

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
28 SEPTEMBER 2021	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Michael Kelleher, Assistant Director for Housing	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Steve Allen, Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Communities	
Contact Officer(s):	Sean Evans, Head of Service - Housing Needs Sarah Hebblethwaite – Housing Needs Operations Manager	Tel. 01733 864083

HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2021 - 2026

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: The Head of Housing Needs	Deadline date: 15/11/2021
<p>It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents and scrutinise the report and the accompanying Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. 2. Endorse the Strategy and Action Plan to be taken forward to Cabinet for approval. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 The Homelessness strategy is a key document the Council has a statutory duty to produce every five years, which lays out how it will tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the period.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 Being a key document the strategy requires scrutiny and agreement from Committee, Cabinet and Full Council.

2.2 This report is for the Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.1, Functions determined by the Council:

1. Housing need (including homelessness, housing options and selective licensing)
2.4 *How does this report link to the Corporate Priorities?*

Priority outcome 1: pride in our communities, our places and our environment

Our voluntary, community and faith sector has been at forefront of the COVID-19 response providing a range of support including food delivery, information and advice, befriending support and reaching out to vulnerable and hard to reach communities. We will continue to engage, support and work with them to ensure we not only maintain a thriving voluntary, community and faith sector across the city, but also to ensure our communities and neighbourhoods are cohesive and involved in making choices that affect their people, places and environment.

We will work together as a community to support greater integration, helping to build bridges between different parts of the community, tackling social isolation and contributing to making

Peterborough a safe, friendly place.

Priority outcome 3: better jobs, good homes and improved opportunities for all

As Peterborough grows and becomes more sustainable, we will ensure that the availability and choice of housing increases to meet the needs of the city. We will increase the supply of homes which people can afford, continue to improve the conditions of existing housing to support health and wellbeing, and ensure that there is a range of supported and specialist accommodation available.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	YES	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	15/11/2021
Date for relevant Council meeting if applicable	08/12/2021	Date for submission to Government Dept. <i>(Please specify which Government Dept.)</i>	n/a

4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 In November 2020 the Homelessness Review was presented to Adults & Communities Scrutiny to obtain endorsement to develop a new homelessness strategy for the 5 years ahead.

Over the last 10 months, since receiving endorsement, the Housing Needs team have been working with partners from the statutory, voluntary and faith sector to develop a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that not only informs the work programme of the housing needs service for the next 5 years, but accounts for and builds on all of the relationships that have been formed and strengthened while we as a city have been tackling Covid 19.

It is clear that we couldn't have managed and achieved what we have during the most of challenging times without the support of key organisations across the city.

Homelessness continues to be an ongoing issue in the city, and without a sharp focus on delivering services that meet the needs of the most vulnerable, the negative impacts on families and individuals will be felt for years to come.

- 4.2

Immediately prior to the pandemic the Council achieved zero households in bed and breakfast accommodation after a period of high demand and low supply of suitable temporary accommodation meant that we were left with no option but to place households in B&B, sometimes outside of Peterborough.

No sooner had we achieved this, that the pandemic hit, and the country entered lockdown. With this came the instruction from government that councils should mobilise a response that would mean that all rough sleepers were lifted from the streets and provided with accommodation and support to reduce the risk of contracting Covid 19. We were also advised that our night shelter and crash bed provisions could not remain open because of the shared sleeping space and increased risk of transmission.

Within 24 hours, with significant support from the Light Project Peterborough, we were able to secure the use of a local hotel and over the course of a weekend had over 50 individuals accommodated. The Light Project Peterborough co-ordinated food provision with the help of The Peterborough Soup Kitchen, Three Pillars, Peterborough Homeless helpers and an array of local businesses, residents were provided with 3 meals a day and snacks. Support from other providers

was brought in to support with primary health needs, drug and alcohol issues and volunteers and staff from a mix of the housing needs team, Light Project Peterborough staff and volunteers as well as redeployed council staff from across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire provided 24 hours staff cover providing support and reassurance to some of our most vulnerable chaotic guests.

4.3 Over the months following we saw increasing numbers of people falling into homelessness due to relationship breakdown, prison releases and hospital discharges who would have normally been able to rely on family and friends to provide accommodation unable to do so as they were wary of introducing covid to their home. This resulted in the numbers accommodated soon increasing and at its peak we were accommodating over 150 individuals across 3 hotels in the city. Between the start of lockdown and now we have seen what we can achieve when all agencies come together to achieve a common aim.

As the months have gone on and we have continued to provide accommodation to all eligible rough sleepers we have seen people move through the temporary accommodation settings into more permanent accommodation. We have been successful with funding from the MHCLG to bring forward 22 units of supported accommodation for former rough sleepers at Lincoln House. We continue to work with our supported accommodation providers in the city such as, Cross Keys Homes, Longhurst Group, the Supported Housing Fellowship, The YMCA & Hope into Action to ensure that the supported accommodation in the city is best used by housing the people who require support and ensuring that we are able to move on those who no longer need it and are able to live independently.

4.4 We have worked to continually reduce our use of B&B/hotel accommodation while still providing accommodation to any eligible rough sleeper and expect to only be using B&B accommodation in an emergency by the end of March 2022.

This experience over the pandemic has clearly demonstrated that homelessness is every bodies issue and the Council and the city cannot achieve its aspirations without partners working together. The proposed homelessness strategy has been developed with this in mind. A Homelessness Strategy Steering Group has been formed and meets fortnightly to discuss live issues regarding homelessness as well as developing and forming this strategy. Key partners included in this group and the development of this strategy are:

- 4.5
- PCC Housing Needs
 - Cross Keys Homes
 - Longhurst Group
 - The Light Project Peterborough
 - PCC Adult Social Care
 - Counting Every Adult Lead
 - C&P Mental Health Trust
 - Public Health Commissioning
 - The Police
 - PCC Prevention & Enforcement Service
 - P3 Floating Support

This strategy builds on our existing work alongside the knowledge of what we need to do collectively, to make a sustained and long-term change to ensure that those who become homeless are supported into sustainable permanent accommodation.

We are committed as a partnership to taking a person-centred approach. We will work alongside people with lived experience ensuring that they influence and guide the approach taken by services in the delivery of our strategy. We will work in a way which builds on the strengths and assets of each person, taking a trauma informed approach where appropriate.

4.6 Our strategy will be informed by place, recognising the role of communities and neighbours in identifying and addressing problems early. In developing affordable housing options, we will consider the impact of growth and development at a local level.

We will work in partnership and use systems leadership to achieve good outcomes for those in greatest housing need, making the most of our data to understand individual and community need, and deliver the best individual and community solutions possible.

The overarching aim of the strategy is: **Acting as One City to End Homelessness**

Our understanding of needs in the city, and from what those with lived experience have told us, shows that we have five priorities for the next 5 years:

1. A systems wide relentless focus on preventing and relieving homelessness
2. Aspire to create a positive experience for all clients on their homelessness journey and work to ensure that homelessness is a one-off event
3. Ensure suitable homes are made available, that clients support needs are met, and they feel part of their community
4. Empower rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to make positive choices to move on to suitable homes
5. Strengthening our partnership & multi agency work through transformation to achieve a whole city approach to tackling homelessness

Our strategy will apply to all, but we recognise that some people are affected by different factors in their lives which may make them more vulnerable to becoming homeless, or who may struggle to find a pathway out of homelessness if it happens to them.

4.7

The test of our strategy will be on how well we have made an impact with households who are:

- on a low income, or living in poverty have been the victim of domestic abuse
- affected by poor mental health
- people with an addiction or dependency on substances such as drugs or alcohol
- in hospital without homes to go to
- prison leavers
- young people – those who are leaving care or who have other vulnerabilities

The strategy, priorities and objectives detailed in the strategy capture the forecast pressures as we move out of the Covid pandemic and with a clear understanding of what may be on the horizon we are best able to handle any surges in demand that have been pent up.

We are expecting that there will be an increase in the number of people that are evicted from their private rented accommodation when the required notice periods for section 21 notices return to the pre pandemic conditions. This in turn may mean landlords who had held off taking action against their tenants may do so. Last year during the pandemic the number of households evicted from rented accommodation and presenting as homeless as result was around 300 less than the year prior. We are predicting that a proportion of those households will present later in this financial year.

With the end of the Furlough Scheme in October we are expecting that this may impact further on households seeking assistance as homeless. As well as households losing rented accommodation there may be home owners also affected. The team are receiving additional training to deal with these cases.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 While the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan is a council strategy, the strategy and action plan has been developed jointly with partners organisations who have a key role to play in tackling homelessness in the city.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 *It is anticipated that the report be endorsed and the strategy and action plan be taken forward for approval at Cabinet and Full Council.*

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is recommended that committee approve progressing the report through Cabinet and Full Council approval in order for the council to fulfil its statutory duty in relation to homelessness and to provide the Housing Needs service its service direction for the coming years in tackling homelessness in the city.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 No alternative options have been considered. It is a statutory requirement to develop a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 It is not expected that the implementation of the strategy will have any additional implications on the Councils Finances that have not already been budgeted for.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 It is not anticipated that the introduction of a new homelessness strategy or achieving any of the objectives detailed will have any legal implications.

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 It is not anticipated that there will be any equalities implications from the introduction of strategy or any of achieving any of the objectives.

Rural Implications

- 9.4 *N/A*

Carbon Impact Assessment

- 9.5 There is not expected to be any Impact with the introduction of this strategy.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 *This report and strategy has been developed in accordance with the guidance in the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.*

www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 *Appendix 1 – The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 - 2025*

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