

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023 Action Plan Update - November 2022

Housing Committee Thursday, 17 November 2022

Report of: James Devonshire – Head of Housing

Purpose: For information

Publication status: Unrestricted

Wards affected: All

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 third year.

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

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 third annual review since adoption of the strategy and action plan.

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 Housing 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 year since adoption of the strategy. The Action Plan will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Update to the Action Plan

- 5 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.
- 6 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 the County;

- the creation 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;
 - Domestic Abuse Act Grant funding being utilised to significantly improve and expand the work and scope of the East Surrey Sanctuary Scheme
 - Domestic Abuse Act Grant funding being utilised to create 4 Housing Independent Domestic Violence Advocate roles to work with survivors of DA across Surrey;
 - Joint initiatives with other councils and Public Health to enable a supported housing provider to purchase accommodation for use as move-on accommodation for former rough sleepers.
- 7 The Government has previously made its commitment to ending rough sleeping. In this regard, in recent years, it 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 these funding streams.
- 8 Among the notable achievements in our work to address rough sleeping are the creation and consolidation of a Navigator role within the East Surrey Outreach Service (ESOS) to work with the most complex clients, funding being secured to provide assessment beds for former rough sleepers working with ESOS, a successful bid for grant funding under the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AFEO) Scheme to improve access for these clients to private rented sector, the acquisition by Transform Housing of a move-on property for rough sleepers as well as a further property to operate on a Housing First model.
- 9 As a result of this work and the increased funding provided by DLUHC, the Council has been able to be far more proactive in its work with rough sleepers and other single non-priority homeless clients. This has led to the development of a far more inclusive service offer for these clients.
- 10 The emphasis on prevention is not new but the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 introduced new challenges and a requirement for much greater co-operation across agencies. Significantly improved joint working with other statutory services across Surrey, which initially arose from multi-agency responses to the COVID Pandemic, has continued. Representatives from each of the Surrey housing authorities now meet fortnightly with Public Health colleagues to brief each other on developments and to explore options for joint working. This work 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 PSHE / SCC bids for funding through the Changing Futures Programme, as well a number of other initiatives.

- 11 All Tier 1 and Tier 2 local authorities received funding from the Government to support their new duties, under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to provide safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse. Across Surrey, it was agreed that a significant proportion of this funding should be utilised to:
 - Expand the number of sanctuary schemes that are delivered to enable survivors and their children can stay safely in their own home where appropriate to do so
 - Ensure that those in sanctuary have access to specialist support services in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 through expanding the capacity of Surrey's specialist DA Outreach services
 - Increase the options for survivors to stay safe in their own home where they have local connections and support networks and reduce the onus on them to need to move home.
- 12 Through this initiative, Surrey County Council are providing significantly increased funding to the four DA outreach providers across the County to cover the capital costs of sanctuary works. Each District and Borough has agreed to provide use a fixed amount of their Domestic Abuse Act Grant to each fund four full-time Housing IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) and four part-time sanctuary scheme co-ordinators. Housing IDVAs are being managed and recruited through DA Outreach services and will collaborate with Districts and Boroughs to support the needs of survivors in safe accommodation.
- 13 Unfortunately, there are a small number of actions where progress is, behind schedule. Reasons for these delays, which primarily relate to 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.
- 14 It should be noted that the strategy is a five-year plan and therefore there are a small number of actions that have not commenced or been progressed yet. These specific actions are still due to be undertaken during the life of the strategy.
- 15 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

The costs of running and managing the scheme will remain within the boundaries of the grant received from government. However, as the changes in the country's financial situation take effect, then we may be called on more to support and help a larger volume of new cases. This could impact on resources

and also on additional costs for emergency accommodation. This has to be carefully managed to ensure that we keep within the boundaries of the grant we receive.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

The Council holds a statutory homelessness duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The legislation places a duty on the Council so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness has access to meaningful help as long as they are eligible for assistance. Councils must try to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

In order to ensure the legality/enforceability of homelessness decision made under Section 184 - statutory homeless applications, the Council is required to have an up to date strategy in place based on a homelessness review which takes place at least every 5 years.

The team delivering the strategy and homelessness services, operate within a complex environment that is reliant on support services, private sector landlords, the voluntary and community sector etc. This creates inherent risk in the delivery of the service, where increasing difficulties for clients in their ability to access suitable affordable housing in both the private and social housing sectors, as well as any inefficiencies in prevention activities and other key services, could lead to increase temporary accommodation costs.

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 undertaken 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 among 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 3

Background papers

None

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