

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 12 FEBRUARY 2019

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING

THE EAST HERTS HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING REVIEW
AND STRATEGY 2019-2024

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report presents the draft version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review Strategy 2019-2024 and requests its consideration prior to recommending the finalised draft to Council for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: That:

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| (A) | The Executive considers the content of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2019-2024 and raise any points for consideration and inclusion; |
| (B) | The Executive delegates to the Head of Housing and Health authorisation to make such amendments as authorised by the Executive and any minor amendments as deemed necessary; and |
| (C) | Subject to such amendments in recommendation B, the Executive recommends the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2019-2024 to Council. |

1.0 Background

1.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local authorities are required to carry out a homelessness review and to develop and publish a strategy based on the review every five years.

East Herts conducted its first homelessness review and published its first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003. This is the fourth Review and Strategy and is due to run from April 2019 to March 2024. At Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 November 2018 members discussed the work to date and endorsed consultation on the draft document prior to seeking approval of its adoption from Council.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed enhanced duties on local authorities to assist homeless and potentially homeless people. One of the key aims of the Act was to ensure that housing authorities take a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing and preventing homelessness in their districts.
- 2.2 The council's last Homelessness Strategy, which included a thorough review, (herein referred to as "the Strategy") was adopted and published in July 2013 and the council and its partners have made significant progress on providing and improving services to those people that are homeless or potentially homeless. The Strategy includes a section on the achievements by the council and its partners to improve the homeless services provided, since the last Strategy was adopted.
- 2.3 A lot has changed both locally and nationally since the last Strategy was adopted. The most significant recent changes that have an impact on the council's work regarding homelessness have been the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 that came into force in April 2018 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 primarily impacting on benefit eligibility. The Strategy provides more detail on the actual changes resulting from these two pieces of legislation which are likely to have a direct and indirect effect on homelessness.

- 2.4 A draft Strategy has been developed and has four objectives around which the Housing Service will build its Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan will shape the emphasis of the Housing Options Team's work for the next five years. These are:
- Objective 1 - Strong and effective partnership working;
 - Objective 2 - Early targeted intervention and advice to prevent the loss of accommodation;
 - Objective 3 - Effective action to relieve homelessness and sustain tenancies to prevent repeat homelessness;
 - Objective 4 - Protecting and increasing the local housing options.
- 2.5 The first draft of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting of 6 November 2018. Members of the Committee supported the draft Strategy and made comments during the discussion regarding the costs of affordable rents and their impact on affordability, the need to work closely with partners to support those with mental health issues, the perceived increase in rough sleeping and the likely impact on homelessness of Universal Credit.
- 2.6 The draft Strategy, including amendments from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was published for consultation, for five weeks, on the council's website. The consultation ended on 7th January 2019 and four responses were received. Three of the four responses raised concerns about rough sleeping, perhaps not surprisingly considering the Government's current emphasis on addressing rough sleeping, (a national Rough Sleeping Strategy was launched in August 2018) and recent media interest. The fourth response raised concerns about the reduction of support services leading to an increase in homelessness for vulnerable households, particularly those with mental health issues.
- 2.7 Taking on board the responses to the consultation, the Strategy was further updated and renamed the Homelessness

and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2019-2024, to reflect the Government's renewed focus on addressing rough sleeping. A copy of the updated Strategy is attached at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. Taking into account the consultation responses, the content on rough sleeping has been expanded and the proposed actions around rough sleeping in Objective 3 have been added to and strengthened. An Equalities Impact assessment has also been prepared for the Strategy and included at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**.

2.8 Executive Members are now asked if there any further points they wish to raise or be considered for inclusion in the finalised draft Strategy, particularly regarding the actions outlined under each of the four Strategy Objectives, which will form the basis of the first year's Delivery Plan. These are listed as bullet points under each of the four Strategic Objectives on pages 19 to 23 of the Strategy.

2.9 Following adoption of the Strategy by the Council on 5 March 2019 a Delivery Plan will then be developed by officers. The Delivery Plan's progress will be monitored by officers in the Housing Service and internal and external partners impacted by homelessness in East Herts and also by way of an annual report to Performance, Audit and Governance Committee.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

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