

**Title of meeting:** Cabinet Member for Housing

**Date of meeting:** 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Subject:** Draft Homelessness Strategy

**Report by:** James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

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**1. Purpose of report**

1.1. To present the updated draft homelessness strategy which outlines Portsmouth's preventative approach to understanding and responding to customers and residents who face homelessness.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1. To endorse the council's draft Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023.

2.2. Instruct officers to undertake formal consultation on the strategy with relevant partners and stakeholders.

2.3. That following consultation, officers should return to councillors with a final strategy, and action plan, for agreement.

**3. Background**

3.1. There is a duty on all local authorities to provide an advice service to all homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 defines homelessness as a person who has no accommodation available for his occupation which they are entitled to occupy, have an express or implied licence to occupy, or can occupy by any enactment or rule of law. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it.

3.2. Homelessness impacts on all Portsmouth residents and those with a local connection to the city who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

3.3. Between April 2016 and March 2018, 2,382 homeless applications were made to the authority, with almost 50% resulting from a private rented sector tenancy ending.

3.4. A related, but separate issue is rough sleeping, and Portsmouth has seen a significant increase in the number of people sleeping on the city's streets over

the last decade. In November 2017, 42 people were identified as rough sleeping during the Annual Rough Sleeping Count. This strategy should be read in conjunction with Portsmouth's draft Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 - 2020, which was agreed by councillors on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

#### 4. **Legislative requirements**

- 4.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 gave housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their area and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy. The council's most recent homelessness strategy ran from 2008 - 2013.
- 4.2. An exemption from this requirement was granted for 'excellent authorities', who included Portsmouth, but this was revoked by the Local Audit and Accountability Act (2014) and all housing authorities are now required to publish a homelessness strategy.
- 4.3. Following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which introduced additional duties for the housing authority and its partner agencies, the council have drafted a new strategy which supports a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to the prevention and relief of homelessness.
- 4.4. To be effective, the homelessness strategy will need to be based upon realistic assumptions and be jointly owned with partners, who share in the responsibility for its delivery.
- 4.5. The strategic vision: "Working Together to Prevent Homelessness" supports the corporate plan to help customers and residents live healthy, safe and independent lives.

#### 5. **Draft strategy**

- 5.1. The draft Homelessness Strategy 2018-2020 is in Appendix 1 of this report. It sets out five main aims as follows:-
  - 5.1.1. **Prevent Homelessness**: Ensure a cohesive offer of early help is available to anyone at risk of homelessness
  - 5.1.2. **Reduce Rough Sleeping**: Align with the city's Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy
  - 5.1.3. **Relieve Homelessness**: Build on 'Rent It Right' to develop opportunities to provide good quality, affordable accommodation
  - 5.1.4. **Sustain Tenancies**: Develop partnership working relationships that help people build resilience
  - 5.1.5. **Direct the Strategy**: Offer dynamic direction to the strategy and its collaborative delivery
- 5.2. Working in partnership with other services, help and support will be offered at the earliest opportunity, developing personalised housing plans which are tailored to individual circumstances.

## **6. Reasons for recommendations**

- 6.1. To ensure that the council's homelessness strategy is up to date and meets the needs of the customers and residents of Portsmouth
- 6.2. To ensure the council continues to meet the statutory duties under Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and supports the most vulnerable in society.
- 6.3. Advice received from the equalities team is that because of the city-wide nature of this strategy, it is important that full and meaningful consultation takes place to ensure successful delivery. Consultation will begin on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019 with the publishing of the draft strategy on the council's website and will conclude on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Details of how to respond to the draft strategy are published in the draft strategy.
- 6.4. Consultation will take place with a range of stakeholders, including
  - 6.4.1. Health & Wellbeing board
  - 6.4.2. Safer Portsmouth partnership
  - 6.4.3. Housing associations
  - 6.4.4. Voluntary groups
  - 6.4.5. Providers of support services
  - 6.4.6. Private Sector landlord groups
- 6.5. In addition the draft strategy is already on the council's website, and consultation will take place with the public through the usual communications channels.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 6.1 The EIA process has commenced however a full consultation is necessary to understand the impact of this strategy. Therefore an EIA is not required at this time, but will be required to accompany the decision about the final strategy, following consultation.

## **8. City Solicitor's comments**

- 8.1. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their area. 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.
- 8.2. The strategy must be kept under review and regard had, when modifying it, the local housing authority must have regard to its current allocation scheme and tenancy strategy.
- 8.3. Before modifying a homelessness strategy, the authority must consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate.

8.4. Following legislative changes, in particular the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, it is appropriate for the City Council to review, consult on and modify its strategy. Non-statutory guidance in relation to local housing authorities' homelessness duties has recently been updated to reflect these legislative changes and provide an outline of the powers, duties and obligations on housing authorities - "Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities" 2018.

8.5. The Cabinet Member has authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report in order to meet the authority's statutory obligations.

## 9. **Director of Finance comments**

9.1. There are no direct financial implications as a result of approving the recommendations within this report.

9.2. The costs of the consultation will be met from the existing cash limited budget.

9.3. As a result of the consultation initiatives may be identified that require resources that cannot be met from the existing cash limit and officers will look at ways these initiatives can be funded from other sources.

Signed by:

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James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

## **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Draft Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023

### **Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Housing Act 1996	<a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents</a>
Homelessness Act 2002	<a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents</a>
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted</a>
Portsmouth City Council's Street Homeless and Rough Sleepers Partnership Strategy 2018-2020	<a href="https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=152&amp;MIId=4062">https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=152&amp;MIId=4062</a>

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/  
deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

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Signed by:  
Councillor Sanders  
Cabinet Member for Housing