



Subject: Rochdale Borough Council
Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019

Status: Publication

Report to: Communities, Regeneration and
Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 9 November 2016

Cabinet Member: Cabinet Member for Housing
and Environment

Report of: Director of Neighbourhoods

Author: Ian Jolley

Author Email: ian.jolley@rochdale.gov.uk

Tel: Tel: 01706 923551

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update to elected members about the draft Homelessness Strategy that is currently available for consultation.
- 1.2 To invite elected members to contribute any views or observation in regard to the Strategy.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That elected members agree that the Council should consider and have due regard for the comments and contributions received as part of this consultation and should be reflected where appropriate in the Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019.

Reason for recommendation

2. The Strategy Refresh has been developed by a Homelessness Strategy Group under the guidance of the Joint Homelessness Board and reflects the efforts and contributions from a partnership approach that has included input from statutory, non-statutory and voluntary services. It identifies priorities and how the Council wishes to engage with the wider community to help prevent homelessness and support those at risk of homelessness across the Borough.

3 Background

3.1.0 In 2012 the council undertook an in depth review of homelessness in the Borough. Following the review a new Homelessness Strategy was published in 2013 that set out the key priorities for the borough over the following 3 years. Key themes included the establishment of a Homelessness Board that includes representation of key stakeholders and service providers led by the elected member responsible for housing issues. Key priorities of the current strategy include:-

- The homelessness Board and the Borough of Rochdale Homelessness Action and Information Network (BRHAIN) meeting quarterly to review strategy and respond to housing issues.

- a continued emphasis on homelessness prevention through a housing options approach
- encouraging services to work together to provide more holistic outcomes and gain better value for money.

3.1.1 In 2015 the Homelessness Strategy Board agreed to oversee a review of Homelessness within the Borough and to consult with partner agencies, elected members, stakeholders and the wider community. To use the outcome of the strategic review to set out a revised strategy that would identify key themes and actions for how the council will assist households in the borough at risk of homelessness for the next 3 years.

3.1.2 The Joint Board agreed that although the challenges that households at risk and those agencies and services that seek to support households face continue to be a high priority, that the new strategic review would be a refresh. The new strategy sets out how the council will help households at risk of homelessness over the next 3 years. It aims to reflect the current and future challenges and the very fluid nature of potential change that may occur as a result of new legislation and contributory factors such as Public Sector Reform and the Welfare Reform agenda. The primary focus will continue to be to prevent people from becoming homeless and emphasises the need to continue to build a strong partnership approach across all services and agencies working towards common goals.

3.1.4 In August elected members agreed that the Council should undertake formal consultation and the draft strategy has been made available to all key stakeholders within the Borough, service users and the wider public.

3.1.5 Response to the draft Strategy has been positive and constructive and is a reflection of the decision by the Joint Board to include statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector partners in the development and direction of the strategy. Contributions range from the recognition of some gaps in background information such as lack of reference to the impact that spare room subsidy has had upon tenants in social housing and the housing providers that have tried to support those effected and; suggestions to how the strategy can link more effectively with corporate aims to support and improve life chances of children.

3.1.6 Further to the contributions and views that have already been received, the strategy may need to reflect the rapidly changing environment in relation to potential changes in Homelessness legislation and arrangements for funding supported accommodation.

Alternatives considered

3.2.0 The local authority has a statutory responsibility to make available a Homelessness Strategy. In recent years many authorities have recognised that the pace of change that has occurred through such things as economic recession and welfare reform has often over taken their homelessness strategy. Although there is a statutory requirement to have published a Homelessness Strategy many Boroughs delay undertaking reviews pending the outcome of potential changes. For example, the Government has indicated that it may revise Homelessness legislation during the life time of this parliament. Elected members could agree to delay consultation and subsequent publication to allow a strategic response to any new legislation.

4 Financial Implications

4.1.0 There are few financial implications directly associated with the development

of the strategic document. The Financial implications associated with the strategy are those reflected within the strategy. For example, the council retains a commitment to support households at risk of homelessness, to provide statutory services including assessment, provision of interim and temporary accommodation and to discharge the housing duty. The strategy also makes reference to areas of potential demand and likely budget pressures such as legislative change and the statutory requirement to accommodate homeless 18-21yr olds who may lose any entitlement to housing benefit.

4.1.2 Direct funding to help support partner organisations has been reduced over the last 3 years in line with proposals set out in the previous Homelessness Strategy. The current value of the contract that the Council has with RBH to provide core Homelessness services has been fixed for the duration of the contract pending a review in 2019. Elected members recognise the effective outcomes that agencies are able to contribute to the homelessness prevention agenda and have agreed to protect these services from any reductions in 2017/18.

4.1.3 Public Health have made a significant contribution to funding that supports some of the Council's partner organisations and this is reflected in the opportunities that they provide that supports a more holistic approach to prevention and sustainment. The table below shows the headline financial breakdown for homelessness and prevention services. This does not include services commissioned directly through Public Health or Adult Care services.

Partnership funding (*not inc. RBH contract*)

	2013	2016
Strategic Housing Services	431,400.00	147,800.00
Public Health	Nil	150,000.00
Total	431,400.00	297,800.00

In addition to the above Public Health are also funding, Debt and Advice through CAB contract of £50,000 and contributing to RBH Homelessness contract of £45,000.00 this year.

4.1.4 The strategy also sets out the council's commitment to continue to support an inclusive approach to supporting households at risk of homelessness through partnership arrangements and that sufficient resources are made available to support the strategic aim to prevent homelessness in the Borough.

4.1.5 The government confirmed in 2015 that it would continue to provide the council with an annual Homelessness Prevention grant of £133,000 each year for the lifetime of this Parliament. This is included within the annual yearly settlement as part of Core Spending Power.

4.1.6 There is a potential financial liability in the event of the Council facing any statutory appeal or legal action with regards a housing duty. The council decision could be challenged on the grounds that it has not 'published' and up to date Homelessness strategy which may result in some form of penalty in the event of legal intervention.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 As above, the requirement for local authorities to publish a Homelessness Strategy is set out in Section 1(3) Housing Act 2002; the duty for the local authority to regularly review and update a Homelessness strategy is set out in Section 1(4).

6 Personnel Implications

6.1 There are no significant personnel implications

7 Corporate Priorities

7.1 The strategy supports the delivery of key corporate priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2015- 2106. These include

- Fewer children will live in temporary accommodation
- More people will be supported so they don't become homeless
- Fewer vulnerable adults will be neglected or harmed through abuse
- More families will be supported by multi agency teams working together

8. Risk Assessment Implications

18.1 The strategy refresh recognises the continued demand for services from households at risk of homelessness and has identified local trends and future challenges. It consolidates and commits the council to continuing to support and enable the delivery of a range of services, activities and opportunities that can meet current demand and help mitigate future challenge. It is also specifically ambitious in areas where the council has a corporate desire to improve such as in the support for care leavers.

8.2 The review recognises that while the strategic aims will continue to be focused upon homelessness prevention and the contribution to corporate aims, it should also be recognised that priorities within the strategy and how those aims are achieved may change in response to local conditions.

8.3 Successful delivery of the strategy requires continued support from statutory and non-statutory services, stakeholders and representatives of the wider community. With demands increasing and resources continuing to be cut year on year, there is a risk that delivery and quality of outcomes will be compromised.

9. Equalities Impacts

9.1 Workforce Equality Impacts Assessment

There are no workforce equality issues arising from this report.

9.2 Equality/Community Impact Assessments

The following equality/community issues arise from the issues raised in this report as set out below:

The majority of household's at risk of homelessness comes from the most deprived wards.

That all household types can be at risk of homelessness

Recent and potential future changes such as the government's welfare reform are likely to place particular groups at higher risk of homelessness or will be less able to resolve housing issues. This includes

- people aged 18-21yrs without adequate support and not in employment.
- people at risk of sleeping rough
- single people on welfare under 35yrs

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Appendix 1 Draft Homelessness Strategy	Attached
Appendix 2 Draft Delivery Plan	<i>Attached</i>