

Report of the Strategic Director Place to the meeting of Executive to be held on 2 January 2020

Subject:

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Bradford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 - 2025

Summary statement:

This report outlines the development of a refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy for the district. The strategy sets out the vision, themes and priority actions identified for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years. The strategy has been drafted as a high-level framework to guide and influence the policies and delivery programmes of partners and stakeholders.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration & Environment

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the development of a refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy for the district. The strategy sets out the vision, themes and priority actions identified for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years. The strategy has been drafted as a high-level framework to guide and influence the policies and delivery programmes of partners and stakeholders.
- 1.2 This report provides the draft Bradford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Executive to approve – see Appendix 1.

2. BACKGROUND

Previous Strategy

- 2.1 'A Place to Call Home: Housing & Homelessness Strategy for Bradford District 2014-2019 was endorsed by the Council Executive on 11 March 2014 and agreed by full Council at its meeting on 25 March 2014. The strategy was partnership-led and jointly owned by the Council and the Bradford Housing Partnership. Progress against the objectives in this strategy was monitored regularly and reported to the Council's Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.
- 2.2 A review of the strategy began in early 2019 with a decision taken to separate the strategy into two separate strategies – a housing strategy and a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. This decision took into account the local context as well as a recent government requirement to focus increased attention on homelessness and rough sleeping.

Approach and purpose

- 2.3 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, it is a statutory requirement for all local authorities to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy on a five yearly cycle. In light of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and the development of the Government's 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Government set out a more specific requirement that all local authorities must revise their homelessness strategies to expand them into Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies, and to do so by the end of December 2019.
- 2.4 A multi-agency project group was established to oversee the development of the revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Partners from all main sectors involved in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping were invited to join the project group, and in doing so, took responsibility for feeding back to and involving their wider networks, service users and staff as the strategy took shape.
- 2.5 In order to inform the strategy, evidence was gathered as to the causes of homelessness, current homelessness levels and trends, services in place to prevent or tackle homelessness and resources available to support homeless people. Evidence and statistics were gathered from Council departments and a wide range of external stakeholders. This evidence informed the Homelessness Review in accordance with the Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance.

2.6 A series of three interactive development sessions were held with project group members, with over twenty participants taking part at each session. At these sessions, evidence on homelessness issues was discussed and collaborative exercises were undertaken to develop a draft vision and themes for the strategy. At the final session, partners worked to identify and prioritise headline actions and commitments for inclusion in the strategy.

2.7 Consultation on the strategy has consisted of:-

- Engagement with project group members on draft vision and themes
- In relation to youth homelessness issues, young people were involved in sharing their experiences and suggestions for improvements at two engagement sessions in Summer 2019 (Specialist Government Adviser review session, and review of supported housing focus group)
- Health and Wellbeing Board away day 28 August
- Regeneration & Environment Overview and Scrutiny – meetings on 19 Sept and 7 Nov, plus two informal working groups sessions
- Housing Partnership – People Group meeting on 5 Sept
- Bradford District Tenants and Residents' Federation – meeting on 25 Oct
- Public Consultation via CBMDC website – from 24 Sept to 21 Oct. This consultation was publicised to a very wide range of partners and stakeholders via both formal and informal networks.

The strategy has been developed alongside the revised Housing Strategy for Bradford, and has been discussed in detail at Housing Strategy project group meetings to ensure synergy between the two strategies.

2.8 Consultation feedback has been largely supportive of the vision, themes and actions. Specific comments included the need to articulate the complexity around affordability, low income and debt more clearly, and a request for the strategy to include more 'plain English' explanations of technical homelessness terminology. Other suggestions were to include links to Bradford's Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Mental Wellbeing Strategy. Other comments were around clarifying the difference between the definitions of homelessness and rough sleeping, and highlighting some of the reasons for rough sleeping. There were also comments about highlighting the role of social landlords through the Commitment to Refer, recognising their role in early intervention to reduce evictions.

Where appropriate, all of the specific comments relating to detail within the strategy have been incorporated.

Vision, themes and format of the strategy

2.9 The introductory sections of the strategy provide an overview of the changing environment in which homelessness and rough sleeping services are now delivered across the district. A summary of key findings of the Homelessness Review is also included, with some headline statistics and overview of the main homelessness and rough sleeping issues prevalent in the district.

2.10 The strategy has identified the following vision:

‘Across our partnerships we will strive towards ending homelessness and rough sleeping once and for all. Homelessness is everyone’s business.’

- 2.11 The five key themes for the strategy are:-
- Early intervention and prevention of homelessness
 - Deliver support in the right way at the right time to people who are homeless
 - Tackle rough sleeping
 - Improve access to housing for people who are homeless
 - Work better together
- 2.12 There are five general principles identified, which will be incorporated across each of the themes. These are co-production; person centred; recovery focused; equality and diversity; and safeguarding vulnerable people.
- 2.13 For each of the five key themes, the issues affecting Bradford are highlighted, and a set of headline actions identified as priorities to take forward. A case study for each theme is also included, which summarises real-life experiences of dealing with homelessness or the threat of homelessness in Bradford.
- 2.14 Finally, a set of four overarching target areas are identified for the strategy. These are:-
- Increase rates of successful prevention of homelessness
 - Reduce the number of placements into temporary accommodation
 - Reduce the length of stays in Bed & Breakfast accommodation (B&B)
 - Reduce rough sleeping significantly

Implementation

- 2.15 The Strategy is a partnership-led strategy, being jointly owned by Bradford Council and the Bradford Housing Partnership. It is imperative that we have a shared commitment across a range of key partners to help deliver this strategy, as the achievement of the vision depends on many partners contributing their resources and developing solutions, alongside the Council. The strategy is intended to provide a framework to guide future service development, bidding for funding opportunities, and influencing resourcing decisions and programmes. The success of the strategy will therefore depend in part on the implementation of other linked strategies and policies, including the district’s Housing Strategy, Social Housing Allocations Policy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Mental Wellbeing Strategy and Affordable Housing Programme.
- 2.16 The Housing Partnership’s People Group will take responsibility for developing and securing detailed commitments from partners, building on the headline actions identified so far. Lead partners will be identified for coordinating delivery of specific new actions. The People Group will also take responsibility for reviewing success measures and performance. Annual progress reports will be provided for the Council’s Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 This strategy is closely linked to a number of district and Council-wide plans and strategies. In particular, the strategy has been developed alongside the revised

Housing Strategy for Bradford, which is also presented to Executive for approval elsewhere on this agenda. The two strategies have been subject to tandem processes of development and consultation, and engagement events for the Housing Strategy have incorporated many issues which have then informed the drafting of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Both strategies will be overseen by the Housing Partnership going forward, to ensure this synergy is maintained.

- 3.2 As the high-level strategy for homelessness across the district, this strategy will in part set the context and key principles for future reviews of housing-specific policies including the district's Social Housing Allocations Policy.
- 3.3 The themes and vision of the strategy will need to inform, influence and contribute towards other key partnership strategies including the District Plan, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Bradford and Airedale, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Mental Wellbeing Strategy, Bradford Anti-Poverty Strategy and Bradford Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the strategy sets out a number of priority actions, some of which will utilise the resources of the Council. All Council-led actions which contribute towards this strategy will be subject to approval via the Council's annual budget process and additional resource requests will be submitted to the Executive.
- 4.2 The strategy also outlines a number of actions which focus on trying to secure funding from external sources, which may include central Government funding or partner organisation funding. This highlights the importance of working in partnership to deliver programmes of activity, and a need to take a flexible approach to how and when resources are sourced and utilised. The strategy will be used as an influencing document, to seek to secure maximum value from internal and external resources which can contribute to the strategy's vision and objectives.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 A reputational risk would arise if the Council failed to produce a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in line with Government requirements. The partnership approach to delivering and owning the strategy supports the Council's role in enabling change through collaborative action and oversight. Risks associated with Council-led projects and programmes relating to this strategy will be managed through the corporate risk management process.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The Council has a duty under Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 to publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of a homelessness review at least every five years. This strategy must be taken into account in the exercise of the Council's functions.
- 6.2 The aim of this strategy must be to prevent homelessness, to secure that sufficient

accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless, and to secure the satisfactory provision of support for such people, or those who have been homeless and need support to prevent a recurrence.

- 6.3 In formulating this strategy, the Council has considered the needs of all groups of people in its district who are homeless or likely to become homeless including Gypsies and Travellers. It has had regard to the 'Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities', last updated in April 2019, and to the Council's current Housing Allocation Scheme and Tenancy Strategy. Appropriate public or local authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons have been consulted.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Council is required to comply with the public sector equality duty under S149 Equality Act 2010 which requires that the Council, in the exercise of its functions, has due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (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;

Officers have prepared an equality impact assessment to assist elected members in having regard to this duty.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Through the promotion of access to decent, affordable homes, and support to maintain tenancies, the strategy will contribute towards personal, neighbourhood and community wellbeing and sustainability.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

No direct impacts on greenhouse gas emissions.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

No direct community safety implications, however the strategy does seek to prevent

homelessness and rough sleeping, by improving access to housing and support. These objectives contribute towards keeping individuals safer, and in turn deliver wider positive outcomes in relation to creating thriving communities.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Implementation of the strategy will be conducive to the fulfilment of the Convention, Rights and Freedoms under Schedule 1 of the Human Rights Act 1998, and in particular the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions.

7.6 TRADE UNION

There are no trade union implications identified.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific ward implications identified, as the strategy will apply district-wide. Some of the projects relating to supported housing will inevitably be focused in specific locations. However, residents from any part of the district are able to access locality-based homelessness services specific to their needs.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The strategy identifies a range of issues linked to youth homelessness, and clearly states that the Council has a role, as corporate parent, to ensure that young people who have been looked after are equipped with the skills and support to thrive in their own home. Youth homelessness is explicitly recognised in the strategy as a key priority to address, and a number of actions are included that aim to improve homeless prevention work with children and young people, improve pathways to enable earlier intervention and develop a discrete Youth Homelessness Delivery Plan.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

No Privacy Impact Assessment required.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

9.1 Option 1 - To endorse the Bradford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2025. This is the preferred option, as the draft strategy fits with the overarching aims and vision for the Council, and provides an updated framework within which the Council and its partners can develop their delivery programmes over the coming years.

9.2 Option 2 - To reject the Bradford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2025. This option is not recommended as the Council would be non-

compliant with Government requirements to have an updated strategy in place by the end of 2019.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the Bradford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 be endorsed.
- 10.2 That the support provided by partners in developing the strategy be noted, and the significant contribution that will be provided by housing, homelessness and other partners in implementing this strategy be acknowledged.
- 10.3 That Strategic Director Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, is delegated authority to undertake monitoring and implementation of this strategy.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Final Draft – Bradford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2025

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

'A Place to Call Home – Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Bradford District 2014 – 2019' see <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/housing/policies-and-reports/housing-and-related-strategies/>

Report to Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Thursday 19th September 2019 see <https://bradford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=402&MId=7234>

Report to Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Thursday 7th November 2019 see <https://bradford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=402&MId=7236>