

Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024

Methodology

Survey was open between 18th April and 16th June 2019.

The survey was carried out online and by email, with a direct email to approximately 8,000 customers who have signed up to the council's consultation mailing list. Parish Councils and other stakeholders identified by the Housing team were also directly emailed. The survey was also promoted on the Council's website and paper copies of the survey and alternative formats were available on request.

The survey was open to all Maidstone Borough residents aged 18 years and over as well as visitors and workers in the borough. The data has not been weighted, however the bottom two age brackets were combined to create the 18 to 34 years age group.

Survey respondents were asked their opinions about the proposed priorities and actions areas for the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers strategy. Links to the draft strategy were provided alongside the survey and embedded within the survey for ease of reference. Questions about actions included a summary of the proposed action areas. Respondents had the opportunity to provide additional comments throughout the survey.

A total of 500 responses were received.

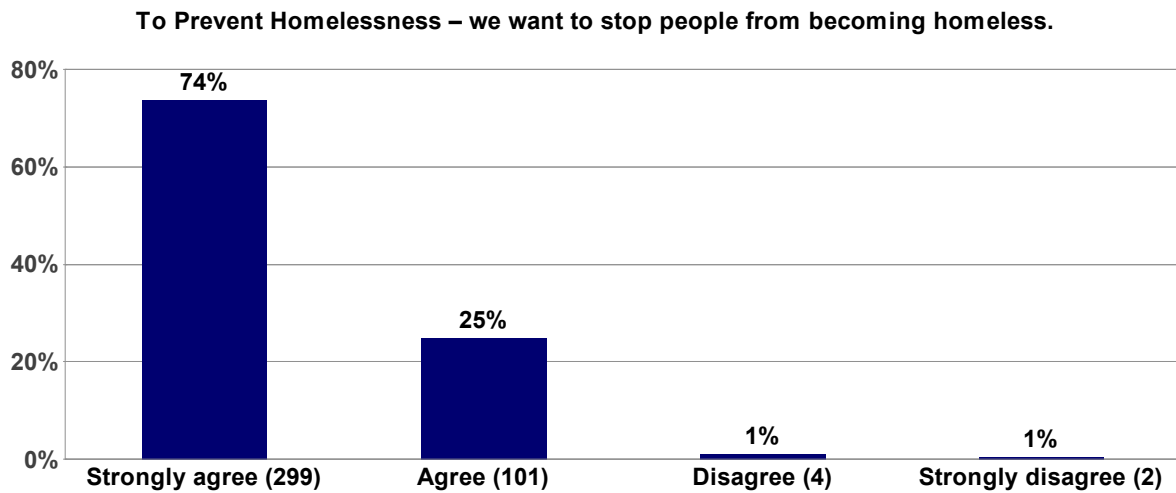
The demographic groups that were assessed as part of this analysis were Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Disability, Household types (Households with and without dependent children and Couple based, Single person households and Single Parent household groups were created using Q16 'Which of the following best describes your household?') and Economic activity.

Only demographic groups with a base of 20 respondents have been z-tested for differences. The data has been z-tested at the 95% confidence level. The z-test is a statistical test which determines if the percentage difference between subgroups is large enough to be statistically significant or whether the difference is likely to have occurred by chance.

Please note not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall. Comments have been categorised according to content with some covering more than one category. Rounding anomalies means that charts may not equal 100%.

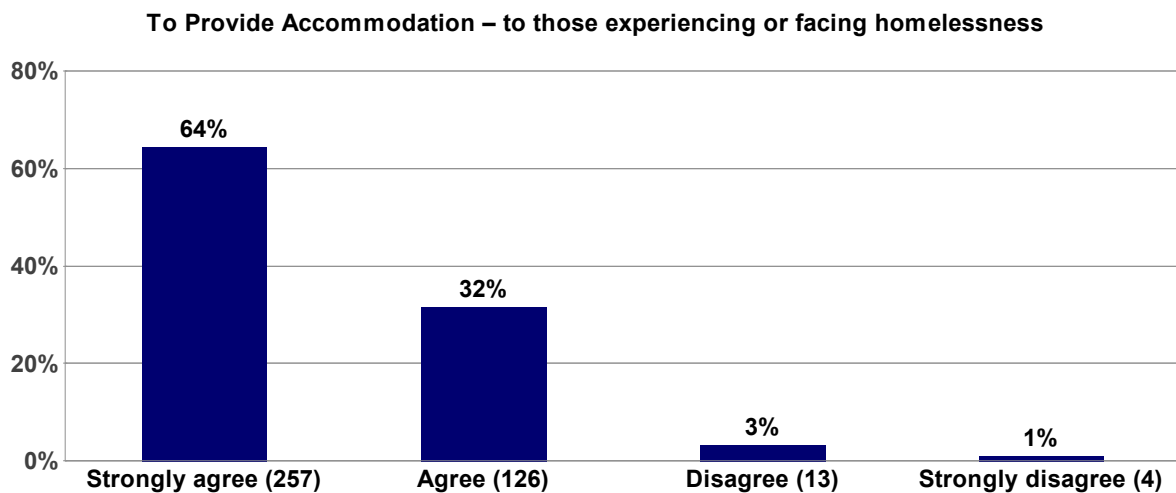
Agreement on Priorities

The survey asked respondents to state if they agree or disagree with the proposed priorities. The result for each of the proposed priorities are shown below.



Overall, support for this priority was very strong with 99% of respondents agreeing that this should be priority for the Council.

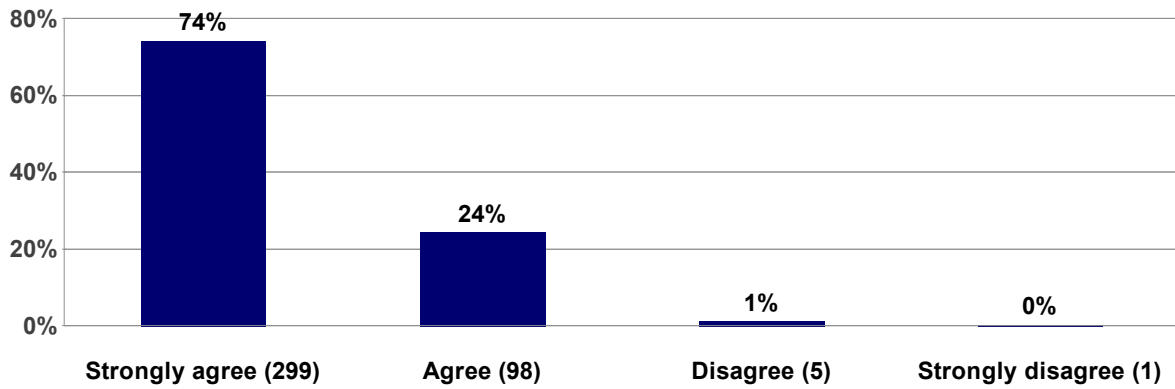
There was no significant variation in response across the different demographic groups.



This priority had a slightly lower proportion agreeing that this should be a priority with 96% in favour of 'To provide accommodation- to those experiencing or facing homelessness'.

The data shows that women were more likely than men to agree that the proposed priority should be included with 100% responding this way compared to 97% of men. Although the difference is small it is significant at the 90% confidence interval.

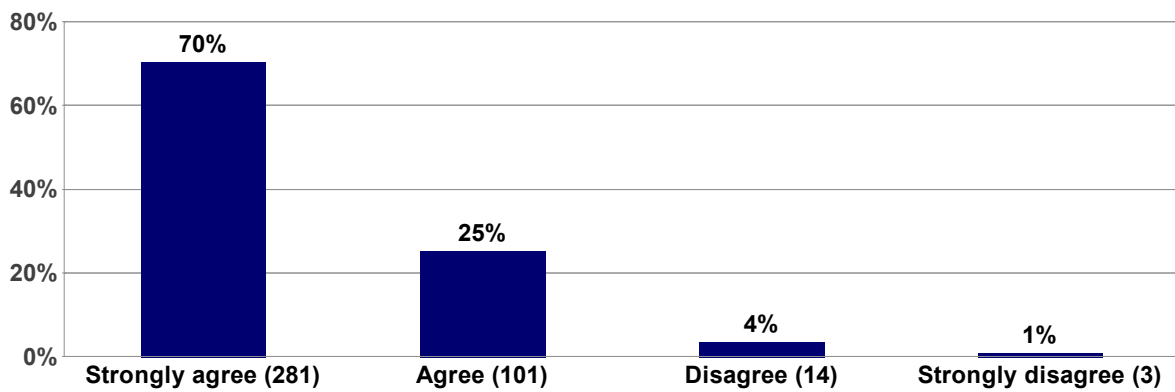
To work alongside Vulnerable People - support those experiencing the crisis of homelessness to regain their independence and access the support they need.



99% of all respondents were in favour of 'To work alongside Vulnerable people – to support those experiencing the crisis of homelessness to regain their independence and access the support they need.

There was no significant variation in response across the different demographic groups.

To support Rough Sleepers away from the streets, bring a sense of hope and ensuring Maidstone's voice is heard as part of a national response to the challenges of housing shortage, instability and homelessness

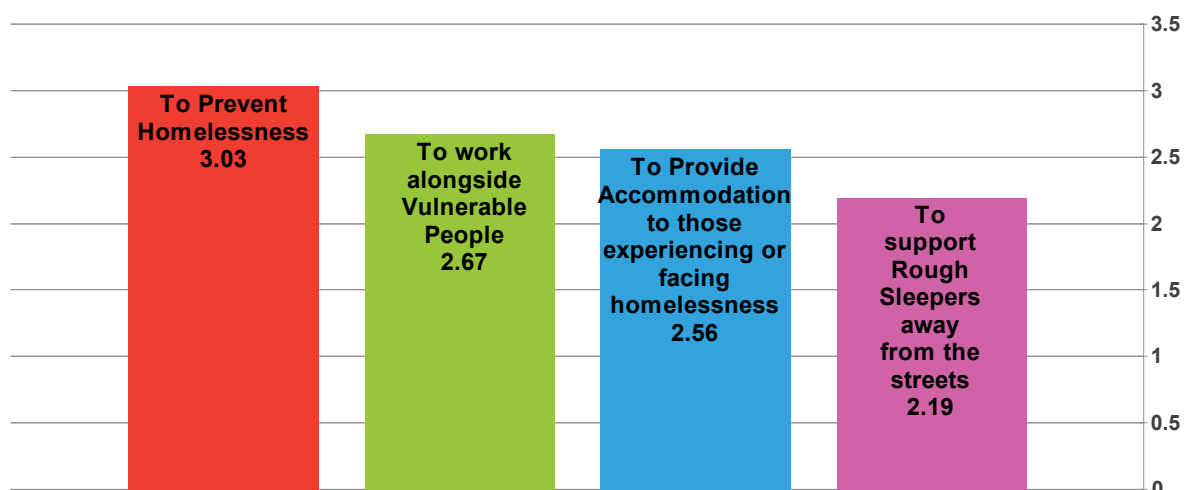


This priority had the lowest proportion of respondents agreeing with 95% answering this way.

There was no significant variation in response across the different demographic groups.

Priority Importance

Respondents were asked to put the list of priorities in order of preference. In order to assess this data a weighted average has been used; with the priorities placed as first receiving four points and the priority ranked last given one point. These are then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.



To prevent homelessness

Overall this was the priority that respondents felt was the most important with just over half of all respondents selecting this as being most important.

Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the highest score across all the different groups at 3.21. Overall, 57.% of this group put this priority first.

Respondents with a disability had the lowest score across the groups at 2.54. Overall, 32.1% of this group said this priority was the most important.

The data shows that respondents without a disability rated this priority higher than respondents with disabilities. This difference has been assessed as being significant at the 90% level.

To provide accommodation to those experiencing or facing homelessness

18% of all respondents selected this priority as being the most important.

Across the different demographic groups Single person households rated this priority higher than any other group with a score of 2.78, with one in five respondents in this groups selecting this priority as the most important.

Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the lowest score across all the different groups at 2.44. Overall, 21% of this group put this priority first.

There was no significant variation in scores across the different demographic groups.

To work alongside vulnerable people

24% of all respondents selected 'To work alongside vulnerable people' as the most important priority.

Respondents with a disability had the highest scores across the different demographic groups at 3.00.

The data shows that respondents without a disability rated this priority higher than respondents with disabilities. This difference has been assessed as being significant at the 90% level.

Respondents in the single parent households had the lowest score for this priority across the different groups at 2.38.

To support Rough Sleepers

Overall, 22% of all respondents selected this priority as being most important.

The data shows that the difference in score between respondents aged 75 years and over and those aged 35 to 44 years and between those aged 75 years and over and those aged 55 to 64 years are significant at the 90% confidence level.

The 75 years and over group had the highest score for this priority at 2.74 and respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the lowest score at 2.00.

Comments & Suggestions

Survey respondents were asked if there were any other priorities they felt the Council should consider, a total of 88 comments were made.

In terms of the importance of the priorities four comments mention that the priorities should be equal or that no one priority was more important than the others. There was also one comment about the need for careful assessment when distinguishing priorities.

There were 24 people that made comments that have been categorised as making reference to additional support services outside of housing support. There were five people that specifically mentioned mental health services and five specially mentioned addiction, substance misuse or alcohol issues. Seven people mentioned employment, jobs or support for people. All these comments urged for there to be adequate support services in these areas to help tackle the causes of homelessness, prevent repeat homelessness and get people back into work. There was also a suggestion here that the policies covering drinking in the town centre currently encourage street drinking.

Also, in relation to support services there were four comments about partnership working. These comments say the Council should be supporting other agencies working with homeless people. One states to increase funding to these agencies, one stated a need for new partnerships with specialised training, the third said existing charities supporting the homeless should be maintained, with MADM, Trinity Foyer and Lilyworth House mentioned. The final comment relating to support services and partnership working was about ensuring a joined-up approach.

There was one comment categorised as relating to support services where it was suggested there should be signposting to access food parcels for the homeless and one where the commenter said outreach workers are a key service.

Finally, there were three comments around supporting people in holding onto to their tenancies such as providing budgeting advice and workshops on life skills.

There were six comments which have been categorised as being about the causes of homelessness. These suggested that the reasons why people become homeless need to be addressed and one said there should be more awareness in this area to reduce stigma.

There were nine comments about the Council doing more to free up empty properties; both commercial and residential. It was suggested that these could be converted or used as temporary shelters.

There were two people that made comments about people moving to Maidstone from London boroughs; with one saying this should stop and the other stating this brings additional issues and is a financial burden on the council if it cannot be reclaimed. There were also three comments that Maidstone residents should be prioritised for housing.

There were eight comments that have been categorised as relating directly to providing accommodation; four these were concerned with lower or affordable rent. While the remaining comments here request investment in social housing and the building of affordable homes. There was also a comment that mentioned reclaiming housing stock from providers.

There were three comments that mentioned being homeless as a choice and one that said the Council needs to ensure rough sleepers have a genuine need. There were also three comments urging the Council to help/prevent homelessness and one stating that the Council should be providing solutions that protect vulnerable people.

There were two comments that mentioned support of ex-offenders and those released from prison.

Fifteen comments were categorised as suggestions. There were three references to central government policy – two comments were in favour of lobbying and the third was not. There were two suggestions around partnership working with one saying local engagement with sports facilities and community centre as possible shelter providers would help raise awareness and another saying more funds need to be put into Winter Churches Shelter Scheme.

One comment mentioned getting the support of local businesses (to provide practical support) and another suggested working with local hotels for short term accommodation (in return for business rate credits). One person suggested having a night hostel, one suggested self-contained rooms in HMOs for rough sleepers, another said there should be somewhere for people to sleep safely at night and access food and one said there should be somewhere for rough sleepers to go in the daytime.

One comment suggested that the Council should have a priority around directly intervening in the housing market to move its focus away from profit making towards a model that benefits people who want somewhere to live.

The last four comments categorised as suggestions were that the council should pay rent direct to landlords, banning all drinking in the street, having a donation line/website where people can give money to the homeless rather than street beggars and the last comment here said the Council should be focusing on reducing rates for working people.

Seven comments were categorised as Other. with one concerned about people falling through the cracks and another that expressed that both people with and without homes should be treated fairly, so those with homes do not lose them.

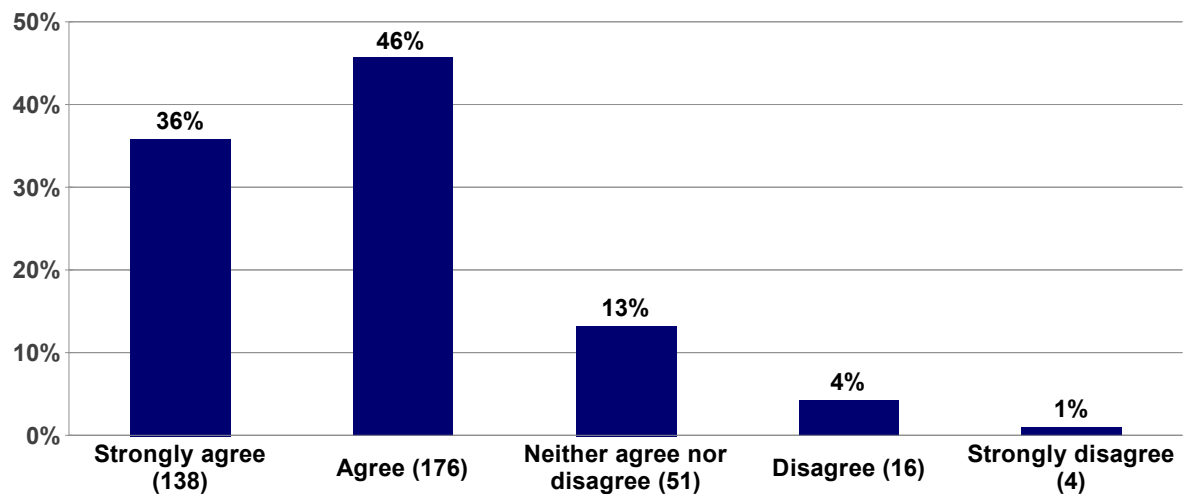
There was one commenter that queried who was responsible for closing Trinity Foyer and one that mentioned that the policy should cover the rural areas of Maidstone.

One comment expressed frustration at the survey questions and another stated we should listen more to peoples' views. The last comment categorised as Other was from a regional provider that stated their ranking of priorities was based on their view of what is important to the Council.

There were also four comments that did not directly related to housing or homelessness but related to undesirable or nuisance behaviour. One of these mentioned that Marsham street no longer felt like a safe place, while the others expressed concerns about alcohol and drug use on the streets, beggars in the town centre and dog mess.

To Prevent Homelessness – we want to stop people from becoming homeless

Respondents were given details of the action that the Council propose for this priority and as if they agree or disagree that these actions would help deliver the priority.



Overall, 82% of respondents agreed that the actions listed in the survey would help the Council to deliver priority one – We want to stop people from becoming homeless. The most common response was agree with 46% responding this way.

Single person households had the greatest proportion agreeing at 93.3%. The difference between this group and couple-based households, where 81.4% were in agreement, has been assessed as significant at the 95% confidence level. There were no respondents from single person households that responded 'neither agree nor disagree'.

Respondents with a disability had the greatest proportion that disagreed that the proposed actions would help deliver priority one at 10.9%, however no significant differences between this group and respondents without a disability was identified.

A significant difference was identified between economically active and economically inactive respondents at the 95% confidence level. It suggests that economically inactive respondents are more likely, than economically active respondents, to disagree with the proposed actions.

Priority One - Comments

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments or suggestions around priority one, a total of 87 comments were made.

There were 14 comments that mentioned non-housing support including six comments that specify support for mental health issues and six that specify economic help such as carers advice and education. There were three comments that mentioned support for drug, alcohol and addiction issues, one that mentioned food banks and one that mentions financial support. There was also one comment that said that support should be delivered by one source and that an effective wellbeing strategy should be in place for staff delivering support services.

There were fourteen comments that have been categorised as relating to how the Council deals with homelessness and rough sleepers, such as different approaches to dealing with homelessness and preventing it. Of these, four mention the need to look at the reasons for homelessness and focus on preventing it and three specifically mention the need for appropriately trained staff. There were two comments that contained references to the introduction of universal credit, with a landlord stating it has caused problems for his tenants as they do not understand it and the other was concerned that that impact of UC should be considered as part of data analysis.

There was one commenter that felt that people should be given a place of residence at the start of the process and another stated that the referral process and what the housing team do is unclear. There was also a stakeholder comment stating they would welcome a review of the Homelessness Forum and a desire to work together to align data to support the data analysis, they also commented they were disappointed there was no mention of Kent Homeless Connect in the strategy. There were also two suggestions in this category. The first was for access to toilet facilities for washing and access to clean clothes and the second was for a place that is open 24 hours a day to provide access to help and advice.

There were three comments that have been categorised as relating to intervention. All state intervention should be early, with one commenting that the provision of youth centres and youth services needs to be addressed.

There were eighteen comments that mention the providing of accommodation. One of these was a request for no further building of new homes and another suggested using empty properties such as office blocks and the barracks to provide accommodation. There were three comments in this category that specifically mentioned affordable rents or social rents. With one stating that social rent should be a priority rather than affordable and another asking for this scheme to be reviewed.

The remaining ten comments in this category request more options for accommodation in the borough and asking the Council to invest more in housing. Within this category, four specifically mentioned Council owned accommodations (both general and temporary), two mentioned a need for smaller units such as one bed homes and studios and two mentioned 'affordable' accommodation.

There were ten comments that have been categorised as relating to evictions. Three of these made comment about tenant behaviour causing homelessness with one stating anti-social tenants should not get additional support, another stating that people would not be evicted if they were doing what they should and the last one stating people who make themselves homeless should be a low priority.

In this category there were also two comments that specifically mention no fault evictions with one stating action is required against exploitative landlords and the other stating the actions should only apply for no fault tenants. There were two respondents that expressed concerns around the actions taken supporting people facing eviction, with a landlord concerned about how this may impact them and another stating they support the objectives but don't want to diminish the ability for landlords to evict problem tenants. There were two comments that were disparaging about the processes around eviction, with one saying people shouldn't have to wait to be evicted following a court order and the other stating the council should be supporting tenants facing eviction and not suggesting they ignore legal attempts to remove rogue tenants. There was also one comment that stated the

biggest cause of homelessness is private sector evictions and another saying a system needs to be developed to deal with evictions.

There are nine comments that have been classed as being generally negative. Two of these made comments about the actions; with one making comment about smart actions and the other saying Maidstone has washed its hands of meaningful action. The remaining comments categorised as negative included a mention of scapegoating by the council, another suggested to stop giving out freebies and another was generally disparaging about homeless people, stating they commit crime and take up public resources. One commenter said they do not feel that MBC partners try to prevent homelessness, while another said this should not be the Council's job. There was also a comment from personal experience where the commenter expressed disgust in how they have been treated and the last comment here said that the strategy is wrong.

There were six comments that referred to partnership working, all of which mention the need for wide engagement with various agencies; including the probation service, prisons, mental health services, social services, private sector landlords and registered housing providers. There was a comment that said partnership working is crucial and another stating Porchlight would welcome the opportunity to work with the council to align data systems.

There were four comments that have been categorised as referencing vulnerable people; with one saying there should be a targeted approach for providing education for the vulnerable homeless. One comment mentioned the need for support through schools for underage homelessness, another stated the data analysis should include prisoner release dates and last comment said there should be a focus on the daily rough sleepers.

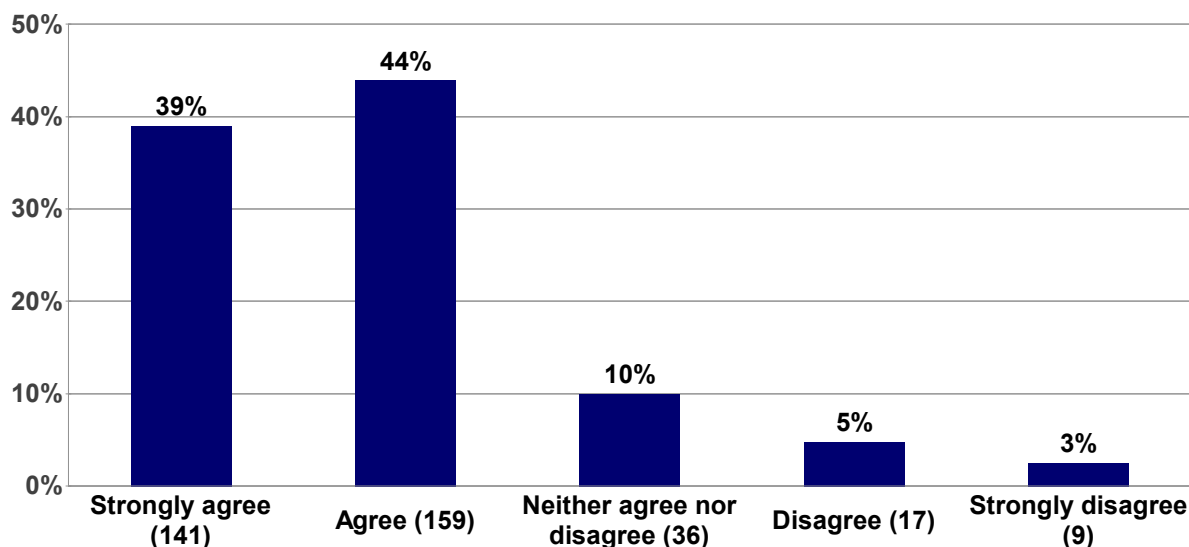
There were two comments that referred to local people having priority for housing and one said to stop allowing London boroughs to take up accommodation in Maidstone.

Ten comments have been categorised as other. These included two direct questions with one asking how many rough sleepers come from outside Maidstone and the other asking about how support is delivered and by who. There was one person who stated they were unsure if the actions do enough to address reasons for homelessness. There were three comments that are considered suggestions with one saying it should be promoted that homeless people can get benefits by using the job centre as an address, it was also suggested that homeless people should visit schools and colleges to talk to children about how they became homeless and the last suggestion was to look at the list of landlords that will take DSS. The remaining comments in the category are statements about housing in general; with one stating no one should be subject to homelessness in the 21st century, one saying the housing market is broken, another saying support return to work with living wage and the final comment in this section mentioning that the government has a role to play in ensuring that people can maintain a reasonable standard of living.

Finally there were two comments about equality both stating that all should be treated equally and one comment about funding that simply said to ensure adequate funding was available.

To provide accommodation – to those experiencing or facing homelessness

Respondents were given details of the action that the Council propose for this priority and as if they agree or disagree that the actions set out would help deliver the priority.



Overall, 83% of respondents said they strongly agree or agree that the proposed actions under the priority - To Provide accommodation. The most common response was agree with 44% responding this way.

The 45 to 54 years age group had the greatest proportion agreeing at 89.6% across all demographic groups, there were no respondents in this group that answered disagree.

The 75 years and over age group had the greatest proportion giving a disagree response at 12.0%.

The 35 to 44 years groups had the lowest proportion agreeing at 64.9% across all demographic groups and the greatest proportion responding neither agree nor disagree at 24.3%. These differences were assessed as being significant at the 95% confidence level when compared to the 45 to 54 years and the 55 to 64 years age groups.

The data shows a significant difference, at the 95% confidence level, in the proportion responding disagree between households with dependent children and those without dependent children. Households without children were more likely to respond negatively with 9.2% of this group answering this way compared to 3.0% of households without dependant children.

The data also shows a significant difference at the 90% confidence interval between economically active and economically inactive respondents for the response neither agree nor disagree. Respondents that are economically active were more likely than those who are economically inactive to respond this way with a result of 12.0% compared to 5.4%.

Priority two – Comments

A total of 90 comments were made by respondents.

There were 26 comments that related to the provision of accommodation in the borough. Of these twelve were positive about the building of new homes, stating that more accommodation needs to be built, with mentions of the need for these to be in the right place, be affordable and should not move people away from their family and support networks. There was a comment that the council should be building purpose built accommodation for the homeless, another that suggested pre-fabricated building as starter homes and one mentioned the building on brownfield sites. There were also two comments that said the Council should not be looking to the private sector for solutions. There was one person that said they oppose more housing being built and another who was uncertain. One comment said that affordable housing should be a higher priority than the building of homes to buy. There was also a comment about the conversion of offices and providing more accommodation in the town centre with this responder concerned that this could lead to areas of deprivation and poverty and a suggestion that the council should provide halfway homes.

There were two comments that suggested that the Council should return to being a housing authority and directly own and maintain property accordingly. There was a comment around the sale of Council property stating that the money received for council houses should be reinvested in new housing and that the price of council houses sold should reflect rebuilding costs. There was a comment around ensuring short-term accommodation is available for people in crisis and another that mentioned accommodation for single people. One comment stressed the need for affordable accommodations to be truly affordable. Under the category of providing accommodation there were also two questions the first asking how Maidstone will access affordable accommodation in the borough and another suggested we should work to prevent large amounts of housing being brought by London Boroughs. The last comment in this category mentioned the need for effective liaison between housing providers and the planning department especially when there is local opposition to housing development.

There were fourteen comments that have been categorised as relating to private sector regulation. Of these six were negative about the proposals stating this would landlords with small portfolios to leave the sector or result in reduced availability of accommodation in the private rental market. There were four comments that were positive about proposed regulation of the private sector stating that this is a must and rents should be controlled (with one giving the example of Switzerland where rents are regulated). The remaining four comments in this category mentioned uncertainty about the proposal, with two querying if this would reduce homelessness, another stating they do not have enough information to judge and one (that appears to be from a landlord) saying they are unsure and asking the Council to engage more with landlords, so they can help.

There were ten comments that mentioned bringing empty or derelict properties back into use. It was suggested that empty shops and offices could be converted with one mentioning the development in Romney Place. One person suggested that the army barracks could be used also.

Eight comments have been categorised as relating to prioritising Maidstone property for Maidstone residents. These are of a similar vein to those received in relation to priority one, with three mentioning property being purchased by London Boroughs and the remaining comments asking for local people / Maidstone residents to have priority for accommodation.

There were nine comments that specifically mention affordable or social rents or make reference to the cost of rental property in Maidstone, of which seven state that rental accommodation in

Maidstone is expensive and not affordable. There was one comment that queried how homes can be offered to homeless people in financial difficulty and the last comment in this category said that using Maidstone Property Holdings to provide accommodation through letting agents will exacerbate the housing crisis.

There were seven comments that relate to how the Council delivers housing policy. Here there were two comments that said the targets in the proposals are too vague and another that said the objective statement is not specific enough and another said they had no idea what the meaning of the last point about developing a whole market solution means. One commenter said there should be rigorous and frequent checks on the quality of accommodation provided and another said that long term housing should not be given to those who can afford other accommodation. The last commenter in this category queries if the structure in which housing is provided compromises the delivery of affordable home for those in need.

There were six comments that referred to non-housing support, these were similar to those received in previous comment sections of the survey, with three mentioning support for mental health issues. One comment mentioned providing hot meals and a needle exchange, another mentioned basic bedding and household items (for those in temporary accommodation) and the last comment in this category mention support in finding employment.

There were six comments that were categorised as containing reference to private sector landlords. One commenter, a landlord, said they had never been approached by the council to enquire if they would consider it being used for homeless people and suggested that the council contact landlords annually to ask. Another commenter said landlords should be encouraged to accept housing benefit tenants while another stated private sector landlords do not want to rent to homeless people. There was one comment that the private sector rental market is a nightmare, and that the council does little to help people and the final comment in this category was a suggestion to bring back rent officers to control standards of accommodation and landlords.

Three comments have been categorised as relating to eviction with two implying that resources should be concentrated on no fault tenants. Another comment stated there should be a softer approach from landlords in removing tenants.

There were three comments that mention rough sleepers with one stating they were uncertain if the proposals go far enough to help this groups, another said rough sleepers would not be able to afford any of the options set out under this priority and the third stated that many rough sleepers feel safer on the street rather than in hostels or shared accommodation.

Two comments have been categorised as relating to funding with one pointing out that funding in this area has dropped. The other notes that the strategy mentions pursuing funding for a floating support service for single people. It goes on to states a prevention service is already being delivered through Kent Homeless Connect and therefore duplication of services should be considered.

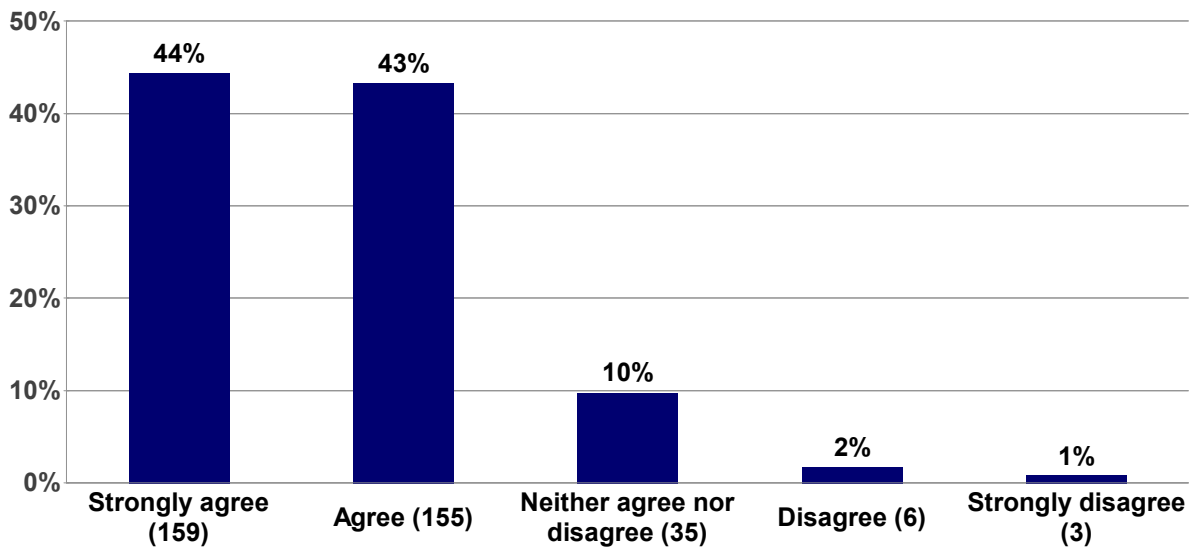
There were three comments that referred to partnership working, one stated that it is important that the borough leads but co-operates with other social services, the second said to take advantage of charity and voluntary schemes such as the winter churches. There was also a comment from a

stakeholder who mentioned the need to avoid duplication with Kent Homeless Connect and the proposed floating support service.

There were seven comment that have been categorised as other, these comments did not align with any other category and include general statements. There was one positive comment that said the proposals look good and a negative comment stating that the response from MBC housing service is poor and disappointing. One comment stated it should not be necessarily to provide accommodation in Maidstone if people are not employed and another stated that providing accommodation doesn't deal with the root causes of homelessness. One comment suggested that additional licensing schemes could be introduced and another queried how the council would ensure people pay their bills. The final comment here was that 'we must end this kind of poverty'.

Priority 3 – To work alongside vulnerable people – support those experiencing the crisis of homelessness to regain their independence and access the support they need

Respondents were given details of the action that the Council propose for this priority and asked if they agree or disagree that the listed actions would help deliver the priority.



Overall, 87% of those that completed the survey said they strongly agree or agree with the proposed actions in relation to Priority 3 – To work alongside vulnerable people. The most common response was strongly agree with 44% answering this way.

The age range groups had the most variation in responses. As with priority two the 45 to 54 years age group had the greatest proportion agreeing across all demographic groups with 94.7%, again there were no respondents in this group that answered disagree.

The 65 to 74 years age group had the lowest proportion agreeing across the different age groups at 81.0%. This response was assessed as being significantly different at the 95% confidence level when compared to the 45 to 54 years and the 55 to 64 years age groups.

The 65 to 74 years group had the greatest proportion answering neither agree nor disagree with 16.5% responding this way and the 55 to 64 years age group had the lowest proportion across the age groups at 4.7%. The differences between these groups answering this way was assessed as being significant at the 95% confidence level.

The data doesn't show any significant differences in the proportion of respondents answering positively or negatively between the economically active and the economically inactive. However, there is a significant difference in the proportions of these groups responding neither agree nor disagree. Respondents that are economically inactive were more likely than those who are economically active to respond neither agree nor disagree with 13.6% answering this way compared to 5.7% of economically active.

Priority three Comments

A total of 54 comments were received in relation to priority three – to work alongside vulnerable people.

There were fifteen comments that have been categorised as being about partnership working. Of these six mention voluntary services or charities with three of these specifically mention funding for voluntary services and stating that the Council should support these organisations. There was also another comment that stated that charities in this sector deliver excellent value for money and one that said this type of organisation should be supported if they are proven to be effective. There was also a comment in this section said that people need to be encouraged to volunteer. There were three comments around collaborating; with one stating this wording suggests that the council will not be supporting key agencies and the others stressing the need for communication between agencies and for these agencies to be proactive. The other comments relating to partnerships included a comment that this support could be delivered by social services, a suggestion about involving businesses, optimism that the health sector will be included as key partners and finally one commenter queried Maidstone Council view of the Kent Homeless Connect Service.

There are thirteen comments that have been categorised as related to the proposed policy or housing processes. Of these; three mentioned resources or staffing, with two concerned there was not enough resource/staff to action the proposals and the remaining comment concerned that staff need to be trained (to deal with vulnerable people). There were two comments that mentioned they did not feel the measures outlined under this priority were specific enough and one that said there should be more action and less plans. There were two comments that stressed the importance of peoples' individual needs being considered. There were two comments around obtaining information and advice; with one stating these need to be easier to obtain and the other saying that strong processes for the exchange of information are needed to gain the best outcomes for people. In this category there was also a query about section 7.3 of the proposals asking if this section would be reviewed in light of new legislation on domestic violence and a comment from a landlord stating they find that once someone is housed the support disappears. The last comment in this category mentions that the commenter thinks the system is bureaucratic and raises a concern about how much it cost to set up short term projects.

There are eight comments that have been classified as relating to non-housing support. Four of these agree that training and education, as outlined in the measures are needed or are important. There two comments that mentioned support for alcohol and drug abuse, another suggested a call centre and walk in centres to provide advice around obtaining benefits and the last comment in this category said there should be other support available around budgeting and keeping house.

There are two comments classified as relating to funding here one said more funding for outreach services is required and the other stated that funding services like Trinity should be a priority.

There were five comments received that have been categorised as relating to vulnerable people, with one commenter querying why there are so many vulnerable people in Maidstone and another stating that not all homeless people are vulnerable. There was a comment that this group is

continually oppressed and blamed for society's ills. The remaining two comments in this category said that vulnerable people should be helped and supported.

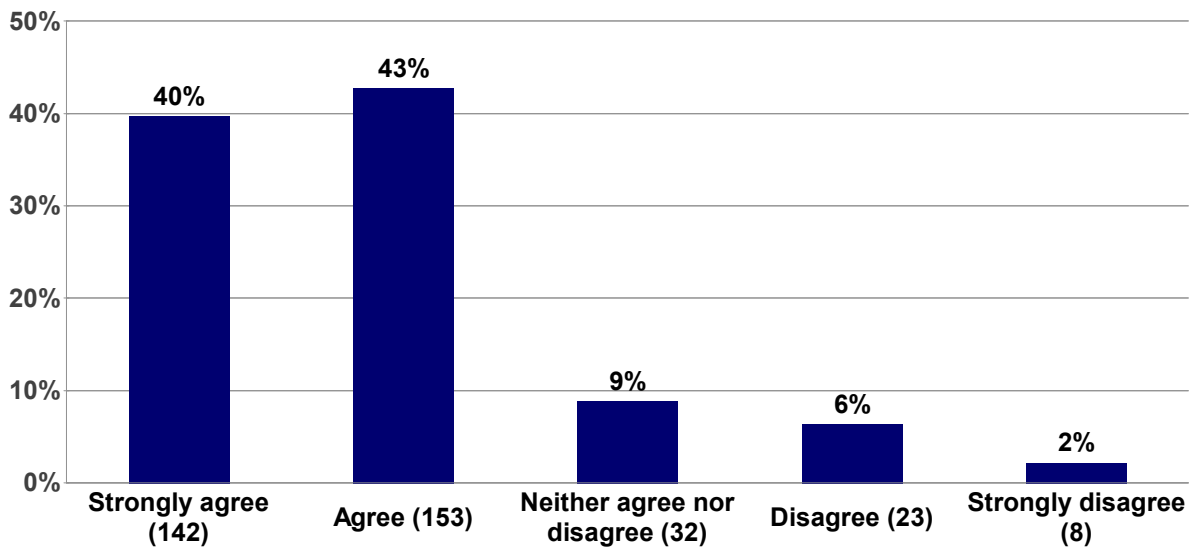
There were three comments around choosing to be homeless, with one stating there is an assumption that everyone wants to be helped, another stating they don't want to be helped and the last comment here queried how we support homeless people that reject support.

There were three comments around providing accommodation of which two state to build more housing and another that stated supported accommodation should be provided but not in concentrated areas as this encourages anti-social behaviour.

There were six comments that have been categorised as other. There was one comment that viewed the proposals as vague and the consultation as a tick box exercise. One comment said the proposals in this section are vital and another stated they hoped what was outlined in the proposals could be achieved. There was a comment that stated uncertainty about what the measures would look like for people at risk and a query about what the proposals mean and asking where the accountability is. The last comment was a suggestion to bring back National Service.

Priority four – To support rough sleepers away from the streets, bring a sense of hope and ensuring Maidstone’s voice is heard as part of the national response to the challenges of housing shortage, instability and homelessness

Respondents were given details of the actions that are proposed for this priority and were asked if they agree or disagree that the listed actions would help deliver the priority.



Overall, 83% of those responding to the survey said they strongly agree or agree that the listed actions relating to this priority. The most common response was agree with 43% answering this way.

Single person households had the greatest proportion agreeing at 91.5%, but no significant differences were identified between this and its comparable groups.

The data shows that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to agree at 87.2% compared to 81.6%. Males respondents were more likely than females to disagree with 10.2% of males answering this way compared to 4.4% of females. These differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.

The 45 to 54 years age groups had the lowest proportion responding disagree at 1.3%. When compared to the other age groups there is a significant difference between this group and the 55 to 64 years (11.6%) and the 75 years and over at group (11.5%).

The data shows that respondents that are economically inactive were more likely to disagree than respondents that are economically at 11.6% compared to 4.6%. This difference is significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Comments

A total of 86 comments were received in relation to this priority.

There were 23 comments that were classified as relating to housing stock, of the fourteen made comments to the effect they do not want any more homes built or that building more homes is not a solution, many of these comments included mentions of infrastructure such as roads, GP surgeries

and schools. There were four comments that stated that although houses are being built they are not of the right type to reduce or prevent homelessness, with comments that housing is unaffordable or executive homes.

There are fifteen comments that have been categorised as process or policy orientated. Two of these were about ensuring applicants are genuine. One comment queried if the proposals meant that every rough sleeper would be offered accommodation, with another stating stable accommodation is required to achieve the objective and another saying homeless people should have priority access to new homes. Two people mentioned the Housing First initiative both of which were positive about the proposals to expand the scheme. One comment mentioned they did not feel the proposals go far enough, and one said the strategy should not be reliant on a single element while another said they did not feel the council should be lobbying. One person suggested a measure of reducing the cost of accommodation. One mentioned that the measures listed should be available in the rural as well as the urban area another mentioned access stating the council needs to be available in person to provide support. There was a comment in this category that said resources should not be given to housing associations as they were concerned that this will duplicate their housing stock with council accommodation. There was also a suggestion in this category that the council should adopt the Housing First approach.

There were fourteen comments about rough sleepers half of these advocated more support for this group stating that there should be more places for rough sleepers to go that are safe and that are available all year round and have facilities like showers and toilets. There was one commenter that suggested that rough sleeping in the borough is increasing and another that said that identification is key with people sleeping in cars outside of the town centre. There was a one comment that raised a concern that rough sleepers would be shuffled off to another area and that the problem of rough sleeping will remain unsolved, another comment stated that rough sleepers will require a lot of encouragement in order for them to develop a desire to be in settled accommodation. One comment mentioned the desensitisation of the public towards rough sleepers and another said there should be more information about who to contact if you see someone sleeping rough. Finally there were two people that mentioned hostels, one saying they should be provided and another saying they are unaware if Maidstone has any.

There were eight comments that made reference to the proposals around establishing a pathway to get rough sleepers 'off the streets'. Two of these comments were negative about the proposals stating they are meaningless with one clarifying they believe there should be a targeted approach. Three comments were positive with one stating this is important, another stating they agree with this element of the proposals and one stating it is a decent suggestion but that it needs to be recognised there is not 'one size fits all' approach. Two comments suggest using people that have already been through the Pathway scheme, either by involving them in future strategy design or to help support getting others off the streets.

There were seven comments categorised as being about the private rental sector or private landlords. Two of these mention the buying up of homes by private landlords with one saying it should be harder for landlords to purchase affordable homes and the other commenting that they can purchase and let new apartments that are being built. One commenter queried why we need a private rented sector and another queried how the Council would support private landlords, raising

concerns about the potential profits that private landlords could receive. There was also a comment that private sector rentals are too expensive. One comment mentioned the need for private landlords to be accountable and the last comment expressed despair stating that 'if the private sector is going to be the arbitrator of who does and who doesn't get a home we are all lost'.

There were four comments about private sector regulation. One was positive about greater control of the private sector market, one said that this sector is already subject to too many rules and regulations and should be left alone while the other two queried how this would be done as private landlords are autonomous private individuals.

Six comments have been assessed as relating to welfare reform. Two comments were negative about universal credit with one stating it should be abandoned and the other stating it has increased desperation and homelessness. Another comment suggested the government is not interested in making changes to the welfare system that would help those who are marginalised. The remaining comments in this category were supportive of the Council's proposals to advocate changes to the welfare system with one stating it is a good thing and another said the government should be pressed to simplify the system to reduce stress.

Five comments made reference to non-housing support, again similar themes here were raised to those highlighted in previous comment sections. Two comments mention the need to get people into employment, another mentioned drug and alcohol education, one mentioned mental health support and the last comment mentioned the importance of clear signposting of assistance services for people in the private rented sector.

Three comments mention homeless people from outside Maidstone (all mention London Boroughs), coming to Maidstone. With one mentioning problem tenants and another referring to Maidstone as a dumping ground for London and other countries.

There were two comments that people are homeless by choice with one saying to stop wasting money on those that don't want help.

There were also two comments that referred back to the reasons people are homeless saying these need to be removed and rough sleepers should be asked how they became to be in their situation.

There were two comments that stated that that housing and homelessness is a national problem and that the government should give the council more funding.

Eight comments have been classified as other. Two comments are sceptical about the proposals with one doubtful that the proposals would be implemented and the other requesting actions not words. Another comment stated that it was not a free ride and another state that these proposals should be for those who are genuinely homeless and want to help themselves. One comment said it is important that people get proper support but was concerned about putting people together who may influence each other. There was also a comment that contained a request to eliminate begging in the town and one that suggested young people should be educated about homelessness. The final comment in this grouping said it was important that every voice is heard.

Survey Demographics

