

# \*Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing

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Key Decision? Y

Local Ward Members All



**Community,  
Housing and  
Health Overview  
and Scrutiny  
committee**

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 The draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 sets out the council's plans to tackle homelessness, rough sleeping and a range of other housing-related challenges over the next five years in Lichfield District from 2019 to 2024. It provides a position statement that sets out the council's strategic priorities and objectives across all housing tenures. The strategy reflects on performance and achievements since the last strategies were published, examines the housing and homelessness challenges that we face in the district and explains how the council and its partners will address these challenges through three priorities for action:

- Enable people to live in good quality homes that are suitable for their needs
- Increase housing choice to meet the need of current and future residents
- Prevent or relieve all forms of homelessness including rough sleeping

1.2 The homelessness and rough sleeping section of the strategy was approved by Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 and this is the wider strategy incorporating all housing issues. For the first time, the housing strategy and the homelessness strategy have been combined into one document. In addition to saving resources, our combined approach means that homelessness and rough sleeping are not seen in isolation but within a wider framework, which covers the causes of and solutions to challenges such as access to affordable and suitable accommodation and the provision of and access to support and housing for vulnerable households. This approach will ensure that the council takes a comprehensive and joined up approach to all matters relating to housing, homelessness and rough sleeping.

1.3 The draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 is attached at **Appendix 1**. The detailed evidence base - the Homelessness Review and additional housing information is contained in Annexes A and B.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 That Members note, comment and recommend to Cabinet the draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 attached at **Appendix 1**.

## 3. Background

3.1 The council has a statutory duty<sup>1</sup> to carry out a homelessness review for the district and utilise the findings of the review to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy every five years. In 2018 the

<sup>1</sup> Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002

government launched its new Rough Sleeping Strategy<sup>2</sup> in which it requested that all homelessness strategies were reviewed and rebadged to include a specific focus on addressing rough sleeping.

- 3.2 Our previous Homelessness Strategy covered the period from 2013 to 2018. Rather than directly replace it, we have combined it with the Housing Strategy to produce a broader strategy covering not only homelessness and rough sleeping but the wider housing challenges. This reflects thinking that tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping cannot be considered in isolation but within a wider framework, which covers causes of and solutions to these challenges such as access to affordable and suitable accommodation, the impact of welfare reform, and the provision of and access to support for vulnerable households.
- 3.3 Whilst the strategy is a council document and forms part of the council's policy framework, the strategy has been developed in consultation with a range of partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors, and successful delivery of the action plan will rely heavily on the contribution of a range of partners. The strategy is informed by and sits alongside a range of other plans and strategies; these include the Strategic Plan 2020-2024, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Local Plan and the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 3.4 The strategy is structured into three main sections: Current Housing; Future Housing, and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. Within these sections the document outlines the key housing challenges and issues facing Lichfield District, particularly in relation to the existing stock, affordable housing supply, homelessness and housing-related support. It does not seek to cover issues that are more appropriately addressed through the emerging Local Plan, such as the number, mix and distribution of future housing supply to be delivered in the district. That said, it is recognised that the amount and mix of affordable homes that will be delivered will be heavily influenced by the Local Plan and accompanying guidance. The delivery of affordable housing in the district over the lifetime of this strategy up to 2024 will largely be informed by the current Local Plan and planning policies in place, the viability of sites and a range of other factors, including funding available and the ambitions of our approved registered providers (housing association), as well as the progress made by other developers.
- 3.5 The key challenges we have identified are that we have:
- the highest house prices in Staffordshire meaning that home ownership is out of reach for many, particularly younger people
  - an ageing population that will continue to increase demand for disabled adaptations to their homes
  - a need to improve housing choice for our changing population, particularly increasing the supply of smaller homes and enabling the development of age-related housing
  - a smaller than average private rental sector with high rent levels
  - had an increase in homeless applications due to the ending of private rented tenancies; nearly 4 times as many in 2018/19 as in 2017/18
  - a shortage of affordable social rented housing with the turnover not meeting demand
  - had a rise in the number of households approaching us that need support due to mental health issues
  - an increasing number of customers with multiple and complex housing needs where the accommodation options available to them are limited
  - limited access to local support agencies for people at risk of homelessness
  - had an increase in the number of people sleeping rough in Lichfield city centre

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<sup>2</sup> In August 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published their first dedicated rough sleeping strategy <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>

3.6 To address these challenges the following priorities have been identified:

- Enable people to live in good quality homes that are suitable for their needs
- Increase housing choice to meet the need of current and future residents
- Prevent or relieve all forms of homelessness including rough sleeping

The three priorities are underpinned by 8 objectives and several actions contained within the action plan in Annexe D that will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant us. The strategy sets out high level actions only; more detailed actions are included in the annual service plans that sit below the strategy. Upon adoption the action plan will remain a live document and will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that actions are being progressed and amended to respond to any changes in trends, issues or government policy that emerge during the lifetime of the strategy.

3.7 Under the terms of the council's constitution the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 must be approved by Full Council.

Alternative Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To not publish a new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024: this is not recommended as we have a statutory duty to publish a homelessness strategy every five years after we have carried out a review of homelessness. The government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 also requires us to have a plan in place to halve rough sleeping by 2020 and end it by 2027.</li><li>2. To have a separate housing strategy and homelessness strategy; the synergy between this and the housing strategy mean that it will be beneficial and more cost effective and efficient use of staff time to have both in one combined document.</li></ol>
Consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To develop the strategy we have carried out a range of consultation exercises with partners and stakeholders. We have engaged with our Homelessness Forum made up of representatives from organisations working with homeless and vulnerable people across the district. The Forum meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019 was well attended by 30 representatives from 16 organisations. At this meeting we shared our emerging evidence and sought views on the priority and emerging objectives for the homelessness and rough sleeping section of the strategy, which were well received. We have also obtained their feedback on the homelessness review and draft strategy.</li><li>2. Members of this committee received a report on the homelessness and rough sleeping section of the strategy and the homelessness review document on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019, following which Cabinet approved it for publication on the website at its meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019. It was subsequently sent to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in December to meet the deadline set in the government's Rough Sleeper strategy.</li><li>3. Residents aged over 60 and with support needs were invited to take part in research on assessment of the housing needs of older people, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health needs and people with physical disabilities in Lichfield District conducted by Housing LIN<sup>3</sup> during November 2019. The research included primary qualitative research through questionnaires and several focus groups.</li><li>4. We will be consulting residents and wider stakeholders on the draft strategy and a questionnaire will soon be available for completion on our website.</li></ol>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/>

<p><b>Financial Implications</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our ability to deliver the priorities of the strategy is dependent upon a range of capital and revenue funding sources. Our action plan has been drawn up within existing budgets supplemented by additional government funding. We have received three years and will be soon receiving a fourth year of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) funding. We have been using this to employ additional Housing Options Officers to be able to cope with the increased work and demands placed on us by the HRA and part fund the rough sleeper outreach and Housing First service by Spring Housing<sup>4</sup>.</li> <li>2. The strategy has a four-year lifespan until the end of 2024 so it is not possible to provide a definitive assessment of all the financial resources that will be available both to the council and other partner agencies over that timeframe in order to implement the strategy's action plan. The majority of targets are to be met from existing resources; where additional resources from the council are identified for the delivery of specific items, these will be considered through the annual budget setting process and in accordance with the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy. There is an increasing tendency for government to allocate funding on an annual basis, particularly for homelessness prevention and rough sleeping and whilst such funding is very welcome, such an approach does not lend itself to long-term planning and certainty.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan</b></p>	<p>The Strategic Plan 2016-2020 sets out what we want to achieve in four main themes. The development of the strategy will contribute most significantly towards the themes of 'healthy and safe communities' and 'clean, green and welcoming places to live' by preventing homelessness. The draft Strategic Plan 2020-2024 has four corporate priorities, the three that are of most importance to this strategy are the priorities 'shape place', 'enable people' and 'develop prosperity'.</p>
<p><b>Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications</b></p>	<p>The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 means that the council now has additional duties to prevent homelessness and we must help to secure accommodation for all eligible households, regardless of whether they are in a 'priority need' category. This has increased the help given to single people and those without dependent children, especially single men, who were previously not in a 'priority need' category. They are still not necessarily in a priority need category, it is just that priority need is not a consideration when we are trying to prevent or relieve homelessness, except in determining eligibility for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that the strategy or action plan will have any negative implications for equality, diversity or human rights. The draft was evaluated by our Equality Impact Assessment group on the 25th February 2020 and all was considered positive. However, it was noted that the immigration status of some households may restrict the assistance that they can be offered under the homelessness legislation.</p>
<p><b>Crime &amp; Safety Issues</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The provision of the Housing First scheme with supported accommodation options will potentially reduce the issues of anti-social behaviour created by some of our rough sleepers who have been using Friary Outer, other car parks and various locations in Lichfield City centre to sleep in, several of whom are reported to be taking drugs and begging in the city centre.</li> </ol>

<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with Cannock Chase District Council, we have commissioned a delivery partner Spring Housing to provide an independent and impartial outreach service for our rough sleepers. Spring will provide at least 5 units of supported accommodation that will support those individuals with the most acute needs, forming part of the Housing First model, but also flex to cater for those with lower level support needs who may be at risk of homelessness. It is being partly funded by government following successful bids to its Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) of £50,000 and Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) fund of £109,500(shared with Cannock Chase DC).

2. The clients of the housing service cover a wide range of individuals from victims of domestic abuse to offenders leaving prison. Therefore, positive interaction to address the individual's needs will have a positive impact on crime and disorder.

**Environmental Impact**  
1. None identified.

**GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment**  
1. None identified

	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	Actions identified in the strategy are not delivered	Our action plan will be monitored through Pentana and an annual review conducted.	Green
B	There are insufficient resources to deliver the emerging strategy	The priority, objectives and associated actions have been established using existing budget and resources.	Green
C	The priority and objectives cannot be achieved within the timeframe set.	The priority and objectives proposed are very broad and the action plan will contain the detail to deliver the strategy. Many actions are existing project/commitments. We will monitor the impact of our actions and would develop business cases for any additional funding needed over time.	Yellow
D	FHSG or similar government funding is not received in 2021/22 or future years	The action plan for the whole strategy is based on current budgets, which includes FHSG received for three years 2017/18-2019/20 and due for 2019/20. We will regularly review our action plan and the staff and other resources needed to deliver it to ensure that the plan is achievable. If government homelessness funding ceases we will develop a business case for additional council funding if required.	Yellow

### Background documents

MHCLG (2018) Rough Sleeping Strategy:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf)

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2020- <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Council/Health-and-wellbeing-strategy.aspx>

Lichfield District Safer Community Partnership Draft Delivery Plan

<https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/file/1246/community-safety-delivery-plan-2019-22>

### Relevant web links

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Cabinet 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019

<https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=1537>

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Community, Housing and Health Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019

<https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=1523>