

# Community Wellbeing and Housing



28 November 2024

<b>Title</b>	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a Key Decision
<b>Report Author</b>	Steph Green, Assistant Strategic Housing Lead
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Exempt</b>	No
<b>Exemption Reason</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Corporate Priority</b>	Addressing Housing Need
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Committee is asked to:</b> Approve the draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for public consultation.
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	The Council has a statutory duty to publish a new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy every 5 years. The next publication is due by Spring 2025. Officers are looking to take a draft version to public consultation to gauge views.

## 1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Working Group (the 'Working Group') have agreed on a first draft to be considered by the Committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to publish a new Homelessness Strategy, based on the results of a Homelessness Review, every 5 years.</li> </ul>
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receive feedback from the Committee on the first draft and look to progress to public consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pending Committee's decision, Officers will look to run a public consultation on the first draft. The Working Group will reconvene and make any suggested final amendments to the Strategy before recommending a final draft to Committee for approval.</li> </ul>

1.1 This report seeks the Committee's view on the first draft of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The Working Group reviewed the findings from the Homelessness Review (Appendix C), the responses from a survey that was circulated to Housing Options service users from the

last 5 years, and feedback from stakeholder breakout groups. Using these findings, the Working Group has proposed some new strategic priorities for the Committees consideration. Officers are now looking to progress to public consultation to capture final views of residents and stakeholders.

## **2. Key issues**

2.1 The existing Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will expire in Spring 2025. As per the statutory duty to publish a new Strategy every 5 years, Officers have been liaising with the Working Group to formulate a new set of strategic priorities. The draft Strategy is provided in Appendix A with a proposed Action Plan provided in Appendix B.

2.2 Following pre-engagement with stakeholders and service users, combined with findings from a Homelessness Review that analysed data from the last 5 years, the Working Group proposes 3 key strategic areas:

- (a) Partnership working: A multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness.
- (b) Identifying opportunities to address housing need.
- (c) Proactive homelessness prevention and an effective service response.

These strategic priorities are supported by a detailed Action Plan that will act as a working document throughout the Strategy's existence.

2.3 The Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance states that the Council must consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate before adopting a Homelessness Strategy. The Council will also wish to consult with service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people in the borough.

2.4 The Council's Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) adviser suggested that they recommend public consultation as best practice, as it is a way to capture the views of groups that may not have been captured in the stakeholder event undertaken prior to the draft being completed. If the Council chooses not to run a public consultation, there is a risk that there may be a community group, faith group in addition to the general public who would not have necessarily had an opportunity to contribute. MHCLG suggested that the Council may wish to undertake a shorter consultation to reflect the early pre-engagement work that has been done.

## **3. Options analysis and proposal**

Option 1: Approve the draft Strategy and run a public consultation for 6 weeks (recommended)

3.1 The draft Strategy has been proposed by the Working Group based on the data from the Homelessness Review and views of the Council's stakeholders and service users. Running a public consultation for a minimum of 6-weeks will ensure the Council has captured these views correctly and it also provides an opportunity to consult with others who may like to contribute.

Option 2: Approve the draft Strategy and run a shorter public consultation for less than 6 weeks

3.2 As Officers have already done some pre-engagement with service users and stakeholders prior to the draft being formed, the Committee may choose to

run a shorter consultation as a way to capture all. However, best practice from the Local Government Association suggests that a Council should plan for up to 6 to 12 weeks for a consultation exercise, to give people enough time to respond.

Option 3: Approve the draft Strategy but do not run a public consultation – propose adoption to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

3.3 There is a requirement to undertake some statutory consultation as noted in 2.3. Whilst Officers have already done some pre-engagement, this option is not recommended as some stakeholders and residents may not have had an opportunity to contribute their thoughts.

Option 4: Approve the draft Strategy with amendments and run a public consultation for 6 weeks

3.4 As noted, the draft Strategy proposed has been formed using supporting data collated in the Homelessness Review and views from stakeholders and service users. The priorities have been formed by the Working Group who have all been briefed on the findings. Any amendments should aim to meet the key themes, otherwise they could risk not being data-led. A full public consultation will capture views that may have been missed from the pre-engagement activities.

Option 5: Approve the draft Strategy with amendments and run a shorter public consultation for less than 6 weeks

3.5 As above, amendments should be in keeping with the themes otherwise they risk not being data driven. It is best practice to run a consultation for a minimum of 6-weeks.

Option 6: Approve the draft Strategy with amendments but do not run a public consultation – propose adoption to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

3.6 There is a risk that amendments may not be in keeping with the data reviewed or of the views collected from service users and stakeholders. If a public consultation is not held, stakeholder and residents would not have had the opportunity to comment on these new suggested amendments.

Option 7: Do not approve the draft Strategy

3.7 This is not recommended due to the timescales involved to approve and adopt a Strategy by Spring 2025. The proposed draft Strategy has been formed following extensive data analysis and pre-engagement with stakeholders and service users.

**4. Financial management comments**

4.1 This will be dependent on actions that arise from the Strategy Action Plan and funding opportunities that may be announced by the Government within the next 5 years. Consideration may need to be given on the resources to support the delivery of the actions throughout the lifetime of the Strategy; these will be reflected in Service Plans.

**5. Risk management comments**

5.1 Should the Council miss the 5 year deadline to approve and publish a new Strategy by Spring 2025, Officers will liaise with MHCLG to request an extension.

## **6. Procurement comments**

- 6.1 Not applicable at this stage. The Council's procurement obligations will be followed should the need arise from actions noted in the Action Plan.

## **7. Legal comments**

- 7.1 Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to publish a new Homelessness Strategy, based on the results of a homelessness review, every 5 years.
- 7.2 The definition of "Homelessness Strategy" is a strategy formulated by a local housing authority for preventing homelessness in their district, securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless, securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district who are or may become homeless, or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again. It further states that a Homelessness Strategy may include specific objectives to be pursued, and specific action planned to be taken.
- 7.3 There is a requirement in Section 3 (8) of the 2002 Act for the local authority to consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate.

## **8. Other considerations**

- 8.1 The Strategy was drafted at a time when the Working Group and the Council were awaiting announcements from the new Government. The Strategy Action Plan is designed to be a working document to allow for additional projects to be weaved in that will help the Council achieve its strategic priorities.
- 8.2 The Action Plan will be monitored by Officers and Strategic Housing Group (made up of Officers and the Committee Chair and Vice Chair). Officers will publish an annual update on the progress made.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 A full Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken and provided as a background paper. This assessment has not identified any significant impact on equalities.

## **10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 Due regard will be given to any climate change implications that may arise out of the actions from the Strategy Action Plan.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1 If the Committee chooses to consult, a full public consultation can commence earliest from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024. When the consultation closes, the consultation responses will be analysed and a report will be formed. The Working Group will consider the responses and make revised changes to the draft Strategy as appropriate. The final draft Strategy will then be presented to the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee for an approval decision in March 2025. Once a draft has been agreed by the Committee, adoption will then need to be recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources

Committee (targeting May 2025). The Council's Strategy is due to be refreshed by Spring 2025 and Officers have made MHCLG aware of the Committee meeting dates that are being targeted.

## **12. Contact**

12.1 HousingStrategy@spelthorne.gov.uk

**Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.**

### **Background papers:**

- Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Plans ([Housing Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy Plans.pdf](#))
- Establishment of Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Working Group and Terms of Reference ([Establishment of Homelessness Strategy.pdf](#))
- [Appendix A Terms of Reference.pdf](#)
- Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Working Group Minutes (October and November 2024 Committee Briefing Packs)
- [Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment.pdf](#)

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix A: Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Appendix B: Action Plan
- Appendix C: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 - 2024