

REPORT TITLE: PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

18TH JUNE 2019

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Kelsie Learney Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management

Contact Officer: Kenna-Sian Young Tel No: 01962 848 234 Email
ksyoung@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

The Council's Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Council's key priorities for the next 5 years.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on Local Authorities to develop strategies to prevent homelessness, the strategy should be formulated based on results of a review of homelessness in the District.

The review should consider levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the district. Identifying activities undertaken to prevent homelessness, secure accommodation or support the needs of people in the district. The resources available for the authority and other key partners should be considered in line with the activities identified.

It presents how the Council has considered which areas to prioritise based on consultation and an understanding of predicted homelessness trends. Demonstrating how the Council and its partners will deliver the strategy and the actions required to achieve each priority.

The priorities and underpinning actions have been translated into an Action Plan which will be robustly monitored to ensure the Council delivers the required outcomes to address homelessness and rough sleeping.

This is a working draft with relevant amendments to be made to the format as necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Business and Housing Policy Committee supports the key priorities and action plan set out in the draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

1. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 The delivery of homeless prevention services is supported by Government grants allocated specifically to help the Council fulfil its obligations under the national homelessness agenda.
- 1.2 The Council have had confirmed funding of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant for 2019/20 of £154,479 for the purpose of supporting the Council toward the expenditure lawfully incurred by preventing and dealing with homelessness. A further £26,560 has been awarded as part of the New Burdens Funding associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act. The previously awarded Homelessness Prevent Grant is now received by the Council as part of core funding.
- 1.3 It is proposed to contribute £50k of this grant provision to support the introduction of the Housing First project into the city (in line with the co-commissioning principals approved in report CAB3054 (HSG)). Further information on this will be reported to Cabinet later in the year.
- 1.4 In order to achieve the priorities of the strategy there will be a reliance on grant funding which is not guaranteed long term. The Council will need to ensure they are committed to the prevention of homelessness agenda and use funding in a creative way to meet the needs of the district.
- 1.5 The intention is to prioritise existing staff time and resources with the Housing & Social Inclusion service as well as the time of partners to implement the strategy. Should it be identified in due course that additional staff resources are required; in the first instance consideration will be given to using temporary project/support resources from other relevant services. Should this not meet demand then consideration will be given to using grants provided by MHCLG for prevention of homelessness activities or identifying relevant funding opportunities that are made available. Consideration will need to be given to the fact that grant entitlement fluctuates year on year and cannot be relied upon as a consistent income stream.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

2.1 BACKGROUND

Since the last preventing homelessness strategy was published in 2014, the homelessness sector has been through significant change to which the housing options service has responded in a positive and proactive way.

This was recognised nationally in 2017 when the service achieved the Government's Gold Standard award for its committed approach to preventing and tackling homelessness in the District. Winchester City Council was the first local authority in the County and only the fifth nationally to achieve this award. This could not have been achieved without corporate commitment, a proactive frontline triage service and robust partnership working.

The work undertaken by the service to achieve this meant that the Council was in a good position for the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). This was the most significant change in homelessness legislation for over 40 years. It brought new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness with 4 key measures:

- a) Extension of the definition of "threatened with homelessness" from 28 to 56 days
- b) A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.
- c) A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants regardless of priority need, and
- d) A new duty to refer for specified public services to notify the LA if they come in to contact with someone who they believe may be at risk of homelessness.

As a Local Authority we have welcomed this legislation and have worked with our partner agencies to ensure we reach those in need of support at the earliest possible stage. It is now more widely recognised that housing is not always the single solution and, services need to work together for the best possible outcomes for households. The Council will endeavor to not only work in partnership with agencies but also expand on co-production opportunities so that those with lived experience are given a voice to overcome local and national issues. There is no single reason why someone can end up without a home and we are committed to a person centred approach with support available no matter what the issue may be.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) published a Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018. Its ambition is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it by 2027. There are a range of commitments to help those rough sleeping or at risk of doing so, with a model focused on prevention, early intervention and a rapid rehousing approach to recovery.

The Council along with partners and stakeholders have shown commitment 'To reduce rough sleeping in the Winchester City Centre by 2020 and to end rough sleeping within the Winchester district by 2023'

2.2 HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

A review of homelessness in the district was undertaken to identify vulnerable client groups, and challenges which may impact on preventing homelessness.

Welfare Reform can have a significant impact on the viability of some housing options for those reliant on state benefits. Partnership working and communication across departments at both a local & national level is key to supporting households.

As of 11th April 2019 there were 1148 households claiming Universal Credit via the Winchester Job Centre. Early identification of those due to move on to Universal Credit and who may need support to maintain their claim is vital to ensure low levels of rent arrears for both landlord and tenant.

Hampshire County Council announced in 2018 a funding shortfall of £140 million, of which £56 million to be met from the Adult Social Care budget. As a consequence there will be a reduction in spend on lower level support services for those facing homelessness. In response to both this reduction in service along with the need to ensure households are receiving the right support the Council will provide a support service which is specific to particular needs rather than generic floating support.

There is an identified trend nationally that those rough sleepers who fall in and out of homelessness have increasingly experienced complex trauma. This can result in behaviours which do not conform to the rules attached to some accommodation. The Winchester Social Inclusion Group (SIG) has a wide range of engaged partners keen to contribute to a systems change approach. The group was created to reduce rough sleeping and tackle associated issues of street attachment and harmful street activity by 2020.

The strategy and priorities have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders as set out in Table 1 below. The Council commissioned an independent consultant to produce a report looking at the current services in place for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The report identified the generosity and good will found in Winchester, not just financial but time and sharing of knowledge. There is a clear willingness to build relationship to work together and support those at risk of homelessness.

Keen to understand the views of those with lived experience, consultation took place with residents within our own temporary accommodation and those accessing the services offered by Trinity Winchester (homelessness day centre).

The identified areas for improvement formed part of a consultation event held in January 2019 and informed discussions to facilitate the creation of the accompanying action plan.

Table 1

Hampshire Constabulary	Two Saints
Trinity Winchester	A2Dominion
Office for Police & Crime Commissioner	Tenancy Services Team
Inclusion	Hampshire County Council
Housing Options service	Winchester District CAB
Winchester Street Pastors	Winchester Churches Night Shelter
Private Sector Housing Team	Co-production board- Trinity Winchester
Temporary Accommodation residents	Temporary Accommodation Team

2.3 PRIORITIES

The 4 key priorities identified through the homelessness review and consultation were:

- (i) Provide early intervention and support to prevent homelessness district: Providing the earliest opportunities to prevent and relieve homelessness through our frontline housing options triage service which is available to all customers.
- (ii) Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements: Promoting district wide systems change through the Social Inclusion Group (SIG), a senior cross sector collaborative partnership. Co-operation between internal departments, statutory bodies, voluntary sector agencies, and faith and community groups is vital to drive through change.
- (iii) Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation: Explore and take opportunities with partners for joint commissioning and resources ensuring that the housing options offer contains a variety of housing types.
- (iv) Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Winchester: Provide services which are led by an individual's strengths and needs to promote positive engagement and outcomes for those without accommodation.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Building and resourcing homes will not meet housing need alone. The development of more cohesive communities and ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to experience civic pride is vital. All departments and services need to recognise that for us to really understand the needs of those facing homelessness in the district we need to establish the root cause of an individual's situation, consider trauma and multiple needs that are not being addressed and provide strengths based approaches to improve their quality of life.

We need support to be available to individuals at the right place, right time and in the right way.

2.5 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

A range of options and priorities have been considered in the process of drafting the Strategy. However, the key priorities recommended have been arrived at through consultation with key partners and take account of the principles approved in CAB3054(HSG) dated July 2018.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

CAB3054(HSG), THE FUTURE OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES AND SUPPORT IN WINCHESTER, 4 JULY 2018

[CAB3054\(HSG\)](#)

Journey to the Pledge, Karina Christiansen, Spirende Ltd October 2018

[Journey to the Pledge](#)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Draft Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

[Draft Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024](#)

Appendix 2 – Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2019-2024

[Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan](#)