

Harborough District Council

Report to Performance Overview and Scrutiny Meeting of 28 February 2024



Title:	Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2024-2029
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	N/A
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Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Knight - Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing
Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix A - Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2024-2029• Appendix B - The Evidence Base• Appendix C – Summary of Consultation• Appendix D – Equality Impact Analysis

Summary

- i. The Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2024-2029 will replace the current strategy date 2019-2024.
- ii. The new strategy covers the period for the next five years and focuses on current issues affecting social housing and homelessness, including rough sleeping, and incorporates anticipated actions and interventions required to address and alleviate issues.

Recommendations

1. To receive, consider and comment on the revised Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2024-2029.
2. To note the key priorities around new housing supply to include an increase in the supply of affordable housing, to facilitate the building of new homes suitable for those with health and disability needs and to meet the peculiar challenges of providing homes in rural locations.
3. To note the key priorities around homelessness, including the ongoing prevention of homelessness, to deal with increasing numbers of people fleeing domestic abuse, continuing to tackle rough sleeping and to look to provide more suitable temporary accommodation within the district.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i. To provide members of the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Panel with the details on the Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2024-2029 which will be considered by Cabinet in March 2024.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To enable members of the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Panel to have an opportunity to review the Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2024-2029 and for officers to consider any amendments or recommendations before the Strategy is taken to Cabinet in March 2024 to seek approval.

2. Background

- 2.1 This Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29 (Appendix A) will replace the current Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2019-2024.
- 2.2 To support and inform the development of the Strategy an Evidence Base Report (Appendix B) was prepared. This report presents an overview of housing and homelessness in Harborough by looking at the economic context, the level of housing need, and service users' journeys, for both priority and non-priority applicants, including their outcomes.
- 2.3 In May 2023 a housing summit was held which was a critical event in the evolution of the Strategy. The summit was attended by various organisations involved in housing issues in Harborough, including private developers, neighbouring Local Authorities and Registered Housing Providers. Views were also sought from partners who were not able to attend the summit.
- 2.4 The summit focused on the supply of affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping and provided a forum for discussion and ideas, along with identifying the various challenges. It enabled a shared understanding of the issues faced by the Council and its partners. These challenges are explored in more detail within the Strategy and have influenced the emerging themes, objectives and priorities that have been identified.
- 2.5 Some of the key priorities around new housing supply include to increase the supply of affordable housing, to facilitate the building of new homes suitable for those with health and disability needs and to meet the peculiar challenges of providing homes in rural locations.
- 2.6 Some of the key priorities around homelessness include continuing to try and prevent homelessness, to deal with increasing numbers of people fleeing domestic abuse, continuing to tackle rough sleeping and to look to provide more suitable temporary accommodation within the district.

3. Details

- 3.1 The updated Strategy reflects the Council's continued commitment to improving the housing conditions and opportunities for local people to secure safe and affordable accommodation against the background of a cost-of-living crisis, high interest rates and the impacts of Covid pandemic which we still continue to recover from.
- 3.2 Whilst many of the drivers impacting households in achieving their aspirations (safe and affordable homes) are outside of our control we must nonetheless put in place our best plans to mitigate the impact.

3.3 The vision for the new Strategy is:

“There is good quality and appropriate housing to meet local needs, offering choice and opportunity to our residents, including those who are vulnerable, facing homelessness or discrimination.”

3.4 The Strategy identifies three main themes each with their own priorities. The Strategies themes and priorities are below. The objectives and how these themes will be delivered is contained within the Strategy document.

Theme 1 - Housing
Priority 1 - Increasing the supply of affordable housing. Priority 2 – Build new homes that enable people with health and disability issues and support needs to live more independently. Priority 3 - Rural housing. Priority 4 - Increase the focus on ensuring suitable housing is developed for people with experience of multiple disadvantages. Priority 5 – Ensure the accommodation needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community are understood.
Theme 2 - Existing Homes
Priority 1 - Improve standards in privately owned and rented housing. Priority 2 – Enabling people to stay safe and well in their own homes. Priority 3 – Tackling Empty Homes.
Theme 3 - Homelessness Prevention and rough sleeping
Priority 1 – Prevent homelessness where possible, and where it does occur ensure, it is rare, brief and non-recurring. Priority 2 - Respond to an increasing number of people who become homeless as a result of experience of domestic abuse. Priority 3 - Minimise the number and recurrence of rough sleeping instances. Priority 4 – Ensure a suitable and sufficient supply of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

3.5 The Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping is supported by a delivery plan, which sets out what will be done, when, and by whom to enable delivery on each of the key themes and priorities. Once the Strategy is approved, a delivery plan will be developed which will dovetail with the Service Team Plan and work undertaken with partners etc. It will be reviewed periodically and revised as required to continue to meet demands on the service.

4. Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

4.1 Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices.

Consultation

- 4.2 Housing Summit held in May 2023 with key partners and providers of housing/support services.
- 4.3 The Portfolio Holder has been consulted on the development of this report.
- 4.4 Key partners including Elected Members, Registered Providers and the Public have been consulted. This consultation closed on 5 February and findings of this consultation can be found at Appendix C.

Financial

- 4.5 Due to the ongoing increase in demand for temporary accommodation the revenue costs do exceed the budget provision. This Strategy aims to address this through better understanding of the supply and demand of temporary accommodation.
- 4.6 Capital investment; at the time of drafting this report, the capital programme to be presented to Council on the 26 February shows a capital allocation of £1.043m in respect of housing:
- Plowmans Yard, £200k is allocated to the enhancement of the property. These flats are used to support temporary accommodation and therefore, during the time these flats are not use the Council incurs increased costs for alternative temporary accommodation, all of which impacts on the revenue temporary accommodation budget. Work on Plowmans Yard is expected to start early in to the new financial year.
 - 4, Roman Way, the capital investment previously allocated to this development (£843k) is to be reallocated to support the provision of alternative temporary accommodation. A business case is currently being prepared to support this work. The property itself at 4, Roman is in the process of being sold.
- 4.7 Without sufficient temporary accommodation and insufficient resource to provide housing services, this will result in increased temporary accommodation costs to the Council.

Legal

- 4.8 The Strategy identifies current areas of legislation and the impact of new legislation which enables the Council in the delivery of homes and support for those facing homelessness.

Environmental Implications

- 4.9 Whilst there are no direct environmental implications for this report, the Council does ensure it provides assistance to support vulnerable residents to help their homes with advice around energy efficiency and warmer homes. The council will continue to do this where possible.

Risk Management

- 4.10 There are several factors which could have an impact on the implementation of this Strategy, which include the unknown impact on continued cost of living, incidents of domestic abuse and those with no homes. During the five-year period of the strategy, new priorities may emerge, and national policy may shift its focus. The Strategy will be kept under review to ensure that its themes and priorities remain relevant and appropriate.
- 4.11 Through ongoing monitoring of the strategy and demands on the service, this will go some way to ensure sufficient resources to provide the service and less impact on costs for temporary accommodation.

Equalities Impact

4.12 An Equality Impact Analysis (Appendix D) has been completed and is attached to this report.

Data Protection

4.13 There are no data protection issues with this report.

5. Alternative Options Considered

5.1 Without the Housing and the Prevention of Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 to 2029 the Council would not have a strategic document that sets out the vision, themes, priorities, and objectives for the district. There would be no clear plan on how the Council would work towards meeting the housing aspirations and needs of residents, including those who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness and those experiencing, or at risk of rough sleeping.

6. Recommendation

6.1 To consider and comment on the revised Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2024-2029 and the key priorities around new housing supply and homelessness.

7. Background papers

7.1 Not applicable for this report.