

# Homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy 2019-2023 action plan update

## Housing Committee Tuesday, 28 September 2021

Report of: Executive Head of Communities

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Purpose: For information

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Publication status: Unrestricted

Wards affected: All

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### Executive summary:

The Committee adopted the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023 and accompanying Action Plan in June 2019. This report provides an update to the Committee on the progress made in delivering the action plan for the second year.

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### This report supports the Council's priority of:

- Building a better Council
- Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need
- Supporting economic recovery in Tandridge

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### Recommendation to Committee:

That the Committee notes the contents of this report and progress made to date

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### Reason for recommendation:

It was agreed upon adoption of the Housing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan on 20 June 2019 for the Action Plan to be reviewed on an annual basis. This is the second annual review since adoption of the strategy and action plan.

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## **Introduction and background**

- 1 A local authority is required under Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 ('HA 2002') to undertake a review of homelessness within its area every five years and, based upon that review, formulate an effective prevention strategy.
- 2 The Council's current Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019- 2023 was adopted by Members of the Committee on 20 June 2019. The Strategy and accompanying Action Plan sets out the Council's vision and key priorities, and the actions to be taken to address homelessness and rough sleeping in its District over the next five years.
- 3 The Strategy contains the following three strategic housing objectives which will be achieved through the actions set out in the accompanying Action Plan:

Strategic Objective 1: Spread the word: Raising awareness of the advice and support available;

Strategic Objective 2: What works: Identifying the top causes of homelessness and developing innovative housing solutions, including building more homes;

Strategic Objective 3: More effective together: Developing strong integrated partnerships.

- 4 Appendix A is the accompanying Action Plan that sets out the steps necessary to achieve the aims of the Strategy. This has been amended to include an update on the progress made in the two years since adoption of the strategy. The Action Plan will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 5 The Government has committed to ending rough sleeping during this Parliament and work to achieve this has gained momentum since the outset of COVID pandemic. In line with Government requirements, the Council has produced an ending Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan, which is shown in Appendix B.

### Recent Impacts on the Homelessness Prevention Service

- 6 While the Council's work with rough sleepers and people at risk of rough sleeping increased significantly during the COVID Pandemic, overall the Council did not experience a significant surge in demand for homelessness services. This is predominantly due to the increase in work with rough sleepers and other single people being balanced by a reduction in the number of families becoming threatened with homelessness.

- 7 The temporary ban on evictions that was imposed during the height of the Pandemic ended in May 2021 and there is evidence that this is, now, leading. to an increase in homelessness applications, which is likely to continue.
- 8 However, while applications are likely to increase, they are not expected to increase significantly beyond pre-Pandemic levels. Officers anticipate that there is sufficient capacity, currently, within the dedicated temporary accommodation stock to cope with this rise in demand. Furthermore, should this not be the case, the Council has received additional Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22, which should cover any increased cost of emergency accommodation provision.
- 9 The Homelessness Prevention Service does not appear to have experienced any significant effects arising from Brexit thus far. Historically, numbers of homelessness applications from EU Nationals has been very low and this has remained the case.
- 10 As it has only recently been introduced, the full impact of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 on the Homelessness Prevention Service is not clear. However, there has been no significant increase in applications as a result of the Act thus far. Procedures have been amended to reflect the change in the statute and work with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, to review the Council's effectiveness in supporting survivors of domestic abuse, has been initiated.

#### Update to the Action Plan

- 11 The specific actions within the Action Plan in Appendix A are identical to those within the Action Plan in the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy approved by members in 2019. However, the layout and presentation has been reorganised to show, more clearly, when each action is due and the progress against it.
- 12 The Council continues to progress well with the actions set out in the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy, with most actions on or ahead of target. Among the more notable actions to have been achieved so far are:
  - Significant development of multi-agency work to address and prevent rough sleeping and homelessness across Surrey;
  - During the COVID Pandemic, 33 individuals who were rough sleeping or, more usually, considered to be at risk of rough sleeping were provided with self-contained emergency accommodation and assisted to secure settled accommodation;
  - The creation and retention of a Navigator role within the East Surrey Outreach Service (ESOS) to work with the most complex clients;
  - The appointment of a full-time Private Sector Access Scheme (PSAS) Officer, leading to a significant increase in the number of clients assisted through the Scheme;

- Commencement of work with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance to review the Council's effectiveness in supporting survivors of domestic abuse.
- 13 The Government is committed to ending rough sleeping this Parliament and has made significant funding available to local housing authorities to support their activities to achieve this. In partnership with other councils across Surrey and, particularly, East Surrey, the Council has been able to bid successfully for funding under a number of funding streams. This includes £25,480 under Rough Sleeping Initiative Year 3, £8,094 under Cold Weather funding / Protect Plus, £6,707 under Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Programme and £31,150 under Rough Sleeping Initiative Year 4.
  - 14 Initially, arising from multi-agency responses to the COVID Pandemic, significantly improved joint working has been implemented across Surrey during 2020/21. This has led to the launch of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Multi Agency Group, the Bridging the Gap Project, development of the Surrey Adults Matter (SAM) Process, Joint Public Health / SCC bids for funding through the Changing Futures Programme, as well as a number of other initiatives.
  - 15 Statutory and strategic partners across Surrey have come together to form the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Multi Agency Group (MAG). MAG cross-sector working was initiated in April 2020 in response to COVID-19 and has continued at pace in support of local district and borough homelessness strategies and the Government commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024. A support plan has been agreed to build on the joint working, ensure cross-sector leadership, and agree practical and strategic action from local health and social care agencies working alongside local districts and boroughs to support homeless people in Surrey
  - 16 In accordance with Government requirements, the Council has produced an ending Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan (Appendix B), which provides more detail on the Council's activities to address and prevent rough sleeping in the District. The funding provided through MHCLG and the multi-agency partnerships described above are key to successful delivery of the Plan.
  - 17 There are a small number of actions where progress is, unfortunately, behind schedule. Reasons for these delays, which include the Covid-19 pandemic, are provided in the commentary column in the plan. In one case, the proposed action has had to be abandoned because the Government funded programme that it related to has been discontinued.
  - 18 It should be noted that the strategy is a five-year plan and therefore there are several actions that have not commenced or been progressed yet. These specific actions are to be undertaken later in the life of the strategy.

- 19 There are a number of actions that are recorded as ongoing for the life of the strategy. These actions reflect some of the resourcing commitments that were made within the strategy and will be reported on annually to demonstrate compliance.

## **Key implications**

### **Comments of the Chief Finance Officer**

With the current ban on evictions ending in May 2021 there is a possibility that there will be an increase in homeless applications. This could lead to an increase in officer workload and cost in emergency accommodation provision.

However, officers consider there is sufficient capacity, currently, within the dedicated temporary accommodation stock to cope with this rise in demand. Furthermore, should this not be the case, the Council has received additional Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22, which should cover any increased cost of emergency accommodation provision.

### **Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

There are no specific legal implications in the report. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places legal duties on councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of whether they are judged to be in priority need, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their area. The strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years. The strategy must set out the Council's plans for prevention of homelessness and for securing sufficient accommodation and support that will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so. Annual updating of the Action Plan is an MHCLG requirement.

### **Equality**

The Strategy is intended to have a positive impact on all groups with protected characteristics through appropriate initiatives and responses to reduce and prevent homelessness. A full Equalities Impact Assessment was created as a background paper during the development of the Strategy and is available on request

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy primarily impacts on homeless people who are often the most vulnerable people in the District. Homeless people are disproportionately overrepresented in all the groups with protected characteristics. On completion of the Equalities Impact Assessment, no negative impacts were identified as a result of this strategy.

## **Climate change**

It is not considered that this report contains any proposals that will significantly impact the Council's ability to take action on climate change and hit its target of net zero carbon by 2030.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Housing Strategy Action Plan Update Year 2

Appendix B- MHCLG Rough Sleeping Action Plan

## **Background papers**

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