

West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Report No:	OAS/WS/19/008	
Reports to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 September 2019
	Cabinet	8 October 2019
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Sara Mildmay-White Portfolio Holder for Housing Tel: 01359 270580 Email: sara.mildmay-white@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Davina Howes Assistant Director (Families and Communities) Tel: 01284 757070 Email: davina.howes@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is included in the Cabinets Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is **RECOMMENDED** that, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) **Recommends to Cabinet the approval of the revised Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Appendix 1);**
- (2) **Notes the performance of the Housing Options and Homelessness Team in the evidence base (Appendix A) and makes any recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate;**
- (3) **Notes progress against the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan (Appendix B); and**
- (4) **Recommends to Cabinet the approval of the new Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy (Appendix C).**

1. Background / Context

- 1.1 In June 2018, West Suffolk councils adopted the Homelessness Reduction Strategy. This report sets out a review of the strategy and changes that have been made in response to new duties and requirements being placed on local authorities. The strategy will now be called the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

2. Proposals

Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023 (Appendix 1)

- 2.1 In August 2018, Central Government published a Rough Sleeping Strategy. The focus is on:
- (i) Prevention: which is at the core of the Homelessness Reduction Act;
 - (ii) Intervention: where people experiencing rough sleeping are supported with help to ensure it never happens again and;
 - (iii) Recovery: where sustainable accommodation and flexible support is given so people can maintain a stable home.

The Government's Strategy required that councils publish a Rough Sleeper Strategy. Whilst the Council's Homelessness Reduction Strategy (approved in June 2018) included actions to reduce rough sleeping, the document has been updated to reflect the new duty being placed on local authorities to adopt a rough sleeping strategy. Our commitment to tackling rough sleeping was reflected in the Strategy agreed in June 2018.

- 2.2 Furthermore, in March 2018 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government launched a £30 million fund to help areas with the highest levels of rough sleepers. West Suffolk bid for this funding and in August 2018 secured Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) grant to deliver targeted interventions that could be implemented quickly and make a real difference to the number of rough sleepers on the streets. In 2018/19, West Suffolk received £245,782 of RSI funding and £345,562 in 2019/20. Progress against these actions is included in the review of the delivery plan.
- 2.3 When West Suffolk made a bid for the RSI funding we were required to submit an RSI funding action plan. The seven actions included in that action plan have now been incorporated in the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy and can be found at 2.11 to 2.17 of the delivery plan.

Evidence base for the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Appendix A)

- 2.4 The development of the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy is supported by data and analysis that sets out the extent to which people in West Suffolk are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, assess the likely extent of homelessness in the future, what is being done and the resources available to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

- 2.5 From April 2018, local authorities have provided data on homelessness and rough sleeping to Central Government through a new reporting system. All of the data for 2018/19 has been submitted by local authorities, however only the first three quarters of 2018/19 have been audited and published by Central Government. The data attached as **Appendix A** therefore presents data for the first three quarters of 2018/19, which is the only audited and published data available. This data reflects the new duties placed on local authorities through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Review of the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan (Appendix B)

- 2.6 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 brought in fundamental changes to the prevention and relief duties that has changed the work of housing teams. We have worked hard to implement those duties so that we can help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 2.7 When the Homelessness Reduction Strategy was adopted in 2018 a commitment was made to present Councillors with a review of the delivery plan on an annual basis. The delivery plan has been regularly monitored since it was adopted. The delivery plan is attached as **Appendix B** to the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy and it sets out the progress that has been made along with some challenges that are being addressed.
- 2.8 We have seen successes in a number of areas. Where data is given this is also provided in **Appendix A** to the strategy. The delivery plan contains detailed information and some key activities are listed below:
1. providing support with a focus on preventing and relieving homelessness to ensure that more people are able to maintain and secure a settled home. In West Suffolk 77% of those owed a duty had a successful prevention duty outcome (compared to 58% across England) and 48% had a successful relief duty outcome (compared to 44.8% across England);
 2. 62% of the successful prevention duty outcomes resulted in households staying in their existing accommodation (compared to 39% across England);
 3. the main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households was negotiation, mediation and advocacy at 55% in West Suffolk (compared to 9% across England);
 4. West Suffolk has a high percentage of households with a relief duty ending due to a successful relief duty outcome at 48% (compared with 45% across England);
 5. the number of rough sleepers across West Suffolk has reduced from 29 in 2017 to 22 in 2018. Note that Rough Sleeper Initiative funding had only been available for three months before the November count;

6. working with our statutory and voluntary partners to ensure that they provide the right support and advice in accordance with the Act;
7. agreeing clear pathways, referral routes and protocols with partners for the duty to refer;
8. implementing pathways for tackling homelessness, identifying risks early and promoting self-help and resilience and working with partners to provide services with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness;
9. supporting rough sleepers through use of Rough Sleeper Initiative funding by recruiting and establishing a Rough Sleeper Outreach Team, increasing accommodation options for rough sleepers, extending emergency accommodation provision with a support worker and undertaking a rough sleeper count every two months;
10. increasing accommodation options for vulnerable households including those who have experienced domestic abuse; and
11. supported customers and private sector landlords during the implementation of Universal Credit.

2.9 We have also faced challenges. A number of these are outside of our control but we continue to liaise with and influence our partners. We are working to address challenges in the following areas:

1. ensuring that floating support is available to help those in temporary accommodation to access services despite this provision being reduced. The contract has been extended until 2021 and we will continue to work closely with Suffolk County Council;
2. working with registered providers and the voluntary sector to increase access to accommodation including lodging schemes, shared accommodation, temporary accommodation and tenancies to support move on;
3. continuing to influence the provision of supported accommodation and support Suffolk County Council to manage its existing contracts (we are giving support and information to the post reviewing Housing Related Support); and
4. ensuring that the review of mental health services addresses the support needs of the most vulnerable, including specialist accommodation and outreach services.

2.10 We are currently resourcing the delivery of our priorities and actions through existing budgets and resources including the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) and Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding. We do, however, have a key issue in that FHSG and RSI funding is short-term funding which we are reliant upon to deliver our five-year delivery plan.

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy (Appendix C)

- 2.11 Following a Supreme Court judgment, local authorities have a duty to adopt a Temporary Accommodation Procurement Policy. This requirement was set out in case law stating that local authorities should be looking in advance at their temporary accommodation needs. Whilst West Suffolk has always planned ahead in this way, we now need to formally document our plans for providing sufficient temporary accommodation for our needs.
- 2.12 West Suffolk has in place an existing Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy that sets out how we will place households in temporary accommodation. We have taken these two policies to create one **Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy** that will be attached as **Appendix C** to the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The alternative option is to continue with the Homelessness Reduction Strategy in its original form. However, not incorporating rough sleeping in the way that we have means that we would not be consistent with the requirements of Central Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy.

4. Consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The Homelessness Reduction Strategy was the subject of public and stakeholder consultation through a workshop and online survey. It was not necessary to consult on the revised strategy although we have sought the advice of the Rough Sleeper Team at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

5. Risks

- 5.1 Not being compliant with the requirements of Central Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy. Members not receiving an update on progress against the delivery plan

6. Implications arising from the proposal

- 6.1 None.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 **Appendix 1** – Homelessness Reduction & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23.
Appendix A – Evidence Base
Appendix B – Delivery Plan
Appendix C - Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

8. Background documents

- 8.1 [Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018-2023 \(Approved June 2018\)](#)