

Waverley Borough Council

Report to: Council

Date: 12 December 2023

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director: Community Wellbeing

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Report Status: Open

Key Decision: Yes

Waverley's Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028

1. Executive Summary

Councils are legally required under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) to have a Homelessness Strategy detailing their plans to prevent and relieve homelessness. The Strategy is required to have an Action Plan that is kept under review and a Strategy that is based on a Review of homelessness in its area and the services available to help prevent and relieve it.

2. Recommendation to Council

The Executive resolved to **RECOMMEND** to Council:

2.1 The adoption and publication of the Homelessness Strategy

3. Reason(s) for Recommendation:

3.1 To comply with legislation.

3.2 To mitigate the challenges outlined in the report and as far as possible, to build on the Council's success in preventing and relieving homelessness.

4. Exemption from publication

4.1 No

5. Purpose of Report

5.1 To highlight the successes and challenges faced by Waverley in preventing and relieving homelessness and plans to help mitigate the challenges and build on the successes.

6. Strategic Priorities

6.1 Good quality housing for all income levels and age group

6.2 Improving health and well-being of residents and communities

7. Background

7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to produce a strategy outlining how the Council and its partners will work to prevent and relieve homelessness.

7.2 The Council's previous strategy was adopted in 2018 and runs from 2018 to 2023.

8. Consultations

8.1 Statutory and Voluntary partners were consulted by email in September 2023 and in partnership meetings.

8.2 Partners include: Adult Social Care, Childrens Services, Domestic Abuse Outreach, Citizens Advice South West Surrey, Supported Housing Providers, Probation, Mental Health Services, Ethical Lettings

9. Key Risks

9.1 Sufficient staffing capacity

9.2 Financial challenges as a result of reduction in Government grant in 25-26.

9.3 Challenges in securing sufficient private rented and supported housing options for homelessness clients.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 The report highlights the risks faced by Waverley under a revised homelessness formula that will nearly halve its Government Grant in the year 2025-2026. In the current financial year all of the Homelessness Prevention grant allocation of £617k will be spent. Going forward if the same level of service is upheld then the General Fund will need to provide the funding for up to half this costs. This will result in a growth in the MTFP of approximately £300k. Given the current forecast gap in the MTFP over the next 4 years a full review will be required to ensure costs are kept down where possible to minimise the impact on the General Fund.

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 Section 1(1) of the 2002 Act gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review. Section 1(4) 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.

In conducting a review of homelessness and to formulate a new strategy, housing authorities will need to take into account the additional duties introduced through the 2017 Act. Authorities are encouraged to take the opportunity to involve all relevant partners in developing a strategy that involves them in earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness.

12. Human Resource Implications

- 12.1 The report outlines the need to have sufficient staff capacity and resilience to tackle the rise in homelessness approaches to Waverley (and the complexity of many of these approaches), in the context of a likely reduction in Government Grant in 2025-26.

13. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 13.1 The Government requires the Council to obtain detailed Equality and Diversity information from all applicants and anonymised data is reported to Government on a quarterly basis.
- 13.2 The Council's services, including its homelessness services, must be available and accessible for all household groups.
- 13.3 See EQIA – Appendix 2

14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 The report highlights that increasingly Waverley is delivering its homelessness services by phone and online, reducing (but not removing) the need for face to face contact, travel costs and Office use

15. Summary of Options

- 15.1 If Waverley does not have an up to date Homelessness Strategy, statutory homelessness decisions, that are required to take the Strategy into account, would be open to legal challenge.

16. Conclusion

- 16.1 Waverley has for many years been very successful in preventing and relieving homelessness and in doing so, the Council has kept the number of households having to be placed into temporary accommodation to a minimum.
- 16.2 The rise in homelessness approaches, challenging economic conditions and likely cut in Government funding means this success is under threat. The Strategy and Action Plan outline the Council's proposed actions to try to mitigate these risks and build on previous successes.

17. Background Papers

- 17.1 Homelessness Strategy, Action Plan, Homelessness Review (Appendix 1), EQIA (Appendix 2)

18. Appendices

18.1 The Homelessness Review document is contained as Appendix 1 and the EQIA as Appendix 2

Please ensure the following service areas have signed off your report.
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Service	Sign off date
Finance / S.151 Officer	02.11.23
Legal / Governance	31.10.23
HR	09.11.23
Equalities	31.10.23
Lead Councillor	02.11.23
CMB	07.11.23
Executive Briefing/Liaison	14.11.23
Committee Services	16/11