

Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 - 2023

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Purpose of the Report

1. For members of Scrutiny to have sight of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment and Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023 in advance of the final strategy which will be taken to District Executive and Scrutiny later this year for adoption.

Public Interest

2. District Councils have a statutory duty to adopt a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. This strategy sets out the strategic goals for the four Somerset Housing Authorities including a detailed action plan to show how this will be delivered. Our existing Somerset Homeless Strategy 2017 – 19 was adopted in May 2018; this was an interim strategy which only runs until this year so we need to update the strategy taking into consideration the priorities identified in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment and the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Actions Required

3. Scrutiny Committee members comment and provide feedback on the first draft of the Countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2023 (attached), to inform its development prior to being shared with District Executive.

Background

4. The 2002 Homelessness Act places a duty on Local Authorities to develop a homelessness and rough sleeper strategy and an obligation to renew it every five years. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced new measures for dealing with homelessness including:
 - increasing the length of time a housing authority should treat someone as threatened with Homelessness from 28 to 56 days
 - the introduction of Personalised Housing Plans for clients to outline the circumstances of homelessness, the housing needs of the client, any support required to secure and sustain accommodation, steps that the client is required to take along with the steps the Local Authority is required to take to assist the client
 - a new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible households threatened with homelessness
 - a new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants
 - a new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

5. A Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment 2019 (Appendix 1) was carried out to assess the need of the County, this has been used to inform the new Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 23 (Appendix 2). The strategy includes 6 priorities for 2019-23:
 - Provision of adequate, affordable housing stock
 - Support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate
 - Support specific client groups to access suitable accommodation through effective support
 - Support the government's commitment to combat rough sleeping.
 - Maintain strong working relationships across partnerships.
 - Track and respond to the impacts of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

6. The 'Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2023' will be implemented by each district through the Homeless Managers Group (HMG), who will be responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the actions contained within the action plan. There will also be a link with the Strategic Housing Officers Group (SHOG) which is responsible for the delivery plan for the 'Somerset Housing Strategy 2019-2023'. Close links will be maintained between both groups to ensure we keep track of progress on all actions overall.