

Cabinet

15 July 2020



Title	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025		
Purpose of the report	To make a Key Decision		
Report Author	Steph Green, Housing Strategy & Policy Officer		
Cabinet Member	Councillor M. Attewell	Confidential	No
Corporate Priority	Housing		
Recommendations	Cabinet is asked to approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 as appended to this report.		
Reason for Recommendation	The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 sets out how the Council will tackle and prevent homelessness in the borough. The strategy sets out six key priorities, and is based upon the findings of an extensive Homelessness Review, feedback from two stakeholder events held in 2019, extensive feedback from local partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors, and responses from a six week public consultation which ran from December 2019 to January 2020.		

1. Key issues

1.1 The Council currently has a Homelessness Strategy which covers the period 2014 to 2019. It is a legal requirement under the Homelessness Act 2002 to have a strategy in place for the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping, which must be reviewed at least every five years and be informed by an in-depth review of homelessness demand and services in Spelthorne. These requirements are summarised in Chapter 2 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, published by the Government.

Homelessness Review

1.2 The purpose of a Homelessness Review is to determine the levels of actual or possible homelessness and rough sleeping in the local area. It also identifies the current services and options available to the local authority to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

1.3 According to statutory guidance, the review must specifically address:

- (a) the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in Spelthorne;
- (b) the activities which are carried out:
 - i) to prevent homelessness in Spelthorne;

- ii) to secure accommodation for in Spelthorne for residents who are or may become homeless in the future; and
 - iii) to provide support for people in Spelthorne who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness; or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again; and,
- (c) the resources available to the Housing Options team, social services authorities, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above.

1.4 In completing the review, Officers have considered:

- (a) homelessness casework records and other local sources of data;
- (b) trends in homelessness approaches and in underlying causes;
- (c) which cohorts may be more likely to become homeless or be threatened with homelessness;
- (d) the profile of households who have experienced homelessness in Spelthorne;
- (e) equality monitoring data, including that relating to homelessness applications and outcomes;
- (f) the range of factors that may affect future levels of homelessness;
- (g) the personal and structural factors that may contribute to people becoming homeless; and,
- (h) any planned legislation or local policy changes that are likely to impact on levels of homelessness for particular groups in Spelthorne.

1.5 The public, private and voluntary sectors can all contribute, directly or indirectly, to the prevention of homelessness and the provision of accommodation and support for homeless residents. The review therefore considers the activities of all relevant agencies and organisations, as well as the resources available to them, which may contribute to the delivery of services. This in essence involves carrying out a mapping exercise which supports the identification of gaps in service provision. Bridging these gaps form part of the revised strategy.

Steps already taken in the development of a new strategy

1.6 Officers have taken the following steps in the production of the Homelessness Review and draft strategic priorities:

- (a) Online survey sent to approximately 2000 previous service users to gain feedback on the service they received;
- (b) Stakeholder workshops on 24 September & 14 October: over 100 attendees across 40 organisations represented, including councillors;
- (c) Homelessness Strategy Working Group: including key officers and the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing;
- (d) Peer review of the activities being undertaken by neighbouring and comparable housing authorities. This presents opportunities for cross-borough cooperation and joint working;
- (e) Extensive review of relevant local and national data;

- (f) Presentations have been delivered to Spelthorne’s Health and Wellbeing Group and to committees of elected members throughout the development of the strategy;
- (g) A draft strategy framework was made available for public consultation. This ran for six weeks through December 2019 to January 2020. The public consultation was made available online and hard copies were distributed to all local libraries and made available at the Council Offices;
- (h) This strategy proposal has been cross referenced against:
 - the Local Government Association’s ‘Making Homelessness Strategies Happen’ guidance;
 - the ‘Local Housing Authority Checklist: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies’ created by Crisis;
 - “Bleak Houses: Tackling the crisis of family homelessness in England” report from the Children’s Commissioner, August 2019;
 - the Royal British Legion’s “Supporting the Armed Forces Community with Housing in England: a Best Practice Guide”; and
 - our obligations under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), case law, best practice and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (updated 15 April 2019).

1.7 The proposed strategy for the period 2020-2025 consists of 6 strategic priorities, and an associated Action Plan. These priorities are:

- (a) End the use of private sector emergency accommodation (bed and breakfasts);
- (b) Reduce the length of stay in temporary accommodation;
- (c) Nobody sleeps rough in Spelthorne;
- (d) Increase the use of the private rented sector for homelessness prevention and relief;
- (e) Invest in staff training and development in order to improve the customer journey within the Housing Options service; and
- (f) Improve partnership working to prevent and relieve homelessness.

1.8 The Action Plan contains a range of targets, projects and initiatives which work towards achieving the aims of the strategy. Many of the actions listed are areas of work which will be ongoing throughout the course of the strategy period.

1.9 It is proposed the strategic monitoring of the Action Plan is carried out by the Council’s Strategic Housing Group. As the Action Plan is a ‘living’ document that will constantly develop over time, it is proposed that the operational monitoring of the Action Plan is carried out by a new working group which will be set up, made up of representatives from the Council as well as our statutory and voluntary partners. This will include interested elected borough and county councillors.

2. Options analysis and proposal

Option 1 (recommended) – to approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 as appended to this report

- 2.1 The final draft of our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy along with supporting papers are appended to this report:
- (a) Appendix 1: Spelthorne Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025
 - (b) Appendix 2: Spelthorne Homelessness Review 2019
 - (c) Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025
- 2.2 The final draft is presented following extensive work with councillors, stakeholders and the public, outlined in paragraph 1.6.

Option 2 (not recommended) – do nothing

- 2.3 The Council is required under the Homelessness Act 2002 to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which is now out of date. As part of the Government's Rough Sleeper Strategy, there was an expectation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that all local authorities have refreshed homelessness strategies in place before the end of December 2019. Spelthorne has missed this deadline as the development of the parent Housing Strategy was delayed towards the end of 2019. Officers negotiated with MHCLG a revised deadline of 31 March 2020. The Council is at risk of censure from MHCLG if it fails to revise its Homelessness Strategy by this date. This may include an inability to access grant funding for homelessness services until such time as we are able to present an approved, viable Homelessness Strategy.

3. Financial implications

- 3.1 The development of the new strategy has been funded using existing financial resources.
- 3.2 Individual projects within the strategy Action Plan may have financial implications in the future, for example sustaining our rough sleeping outreach service. Where these costs cannot be met using existing financial resources, additional budget will be requested at the time when it is required, or through the annual growth bids process and budget setting. The delivery of some elements of the strategy may not be possible if funding is unavailable at the time. In such a situation, the strategy will need to be adjusted accordingly.

4. Other Considerations

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of the proposed strategy has been carried out. Whilst some negative impacts have been identified, appropriate mitigations have been identified which are already in place which, in the opinion of Officers, satisfactorily addresses these impacts. A copy of this assessment has been appended to this report.

5. Timetable for implementation

- 5.1 Provided that Cabinet approve the recommendation of this report at its meeting on 25 March 2020, then it is anticipated that the strategy will be in use from 1 April 2020.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Spelthorne Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

Appendix 2: Spelthorne Homelessness Review 2019

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025