



Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

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1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 to 2029, which sets out the Council’s vision and strategic priorities in terms of the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping. It includes responses from the public consultation.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, appended to this report, sets out the strategic direction and priorities for homelessness prevention and reduction over the next five years. It emphasises the importance of early intervention and prevention measures to address homelessness and rough sleeping effectively. It proposes a policy framework encompassing various initiatives aimed at preventing homelessness, providing support to individuals at risk and ensuring access to suitable accommodation options.
- 2.2. The proposed Strategy aligns with the Shropshire Plan 2022-2025 “Healthy People”¹ priority, which centres on promoting healthy living, a robust economy, a sustainable environment and an efficient organisation, all of which are connected to this strategy.

Healthy People: We will tackle inequalities, including rural inequalities, and poverty in all its forms; providing early support and interventions that reduce risk and enable children, young people, adults and families to achieve their full potential and enjoy life.

¹ [Healthy people | Shropshire Council](#)

- 2.3 The proposed Strategy retains a clear focus upon early intervention to prevent homelessness; or if prevention is not possible, to end homelessness at the earliest opportunity. It also recognises that homelessness and rough sleeping cannot be tackled by the Council alone. The success of delivering our priorities relies on strong and effective partnership working with other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. This is the 'golden thread' that runs through the strategy.
- 2.4 A review of homelessness has been undertaken to inform the draft Strategy and what the priorities should be. A strategy and action plan will enable better collaborative and joined up service provision.
- 2.5 The proposed Strategy identifies four key priorities that will make the most difference to addressing homelessness. These are:

a) Develop a community and partnership approach to homeless prevention and early intervention.

The proposed Strategy focuses on embedding upstream prevention measures within the Housing Options Service. This includes early intervention programmes, alongside collaborating with housing associations and community partners. We aim to establish new approaches aimed at reducing evictions from both social housing and supported accommodation and ensure adequate access to services.

b) Meet the complex and unique needs of our customers to prevent rough sleeping and repeat homelessness.

We aim to minimise the duration and recurrence of rough sleeping, to ensure that where rough sleeping cannot be prevented, it should be brief, rare, and non-recurring. To achieve this, we will enhance our data collection methods to understand customers better, adopt a housing first approach, explore the feasibility of an assessment centre and develop strategies to support individuals with complex and multiple needs, ultimately breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness.

c) Develop and improve access to a suitable range of settled, supported and temporary accommodation solutions.

The proposed Strategy focuses on minimising and, in the longer term, ending the use of unsuitable Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation by exploring alternative options. Through collaborative working we want to develop and strengthen relationships, expand the availability of accommodation options, and develop a coordinated approach.

d) Deliver an effective, efficient, and accessible Housing Options service tailored to meet the diverse needs of our customers.

The proposed Strategy will prioritise resources effectively within approved budgets to deliver an efficient housing options service, designed to meet the needs of our customers.

- 2.6 The consultation report details responses on the draft preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy following a public and stakeholder consultation and comments received. The public consultation ran over 10 weeks, extended from the initial eight-week timescale due to poor initial participation.

- 2.7 The public consultation received 24 responses from individuals or members of the public (79%), as representatives of a local group or organisation (17%) and 4% did not specify. This consultation report is found at Appendix V.
- 2.8 The feedback from the public consultation was predominantly positive. The feedback was most positive about the vision or aim of the proposed strategy. There was also positive feedback for the partnership focus within the proposed strategy and the way the priorities were presented clearly within the draft document.
- 2.9 In line with the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, Chapter 2, Homelessness Strategies and Reviews² 2.23 and section 1 (1)(b) of the Homelessness Act 2002, the housing authority has formulated its homelessness strategy based on the results of the homeless review.
- 2.10 Additionally, it should be noted that the Homeless Review did not fully address the weight of domestic abuse issues. Consequently, further attention and consideration have been given within this strategy following the public and stakeholder consultation, where comments on this service area have been taken on board. Further information has been included and amendments have been made.
- 2.11 The following amendments have been made to the draft strategy in response to feedback from the public consultation and to comments received.
- 2.12 Based on a respondent's comment, a definition of 'Housing First' has been incorporated in paragraph 8.6 to read "Housing First is a homelessness assistance approach that prioritises providing a secure home and tailored support to people experiencing homelessness" making it clearer that Housing First is not temporary accommodation.
- 2.13 A respondent highlighted that town and parish councils were not included in the list of partnerships. This has been amended and reflected at paragraph 7.4, 7.10 and 7.12 and within the action plan found at Appendix II
- 2.14 A respondent highlighted that the proposed strategy lacks sufficient integration of domestic abuse considerations, despite its significant impact on individuals seeking homelessness support from the local authority. "When vulnerable groups are mentioned in the strategy, victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse are not mentioned specifically which they should be", this has been reflected in an amendment made at paragraph 7.17.
- 2.15 Furthermore, further information has been provided at paragraph 10.7 to reflect a respondent's response on the omission of DAHA accreditation. This paragraph reads "We are committed to working towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation. DAHA accreditation is the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse. We will embed standards of good practice in response to domestic abuse and apply a domestic abuse lens to daily work enabling the early identification of domestic abuse, providing a survivor-led response that, as part of a Coordinated Community Response (CCR), will prevent escalation of harm

² [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Chapter 2: Homelessness strategies and reviews - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews)

and hold perpetrators of abuse to account". The action plan has been updated to reflect this addition to the strategy.

- 2.16 Following a respondent's comment on paragraph 8.7, the terminology has been updated. Although 'assessment centre' is a universally accepted term, the feedback highlights concerns that it might not feel supportive and could imply a risk of failure. As a result, we have changed the name within the strategy to 'Single Assessment Centre' to better reflect its supportive nature. Additionally, paragraph 8.7 has been expanded to clarify that this assessment centre is part of the complex needs' pathway, addressing gaps in support for individuals with high and complex needs.
- 2.17 The action plan (Appendix II) has been amended to include DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation and working to achieve this to include a separate action to enhance and improve the Sanctuary scheme as a preventative measure.
- 2.18 A respondent commented on the virtual delivery model for increasing information for customers. However, it is recognised that individuals who are sleeping rough or fleeing domestic abuse often do not have access to technology. To address this concern, amendments have been made at paragraph 7.10 to ensure that vulnerable groups are not excluded and can access the necessary information and support through alternative means.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Council is asked to approve and formally adopt the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, attached at Appendix I.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. While it is a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to develop and publish a Homelessness Review and Strategy at least every five years, it should be noted that the previous Homelessness Strategy lapsed in 2017. Despite this gap Shropshire Council has remained focussed with various measures and interventions implemented to support individuals experiencing homelessness.
- 4.2. Although these efforts may not have been formally articulated within a strategy document during this period, it's essential to recognise the proactive steps taken by our teams and partners to mitigate the negative impacts of homelessness on individuals, their families, and the wider community.
- 4.3. Moving forward, we are dedicated to ensuring that our approach to homelessness is both robust and formally documented through the development and publication of the Homelessness Review and Strategy, as mandated by legislation.
- 4.4. The proposed "Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping Strategy" serves as a comprehensive policy framework, outlining strategies and initiatives aimed at addressing homelessness and rough sleeping within Shropshire. It enables the council to demonstrate its commitment to addressing these pressing issues and establishes a clear process and policy framework for delivery.

- 4.5. By outlining the advice and assistance that can be provided, the strategy seeks to mitigate risks to the council whilst ensuring effective support for individuals experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 4.6. A follow up Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been completed following the public and stakeholder consultation, considering the feedback received. This can be found at Appendix IV. Whilst responses were low in number, points around domestic abuse and around clarity of terminology were well made. Explaining the definitions that we use and where and how we use them should lead to an anticipated positive impact for the communities that we serve, as what we are seeking to achieve will be clearer for everyone.
- 4.7. Homelessness and poor or insecure housing have adverse effects on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Housing inequality will also have an impact on other factors such as income, education, health, and wellbeing, life experiences, behaviours, and choices, along with relationships with friends and family. There is a likely positive impact accordingly across the nine Protected Characteristic groupings as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This is particularly with regard to Age, Disability and Sex and intersectionality across these groupings.
- 4.8. There will also be anticipated positive impact for women with multiple and complex needs who are struggling to escape domestic abuse situations, with the needs of this vulnerable grouping recognised and articulated by respondents. Additionally, there is an anticipated positive impact for vulnerable young people, including care leavers, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and may have also suffered trauma and hardship within their lives, potentially leading to an increased use of alcohol and illegal substances and problems with mental ill health. This grouping may be at risk of exploitation, including involvement in county lines.
- 4.9. The initial screening process ahead of the proposed consultation had indicated likely low to medium positive impacts for those individuals and households considered at risk of social exclusion. In Shropshire, this includes those whom we may regard as being vulnerable, either by virtue of their circumstances as individuals or as households, for example, households living in fuel poverty and refugee households. In our definition of vulnerable individuals, we would also include people who experience rough sleeping, particularly over a long period. The Council will seek to maximise positive equality impacts for others we may consider to be vulnerable, including people fleeing hate crime and people with disabilities including hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease, and neurodiverse conditions. Social Inclusion is not an Equality Act category, rather representing our efforts as a Council to consider the needs of households in Shropshire and the circumstances in which they may find themselves.
- 4.10. Being able to access an affordable dwelling which meets a household's needs is essential to health and well-being. Providing a house which is affordable, of good quality and has security of tenure to a family threatened with homelessness allows them to create a home for their children and reduces the worry of a 'no fault' eviction or of being unable to afford an increase in rent. Supported accommodation allows individuals to settle and find structure, enabling them to focus on a journey of recovery and integration back into society. Regarding homelessness, people who experience rough sleeping over a long period are more likely to die young than the general population. Rough sleepers also experience some of the most severe health

inequalities. Often rough sleepers also have mental ill health, substance misuse, and physical health needs and may have experienced trauma.

- 4.11 There is therefore an anticipated impact of a fundamental improvement in societal issues through: a reduction in presentations at Accident and Emergency departments; a reduction in accessing services for mental health and substance misuse use; and a reduction in crime and ASB related to rough sleeping, homelessness and the lack of suitable supported accommodation for vulnerable young people and for the adults over 25 whom we are seeking to reach.
- 4.12 Where opportunities arise to work co-operatively with our partners and the voluntary sector, we can co-ordinate our approach to deliver services across Shropshire to reduce the risk of homelessness.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Shropshire Council is currently managing an unprecedented financial position as budgeted for with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 29 February 2024 and detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet monthly. This demonstrates that significant management action is required over the remainder of the financial year to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all Cabinet Reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve:
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2 The proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be implemented within existing budgets. The Council is in receipt of Government funding, including Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rough Sleeper Initiative funding, to support the delivery of services to prevent and relive homelessness.
- 5.3 The future of any of the proposals, revenue or capital funded, will be subject to the scrutiny of funding proposals as part of the determination of future capital or revenue budget strategy.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 Whilst the strategy is not expected to have any direct effect on energy and fuel consumption, renewable energy generation, carbon offsetting or climate change adaptation, a range of indirect effects may require attention, for example:
- More extreme weather events resulting from climate change are likely to
 - generate a surge in numbers of people suffering displacement and homelessness because of rising costs and ill health.

- Investment in preventative measures which deliver energy and cost savings (such as those already being managed the Council's Affordable Warmth and Energy Efficiency team) may help to mitigate the impact of climate change for vulnerable households.
- There may be opportunities to develop renewable energy schemes and sustainable transport options to help reduce energy costs of temporary shelters and fuel costs.

7. Background

- 7.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness every five years and to formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of that review.
- 7.2 The proposed Strategy has taken a targeted consultation approach, identifying key stakeholders, community representations and experts through open forums, surveys and direct engagement. This inclusive process to gather valuable feedback has been incorporated into refining the final proposed strategy, ensuring alignment with community needs.
- 7.3 Each of the proposed Strategy's objectives contain "Priorities for action" which together form an action plan, allowing for monitoring and review of the Strategy. It is proposed that the Strategy is reviewed annually, to provide the opportunity to reflect changes in Government policy and funding streams.
- 7.4 The proposed strategy was approved to go forward to public and stakeholder consultation for eight weeks commencing 24 April 2023 – 21 June 2024. The consultation was further extended for additional two weeks from the initial eight-week timescale due to initial poor participation.
- 7.5 Feedback from the public consultation was generally supportive of the proposed Strategy. A summary of feedback received and subsequent proposed changes to the strategy to reflect comments received is provided at Appendix V.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. The Authority is required to make a copy of its Homelessness Review, its Homelessness Strategy and any associated documentation available for inspection, without charge, by members of the public, and to provide (on payment of a reasonable charge if it wishes) a copy of such documents.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. The proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy represents a commitment to improving the quality of life for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness within our local authority.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet 17 April 2024, Draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Local Member: All Members

Appendices

Appendix I: Final draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Appendix II: Action Plan (forms part of Appendix I)

Appendix III: Executive Summary Homelessness Review

Appendix IV: Equality, Social, Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)

Appendix V: Consultation Feedback