

Committee:	Cabinet	Date: Thursday, 15 January 2026
Title:	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031	
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Arthur Coote, Portfolio for Housing	
Report Author:	Simone Russell – Strategic Director Housing Environment and Communities. srussell@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: No

Summary

1. The council's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy expired at the end of 2025. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that these strategies are renewed every five years following a review of the service establishing demand and trends.
2. Therefore, the Council has undertaken a review of the service and developed a new strategy to take the council forward into Local Government Reorganisation providing clear priorities for improving services for our residents.
3. The new Strategy includes an Action Plan to demonstrate how the Council will deliver priorities set out. The Action Plan will be monitored by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group at twice yearly intervals and updates presented to regular Homelessness Stakeholder Forums.
4. Consultation and engagement with our partners has been undertaken during the development of the strategy.

Recommendations

5. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - I. Adopt the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031

Financial Implications

6. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report and actions contained in the Action Plan will be delivered within the service budget.

Background Papers/Ministerial References

7. The Review of service was presented to the Stakeholder Forum on 20th October and is attached as Appendix 2.

Situation

8. The council has a legal requirement under the Homelessness Act 2002 to put in place a strategy every five years to address homelessness in the district. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 expired at the end of 2025.
9. A review of the Action Plan accompanying that strategy has taken place and achievements are acknowledged in the new strategy. However, we are aware there is still a lot to do.
10. Numbers and demands on the service are increasing with a 73% increase in homeless applications since 2020/21 and alternative accommodation increasingly hard to secure. Many people are left with no option but to approach the council for assistance.
11. The three main causes of homelessness in the district in 2024/25 are:
 1. Loss of private sector tenancy – 77 (29.62%)
 2. Family or friend eviction – 56 (21.54%)
 3. Domestic Abuse – 50 (19.23%)
12. The number of households placed in temporary accommodation is being maintained and efforts are being focussed on the prevention of homelessness through making sure our services and early intervention options are being accessed at an early stage. The SOS Hub is a good example of how we are working with partners to address housing issues at an early stage.
13. We commissioned a free Supported Housing Review from Bridges Outcomes Partnership whose findings confirm the increase in the number of single people facing homelessness but hidden from view and sofa surfing, limited local supported housing provision, a shortage of one-bedroom homes and more people approaching with complex needs. In addition, a need was identified for more joined up referrals and improved data sharing.
14. We are also aiming to secure housing for people as soon as possible through making best use of our council housing stock and nominations to our partner housing associations.
15. A Stakeholder forum was held with our partners on 20th October 2024. Through reviewing the demand and trends and engagement with agencies at this partnership event we have developed our three key priorities for the next five years. Our three priorities are:
 - Priority 1 – Earlier intervention and prevention of homelessness.
 - Priority 2 – Improved partnership working.
 - Priority 3 – Develop more accommodation options for single people.

Impact

- 16.

Communication/Consultation	A Stakeholder Forum was held 20 October with partners and there is a commitment to improve partnership working in the strategy.
Community Safety	A major cause of homelessness is domestic abuse and addressing this and delivering safe accommodation will contribute towards community safety.
Equalities	There are no direct impacts relating to equalities.
Health and Safety	There are no direct impacts in relation to health and safety.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	<p>Section 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy for: a) Preventing homeless in its district b) Securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in its district who are or may become homeless. c) Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district – i. who are or may become homeless; or ii. who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again. d) Keep the Strategy under review.</p> <p>Section 3 (7A) Homelessness Act 2002 provides that in formulating or modifying a homelessness Strategy, the Council must have regard to A. its current allocation scheme under section 166A of the Housing Act 1996, B. its current tenancy Strategy under section 150 of the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>Section 3 (8) Homelessness Act 2002 provides that before adopting or modifying a homelessness Strategy the authority shall consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate.</p> <p>In exercising its functions relating to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, including the development of its Homelessness Strategy, the Council must have regard to the Homelessness</p>

	<p>Code of Guidance Guide for Local Authorities issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.</p> <p>The council's homelessness service must therefore comply with the legislative regime and seek conformity with best practice to avoid legal challenges to the service</p>
Sustainability	There are no direct impacts in relation to sustainability.
Ward-specific impacts	All Wards
Workforce/Workplace	There are no direct impacts in relation to the workforce/workplace.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Challenge by MHCLG by not adopting a new strategy	1	3	Adopt the strategy and ensure a review takes place every five years and new strategies are adopted.
Not delivering the priorities may lead to challenge.	2	2	Review the Action Plan twice yearly to ensure delivery is on track.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031

Appendix 2 PowerPoint presentation to partner Forum.

Appendix 3 Bridges Outcomes Partnership report

