



PART B: RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

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

**TITLE OF REPORT: HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY
SUMMARY**

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Policy and Resources Committee with a summary of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 Appendix 1 for consideration and comments before the summary strategy is presented to Full Council for approval.
- 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 Strategy for submitting to Full Council for approval.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 It is a requirement that there be a review of homelessness in the district and that a Strategy is 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 Strategy support the Council's priority of Sustainable Growth

- Minimising homelessness, improving the standard and availability of rented accommodation and supporting people to live independently
- The objectives are monitored through the Housing Service Corporate Plan

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 Sleeper 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 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 LEP area on homelessness issues and share effective practice in the implementation of its homelessness and rough sleeper strategy.

5.5 CONSULTATION

Consultation has already 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.

5.6 Following the draft Strategy presented to SMB and the Policy and Resources committee, it has been distributed for wider consultation to partner agencies and internal staff. There were limited responses but those that were received were positive and liked the inclusion of case studies. Information from the further consultation with partner agencies and internal staff has been incorporated into the strategy.

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

6.1 Ryedale's five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeper 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. This Strategy was due to be presented to committee in March, however due to the pandemic this has been delayed.

6.2 An action plan will be used as the work plan for the Housing Options team over the next 5 years in order to achieve what has been set out and identified within the homelessness review and strategy. Officers within the team will take responsibility for involvement in achieving the different actions. Annual progress will be reported to SMB and members. We will also identify specific performance indicators that can be reported back on a quarterly basis, in line with the action plan. These are currently being agreed as part of the Corporate Plan.

6.3 The Strategy has been updated to take account of the current situation with Covid-19

and the complete year statistics for 2019-20 have been inserted due to the delay with the pandemic, rather than part year.

The past 4 months have presented us with a large increase in both the numbers approaching for advice and assistance and homeless, but also because of the reduced housing options available to move people into. The number of enquiries to the service during the first 3 months of 20/21 has increased by 64%, with the number of homelessness assessments increasing by 100%. The number allocated temporary accommodation has risen, with a total of 28 households accommodated between April and June, this is an 87% increase on the previous year. Many of these would not ordinarily come under our duty to provide emergency accommodation for or may have been able to find other short term options with family or friends, but were accommodated as part of the Government's "Everybody in" directive. Whilst the findings in the Strategy are still appropriate for the needs in our area, we are also conscious of the potential need of more temporary accommodation and longer term accommodation for single people over the forthcoming year, should future lockdowns be imposed or the situation with the pandemic alter. Funding opportunities and operational developments will impact on the timescales to achieve the targets.

- 6.4 It is a fact that the prevention of homelessness is more cost-effective for authorities than dealing with its consequences, and 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.

6.5 **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 outcomes which Housing Services and our wider partners will aim to achieve. These have altered since the draft strategy was presented to SMB and committee. However, this is largely in relation to altering positioning within the document, rewording and making the outcomes SMART and achievable. Going forward, how we achieve some of them may also differ depending on the changing situation with Covid-19.

6.6 **Objective 1 – Working to prevent and relieve homelessness**

Prior to making a main 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.

Outcomes:

1. **Encourage landlords, letting agents and tenants to refer to our service early.**
2. **Continue to review and improve prevention tools to enable customers to sustain and remain in their current accommodation.**
3. **Work with registered social housing providers to address the high number of approaches for rent arrears.**

4. Increase access to specific and quality advice for customers.
5. Ensure customers who want to stay in their own home are given as much opportunity as possible to allow this to happen.

6.7 **Objective 2 – Ensure sufficient and appropriate accommodation is and will be available for people who are homeless or may become homeless**

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, ensuring security measures are improved if needed, or being 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.

Outcomes:

1. To increase access to low cost shared accommodation for customers
2. To develop and increase access to move on accommodation from supported accommodation.
3. To annually review the temporary accommodation availability and requirements.
4. Develop and extend clear and co-ordinated private sector offer to increase private rental options.
5. Continue to be an active partner in NYHC to ensure that the properties are made available to as many customers as possible.
6. Promote and facilitate access to all types of affordable accommodation options.

6.8 **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.

Outcomes:

1. Ensure those with complex or specific needs have tailored support suitable for them and vulnerable customer groups.
2. Increase numbers of referrals sent through Duty to Refer from statutory and non-statutory agencies to increase early intervention and prevent homelessness.
3. Maintain and develop relationships with organisations providing support to specific groups to prevent and relieve homelessness and improve referrals and signposting.
4. Work with agencies, funders and commissioners to increase availability of Drug and Alcohol Services within Ryedale.
5. Increase employment and training opportunities in partnership with DWP, economic development and partner agencies.

6.9 **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 supply 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.

Outcomes:

1. **Raise awareness of the Housing Options service within the Council, local community and with local agencies.**
2. **Increase the use of technology where possible and explore how and where advice is provided.**
3. **Implement a robust customer feedback and consultation analysis system to continue to develop the service.**
4. **Review the communication and marketing plan.**
5. **Enable customers with additional needs to access our services.**

6.10 **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.

Outcomes:

1. **Work with NYCC in reviewing services that deliver specific young peoples' accommodation and support within Ryedale.**
2. **Work with partners to provide and increase access to domestic abuse refuge accommodation within North Yorkshire.**
3. **Ensure that housing support services within the Council are maintained while increasing homeless prevention and supporting households in order to prevent repeat homelessness.**
4. **Work with NYCC commissioners and successful contractors on the provision of mental health accommodation and offender support services in Ryedale.**
5. **MHCLG funding and local funding options.**
6. **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.**
7. **Develop closer links with Public health and other health services provided within the district.**

6.11 **Objective 6 – Ending 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. 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.

Outcomes:

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

7.0 ONGOING REVIEW

- 7.1 Following on from this initial Strategy an annual update be provided to detail what work has been achieved in the previous year and what will be done to achieve the specific outcomes for the upcoming year. A plan will be used by the team as a working document to monitor how we have met the targets. Performance indicators are being developed through the Corporate Plan to provide data quarterly.
- 7.2 The homelessness 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 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. Housing are working closely with finance to monitor any Covid-19 spend and additional funding bids will be submitted for any ongoing Government funding. Below is an overview of the current financial information for the service.

	2019/20	2020/21
Prevention Budget	£85,000	£85,000
Flexible Homelessness prevention grant	£40,000	£40,000
Preventing Homelessness grant	£8,275	£0
New Burdens Funding		£21,000

Of the above funding the following allocations were made for 2019/20

- Training - £1,500
- North Yorkshire Home Choice administration and co-ordination - £5,000
- Positive activities - £1,800
- Homelessness Prevention Fund - £19,000
- Ryedale Citizens Advice (money and debt advice) - £12,000
- Ryedale Foodbank - £5,000
- Staffing – £40,000
- Temporary accommodation spend between £428 and £4374 over the past 5 years (budget 10K). This is likely to be much more for 20/21 though due to Covid-19 and data is provided directly to finance on a monthly basis.

In addition to the Government funding above we received £65,000 in funding from MHCLG for the Pathway Co-ordinator (Rough Sleeping and Mental health) and the supported lettings officer. This funding has been extended to cover the cost of both posts until the end of March 2021.

There has been additional funding provided by MHCLG for Housing departments to deal with the pandemic crisis. This is being assessed and monitored through finance.

(c) Legal

The Council is 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 has been 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 very large reduction in printing and paper use and an increase in the use of digital communication and document storage. Staff are not travelling to meetings due to the current situation, however many of these meetings are continuing remotely through video and conference calling and will likely continue this way moving forward. Also, staff are more dynamic and flexible in their engagement with customers, reducing home visits and community based support and instead opting for drop-ins and more phone advice. Since social distancing measures were introduced, there has been a further significant increase in the use of digital and telephone interviews. This will continue to be reviewed alongside the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

(g) Planning

Depending on the further development of Shared Houses to increase Affordable Housing in line with the Council's development plan, there may be planning implications for these depending on ownership and current use.

10.0 Next Steps

10.1 The finalised draft Strategy summary will be presented to Full Council.

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Annex 1: Summary of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020-25