

BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2024-2029
DATE: 14 DECEMBER 2023
RECIPIENT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

1. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local council housing authorities must publish a homelessness strategy every five years. The strategy must be informed by a review of homelessness in the local area. The current homelessness strategy in Southampton is due to expire in 2023. This is Southampton City Council's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy ('the strategy') for 2024-2029. The Homelessness Strategic Assessment 2023 has informed this new strategy. Both documents are appended to this briefing paper.
2. The council's Homelessness Strategic Assessment 2023 highlights that the rate of homelessness in Southampton (10.4 per 1000 households) is significantly higher than the national average (6.1 per 1000). The strategy aims to tackle the high rates of homelessness and rough sleeping across the city in the next five years. Our vision is to create a city where everyone has a safe place to call home.
3. The strategy will be adopted in December 2023, subject to Cabinet approval.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

4. The following Acts set out the statutory responsibilities of the council to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are eligible for assistance:
 - Housing Act 1996;
 - Homelessness Act 2002;
 - Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
5. The strategy has been informed by the Homelessness Strategic Assessment 2023, relevant research, internal services, and partners. This includes adult and children's social care services, the housing service, and frontline staff. The council also engaged with registered providers of social housing, commissioned services, and charities.
6. A 12-week public consultation ran from the 10 July 2023 to the 1 October 2023. The consultation was promoted through social media posts, the council's e-bulletin, Tenants Link, the council's website, and a press release. The consultation was also shared with people living in temporary accommodation via email, with homelessness teams and the Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership Board. There were 315 responses. There was a high level of agreement on the priorities of the strategy. 91% of respondents agreed with Priority 1, 90% agreed with Priority 2, 89%

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agreed with Priority 3, and 87% agreed with Priority 4. These responses have been carefully considered and some amendments were made to the strategy in response to the feedback. The full consultation report and consideration of the feedback table are appended to the briefing paper.

7. A strategy review was undertaken to ensure that this strategy aligns with the council's Corporate Plan (2022-2030) and other relevant council strategies and policies, such as the [Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation 2021-2024](#).
8. The four key priorities align with the priorities outlined in the Government's current rough sleeping strategy, [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good](#). This was published in September 2022 with the following priorities: prevention, intervention, recovery and a joined-up transparent approach.

9. The key priorities of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 are:

Priority 1: Prevention

- Move beyond a reactive response and focus on reducing individual and population-wide risks of homelessness across the city.

Priority 2: Intervention

- Provide timely, appropriate, and effective interventions to alleviate homelessness and help those sleeping rough.

Priority 3: Working Together (Partnerships/Systems)

- Combine skills, resources, and experience to improve homelessness solutions and outcomes.

Priority 4: Housing Solutions

- Exploring new and innovative ways to diversify our accommodation and support options in the city.

10. A new Homelessness Prevention Board will be created with key partners across Southampton. The Board aims to bring together knowledge, skills, resources, and funding to achieve these outcomes. The Board will oversee, implement, and monitor the strategy and action plan.
11. An action plan will be developed to detail how the outcomes will be delivered. The action plan will outline who is accountable for each action and provide key performance indicators and a timeline for implementation.

RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

12. Homelessness Act 2002 requires local council housing authorities to publish a homelessness strategy every 5 years. The strategy must be based on a review of homelessness in the local area.
13. The following Acts set out the statutory responsibilities of the council to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are eligible for assistance:

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- Housing Act 1996;
- Homelessness Act 2002;
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

14. The consultation and design of the proposed strategy, as well as the Equality Safety Impact Assessment, has been undertaken having due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, in particular s.149 relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty (“PSED”) and the Human Rights Act 1998. All actions delivered under the strategy and associated action plans will be implemented having regard to these duties.
15. The strategy will be funded by the council’s own budget and Government grants, such as the Homelessness Prevention Grant and Household Support Fund. The Homelessness Prevention Board will work with partners to combine resources and funding to achieve the outcomes.
16. The current forecast for 2023/24 is around £0.26M overspent due to demand pressures, with pressure on temporary accommodation costs and irrecoverable housing benefits costs. This comes after £0.3M was added to the 2023/24 budget, due to rising demand experience last year.
17. In developing the strategy, a review has been conducted to ensure the strategy is in accordance with relevant Policy Framework policies and strategies. The strategy is consistent with the council’s corporate objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2030. The strategy also aligns with the Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation 2021-2024, the Housing Strategy 2016-2025 and the Safe City Strategy 2022-2027.

OPTIONS and TIMESCALES:

18. The strategy will be adopted in December 2023, subject to Cabinet approval on 19 December 2023. The Homelessness Prevention Board will oversee and monitor the delivery of this five-year strategy and action plan.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

19. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, the strategy must be renewed every five years and informed by an assessment of homelessness needs in the city. If this strategy is not renewed by the end of 2023, there is a risk that we will not meet our statutory obligation to renew every five years.
20. The strategy is to be overseen, implemented, and monitored by the Homelessness Prevention Board. If the strategy is approved by the Cabinet at the end of December, it will be ready for implementation by January 2024. If this Homelessness Prevention Board is not established before January 2024, it will not be ready to deliver on the strategy. The team is engaging with the potential members of the Board, and a draft of the Terms of Reference is being circulated to relevant officers and partners.

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21. The role of the Cabinet is to approve the strategy. There is a risk that the Homelessness Prevention Board will not wholly agree with the current strategy. The council must be prepared to consider any of the Board's feedback and recommendations. If any changes are recommended, the council must follow the correct governance routes for approval. To mitigate the risk of major amendments being recommended, potential Board members have been involved with the development of the strategy. Potential Board members were also contacted directly to review and provide feedback on this strategy.

Appendices/Supporting Information:

- Annex 1 - Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029
- Annex 2 - Homelessness Strategy Equality Safety Impact Assessment
- Annex 3 - Homelessness Strategy Consultation Results Report
- Annex 4 - Consultation Considerations Table
- Annex 5 - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 – short version
- Annex 6 - Homelessness Strategic Assessment 2023

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