

NON EXEMPT

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18 December 2019

Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024
Report Author: Head of Housing & Community
Engagement

FOR DECISION

Portfolio: Planning, Regeneration and Communities
Deputy Leader Cllr Tim Pike

Key Decision: Yes

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report is submitted to Cabinet for approval to meet a statutory requirement.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2024
- 2.2. Recommend to Council that the Strategy and Action Plan be adopted

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1. It is a legal requirement under homelessness legislation for local authorities to carry out a homelessness review and formulate a Homelessness Strategy based on findings of the review (Appendix C). The strategy (Appendix A) and action plan sets out the intentions of the Council and partners to prevent, relieve and address homelessness in the district. It is very timely to adopt a new strategy and action plan, being eighteen months since the introduction of the revised homelessness legislation – the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 17). The legislation has now had time to 'bed in' and the review has identified how this has impacted the Council's statutory duties. A new strategy must be adopted in draft by the end of the year. It can then be presented to Full Council in January 2020.
- 3.2. This report details why a strategy is needed, the priority areas identified by the review which have then been formulated into a detailed action plan (Appendix B).

4.0 Additional Budgetary Implications

4.1. None.

5.0 Background and relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Directorate Business Plans

5.1. All local authorities are required to consider housing needs within their areas, including the needs of homeless households and have statutory duties to ensure that advice and assistance is available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The strategy must apply to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just those considered to be in priority need. The HRA has placed further duties upon councils to anyone approaching for assistance. These extended duties include:

- A duty to provide free advisory services to all
- A duty to refer
- A duty to assess all homelessness applications
- A duty to provide each person/household with a personal housing plan
- A duty to prevent homelessness for all
- A duty to relieve homelessness for all
- A duty to provide housing

For further detail on these duties please refer to the Homelessness Review paragraph 1.7 pages 4 and 5.

5.2. Emphasis has always been on prevention, and the Council has an excellent track record in doing this and keeping homelessness acceptances very low. However, the review findings indicate that the new duties are meaning that more households are being placed into emergency B&B accommodation for longer periods of time whilst officers work with the households to find long term solutions.

5.3. The draft strategy has been written in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 and follows consultation with stakeholders, customers and voluntary organisations that work with those facing homelessness in the borough.

5.4. The review identified the concerns and challenges that need to be addressed. These have been grouped under four main priority areas within the Action Plan with specific targets listed under

- ***To ensure all our customers are provided with appropriate advice, assistance and support to enable them to address their housing needs and to lead independent lives – emphasis to be on early intervention, building on existing services and continually improving service delivery.***

- ***Consider more sustainable housing solutions for those facing homelessness and on the Housing Register***
- ***Prevent and Relieve homelessness by working in partnership with statutory and voluntary sector agencies to identify the threat of homelessness at the earliest opportunity, and work together to ensure appropriate support services are accessible.***
- ***To understand the needs and requirements of those rough sleeping and sofa surfing in the borough and provide sustainable solutions***

5.5. Delivery of the actions support the Corporate Strategy's aims of supporting the most vulnerable in our communities and the Service Business Plan states that a Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan will be introduced in 2019 following a review, to increase prevention and relief of homelessness.

5.6. This strategy will be included in the Corporate Strategy and form part of the Council's Policy Framework.

5.7. To ensure the document remains 'live', the Action Plan will be regularly reviewed as part of regular performance appraisal monitoring and against targets in the Business Plan. It is suggested that an annual review of progress will be considered by the Operations and Place Shaping Board in open session with a briefing to Councillors.

6.0 Options considered and reasons for the recommendation

6.1. No alternative options were considered as it is a statutory requirement for every local authority to publish a Homelessness Strategy.

7.0 Resource Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

7.2. The strategy includes a comprehensive action plan, setting out the Council's key priorities. All actions will be funded within existing resources and the grant funding awarded by MHCLG – see table below. At present there has been no confirmation for funding beyond March 2020 however it is anticipated that there will be some continued funding, but this may be reduced in future years.

Purpose of funding	2018-19	2019-20
New burdens	£61,369	£64,871
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG)	£250,003	£306,009
Top up FHSG	n/a	£88,060
Rough Sleeper Initiative – joint partnership with EHDC	n/a	£35,000
Total	£311,372	£493,940

This grant funding is to be used to support any initiatives/projects which will prevent or relieve homelessness. The funds, apart from the RSI, can be carried forward if not spent in year.

7.3. Human Resources Implications - None

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 Section 1, housing authorities are required to carry out a homelessness review and publish a strategy based on the review. A homelessness strategy is defined at S 3 (1) as one formulated to:

- Prevent homelessness in an authority's area;
- Secure that accommodation is and will be available in that area for people who are or may become homeless; and
- Provide support for such people or those who have been homeless and need support to prevent it reoccurring.

There is no legal requirement that specific objectives or plans should be included in the strategy as such matters are left to the discretion of the authority.

9.0 Risks

9.1. It is a statutory requirement to have a strategy. Failure to have a strategy could impact future funding.

10.0 Consultation

10.1. During the review process consultation has been undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders, including partners in the private and voluntary sector. We have also sought feedback from service users.

11.0 Communication

11.1. All Councillors were provided with a copy of the review and invited to feedback thoughts and any queries. A Councillor Briefing has been held on the 4th November 2019 and very positive feedback was received regarding the findings of the review.

12.0 Appendices: Appendix A - Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-24. Appendix B - Action Plan. Appendix C - The Review.

Agreed and signed off by:

Monitoring Officer: (12/11/19)

S151 Officer: (12/11/19)

Director: (12/11/19)

Portfolio Holder: (21/11/19)

Contact Officer: Tracey Wood

Job Title: Head of Housing & Community Engagement

Telephone: 02392 446626

E-Mail: tracey.wood@easthants.gov.uk