

Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 - 2023

Executive Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Val Keitch, Strategy and Housing
Director: Netta Meadows, Director Strategy and Support Services
Lead Specialist: Jan Gamon, Lead Specialist Strategic Planning
Lead Officer: Leisa Kelly, Case Officer, Service Delivery
Barbie Markey, Specialist Housing, Service Delivery
Contact Details: Leisa.kelly@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462641
Barbie.markey@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462774

Purpose of the Report

1. For members to adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023.

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 was adopted in May 2018; this was an interim strategy which only runs until this year so we needed to update the strategy taking into consideration the priorities identified in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment 2019 and the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Recommendations

3. That District Executive adopts the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023 subject to any final changes to the strategy and action plan to be delegated to the Director, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Housing.

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. The current interim strategy was developed by the four District Councils in Somerset and was adopted in 2018. Since the adoption of the Interim Strategy we have conducted a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment which has been used as the evidence base for the “Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023” as well as considering the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The Strategy

6. 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 1). The strategy includes 6 priorities for 2019-23:
 - Provision of adequate, affordable housing stock
 - Support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate
 - Enable specific client groups to access suitable accommodation
 - 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
7. 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 this strategy and actions contained within the action plan; including monitoring progress against actions and targets at the monthly HMG meetings. There will also be a link with the Strategic Housing Officers Group (SHOG) who are responsible for the delivery plan for the ‘Somerset Housing Strategy 2019-2023’ so close links will be maintained between both groups to ensure we keep track of progress on all actions overall.

Financial Implications

8. There are no specific resources requested as part of agreeing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-23, however there may be financial implications linked to the achievement of the action plan which will either be covered within existing budgets or come forward for funding as appropriate.

Risk Matrix

The risks have been identified on the table below, attention should be drawn to risk reference 5 and 7 as these are the highest scored risks. By adopting the strategy these risks are lowered as these refer to us not having a valid Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy which is updated every 5 years which was a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002. The implication of not having an up-to-date Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is that any homelessness decisions on applications would be invalid. Ensuring we have an adopted strategy would mitigate this risk.

Ref	Risk Title	Inherent Rating	Residual Rating
1	Financial: Loss of future funding if we fail to meet government targets	8	8
3	Delivery of Services: Risk of not being able to adequately deliver homelessness prevention and relief duty	8	8
4	Staffing / Capacity: Staff retention and capacity following the introduction of the HRA 2017	14	13
5	Reputation: Failure to have a strategy and clear processes on how we deal with homelessness and rough sleeping	23	2
6	Health & Safety & Environmental: Failing to accommodate vulnerable applicants	13	8
7	Governance & Legal: We are required to have a Strategy and comply with government legislation	22	8

Council Plan Implications

9. *Council Plan 2016 – 2021 aim:*
 - Aim to enable housing to meet all needs
 - Improve health and reduce health inequalities

Area of focus within the Housing Theme for 2019-20

- Enable sufficient housing in appropriate places to meet community needs
- Maximise the number of affordable homes including providing more affordable home to support rural economies and communities
- Reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- Match lifelong independent living with appropriate property solutions

Area of focus within the Healthy, Self-reliant Communities Theme for 2019-20

- Work with partners to support people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

10. None

Equality and Diversity Implications

11. A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment is attached (Appendix 2)

Privacy Impact Assessment

12. It is not necessary to process personal data as part of the strategy, therefore, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is not needed

Background Papers

- Homeless and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment 2019
 - Scrutiny Minutes and Agenda, October 2019
 - District Executive Minutes and Agenda, May 2018
 - Somerset Homeless Review and Strategy 2017
-