

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date: 16 September 2021

Report of: Head of Housing & Benefits

Subject: Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

SUMMARY

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to review homelessness in their area and produce a new homelessness strategy, based on the review findings, every five years. Following a comprehensive review of homelessness in Fareham, a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping strategy is now proposed.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel consider and comment on the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy in advance of it being presented to the October meeting of the Executive where approval will be sought for a period of public consultation.

INTRODUCTION

1. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must carry out a homelessness review for their area and develop and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review.
2. The strategy must set out the authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing sufficient accommodation and support, is, or will be, available for people who become homeless or are at risk of becoming so.
3. This draft strategy builds on the successes of the previous strategy and has been developed in the context of the new provisions and duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into force in April 2018 and the Governments Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2027.

THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

4. In accordance with legislative requirements, to inform the development of the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2022-2025 and the accompanying Delivery Plan, a review of homelessness services was undertaken. The Council appointed Neil Morland & Co Housing Consultants to undertake the review, which was completed in May 2021, and considered:
 - The Council's achievements during the lifetime of the previous Homelessness Strategy,
 - Current and future likely levels of homelessness,
 - Activities to prevent homelessness,
 - Activities to secure accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness,
 - Activities to provide support for people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or have previously experienced homelessness, and
 - The resources available to deliver the above activities.
5. The Review of Homelessness in Fareham can be seen at Appendix C.

THE DRAFT HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

6. The findings of the Review have informed the Council's draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2025 which can be seen at Appendix A. Four key priorities have been identified:
 - **Meeting demand** – The nature of homelessness in Fareham is changing. More single people, often needing more complex assistance to resolve their homelessness are approaching us for help. There is also a changing age profile, with increased numbers of younger households. There are problems accessing the private rented sector and home ownership remains out of reach for many. We believe that the first step in meeting these demands is the provision of high quality, consistent housing advice, tailored to the individual and delivered in a sensitive and supporting manner. This is our first and overriding commitment. We will continue to

invest in our staff and their training to ensure they keep up to date with best practice and we will continue to invest in our relationships with key partners

- **Providing solutions** – While ensuring the provision of high-quality advice and information is an essential foundation and necessary to empower those who can help themselves, and support those who cannot, it must be back by effective solutions. It is also clear that not everyone who wants a social housing tenancy can have one, and that this is often not a realistic solution to homelessness or the threat of homelessness. The private rented sector will continue to play an important role in tackling homelessness therefore we will explore ways to increase our offers to private landlords as part of our Farelets scheme.
- **Preventing homelessness and supporting tenancies** – Many of the above actions will also help to deliver on our third priority, to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. Key to this is the provision of high-quality support for those who need it to maintain their tenancies. We will also strengthen our mediation capability to reduce family/friend evictions. We will explore how we can further develop our working relationships with key agencies by formalising joint working protocols.
- **Ending rough sleeping** – street homelessness is the most visible form of homelessness and, perhaps, the most challenging to deal with. Significant progress has already been made and we will continue our efforts in support of the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping by 2027.

7. To deliver these priorities, a comprehensive Delivery Plan has been developed which can be seen at Appendix B.

RISK ASSESSMENT

8. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

CONCLUSION

9. This report provides panel members with an overview of the Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and invites the Housing Scrutiny Panel to put forward their comments in advance of it being presented to the October meeting of the Executive where approval will be sought for a period of public consultation.

Appendices: **A – Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2025**
 B – Draft Delivery Plan
 C - Review of Homelessness in Fareham

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Caroline Newman (Ext 4645)