

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Housing and Environment

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To: CABINET

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Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Recommendation

That Cabinet formally adopts the proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Cabinet of the content of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
2. To advise Cabinet on the responses from the public consultation and comments received at South and Vale Scrutiny Committees on the draft strategy.
3. To inform Cabinet of amendments to the draft strategy made in response to comments received.
4. To recommend that Cabinet adopts the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Background

5. The 2002 Homelessness Act requires local housing authorities in England to publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years.
6. Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils have a joint homelessness strategy that expires in September 2020.

7. South Oxfordshire District Council has a strong track record in the prevention and reduction of homelessness. The draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is designed to build upon this success by continuing to drive down homelessness and rough sleeping in the district.

Development of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

8. The draft strategy was developed following a review of homelessness services that included stakeholder engagement exercises with councillors; service users and partner organisations.
9. The review considered the council's achievements during the lifetime of the previous strategy; the current demands on the homelessness service; and the ability to meet these demands in the future. The review findings have informed the aims and objectives of the draft strategy.
10. The draft strategy was approved to go forward to public consultation for six weeks commencing 14 October 2019.
11. The strategy was considered at South Oxfordshire Scrutiny Committee on 26 November 2019 and Vale of White Horse Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2019.

The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

12. The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 retains a clear focus upon early intervention to prevent homelessness; or if prevention is not possible, to end homelessness at the earliest opportunity.
13. The strategy has three aims:
 - to prevent homelessness whenever possible
 - to end incidents of homelessness at the earliest opportunity
 - to end the need for rough sleeping
14. In order to achieve these aims the strategy has five objectives:
 1. To improve county-wide partnership working to prevent and reduce homelessness.
 2. To minimise the use of temporary accommodation.
 3. To further develop our housing needs service to prevent and relieve homelessness at the earliest opportunity.
 4. To improve access to emergency accommodation and increase support for rough sleepers.
 5. To improve access to sustainable accommodation for households who are either at risk of homelessness or who are homeless.

Consultation Report – key findings

15. The Consultation Report details responses on the draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy following a six-week public consultation and comments received from South and Vale Scrutiny Committees.

16. The public consultation received 198 responses from individuals, councillors and organisations.
17. The report highlights that there is strong overall support for the proposed aims and objectives of the strategy. 83 per cent of respondents to the public consultation either strongly agreed or agreed with the aims and objectives of the strategy.
18. Each of the five strategic objectives received between 91 per cent and 68 per cent either strong agreement or agreement from respondents.
19. The strategy received a variety of comments from the public consultation and Scrutiny Committee meetings which are explored in the Consultation Report. The report includes detailed responses from the housing needs team.
20. The report includes proposed amendments to the strategy further to the public consultation and Scrutiny Committees responses and comments.

Amendments to the draft strategy post consultation

21. The following amendments have been made to the draft strategy in response to feedback from the public consultation and to comments received from South and Vale Scrutiny Committees.
22. The strategy now refers to the importance of treating homeless persons with respect. (page 6)
23. Further details are included on proposals to provide a winter shelter. (page 12)
24. The section on assistance for victims of Domestic Abuse now includes information on the work of the Community Safety Partnership. (page 17)
25. The section on housing support for 18-24-year olds has been expanded to include recommissioning of services. (page 20)
26. Information has been added on the support available to homeless women. (page 31)
27. Information has been added on the help available for homeless households with pets. (page 31)
28. The first-year targets for the Key Performance Indicators are now included in the strategy. (page 33)

Alternative options

29. a) Not to publish a new homelessness strategy.
30. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all local housing authorities in England publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years.

Financial Implications

31. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be implemented within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

32. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local housing authorities in England to publish a homelessness strategy every five years. The draft strategy is compliant with current homelessness legislation.

Risks

33. Failure to adopt the strategy would result in the council being non-compliant with legislation.

Other implications

34. None

Conclusions

35. The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was developed following extensive stakeholder engagement, public consultation and Councillor scrutiny.
36. The strategy has been amended in response to comments received from the public consultation and Scrutiny Committees.
37. The aims and objectives of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy received broad support and provide the focus of the strategy.
38. The new strategy provides the framework for building upon the council's success in tackling homelessness.
39. Cabinet is recommended to adopt the proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Appendices

- Consultation Report on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – including appendices
- Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy