



Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	30 November 2021
Subject:	Plan for the next Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
Report by:	James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Report Author:	Paul Fielding - Assistant Director - Housing Nicola Clannachan - Interim Head of Housing Needs, Advice & Support
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To outline the process for creating a new single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the city.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Approve the plan for the creation of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028, as outlined in section 5.2 of this report.
- 2.2. Approve the option to update the operational elements of The Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy by the end of the 2021/22 financial year, as outlined in section 6 of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1. There is a duty on all local authorities to provide advice services 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 expressed 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. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on English local housing authorities to formulate a **homelessness strategy** at least every five years. A review of

homelessness in a local housing authority area must take place prior to a homelessness strategy being formulated and published.

3.3. The current Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 for the city was an update on the previous strategy, and subsequently approved on 21 October 2019. This ensured that the City Council meets its statutory obligations in this regard until the end of 2023.

3.4. Rough Sleeping is a significant issue within the homelessness agenda. As part of a wider array of efforts to prevent rough sleeping the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)) has pledged to increase scrutiny of local housing authorities. A Rough Sleeping Strategy, plus an associated delivery plan, was published by Government in 2018. The strategy sets out an ambition to end rough sleeping by 2027, which has subsequently been updated to the end of this Parliament, which is considered to be 2024.

3.5. The City Council responded to this by approving the Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy 2018-2020 on 11 September 2018. This is overseen by monthly meetings of the multi-agency and cross-party Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group ('The Partnership Group')

3.6. Section 71 of the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy commits it to supporting local housing authorities to:

3.6.1. update local homelessness strategies and rename existing local homelessness strategies to 'homelessness and rough sleeping strategies'

3.6.2. ensure all strategies are available online and submit all strategies to MHCLG (now DHLUC)

3.6.3. account for the steps taken to deliver local strategies and re-publish annually the strategy action plan

3.7. There is now a requirement for both issues to be considered together and therefore the creation of a combined Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy is needed before the end of the current Homelessness Strategy period.

4. Purpose of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy

4.1. A **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** should be a single plan for all local agencies to concentrate their activities for tackling homelessness. As such, local housing authorities should be assisted by social services authorities and have the co-operation of private registered providers of social housing, to fulfil homelessness strategy duties. Other agencies should also make contributions.

4.2. In advance of creating the strategy, the guidance requires that there must first be a comprehensive review of homelessness within the city to evaluate the current picture

of service provision. Following this review, it will be possible to identify gaps in service or outcomes which the city wishes to do differently. From this the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** can be formulated and must concentrate on the following areas:

- 4.2.1. levels of homelessness
- 4.2.2. preventing homelessness
- 4.2.3. securing accommodation
- 4.2.4. providing support
- 4.2.5. resources.

4.3. The City Council must consider the statutory guidance on homelessness strategies. The objectives of a local housing allocations scheme and tenancy strategy should also be cross referenced when formulating a **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**.

5. Plan to create the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Portsmouth

5.1. The creation of the new **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** needs to be meaningful and provide real opportunities for those who are homeless and/or rough sleeping. To do this it must achieve the following:

- 5.1.1. Outline the long-term aspiration of the city towards homelessness and rough sleeping
- 5.1.2. Understand the background, issues and data (both local and national)
- 5.1.3. Reflect and direct the joined-up nature of services across the public, private and voluntary sectors

5.2. It is therefore proposed that the following plan is endorsed to create the new strategy.

- 5.2.1. Step 1 - Officers from Housing Needs, Advice & Support (HNAS) will outline the scope of the review into homelessness services.
- 5.2.2. Step 2 - Undertake an analysis of current data and system flow and identify the key agencies to be involved in the review.
- 5.2.3. Step 3 - Identify what information is missing and why it needs to be added into the review, then gather it. This may include research information; reviews of how other areas respond to these issues and/or surveys of relevant stakeholders (including service users). It is anticipated that this work will be complete by May 2022.

5.2.4. Step 4 - Combine any new information gathered into a completed review document. It is proposed that this is reviewed by both The Partnership Group

and The Health & Wellbeing Board to identify key themes for strategic consideration.

5.2.5. Step 5 - Officers will draft a **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** which addresses the issues found within the review, and present it for approval to the Housing & Preventing Homelessness Portfolio.

5.2.6. Step 6 - Once approved, the draft strategy will then be subject to formal consultation, which would need to take place outside of a purdah period.

5.2.7. Step 8 - Once feedback has been received from the consultation any amendments to the strategy can be made.

5.2.8. Step 9 - The final proposed strategy will be brought to the Housing & Preventing Homelessness Portfolio for approval.

5.3. The Partnership Group were made aware of this plan at their November meeting, and will be consulted upon this work on a regular basis to act as a critical friend, and to ensure that multi-agency and cross-party engagement is achieved.

5.4. The timetable for production of this plan will be influenced by a number of issues. This includes resources and current workload, purdah periods and partnership working with internal and external groups. The current homelessness strategy is currently in place until the end of 2023, and, with the issues outlined, it is anticipated that a new draft strategy will be brought for approval during 2022, with a final strategy being approved before the current strategy expires.

6. Interim Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy

6.1. Whilst the current Homelessness Strategy runs until the end of 2023, the Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy had an end date of 2020. In addition, services available for rough sleepers is very different and more wide-ranging since the Partnership Strategy was approved in 2018. Therefore, it is proposed that an interim update of this document is published. This will outline the current services and provide transparency on the current work until the work to review and update the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** is complete

6.2. It is therefore proposed that an updated Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy is brought back to councillors before the end of the 2021/22 municipal year. This would not fundamentally change the strategy but will update the operational details of the services offered.

6.3. This would be in the form of an information-only report and not be subject to formal consultation. However, The Partnership group would be involved in the creation of this document

6.4. There are two alternatives to this approach that are not recommended but may be considered for decision.

6.4.1. Not to undertake an operational update of the Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy. This is not recommended as it would leave the current strategy as live but being obsolete, and not recognise the significant changes in the service since the start of 2020.

6.4.2. Create a new Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy as a standalone document by the end of 2021/22. This is not recommended as the resources and time needed to complete this would risk the completion of the wider strategy and would not achieve the aim of Section 71 of the government's Rough Sleeping strategy to create a single strategic approach to these issues.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

7.1. A **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** is a statutory requirement, and a new strategy is required by the end of 2023. In line with the guidance, and for to give the best outcomes for the city, this should be created following a review of homelessness services in the city.

7.2. The planned full review and strategy, including relevant research and consultation, is likely to take 12-18 months to complete. This timescale takes account of current resources, workloads and the municipal cycle.

7.3. The current Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy is operationally out of date and can be updated to ensure that the current rough sleeping pathway is included. As it is non-statutory as a stand-alone document, and strategic changes are planned to be included in the wider review, it is proposed consultation is not required, but that councillors are updated through an information-only report.

8. Integrated Impact Assessment

8.1. An integrated impact assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix 1.

9. Legal Implications

9.1. Local Housing Authorities have a number of statutory duties in respect of homelessness within the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 included strengthened duties for councils to provide advisory services and introduced new duties to assess all applicants and take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness.

- 9.2. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, LHAs have strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all LHAs in England to publish a homelessness strategy every five years.
- 9.3. As set out above, the national Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018) and its accompanying delivery plan introduced the requirement for councils to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 9.4. The recommendations set out in this report will ensure these duties and requirements are met by the City Council.
- 9.5. It is within the Cabinet Member's authority to approve the recommendations sought.

10. Director of Finance's comments

- 10.1. The costs associated with drafting these strategies will be met from Cash Limited resources.
- 10.2. As the report suggest the Interim Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy may highlight the need to update operations, these will be financially appraised once those changes become known, and an appropriate funding source identified if required.

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Signed by: James Hill - Director for Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Integrated Impact Assessment

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:

Title of document	Location
Current Homelessness Strategy	Portsmouth City Council Homelessness Strategy
Current Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy 2018-2020	Street-Homelessness-and-Rough-Sleeping-Partnership-Strategy-2018-2020.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Report on the Street Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Partnership Strategy (Cabinet Member for Housing Decision meeting 11 September 2018)	Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy report.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Report on the homelessness strategy	Homelessness strategy report.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)



(Cabinet Member for Housing Decision meeting 21 October 2019)	
The Rough Sleeping Strategy (MHCLG Strategy) - August 2018	The rough sleeping strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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

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Signed by: