



Serving You

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10 October 2024

Draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030

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Summary

This report introduces the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030 which replaces the 2019-2024 Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy approved by Cabinet in 2019. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out Medway's strategic approach for homelessness services and details how the Council will enable the delivery of these services. This paper sets out the background to Medway Council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030, the consultation process, and the refinement of the strategy based on feedback received to date.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Committee is asked to recommend to Cabinet to approve the Draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. The Draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030 has been developed in line with the Council Plan and sets out the Council's contribution to meeting the aims of the One Medway Council Plan with respect to preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping. The approval of a Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a matter for Cabinet.

3. Background

- 3.1. Medway Council's current Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy Housing Strategy was agreed in 2019.
- 3.2. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 *all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in*

their district. The strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years. In addition, it was recognised that an updated strategy was required to reflect the changes in local demand and national legislative changes.

- 3.3. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030 details the Council's planned response in meeting the needs of Medway's residents with regards to Homelessness, in all forms. To ensure that the council captured a broad spectrum of views on the local picture, with its pressures and opportunities, a stakeholder event was carried out on 15 July 2024 to confirm what the updated priorities should be.
- 3.4. This span of stakeholders recognises the impact housing has on a wide range of areas including social care, public health, support services and the wider community and conversely the positive role which all of these partners have in the prevention and relief of homelessness.
- 3.5. This input has allowed officers to better understand these interrelationships and look to agree how best to work together to achieve positive outcomes for Medway residents. Input was sought during the process of drawing up the strategy and an iterative process was used to develop the current draft version. Medway's Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter, has been involved through the process and the council has publicised the draft for consultation with Medway residents from 9 September 2024 until 31 October 2024.
- 3.6. Responses to the strategy consultation will then be analysed by officers within strategic housing services, supported by Business Intelligence colleagues and any potential changes to the draft identified and a log of responses to consultation and any answers to questions raised will be summarised in the report to Cabinet.

4. Options

- 4.1. The options are:
- 4.2. To agree that the proposed Strategy (included at appendix 1) can be presented to Cabinet.
- 4.3. To propose amendments to the draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy in advance of presentation to Cabinet
- 4.4. To not agree to the progression of the draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and carry on business as usual without a new strategy in place.

5. Advice and analysis

- 5.1. The draft strategy has been developed based upon a comprehensive review and consideration of:
 - The national and local context

- Achievements and progress of the 2019-2024 Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy
 - Consultation with stakeholders (detailed in section 7)
 - Homelessness review 2024
- 5.2. The strategy is designed around five key priorities:
- Using information to prevent homelessness - what do we know, what do we need to know and how can we use this information to help reduce the risk of homelessness?
 - One Medway Approach – working across partners, sharing expertise and resources
 - Solution focused support -intervening quickly and effectively
 - The right accommodation - people have safe, secure and appropriate accommodation options
 - Informing everyone about homelessness and housing rights - making knowledge about homelessness prevention mainstream
- 5.3. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be delivered by Housing Services in partnership with a range of internal Medway Council Service areas and external stakeholders including Supported Housing Providers, NHS services, Criminal Justice services, Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services, private landlords and the local Voluntary and Community Sector, organisations whose work focuses on housing issues. Each of the priorities will be accompanied by progress indicators and practical actions to meet the aims of the Strategy. Throughout the lifetime of the strategy, Housing services will work with partners to take advantage of new opportunities for funding and with stakeholders to take advantage of resources not available to the Council.
- 5.4. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out and no adverse impacts were identified with advancement of equality identified in the categories of Age, Disability, Sex and Low Income. The Diversity Impact Assessment is included as appendix 2.
- 5.5. Sustainability is a key issue across all Medway's activity. There are limited options to drive this through the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy aside from procurement activity and supporting the application to Sustainable Warmth grant funding, but this will be reviewed regularly for additional options to increase the work towards a carbon neutral Medway.
- 5.6. Included within the strategy priorities are measures which support Medway Housing's ongoing commitment to include the needs of Looked After Children, this will include seeking additional support and accommodation to meet the needs of this group where possible.

6. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
That the actions required by the strategy are not carried out.	The actions which support the commitments are used to derive an action plan which will have indicators of progress which will need to be achieved to meet the outcomes required by the strategy.	Monitoring of progress against the actions agreed will be carried out by the Senior Housing Management Team within Housing Services. Overall progress by individual officers will be managed under the PDR process across the Housing Services. A quarterly analysis of progress will be uploaded on to Pentana.	CII
That agencies do not work in a coordinated fashion to achieve the aims of the strategy.	Actions detailed to fulfil the aims of the strategy will need the input of statutory and voluntary partners.	Officers across Housing Services will ensure that updates are timetabled to progress specific elements of the strategy and that all relevant agencies are regularly met with. Any issues with this will be picked up in quarterly Pentana monitoring commentary and addressed.	CIII
That the decision is made not to update the 2019-24 Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to this draft version, leaving the council open to challenge as not having a current strategy.	The strategy has been written to take into account recent legislative changes and the national picture (e.g. the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act 2023 and the cost of living crisis) and the evolving needs of Medway's residents.	The direction outlined in the strategy is a shared vision across strategic housing and partner agencies. Should the strategy not be agreed, the work areas would continue under the aims of the previous strategy.	CII
Likelihood		Impact:	
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare		I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor	

7. Consultation

- 7.1. Consultation started with a detailed workshop session across internal stakeholders from housing and public health, and children's services, and external bodies including health services, registered providers, support providers, voluntary and community sector providers.
- 7.2. This outlined the key priorities that the group on stakeholders saw as key to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in Medway. The draft has been discussed at Medway's Homelessness Forum and with a range of staff from Housing Options, Rehousing, Private Sector Team and the Rough Sleeping Initiative.
- 7.3. The Strategy was also shared for comment with managers from the Culture Team, Adult Social Care and Children's Services. This allowed for a refining of the draft strategy to the point where Housing Services have now sent the strategy out to public consultation. This runs from 9 September 2024 to 31 October 2024. The strategy has been sent to Children and Adults Directorate Management Team (DMT), Place DMT and Corporate Management Team (CMT) for review and comment.

8. Climate change implications

- 8.1. Due to the type of activity which the Strategy focusses on, it has a limited amount of scope to address climate change directly but actions to reduce the carbon footprint of homelessness provision in Medway are detailed in the table below. It is recognised that the majority of Medway Housing's Partners (for example registered providers of supported housing) will have their own climate change strategies and we will seek to coordinate activity wherever possible. This is in line with Medway Council's target to become carbon neutral by 2050.

Positive Impact on Climate Change	Negative Impact on Climate Change
Ensure that commissioned services evidence their commitment to reducing their environmental impact, through our procurement process.	
Work with non-registered provider supported housing providers and landlords to improve their understanding of acceptable standards, available funding and any likely future requirements regarding the energy efficiency of their buildings. This will include referral to our Private Sector Housing Team where this becomes necessary.	

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. The draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030 recognises the severe pressure that meeting statutory homelessness needs represents for Medway Council, currently projected to result in a budget pressure of c£3m in 2024/25 and between £3-5million in 2025/26, however this strategy aims to reduce the amount of homelessness and therefore lessen the impact on Medway Council's resources.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1. There is a legal requirement to have a Homelessness Strategy, as referenced in section 3.1. The strategy serves as a useful policy document setting out the Council's approach to homelessness and allows Members to scrutinise delivery. There are no other legal implications.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030
Appendix 2 - Diversity Impact Assessment
Appendix 3 - Medway Homelessness Review 2024
Appendix 4 - Supplementary note on winter provision

Background Papers

None