

Report to Cabinet

22 June 2022

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| Subject: | New Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy |
| Cabinet Member: | Cabinet Member for Housing Cllr Padda |
| Director: | Gillian Douglas, Director of Housing |
| Key Decision: | Yes - impacts on communities living in two or more wards of the Borough |
| Contact Officer: | Business Manager, Karl Robinson karl_robinson@sandwell.gov.uk |

1 Recommendations



- 1.1 That details of the progress made to date in reviewing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy be received.
- 1.2 That the refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2022, as set out in the Appendix, be approved.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities are required to produce on a maximum five-year cycle a homelessness review and a homelessness strategy that sets out the strategic direction that the local authority will take to tackle homelessness. The Council last adopted a homelessness strategy in April 2018 and in partnership with Sandwell's Homelessness Partnership officers have produced a revised and refreshed strategy to provide this strategic direction from 2022 - 2027 (unless significant developments require a revision at an earlier date).



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

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|  | Strong resilient communities Having a safe and stable home and in the local community is fundamental to living well and to strong community relationships. |
|  | Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods Having a warm, safe and stable home is key to a good quality of life. |

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 As stated in 2.1 above, legislation requires that local authorities produce on a maximum five-year cycle a homelessness review and a homelessness strategy that sets out the strategic direction that the local authority will take to tackle homelessness. Working in partnership with the Sandwell Homelessness Partnership officers have reviewed and drafted a revised strategy and consultation has been carried out with a range of internal and external partners.
- 4.2 In accordance with legislation, the strategy (Appendix One) sets out how we will:
- prevent and relieve homelessness
 - ensuring that a range of suitable, sustainable accommodation options are available for people who are or may become homeless
 - understand our customers and the real problems to solve around homelessness
 - provide robust holistic support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again
 - ensure that no one in Sandwell has to sleep rough

The strategy will also be accompanied by a Delivery Plan that will be finalised once the strategy is approved. The six priorities that will form and underpin the outputs of the Delivery Plan are set out in Section 4 of the revised strategy.



- 4.3 During the course of the current strategy a number of notable achievements have been delivered and a refreshed strategy will continue to build on these achievements. Of note:
- Reduced the use of temporary accommodation (TA) and bed and breakfast at its best position by 70% and despite the impact of COVID and ending of private rented sector evictions, the number in TA has reduced by half from its peak.
 - Significantly increased access to the private rented sector to relieve homelessness by providing support and incentives:
 - introduced Call Before You Serve service which provides support to landlords to prevent evictions earlier on in the process. The service provides intervention support for tenants to help keep them in their current property through support and liaison between the two parties.
 - developed and launched a new incentive and support model offering landlords who provide a property to a household who is either homeless or at risk of homelessness tenant support to sustain the tenancy backed up by exclusive insurance policies and incentives not available in the wider lettings market.
 - Reduced rough sleeping by supporting 100 rough sleepers over the course of the last two financial years, many of whom now have their own tenancies. In the annual national rough sleeper count in November 2021, the Council recorded 3 rough sleepers – the same figure of 14 was recorded in November 2018.
- 4.4 The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018 represented a significant change to the way local authorities tackled homelessness with far greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness. For many years, Sandwell has had a strong focus on prevention and was therefore well placed to make the adjustments brought about by the HRA and during 2020/21 carried out a systemic review of how the council prevents and relieves homelessness. This systemic service redesign is now in the mobilisation phase and will be embedded by June 2022 and as a major strategic output is set out in detail in Section 3 of the draft strategy.
- 4.5 The vision, purpose and priorities for the strategy are set out in Section 4. Looking ahead, the vision for the strategy is:



To prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and where people find themselves homeless, ensure that we can resolve their housing need through a range of suitable and sustainable housing options

The key priorities for the strategy will be:

1. Preventing homelessness
2. Improving communication, education and engagement
3. Enhancing housing options
4. Improving partnership, collaboration and whole system
5. Eliminating rough sleeping
6. Making best use of resources

- 4.6. The Sandwell Homelessness Partnership will provide governance and oversight ensuring implementation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, including monitoring of the delivery plan and delivery against the key objectives. Unless there are major legislative changes or significant service changes this strategy will be reviewed every five years.
- 4.7 The Partnership comprises of representation from Sandwell Council (officers and Councillors), other statutory bodies, third sector and voluntary sector organisations that operate within Sandwell. The role and membership of the Partnership will grow over the life of this strategy and we will be looking to embed the involvement of people with lived experience into the Partnership during 2022.
- 4.8 Consultation was carried out on the proposed new strategy through various internal and external partnership forums and through the council's website, with consultation running from December 2021 to February 2022. Feedback and input was received from a range of partners including:
- Public Health
 - Childrens Trust
 - Homeless Link
 - Third sector including Brushstrokes, SCVO
 - Health providers
 - Elected members including the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board



There was a range of feedback and comments made through the consultation which have either been reflected in the strategy or will be incorporated in to the delivery plan. A brief summary of the key consultation feedback is as follows:

- Praise for the work completed over the last few years in supporting people who are a risk of or already homeless and significant successes working with people who are sleeping rough
- Support for the new strategy and the key themes/ objectives set out in the strategy
- An eagerness for other agencies and key partners to work with us in delivering against the key themes
- Recognition that the quality of support had improved significantly and our temporary accommodation provision was much better for families

More specific feedback included:

- Maintaining the importance and impact of Housing First as one of the solutions offered and how to sustain this going forwards
- The need for a public education campaign to make sure people understand implications of giving money directly to people on the streets
- There needs to be more work done on understanding the impact of substance misuse on homelessness and the connectivity between the two issues – to understand the cause and effect relationship.
- There needs to be a wider collaborative systems approach to how we support people
- Lesson from our COVID response and the Everyone In initiative needs to be maintained in the new strategy and delivery plan
- The need to make the best use of all housing options in Sandwell and to ensure that housing is good quality, particularly the supported accommodation sector

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 There are no alternative options. The Council is obliged under law to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.



6 Implications

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| Resources: | There are a range of budgets that support delivery of homelessness including the Homelessness Prevention Grant of c£1.2m, Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding of £0.080m and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme as part of a joint bid with the West Midlands Combined Authority. This funding is ringfenced specifically to preventing homelessness and supporting people at risk of or already sleeping rough |
| Legal and Governance: | <p>Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities are required to produce on a maximum five-year cycle a homelessness review and a homelessness strategy that sets out the strategic direction that the local authority will take to tackle homelessness. The strategy has been revised in compliance with this legislation.</p> <p>The Sandwell Homelessness Partnership will provide governance and oversight ensuring implementation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, including monitoring of the delivery plan and delivery against the key objectives. Unless there are major legislative changes or significant service changes this strategy will be reviewed every five years.</p> |
| Risk: | To date no significant risks have been identified in the revised draft strategy. |
| Equality: | The refreshed strategy has been assessed and a screening Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken. As there were no adverse impacts on any protected characteristic a full assessment was not deemed necessary |
| Health and Wellbeing: | The health and wellbeing benefits of living in a decent sustainable home are well documented in improving a wide range of both physical and mental health determinants. This strategy supports this objective by enabling people affected by homelessness to access an affordable sustainable home. |
| Social Value | As identified above |



7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy

8. Background Papers

None

