

BABERGH & MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

TO: BDC COUNCIL MSDC COUNCIL	REPORT NUMBER: BC/23/44
FROM: Councillor Jessie Carter, Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Richard Winch, Cabinet Member for Housing & Property	DATE OF MEETINGS: BDC - 19 March 2024 MSDC - 20 March 2024
OFFICER: Amma Antwi-Yeboah, Corporate Manager – Housing Solutions	KEY DECISION REF: N/A

JOINT HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2024

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To adopt the draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 and the associated Delivery Plan.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council must publish a review of homelessness every five years and a strategy to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002. The draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 also considers the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To adopt the contents of this report and the Draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024, attached as Appendix A and associated Delivery Plan, attached as Appendix B, provide scrutiny and, where appropriate provide comment.
- 3.2 To adopt the vision and priorities of the draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, ensuring the Delivery Plan is reflective of the current challenges facing the districts.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils meets its legal duty to publish a Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

To ensure that Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils meets its statutory obligations under the Homelessness Act 2002 to review homelessness within its District and publish the results of that review and a strategy for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 A review has been conducted of the previous Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024. It highlights some of the key achievements in the service over that period.
- 4.2 The key achievements in Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils from the 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2023 include preventing homelessness in over 579 cases in BDC and 553 cases in MSDC, relieving homelessness in over 264 cases in BDC and 247 cases in MSDC. We have also successfully embedded our Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse services.
- 4.3 The Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy's vision for 2024-2029 is that 'Homelessness and rough sleeping is prevented wherever possible and, where it cannot be prevented, it is rare, brief and non-recurring' and to ensure that the service takes a person-centred and holistic approach to housing options.
- 4.4 The cost-of-living crisis has seen an increase in demand for our Housing Solutions Service. Given the current economic conditions, which is impacting on society as a whole, many private landlords are leaving the sector causing an increase in the number of households approaching for assistance when landlords sell their properties.
- 4.5 From 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, the team took 627 Homeless Applications in BDC and 588 in MSDC, compared to 2021/22 when there were 581 applications in BDC and 510 in MSDC.
- 4.6 From 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, the team prevented homelessness in 144 cases in BDC 153 cases in MSDC and relieved homelessness (helped someone to secure accommodation who was already homeless) in 44 cases in BDC and 56 cases in MSDC. This is a significant achievement, particularly when comparing 'like for like' figures from 2021/22, and reflects the time and effort invested by the team.
- 4.7 In 2021/22,53 households in BDC and 33 households in MSDC were accepted as being homeless and being owed a main housing duty. In 2022/23, there were 60 households in BDC and 54 households in MSDC 54 accepted as being homeless and being owed a main housing duty. This is an increase, which is another indication of the reduction in the supply of homes in the private rented sector and the impact of the cost of living.
- 4.8 We want to aspire to be a homelessness service that goes beyond the minimum required by the legislative framework and the Code of Guidance. We provide a bespoke homelessness service which is person-centred and is focused on proactive, early upstream intervention, working with residents before they are in crisis.
- 4.9 The Housing Solutions Services is ambitious in its aims for the next five years and this strategy sets out some of the key areas we need to be focussing on to further improve the lives of residents within our Districts.

5. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 Make best use of existing housing assets

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications to the final production and launching of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy other than nominal costs which will be within existing budget provision. Naturally there will be financial implications of the pledges and actions within the strategy and each will be considered individually as part of each business case or project document.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a further homelessness review, within the period of 5 years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published. However, housing authorities can conduct homelessness reviews and publish homelessness strategies more frequently if circumstances in the district change. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities monitors which Councils have published a strategy and will contact us if we fail to publish a such a strategy during 2024.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Without a revised and adopted Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, it is unlikely the Councils will reduce homelessness and higher numbers of Babergh and Mid Suffolk residents may be at increased risk. This will impact most on our vulnerable residents and children.	Highly unlikely (1)	Minimal (1)	Dedicated officer resources support the production and inclusion of a reviewed Homelessness Reduction & Rough Sleeping Strategy in accordance with duties and guidance of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, as part of the comprehensive Housing Strategy development process. (Housing Solutions Risk Register Number 47).

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 April 2023: Survey of key stakeholder to determine areas of strategic focus and begin work on action plans.
- 9.2 August 2023: Babergh and Mid Suffolk Housing Portfolio Holders briefed.
- 9.3 November 2023: Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the process and endorsed the approach and scrutinized the Vision, Priorities and Delivery Plan.

- 9.5 December 2023/ January 2024: All Member briefing sessions
- 9.6 December 2023: 6-week open consultation period from 4th December 2023 to 14th January 2024 The consultation was conducted via a variety of communication channels and formats to ensure groups were not knowingly excluded.
- 9.7 February 2024: Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councillors briefed on consultation feedback and final amendments to the strategy and associated delivery plan.
- 9.8 March 2024: Strategy and delivery plan to Full Councils to request adoption.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 10.1 Some of the protected grounds may be affected as a result of the recommendations in this report, so a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and is attached at Appendix (C). The EQIA has been approved by the officer with responsibility for Equality.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no environmental implications as a result of the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy	Attached
(b) Draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan	Attached
(c) BMSDC Homelessness Review 2023	Attached
(d) Equality Impact Assessment	Attached
(e) Consultation Outcomes	Attached