

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2016 - 2021

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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Housing and Planning
Date of meeting 22 January 2020

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to ask the Scrutiny Committee to recommend the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 to Council for adoption.

Recommendations

2. **The Committee is requested to:**
 - I. **Comment on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025**
 - II. **Recommend to Council that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 be adopted**
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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 runs until 2021 but it has become necessary to carry out an early review, due to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the new requirement to incorporate within Homelessness Strategies a special focus on rough sleeping. The Homelessness Reduction Act introduced new homelessness Prevention and Relief duties on local housing authorities. 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, and in August 2019, the Homelessness Advice & Support Team requested all local housing authorities submit their homelessness strategy for their consideration. We have advised HAST that we anticipate our Strategy will be adopted by 1st April 2020.
5. The Homelessness Strategy sets out how services will be delivered in the future to tackle homelessness and the available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness.
6. In developing the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, a comprehensive review of homelessness in the District and an assessment of likely future trends was carried out. The review assesses 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/4622/msdc-homelessness-strategy-review-final-draft-7jan-2020.pdf>

7. The Council consulted on the strategy between 9th August to 4th October 2019. The consultation comprised a web survey and a consultation event attended by key stakeholders. The online survey was sent to stakeholders and service users and was available on the Council's website for members of the public and 45 responses were received. The key issues identified by the review and the responses to the consultation have been used to inform and develop the strategic objectives/priorities for the new Strategy. 93% of the respondents agreed that the proposed priorities for the new strategy are the right ones. 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 Strategy 2020-25

8. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is included at Appendix 1 of this report 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.

9. 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**

The Strategy includes an Action Plan detailing how the strategic objectives will be achieved.

- 9.1 Priority 1: Preventing and relieving homelessness

The Council's focus is on the prevention and relief of homelessness. Its objectives are to prevent homelessness at an early stage and, where this is not possible, to support homeless households and those in housing need to secure suitable affordable housing. These objectives will be delivered through the priority actions outlined in the strategy on pages 17 to 20:

- 9.2 Priority 2: Minimise the use of and improve temporary accommodation

The Council recognises that being in temporary accommodation can be a very stressful and negative experience, particularly when placed outside the district away from their support network, health care providers, place of employment and schools. The Council aims to provide more good quality temporary accommodation within the district and to enable households to move through temporary accommodation into a settled home as soon as possible. These objectives will be delivered through the priority actions outlined in the strategy on pages 23 to 24.

9.3 Priority 3: Preventing recurring homelessness

The Council is committed to preventing previous households from becoming homeless again wherever possible. This objective will be delivered through the priority actions set out in the strategy on pages 27 and 28

9.4 Priority 4: Tackling rough sleeping and homelessness amongst vulnerable groups

The reported number of people sleeping rough within the district is low, for 2019 the reported figure for Mid Sussex for the annual Rough Sleeper count was 8. Despite the low numbers, the Council believes that no-one should have to sleep rough and it is therefore a priority to ensure that there is sufficient provision in place to provide effective support to anyone doing so. The Council also recognises the importance of ensuring that vulnerable groups are provided with the appropriate support to prevent them from becoming homeless and to enable them to remain in their current homes where they are likely to have established support networks and community links. These objectives will be delivered through the following priority actions set out in the strategy on pages 34 to 38:

9.5 Priority 5: Enable access to suitable and affordable accommodation

It is important that a range of suitable and affordable accommodation is available to meet the differing housing needs of the residents of Mid Sussex. It is recognised that the demand for social housing outweighs the supply and that home ownership and private rents are not affordable for residents on low incomes. The Council intends to deliver this priority through the priority actions set out in the strategy in pages 41 to 42.

10. The Council will monitor delivery of the key actions in the strategy and the impact on key performance measures including:

- Number of approaches from households with a housing enquiry
- The number of homeless prevention and prevention duties accepted
- Numbers of households placed into temporary accommodation
- Number of households in nightly paid temporary accommodation
- Average cost of temporary accommodation
- Number of households accepted as homeless
- The average amount of time a household has spent in temporary accommodation
- Number of households assisted to access the private rented sector
- Number of affordable homes delivered

The Strategy and action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and reported to scrutiny

Next steps

11. Subject to the Committee's comments and amendments, the Strategy will be submitted for approval by Council at its meeting on 1 April 2020.

Policy Context

12. The delivery of the Homelessness 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

13. 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

14. 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

15. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will enable the Council to demonstrate how it is meeting its duties under the Homelessness Act 2002, and will avoid the risks associated with non-compliance.

Equalities and customer service implications

16. An impact assessment has been completed to support 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

17. None.

Background Papers

1. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Equality Impact Assessment.
2. Consultation Outcomes (see links above)
3. Review (see links above)