

ROUGH SLEEPING AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2021-2024

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive.

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 ('the 2002 Act') places a requirement on local (housing) authorities in England to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of a review of homelessness in their district. The development and production of this strategy follows the MHCLG code of guidance related to this duty
- 1.2 Stockport's current Homelessness Prevention Strategy was published in 2016 and is due to come to an end in March 2021. This proposed new strategy would replace the existing strategy and outlines the measures the local authority and its partners would take until 2024.
- 1.3 While the maximum period a strategy can cover is five years, it is proposed that a three-year period would be more appropriate as a result of the current levels of uncertainty and challenges posed by the Covid pandemic. It would also align with the proposed Council's revised Housing Strategy which would cover the same period, and the two are intended to complement each other with a particular focus on the supply of affordable accommodation.
- 1.4 Current Government guidance direct local authorities to specifically address the issue of rough sleeping in their strategies. This is in line with the government's target of eliminating all rough sleeping by 2027. The strategy linked to this report has an accompanying action plan (Appendix A) clearly outlining the key objectives over the next 3 years.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Over the past five years homelessness services both locally and across the country have had to adapt to some significant developments even prior to the major challenge presented by the current Covid pandemic.
- 2.2 The 2016-2021 period saw the introduction of the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act, placing additional duties on local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. The Council ensured that additional resources to implement the new Act were targeted at customer facing services through Stockport Homes Group (SHG), its operational provider, enabling an extension of money advice, access to the private sector and support for people facing homelessness.
- 2.3 Stockport has faced a particular challenge in relation to the affordability of accommodation which is exemplified by rent levels for a 2-bed room property

increasing by 19% over the past 4 years and house prices rising 29% over a similar period.

- 2.4 The increasing unaffordability of accommodation has been a contributory factor in the rise of rough sleeping both in Stockport and across the sub-region and the government has, through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, provided resources to enable services to respond to this specific issue.
- 2.5 The main reasons for homelessness remain unchanged within the Borough with almost half of all households losing their accommodation due to failed lodging arrangements or the end of private sector tenancies. Domestic abuse is the third main reason, and this will have a real focus over the course of the new strategy with the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill in 2021, with increased obligations for local authorities to address the issue.
- 2.6 The key challenges, achievements and outcomes of the 2016-2021 strategy have been outlined in the strategic Homelessness Review which accompanies this report and can be found in Appendix B.

3.0 Key Themes & Strategic Priorities

- 3.1 This strategy has been developed through consultation with a wide range of partner agencies and with people who have recent experience of using services in the borough.
- 3.2 On 16 September 2020 a range of these partners were brought together for a Health and Homelessness Stakeholder Day for the purpose of identifying the key issues that needed to be prioritised and tackled through the strategy.
- 3.3 This event helped to identify the following 5 key themes around which the strategy has been organised:
 - i) Access to Affordable Accommodation
 - ii) Prevention and Relief of Homelessness
 - iii) Improving the health of people who are homeless
 - iv) Meeting complex and multiple needs
 - v) Tackling Rough Sleeping

Recommendation

- 4.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on the report and proposed new strategy and action plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Andy Kippax on Tel: 0161 474 4319 or by email on andy.kippax@stockport.gov.uk

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