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| Report title | Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy - consultation |
| Report author | Iqvinder Sokhal (Head of Housing Solutions) |
| Department | Housing |
| Exempt? | No |

Purpose of report:
To resolve

Synopsis of report:
Members approved a 5-year Homelessness Strategy in 2019 which is now in its final year. This report informs Members of the work being undertaken to implement the Council’s new 3-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and seeks permission to consult on the draft version of the proposed new strategy.

Recommendation(s):
Members approve a 6 week consultation on the Council’s new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

1. Context and background of report

1.1 Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on every local housing authority to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy. Rough Sleeping was added to the original remit by government due to the rise in homelessness. The current Runnymede Borough Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was approved by Members in 2019. This report informs members of the work undertaken to develop a new strategy and seeks permission to consult on an emerging draft strategy.

2. Report

2.1 The Council published the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024. This document outlines the action the Council will take to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. As set out in annual updates presented to Members, the Strategy encapsulates the challenges and successes the Housing Solutions team has faced when meeting the objectives set in the current strategy.

2.2 Members were informed in March 2024 of the intention to commence work on the Council’s new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The future strategy will run for three years. This is to ensure that our response to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is agile and reflective of legislative and housing market changes. The increasingly volatile and fast changing nature of the socio-economic climate mean that it is important to have strategies that are shorter in timescale. An annual update will be presented to Members to inform this Committee on progress with the implementation of the strategy.

- 2.3 An extensive data capturing exercise commenced earlier this year in order to analyse the trends in the number of homeless applications and the reasons why applicants were either threatened with or rendered homeless. National, regional and Council specific data was captured and examined to enable us to set our priorities and formulate an action plan for the new strategy. Data from all the Council's current Housing Register applications, profile of tenants in our housing stock including temporary accommodation, as well as those reported as rough sleeping was also collated to identify what the Council needs to focus on in order to take reasonable steps to eliminate homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 2.4 An engagement exercise with the Council's tenants, including those in temporary accommodation, was conducted in May 2024. The survey was an evidence gathering exercise to review the Council's approach to those facing homelessness and rough sleeping. To do this, we asked service users what their housing concerns were. All Council residents, including those in the Council's temporary accommodation stock, were asked to rank the following housing concerns:
- A) Private rent is expensive
 - B) There is not enough social housing
 - C) I wouldn't know how to access housing support/advice
 - D) My property has damp/mould/repair issues which have not been resolved
 - E) My current housing/housing issue negatively impacts my mental/physical health
 - F) My mental and/or physical health prevents me from accessing any support and advice
 - G) I have seen rough sleeping in my area
- 2.5 A partnership event was also held at the Council on 8th July 2024. This event was well attended by our key partners from the third sector, supported housing, Surrey County Council as well as attendance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The purpose of the event was to canvass the views of our partners in relation to the challenges faced by people facing homelessness and rough sleeping as well as a discussion about how we can collectively overcome those challenges.
- 2.6 The data analysis and partnership event has enabled the Council to determine the Objectives for the new Strategy. In particular:
- Objective one: To focus on early intervention and prevention
 - Objective two: Provide holistic support for those experiencing rough sleeping and those with complex needs
 - Objective three: Maximise 'move on' options
 - Objective four: Work collectively with our partners to secure positive and sustained outcomes
- 2.7 Permission is now sought to consult on the draft Strategy. It is proposed that the consultation be open for six weeks. Given the speed of the responses we received to the initial scoping exercise with the tenants and the response to our launch event on the 8th July, a consultation of six weeks, alongside targeted awareness of the consultation will give ample opportunity for our stakeholders and partners to comment on the draft Strategy.
- The robust awareness campaign of the consultation will include direct contacting of all our partners and stakeholders, strong social media awareness with clear links to the website. We will also directly contact our tenants, those on the housing register and in temporary accommodation to ensure that we obtain a wide reach as possible. Full details of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, alongside our Action Plan will be accessible on our website.

- A dedicated web page to the consultation, with an accessible version of the strategy, will be published. This will be publicised on the main website's homepage and our Tenant E-newsletter, which aims to be sent out in October.
- Residents in our Temporary Accommodation and on our Housing Register, will be invited via email to share their views. We will also seek the views of people we have supported into private rented sector accommodation.
- We will contact Registered Providers in the borough and engage with third sector organisations.
- Internal consultation will take place, including Tenancy Services, Community Development, and Environmental Health.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the requirement for local authorities to develop and publish a Homeless Strategy at least every 5 years and for this to be kept under regular review. As outlined above, the new Strategy will be implemented for 3 years.

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 All activities within the strategy are covered by existing budgets. The Council has been awarded central Government funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which is an annual grant, to support the Council in delivering its homelessness service. We have also been awarded funding through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which will enable us to support those who are rough sleeping.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, sections 1-4, a local housing authority must regularly undertake a review of homelessness in the Borough and in consultation with service users, social services and other relevant organisations, formulate and publish a local homelessness strategy. The authority has a duty to publish a new strategy every 5 years.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 (as amended), the Council is required to have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty before adopting the Strategy.

This is to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a Protected Characteristic and those who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those who do not.

- 6.2 The 9 Protected Characteristics are age, disability, race/ethnicity, pregnancy and maternity, religion, sexual orientation, sex, gender reassignment and marriage/civil partnership.

- 6.3 As part of the new strategy an analysis of the outcomes for people with different protected characteristics and how the next strategy might address any inequalities has been undertaken. A new Equalities Impact Assessment is in the process of being completed and will be shared once complete.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 None

8. Risk Implications

8.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, alongside the Action Plan, will underpin the work of the Council's homelessness service. This proposed strategy will ensure that there is a coordinated and focused response to homelessness within the Borough. There is a risk that without the strategy, the levels of homelessness, rough sleeping and use of temporary accommodation will rise.

9 Other implications

Not applicable

10. Consultation

10.1 It is requested that permission to consult be granted with the consultation open for six weeks. The results of the consultation will then be analysed with the final strategy to be brought to Committee in January 2025 .

11. Conclusions

11.1 Members are asked to approve a six-week consultation with stakeholders on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

12. Background papers

12.1 [New Homelessness Strategy 2019 – 2024 Housing Committee 14 March 2019](#)

13. Appendices

Appendix A – Action Plan 2025-2028

Appendix B – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy