

Part I

Main author: Rachel Sesstein

Executive Member: Cllr Nick Pace

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET HOUSING PANEL– 13TH AUGUST 2019  
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING 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.
- 1.2 Approval was provided at SOSC 26<sup>th</sup> 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 an average of 83% of respondents thought we had got it right.
- 1.5 Comments and suggestions made through the consultation were used to make improvements on the final draft.
- 1.6 It was resolved at SOSC on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019 that the final draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 be recommended to the Cabinet and the Council for approval and adoption.
- 1.7 The final draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024, as recommended by the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was approved by Cabinet 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019 and recommended to the Council for adoption.
- 1.8 Full council, at their meeting on 22 July 2019, asked that members of Cabinet Housing Panel review the Strategy and recommend any amendments, prior to approval.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 To approve and adopt the final draft of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024.

**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 homeless 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 those 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, overall was very positive

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 initial action plan in the strategy document for transparency and to show that this is a working strategy.

<b>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</b>	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.
<b>More information on resources / funding</b>	We've added more information on flexible homelessness grant and what we've used it for. We've identified what the funding sources will be and have sign posted to the HRA Business Plan and AHP capital budget
<b>Strategy needs to be clearer about meeting local need. Concerns for newly forming households, influx of commuters etc.</b>	We've explained that the housing numbers are based on an estimate of growth, which includes an expectation on inward movement? Added information on S106 and direct delivery through our own AHP and how that is targeting people on our HNR, who have local connection
<b>More information needed in the Strategy on rough sleeping</b>	We added figures on the rough sleeper count and a paragraph to highlight the work we are already doing using the FHG and other funding secured.

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 The primary homelessness legislation – Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 – which provides the statutory under-pinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.

4.2 In 2002, the government amended the homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to:

- (a) ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, in particular by requiring a homelessness strategy for every housing authority district; and
- (b) strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories to homeless 16 and 17 year olds; care leavers aged 18, 19 and 20; people

who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, the armed forces, prison or custody, and people who are vulnerable because they have fled their home because of violence.

4.3 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:

- (a) an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and
- (b) a new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

4.3 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

4.4 The strategy must set out the authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

## **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) Homelessness prevention and relief is a cost to the General Fund
- b) Council managed temporary accommodation is funded via the Housing Revenue Account
- c) Flexible Homeless Grant has been awarded to us annually (last payment 2019/20).
- d) We will be pursuing other funding opportunities such as the Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund

- e) 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 EqIA was completed on 11/10/18 and no negative impact was identified on any of the protected groups under Equalities legislation.

Report authors should note that the paragraphs above may need to be amended to suit the proposals in the report, e.g. there could be negative and positive impacts.

Name of author	(Rachel Sesstein)
Title	( <i>Housing Strategy Manager</i> )
Date	(01/05/2019)

Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

Appendices to be listed

- Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2019-24
- EqIA - 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Cabinet Housing Panel Agenda Pack – 13 August 2019

<https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=265&MId=964>