

Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 21 September 2021



Portfolio: Housing Services

Subject: Review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Officer contact for further information: Jennifer Gould, Director Community and Wellbeing

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

1. To note the outcome of the initial consultation on the review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which is due for renewal in April 2022; and
2. To consider and approve taking the proposed recommendations within this report to stage 2 consultation between October 2021 and December 2021 to inform the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2027 that will be presented to Cabinet in Spring 2022 for approval.

Report:

1. Under section 1(3), (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities have a duty to review and publish their Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy on at least a 5-yearly basis. This review is being carried out in accordance with The Homelessness Code of Guidance February 2018.
2. The current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was published in 2018. It set out the achievements since 2015/16, incorporated the needs and demands on the service and an action plan to address these needs. The Strategy included a significant level of detail regarding the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came in to force on 3 April 2018.
3. The full review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy began in May 2021 along with simultaneous reviews of the Allocations Policy, the Tenancy Policy and the overarching Housing Strategy which are all due for renewal in 2022.
4. A series of initial consultation events took place between July 2021 and August 2021 including bitesize briefing sessions with Members of the Council, residents, professional partners, other statutory services and staff, desktop research by in-house technical experts, statistical analysis of national and local data and an on-line survey which closed on 30 August 2021.
5. The detailed review is currently in draft format and will be published along-side a summary of the outcome of the stage 1 and stage 2 consultation to form the evidence base for the final strategy. The report will include:
 - Achievements and outcomes to date
 - Causes of homelessness
 - Profile of applicants
 - Current demand

- Current supply
- Pipeline supply
- Anticipated demand
- Shortfall / resources

6. The review has highlighted the following evidence-based issues and opportunities and proposed recommendations for inclusion in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022- 2027.

Streamlining the strategy

The current strategy includes a lot of content about the detail and requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which had just been introduced at the time of publication and was therefore relevant to that document.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that the strategy for 2022 – 2027 is a far more streamlined easy to read publication, and the associated policy and procedures for preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping are produced as separate stand-alone documents.

Five Strategic Priorities

The initial consultation and associated research identified five key themes that could form the basis of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2027 and associated action plan.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that stakeholders are consulted on the proposal to formulate the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy as a set of 5 strategic priorities within the framework of the national context, the local context, and Epping Forest District Council's Corporate Objectives.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy - Strategic Priorities

1. Working together
2. Preventing homelessness
3. Building resilience
4. Access to suitable accommodation and support
5. Ending rough sleeping

Priority 1: Working together

This will detail partners' schemes and funding streams, opportunities for cross cutting services and pooled resources identifying clear outcomes and targets.

Priority 2: Preventing homelessness

This will detail early intervention advice and information, publicity, self-service, the duty to refer, and landlord incentives and will include details of outcomes and targets.

Priority 3: Building resilience

This will focus on the support services, Personal Housing Plans, health and wellbeing, community initiatives that are available to enable homeless households or those threatened with homelessness to improve their overall life-chances and avoid the 'revolving door' of repeat homelessness.

Priority 4: Access to suitable housing and support

This will address how to make the best use of housing and housing related support including; temporary accommodation, the private rented sector, the housing register, specialist/supported housing, empty homes, disabled facilities grant and access to affordable home ownership.

Priority 5: Ending rough sleeping – proportionate prevention, intervention, recovery

This will set out the Council's plans for achieving the Government's prescribed objective to end rough sleeping by 2024.

Consistent format with the Overarching Housing Strategy

The critical part of the strategy will be the associated action plan as it sets out how the objectives and intended outcomes are to be delivered and measured. If a consistent style and approach is taken to the formulation of the Overarching Housing Strategy, then the objectives contained therein can be delivered and measured in the same way.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that an Action Plan with SMART targets is produced that follows the same style and format as the proposals for the Overarching Housing Strategy so that they can both then feed into service plans, team plans and individual one-to ones.

Reason for decision: To enable EFDC to progress to stage 2 of the consultation exercise, thereby fulfilling its statutory obligation to consult prescribed stakeholders on any major change to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022- 2027; before presenting the outcome of the reviews and respective recommendations to Cabinet for consideration and approval in Spring 2022.

Consultation undertaken:

Invitations to participate in live bitesize briefings or view pre-recorded briefings and complete an online survey were sent to:

- Council tenants and leaseholders
- Partner agencies and community groups with an interest in housing in the district
- Private registered providers of social housing in the district
- District, borough and city councils in the county
- EFDC staff
- Members of the Council
- Clerks of parish and town councils to forward to their respective elected members.

The survey and associated information was also published on the Council website and the intranet.

The generic survey ensured every participant was asked the same set of questions. At the time of writing this report 71 participants completed the survey. The results of the survey have been analysed and will be reproduced as a report for circulation and publication as part of the review.

Resource implications: None

Legal and Governance Implications: None

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications: None

Background Papers:

Epping Forest District Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2022

The Big 4 Initial Consultation – Findings (Draft) September 2021

Risk Management: NA

Equality: An indicative Impact Assessment is being maintained and updated as the review progresses to conclusion.