

Report to: **Cabinet**
Date of Meeting: 6 March 2019
Public Document: Yes
Exemption: None

Review date for release None

Agenda item: 14

Subject: **Adoption of our updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023**

Purpose of report: To present the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2023 for approval and adoption as required by the Homelessness Act 2002.

The previous strategy has been reviewed alongside the current homelessness data and new responsibilities for action to prevent homelessness introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This places a statutory duty on local authorities to assist individuals and households who are homeless. The definition of being threatened with homelessness has been extended from 28 days to 56 days.

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2023 is presented in full as **annex 1**.

It explains why we have prepared this strategy, the strategic context and influences on homelessness locally and nationally, and why it matters to us.

As outlined in the strategy, our key priorities are:

- Maximise prevention activities and outcomes
- Increase accommodation options
- Minimise rough sleeping
- Improve health and wellbeing

The strategy has been prepared in consultation with Members, Officers and Housing Teams internally, and representatives of local partnership and homelessness support agencies externally. We have also interviewed individuals who have experienced homelessness.

Following adoption of the Strategy, we will:

- Set up a steering group of member, customer and officer representatives to oversee implementation.
 - Design and publish the strategy including pictures and quotes from customers and case studies.
 - Develop an action plan with SMART objectives to progress our key priorities.
 - Report progress against outcome and evaluation measurements.
-



Recommendation:	<p>(1) To recommend to Council formal adoption of the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023; and</p> <p>(2) Give delegated authority to the Strategic Lead – Housing Health & Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Homes and Communities for any minor amendments to the Strategy prior to its publication; and</p> <p>(3) The Council voices its concerns to government about the additional costs being incurred by local authorities through the Homelessness reduction Act 2017 and the trend of increased homelessness.</p>
Reason for recommendation:	<p>The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and develop and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness based on the findings of the review.</p>
Officer:	<p>Andrew Mitchell Housing Needs and Strategy Manager AMitchell@eastdevon.gov.uk 01395 517469</p>
Financial implications:	<p>The cost implication of Homelessness is significant for the Council and this has increased with the change in local authority responsibility required under the new Act. The current year net budget is £328k which Members will be aware is currently predicted to be overspent by a further £85k by year end. New Burdens funding was provided by Government of £33k in 2017/18, £29k in 2018/19 and a final amount of £33k in 2019/20 to help address the new requirements, there is no indication of any further funding going forward. The actions identified in the Strategy should help to provide suitable accommodation going forward which in turn it is envisaged will reduce some of the costs currently incurred.</p>
Legal implications:	<p>The legal implications are contained within the report.</p> <p>Every local authority must carry out a homelessness review, formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review.</p> <p>All authorities are required to publish homelessness strategies at least once every five years, with the exception of authorities classified as 'excellent' which were exempted from this requirement until 1 April 2017. The first homelessness strategy had to be published by 31 July 2003.</p> <p>In addition, local authorities must periodically assess the accommodation needs of people in their area. This includes those with a need for example, caravan sites or mooring for houseboats.</p>
Equalities impact:	<p>Medium</p>
Risk:	<p>Medium Risk</p> <p>Compliance with our duties under the Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p>
Links to background information:	<p>EDDC Homelessness Review December 2018 "Your Home, Your Wellbeing" - 3 year research study with Birmingham University and LiveWest Housing Association. EDDC Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2023</p>

Link to Council Plan: This report links to the Council priorities of:

- encouraging communities to be outstanding
- Delivering and promoting our outstanding environment
- Continuously improving to be an outstanding council

1. Background

- 1.1 We are required to have a Homelessness Strategy setting out our plans to address homelessness in the district. Our current plan expired in 2018 and since then we had the 'game changing' Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force last April.
- 1.2 This is a time when we need a clear strategic statement with increased pressures and expectations around homelessness, and the increase in rough sleeping.
- 1.3 Homelessness can be one of life's most traumatic and disruptive events, so it is critical that we have a 'fit for purpose' response. It is also one of the most onerous statutory duties the council has to manage. Tackling and attempting to manage homelessness is also quite stressful for staff, so it is important that our Housing Options team have clear guidelines and priorities to work towards, and a good understanding of how this fits in with Council priorities.
- 1.4 We say in the Strategy that there is no typical homeless household, they are all very different, and so there is no 'one size fits all' approach that is appropriate. We need an approach that is quick to respond, empathetic, and achieves the desired outcome or purpose – **Right People in the Right Home**.
- 1.5 The priorities in the strategy are straightforward – maximise homeless prevention; increase accommodation options; minimise rough sleeping; and improve the health and wellbeing of those facing homelessness. We indicate that the main causes of homelessness are the loss of private rented accommodation; relationship breakdown; and family evictions. Contributory factors include poor physical and mental health; drug and alcohol problems; bereavement; experience of the care or criminal justice systems; and poverty/unemployment/low income factors.
- 1.6 In terms of Strategy content our overriding aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible and link with our Housing Strategy aim of **a decent home for all**. We also aim to deliver good housing outcomes for homeless households – so a suitable home – affordable, in good condition, suitably located and adequate in size.
- 1.7 This is where the challenge occurs, as there is a limited supply of housing available to us that meets these tests. Once secured, with some households the challenge moves onto ensuring that they can sustain their tenancy. Many of our clients also present with a range of problems aside from the homelessness, which can make it difficult for them to secure and sustain a tenancy.
- 1.8 It is imperative that our housing advice work is relevant and well targeted as we know that timely, accurate and comprehensive advice can prevent homelessness and empower clients to resolve their own housing problems. The Strategy recognises the importance of good advice.

- 1.9 Key indicators of homelessness are the number of cases we prevent becoming homeless and the number we accept as homeless, and recent trends are shown in the Strategy.
- 1.10 The Strategy contains evidence supporting the four priorities. It states very clearly that we believe that homelessness is preventable (in most cases); that it impacts on health and wellbeing; rough sleeping shortens life expectancy; and that we are committed to eliminating homelessness.
- 1.11 The strategy has been the subject of extensive consultation and will be accompanied by an action plan that sets out specific and updatable actions.