



Cabinet report

Date	16 JUNE 2022
Title	ISLE OF WIGHT HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING ACTION PLAN (2022-2024)
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY PROTECTION, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, HOUSING PROVISION AND HOUSING NEEDS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report seeks approval of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan for the period 2022-24. The plan has been informed through an updated needs analysis and has created in collaboration with wider stakeholders. The purpose of the document is to maintain our positive trajectory of travel and take us closer to achieving the aims of the strategy which are to make:
 - Homelessness in all forms a rare occurrence: we will provide the right support at the right time, so people can access a home and sustain a home they can call their own.
 - Homelessness a brief experience: we will give individuals and families choice and control by systemically improving pathways, support and accommodation options to reduce the trauma associated to homelessness.
 - Homelessness a one-off experience: we will increase access to settled homes.
2. Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2019-2024, is organised around three core pillars: prevention, intervention, and recovery. Prevention focuses on providing timely support before individuals and households become homeless. Intervention focusses on helping people who are already in crisis to get swift, targeted support. Recovery emphasises how we will support people to find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives via a new “accommodation first” approach, utilising the principles of housing first models.
3. The Cabinet is recommended to approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan 2022- 2024, This sets out how the council and our partners will operationalise the strategy until the end of its lifetime, actively addressing the complexity of homelessness, which includes ending rough sleeping.
4. The implementation of the Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1 will be led by the Homelessness Reduction and Prevention Board and will be monitored on a quarterly basis.

RECOMMENDATION

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| <p>5. Cabinet approves the Isle of Wight Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan 2022- 2024 as set out at Appendix 1.</p> |
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BACKGROUND

6. The Homelessness Act 2002 and Parts 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996 place a variety of obligations on the Council toward the homeless. These duties include homeless prevention, housing advice, the provision of temporary accommodation and the provision of permanent accommodation for homeless people who are deemed to be owed a full duty under the legislation. These duties were further enhanced in 2018 through the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA).
7. The HRA has had far reaching implications in relation to the Council's approach to preventing and relieving homelessness on the Isle of Wight. Its measures include:
 - An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone (regardless of priority need) as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
 - A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness (regardless of priority need) and a requirement to provide applicants with housing prevention plans.
 - A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants (regardless of priority need) and a requirement to provide applicants with housing relief plans.
 - A new duty on certain external organisations (including prisons and hospitals) to refer homeless households to the Council.
8. Overall, the Act extends the duties of the Council to a much broader group of people than it has historically had a duty to help. This means the Council must redouble its efforts to prevent and relieve homelessness.
9. The legislation also requires Housing Authorities to undertake 'reviews' of homelessness within their areas and to have strategies in place to tackle identified issues. The purpose of these strategies is to outline the ways that councils and their partners work together to prevent homelessness and to provide housing and support for the homeless.
10. The Council's existing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was agreed by cabinet in 2019. This strategy provides vital strategic direction for tackling homelessness, reducing temporary accommodation, and eliminating rough sleeping. The production of a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is a statutory requirement which has been subsequently reinforced by the homelessness guidance for local authorities issued by the then named Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
11. The strategy should be read within the context of the Council's Housing Strategy 2020-25. This strategy covers a broader range of issues including housing supply,

affordable housing delivery and improving housing conditions. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focusses specifically on homelessness.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

12. The proposal aligns with various outcomes as set out in the following council strategies:

- Isle of Wight Council Corporate Plan 2021-25
- Housing Strategy 2020-2025
- Care Close to Home Strategy 2021-2024
- Draft Island Plan
- Public Health Strategy 2020-2025
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026
- Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022
- Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021- 2024

13. In addition, this also links with national strategies:

- The Rough Sleeping Strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

14. These strategies tend to be underpinned by a key priority that is shared which is to ensure that vulnerable people are protected from harm and that everyone has the opportunity to live the lives they want to lead in a safe community and a place people can call home.

SERVICE IMPACT

15. Homelessness prevention is everyone's business. The strategy and proposed action plan provide a framework that is designed to enable collaboration and partnerships with system partners and those with lived experience for system colleagues and partners and voices of lived experience (including those of children and young people) contribute to and identify their role in the domestic abuse safe accommodation agenda as underpinned by the Domestic Abuse Act (2021).

16. In addition to fulfil the requirements as set out within the strategy we will need to expand the choice of types of safe accommodation and support to mitigate disruption to the victim's social, work, and school networks and perpetrators are supported in being held to account for their actions.

CONSULTATION

17. The strategic action plan has been produced in collaboration with system partner organisations who have all given an undertaking to jointly own responsibility for driving the strategy and achieving the agreed outcomes.

18. A consultation on the action plan has been undertaken with the public (February and March 2022) to ensure the views of lived experience and those we serve were captured to help shape the direction of travel.

19. Feedback on the strategy has also been received from officials at the Department of Levelling UP Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

20. Feedback has been positive with a significant majority of people relating with and agreeing with the commitments as they are set out.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

21. To support the implementation of our statutory housing duties the Government provides a homelessness prevention grant. The Isle of Wight Council have been allocated £776,606 for 2022/23. This funding is ring -fenced to support homeless prevention activity and primarily being used to cover staffing costs and help pay for interventions to prevent homeless. The financial modelling for the available monies has ensured that available funding covers the period of this strategy up to 2023/24. Going forward there is no certainty around the future of Homelessness Prevention Grant. Should this funding end then post 2023/24 the Council may need to reassess its options and consider growth (if required at that point in time) or scale back the level of service provided.

22. A full financial assessment will need to be undertaken alongside the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2019/24. Current spend is currently in line with budget in the current financial year. However, there is a risk to this position, due to the demand led nature of this service. Demand since the implementation of the HRA 2017 has been steadily increasing and is likely to be further exacerbated by ongoing Welfare Reforms, cuts in funding and cost of living crisis.

23. The primary risks to the homelessness budgets are costs associated to temporary accommodation inclusive of Bed and Breakfast. The actions that are in place are intended to ensure that the levels of expenditure incurred on temporary accommodation remain within budget going forward into 2023/24. This projection, however, needs to be viewed in the context of the increases in homelessness numbers that are being experienced nationally and there are clear risks to the position that is currently being projected.

IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

24. Research suggests children bear the brunt of homelessness:
- Homeless children are sick at twice the rate of other children.
 - Homeless children go hungry twice as often as non- homeless children.
 - More than one-fifth of homeless pre-schoolers have emotional problems serious enough to require professional care, but less than one-third receive any treatment.
 - Homeless children are twice as likely to repeat a grade compared to nonhome less children.
 - Homeless children have twice the rate of learning disabilities and three times the rate of emotional and behavioural problems of non- homeless children.
 - Half of school-age homeless children experience anxiety, depression, or withdrawal compared to 18 percent of non- homeless children.
 - By the time homeless children are eight years old, one in three has a major mental disorder.

These are not only challenges in themselves but may act as “secondary adversities,” putting a child at greater risk for trauma reactions and making recovery difficult.

25. To flourish, children need a safe place -- both physically and emotionally -- to come home to. If a child is to turn their full attention to the many demands of growing up, they need a secure, solid home where they feel protected. They need to feel and be safe, which allows them to go out and do battle in the world and return home to recharge.

CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT & UNESCO BIOSPHERE IMPACT

26. There are digital service improvement actions that are being proposed which will contribute to the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2040. The improvements include virtual viewings and electronic signing of occupancy agreements. The website is also being updated to improve customer access and self-service opportunities. This will reduce the potential number of physical visits Council staffs will make to complete all paperwork and assessments, by offering this digital solution. The enhancement of this digital service offer will reduce paper and printing requirements of the service as well as reducing multiple visits to customers where possible, reducing the services carbon emissions through reduced car usage.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

27. Under section 1(3), (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities have a duty to review and publish their Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy on at least a 5- yearly basis.

28. There are no direct legal implications arising from the proposed strategic action plan. It is compliant with Housing legislation and has been designed to encompass wider reforms which include but not limited to responsibilities set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

29. In exercising discretion, the local authority must always be mindful of their duty contained in section 149 of the equality Act 2010, that is the duty to have due regard to the need to (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited or under the Act: (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

30. This includes having due regard to the need to: - (a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by relevant protected characteristic that are connected characteristics from the needs of the persons who do not share it. (b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. Section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 permits the taking of positive action where this is proportionate means of meeting the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic which are different from the needs of persons who do not share that protected characteristic.

31. The strategic plan commits us to ensuring that our homelessness duties and corresponding support is accessible to all of those who need it, irrespective of their individual circumstances and/or any protected characteristics they may have.

32. The proposed decision will help the Council to meet its equalities duties and address known inequalities affecting individuals with protected characteristics. No negative consequences are identified for those who identify with one or more protected characteristics; accordingly, the decision represents progress to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.
33. Ensuring that the customer voice is heard is instrumental in how the Council develops and delivers its services and is of paramount importance. The homelessness service aims to offer a high quality and accessible advice service to all customers, ensuring that our residents have access to housing and can live with dignity and independence.

SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

34. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action plan aims to positively contribute to prevent, crime, disorder, antisocial behaviour by addressing the support needs of members of our community who are at risk or are experiencing Homelessness.

OPTIONS

35. The options available to the council are as follows:

Option 1: Approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024.

Option 2: Refuse to approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024.

Option 1 is the recommended option as the Isle of Wight Council have a statutory duty to develop and publicise how we will operationalise our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

RISK MANAGEMENT

36. The Rough Sleeper Strategy provides the direction for our services until 2024. Although good progress has been made the risk of homelessness on the Isle of Wight continues to grow. Moreover, the local housing market combined with the likely increases to cost of living present major risks, both to our customers who will be under financial pressure and will find it harder to access housing, and to the Council due to increased demand for social housing and housing advice.
37. There is a risk that homelessness applications might increase, and the Homelessness team will have a duty to house growing numbers of households without the corresponding accommodation being available.
38. The Homelessness team will need to continue to be pro-active in addressing homelessness, seeking to work effectively with other services within the Council and our partners to make the best use of our resources
39. To minimise the risk of homelessness to people in our communities the IWC will aim to lead a coordinated effort to ensure everyone on the island has the chance to

live in a safe place they can call home. We can only achieve this vision with active collaboration, cooperation and responsibility from all organisations and agencies across the island.

40. The delivery of this action plan will help manage this risk by co-ordinating and connecting the work of Isle of Wight Council services and wider partners and providers, this is the foundation of a “whole systems approach” that we seek to embed.

41. The risk that strategic direction does not translate into action on the ground has been mitigated by the creation of a comprehensive action plan which will be monitored through the housing governance structures. In addition, annual updates will be presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to give reassurances that the actions are being progressed.

EVALUATION

42. The development and publication of an action plan to operationalise our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a statutory duty placed on the local authority.

43. The strategic action plan gives due consideration to the associated risks, legal and budget implications and has been developed and approved with stakeholders. It provides a blueprint setting out how the IWC will address issues around homelessness that affects hundreds of people on the Isle of Wight each year. Its aim is to deliver our vision whereby everyone living on the Isle of Wight has a safe place to call home.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Isle of Wight Council, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019- 2024.

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