

Report To:	CABINET
Date:	29TH JANUARY 2024
Heading:	HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING PREVENTION STRATEGY 2024-2029
Executive Lead Member:	CLLR TOM HOLLIS - DEPUTY LEADER – STRATEGIC HOUSING AND CLIMATE CHANGE
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	YES
Subject to Call-In:	YES

Purpose of Report

To present the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029.

Recommendation(s)

To approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024.

To approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Under Sections 1-4 of 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.

The Strategy must set out the authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

The Council's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy covers the period 2019-2024 meaning that a new Strategy is required for 2024-2029.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 have been produced by the Strategic Housing Team. A number of consultation activities have taken place with a range of stakeholders throughout the development of both documents, including attendance at the Outward Focus Select Committee in October 2023. The Committee voted in favour of the proposed priorities and asked to review annual action plans as they are developed.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 sets out 6 priorities for the Council to focus on to address homelessness in Ashfield:

1. Prevent as many residents as possible from becoming homeless, with a particular focus on those becoming homeless from a private rented sector tenancy or as a result of domestic abuse.
2. End rough sleeping.¹
3. Help as many residents as possible to move from one home to another without the need for emergency and temporary accommodation. Where it is needed, make sure it is good quality.
4. Provide a high-quality service that customers are satisfied with, and provide opportunities for customers to influence the design and delivery of services.
5. Encourage and support leaders of other organisations to do more to prevent homelessness.
6. Be a trauma-informed service, by looking after the wellbeing of our customers and staff.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 will be launched at a stakeholder event in April 2024 and annual action plans will be developed to deliver the above priorities. Delivery of the priorities and the action plan will be monitored by the internal Ashfield Homelessness Strategy Group.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options were identified as the Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to have in place a Homelessness Strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their District, which must be renewed at least every 5 years.

Detailed Information

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024 provides a detailed analysis of all forms of homelessness in Ashfield, the contents include:

- the Council's achievements in 2019-2024
- the national, regional and local policy context
- an overview of the Ashfield housing market
- future levels of homelessness

¹ Defined by the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities as preventing rough sleeping or ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

- the level of homelessness in Ashfield between 2020 and 2023
- resources available to prevent homelessness in Ashfield

Looking back to the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2019-2024, the Council's priorities were to:

1. Prevent as many people as possible from becoming homeless
2. Ensure options are available to ensure no one has to sleep rough
3. Help as many people as possible to move seamlessly from one home to another without the need for emergency or temporary accommodation
4. Provide a high-quality service that customers indicate satisfaction with

Some notable achievements from 2019-2024 include:

- Providing more support to all customers to maximise their income and improve their money management, with additional support for those in temporary accommodation
- 171 new affordable homes were completed in Ashfield between 2019 and 2022
- Significant external funding secured to provide support to secure and sustain a tenancy
- Homeless households have good access to social housing and loss of a social housing tenancy is a minor cause of homelessness
- External funding secured for 54 supported housing spaces
- Trialled new ways to improve access to the private rented sector
- Multi agency case conferences are well established
- Homelessness awareness sessions delivered in secondary schools
- Substantial external funding secured to support those experiencing rough sleeping
- High levels of satisfaction reported by customers

Analysis of homelessness data and statistics between April 2020 and March 2023 shows that:

- There has been a 21% increase in the number of Ashfield households being assessed for homelessness advice and assistance over the last 4 years.
- There has been an 85% increase in the number of main duty² accepted decisions in the last 4 years.
- Loss of an assured shorthold tenancy is the leading cause of homelessness in Ashfield
- Domestic abuse is a significant cause of homelessness in Ashfield
- Close to half of homeless households have one or more support needs, these are typically due to mental health problems, physical health problems and experiencing domestic abuse
- The majority of requests for assistance are from single female parent households and single male households.
- The majority of lead applicants are aged 25-34, and 85% are White British
- In 2022/23, 55% of prevention cases and 26% of relief cases either stayed in existing accommodation or secured alternative accommodation
- In 2022/23, of those who secured accommodation, 49% of prevention cases, 70% of relief cases and 85% of main duty cases moved into social housing
- Use of bed and breakfast to provide emergency accommodation has increased by 96% over the last 4 years.
- In 2022/23, a third of all households seeking assistance were placed in bed and breakfast.

² This is owed when the relief duty has ended where someone is homeless, eligible, has a priority need and is not intentionally homeless. This duty is typically 'discharged' with an offer of permanent accommodation.

- Use of bed and breakfast for households with families has increased by 340% in the last 4 years.
- No households with children have stayed in B&B for more than 6 weeks and no 16 or 17 year old customers have been placed in B&B.
- The average length of stay for all households in temporary accommodation is around 3 months; for households with children, it is around 4 months.
- Ashfield's use of temporary accommodation per 1,000 households is around half the regional rate and a quarter of the national rate.
- On average in 2022/23, 10 people were found rough sleeping each month, of which 3 were new to the streets.

Whilst forecasting the future levels of homelessness in Ashfield is difficult to do, the trends of the last 4 years clearly show rising levels of homelessness and demand for temporary accommodation. Given the nature of the national and local economy and housing market, this is not anticipated to improve without significant Central Government intervention and investment. In addition, the national housing policy context is rapidly evolving, which will affect, both positively and negatively, the supply of and demand for affordable housing. The Government Policy and investment position is unknown for 2025 onwards due to the pending General Election and so the delivery of this Strategy will be regularly reviewed to reflect the latest announcements.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

There are 3 priority areas in the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 that are linked to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029:

The Health and Happiness priority includes an ambition to address key health inequalities and prioritise areas and people in most need.

The Homes and Housing ambitions include:

- Housing development
- Tackling disrepair and poor housing conditions
- Reduce and preventing homelessness

The Safer and Stronger priorities are:

- A safer district
- Health inequalities

Legal:

The report and its recommendations ensures the Council complies with its duties pursuant to the Homelessness Act 2002. [RLD 02/01/2024]

Finance: There are no direct financial implications arising from approval of this Strategy. [PH 20/12/2023].

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A

General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Levels of homelessness in Ashfield are expected to rise and this may result in increased costs to the General Fund due to the increased need for temporary accommodation.	<p>Levels of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation are closely monitored.</p> <p>Additional temporary and short-term supported housing has been procured in the last 12 months to reduce the use of expensive bed and breakfast accommodation.</p> <p>Households in temporary accommodation are prioritised for Homefinder lettings to minimise the length of stay.</p>
Government funding for homelessness and rough sleeping prevention is only confirmed to 31 st March 2025 – the Council’s ability to deliver its strategic priorities are dependent on the funding available.	<p>An annual action plan will be developed in line with the resources available.</p> <p>All external funding opportunities are explored and maximised – the Council has a good track record in securing funding.</p> <p>Budgets are closely and regularly monitored</p>
There is a lack of housing options due to the shortage of affordable housing in Ashfield alongside increasing demand across all sectors, from all household types.	<p>Maximise the Council’s delivery of affordable housing and support other providers to do the same.</p> <p>Increase the focus and investment in homelessness prevention</p>

Human Resources:

There are no HR implications with this proposal [NM 4.1.24]

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from the approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029.

Any actions from the action plan requiring approval will be subject to an environmental and sustainability assessment as part of the approval process.

Equalities:

Nationally, homelessness disproportionately affects many groups with protected characteristics. Many of these groups are afforded priority need status in the homelessness legislation and therefore are positively impacted by the work of our Housing Options Team.

An Equality Impact Assessment and Action Plan has been completed covering both the Review and the Strategy. Overall, this Strategy will have a positive impact for those with a protected characteristic. However, the assessment has identified a number of areas for improvement, firstly in collecting and analysing data regarding the impact of homelessness and the assistance we provide to those with a protected characteristic. Secondly, in how we can improve the assistance we provide to those with a protected characteristic to ensure a positive impact for them. These actions will be included in the annual Strategy Action Plan. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment will be published alongside the Strategy and Review documents.

Other Implications:

None

Reason(s) for Urgency

N/A

Reason(s) for Exemption

N/A

Background Papers

A copy of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 is attached to this report.

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