

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

15 January 2019

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Review

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Tony Stewart, Homechoice and Strategy Team Leader
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee: That

1. The findings of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Review (Appendix A) are approved to be used in drafting the consultation document and in developing the next Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.
2. The Policy and Resources Committee are recommended to invest a further sum of £3 million towards acquiring additional temporary accommodation in order to meet rising need.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Communities, Housing & Environment Committee	15 January 2019

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Review

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's current Homelessness Strategy (2014 – 2019) ends next year and a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2019 – 2024) needs to be adopted and published in 2019.
 - 1.2 The 2002 Homelessness Act requires local housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their borough and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy demonstrating how they will tackle the issue. Latest guidance suggests that areas that have high levels of rough sleeping should pay particular attention to this issue when formulating their strategy.
 - 1.3 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Review (Appendix A) provides information and data on the current situation within the borough which will be considered when formulating the new strategy.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's primary objective and key priority within the Housing Strategy is to prevent homelessness. This reflects the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities, which sets out the process that should be followed when formulating the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. This commences with a review of homelessness activity and this is set out at Appendix A. covering such matters as levels and reasons of homelessness; age, gender and ethnicity of homelessness cases; the council's housing register and new social housing being built within the borough.
- 2.2 Therefore, this report does not make recommendations on the prevention of homelessness and the actions the Council will take to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, as this will be covered in the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy that will be presented to the Committee early in 2019.
- 2.3 The review must be made available for any member of the public to access and will, along with the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, be published on the council's website as part of the consultation process that will follow.
- 2.4 The Temporary Accommodation Strategy, introduced in December 2016 and reviewed in December 2017, recommended that the council purchase properties to use as Temporary Accommodation. Additional units have been acquired since the December 2017 report and the Council now has a portfolio of 74 units (with a further 2 nearing completion) that are used to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households and rough sleepers and that also provide a more cost effective solution for the Council.
- 2.5 The success achieved in providing Council-owned temporary accommodation has been reported previously to the Committee. As the increase in homelessness represents a current and tangible matter that needs to be tackled now, this report makes recommendations in relation to additional temporary accommodation in order to meet the further demand experienced in the last 9 months.

- 2.6 Net spending on Temporary Accommodation was at its highest in 2016/2017 but has fallen significantly since the council started procuring properties for this purpose. Whilst the total number of nights spent in Temporary Accommodation decreased by 13% from 2016/2017 to 2017/2018, the net overall cost for the year was 38% lower in 2017/2018 (£342,889) than it was in 2016/2017.
- 2.7 The review has identified a significant increase in homelessness. Although the majority of homelessness approaches are from households with a 1 bedroom need, most single homeless applicants are found not to be owed a main housing duty. The Council continues to be under a duty to secure accommodation that is available for persons who fall within the statutory definition of priority need. In the main, this is households with dependent children. In order to maintain a degree of control over the availability of good quality temporary accommodation at a reasonable cost, it is proposed to extend the Council's recent strategy of acquiring its own temporary accommodation.
- 2.8 The data suggests that family sized accommodation of a range of 2 and 3 bedroom property would best suit the Council's needs. The recent programme of acquisition has enabled 17 units of housing to be purchased within the budget of £4.1million and it is proposed that a further amount is made available to undertake an additional programme of purchasing 10 more family sized properties.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option A: The Council could decide not to pursue an updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy but to do so would disadvantage the Council through policy not reflecting legislative change, tackle the increase in homelessness and potentially expose the Council to legal challenge.
- 3.2 Option B: The Committee approves the findings of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Review (Appendix A) to be used in drafting the consultation document in developing the next Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. In addition, additional funds are made available to increase the Council's portfolio of Temporary Accommodation stock to reduce costs to the Council and provide better quality temporary accommodation.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1** Option B, as stated in paragraph 3.2 above, is recommended. This will ensure that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy can be produced and adopted in 2019 and that the purchase of additional units for use as Temporary Accommodation can be delivered in order to meet current and future need.

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 Following approval of the recommended option by the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee the Council will draft a consultation document in order to comply with the Code of Guidance process to achieve a compliant and effective Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. A consultation period of not less than 8 weeks will follow that will enable the draft Strategy to be considered by the Committee by April 2019.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Preventing homelessness is a key priority of the Housing Strategy. 'A home for everyone' is a priority within the strategic plan	John Littlemore (Head of Housing and Community Services)
Risk Management	Under the 2002 Homelessness Act, housing authorities must carry out a homelessness review for their borough and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.	John Littlemore (Head of Housing and Community Services)
Financial	This report proposes a further investment of £3 million for the purchase of property for temporary accommodation. This provides a more cost-effective way of meeting our legal obligations than renting accommodation on a short term basis.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The Housing Service has increased as a result of successfully applying for additional grant to meet the demands placed on the service. The work outlined in this report will be delivered through existing resources.	John Littlemore (Head of Housing and Community Services)
Legal	Pursuant to section 2 of the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities have a duty to review homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of the review. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force in April 2018 and requires that local housing authorities must take "reasonable steps" to either maintain or secure accommodation for eligible applicant threatened with homelessness, known as the prevention and relief duties. In addition, pursuant to section 182 of the Housing Act 1996, local authorities are also bound to have regard to the Secretary of State's Homelessness Code of Guidance. A revised code was published on 22 February 2018. Failure to have an updated Homelessness Strategy may impact	Claudette Valmond – Principal Solicitor – Commercial Mid Kent Legal Services

	<p>the council's ability to defend challenges to decisions made under the Housing Act 1996 as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p> <p>Acting on the recommendations specified in this Report is in line with the Council's statutory duties as set out above.</p>	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An EIA will be carried out when the Strategy is drafted based on the data contained within this review.	John Littlemore (Head of Housing and Community Services)
Environmental/Sustainable Development	N/A	Homechoice and Strategy Team Leader
Community Safety	N/A	Homechoice and Strategy Team Leader
Human Rights Act	N/A	Homechoice and Strategy Team Leader
Procurement	N/A	Homechoice and Strategy Team Leader
Asset Management	N/A	Homechoice and Strategy Team Leader

7. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A: Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Review – December 2018