

Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing

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Key Decision? Y

Local Ward All

Members

Lichfield
district council
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CABINET

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The 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 this strategy was approved by Cabinet on 3rd 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 Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 is attached at **Appendix 1**. The detailed evidence base - the Homelessness Review, additional housing information and action plan is contained in **Annexes A-E**.
- 1.4 In order to be able to respond flexibly to the changing impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic, it is also proposed to delegate powers to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing and Head of Regulatory Services, Housing and Wellbeing to review the strategy after one year and amend the strategy and action plan accordingly.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves and recommends to Council the approval of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 attached at **Appendix 1** and the accompanying **Annexes A-E**.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees to delegate to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing in conjunction with the Head of Regulatory Services, Housing and Wellbeing to amend the strategy at **Appendix 1** and action plan at **Annexe D** after the year one review to assess the implications of the Covid 19 pandemic and any emerging challenges.

- 2.3 That Cabinet approves and recommends to Council the approval of the new policy of earmarking future Right to Buy receipts towards capital investment to support delivery of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

3. Background

- 3.1 The council has a statutory duty¹ 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 government launched its new Rough Sleeping Strategy² 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 the 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 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 condition of the housing market and progress made by other developers.
- 3.4 In developing the strategy, 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 ageing 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
 - 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
 - a rise in the number of individuals 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
 - an increase in the number of people sleeping rough in Lichfield city centre

¹ Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002

² 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>

3.5 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 to 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.

3.6 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">1. To do nothing and not have 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 2027.2. To have a separate housing strategy and homelessness strategy; the synergy between these mean that it will be beneficial and more cost effective and efficient use of staff time to have both in one combined document.3. To put the approval of the strategy on hold until after the Covid 19 pandemic has ended, gather further evidence and carry out consultation later this year or next. This would involve gathering another year's data and rewriting much of the strategy and accompanying documents leading to a delay in delivery of the action plan and key pieces of work contained in it. Considering the initial economic and social impacts of the pandemic so far, it is likely that the need to enable affordable housing and prevent homelessness will be even greater and so a review of the strategy after one year is considered the best way forward as this will enable us to assess the impacts of Covid 19 and amend the strategy actions accordingly.
Consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To develop the strategy we 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. Forum members at the meeting on the 11th September 2019 discussed our emerging evidence and objectives for the homelessness and rough sleeping section of the strategy and subsequently gave their feedback on these sections of the draft strategy.2. Cabinet approved the homelessness and rough sleeping section of the strategy for publication on the website on the 3rd December 2019, following which it was sent to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to meet the deadline set in the government's Rough Sleeper Strategy.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 LIN³ during November 2019. The research included primary qualitative research through questionnaires and

³ <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/>

several focus groups which has informed the strategy.

4. The Community, Housing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the draft strategy and accompanying documents at its meeting on the 18th March 2020 and recommended it to Cabinet for approval.

Financial Implications

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 Housing⁴.
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.
3. The Council does receive under the transfer agreement with Bromford, a share of Right to Buy receipts that were £276,049 in 2019/20 and £576,398 in 2018/19. These capital receipts are currently treated as windfall payments as they are likely to reduce over time and there is no certainty on their value and timing, and are used to support the Council's corporate capital investment.
4. To help with delivery of our strategy and reduce homelessness, we are in the process of purchasing affordable properties. It is proposed that this is funded in the future with use of commuted sums, housing strategy reserves and any future Right to Buy receipts.
5. The Approved Revenue Budgets⁵ within the Medium Term Financial Strategy directly supporting the delivery of the Housing Strategy are:

Service	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Homelessness Service	£276,780	£279,800	£285,650	£292,180	£1,134,410
Housing Strategy & Wellbeing	£175,100	£178,380	£181,730	£185,140	£720,350
Total Direct Expenditure	£451,880	£458,180	£467,380	£477,320	£1,854,760
External Income	(£42,320)	(£43,670)	(£45,080)	(£46,770)	(£177,840)
Net Direct Expenditure	£409,560	£414,510	£422,300	£430,550	£1,676,920

⁴ 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 Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) fund of £109,500 and Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) of £105,000 (including £55,000 of funding for specialist mental health and substance misuse workers) shared with Cannock Chase DC.

⁵ Excluding Housing Enforcement and Licensing.

6. The Approved Capital Programme Budgets⁶ within the Medium Term Financial Strategy directly supporting the delivery of the Housing Strategy are:

Project	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Disabled Facilities Grants	£2,107,000	£950,000	£950,000	£950,000	£4,957,000
Home Repair Assistance	£36,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£81,000
Decent Homes Standard	£172,000	£0	£0	£0	£172,000
Energy Insulation	£48,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£78,000
DCLG Monies	£212,000	£0	£0	£0	£212,000
Affordable Housing S106	£684,000	£0	£0	£0	£684,000
Housing Strategy Total	£3,259,000	£975,000	£975,000	£975,000	£6,184,000

Council Sources	(£264,000)	(£44,000)	(£44,000)	(£44,000)	(£396,000)
Grant	(£2,311,000)	(£931,000)	(£931,000)	(£931,000)	(£5,104,000)
Section 106	(£684,000)				(£684,000)
Total Funding	(£3,259,000)	(£975,000)	(£975,000)	(£975,000)	(£6,184,000)

Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 has four corporate priorities; the ones that this strategy will mostly contribute to are the priorities 'shape place', 'enable people' and 'develop prosperity'.

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

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.

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 was considered to have a positive impact. However, it was noted that the immigration status of some households may restrict the assistance that they can be offered under the homelessness legislation.

Crime & Safety Issues

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.
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.

⁶ Assumes slippage is approved from 2019/20 contained in the Money Matters Report elsewhere on the Agenda.

GDPR/Privacy
Impact Assessment

1. None identified

	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	Actions identified in the strategy cannot be delivered	Our action plan will be closely monitored through Pentana. An annual review will be conducted to enable us to assess the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic and amend the strategy actions accordingly.	Yellow
B	There are insufficient resources to deliver the emerging strategy	The priority, objectives and associated actions have been established using existing budget and resources.	Yellow
C	The priority and objectives cannot be achieved within the timeframe set.	The priority and objectives proposed are very broad and the action plan contains 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 four years 2017/18-2020/20. We will 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

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

Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 Community, Housing and Health Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting 18th March 2020

<https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=1556&Ver=4>

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Cabinet 3rd 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 17th October 2019

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