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**PART A: MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 19 MARCH 2020**

**REPORT OF THE: KIM ROBERTSHAW  
HOUSING SERVICES MANAGER**

**TITLE OF REPORT: DRAFT RYEDALE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH  
SLEEPER REVIEW AND STRATEGY, 2020-25**

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report provides Policy and Resources Committee with a draft of the Ryedale Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2020-25, for consideration and comments before further consultation takes place with partners. Once the draft has been sent out for further consultation, the updated strategy and report will return to Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council for sign off.

1.2 The report summarises the objectives and targets specified within the strategy and sets out any implications for the Council.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 Approve the draft strategy for further consultation.

### **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 It is a requirement for there to be a review of homelessness in the district and a Strategy and Action Plan developed and published every five years.

### **4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS**

4.1 Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Authorities to publish a Homelessness Strategy within 5 years of the previous one. Therefore this is required to be in place for April 2020.

### **5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The proposals contained within the Action Plan support the Council's priority Sustainable Growth
- Minimising homelessness, improving the standard and availability of rented accommodation and supporting people to live independently
- 5.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy based on a review of homelessness within their district. This must be reviewed every five years. The current strategy was developed in 2015.
- 5.3 Since publication of the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018, it is also a statutory requirement to include rough sleeping as a priority within the strategy.
- 5.4 Ryedale's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy is linked to the Council's Housing Strategy Action Plan 2015/2021. This strategy includes an objective on the prevention of homelessness. Ryedale's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan will ensure that proposals under that objective have been highlighted and will be developed and monitored at a local level. The Council will continue to work closely with the other local authorities across the York and North Yorkshire area on homelessness issues and share effective practice in the implementation of its homelessness and rough sleeper strategy.
- 5.5 The National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) completed a diagnostic peer review in August 2019 covering the full elements of the housing options and homelessness service. Their results and recommendations have been fed into the strategy. In addition they have reviewed the draft strategy in February 2020, with comments provided below.

## 5.6 CONSULTATION

Initial consultation has been carried out with staff, customers and partners through the Housing Forum, focus groups and service user's questionnaires, in order to inform the review of homelessness and services in the district. We have consulted with an independent organisation (the National Practitioner Support Service) on the draft strategy. They scored the strategy highly and have made some recommendations that we will address around including more details around the work we do with private landlords to reduce homelessness and help people to access accommodation and providing more details around the costs of the service.

NPSS commented

"overall, it's a great piece of work and really shows the commitment that Ryedale has to preventing and relieving homelessness the provision of joined up services and really great partnerships"

Further consultation with partner agencies will take place once the draft is agreed.

## REPORT

### 6.0 REPORT DETAILS

- 6.1 Ryedale's five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy sets out the Council's aim to tackle homelessness across the district over the next 5 years and details how the Council will provide housing options and homelessness services for

the residents of Ryedale.

6.2 In recognition of the fact that homelessness can be devastating and is seldom a problem in isolation, the simple provision of accommodation is not in itself a solution without considering all contributory factors and then aiming to facilitate access to specialist support and assistance to address those problems. A holistic approach is required to ensure that health, employment, income, social isolation, relationships and other issues which may affect individuals' ability to maintain their home are considered.

6.3 It is a fact that the prevention of homelessness is more cost-effective for authorities than dealing with its consequences. Resources deployed on the prevention of homelessness ultimately save on costs long-term, and help to alleviate the crisis for the customer. To achieve this the emphasis must continue to be on partnership working, sharing resources and employing creative and innovative solutions.

6.4 **Key achievements over the past 5 years**

- In July 2017 Ryedale District Council was only the 9th local authority of 326 in England to achieve a Gold Standard award. At the time this showed that the local housing options service was in the top 3%, but we are not complacent and always want to improve and develop our services.
- Enhanced partnership working on homelessness between agencies, including police, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), children and adult services, health, substance misuse services, community, voluntary and faith groups.
- Completed a full restructure of the department
- Successfully bid for funding to prevent rough sleeping in the form of rough sleeper initiative and rapid rehousing pathway and employed 2 additional staff on a 12 month contract, with funding recently extended until March 2021.
- Implemented a new IT system for recording approaches to the service and homeless applications
- Implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requirements, including implementing the new homelessness prevention and relief duties and introducing Personal Housing Plans.
- The Homelessness Prevention Support Service that was previously provided by Horton, has been integrated into the Housing Team at Ryedale District Council from October 2019, streamlining the service.
- The National Practitioner Support Service Reviewed the Housing Options Service in August 2019, assessing the local authority service at 62%, with significant positive feedback.
- We continue to ensure that Safeguarding of Children and Adults is paramount in all services provided
- The young persons' accommodation pathway has continued to provide mediation and advice services for 16 to 25 year olds in partnership with other agencies
- The North Yorkshire Home Choice pathway has been maintained and continues to provide a county wide allocations scheme for social housing
- Housing Options staff and the development officer continue to work closely together and with developers and landlords, regarding affordable housing need and the allocation of affordable properties once built
- In July 2017, in partnership with Broadacres, an additional House of Multiple Occupation was developed, for those aged 18 to 25 in education, training or employment

- The housing team continue to manage four Houses of Multiple Occupation, providing affordable accommodation options for single people

## 6.5 **FINDINGS FROM THE INITIAL CONSULTATION**

- There has been a reduction in numbers approaching the authority, but greater complexity of cases and many cases that were previously dealt with outside of the legislation now require statutory assessments since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- There has been an increase in the numbers of rough sleepers approaching the Council, this may be partly due to greater awareness in the community and partner agencies
- There is a need for improved communication and advertising about housing services to ensure information is available to customers when needed (i.e. available online, promote customer portal)
- There has been a reduction in funding from NYCC including support services i.e. the homelessness prevention service, loss of services e.g. accommodation for ex-offenders, specialised support for the gypsy and traveller community, and loss of family support services such as home start
- Social housing arrears has been in top 3 reasons for approach for the last 3 years, whereas this was not the case previously. This could be linked to the introduction of universal credit, but may be also linked to the increased number of referrals and recent commitment to refer, which encourages social landlords to contact our service if their tenants are in arrears
- Relationship breakdown with a partner is also one of main reasons for approach
- Due to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and new IT system to monitor the legislation, it has been much more difficult to obtain data around Housing Advice, provided prior to households being at risk of losing their home. Configuration of the system will be taking place to ensure that data around Housing Advice and Support can be recorded more clearly to generate reports, going forward.
- The district continues to have a low wage to high house price ratio, above North Yorkshire and county averages meaning that people find it difficult to afford housing in this area
- There are continuing difficulties accessing the private sector ( but the team are working on securing additional houses of multiple occupation, building relationships with landlords and letting agents, helping clients to access the private sector)

## 6.6 **OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS**

Following a review of homelessness within Ryedale and within the national and sub-regional context, the following objectives have been identified as priority areas to work on over the forthcoming 5 years. Within each of the objectives are specific targets which Housing Services and our wider partners will aim to achieve.

### 6.7 **Objective 1 –Prevent and relieve homelessness**

Prior to making a main homelessness duty decision, there are a minimum of 56 days in which we will work with a customer to prevent their homelessness or assist them into alternative accommodation. This is achieved through successful case management, identifying why people are approaching for assistance, providing

bespoke support and advice and ensuring that prevention tools are in place to give staff and customers the chance to obtain suitable accommodation much quicker.

**Actions:**

- Work with landlords and estate agents in the district to encourage people to approach our service early
- Continue to review and improve prevention tools to enable customers to sustain and remain in their current accommodation.
- Work with registered providers to address the high number of approaches for rent arrears.
- Increase access to specialist services for customers

6.8 **Objective 2 – Work with partners to enable sufficient and appropriate accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**

We must ensure that there is an array of affordable and suitable tenure options and properties available to residents. This can be achieved, by working with colleagues and partners to make the best use of existing stock, ensuring it can be adapted if required, security measures improved if needed, or made affordable for the occupant to remain in. Alternatively it can be achieved through access to new properties, bringing empty properties back into use, and working with landlords to increase access to low cost home ownership as well as rented accommodation for customers.

**Actions:**

- To increase the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation that the Council have access to for customers
- To develop pathways and increase access to move on accommodation from supported accommodation
- To annually review the temporary accommodation availability and demand
- To improve relationships with private landlords and develop an improved landlord offer to encourage acceptance of our clients into the private sector
- To promote and facilitate access to low cost home ownership and affordable rent as alternative housing options

6.9 **Objective 3 – Maximise and maintain partnerships to ensure appropriate tailored support**

The strategy recognises the important role that partners and stakeholders have to play in employing skills and delivering sensitive and tailored solutions to some of the issues affecting Ryedale's community.

**Actions:**

- Review our housing pathway and referral protocols (offender, hospital discharge, drugs and alcohol services, mental health, etc)
- Increase numbers of referrals sent through Duty to Refer from statutory and non-statutory agencies, to increase early intervention to prevent homelessness
- Maintain and develop relationships with organisations providing support to specific groups, to prevent and relieve homelessness and improve referral pathways and signposting
- Work with agencies, funders and commissioners to increase drugs and alcohol

services within the Ryedale area.

- In partnership with DWP and partner agencies increase employment and training opportunities for young people
- Review money advice, income maximisation, financial support and basic living provision available to residents and look at future funding provision from the council and external sources

6.10 **Objective 4 – Raise awareness of homelessness and housing issues across the district and improve access to the services in the district**

A need to raise awareness and provide information on the services provided within the department has been identified through the consultation process. This includes reviewing all aspects of communication, the information that we make available, how the service is promoted, how customers access the services and how we consult to obtain feedback.

**Actions:**

- Advertise the service on all platforms to inform agencies and the public about housing services
- Improve information available online so customers and partners are able to self-help and access information 24/7
- Increase the use of technology where possible and explore how and where advice is provided
- Implement a robust customer feedback and analysis system to continue to develop the service
- Review the communication and marketing plan
- Extend housing advice drop-in services throughout the district to cover the rurality of the area and improve equality of service provision
- Enable customers with additional needs to access our services
- Improve engagement with sections of the community who do not currently use our services by working with local employers, LGBTQ and veteran communities.

6.11 **Objective 5 – Continue to work strategically to maintain services and seek new opportunities for funding and partnership working**

Local authorities and their partners have worked under ongoing financial constraints for a number of years. Working collaboratively, for example by joint funding or joint protocols and processes, on early intervention and prevention is key to success. There are several services being reviewed over the next couple of years through North Yorkshire County Council and ongoing funding opportunities through MHCLG. We must focus on accessing appropriate funding to meet the targets of this strategy.

**Actions:**

- Work with Commissioners and providers to improve the availability of Drug and Alcohol services within Ryedale
- Work with NYCC in reviewing services that deliver specific young peoples' accommodation and support services within Ryedale
- Work with partners to provide and increase access to domestic abuse refuge accommodation within North Yorkshire
- Ensure that Housing Support Services within the Council are maintained and meet targets

- Work with NYCC commissioners and successful contractors, in partnership, on the provision of mental health accommodation and offender support services in Ryedale
- Improve links with probation services

## 6.12 **Objective 6 – End Rough Sleeping**

Rough sleeping is an area of significant national policy focus within homelessness, attracting funding and a clear aim to reduce and end rough sleeping. Ryedale's annual count figures have remained low, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to find quick housing solutions for all and between July 2019 and January 2020, 30 individuals who had slept rough or were at risk of doing so were assisted by the service. Following successful interventions over the past 6 months, MHCLG funding has been provided until March 2021 to continue to develop the rough sleeper pathway and provide sustainable tenancy support to ensure individuals do not return to the street.

### **Actions:**

- Refresh and implement a 'single service offer' based on the no second night out principles.
- Develop and embed a rough sleeping pathway across the district
- Continue to deliver tenancy sustainment work to prevent rough sleeping
- Increase knowledge across the district with both partners and the general population of how to seek help for a rough sleeper
- Create a rough sleeping personalised intervention fund
- Create an emergency bed space for Rough Sleepers

## **7.0 ONGOING REVIEW**

7.1 An action plan will be developed and presented to Strategic Management Board in April 2020 and then annually to detail what work will be done to achieve the specific targets for the upcoming year and will be used as a working document to monitor how we have met the targets. Performance indicators will also be identified to provide data quarterly.

7.2 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy will be used to consider where funding is required for investment and gaps in services that need to be explored with commissioners or other agencies. These gaps are expected to be funded using current monies within the homelessness budget and any future funding sources that become available.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Policy**

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all local authorities must have adopted a Homelessness Strategy Action Plan which is reviewed on an annual basis.

The provision of housing advice and support for homeless people forms a core element of the Council's Homeless Strategy and supports legal obligations around the prevention and relief of homelessness.

### **(b) Financial**

The recommendations within this report do not require 'growth' within the Councils homelessness budgets.

**(c) Legal**

The Council will be meeting its legal obligations by producing this strategy.

**(d) Equalities and Diversity**

The provision of services for homeless people will have a positive impact in terms of Equalities and Diversity issues. An equalities impact assessment will be completed.

**(e) Staffing Issues**

There will be no additional staff resource required.

**(f) Climate Change**

In April 2018, the Housing Options and Homelessness service introduced a new case management system and stopped printing application forms. This has led to a significant reduction in printing and paper use and an increase in the use of digital communication and document storage. Staff have reduced travelling to attend meetings, instead using conference calling. Also staff are more dynamic and flexible in their engagement with customers, reducing home visits and community based support, instead opting for drop-ins and more phone advice. This will continue to be reviewed alongside the Council's climate change strategy.

**(g) Planning**

No implications

**10.0 Next Steps**

10.1 The draft Strategy will go out to consultation with partner agencies, and stakeholders.

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**Annex 1: Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020-25**