

This report is public	
Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-28	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	5 October 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Greener Communities – Councillor Ian Middleton
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	27 August 2026
Report of	Assistant Director, Wellbeing and Housing – Nicola Riley

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the reviewed Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-28.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the reviewed Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-28.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Oxfordshire Homelessness Strategy was implemented in 2021 for a five-year period, following a feasibility study led by Crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was signed by all Oxfordshire local authorities (Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Cherwell, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire, and West Oxfordshire District Councils) together with the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.
- 2.2 The strategy has come to the end of its cycle, and a reviewed strategy has been produced and was consulted upon earlier this year. The strategy supports the current joint commissioning of countywide homelessness services through “The Alliance”. Each of the organisations in 2.1 make financial contributions to the homeless pathway every year to enable supported accommodation, prevention and outreach services for rough sleepers. A similar report is being taken through each Councils governance processes to approve the updated strategy.
- 2.3 The purpose of the report is to agree the reviewed and extended strategy, given the Local Government Regorganisation context. Discussions are ongoing regarding the commissioned contract, and a further update will be provided to the Executive when the position is finalised by Oxfordshire County Council as the lead commissioner.

Extending the current approach will ensure the services provided to vulnerable people are not affected by and continue whilst the wider structural local government changes are ongoing.

- 2.4 The Oxfordshire Homelessness Strategy is overseen by the Prevention of Homelessness Directors Group (PHDG). This group has representatives from all the commissioning organisations and those within the wider statutory system. The PHDG and progress on the strategy reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications		Commentary		
Finance		The costs associated with the reviewed and extended strategy, will be met from existing budget, funded via CDC's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse grant. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 1 September 2026.		
Legal		There are no legal implications arising directly as a result of this report. This is an Oxfordshire wide strategy and does not directly intersect with the Council's statutory duties. It is still important for the Council to regularly review and update its policies to ensure that it is aligned with the other authorities which it works with in this area, particularly in the context of local government reform as the report highlights. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 2 September 2026		
Risk Management		As the strategy does not directly relate to the statutory services provided by the housing team, there are limited risk impacts. Continuation of services received by vulnerable people that are accessed by the Council in order to support them, whilst the Local Government Reorganisation is ongoing, would seem prudent. Celia Prado Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 1 September 2026		
Impact Assessments		Positive	Neutral	Commentary
Equality Impact			x	The policy has a neutral impact on group within the protected characteristics and has been developed in line with the council's Equality,

				Diversity and Inclusion framework, ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		Not applicable
ICT & Digital Impact		x		Not applicable
Data Impact		x		Not applicable
Procurement & subsidy		x		Not applicable
Council Priorities	Quality housing and place making			
Human Resources	Not applicable			
Property	Not applicable			
Consultation & Engagement	Consultation on the draft strategy has taken place, as outlined within the report.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The Oxfordshire Homelessness Strategy was implemented in 2021 for a five-year period, following a feasibility study led by Crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was signed by all Oxfordshire local authorities (Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Cherwell, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire, and West Oxfordshire District Councils) together with the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.

- 3.2 The strategy introduced a shared vision and five key priorities focused on prevention, rapid response, person-centred support, timely move-on, and securing the right home in the right place. Furthermore, it responded to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board's Thematic Review of Homelessness (2019), which examined the deaths of nine individuals experiencing multiple exclusion homelessness in 2018–19. This review underscored the need for a system-wide shift in how homelessness is prevented and addressed. The Countywide Homelessness Steering Group (CHSG) was established to support the delivery of Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. CHSG provides direction and coordination for joint work across partners, ensuring that actions and activities undertaken by the system contribute meaningfully to the countywide strategy.
- 3.3 In October 2025, the Prevention of Homelessness Directors Group (PHDG), which provides oversight through senior representatives from organisations within the health, housing and social care system, requested a refresh of the Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026. The PHDG is chaired by Caroline Green, Chief Executive of Oxford City Council and reports into the Health and Wellbeing Board. The aim of the refresh was to ensure it reflected the current priorities and responded to the evolving local homelessness landscape.
- 3.4 In December 2025, the government launched a new strategy, A National Plan to End Homelessness, which sets out a clear national vision focused on prevention, earlier intervention, and improved coordination across housing, health, and support services. The priorities within this plan closely align with Oxfordshire's own approach, particularly around partnership working, reducing rough sleeping, and delivering person-centred, sustainable housing solutions. This shows that the approach that we are taking and have taken is the right approach.
- 3.5 In August 2026, the government announced a new rough sleeping programme and accompanying funding. The new programme has the ambition to end rough sleeping. The District and City Councils have all received revenue funding based on a central government formula. The refreshed countywide strategy is compatible with the new directive from government, but local approaches will be taken by individual Councils to meet the demands and pressures within their individual areas rather than solely being reliant on the existing pathways and commissioned services.
- 3.6 A draft strategy was developed in partnership with key stakeholders. A public consultation was subsequently undertaken to ensure that voluntary sector partners, people with lived experience, and residents had the opportunity to inform and shape the final priorities. The consultation, coordinated by Oxford City Council, was launched on 27 March and ran for 10 weeks, closing on 6 June. Over 100 responses were received. Feedback has been analysed and is informing the final iteration of the strategy.
- 3.7 The countywide strategy is not a statutory document. The requirement for District Councils, like Cherwell, to produce their own strategy remains. This is part of our statutory duties.

4. Details

- 4.1 The strategy sets out a renewed two-year plan to tackle rising homelessness, strengthen the prevention of homelessness, and accelerate the shift to a modern, Cherwell District Council

housing-led system. Building on progress since 2021, it responds to a far more challenging housing environment, rising demand across Oxfordshire, and a national direction that aligns with Oxfordshire's increasingly person-led approach.

- 4.2 The strategy reinforces a commitment to services built around people's individual needs, prioritising prevention, rapid and sustainable re-housing, and joined-up support. Its aim is to make homelessness rarer, briefer, and less likely to recur, while improving outcomes for people experiencing homelessness across Oxfordshire.
- 4.3 The strategy is being considered by each Council individually for approval. Post Local Government Reorganisation, future homelessness and rough sleeping strategies will need to be developed for delivering services across the new unitary Council area, as at present, this remains a statutory duty.
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5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not bring forward a reviewed strategy. As it not statutory document, this could be considered. However, Cherwell is located in the area covered by the existing strategy and accesses services within the wider partnership. This enables essential support for vulnerable people. To exit this arrangement without an alternative in place would put services at vulnerable people potentially at risk or harm. This is rejected.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Approving the strategy and the continuation of the principles of the current service delivery approach will ensure continuity for service users and ensure that services continue through the period of change brought about by Local Government Reorganisation.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes Community threshold met
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	Not applicable
Ward(s) Affected	All wards

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-28
Appendix 2	ECIA – Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-28
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Richard Smith – Head of Housing
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Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director – Neighbourhood Services, 2 September 2026