

**Review of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy
Action Plan**

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| Final Decision-Maker | CHE |
| Lead Head of Service | John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services |
| Lead Officer and Report Author | Hannah Gaston, Housing and Inclusion Manager |
| Classification | Public |
| Wards affected | All |

Executive Summary

For the Committee to review the 2019-24 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan (Appendix 1) and approve the proposed new additional action plan attached at Appendix 2.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To note the 2019-24 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
2. To ratify and endorse the proposed additional action plan for 2022-24 attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Timetable

| Meeting | Date |
|--|-------------|
| Communities, Housing and Environment Committee | 01/03/2022 |

Review of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue | Implications | Sign-off |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Impact on Corporate Priorities | <p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homes and Communities • Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve Homes and Communities. We set out the reasons other choices will be less effective in section 2 [available alternatives]. | Head of Housing & Community Services |
| Cross Cutting Objectives | <p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendation(s) supports the achievement(s) of the deprivation and social mobility is improved cross cutting objectives by support the Councils aspiration to provide and support greater access and choice to the local community in relation to housing.</p> | Head of Housing & Community Services |
| Risk Management | Covered in the risk section. | Head of Housing & Community Services |
| Financial | The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation. | Section 151 Officer & Finance Team |

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| Staffing | We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. | Head of Housing & Community Services |
| Legal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council's duties under the homelessness legislation. | Legal Team |
| Privacy and Data Protection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules. | Policy and Information Team |
| Equalities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment | Policy & Information Manager |
| Public Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals. | Public Health Officer |
| Crime and Disorder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendation will have a positive impact on Crime and Disorder. The Community Protection Team have been consulted and mitigation has been proposed | Head of Housing & Community Services |
| Procurement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable | Head of Service & Section 151 Officer |
| Biodiversity and Climate Change | <p>The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change. | Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer |

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It is a statutory requirement of every Local Housing Authority to produce a current and relevant Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out how they intend to support their local community to obtain, sustain and develop a local offer which supports the housing needs across the district.
- 2.2 The legislation states in Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and Section 1(4) requires a housing authority to publish a new homelessness and rough sleeping strategy based on that review. Strategies should be published every five years but can be more often if the need arises.
- 2.3 In 2019, Maidstone Borough Council, developed our most recent strategy, which was ratified by the Committee in 2019. See link: https://maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/164669/Homelessness-Strategy-2019-2024-Final-with-glossary.pdf
- 2.4 Since then, the Housing Department have been working towards achieving the action plan as agreed, see Appendix 1. The document demonstrates the actions and the current position of each one.
- 2.5 To enable Members to be kept informed of progress, this report shares with the Committee the success of the team, over the past two years, even within the midst of the Covid Pandemic – the achievements have been positive, and we have made significant progress with the Action Plan see Appendix 1
- 2.6 At the mid-point of the strategy, it is the most appropriate time to review the incumbent actions and seek new ideas for the team to work towards. Our aim is always to be an innovator amongst our district peers, to best serve our residents.
- 2.7 From the current plan we would request that the following actions are specifically noted:
 - The development of the Predicative Analytics programme which was a winner of a prestigious award from the Local Government Chronicles. This development of software within a collaboration of partners has enabled MBC to identify those who are at risk of homelessness before they have even approached us for advice and assistance. Once identified the household will be contacted and supported to access various interventions or financial support.
 - Development of the Intentional Homelessness Protocol to divert households away from homelessness to work together to address key issues and challenges. Since its mobilisation in 2020, the IH pathway has supported 15 household into accommodation, whom otherwise would have been found IH. Many of these households have children, so we have halted the traumatic and stressful experience of the IH decision and not made the required referrals to KCC's Children's service under the Children's Act. This intervention has made both

financial and emotional stress savings for the household. During year 2019/20 we made 24 IH decisions, this decreased to 10 in 20/21 and year to date we have made 3.

- Development of specific accommodation for different cohorts – including ex-offenders, rough sleepers and private sector tenants.

2.8 More recently KCC have made the decision to decommission the Kent Homeless Connect Service, which provides 70 units (beds or floating support) to individuals from Maidstone and those who move into supported accommodation. The date of these services being decommissioned is not yet clear but we anticipate some will cease in September 2022 and others thereafter in April 2023. This will have an impact on our future provision and finances – so the refresh of the action plan will enable us to take the potential impact into consideration, and seek to find alternative solutions.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 To undertake no further actions and continue with working to the original plan. This would be an easy option to employ as we have embedded the working practises within the team. This would also ensure that our service remains static and would not be pressing ahead with any new initiatives which could potentially enhance opportunities for our local community.
- 3.2 To agree the additional action plan and accompanying target dates as set out in Appendix 2. This ensure the Council are working towards a healthy and progressive agenda for our local community.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 For the Committee to agree the new additional proposed action plan as set out in Appendix 2. This will give the Housing Department a clear trajectory to work towards over the coming two years, building on what we have developed thus far, and seeking to continue to offer an exceptional housing offer to our local community.
- 4.2 The additional action plan will be reviewed in 2024 alongside a wider needs assessment for the district which will form the bedrock of the new 2024-29 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. The actions our within our appetite and the capability of the management structure. The wider team and the officers will enjoy the challenges that this new plan may present.

5.2 Funding for the initiatives will be covered off by the number of grants we are receiving specifically for housing and homelessness. None of the actions suggested have an excessive funding requirement.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 No formal discussions or consultations have taken place in the creation of Appendix 2.

6.2 We have been meeting with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in relation to our Rough Sleeper specific work.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Once ratified the new action plan will be shared with the wider housing team so officers are clear on our trajectory.

7.2 The new document will also be shared at the next appropriate Homelessness Forum so we can share with our partners and stakeholders.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Action Plan 2019 -2024
- Appendix 2: Proposed Additional Action Plan 2022 – 2024