

Cherwell District Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation **Results Summary**

Thank you for those who participated in the Cherwell District Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation

Introduction

This consultation was undertaken to help Cherwell District Council develop a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to help shape how homelessness services will be delivered over the period 2024-2029. Councils are required to undertake a consultation when a new strategy is developed.

The Council is required to consult a range of key partners, including statutory, voluntary and third sector organisations. This can include agencies specialising in homelessness locally as well as service users living in the local area.

Methodology

The consultation ran between November and January 2024. The consultation was carried out in the form of an online survey that was available on the Council's website. Press and social media communications were used to promote the survey and encourage responses. Key partner agencies were directly approached to participate.

The strategy was also discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the consultation period.

The survey asked for views on the main themes and issues identified in the homelessness review and that informed the proposed priorities of the homelessness strategy. The survey then asked whether respondents agreed with the priorities that had been chosen and whether there was anything they wanted to see included in the strategy. The survey asked finally for general comments on housing and homelessness in Cherwell.

The four main themes within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy that views were requested on, in terms of the extent to which the respondent agreed, were

1. Identify the causes of homelessness, facilitating early interventions to ensure pathways to housing to reduce rough sleeping
2. Ensure that our service is accessible to all and engage and assist households who have difficulty receiving our services
3. Deliver long term housing solutions and help sustain tenancies for the most vulnerable. Creating resilience
4. Improve access to quality and affordable accommodation across all sectors for homeless households

These themes reflected question 1-4 of the survey. In questions 1-4, respondents were asked to what extent they thought each theme was important to our goal of tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in Cherwell.

Appendix 3

The responses were graded out of 5 and respondents were asked to choose one. The response options were as follows.

5 – very important

4 – quite important

3 – not sure

2 – not particularly important

1 – not important at all

Question 5 asked respondents

Overall, do you agree with the priorities that we have chosen? Please tell us if you disagree.

A free text box was then provided for respondents to type their answer.

Question 6 asked respondents

Are there any priorities that you feel that we should include instead? If yes, please tell us what you would like for us to include.

A free text box was then provided for respondents to type their answer.

Question 7 asked respondents

Do you have any other comments about housing or homelessness in Cherwell?

A free text box was then provided for respondents to type their answer.

Question 8 asked respondents whether they were responding as a residents, a local business, a voluntary organisation, a service provider, a statutory partner, a landlord, a Registered Provider of Social Housing or a service user.

Surveys were anonymised to ensure impartial views were obtained. Documents were made accessible and other ways to participate were made available if and when requested.

Survey Response and Results

A total of 73 responses were received to the consultation. Thank you to everyone that took part

The responses came from a variety of different sources. Summarised in Table 1 below

Appendix 3

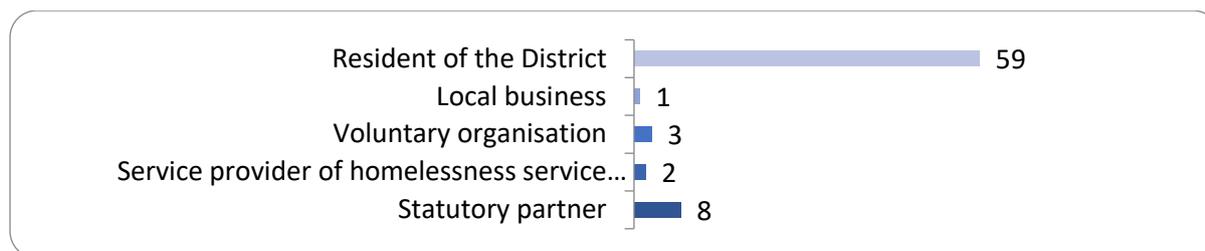


Table 1

In response to the four proposed themes, respondents were broadly very supportive that the identified themes were important to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the Cherwell District. The responses to these are shown in Table 2, 3, 4 and 5 below

Priority 1

Identify the causes of homelessness, facilitating early interventions to ensure pathways to housing to reduce rough sleeping

There were 73 responses to this part of the question, and the overall most selected response was 'very important with 89% of the participation.



Table 2

Priority 2

Ensure that our service is accessible to all and engage and assist households who have difficulty receiving our services

There were **73** responses to this part of the question, and the overall most selected response was 'very important' with 81% of participation.

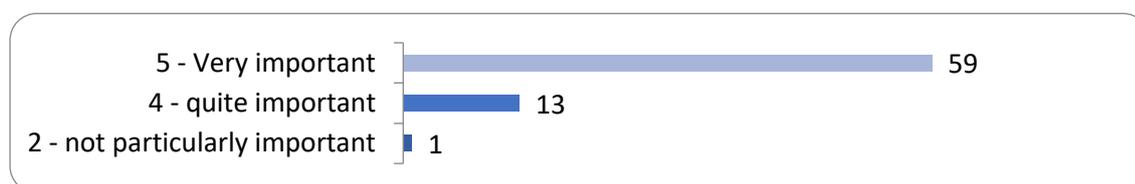


Table 3

Priority 3

Deliver long term housing solutions and help sustain tenancies for the most vulnerable. Creating resilience.

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There were **73** responses to this part of the question, and the overall most selected response was 'very important' with 81% of the participation

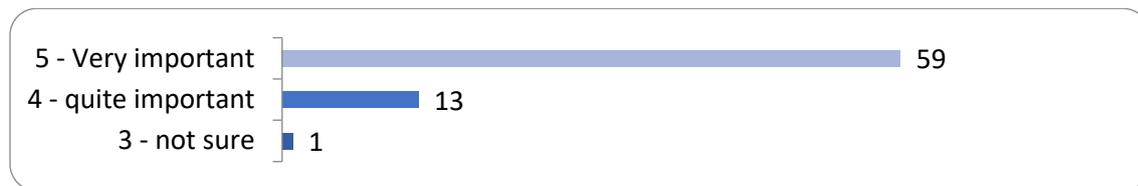


Table 4

Priority 4

Improve access to quality and affordable accommodation across all sectors for homeless households

There were **73** responses to this part of the question, and the overall most selected response was 'very important' with 81% of the participation



Table 5

How the consultation feedback has helped to shape the Strategy

From the responses received, the feedback that the Council has received as part of the consultation has been supportive of the priorities that the strategy has as its overarching themes and the guide the action plan.

As a result of the comments, the following changes or additions have been made.

- An action has been added to the action plan in Priority 4, Improving access to quality and affordable accommodation across all sectors for homeless households, regarding the usage of underutilised buildings to assist with homelessness accommodation or services. This is following a large number of consultation comments.
- A further action has been added following the comments received regarding tenancy sustainment and support once people are in accommodation. This will hopefully prevent repeat homelessness but will also hope to ensure greater engagement in the community and reduce isolation, so there are potential pathways into other support, training or employment.

As outlined in the Methodology, the Council as part of the consultation process asked for comments from those completing the consultation survey. A summary of these comments is provided below. Where multiple comments have been received that are similar, this is indicated.

Overall, do you agree with the priorities that we have chosen?	
Summary of comments made by respondents	Officer Response
Dilapidated buildings should be utilised in place of hotels where possible and should be staffed. – 5 similar comments	An action regarding under utilised buildings has been added to the action plan following consultation.
Provision of more affordable social housing accommodation for people in the district – 5 similar comments	Working to provide greater access to affordable housing for those affected by homelessness is a key priority within the new strategy. There are several wider factors in increasing the amount of housing and affordable and social housing within the District and these matters are addressed in further detail within the Housing Strategy and the Local Plan.
There shouldn't be homelessness in this country – 5 similar comments.	The Council has a statutory role to prevent and relieve homelessness within the Cherwell District, and works to provide accommodation options for those affected by homelessness.
People should have an option to request help before they are desperate and preventative action taken. – 3 similar comments.	This is provided in accordance with legislation and within the Prevention Duty. Continued homeless prevention is a key part of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

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<p>More sympathetic response from the Council when presenting as homeless. – 4 similar comments</p>	<p>The Council responds and manages homelessness in accordance with legislation. Legislation and Council procedures in turn prioritise applicants according to need, and some applicants are able to access more support and receive support in finding new accommodation sooner than others in lower need.</p> <p>The Council before this strategy and in the future following implementation will aim to treat all applicants with respect and respond to their individual needs.</p>
<p>Homeless should be offered safe accommodation in hotels There should be categories, family homelessness, drug / alcohol abuse shelter / Single Shelters – 2 similar comments.</p>	<p>Accommodation is offered in hotels to those in priority need. Those applicants with support needs are provided with support once in the homelessness pathway.</p> <p>Some specialist accommodation is provided within the homeless pathway, but it is not possible to have a hotel for each type of homeless person.</p>
<p>Designated homelessness staff member – 1 comment</p>	<p>The Council has Housing Options Officers and Officers within the Single Homeless Team who provide support to homeless people, so designated staff members are provided.</p>

Are there any priorities that you feel that we should include instead? If yes, please tell us what you would like for us to include

Summary of comments made by respondents	Officer Response
<p>Provision of more safe short term temporary accommodation with support for people with mental health issues and for those with physical disabilities – 14 similar comments.</p>	<p>The Council has a varied temporary accommodation portfolio. Anyone who is in “Priority Need” in accordance with homeless legislation will be provided with temporary accommodation and then assisted to find a permanent accommodation option.</p> <p>Where needs, such as mental health are severe, the wider health and social care structure will have duties to provide more appropriate care and support.</p>
<p>Provision of more affordable accommodation, re purposing of existing buildings. – 3 similar comments</p>	<p>This is reflected in a previous section within this response</p>
<p>Children and domestic abuse victims provision – 2 comments.</p>	<p>This is provided currently through the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse services pathways.</p> <p>Domestic Abuse survivors and their support is an action within the action plan</p>

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<p>Prevent homelessness happening in the first place – 2 comments.</p>	<p>The Council has statutory duties to do this and prevents hundreds of cases of homelessness each year.</p> <p>The Council is looking to make more improvements in this area and this is reflected in the new strategy and action plan.</p>
<p>Consider and identify homeless people outside of the main towns – 1 comment.</p>	<p>The Council and specifically the Single Homeless Team, work with those rough sleeping to assist them into accommodation, regardless of where in the District that they live.</p> <p>The Council through its Rough Sleeper Initiative funding from Central Government contributes to services within a Countywide Alliance. One of these services is outreach support to rough sleepers. A multi-faceted Adult Homeless Pathway is also provided as part of this Alliance.</p>

Do you have any other comments about housing or homelessness in Cherwell?	
Summary of comments made by respondents	Officer Response
More affordable social housing for people – 5 similar comments.	This is reflected in a previous section within this response
Better support for ex forces personnel, people with ill health and physical disabilities and mental health issues – 5 similar comments.	This is reflected in a previous section within this response Regarding ex forces personnel, the Council's Allocations Scheme, in accordance with government guidance, provides additional preference and therefore prioritises ex forces personnel and their immediate family members.
Agencies working more collaboratively – 3 similar comments	Improving partnership working is an action within the action plan.
Tackling drug and alcohol misuse, often a big factor in why someone becomes homeless – 3 similar comments.	Improving access to supported accommodation pathways for clients is within the action plan of the strategy. It is important that a clients needs are identified early, so barriers to accessing accommodation and support can be understood and tackled, and this is also reflected within the strategy.
Use of some empty buildings to provide shelter for homeless people – 3 similar comments.	This is reflected in a previous section within this response

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<p>Better support for the homeless over a longer period of time once they are housed – 2 similar comments.</p>	<p>Tenancy sustainment is a key part of homeless prevention and there is an action within the action plan to increase the work within this area across tenures. This has been further added to following the responses within the consultation.</p>
<p>Homelessness in rural areas and outside of the main towns – 2 similar comments.</p>	<p>We understand that homelessness can occur anywhere, and we respond to homelessness in any area of the District. Whether this be someone approaching who is threatened with homelessness or whether this is someone that is sleeping rough in an urban or rural area.</p> <p>More support is provided however within larger settlements such as Banbury and Bicester because the prevalence of homelessness and rough sleeping are higher, and the Council can work with other partners to provide more holistic support</p>
<p>Safe and warm places to go during the day with medical care 1 comment</p>	<p>The Council provides funding to the Beacon Centre in Banbury to provide a place where rough sleepers can go to access support. Services such as the Council's Single Homeless Team also visit the Centre on a regular basis to try and assist people into a housing or to access support.</p>
<p>Local based solution rather than having to go to Oxford City – 1 comment.</p>	<p>Support is provided locally and within District.</p> <p>Some accommodation schemes are provided throughout the County and are not always provided within District.</p> <p>The Council is routinely able to provide temporary housing within District and offers of permanent social housing or private rented housing will also routinely be in District.</p>