

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE– 12TH JUNE 2019
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2019-2024

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 A new draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy has been produced, informed by a recent review of homelessness in the borough and engagement with all key stakeholders. This is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.2 Approval was provided at SOSC 26th November 2018 to initiate a public consultation on the first draft Housing Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
- 1.3 The consultation on the draft strategy was completed end of January 2019.
- 1.4 Overall feedback on the strategy was positive with an average of 83% of respondents saying we had got it right.
- 1.5 Some changes have been made to the first draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy to incorporate the comments and suggestions made through the consultation. These are identified through “tracked changes” on the current draft of the strategy
- 1.6 An Action Plan has been developed, which is attached at Appendix B

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To consider and provide any comments on the final draft of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.
- 2.2 Subject to any agreed amendments, to approve the final draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and recommend that it proceeds to Cabinet and full Council for adoption.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to carry out a ‘Review of Homelessness’ in their area and formulate a strategy based on the results of the review
- 3.2 The statutory obligation to formulate a Housing Strategy was removed under the terms of the De-regulation Act 2015. However the council has a number of statutory housing functions, and as such it is appropriate to set out our plans and priorities for doing this in order that we can demonstrate how we assess need, determine local priorities and plan for the delivery of good quality affordable housing.

- 3.3 The review of homelessness and development of the new draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was completed between February and September 2018 in collaboration with partners, relevant stakeholders and residents
- 3.4 The review of homelessness identified a number of key issues that have influenced the priorities in the strategy and will impact on how we deliver homelessness and housing services over the next five years.
- 3.5 The new draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy sets out the challenges these issues represent and the council’s short, medium and longer term plans to address these challenges.
- 3.6 The review outcomes and stakeholder engagement identified that the key priorities from the previous five year strategy are still relevant and need only minor tweaking to incorporate current issues.
- 3.7 The outcome from the stakeholder consultation on the draft strategy was very positive overall, with seventy two responses from organisations and residents - this is summarised below:

Question	Yes	No
Is the strategy clear and easy to understand?	85%	15%
Do you agree with the challenges we’ve identified for meeting housing need and tackling homelessness in this area?	85%	15%
Do you agree with our priorities for addressing the challenges?	78%	22%

- 3.8 We have used other feedback and suggestions collated in the consultation for improvement:

Themes Arising From Consultation	How We’ve Addressed Concerns
Strategy needs more specific detail	We have incorporated the proposed Action Plan in the strategy document, in order to be transparent and show how we intend to deliver on the objectives of the Strategy.
Strategy doesn’t address resident concerns that future development of new housing in this borough takes account of quality of life, pedestrianism, wide enough roads, parking, space and designs that eliminate anti-social behaviour	We have added information on delivery as a key priority, how development falls within the remit of planning and that planning policy has been developed to take account of the wider place setting – so look and feel, infrastructure etc.

More information on resources / funding	We have added information about the flexible homeless support grant and what we've used it for. We have identified what the funding sources will be and have referred to other key documents, such as the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
Strategy needs to be clearer about meeting local need. Concerns for newly forming households, influx of commuters etc.	We have explained that the housing numbers are based on an estimate of growth, which includes an expectation on inward movement. We have also included information on delivery via planning obligations and direct delivery achieved through the council's Affordable Housing Programme.
More information needed in the Strategy on rough sleeping	We have added figures on the rough sleeper count and a paragraph to highlight the work we are already doing using the Flexible homeless support grant and other central government funding secured via the Rough Sleeper Initiative.

- 3.9 Once the Housing Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is approved by cabinet and full council, it will be published. A monitoring group will be set up to be responsible for oversight, review and progress of the strategy and action plan.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 As a strategic housing authority we are required by statute (Homelessness Act 2002) to carry out a review of Homelessness in our area; formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 This strategy sets medium and long term objectives that will require planned and coordinated investment of a number of existing council budgets, funding from central Government, and other private external investment.
- 5.2 There will be a number of funds used to support the actions within the Strategy for example:
- a) Existing council budgets which support our activity in achieving homelessness prevention and relief.
 - b) Flexible Homeless Support Grant has been awarded to us annually (last payment 2019/20).
 - c) We have been successful in being awarded Central Government funding and will be pursuing other funding opportunities such as the Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund

- d) We will work with partners and stakeholders, such as Herts County Council, NHS and Registered Providers to facilitate actions.

6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 The risks related to this proposal are:

- 6.1.1 There is a reputational risk to the council of not meeting our statutory obligation to have a strategy in place from Government, partners and residents. **Likelihood Very low : Impact Medium Residual Risk Score Low**
- 6.1.2 There is a reputational risk in not being transparent and setting out our plans to achieve our general statutory responsibilities as a Statutory Housing Authority **Likelihood Very Low : Impact Medium Residual Risk Score Low**
- 6.1.3 There is a financial, reputational and social risk in not addressing homelessness in our area **Likelihood low: Impact High Residual Risk Score Medium**

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising from this report

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 9.1 Three of our five key strategic priorities will make a significant impact on climate change.
 - 9.1.1 Supply of Affordable Housing will include building of new homes which are more sustainable and energy efficient;
 - 9.1.2 Raising Standards in the Private Sector and Making Best use of our Stock will include improving property conditions and energy efficiency

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

10.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

- 11.1 It is now widely accepted that accessibility to a good quality, stable home is intrinsically linked to a person's health and wellbeing. All key priorities in this strategy are dedicated to enabling the boroughs residents to have a home and that those homes are decent, affordable, warm and secure.

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

- 12.1 Partners, stakeholder and residents have been engaged in the development of this strategy through involvement in the strategic steering group, a number of specialist working groups and a strategic housing forum event. Further consultation has taken place since development, with stakeholders on the draft strategy.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priorities
- 13.2 Our Housing, and specifically to the achievement of Quality landlord, Housing Need, Affordable Homes, and Housing Quality
- 13.3 Our Economy and specifically Sustainable Growth, Investment and Regeneration
- 13.4 Our Council and specifically to the achievement of Value for Money, Equality and Fairness, Customer First and is linked to a statutory requirement, under the Homelessness Act 2002 legislation.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An EqlA was completed on 11/10/18 and no negative impact was identified on any of the protected groups under Equalities legislation.

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Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

Appendices to be listed

Click link below for Appendix to the report

<https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=155&MId=938>

- Draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24
- Draft Action Plan (Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024)