

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	4 th April 2024
Subject:	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing)	Wards Affected:	All
Portfolio:	Communities & Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every Local Authority to publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years. This Strategy seeks to tackle all forms of homelessness, including those owed a statutory duty.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) The Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29 be approved
- (2) That the Head of Economic Growth & Housing, in consultation with Cabinet Member Communities & Housing, be given delegated authority to put in place a Homelessness Strategy action plan, which will help deliver the strategy and monitor delivery.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every Local Authority to publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years. The existing Strategy was published in January 2019 and is due to be renewed.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

The Homelessness Act 2002, makes it a legal requirement for every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review every 5 years, and to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on this review. The only options relate to the agreed contents of a Strategy.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Cabinet is asked to note the potential budget implications that would result from the commissioning of new proposed services recommended as a result of the Homeless Review. At present it is not clear how this additional financial burden would be met. Also,

the responsibility for these new services is across departments and not just with homelessness services.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs arising from the Strategy.

Implications of the Proposals:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): There are no revenue cost implications with adopting Sefton’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029. Cost implications will be considered on a case-by-case basis for any work relating to the delivery of the priorities highlighted in this document.</p>									
<p>Legal Implications: The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review every 5 years, and to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on this review. The current Strategy is now 5 years old.</p>									
<p>Equality Implications: The equality Implications have been identified and mitigated. An Equality Impact Assessment is available online.</p>									
<p>Impact on Children and Young People: No There are no direct impact for children and/or young people as a result of this Strategy.</p>									
<p>Climate Emergency Implications:</p> <p>The recommendations within this report will</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Have a positive impact</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a neutral impact</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a negative impact</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </table> <p>There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report. Any climate emergency implications arising from matters referred to in the Cabinet Member report will be contained in reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.</p>		Have a positive impact	No	Have a neutral impact	Yes	Have a negative impact	No	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
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Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p><i>Protect the most vulnerable:</i> Those who are homeless, and, those at risk of becoming homeless are among the most vulnerable in society.</p>
<p><i>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</i> Through the intervention by the Council and its partners at the most critical moment when residents are homeless or at the risk of becoming homeless in order to prevent further reliance on public sector support in the future.</p>
<p><i>Commission, broker and provide core services:</i></p>

The delivery of services which are based on the needs of the most vulnerable in society.
<i>Place – leadership and influencer:</i> Through the close working relationship with Liverpool City Region to deliver services that help deliver the 2030 vision of the borough. Through working with Sefton VCF Partners who provide homeless related services.
<i>Drivers of change and reform:</i> Through the understanding of the needs of the most vulnerable in society and change and reform of services in order to meet those needs.
<i>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</i> Help to prevent homelessness in Sefton has a wide-ranging positive impact for those most vulnerable in society by providing residents with the most basic form of need; housing.
<i>Greater income for social investment:</i> Not applicable.
<i>Cleaner Greener</i> Not applicable.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7575/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5675/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

A consultation plan in order to create the Homeless Review was approved by the Council's Consultation and Engagement Panel at its meeting in July 2023 and the results reported back to the Panel in November 2023.

The production of the Homeless Review has included a combination of a data exercise, looking at data past and present and consulting with a range of partners and service users. The consultation was a mixture of online and face to face, including a £10 voucher to anyone undertaking an in-depth interview.

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

Cabinet Member Communities & Housing has been kept informed regularly throughout the process also.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting.

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Appendices:

Appendix A – Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29

Background Papers:

The following background papers, which are not available elsewhere on the Internet can be accessed on the Council website:

Homeless Review (evidence base)

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 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 existing strategy is 5 years old and is due for renewal.

1.2 The latest Homelessness Review report provides many conclusions and recommendations, which will form the basis of the delivery of this new Strategy. An action plan will be developed and agreed with the Cabinet Member Communities & Housing following the approval of the recommendations in this report and will be drawn from recommendations in the Homeless Review and Homeless 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.

2 Success and Achievements from the last Strategy

2.1 The consultants reviewed the previous Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan and found that a number of positive achievements had been made by Sefton from 2018 to 2023.

2.2 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.
- 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.

3 Ongoing Governance arrangements to deliver the Strategy

- 3.1 The Review report contains a number of conclusions and recommended priorities. The majority of these will need to be addressed on an ongoing basis over the 5-year lifetime of the strategy.
- 3.2 The Homeless Providers Forum will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to help improve delivery of the commissioned services; inform future recommissioning of the homelessness services within the lifetime of this Strategy and ensuring the delivery of commitments in the Strategy and subsequent actions.
- 3.3 The implementation of some actions, particularly those with cross department and organisational responsibility that have resource implications, would need to be referred to Cabinet, relevant Cabinet Member or other formal decision-making body prior to formal implementation. Engagement with the Sefton Partnership infrastructure to ensure the commitment and delivery of these priorities in partnership with health colleagues is critical.

4 Consultation

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

- 4.2 The comments received from the Public and from Organisations within Sefton included,

'Within Sefton there are many brownfield sites that I am sure would be suitable for the development of 1-bed properties....., with the increase in population and decrease in available land, I would suggest that it is better to have 1-bed flats or houses without parking than it is to have homeless people. For example, "tiny houses" are surely better than nothing. There isn't just one perfect solution in this imperfect, unequal world.'

'It is unreasonable to (expect people to) suddenly withdraw from substances, and especially with alcohol may be dangerous. Such hostel accommodation not making provision for drug and alcohol use. I would thoroughly endorse the provision of wet hostel or accommodation where the use of alcohol and/or drugs is permitted (supervised). I would hope that Sefton would see a real need for this sort of accommodation and give this some more priority.'

'There is reference to Complex needs and palliative but not how this works with health and hospice offers.'

'Improve and increase daytime services including access to dentists and other health care professionals.'

'Move towards removing shared bedrooms in all accommodation.'

'Improve accommodation and high need specialist care for people with significant problems with addiction.'

'Increase the size of the floating support team.'

'Raise awareness of services provided by the floating support services.'

'Prevent more people becoming homeless through better sign posting.'

'Improve access to affordable housing.'

'Move people who are, or in danger of being homeless to a higher band.'

'Develop alternative models of care and support for those preparing to start work.'

'Place link works in additional appropriate locations such as job centres.'

5 Joint Priorities

- 5.1 Whilst there are no revenue cost implications with adopting Sefton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029, there are priorities within this Strategy which will require joint commissioning with other organisations and Council departments, as the responsibility does not sit solely with Homelessness Teams to deliver.
- 5.2 Homelessness funding at this time is uncertain, mainly due to a General Election being imminent and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities unable to confirm what funding streams that Councils will be able to access beyond the next financial year.
- 5.3 Cost implications will be considered on a case-by-case basis for any work relating to the delivery of the priorities highlighted in this document and separate approval will be sought with the relevant Cabinet Members that have responsibility for that portfolio area that is joint funding an initiative.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The Council are legally required to undertake a Homelessness Review and produce a new Homelessness Strategy every 5 years. The latest Review has been concluded, with a number of recommendations.
- 6.2 Once this Strategy is approved an action plan will be developed and, if approved by Cabinet, Cabinet Member Communities & Housing will be given delegated authority to finalise the action plan, which will help deliver the strategy.
- 6.3 The process to undertake the Homelessness Review, and to produce the Homelessness Strategy has been the subject of significant consultations. The views from a variety of stakeholders were sought as part of this homelessness review, this included both commissioners and services providers from the public,

and VCF sectors, together with a number of face-to-face interviews were undertaken with people who were experiencing homelessness.