

## HOMELESSNESS and ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2020 - 2025

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Wards Affected: All  
Key Decision: No  
Report to: Council  
24<sup>th</sup> June 2020

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### Purpose of Report

1. To recommend that the Council adopts the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 following consideration by the Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020.

### Recommendation

2. **Council is recommended to adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 at Appendix 1.**
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### Background

3. The Homelessness Act, 2002, requires all local authorities to conduct a review of homelessness in their district and use this to inform a strategy for tackling homelessness which they must publish at intervals of no longer than five years.
4. The current Homelessness Strategy expires in 2021 but it has become necessary to carry a review in order to respond to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the requirement to focus on rough sleeping.
5. In its Rough Sleeping Strategy August 2018, the Government committed to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) has pledged to increase scrutiny of local housing authorities' homelessness strategies. In August 2019, the Government advised all local housing authorities to submit a homelessness strategy for their consideration.
6. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how services will be delivered in the future to tackle homelessness and the Review sets out the available resources in place to prevent and relieve homelessness.
7. In developing the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, a comprehensive review of homelessness in the District and an assessment of future trends was carried out. The review assessed the nature and extent of homelessness in the District, together with its causes and an analysis of those groups most affected. The review also considers the use of temporary accommodation by the Council, the availability of social housing, access to the private rented sector and the affordability of market housing. The review can be found at:  
  
<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/4955/homelessness-review-2019-v2.pdf>
8. The Council consulted on the strategy between 9th August to 4th October 2019. The key issues identified by the review and the responses to the consultation have been

used to inform and develop the new Strategy. Of the 45 responses, 93% agreed that the proposed priorities for the new strategy are appropriate. A summary of the outcome of the consultation can be found at:

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/4620/homelessness-strategy-2019-short-summary-consultation-response-report.pdf>

### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025**

9. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is attached at Appendix 1 and sets out five strategic objectives and actions for their achievement in preventing and dealing with homelessness in the District. The overall aim of the strategy is to deliver an accessible service to prevent homelessness and assist homeless households in finding long term affordable and sustainable housing.
10. The strategic objectives identified in the Strategy are:
  - **Preventing and relieving homelessness**
  - **Minimise the use of and improve temporary accommodation**
  - **Prevent recurring homelessness**
  - **Tackle rough sleeping and homelessness amongst vulnerable groups**
  - **Enable access to suitable and affordable accommodation**
11. The Strategy includes an Action Plan detailing how the strategic objectives will be achieved. The lockdown has increased strain and pressures within households causing family breakdown, including an increase in domestic violence.

### **Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic**

12. The strategy was proposed for adoption to Council on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic this meeting was cancelled.

As reported to Cabinet on the 1<sup>st</sup> June and the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has clearly had a significant impact on the Council and in particular on the demand for assistance from those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
13. As a result of this the Council has reviewed the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. After careful consideration, a fundamental review of the Strategy is not required at this stage because the objectives and the action plan remain and are more appropriate and applicable. However, as indicated, the effect of Covid-19 is expected to cause more homelessness in both the short and medium term. It is considered appropriate at this stage to highlight the impacts of Covid-19, and to review the Strategy and its Action Plan more comprehensively from April 2021 when the overall impact of Covid-19 will be better understood.
14. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased pressures on temporary accommodation. The numbers in temporary accommodation have increased from 85 at the end of February to 103 at the end of May. The numbers in nightly paid guest house

accommodation increased over the same period from 48 to 59. This is partially due to the Government's requirement on the 26th of March for Councils to "bring everyone in" to safeguard rough sleepers and those at risk of sleeping rough. These are people to whom the council would not usually have a legal duty to accommodate under the Homelessness Reduction Act. The Government have instructed councils to work with this cohort to support them to move onto settled accommodation and not return to rough sleeping.

15. The pandemic has also created pent up demand. Covid-19 has halted activity across all tenures in the housing market including the delivery of new affordable homes which has had a negative impact on the service's capacity to move people on from temporary accommodation. The market is starting to resume activity but at a slow pace. Possession actions have been suspended until the end of August but the loss of employment and incomes will mean many people may be unable to meet their housing costs and will be faced with homelessness later in 2020/21.
16. The Strategy was considered by the Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 and was unanimously supported.

### **Policy Context**

17. The delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will make a significant contribution to the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, and to the Council's aim to be an effective council delivering value for money services and helping to create a strong economy, environment and community.

### **Other Options Considered**

18. The report provides a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out how the Council will meet its homelessness duties. No other practicable options were identified.

### **Financial Implications**

19. The actions set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy can be met from existing resources. If additional resources are required this will be considered by Cabinet.

### **Risk Management Implications**

20. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will enable the Council to demonstrate how it is meeting its duties under the Homelessness Act 2002 that require Local Authorities to have such strategies and will avoid the risks associated with non-compliance.

### **Equalities and customer service implications**

21. An impact assessment has been completed for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Those assisted by the Council to prevent them becoming homeless include some of the most vulnerable residents of Mid Sussex.

## **Other material implications**

22. None.

## **Background Papers**

1. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Equality Impact Assessment  
<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/4621/homelessness-strategy-impact-assessment-2019.pdf>
2. Consultation Outcomes  
<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/4620/homelessness-strategy-2019-short-summary-consultation-response-report.pdf>
3. Review  
<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/4955/homelessness-review-2019-v2.pdf>