

# HILLINGDON HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING REVIEW AND STRATEGY

<b>Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Councillor Ray Puddifoot MBE Councillor Philip Corthorne
<b>Cabinet Portfolio(s)</b>	Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Social Services, Housing, Health and Wellbeing
<b>Officer Contact(s)</b>	Daniel Kennedy, Resident Services
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix 1 - Hillingdon Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2019 to 2024 Consultation Draft

## HEADLINES

<b>Summary</b>	The report presents the draft Hillingdon Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2019 to 2024 Consultation Draft. The draft strategy sets out key challenges in Hillingdon relating to homelessness and rough sleeping and how the Council will work with partner agencies to prevent homelessness where possible and to access suitable accommodation and support homeless households. The report seeks approval to commence a formal consultation process.
<b>Putting our Residents First</b>	This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People; Our Built Environment; Strong financial management.</i>  The Homelessness Prevention Strategy will complement the wider Housing Strategy and contribute to the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
<b>Financial Cost</b>	A very brief summary of the total financial cost to the Council.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Social Care, Housing and Public Health
<b>Relevant Ward(s)</b>	All

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Housing, Health and Wellbeing:**

- 1) note the contents of the Hillingdon Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Consultation Draft; and**

- 2) **authorise officers to commence formal consultation on the Hillingdon Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and report back the findings and final strategy for consideration and approval by Cabinet.**

### **Reasons for recommendations**

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on Hillingdon Council to produce a strategy to address homelessness at least once every 5 years. Statutory guidance requires that housing authorities consult appropriate persons and organisations before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy.

### **Alternative options considered / risk management**

No alternative option has been considered. The previous Hillingdon Homelessness Prevention Strategy was published in November 2017. Given that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) marked a substantial change in homelessness legislation and was due to be implemented from the following April, a commitment was made to carry out a further early review. Statutory Homelessness Guidance was fully updated in 2018.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published a Rough Sleeper Strategy in August 2018. This requires local authorities to update and make their Homelessness Prevention Strategies available online by winter 2019 and rebadge them as Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies. MHCLG will consider the strategy to be submitted once it is available online and this commitment is to be achieved by 31 December 2019.

Risks in not updating the strategy relate to meeting the requirements of Statutory Guidance and accessing future funding opportunities.

### **Policy Overview Committee comments**

None at this stage.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Background and Legislative Context**

1. The 2002 Homelessness Act made it a statutory requirement for local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness and to publish a homelessness strategy at least once every five years. The homelessness strategy must include a strategy for preventing homelessness in the local area.
2. The homelessness review is about understanding the picture related to homelessness in Hillingdon. Its purpose is to determine the extent to which the population in the district is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, assess the likely extent in the future, identify what is currently being done and by whom, and identify what resources are available to prevent and tackle homelessness.
3. The draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been informed by the review and sets out Hillingdon Council's approach, working with partners, to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Hillingdon over the next five years.

## Progress in delivering the current Homelessness Prevention Strategy

4. Although it is a relatively short time since the last strategy was published, there have been a number of achievements made throughout 2018 and 2019:
  - The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) marked a wholesale change in the way that local authorities deliver housing advice. This resulted in a complete re-think of how front-line services are delivered and the Homelessness Prevention Service was well prepared for implementation;
  - New IT software was commissioned, staff trained in its use and data submitted to meet new reporting requirements. A richer body of data to provide intelligence regarding homelessness in Hillingdon is now analysed on an ongoing basis to inform future action. Residents are able to self-refer via an online portal through the Council's website;
  - The HRA Duty to Refer came on stream in October 2018. Arrangements have been made for homelessness prevention staff to attend the Job Centre Plus (JCP) for half a day on a weekly basis. This enables the Duty to Refer cases to be identified at source and dealt with efficiently. A reciprocal arrangement has been agreed which will assist homeless clients with job and benefit related issues;
  - A successful bid for funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeper Initiative was secured in 2018/19 and has been extended into 2019/20. A dedicated team of Council officers work alongside staff from Thames Reach, Trinity Homeless Project and Heathrow Travel Care. They work with rough sleepers at Heathrow Airport and across the Borough by providing assessments and support in moving into settled accommodation;
  - A cross-service project team, which includes representatives from DWP, Citizen's Advice and Hillingdon MIND, meets on a monthly basis to coordinate the response to Universal Credit (UC) and to mitigate adverse impacts. The Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee has conducted a major review into UC;
  - The Council worked with Trinity Homeless Project to provide the Winter Night Shelter facility during the coldest months of the year from 21 January 2019 up to 3 March 2019;
  - The number of households in temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast accommodation, reduced during 2018, and has reduced further in 2019;
  - Establishment of a Resettlement Team to increase links between homeless households and the Private Rented Sector. The team assists with move-on of homeless households from temporary accommodation and also assists other service areas, such as Children's Social Care team, to resettle households;
  - A successful bid has been made to the MHCLG, Rapid Rehousing Pathway for a Local Lettings Agency in partnership with Trinity Homeless Project;
  - A further successful Rapid Rehousing Pathway bid has been made to employ two navigators to develop relationships with people who sleep rough and to help them to access appropriate local services, get off the streets and into settled accommodation.

The two navigators will work with rough sleepers with higher and more complex needs;

- Grant funding from Public Health England (PHE) is funding a Welfare Pathway for homeless people and rough sleepers with alcohol problems, multiple risks and complex needs. This includes a Fibroscan to provide rapid and non-invasive assessment of liver damage;
- The Council worked in partnership with St Mungo's and the GLA to make available a short term, pop up hub providing a period of intensive support to make an impact in reducing rough sleeping; and
- A dedicated social worker has been employed using Department for Education (DfE) funding to work with a cohort of care leavers considered most at risk of sleeping rough.

## **Key Findings from the Review**

5. A variety of internal and external partners have been involved in the review and informing the development of the strategy and action plan. Key findings from the review are:
  - Numbers of rough sleepers at Heathrow Airport remain stubbornly high;
  - The main impact of the HRA on the homelessness service has been to increase the number of homelessness assessments, the time they take, case-loads and the amount of time that a case remains in the system;
  - Over half of homeless applicants are aged under 35;
  - Those owed a prevention or relief duty are split almost 50/50 between families with children and single people and couples. Of the former, 70% are single parents and of the latter the vast majority are single people;
  - Almost 60% have no support needs, rising to 70% of families with children, indicating that their homelessness is primarily concerned with difficulty accessing or sustaining their position in the housing market;
  - The most common support needs are physical ill health and disability, mental health problems and experience of domestic abuse;
  - By far the most common reason for homelessness is the ending of a private sector tenancy, followed by the family no longer being willing to accommodate and then by domestic abuse;
  - Affordability is an increasingly significant issue; compounded by the gap between market rents and the amount that Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates will cover;
  - A general lack of access to a supply of affordable housing is a key issue;
  - There is also a need to provide housing with low to medium level support and floating support;
  - Partnership working in the Borough would benefit from greater sharing of information

on services available and referral routes;

- Partnership working with Housing Associations would benefit from being reinvigorated;
- Prevention, early intervention and partnership working are considered priorities;
- Support in learning how to manage a household budget is needed; and
- Other considerations are referral systems for prison and hospital release and mental health support.

## **Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

6. The strategy has been developed with the following vision and priorities and actions:

### ***Our vision is to:***

***Prevent homelessness and improve life chances by acting early, improving access to housing and supporting individuals.***

Our priorities and key actions are:

- Priority One: Ensure that residents are able to access good quality, clear housing advice regarding their housing options:
  - Review the quality and consistency of the advice offer
  - Ensure good access to housing advice
  - Ensure good communication with organisations representing specific vulnerable groups to assist in effectively tailoring the advice offer
  - Provide holistic multi-partner services for homeless households
- Priority Two: Prevent earlier:
  - Streamline internal processes to resolve potential homelessness early
  - Move prevention upstream
  - Develop focussed plans for the top three most prevalent causes of homelessness:
    - Private sector evictions
    - Family and friend evictions
    - Domestic abuse
  - Review and enhance working arrangements concerned with preventing homelessness amongst vulnerable groups;
- Priority Three: Eliminate the need to sleep rough in Hillingdon:
  - Complete short term funded rough sleeper projects
  - Assist rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping to access the private rental market
  - Provide additional support to assist rough sleepers
  - Host a temporary rough sleeper hub
  - Work with partners to provide supported housing for rough sleepers
  - Develop an agreed approach to enforcement
- Priority Four: Increase the availability of affordable rented housing:
  - Procure private rented sector housing for use as settled accommodation
  - Seek to reduce competition for private rented housing from other organisations
  - Make best use of existing social rented housing

- Deliver the Council's new build programme
- Use Right to Buy receipts to acquire additional properties
- Increase availability of housing association properties for homeless households
- Priority Five: Manage the quantity, quality and cost of temporary accommodation:
  - Acquire additional units for use as temporary accommodation
  - Use Council owned stock creatively to support homeless households
  - Move people on from temporary accommodation in a timely fashion
  - Work to retain good quality existing landlords that work with homeless clients
  - Review current private sector licensing arrangements
  - Drive up property and management standards in the private rented sector
- Priority Six: Bring greater purpose, clarity and focus to local homelessness partnership arrangements:
  - Hold regular meetings of relevant partnership groups
  - Produce and update partnership resources
  - Review operational collaborative working arrangements between housing, health and social care

## Next Steps

7. A variety of Council service areas and external partners have already informed the draft of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy. It is now proposed that formal consultation on the draft document commence in October. The consultation will include placing a draft document for consultation on the Council's website. An online form will seek views from individuals and interested organisations in relation to the priorities identified and their likely impact. Views will, in particular, be sought from service users, neighbouring councils and the Greater London Authority (GLA), housing associations that work in the area and voluntary sector agencies working with homeless families in Hillingdon. Briefings/workshops will also be held.
8. Following completion of the formal consultation process, a revised document will be presented to Cabinet for approval in December 2019.

## Financial Implications

There are no immediate or direct financial implications relating to the recommendations of this report. The proposed consultation can be undertaken within existing resources.

The Council is committed to tackling the causes of homelessness and will provide advice, support and services to those affected, within the available General Fund budget and central Government grant. At the time of writing, specific funding announcements in relation to grant funding have not yet been made beyond 2019/20.

## RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy has a direct bearing on the Council's priority of Putting Residents First. It sets out plans for the prevention of homelessness, securing accommodation and support for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Hillingdon.

## **Consultation carried out or required**

The report is seeking Cabinet approval to undertake a consultation exercise in relation to the draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Review and Strategy.

## **CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

Corporate Finance has reviewed the recommendations to this report and concurs with the financial implications as set out above.

### **Legal**

The relevant legislation is referred to in the body of this report. The Borough Solicitor confirms there are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL.