

REPORT FOR CABINET

THURSDAY 3rd DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020- 2025

EXEMPT INFORMATION

None

1. PURPOSE

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to have in place a Homelessness strategy. In August 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy¹ which set out the vision to, by 2027 support every person who sleeps rough off the streets and into a home. Its main focus is eradicating rough sleeping and preventing homelessness. A Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping strategy was made a mandatory document for all Local Authorities to have as stated in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Our new strategy identifies revised priorities drawing on the evidence base as well as our response to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on service delivery. The purpose of this report is for cabinet to agree and endorse all principles within the report and its delivery plan

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to:

- Approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020- 2025 attached at **Appendix 1**
- Endorse the evidence base **Appendix 2**
- Support the community impact assessment (CIA) is **Appendix 3**. This was developed with stakeholders facilitated by external support
- Acknowledge Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny input into the development of the strategy.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in line with its manifesto pledge – has made addressing rough sleeping a priority. Ministry of Housing and Communities for Local Government (MHCLG) have committed to halve rough sleeping in this Parliament and to end it for good by 2027. Embedded throughout its strategy is its

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>

visions and plans to help people who are sleeping rough now and to put in place the structures to end rough sleeping for good. Preventing homelessness and helping people access suitable accommodation are part of Tamworth's core strategic purpose. Utilising resources effectively and building resilient communities are integral to ensuring our most vulnerable members of the community are supported and signposted to sustainable housing solutions. It is recognised that Local Authorities cannot deliver this by themselves and highlights the importance that communities, voluntary groups, local businesses, faith groups and members of the public can all play in delivering this vision. The Government in total is spending over £700 million pounds nationally to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year alone and state they..” remain committed to transforming the lives of some of the most vulnerable in society, and to end rough sleeping for good”. (MHCLG 2020²)

The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 sets out the Council's plans to tackle homelessness, rough sleeping and a range of other housing-related challenges over the next five years in Tamworth. The strategy reflects on performance and achievements since the last strategy was published, examines the homelessness challenges that we face in the borough, highlights the statutory obligations placed upon the Local Authority. The evidence base highlights feedback from key partners, data from key performance indicators and data returns that the service is required to submit back to MHCLG on a quarterly basis known as the Homelessness Case Level Collection (HCLIC) which has formed a basis for the development of our five key priorities.

Our five priorities are as follows:

1. Prevention and early intervention through working with partners and stakeholders
2. Develop rapid pathways for rough sleepers
3. Improve the supply of and access to affordable and supported housing
4. Offer a high quality and innovative service to homeless households
5. Improve health and well-being aspirations

The intended overall outcome is to prevent homelessness and, where it cannot be prevented, ensuring that services work to relieve it. It also will ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy has been considered on two occasions³ by Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny as well as, being the subject of a question at full Council on 27th October; and the collective feedback has been incorporated into the report. Officers recommend that Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny are thanked for their feedback which endorsed the documents being shared and were pleased to see that the evidence base drove the delivery plan.

External consultation has also been underway with partners since 2019 with a range of stakeholder interviews being undertaken by Housing Quality Network (HQN). This was refreshed by a further 2 weeks of internal and external consultation which took place with between 26 October and 9 November 2020. We received detailed partner feedback



Letter from Minister
² Kelly Tolhurst MP to C

³ Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny 24th September and 20th October 2020

from Tamworth Cornerstone Housing Association (TCHA) and we will be in touch with them directly to work with them on future projects.

A summary of further partner feedback is listed below and includes actions taken within the strategy to support successful outcomes:

<u>You said (Partner consultation)</u>	<u>We did (action within strategy)</u>
Impact of county lines and cuckooing on vulnerable households in the social and private rented sectors leading to the potential loss of accommodation. (Cuckooing is a term used by the police in which drug dealers take over the home of vulnerable person in order to use it as base for county lines drug trafficking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an eviction prevention panel to work directly with registered providers to support early intervention. • Working with our community safety partnership, we will promote the Staffordshire Smart Alert service to vulnerable customers
Military veterans across the County experiencing or facing homelessness and rough sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous policy regard and current successful implementation of the allocations policy 2020-23 which further supports military veterans • Increase multi agency visits following reports of rough sleepers to engage through early intervention
Small numbers of homeless individuals and rough sleepers that have chaotic lifestyles adversely impacting on other communities and reluctant to engage with service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with partners and stakeholders, we will explore the relevance of 'housing first' as a potential pathway for rough sleepers with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles • Expand the provision of emergency accommodation within the community with enhanced support • Homeless Hub/ Outreach work
Mental health issues: Increasing incidence of homeless people and rough sleepers with mental health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting vulnerable households on digital inclusion so as to directly access / use, for example, e-forms and customer portals • Assisting third sector organisations to support their vulnerable customers to access services online • Consideration to be made for the employment of a rough sleeper outreach worker and mental health support worker within the service.

6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nationally the main causes of homelessness are loss or threat of homelessness through friends and family unwilling to accommodate, loss or threat of accommodation with rent arrears/anti-social behaviour (ASB), clients not being eligible due to immigration or status reasons e.g no recourse to public funds and not exercising their treaty rights under European Economic Area rules (EEA) , hidden homelessness (sofa- surfing), offending history, substance misuse and mental health issues and domestic abuse.

From our evidence base the Tamworth local context in 2018/19 and 2019/20, is the number of households assessed as owed a homelessness duty per quarter ranged from

72-85. Nationally and locally the two immediate reasons for homelessness continue to be the loss of a tenancy in the private rented sector and the unwillingness of families and friends to continue to provide accommodation (see evidence base P18).

In Tamworth the support needs of people likely to become or who are homeless is dominated by mental health issues (and this trend is growing) – the mean figure per quarter in 2018/19 was 26 cases and this increased to 31 cases in 2019/20 (see evidence base P17).

In England since the current methodology for recording national figures of rough sleeping conducted by Homeless Link was established in 2010 the numbers of rough sleepers nationally has risen . This picture contrasts with Tamworth where lower than national average figures are recorded. Since 2010 the numbers recorded as rough sleeping during the yearly estimate in Tamworth have recorded a figure below 5, with an exception in 2016 of 8 recorded. These figures are reflective of the transient nature of the issue and the strong partnership working undertaken with our statutory partners and the third sector to help identify and support rough sleepers into positive accommodation pathways through intelligence-lead provisions.

The number of rough sleepers ranged from 2-8 in the annual count between 2010 and 2019. And this year's estimate took place on 4th November and the verification process on 5th November, of which Tamworth have reported back the figure of 5 this year.

The 'Everyone in' Strategy due to covid-19 in lockdown one saw the service accommodate 16 clients of which were either at risk of rough sleeping or rough sleeping, this was from the period of 19 March until 23 June. This highlighted nationally a hidden homelessness problem as nationally last count there were approximately 4266 Rough sleepers on one particular night and nationally 15,000 vulnerable people were accommodated in hotels. For lockdown two, the Council has currently accommodated a further two rough sleepers and is hoping to engage all others and move them on to settled accommodation.

However, some rough sleepers known to the service are not always willing to engage with the Council and ensuring that the right support, tailored to an individual's needs and is provided alongside a home, which is fundamental. The earlier that a stable base can be established, the greater the chances that an individual will not return to rough sleeping. The internationally recognised Housing First model follows the principle that the first thing to do when intervening to secure a person's recovery is to support them into a home, with intensive wrap-around support provided in tandem to help them address their needs. One of Tamworth's actions is to commission a service such as this which is outlined in the strategy.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. The SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resources, Time-Bound) delivery plan will require investment and decisions around the level of resourcing required and will be based on individual assessed business cases and reported to members as appropriate.

Our ability to deliver the priorities of the strategy will be dependent on a range of funding resources. Confirmation of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) allocation is

not confirmed and it has, therefore, been prudent to propose an annually updated resourcing plan so that financial implications can be assessed.

In summary the financial parameters are detailed in the table below for what future plans of investments will be used for.

Resource	Estimated cost pa
Housing Solutions Fund	50,000
Staff Training	5,000
Contribution for commissioning an advice service (TAC)	20,000
Jigsaw software	9,000
Housing First	50,000
SWEP	6,000
Outreach Service	20,000
Resource for Mental Health support	30,000
OOH service	6,600
	196,600
Funding available:	
FHSG reserve	218,405
FHSG remaining from 2020/21 allocation	45,855
	264,260

The homelessness service is routinely exposed to bench marking exercises on our service costs through MHCLG and the Homelessness Support Advisor Team (HAST), along with other independent partners. Over the last 3 years the service has seen a significant decrease in the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation which is down from approximately £213,000 to just over £80,000 pa with an ambition of bringing this down further in the coming years.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the development of the strategy there has been a detailed risk assessment which has included an independent assessment from Housing Quality Network (HQN) it’s legislative and regulatory compliant. The headline risks are captured below:

Risk Factor	Mitigation
Actions and 5 priorities cannot be delivered.	A SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resources and Time-Bound) delivery plan will be reviewed and Key Performance Indicators will be updated on the system and also in line with Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) requests from MHCLG
Significant increase in citizen expectations to deal with rising homelessness as a result of covid-19.	Comprehensive partnership working with the third and voluntary sector to support homelessness and winter relief. In addition to an updated allocations policy (June 2020) which manages access to the Council’s housing register and which has also been subject to detailed consultation.
There are	We are cognisant of the uncertainty around future funding and

insufficient resources to deliver the emerging strategy	therefore, are recommending an annual update to the delivery plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
Flexible Housing Support Grant (FHSG) or similar government funding is not received in 2021/22 or future year	Officers are working closely with the homelessness advisory support team (HAST) and monitoring updates to different funding arrangements to maximise the Council's opportunity of receiving future funding.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

In accordance with Council policy a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has been done in conjunction with partners and external support. A copy of which is shown at Appendix 3.

Clearly an assessment of homelessness and or priority need is likely to be based on a range of factors, some of which fall within protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010. Inevitably factors such as pregnancy, nursing mothers, disability through complex vulnerability will impact on particular groups more than others. The assessment concludes that the strategy will not have any negative implications across all these areas, not withstanding that individual circumstances will result in tailored service offers.

REPORT AUTHOR

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