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. In April 2018 the new Homeless Reduction Act 2017 came into force, so particular attention has been given to the requirements of this legislation when the new Homeless Strategy has been prepared.

Recommendation(s):

(1) The Council’s Homelessness Strategy 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 Homeless 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 September 2013 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
There are no direct costs arising from the Strategy. Should any actions contained within the Strategy have resource implications, then implementation
of those recommended actions will be the subject of future formal Council
decision making processes.

(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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are no direct implications arising.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal Implications:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality Implications:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The equality Implications have been identified and mitigated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Equality Impact Assessment is set out in Appendix B of this report.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protect the most vulnerable:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Those who are homeless, and, those at risk of becoming homeless are among
  the most vulnerable in society. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission, broker and provide core services:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The delivery of services which are based on the needs of the most vulnerable
  in society. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place – leadership and influencer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers of change and reform:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Through the understanding of the needs of the most vulnerable in society and
  change and reform of services in order to meet those needs. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greater income for social investment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cleaner Greener:

Not applicable

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?
(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD.5465/18) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD 4590/18) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

A Consultation plan was agreed by the Council’s Consultation & Engagement Panel. In the formulation of this Strategy a number of face-to-face interviews were undertaken with people who were experiencing homelessness. The Providers of Sefton’s Homelessness Services were invited to complete the Sefton Homeless Strategy 2018 – 2023 Stakeholder Consultation in March 2018.

The draft Homelessness Strategy was also subject to a 12-week consultation period from 7th September 2018 to 30th November.

Implementation Date for the Decision
Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Officer:</th>
<th>Neil Davies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number:</td>
<td>0151 934 4837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Neil.davies@sefton.gov.uk">Neil.davies@sefton.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendices:
Appendix A – Homelessness Strategy
Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

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

Sefton’s Homeless Review 2018

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 Strategy based on this review and to consult with other statutory and voluntary organisations. This is Sefton’s fourth review and builds upon the work of the first three carried out in 2003, 2008 and 2013. On this occasion, the review has been undertaken by the Consultant, Neil Morland. The existing strategy is 5 years old and is due
for renewal, though the formal Review exercise was completed prior to the 5-year anniversary date of September 2018.

1.2 This Strategy is written to take account of the requirements of the recent Homeless Reduction Act 2017, which places more emphasis on prevention of homelessness and the subsequent duties which have now been placed on the Housing Authority and Public Authorities.

1.3 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 2018 – 2023. 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.

2 Ongoing Governance arrangements to deliver the Strategy

2.1 The Review report contains a large number of conclusions and recommendations. The majority of these will need to be addressed on an ongoing basis over the 5-year lifetime of the strategy.

2.2 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.

2.3 The implementation of any actions, particularly any with resource implications, would need to be referred to Cabinet, relevant Cabinet Member or other formal decision-making body.

3 Conclusion

3.1 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 large number of recommendations.

3.2 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.

3.3 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. The draft Homelessness Strategy was also subject to a 12-week online consultation during the period from 7th September to 30th November 2018.
Appendix A – Homelessness Strategy

Sefton Homelessness Strategy
2018 - 2023

September 2018

Commission by: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Formulated by: Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd
Sefton Council
Sefton Borough Council, a metropolitan district, was founded in 1974. The Council is a member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority, and Merseyside Police & Crime Panel.

Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd
Established in 2011, Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd provides specialist advice on homelessness and housing allocation to public authorities, voluntary organisations, and others, throughout Great Britain. Our ethos is to provide efficient and quality services that are value for money. Our ambition is to reduce housing inequalities by improving social policies and practices.

Acknowledgement
This strategy was commissioned and funded by Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. Our thanks go to Neil Davies and Alistair Malpas from the local authority who provided invaluable assistance. We are grateful to everyone who generously inputted into this report. We wish to acknowledge the important contributions made by Kate Gascoigne and Liz Griffiths.

Disclaimer: All views and any errors contained in this report are the responsibility of the author. The views expressed should not be assumed to be those of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council or any of the persons who contributed to this Strategy.
1. Introduction

The approach taken to formulating this Homelessness Strategy, the fourth adopted by Sefton Council, complies with the obligations explained in the Homelessness Act 2002.

This Strategy seeks to tackle all forms of homelessness, including those owed a statutory duty (typically families with dependent children, or vulnerable adults), but also people who are single, sleeping on the streets, or other in transient arrangements (e.g. sleeping on a friends’ sofa).

When formulating this Strategy, regard was had to the conclusions of the recently published Sefton Homelessness Review, which assesses the levels and patterns of homelessness, plus identified gaps in knowledge and services, for the period of 2012/13 to 2017/18.

While the Sefton Homelessness Review paints a picture on homelessness locally, it is the Sefton Homelessness Strategy that sets out how to address the issues locally.

When formulating this strategy, other local and national plans for addressing homelessness were taken into account, as was the local Housing Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy plus regional housing strategies.

The results of the Sefton Homelessness Review, have been used to inform this Strategy. The Strategy has specific objectives for:

- Preventing homelessness
- Securing suitable accommodation for those who are, or may become homeless
- Providing support to those who are, or used to be homeless or at risk of becoming so, to prevent them from becoming homeless again

A range of actions have been identified for Sefton Council, along with other organisations involved with tackling homelessness. Specific actions have been included for people who are more at risk of homelessness. The actions contained in this Strategy take consideration of how Sefton discharges its homelessness functions. Also taken into account are the functions exercised by Sefton Council’s children and adult social care responsibilities. The Strategy promotes working across organisations and policy boundaries, to ensure social inclusion and equality of access to services.

Prior to finalising the strategy, a broad range of organisations have been consulted, including people that have experienced homelessness. Feedback has been used in the development of the strategy.

This strategy will be place for the period of 2018 to 2023.
2. National and Regional Homelessness Context

Decisions about homelessness law for England is the responsibility of the UK Government, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Governments is charged with leading on policy formulation and implementation.

2.1 Statistics

The UK Government published strategies for preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in 2011 and 2012. Nevertheless, statistics collected by all English local housing authorities show that homelessness has worsened. Between 2012/13 to 2017/18, there was;

- 6% increase in the overall number of people assisted by local authorities, with levels peaking at record high of 280,690 in 2013/14, 9% above a low of 256,670 in 2013/14
- 6% increase in the number of people whose homelessness was prevented, with levels peaking at a record high of 209,000 in 2013/14, 14% above a low of 181,900 in 2013/14
- 29% reduction in the number of people whose homelessness was relieved, with levels peaking at a high of 21,000 in 2012/13, 33% above the record low of 14,520 in 2015/16
- 6% increase in the number of people owed the main housing (homelessness) duty of assistance (s.193(2), part 7, Housing Act 1996), with levels peaking in at 59,110 in 2016/17, an increase of 12% in the record low of 52,290 in 2013/14
- 31% increase in the number of households living in local authority temporary accommodation, from the low of 55,320 in 2012/13
- 51% increase in the number of people sleeping rough, from a low of 2,309 in 2012.


Source: UK Government
These statistics show that more people are approaching local authorities for assistance, however the method in which they are being assisted has changed. The success of homelessness prevention activity continues to increase. However, fewer people are having their homelessness relieved. At the same time, more people are benefiting from the statutory safety net, applicable to those who have a priority need for accommodation and are not intentionally homeless. This has driven-up the number of people being provided with temporary accommodation. Meanwhile, the levels of people experiencing street homelessness has gone-up to a new high. The publication of homelessness statistics by the UK Government was criticised in 2015, by the UK Statistics Authority, for a lack of clarity. Subsequently, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government has arranged to make significant changes to how homelessness is monitored from April 2018.
2.2 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
As a consequence of the increase in homelessness, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee launched an enquiry into homelessness in December 2015. The Committee concluded that, the cost and availability of housing has pushed the problem of homelessness to such a level that a renewed Government-wide strategy is needed.

A Homelessness Reduction Bill was produced following the inquiry into homelessness, which subsequently became the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. From April 2018, a number of new duties were introduced, including:

- Assessment of all eligible applicants’ cases and agreement a plan to meet housing and support needs
- To relieve homelessness for anyone who is homeless as defined by law
- To help to secure accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened homelessness
- For public authorities to refer cases of homelessness to a local housing authority

2.3 Homelessness Prevention and Relief
Local authorities have voluntarily carried-out activities to prevent and relieve homelessness since 2003 onwards. A range of discretionary initiatives have been used to assist people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Any casework action that has been taken, is done so outside any legal obligation to do so. The UK Government recognises three forms of homelessness prevention:

- Early Prevention - Making accommodation and support available before crisis point.
- Pre-Crisis Prevention - Advice and proactive intervention to allow time to move to alternative accommodation.
- Preventing Reoccurring Homelessness - Support to ensure tenancy sustainment, avoid repeat homelessness.

In 2012/13, the split between people being helped to remain in their existing homes verses being helped to obtained alternative accommodation was 52/48 respectively.

The most common casework action taken to prevent homelessness, by helping people to remain in their existing accommodation, include:

- 12% - resolving housing benefit problems
- 10% - assistance to remain in private rented sector accommodation
- 6% - debt advice

The most common casework action taken to prevent or relieve homelessness, by assisting people to obtain alternative accommodation, include:

- 28% - private rented sector (with or without use of a landlord incentive)
- 24% - allocation of social housing
- 17% - hostel or house of multiple occupation
Casework action associated with housing benefit problems has doubled in recent years. During the same period the number of people whose reason for loss of their last settled home is due to the end of assured shorthold tenancy has increased to become the main reason for homelessness, accounting for 31% of cases in 2016/17. The National Audit Office, reported in 2017 that a succession of reforms to welfare benefits entitlements, implemented by the UK Government, are not coincidental. The report criticised the lack of a joined-up Government strategy for tackling homelessness.

2.4 UK Government Priorities
The UK Government has received criticism about rising levels of homelessness and lack of a coherent strategy for tackling the problems from the UK Statistics Authority (in 2015), the Communities & Local Government Select Committee (in 2016), the National Audit Office, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, and the Commons Public Account Committee (all in 2017).

Subsequently, the UK Government made a manifesto commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. A taskforce has been assembled to provide advice on the formulation of a national strategy. Piloting of the Housing First approach to help people stop sleeping rough has been announced, which includes the Liverpool City Region. A Rough Sleeping Initiative was launched at the end of March 2018, this involves a cross-disciplinary team of made up of experts from the homelessness sector. A new strategy for ending rough sleeping in England is due to be published by the UK Government in July 2018, focusing on the themes of prevention, intervention and recovery.

The UK Government has allocated a substantial sum of funding to help tackle homelessness. During the present spending period (2016/17 – 2019/20), £1.2bn will be awarded to local authorities and voluntary organisations.
The UK Government has established a Homelessness Advice and Support Team, offering support to local authorities. A new statutory code of guidance and secondary legislation has been published. The National Homelessness Advice Service has delivered funding to frontline staff. A new Duty to Refer cases of homelessness will come into force from October for specified public bodies, to help identify and assist people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

2.5 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
The strategic Combined Authority covers the Merseyside Metropolitan County, plus Halton. While the legal responsibilities for homelessness remains a matter for national and local governments, there are positive opportunities to collaborate with the other Merseyside LA’s and the Combined Authority to tackle homelessness issues. Steve Rotherham, the Elected Mayor of the Liverpool City Region made a manifesto pledge to tackle homelessness and street sleeping. A homeless advisor was appointed shortly after his election and more recently a strategic lead for homelessness has been appointed to the Liverpool City region Combined Authority. The Combined Authority has already backed a report published by Crisis, calling for adoption of the Housing First approach across the City Region. Subsequently the Government has awarded £7.7m to the Combined Authority to carry out a Housing First Pilot, together with £2.2m for a homeless Trailblazer initiative.

Housing First is a system of support for homeless people with high and complex needs which is designed to deliver a sustainable exit from homelessness, improve health and well-being and enable social integration. Housing First uses ordinary housing, such as private rented or social rented flats and is designed to house formerly homeless people with high needs in their own, settled homes as quickly as possible and to provide the support they will need to sustain an exit from homelessness in their own home.

The Trailblazer initiative seeks to develop initiatives to tackle rough sleeping across the sub-region, as well as put in place local initiatives for early intervention and prevention of homelessness.

There will be inter-dependencies between Trailblazer and Housing First given that there will be common stakeholders and complementary services and common objectives. The LCR sees these two funds as being wholly complementary and will manage them accordingly.
3. Local Homelessness Context

3.1 Sefton Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018
Sefton’s previous Homelessness Strategy, for the period of 2013 – 2018, saw a number of actions delivered to reduce the levels of rough sleeping, this included introduction of services offered to people sleeping rough. Actions to prevent homelessness included the re-introduction of home visits for people at risk of homelessness. Actions to ensure that sufficient accommodation is available to tackle homelessness included a review of all supported accommodation and commissioning of new services. Alongside this Emmaus Society were supported to deliver new accommodation with employment/training for homeless people in Seaforth. Actions to provide support, information, advice and assistance to tackle homelessness included a review of tenancy support provision, and commissioning of new services. Actions to make available the required levels of resources for tackling homelessness included continued investment in homelessness services by the Council.

3.2 Levels of Homelessness
Homelessness decisions taken by Sefton Council over the last six years have remained relatively stable, except for a slight reduction in 2013/14 and 2014/15, and then there has been a large increase in 2017 – 2018. White single men aged 25-44 years of age represents the most common characteristic of households making an application for homelessness assistance.

Chart 5: Homelessness decisions, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sefton Council

Just under a quarter of all children in Sefton are living in poverty. Just over a quarter of all people aged 16-64 years living in Sefton are economically inactive. The ratio of house prices to earnings is 6.59 times for Sefton households. Future levels of homelessness are likely to increase due to economic and housing market factors. House price to earnings ratios are of particular concern, meaning many people will not be able to afford to buy a home, putting further pressure on an already limited supply of affordable housing.
3.3 Resources for tackling homelessness

Sefton Council’s own spending on homelessness is complimented by grants received from the UK Government. £1.4m is budgeted from Sefton Council’s own funds, the contribution from UK Government has increased by 32%.

Table 1: UK Government Homelessness Funding Allocations to Sefton Council, 2016/17 – 2019/20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness Grant</td>
<td>£346,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Homelessness Support Grant</td>
<td>£505,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness Reduction Act 2016 New Burdens Grant</td>
<td>£163,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£505,476</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UK Government

The Local Authority employs 12 people full-time staff with the skills to administer homeless duties, nine permanent posts are being complimented with three additional temporary positions. If future levels of homelessness increase as predicted, more resources will be needed to perform the public law responsibilities.

A recent IT upgrade has been installed to aid administration of homeless functions, which will help to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Sefton Council's Homelessness Service.

3.4 Activities to Prevent People Becoming Homeless

Some early homelessness prevention activity is currently taking place to help people who are more at risk of becoming homeless, by a number of public authorities. However, not enough is being done to help people leaving prison, and those who are vulnerable adults. Existing arrangements exist to help a number of other vulnerable groups, but these require updating with opportunity to consider improvements that could be made to these arrangements for how people leaving care, hospital and escaping domestic abuse are
helped. Sefton Council has effective (protocol and service) arrangements for to help children aged 16 or 17 years of age who are at risk of homelessness.

Sefton Council’s Homelessness Service is undertaking limited pre-crisis homelessness prevention activity. This is primarily concentrated on helping to obtain alternative accommodation. Much more needs to be done to help people remain in existing accommodation, whenever this is safe to do so.

**Chart 7: Homelessness prevention casework activity outcomes, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOMELESSNESS PREVENTED: EXISTING HOME</th>
<th>HOMELESSNESS PREVENTED OR RELIEVED: ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sefton Council

### 3.5 Activities to Securing Accommodation for People Who Are Homeless

Temporary accommodation provided or commissioned by Sefton Council to homeless applicants has increased by 24% during the past five years, however the actual number remain low. The number of single males and those with mental ill health is far above rates elsewhere. Most people move on from temporary accommodation within 6 months.

Sefton Council’s Homelessness Service undertakes very limited homelessness relief activity. There is limited affordable private rented sector accommodation for people having to claim help with paying housing costs. Demand for social housing does not match the supply available. Two-bedroom bungalows have the highest number of bids, three-bedroom flats have the lowest number of bids. The administration of allocating social housing is performed by One Vision Housing on behalf of the local authority, with the policy for controlling this process is jointly agreed with five neighbouring local housing authorities, plus more than 20 social landlords. These arrangements would benefit from being reviewed, to ensure they remain effective, value for money and a quality service is provided. The housing allocation policy would benefit from being checked to ensure compliance with the law. This should include a review of any barriers to social housing experienced by homeless clients.
3.6 Activities to Support People Who Are, or Have Been, Homeless

Statutory homeless households are primarily single males, with mental illness who became homeless due to others no longer willing to accommodate them. This makes Sefton a significant outlier to the rest of the country.

A number of voluntary organisations are commissioned by the local authority to provide accommodation-based and floating support for single homeless people, people with a history of offending and people with a substance misuse problem. Single homeless people living in supported accommodation stay on average between 99 to 231 days. Accommodation-based support housing is reliant on shared and communal living arrangements, in often older properties that can't be described as psychologically informed environments that are conducive to recovering from the experience of being homeless, although there is recognition of improvements that providers have made to the quality of this accommodation in recent years.

Floating support provision is taking longer to achieve the standard of outcomes being achieved by accommodation-based schemes. A light touch performance monitoring and contract management regime is in place to oversee the delivery of these services.

Sefton Supported Housing Group, consortium of voluntary organisations, operate a range of accommodation-based support services for single homeless people, with supported housing located in Southport and Bootle. The consortium members consist of Bosco, Excel Housing, New Start, and Venus. Outcomes achieved for people living in the supported housing are monitored by Sefton Council, to ensure contracts are value for money, delivery quality support and are operating efficiently. Support providers are monitored against four key outcomes that people in receipt of support are expected to achieve whilst in receipt of support. Typically, positive outcomes are reported for economic wellbeing and enjoying achieving, with more mixed outcomes being reported for being healthy and staying safe.

The Council should review its commissioned services over the lifetime of this strategy to ensure they meet needs in the most appropriate way.
People experiencing street homeless are concentrated in Southport, assisted via numerous community-based initiatives. Alongside this are numerous incidents of anti-social ‘street activities’ such as begging, and drinking, which distort the true levels of rough sleeping.

People throughout the borough are likely to be experiencing hidden homeless. No specific services are commissioned to tackle hidden homelessness, and not enough information is collected on the scale of this form of homelessness.

3.7 Consultation with stakeholder and service users
Stakeholders and service users agreed that social housing was the best housing option for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Stakeholders believed that more needs to be done to prevent homelessness, service users wanted more housing to be available to help those who are already homeless.

3.8 Findings
The local authority could do more to monitor the current and future levels of homelessness. Better sharing of this intelligence would lead to a greater understand of the scale and nature of homelessness in Sefton, and assist policy making.

Research needs to be carried out into why there is such a high prevalence of single homeless males with mental ill health in Sefton.

An increase in early and pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities are required. This will help to better target people more at risk of homelessness, plus help people to remain in their existing accommodation or secure alternative accommodation prior to becoming homeless.

Additional accommodation is needed for people who are experiencing homelessness. Further incentives to encourage private landlords need to be expanded and developed. The rules and practices for allocating social housing would benefit from being reviewed.
A dispersed provision of temporary accommodation would be better than current arrangements, which concentrates this provision in the Bootle area. In future temporary accommodation should be located as near as possible to a persons’ last settled address, with opportunities for converting temporary into permanent being facilitated. This accommodation could be procured by the local authority and/or a third-party agent, from social and private landlords, and be managed by a local authority and/or a third-party agent. Floating support should be provided to all occupants of temporary accommodation.

Commissioning of supported housing would benefit from building on the existing consortium already in place and being more housing-led. The current provision of supported housing services is not personalised enough. The model relies on specific separate institutions which segregates people away from the wider community. This approach often dwells on people’s deficits, and negatively focuses on the challenging behaviour sometimes associated with being homeless, rather than addressing the poverty people are experiencing. A proposed future provision of supported housing homelessness specific services, would be housing-led, primarily based around the Housing First approach, but having mixed range of accommodation to cater for all types of needs. Whilst a Housing First model will be pursued, it is unlikely to replace all existing temporary accommodation over the lifetime of this strategy, as it is more likely to work alongside current provisions within the borough but not entirely replacing them. The method is based on what works to tackle multiple exclusion:

- Personalised support – individually-tailored support that is open-ended, persistent, flexible and co-ordinated
- Mainstream housing – social or private rented housing as an option as far as possible
- Reintegration – Support to socialise and work in ordinary mainstream social settings
- Asset-based – Identifies and nurtures people’s strengths and assets, as well as addressing their needs
- Poverty Informed – Directly tackles the financial and material hardships that cause homelessness

Street homelessness services need to concentrate on getting people into accommodation and getting them the right support. The current provision has too much of a reliance on volunteers who are seeking to improve the dignity of people sleeping by offering free food, clothing, bedding and showers. While this helps people to feel more comfortable when sleeping rough, it doesn’t always help to end the need for people to sleep rough. The day services on offer are well intentioned but often create a dependency and distract from the real goal of getting people off the streets. The accommodation being offered to people sleeping rough isn't appealing to many, and even when there is a willingness to be referred, rules on exclusions can prohibit some of them from accessing this provision. A multi-disciplinary team of professionals from voluntary organisations will be best able to make contact and diagnose the support needs of people experiencing street homelessness and to assist them to broker access to mainstream services. This should include workers who have specialist knowledge or skills in homelessness law and housing advice, mental illness, substance dependency, offending behaviour and sexual health. Initial help should focus on securing short-term emergency accommodation (for a couple of days or weeks at the very most), until more mainstream accommodation can be obtained, in which they can recover from their experience of being homeless. Awarding each person an individual budget that
they control the spending of, will help them to purchase the items they need to help get them off the streets and remain indoors. Enabling assistance from a peer mentor, will provide the additional encouragement to live a more sustainable a way of life.

This package of support could be funded via the integration of housing, health, social care, and criminal justice budgets. Alternatively, or additionally, funds could be raised by issuing a social impact bond, which has proven successful in Greater London.

A better understand of the scale and nature of hidden homelessness is needed, so specific services can be commissioned. No official statistics are collected in Sefton, or elsewhere in the UK, about the number of people experiencing hidden homelessness. However, the London Assembly has forecast that the levels are 13 times greater than those who are street homeless. A response to hidden homelessness should focus on:

- Prevention
  - Awareness raising about hidden homelessness
  - Risk assessment of people more likely to experience hidden homelessness
- Relief
  - Targeted advice for people who are experiencing hidden homelessness
  - Help to obtain accommodation
- Support
  - To escape assault and exploitation
  - To transition from childhood to adulthood
  - To identify as LGBT
  - To recover from domestic abuse

Light for Life is one the few services that consciously offers services to those experiencing hidden homelessness, plus collects some intelligence on scale of this form of homelessness.

The local response to hidden homelessness should be formalised so that better solutions can be put in place to prevent and relieve it for people from Sefton. Attention should be given to the needs of females in parts of the borough, where there is a need for additional specific targeted housing related support for single women without families. Females will often remain in housing situations that could see them legally defined as homeless, but they remain hidden.

Consultation with people who are, or have been, homeless should be carried-out more frequently.
4. Delivering this Homelessness Strategy

4.1 General Principles
All of the approaches, as set out below, are recommended for the local authority to undertake. This will allow Sefton Council to deliver this Homelessness Strategy in the most appropriate and effective manner.

The delivery of the strategy requires close working between housing services, adult social care services, children services, all of which are located within Sefton Council. These sections of the Sefton Council are required in law to take responsibility for tackling homelessness.

Social landlords have regulatory responsibilities to assist local authorities with their homelessness functions. Therefore, these organisations are also expected to play an active role in the delivery of the strategy.

Throughout duration of this strategy, Sefton Council will seek to build stronger relationship between departments and agencies, to foster a multi-agency commitment to deliver of the strategy. Sefton Council is especially keen to ensure involvement from the voluntary organisations, along with co-operation with a wide range of other public authorities (e.g. Prisons, NHS Trusts). Sefton Council will frequently confer with people who have experience of being homeless, to get their views about what works, any barriers to service and any suggestions for improvements.

4.2 Corporate Commitment
Progress towards tackling homelessness and achieving the objectives of this strategy will be reported to the Sefton Council’s Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing. Annual service plans should have clear responsibilities for tackling homelessness, linked to chief officers.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole. They allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern. These lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery. The Committees also monitor the decisions of the Cabinet.

The Council’s Overview & Scrutiny committee of elected councillors may also scrutinise the delivery of the homelessness strategy over its lifetime. They might consider a report on (i) levels of homelessness, (ii) activities on preventing homelessness, securing accommodation and providing support, (iii) resources for tackling homelessness.

4.3 Homelessness Service Providers Forum
A Homelessness Service Providers Forum will be used to oversee the delivery of the Sefton Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. The Group will meet every three months to (i) review the levels of homelessness, (ii) consider the activities for preventing homelessness, securing accommodation and providing support, and (iii) coordinate the resources for tackling homelessness. The Group will be responsible for annually updating the Plan, to ensure it
remains relevant. Membership consists of the Sefton Council’s strategic housing officers together with external agencies (commissioned and non-commissioned) who provide services to resolve homelessness.

The Forum will be chaired by the lead Officer with responsibility for local housing authority functions. Lead officers with responsible for public law functions and/or funding of services that affect homelessness may join the membership of the Group, from the following business areas:

- Adult social care
- Children services
- Public health
- Community safety
- Housing benefit
- Plus, at least one representative of local social housing providers

Membership of the Forum could also include all other agencies who make a contribution to resolving homelessness:

- Any other public authority
- Voluntary organisations
- Any other interested persons (including those with experience of being homeless)

Homelessness Strategy Task & Finish Groups will be established as and when needed, to accomplish specific tasks from the Sefton Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. Membership will consist of any relevant public authority, voluntary organisation or other person that attends the Homelessness Forum. These groups will be for a fixed term of no more than 12 months. Specific action plans will be formulated to control the work of any such group.

The Forum will also be the vehicle to recruit interested parties to participate in Homelessness Strategy Task & Finish Groups.

**4.5 Service User Involvement**

A panel of service user could be assembled annually to review the progress of delivering the Sefton Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, plus be consulted about the priorities for the year ahead. Their know-how will be used to ensure the activities carried out will have a relevant impact on the lives of those who it is intended to benefit.

Additionally, an annual service users survey will be carried-out, to seek views of what’s working well and what could better in respect of the advice and assistance they receive to prevent or relieve homelessness.
Diagram 1: Sefton Homelessness Strategy Governance Structure

- Cabinet Member
- Scrutiny Committee
- Homelessness Forum
- Service User Engagement
5. Action Plan

Once the Homelessness Strategy is finalised, following consultation, the Council would propose to put in place an Action Plan to help deliver the objectives and key actions identified.

5.1 Homelessness Review Findings
The Review of Homelessness in Sefton (July 2018) assessed the current context of homelessness in the Sefton local authority area. An in-depth analysis was carried out of the:

- Current and future levels of homelessness
- Resources available to tackle homelessness
- Activities carried-out to
  - prevent homelessness
  - secure accommodation for people who are or maybe homeless
  - provide support for people who are or have been homeless

The Review included assessment of needs of people who experience statutory, single, street and hidden homelessness, such as persons who have become intentionally homeless, as well as those who do not have a priority need for accommodation. This Strategy features actions that will benefit the four forms of homelessness described above. This would include actions to tackle anti-social behaviours often associated with rough sleeping, in addition to recommissioning and redesigning of supported housing provision and services, so that in the future it is housing-led. Particular focus would be given to remodelling supported housing.

The Review identified what services worked well, for example help for 16/17-year-old children who are at risk of homelessness, as well as what provision could be better, for example the procurement and management of the Council’s own temporary accommodation so that this provision is dispersed across the borough, instead of being concentrated in one location. Actions for tackling youth homelessness and securing a suitable supply of temporary accommodation feature in the Strategy Action Plan.

The Review also covered staffing arrangements, which will need to be re-evaluated 12 months after enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, plus funding for which Sefton Council (along with neighbouring local authorities) will need to work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to pilot the ‘housing first’ approach across the Merseyside and Halton area.

5.2 Homelessness Strategy Objectives
Taking a lead from the primary areas covered by the Review, the following objectives would be adopted for this Strategy:

1. Monitor the current and future likely levels of homelessness
2. Resource activities to tackle homelessness
3. Prevent homelessness
4. Secure accommodation for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
5. Support people who are, or have been, homeless
APPENDIX B

Equality Impact Assessment: Sefton Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2023

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Equality Act 2010 outlines how public bodies must have due regard to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.0 Protected Characteristics

2.1 Equality Act 2010 is clear that there are particular characteristics that are intrinsic to an individual against which it would be easy to discriminate. Section 149 (the Public Sector Equality Duty) lists the characteristics known as ‘protected characteristics’ against which we have to test for discrimination. These characteristics are gender, race/ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and disability.

2.2 The development and publication of the Homelessness Review and Strategy is a statutory duty that must be undertaken at least every five years. The purpose of the Strategy is to inform commissioning decisions across local services focussing on the needs of residents who may need to access homeless and housing related services, and to those who are or will become service users. Much of the emphasis of the Strategy is on preventative services to mitigate the negative impacts of homelessness for the individual, their family and the wider community.

2.3 As part of the development of this Homelessness Strategy In the formulation of the Homelessness Review and this Homelessness Strategy a number of face-to-face interviews were undertaken with people who were experiencing homelessness and the Providers of Sefton’s Homelessness Services were invited to complete the Sefton Homeless Strategy 2018 – 2023 Stakeholder Consultation in March 2018.

3.0 Identifying Impacts across protected characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected characteristic</th>
<th>Recommendations/mitigating actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>The review identified a high level of single male homeless applicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mitigating actions: Sefton will seek to develop a better understanding as to why there are exceptionally high levels of lone male applicants in temporary accommodation, relative the number of households with dependent children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>There were concerns raised about the availability of supported housing and housing related support for single homeless young People. Mitigating Actions:  There were concerns raised about the availability of better support before, during and after leaving care Sefton provide a range of homelessness prevention activities for people leaving care, however these practices and protocols could be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Whilst there was nothing of concern coming from the findings relating specifically to disability we are aware of the need to continue to ensure that our services are accessible to all members of the community Mitigating actions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Whilst there was nothing of concern coming from the findings relating specifically to race/ethnicity we are aware of the need to continue to ensure that our services are accessible to all members of the community Mitigating actions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion or belief</td>
<td>Whilst there was nothing of concern coming from the findings relating specifically to religion or belief we are aware of the need to continue to ensure that our services are accessible to all members of the community Mitigating actions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>People who are more likely to experience hidden homelessness are more likely to be of a young adult, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, and/or escaping domestic abuse Mitigating actions:  A greater understanding of hidden homelessness needs to be developed by Sefton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Reassignment</td>
<td>People who are more likely to experience hidden homelessness are more likely to be of a young adult, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, and/or escaping domestic abuse Mitigating actions:  A greater understanding of hidden homelessness needs to be developed by Sefton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy and maternity</td>
<td>Whilst there was nothing of concern coming from the findings relating specifically to disability we are aware of the need to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continue to ensure that our services are accessible to all members of the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigating actions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>