

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/2020 REPORT NO. **156**

**MEETING TITLE AND DATE:**  
**Cabinet 4.12.19**

**REPORT OF:**  
Director of Housing and  
Regeneration

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**Agenda – Part: 1**

**Item: 6**

**Subject: Preventing Homelessness and  
Rough Sleeping Strategy**

**Wards: ALL**

**Key Decision No: KD 4809**

**Cabinet Member consulted:**

Cllr Needs, Cabinet Member for Council Housing

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy is a high-level strategic document which sets out the Council's overarching vision and ambitions to ending homelessness in Enfield. With homelessness continuing to significantly increase in the borough and with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, this strategy sets out our vision to end homelessness through making homeless prevention a priority across the Council, with our partners and in the community.

The 12-week public consultation on the strategy closed on 21<sup>st</sup> October.

There was broad support for the vision and ambitions of the strategy. The consultation also suggested further areas that we needed to address in the strategy or areas to clarify and strengthen. These changes are detailed in this report.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet approves the strategy for adoption and implementation.

That Cabinet notes the establishment of a multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Partnership Board to take forward the delivery of the strategy.

**3. BACKGROUND**

This new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy explains how we will work with partners to prevent and tackle

homelessness and rough sleeping in Enfield. The strategy meets our obligations under the Homelessness Act 2002 for all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy.

This new strategy will replace the previous version which was published in 2013. A new approach is needed given the significant demographic and legislative changes since 2013. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reforms England's homelessness law by placing new duties on local authorities to intervene at a much earlier stage to assess and prevent homelessness. It requires local authorities to assist all homeless households irrespective of their priority need status and put in place a Personal Housing Plan that is kept under regular review. The opportunities presented through the Homelessness Prevention Act mean we need a different approach to tackling the challenge.

As well as new legislation relating to how homelessness is tackled, the borough of Enfield has changed considerably since our previous strategy was created. Homelessness has increased significantly, both nationally and locally. In Enfield homelessness has increased by 250% since 2011/12. At March 2019, there were 3,410 households in Enfield's temporary accommodation which is a 74% rise since 2012. There are much higher numbers of people on low incomes in the private rented sector than was the case in 2013.

Through the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, we will design and develop our services to intervene as early as possible to prevent homelessness and to facilitate partnership working across the Council, with partners and with the community to prevent homelessness, focusing on the main cause of homelessness, which is eviction from the private rented sector.

In developing the strategy, we have carried out extensive engagement with stakeholders, including with residents, voluntary and community sector, registered providers, MHCLG and elected members.

The public consultation on the draft strategy launched on 26<sup>th</sup> July and ran for 12 weeks until 21<sup>st</sup> October. This comprehensive consultation programme included an online survey, distribution of paper copies at community events, discussion on the strategy at community forums, stakeholder committees and Boards. There were also paper copies of the survey made available at John Wilkes House for those waiting for housing options and advice services to complete. The consultation was promoted in civic buildings, GP surgeries, on social media and in the press.

We also wrote directly to key stakeholder organisations inviting discussion on the draft, including all Registered Housing Providers with stock in the borough; our three local NHS Trusts; Enfield Clinical

Commissioning Group; Enfield and Haringey Borough Commander; Public Health England; the GLA; and neighbouring authorities.

The full list of who we consulted with and how we promoted the consultation is provided in appendix III.

There were 295 responses to the consultation including the online questionnaire and direct responses via email. This included responses from 242 residents, 7 registered providers and 11 voluntary sector groups.

There was broad support for the vision and ambitions of the strategy. There was particular support from Registered Providers and voluntary organisations who supported our approach to preventing homelessness in Enfield and expressed their interest in helping Enfield deliver this strategy through increased partnership working.

Respondents also suggested where further detail and clarification was needed to strengthen our approach, and the strategy was further developed as a result of this feedback as follows.

The results of the consultation suggested that many organisations and landlords are unsure of how to refer into homelessness prevention services. As a result, the strategy has a renewed focus and commitment to supporting and training organisations, partners and landlords to understand how they can support homeless households, how they can refer into services and who to contact.

The consultation suggested that communications could be improved and the information that the community receives to get help early and to understand the available housing options needs to be more accessible. We have strengthened ambition four, 'supporting people to plan for their lifetime housing needs', which focuses on improving the communications and information that the public receives.

The results of the consultation suggested that the Council could work more effectively with the voluntary and community sector. There was support for strengthening our partnership work within this sector. This is in line with the strategy aims, and there will be a renewed focus to put this into action with funding secured through the LGA Housing Advisors Programme, to co-ordinate our activities and make sure that together we are delivering the best outcomes for residents.

There was strong support for widening the support that people receive alongside housing support. This is in line with the aims of the strategy which acknowledge that homelessness cannot be dealt in isolation. There are multiple underlying issues that contribute to a household becoming homeless and we must provide a holistic service that can identify this and intervene early to prevent homelessness.

The Strategy includes the outcome measures that we will use to evidence whether the strategy is being successfully implemented. Due to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the accompanying new H-CLIC system, several measures are new and have not been monitored for long enough to be able to set targets. Year one of the strategy will involve monitoring new measures and setting a baseline, with year two looking to set measurable targets.

A new Homelessness Prevention Partnership Board will agree, deliver and monitor an annual action plan to deliver on the strategy commitments, which will include targets for the outcome measures.

The purpose of this board is to actively drive the strategy and have accountability for delivering the action plan. The board will also ensure that homelessness prevention activities are co-ordinated and will support strengthened partnership working.

The Council has also been successful in securing funding from MHCLG and GLA for a winter homelessness shelter. This will include 20 emergency bed spaces, run by All People All Places in Claverings, which will help to deliver on ambition 5 of the strategy 'end rough sleeping'.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

An alternative option considered was to not renew the 2013 Preventing Homelessness strategy. However, under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities are required to have a Homelessness Strategy that is updated at least every five years and that includes plans for; preventing homelessness, ensuring sufficient accommodation and satisfactory support services for people who are, or who may become, homeless. If we decided to not renew our Preventing Homelessness strategy, we would not meet our statutory duty. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has advised that our new Preventing Homelessness strategy must be approved and implemented by December 2019.

With the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA), the Council has a duty to focus on prevention and early intervention, requiring an emphasis on joined-up, partnership working. Without the renewed strategy, it would be unlikely that we could achieve these aims, homelessness would continue to rise and costs to the Council would increase.

#### **5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Increasing homelessness; a growing private rented sector which in many cases is offering sub-standard accommodation; a growing population and ambitious new housing targets mean that we require a

bold new approach to deliver more and better homes and prevent homelessness in Enfield.

Homelessness in Enfield has increased significantly in recent years, with a 250% increase since 2011/12. We have seen a 74% rise in temporary accommodation rates since 2012 and rough sleeping has increased from 7 in 2017/18 to 78 in 2018/19. The human cost of homelessness and households spending years in temporary accommodation is enormous. At the same time the financial cost to the Council of an ever-increasing number of households in temporary accommodation is growing.

As such, we require a radically different approach to preventing and ultimately ending homelessness. This strategy sets out our approach for preventing homelessness, giving an overarching vision and guiding principles that will ensure consistency across relevant Council departments and set out how we will work in partnership to achieve our vision. The new strategy provides the opportunity to design and develop our services to intervene as early as possible to prevent homelessness and to facilitate partnership working across the Council, with partners and with the community to prevent homelessness. The strategy aims to prevent and reduce homelessness which will improve outcomes for residents and reduce costs to the Council.

This strategy takes a 'Health in all Policies' (HiAPT) approach in how we propose to work together to prevent and address homelessness.

The strategy will significantly contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan, addressing all key priorities; Good Homes in Well-Connected Neighbourhoods, Sustain Strong and Healthy Communities & Build our Local Economy to Create a Thriving Place.

## **7. COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS**

### **7.1 Financial Implications**

- 7.1.1 The Council is committed to reducing the pressure in Homelessness with a range of savings and initiatives designed to both prevent homelessness in the borough and where homelessness does occur to provide cheaper, better accommodation for those in need.
- 7.1.2 The Council has identified £1.1m of savings around the supply of Temporary accommodation, which is reflected in the 2019/20 budget and further savings proposals are being considered that will impact in 2020/21 but will only be formally agreed in February through the Councils Budget Report.
- 7.1.3 The Council is currently in receipt of the grants for Rough Sleepers, Private Rented Sector Access Fund and the Flexible Homelessness Support (FHSG). The FHSG is partly administered to give Local

Authorities the means to implement a successful prevention strategy. However, whilst the Flexible Housing Support Grant meets some of the cost of temporary accommodation, the uncertainty of this grant every year means that we cannot plan for the longer-term, making it harder to put in place longer term approaches to preventing and addressing homelessness.

- 7.1.4 It is important to note that at this time there is no guarantee of FHSG funding beyond 2019/20 and the continued receipt of the grant will be crucial in taking these initiatives forward, though the Government have recently announced an increase of £54m nationally for homelessness and rough sleeping which provides greater confidence that this funding will continue into 2020/21.
- 7.1.5 In implementing this strategy, a new service model is being developed and this transformational approach with a focus on upstream prevention and the alleviation of homelessness and rough sleeping will require an upfront investment which is still being quantified but over the next five years the proposed service model is anticipated to generate greater efficiencies in the cost of providing the homelessness service. There is an ambition to implement these changes with existing resources whilst seeking external funding opportunities and lobbying around fairer funding and retention/growth of the FHSG.
- 7.1.6 The strategy and Council ambitions to drive down costs and increase service efficiency are being pursued in a climate where recent research has reported on the growing costs of homelessness across London, which is anticipated to increase to over £1bn a year by 2021/22. This same research carried out by the LSE has indicated that in the five years following the 2018 introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, boroughs will have to find an extra £70 million as a result of increasing homelessness and service costs.

## **7.2 Legal Implications**

Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review. Section 1(4) requires housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a further homelessness review, within the period of five years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.

## **7.3 Property Implications**

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Council's approach regarding action to prevent and tackle rough sleeping in the borough, with reference to our role as a corporate landlord.

It also sets out the Council's intention to re-design housing options and advice services to make sure the Council can intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness and support people at risk in the private rented sector to sustain their tenancies. This may have implications for where housing options and advice staff are located which will need to be considered alongside relevant property strategies.

Further property implication may arise following implementation of the strategy and these will be reported on separately in any subsequent operational reports.

## **8. KEY RISKS**

The lack of guaranteed Flexible Homelessness Support Grant funding beyond 2019/20 poses a risk in our ability to deliver on our strategy. The continued receipt of the grant will be crucial in taking these initiatives forward. However, the recent Government announcement of an increase of £54m nationally for homelessness and rough sleeping, provides some confidence that this funding will continue into 2020/21. We are proactively making the case to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of the level of need in Enfield and have proactively engaged with them in the development of our strategy, receiving broad support of our approach.

We will be delivering this strategy in the context of high numbers of people becoming homelessness, and the context of large numbers of people with low incomes in the private rented sector. There is a risk that we will not achieve our vision, given the scale of the ambition alongside uncertainty in the housing market and that fact that success depends on partnership across a number of different council department and organisations.. This risk is being mitigated through the creation of a clear and measurable action plan and annual targets based on the outcome measures in the strategy, to be agreed and delivered by the new Preventing Homelessness Partnership Board. We will ensure that future performance management frameworks for the Council reflect the new priorities in the strategy.

## **9. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES - CREATING A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ENFIELD**

### **9.1 Good Homes in Well-Connected Neighbourhoods**

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy aims to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and to increase the quantity of decent and good quality private rented sector accommodation.

### **9.2 Sustain Strong and Healthy Communities**

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy aims to build the resilience of residents in all aspects of their life by empowering them to take responsibility for their housing needs with the support of the Council. We know that poor housing and poor health are linked and that people who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation are more likely to experience mental health issues and poorer health outcomes. By preventing homelessness, raising standards in the private sector and reducing the length of time that people spend in temporary accommodation, we are contributing to the Council's ambition to sustain healthy communities.

### **9.3 Build our Local Economy to Create a Thriving Place**

As part of our holistic approach to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, we are proposing to also tackle worklessness, which is a contributing factor to homelessness. We anticipate that this will help build our local economy and contribute to thriving communities.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

We have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment for the strategy and anticipate that the strategy will have a positive impact on equalities. The strategy takes a person-centred approach to preventing homelessness, in which all needs of a person are considered. We anticipate this approach will have a positive impact on equalities.

In order to develop a strategy which reflects the diverse needs of communities, including people of all protected characteristics, we undertook an extensive consultation on the draft strategy, and used the results of this to finalise our approach.

## **11. PERFORMANCE AND DATA IMPLICATIONS**

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy includes the outcome measures that we will use to evidence whether the strategy is being successfully implemented. A new Homelessness Prevention Partnership Board will agree, deliver and monitor an annual action plan to deliver on the strategy commitments, which will include targets for the outcome measures. We will ensure that future performance management frameworks for the Council reflect the new priorities in the strategy.

## **12. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy sets out our proposal to work across council services, with our partners, local organisations and with the community to respond to links between poor housing, low income and poor health to help residents to build resilience to prevent homelessness.

## **Background Papers**

Draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Appendix I: Enfield's Review of Homelessness

Appendix II: The Right Home for Everyone Consultation Report

Appendix III: Equalities Impact Assessment