

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024

## CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, CULTURE AND LEISURE – COUNCILLOR ADAM BROWN

Report Title	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-27
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### List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Sarah Hall	22/02/2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	22/02/2024
Other Director	Jane Carr	22/02/2024
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	22/02/2024

### List of Appendices

#### Appendix A – West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2024-2027

##### 1. Purpose of Report

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To seek approval of the West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2024-2027).

##### 2. Executive Summary

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2.1 S 2. of the Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the duty on local authorities to:

- Carry out a homelessness review
  - Formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review.
  - The strategy must be published every 5 years, or sooner if circumstances change.
- 2.2 MHCLG's 2018 Ending Rough Sleeping Strategy required that by winter 2019 all local authorities must update their strategies and rebadge them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies; ensure they were available online and that local authorities report progress in delivering these strategies and publish annual action plans.
- 2.3 DLUHC's 2022 strategy committed government to Ending Rough Sleeping for Good, through a focus on prevention, intervention, recovery and a transparent, joined up system.
- 2.4 The West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed to provide an aligned and harmonised approach to homelessness prevention, relief, and joint working across West Northants. This will help in meeting the emergency and longer-term housing needs of the most vulnerable of West Northamptonshire's residents whilst protecting finances by reducing demand for temporary accommodation by ensuring more effective homelessness prevention and greater opportunities and support to help those who become homeless to move on to settled housing solutions.
- 2.5 A co-production approach has been adopted in the development of the strategy. The Homelessness Review has been developed and informed by data collation and discussion with internal teams and key partners, and a number of engagement and consultation events have taken place to ensure wider collaboration and involvement.
- 2.6 In accordance with the Local Government (Structural Changes) Transitional Arrangements (No.2) Regulation 2008, (regulation 12) (as amended coronavirus amendment regulation) West Northamptonshire Council requires a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by April 2024.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Approve the West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2024-2027)
  - b) Note that a robust Delivery Action Plan, aligned to the objectives and priorities set out in the strategy, will be produced with partners and will be presented to Cabinet in May 2024.

#### 4. Reason for Recommendations

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- 4.1 To accord with legislation which requires that a local authority formulate and publish a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and specifically comply with the Local Government (Structural Changes) Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulation 2008 which requires a harmonised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy to be published by the Council by April 2024.

#### 5. Report Background

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- 5.1 The three legacy authorities each had a Homelessness Strategy in place prior to vesting day. These need to be harmonised and aligned to provide a consistent service across the area of West Northamptonshire.

- 5.2 Following consultation with key partners and internal stakeholders we have identified four key themes for the new strategy, aligned to the government's 2022 Ending Rough Sleeping for Good Strategy, which focusses on Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and a transparent, joined up system.

- 5.3 The four strategic themes are:

- Theme 1: Improve collaborative partnerships to make homelessness everyone's business
- Theme 2: Early joined-up intervention and prevention of homelessness
- Theme 3: Increase provision and access to suitable and sustainable settled housing solutions
- Theme 4: Ensure that when rough sleeping occurs, it is rare, brief and non-recurring

- 5.4 In order to deliver these themes the strategy has suggested associated objectives and priorities for each. These are set out below.

##### 5.5 **Theme 1: Improve collaborative partnerships to make homelessness everyone's business**

- **Strengthen collaborative working**

We will do this by working with a wide range of partners and organisations through:

- Providing strong governance and delivery of partnership projects through the Housing Partnership Board, task and finish groups and our local partnership forums and networks to harness the resources of all partners to respond to homelessness.
- Delivering a collaborative multi-agency homelessness approach that facilitates early interventions to ensure pathways to housing and support reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- Exploring opportunities to work with other services within the Council and external strategic partners for joint-commissioning opportunities to improve & enhance the delivery of a range of homelessness services.

- Work with local communities and Local Area Partnerships to understand the barriers to accessing services so we can improve access for specific communities and localities.
- The delivery of joint training, education and learning opportunities to share knowledge and experience and to understand each other's business to enable better coordination and collaboration.
- Raising awareness of homelessness support and services available for people with local community & voluntary sector organisations so they know where to signpost individuals looking for support.
- Strengthening relationships with Registered Providers (RPs) who have a strong presence across the area and who deliver good quality housing, to improve sustainable move on options.
- Improve data collection, monitoring and use of intelligence across WNC and relevant partners to evidence what works and where gaps in needs and services remain.
- Securing support and investment across a range of council services and external partners to break down silos and pool resources to use resources more effectively to maximise the support available.

- **Embedding a person-centered approach**

We will do this by working with a wide range of partners and organisations through:

- Improving coordination and integration of support services around individuals and families to minimise the need for people to repeat information about traumatic experiences.
- Ensuring the whole person is 'Seen and Heard' through the establishment of specialist multi-disciplinary and co-located teams, will including Adult Social Care, Housing, Northants Children's Trust (NCT), Public Health, the Police, Drug and alcohol service and the VCS so there is a holistic approach.
- Understand trauma informed approaches to develop service provision that supports better outcomes for customers.
- Working with partners to identify how those with lived experience of homelessness / rough sleeping can be included in the design and delivery of services.

## 5.6 Theme 2: Early identification, intervention and prevention of homelessness

- **Increase our early intervention services**

We will do this by delivering, with a wide range of organisations and partners:

- accessible, high quality, up-to-date information and guidance, to help residents address their housing difficulties when these first arise
- a programme of awareness raising initiatives across community settings, including schools on tackling issues that may result in homelessness
- improved collection and analysis of data to identify households at risk of homelessness and inform service delivery

- **Provide effective homelessness prevention services**

We will do this by developing and delivering services that:

- Ensure that residents can access the right service from the right organisation at the right time
- Strengthen consistent provision, access to and promotion of housing, debt and money advice services across West Northants
- Encourage housing providers to identify and assist households at risk of homelessness at the earliest point possible
- Support all statutory partner agencies to use the Duty to Refer and Commitment to Refer to alert Housing Solutions team of households at risk of homelessness to enable us to respond at the earliest opportunity
- Develop a range of effective financial and other interventions and assistance to prevent homelessness
- Ensure our West Northants Housing Allocations Scheme is effective in preventing homelessness through access to settled homes

- **Reduce the instances of people facing repeated homelessness**

We will do this by delivering, with a wide range of organisations and partners, services that:

- Support households to make timely and accurate claims for financial support with their housing costs to create sustainable tenancies and avoid arrears
- Ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse have appropriate support to remain in safe, settled accommodation, avoiding need for repeated moves
- Develop resident's skills and strengths to support them to build skills and confidence and develop resilience and self sufficiency
- Identify and provide appropriate targeted support for people with more complex needs to help sustain tenancies

## 5.7 Theme 3: Increase provision and access to suitable and sustainable settled housing solutions

- **Increase the supply of new affordable housing**

We will do this by:

- Developing a council-led affordable homes development programme to increase the number of new council homes
- Strengthen our partnerships with registered providers to increase the supply of new social rented homes that are genuinely affordable, and look at options to increase the level of homes let at a social rent level
- Explore the provision of modular homes and investigate innovative ways of providing accommodation to prevent and relieve homelessness
- Maximising grant funding opportunities and ensure continual engagement with Homes England and DLUHC.
- Utilising and making best use of Council land assets and resources

- **Reduce the number of households in and cost of temporary accommodation**

We will do this by:

- Ensuring value for money in the procurement of temporary accommodation.
- Reducing the number of households needing temporary accommodation through effective, and early prevention tools
- Ensure that we have a sufficient supply of affordable temporary accommodation to meet demand and is of the right type, quality and in right location and better meets the needs of homeless households.
- Provide effective support and advice to households living in temporary accommodation, to develop a personalised move-on plan to understand their housing options to enable them to move onto settled, sustainable homes as quickly as possible.
- Increase the supply of Council owned temporary accommodation by continuing to deliver the temporary accommodation acquisition programme

- **Improve access to good quality, affordable private rented accommodation**

We will do this by:

- Utilise our full range of statutory powers to tackle substandard private rented properties.
- Improve the support and incentives available to the private rented sector into a single 'offer' for landlords

## 5.8 Theme 4: Ensure homelessness when it occurs is rare, brief and non-recurring

- **Reduce rough sleeping**

We will do this by working with partners to:

- Improve access to suitable housing solutions to reduce initial incidences of rough sleeping
- Reduce the prevalence of repeat homelessness arising where people are evicted from supported accommodation
- Monitor the prevalence of placements by other local authorities within West Northants, of vulnerable people
- Address the disproportionate impact of homelessness and destitution by groups and individuals who experience specific discrimination
- Ensure no-one transits from prison, hospital or care without accommodation and appropriate support

- **Co-produce a joined-up pathway which supports people with complex needs who experience homelessness**

We will work with a range of partners to:

- Ensure that an assertive outreach service is available to anyone who experiences rough sleeping, throughout West Northants
- Deliver a comprehensive 'pathway' of appropriate accommodation and support to people with complex needs who experience homelessness, including rough sleeping
- Deliver interventions that are tailored to an individual's need, that 'meet them where they are', for as long as needed

- **Help people settle into homes where they can thrive**

We will develop innovative services that:

- Develop and adopt housing-led principles throughout our support services, specialist housing provision and mainstream accommodation options.
- Increase our understanding of needs and experiences and deliver targeted support and services for women at risk of and experiencing homelessness.
- Improve access to rapid 'off-the-street' options for rough sleeping.

5.9 In order to deliver the priorities that we have set out in this strategy we need to continue to work closely with our key partners. However, we also recognise that homelessness is an ever-changing landscape, bringing new challenges all the time.

- 5.10 While this is a three-year strategy (2024-2027), we will develop a dynamic 12-month Delivery Plan, to be monitored and reviewed annually, ensuring its actions are flexible and resilient.
- 5.11 The Delivery Plan will be presented to Cabinet in May 2024.

## **6 Issues and Choices**

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- 6.1 It is a legal requirement under s.2 Homelessness Act 2002, that Local Authorities conduct a homelessness review and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review.
- 6.2 West Northamptonshire Council is required to have a harmonised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by April 2024.
- 6.3 Therefore, to enable us to adhere to the requirements of having a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for West Northants and the timetable for this to be published in April 2024, it is recommended that the West Northants Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is approved.
- 6.4 The Council may be at risk of legal challenge if we do not have an adopted Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy within the timescales set out.

## **7 Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1.1 Resources and Financial**

- 7.1.2 The approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy does not in itself incur any new revenue or capital liabilities for either the Housing Revenue Account or the general fund.
- 7.1.3 The implementation of and delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy requires significant investment of time and resource by existing council staff and its partners. The delivery action plan will need to be fully costed to set out the expected financial impact on the council. If the financial impacts cannot be covered within existing resources a further report will be brought back to Cabinet to determine if additional resources will be released and how they will be funded.
- 7.1.4 The delivery plan will be an ever-evolving document and if additional resources are required in the future they may be considered as part of the normal budget setting process.
- 7.1.5 Throughout the lifetime of the strategy there will be some specific projects and developments where decisions will need to be made and the full revenue and capital implications will be made clear at the time. None of the projects or development will be able to proceed until the appropriate funding is agreed and in place.

### **7.2 Legal**

- 7.2.1 s.2 Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the duty on local authorities to:



- Carry out a homelessness review
- Formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review.
- The strategy must be published every 5 years, or sooner if circumstances change.

7.2.2 s.3 Homelessness Act 2002 specifies that the homelessness strategy is a strategy for:

- preventing homelessness
- securing that sufficient accommodation (of a range of types) is available for people who are or may become homeless
- providing satisfactory support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

7.2.3 The strategy must consider how the local housing authority and social services authority, any other public authority, voluntary organisation or anyone else can meet the objectives of the strategy. It may include specific actions or objectives to be undertaken by the local housing and social services authority, or, with its agreement, by any other public authority, voluntary organisation or anyone else.

7.2.4 The authority must consider the needs of all groups of people in its area who may be affected by homelessness.

7.2.5 The local housing authority must keep the strategy under review. Before adopting or modifying the strategy the local housing authority must consult any public or voluntary organisations or other persons, as it considers appropriate.

7.2.6 Once the strategy is completed, it must be made available for public inspection without charge, and copies made available on payment of a reasonable charge.

7.2.7 In accordance with the Local Government (Structural Changes) Transitional Arrangements (No.2) Regulation 2008, (regulation 12) (as amended coronavirus amendment regulation) West Northamptonshire Council requires a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by April 2024.

### 7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There is a legal requirement before adopting a homelessness strategy the authority shall consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons they consider appropriate. The council has taken a co-production approach to developing this first West Northants Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy through extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders including statutory external partners and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations.

7.3.2 The impact of non-compliance to the structural change order could result in reputational damage, risk of challenge and potential consequences from central government.

### **7.3 Consultation and Communications**

7.4.1 The development of the strategy has been co-designed /produced with regular discussions with internal team and key partners. There were also a number of engagements events, including:

- Single Homeless Forum and Homelessness Prevention Network:
- Prevention of rough sleeping engagement event
- General needs homelessness and prevention event
- Wider Determinants of Health Workshops

7.3.2 In addition, we commissioned two independent pieces of research:

- a. Health Needs Assessment of people who sleep rough – commissioned jointly with Public Health. This research reviewed the current customer journey, including existing accommodation and support; identified gaps and made recommendations on maximising service provision, including new operating models and approaches, to inform a new commissioning framework for supported accommodation and services for this cohort. Over 20 partner organisations were involved, including people with lived experience of homelessness.
- b. Homelessness and Housing Solutions Health Check - commissioned an internal 'service health check' of our Housing Solutions provision, which included mystery shopping of the access points to our service, staff interviews and case file reviews. This work has informed service aggregation and transformation of the housing solutions team.

### **7.4 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

A presentation was provided to Children's, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny on the 5<sup>th</sup> February. This provided an overview of the key headlines from the homelessness review, the aims, themes and objectives of the West Northants Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

### **7.5 Climate Impact**

None

### **7.6 Community Impact**

7.7.1 An Equality Screening Assessment in respect of the draft Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy has been completed and will be made available alongside the formal public and stakeholder consultation. Changes will be made to the ESA to reflect any feedback gathered during the consultation.

## **8 Background Papers**

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8.7 None