

Report Title:	<b>Updated Homelessness Strategy and Housing Allocations Policy</b>
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information?	NO - Part I
Member reporting:	Cllr Mike Airey, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services (including Parking, Flooding, Housing and Performance Management)
Meeting and Date:	Planning and Housing O&S Panel – 20 November 2018
Responsible Officer(s):	Russell O’Keefe, Acting Managing Director
Wards affected:	All

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## REPORT SUMMARY

1. The report requests approval for an updated homelessness strategy which will guide the Council’s approach to the provision of homelessness and rough sleeping services in the Borough over the next five years working with partners.
2. The reports also request approval to formally consult on an updated housing allocations policy which sets out how the council assesses applications for housing, prioritises each application and decides which applicant will be offered (allocated) housing.

## 1 DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Cabinet notes the report and:

- i) Approves the updated homelessness strategy.
- ii) Delegates authority to the Executive Director with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services (including Parking, Flooding, Housing and Performance Management) to engage with registered providers and other key stakeholders on the updated housing allocations policy and approve the final version taking into account comments received.
- iii) Approves that the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol commences from the date of the meeting or as soon as the temperature drops below the necessary level (whichever comes first).

## 2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

### Updated homelessness strategy

- 2.1 The strategy guides the Council’s approach to the provision of homelessness and rough sleeping services in the Borough over the next five years working with partners.
- 2.2 An action plan sets out how the priorities in the strategy will be achieved and this will be refreshed and updated with new actions each year.
- 2.3 The strategy has been developed through:
  - Homelessness review, trends and issues, both quantitative and qualitative.
  - Consideration of national and local policy, current and proposed.

- Analysis of best practice from across the country.
  - Engagement and discussion with partners including voluntary organisations such as the Brett Foundation and the Windsor Homeless Project, housing providers such as Radian and Housing Solutions, health service providers and Thames Valley Police.
- 2.4 The strategy sets out a collaborative approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years working closely with partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- 2.5 The Council believes the most effective way to deal with homelessness and rough sleeping is to prevent it from happening and it places great emphasis on this approach through the provision of specialist housing advice and assistance to those in housing difficulty in the Borough.
- 2.6 The vision for this homelessness strategy is that:  
*'The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is a place where agencies work effectively together to support those who are or may become homeless guided by a focus on prevention and early help.'*
- 2.7 The strategy focuses on working collaboratively with partners on the following five key priorities:
1. Reducing the numbers of people becoming homeless.
  2. Reducing the numbers of households in temporary accommodation and improving the quality of that accommodation.
  3. Supporting people into good quality, affordable and sustainable accommodation options.
  4. Reducing rough sleeping and supporting those who find themselves on the street.
  5. Improving the customer service provided to people approaching housing services.
- 2.8 The Council will monitor delivery of the key actions in the strategy and the impact on key performance measures including:
- Number of homeless preventions per quarter.
  - Numbers of young people presenting as homeless.
  - Number of people placed into temporary accommodation.
  - Average cost of temporary accommodation.
  - All temporary accommodation passing requirements.
  - Numbers of people accommodated in private rented accommodation.
  - Number of approaches from people threatened with homelessness.
  - Numbers of people sleeping rough.
  - Waiting times for housing advice.
- 2.9 The strategy and action plan will be reviewed, refreshed and updated on an annual basis both to measure performance and also to ensure that the actions continue to be the right ones to meet the five key priorities of the strategy.
- 2.10 Where identified, new key areas of action to meet priorities will be introduced as part of the review which will be carried out with partners and key stakeholders.

### **Updated housing allocations policy**

- 2.11 The policy sets out how the council assesses applications for housing, prioritises each application and decides which applicant will be offered (allocated) housing.
- 2.12 The Council is not a stock holding local authority, hence all social housing allocated is through the nominations agreements held with local registered social landlords (housing associations).
- 2.13 The Council receives many enquiries every year from people looking to be housed within the borough. Due to the high demand for housing and limited supply of properties, the main purpose of the policy is to set out on what basis nominations are made and how properties are allocated.
- 2.14 The policy has been developed through:
- Consideration of national and local policy, current and proposed.
  - Analysis of best practice from across the country.
  - Engagement and discussion with partners including voluntary organisations such as the Brett Foundation and the Windsor Homeless Project, housing providers such as Radian and Housing Solutions, health service providers and Thames Valley Police.
- 2.15 The allocations policy is designed to meet all legal requirements and to support and contribute towards the Council's wider priorities. The council is committed to preventing homelessness and the allocations policy focuses on supporting residents to actively pursue suitable alternatives to avoid becoming homeless.
- 2.16 The key objectives of the allocations policy are to:
- Provide a fair and transparent system by which people are prioritised for and allocated social housing.
  - Help those with the greatest housing need.
  - Promote the development of sustainable mixed communities.
- 2.17 The allocations policy will be supported by a housing options approach in order to give applicants realistic housing advice and promote a range of housing options such as low cost home ownership and private sector housing.

### **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**

- 2.18 SWEP provision would normally be triggered when the forecast was zero degrees or below for three days and temporary accommodation is then provided regardless of priority under the homelessness legislation for a short period. As the Council is committed to ensuring appropriate support for vulnerable individuals and preventing harm it will continue the approach it followed last year by having an extended SWEP provision through the winter period. This will see SWEP commence from the date of the meeting or as soon as the temperature drops below the necessary level (whichever comes first). The Council is one of the few in the country to take such an approach and will invest the necessary funding to ensure provision is provided through the winter months.

**Table 1: Options**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Comments</b>
To approve the updated homelessness strategy and updated allocations policy for consultation. <b>Recommended option</b>	This ensures an up to date policy framework for the Council's housing services.
To not approve the updated homelessness strategy and updated allocations policy for consultation.  Not recommended	This would not ensure an up to date policy framework for the Council's housing services.

### 3 KEY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Key implications of the recommendations are set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Key implications**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Unmet</b>	<b>Met</b>	<b>Exceeded</b>	<b>Significantly Exceeded</b>	<b>Date of delivery</b>
Updated homelessness strategy action plan completed	Not completed	March 2020	February 2020	Before February 2020	March 2020
Engagement completed on updated housing allocations	Not completed	25 January 2019	N/A	N/A	25 January 2019

### 4 FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

4.1 The activities within the updated homelessness strategy and allocations policy can be met from within existing budgets.

### 5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 imposes a duty on local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review in their area and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on its results every five years.

5.2 A homelessness strategy is defined in Homelessness Act 2002 s3(1) as one formulated in order to:

a) prevent homelessness in an authority's area

b) secure accommodation that is and will be available in that area for people who are or may become homeless; and

c) provide support for such people or those who have been homeless and need support to prevent it recurring.

5.3 The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) and the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an allocation scheme.

5.4 The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires local authorities to give reasonable preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The main groups are:

- People who are homeless as defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part VII.
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing, or who are otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds.
- People who will suffer hardship if they are unable to move to a particular locality or district.

5.5 The housing allocations policy complies with the requirements of:

- Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
- Allocation of Accommodation: Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- Localism Act 2011.
- Equality Act 2010.

5.6 Section 166A(13) requires authorities, before adopting an allocation scheme, or altering a scheme to reflect a major change of policy, to:

- send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every registered provider with which they have nomination arrangements, and
- ensure they have a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.

## 6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 Key risks associated with the recommendation are shown in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Impact of risk and mitigation**

<b>Risks Uncontrolled</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Controlled Risk</b>
Homelessness strategy action plan not delivered	Medium	Effective management of action plan	Low
Key agencies do not engage with the consultation on the updated housing allocations policy	Low	Effective promotion and engagement	Low

## 7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The report will be considered by the Planning and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 7.2 In line with legislation the Council will carry out engagement with registered providers and other key stakeholders on the updated housing allocations policy and will consider comments received before finalising the document.

## 8 TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Activity	Timescale
Work completed on homelessness strategy action plan	March 2020
Engage with registered providers and key stakeholders on updated housing allocations policy	29 November 2018 – 11 January 2019
Updated housing allocations policy finalised following consideration of comments received	25 January 2019

## 9 APPENDICES

- 9.1 Appendix A – Homelessness Strategy
- 9.2 Appendix B – Housing Allocations Policy
- 9.3 Appendix C – Key data for 2018/19

## 10 CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

Name of consultee	Post held	Date issued for comment	Date returned with comments
Cllr Mike Airey	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services (including Parking, Flooding, Housing and Performance Management)	22/10/18	23/10/18
Andy Jeffs	Executive Director	22/10/18	23/10/18
Rob Stubbs	Section 151 Officer	22/10/18	
Stuart Taylor	Finance Partner	22/10/18	
Hilary Hall	Deputy Director Strategy and Commissioning	22/10/18	23/10/18
Nikki Craig	Head of HR and Corporate Projects	22/10/18	23/10/18
Louisa Dean	Communications	22/10/18	23/10/18