

APPENDIX 4

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION & SKILLS)

5 MARCH 2024

BRIEFING NOTE RE: HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2024-2029

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Background

The Council's latest Forward Plan indicates that a report on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 4 April 2024. The report to Cabinet is still being prepared but bearing in mind the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets before 4 April, Councillor Dowd, Chair of the Committee, has requested that this briefing note be prepared to provide an outline of the matters to be considered by Cabinet. The information set out below provides an update.

Update Position

The Homelessness Act 2002, requires every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review in its Borough every 5 years, to develop and publish a Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy based on this review and to consult with other statutory and voluntary organisations.

This is Sefton's fifth review and builds upon the work of the first four carried out in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018. On this occasion, the review has been undertaken by the consultants, Imogen Blood & Associates.

The latest Homelessness Review report provides many conclusions and recommendations, which will form the basis of the delivery of this new Strategy. It is intended that these actions will need to be completed during the lifetime of this strategy from 2024 – 2029. The Action Plan will be a live action plan, to be agreed within the proposed governance arrangements, which will be continually reviewed and revised throughout the delivery of the strategy.

Cabinet Member Communities & Housing is being briefed for comment on the proposed Cabinet Report at the Cabinet Member's briefing in February, after which the Report will be presented to Cabinet in April 2024.

Success & Achievements from the last Strategy

The main achievements being:

- Move to consortium alliance of Providers and human learning approach to supported housing commissioning on 10-year contract.
- Shared, centralised system (MainStay) for assessments, placements and case management in partnership with Housing Options.
- Implementation of Homelessness Reduction Act and Duty to Refer.

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- Ongoing commitment to resourcing plus successful bidding has enabled:
- Dedicated lead for homelessness commissioning.
- Specialist roles, including recent expansion of Housing Options, clinical psychologist.
- Assertive outreach and emergency provision to tackle rough sleeping.
- Hospital in-reach/ discharge project in Southport.
- Expanded award-winning Riverside Dispersed Families and implemented Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme with single people.
- Alongside much relevant activity and resource in CVS/ statutory partners.

Consultation

The draft Homelessness Strategy was also subject to a 12-week consultation from 30th October 2023 to 21st January 2024.

The comments received have all been considered and will be incorporated into the Action Plan, where appropriate.

Suggested Priorities

The Strategy for the next five years sets out our approach for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping across the borough with three key priorities being:

- Improve Access to Accommodation
- Increased Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Focus on Support