

Cherwell District Council

Executive

5 July 2021

Oxfordshire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26

Report of Assistant Director Housing and Social Care Commissioning

This report is public

Purpose of Report

To set out the Oxfordshire Wide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26 and Action Plan for approval by the Executive, recognising that Cherwell District Council is a key partner in preventing and resolving homelessness and in supporting systems change county wide. In approving the Strategy, Cherwell District Council agrees to play a key role in delivering the vision, priorities and actions identified.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve Oxfordshire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26 and the supporting Action Plan.

2.0 Report Details

- 2.1 The County Wide Homelessness Steering Group has now completed consultation on a Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Oxfordshire. This report sets out the final Strategy and supporting action plan for adoption by all Oxfordshire councils. Cherwell District Council is represented on the Steering Group and has played a key role in strategy development.
- 2.2 The Strategy does not replace councils' own homelessness strategies, which are a statutory requirement of housing authorities, but sits above those to set out a common vision and set of priorities for Oxfordshire. Cherwell's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26 was adopted by the Executive in March 2021 and the county wide strategy complements Cherwell's strategy.
- 2.3 The Strategy is set out at appendix 1 and the action plan at appendix 2.

3.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 A county wide strategy is important in delivering a coordinated approach and is the result of ongoing partnership working to arrive at a common vision, set of principles

and agreed actions for preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in the county.

- 3.2 The strategy builds on the learning from the Crisis feasibility study carried out in Oxfordshire in 2019/20 and is being used to inform the recommissioning of homelessness services currently being led by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council with a pooled budget including Cherwell's contribution.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 Public consultation on the Strategy was carried out over 8 weeks between January and March 2021 and resulted in 49 responses, 33% of which were from people with lived experience of homelessness. This feedback was supported through focus groups.
- 4.2 The key points from the consultation that resulted in changes to the Strategy are set out below.

Context and key issues

- 4.3 The Strategy was largely well received as noted in the consultation team's summary report : 'The survey responses highlighted that there is strong overall support for the draft strategy's vision, principles, priorities and action plan'. The most significant issues raised were:
- achievability with the available budget;
 - whether the approach included young people and families;
 - whether a common allocations policy across the housing authorities was the best way forward;
 - the gatekeeping approach perceived by homeless people;
 - whether the action plan would deliver and whether it would develop over time.

Achievability with the available budget

- 4.4 The concern about budget is reflected in the addition to the Strategy that: Senior leaders across the system will seek to influence and lobby national policy and longer-term funding developments across MHCLG, Dept of Health and the MoJ.

Whether the approach included young people

- 4.5 The Strategy has been clarified to note that: The focus of this strategy is on rough sleeping and single homelessness including couples without dependents. There will be close working and connection across to the work on families, young people, people with mental health issues and people experiencing domestic abuse.

Whether a common allocations policy across the housing authorities was the best way forward

- 4.6 While there is a strong will across all the Oxfordshire housing authorities to ensure that this Strategy works and strong co-working on a range of initiatives, it is not

considered that a common allocations policy is essential to the delivery of this Strategy.

The gatekeeping approach perceived by homeless people

- 4.7 The Strategy now explicitly states:
We avoid 'gatekeeping' in the delivery of services.

Whether the action plan would deliver and whether it will develop over time

- 4.8 It is now made explicit in the Strategy that the action plan will develop over time and be kept under review. The final action plan attached to the Strategy has been developed in line with comments made in the consultation and the ongoing progress made in the Steering Group's workstreams.

5.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative option has been identified and rejected for the reason set out below.

Option 1: not to have a county wide strategy. This would not do justice to the collaborative working that exists between the 6 local authorities and wider partners to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping. It would also limit the outcomes that can be delivered for people affected by homelessness. By working cross-county and across the professional boundaries of housing, health, social care and the voluntary and community sector we can make the greatest impact in terms of tackling homelessness.

6.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 6.1 Delivery of the commitments within the Strategy will be delivered within existing Housing budgets.

Comments checked by: Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner; 01295 221570
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Legal Implications

- 6.2 The county wide strategy is not required by law but is in line with Cherwell District Council's commitments to preventing and tackling homelessness. It complements Cherwell District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26 which is a statutory document.

Comments checked by: Richard Hawtin, Team Leader, Law and Governance
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Risk Implications

6.3 No risks have been identified in connection with the adoption of the new policy.

Comments checked by: Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes

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Equalities Implications (Equality, Diversity and Community)

6.4 An Equality and Climate Impact assessment has been undertaken and has informed strategy development.

6.5 The strategy aims to enhance support across the county, and seeks to focus on the person, not the problem, providing an equal approach to delivery of preventative and holistic services for all residents across the county.

Comments checked by: Emily Schofield, Acting Head of Strategy,
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7.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met:

Community Impact Threshold Met: Yes

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Business Plan 2021/22 : Housing That Meets Your Needs
CDC Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26

Lead Councillor

Councillor Lucinda Wing, Lead Member for Housing

Document Information

- Appendix 1 - Oxfordshire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26
- Appendix 2 – Action Plan

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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