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| Subject: | Scrutiny Task and Finish Group – Homelessness Strategy |
| Reason for briefing note: | To set out options for the Task and Finish Group to focus their review on. |
| Responsible officer(s): | Russell O’Keefe – Executive Director |
| Senior leader sponsor: | As above |
| Date: | 17 July 2019 |

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SUMMARY

1. On the 18 November 2018 the Council’s Cabinet agreed an updated Homelessness Strategy which will guide the Council’s approach to the provision of services in this area. The strategy is supported by an action plan setting out how the priorities in the strategy will be achieved.
2. The Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on the 18th June 2019 discussed setting up a Task and Finish Group focused on the Homelessness Strategy. This briefing note sets out options for the focus of a Task and Finish Group Review.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On the 18 November 2018 the Council’s Cabinet agreed an updated homelessness strategy which 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.
- 1.2 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
- 1.3 The strategy sets out a collaborative approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping over five years working closely with partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- 1.4 The vision for the 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.”*
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 The Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on the 18th June 2019 discussed setting up a Task and Finish Group focused on the Homelessness Strategy. This briefing note sets out options for the focus of a Task and Finish Group Review.

2 KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The Homelessness Strategy guides all the Council's work in regards to rough sleeping and homelessness. Any recommendations made to Cabinet by the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel could lead to changes in the Council's approach to the provision of services in this area.

3 DETAILS

- 3.1 The current Homelessness Strategy has five priorities and a supporting action plan with 22 actions that are all due to be completed by March 2020. The action plan itself will be refreshed at the end of this year.
- 3.2 It is good practice for scrutiny reviews to have a focused topic that is not too wide so that the group has the time and capacity to review the topic in depth and produce evidence based recommendations that inform policy making and improvement/ innovation in service provision.
- 3.3 In term of options for the focus of the review, of the remaining actions due to completed within the current action plan for the Homelessness Strategy, any one of the following would could work well for a Task and Finish Group from a topic, impact and timescale perspective:
1. Review options for meditation services to assist with helping to maintain people in their existing accommodation. Due to be completed December 2019.
 2. Explore the potential for a social lettings agency with third sector partners. Due to be completed March 2020.
 3. Explore models from elsewhere (to reduce rough sleeping) that include holistic approaches involving accommodation, learning and employment. Due to be completed December 2019. Carry out a feasibility study for the potential for future hostel accommodation. Due to be completed March 2020.
- 3.4 An alternative option would be for the Task and Finish Group to instead review the refreshed action plan for the strategy once a draft has been completed later in the year.

4 RISKS

- 4.1 The main risk to such a review is that the Task and Finish Group does not have the time and capacity to really develop an understanding of the subject matter and is not able to produce evidence based recommendations that inform policy making and improvement. This risk is mitigated by having a focused review on a topic that is not too wide supported by good advice.

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel to determine which topic they would wish the Task and Finish Group to focus on.

Task and Finish Group Scoping document- Homelessness

Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Panel

July 2019

The process for establishing a task and finish group as follows:

1. The relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel identifies a potential topic or topics for the relevant Task and Finish group
2. The relevant Scrutiny Panel Chairman and Lead Officers to complete the scoping document.
3. The relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel will review the scoping document
4. The relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel agrees overall terms of Reference Task and Finish group

TASK & FINISH GROUP MEMBERSHIP

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT 3 MEMBERS ARE APPOINTED FOR THE DURATION OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP. MEMBERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT MEMBERSHIP SHOULD BE POLITICALLY BALANCED.

Purpose of proposed task and finish group (options for topics and tasks)

- a) To review options for mediation services to assist with helping to maintain individuals/families in their existing accommodation.
- b) To explore whether a Social Lettings Agency (SLA) could be modelled and implemented.
- c) To explore models from elsewhere (to reduce rough sleeping) that include holistic approaches involving accommodation, learning and employment.
- d) To review a feasibility study for the potential for future hostel accommodation
- e) To provide a critical friend approach to the refresh of the Homelessness Action Plan (drafts to be available by the end of 2019).

What outcomes and recommendations are the dedicated task and finish group aiming to achieve?

- Reduce the numbers of people becoming homeless.
- Reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation and improving the quality of that accommodation.
- Supporting people into good quality, affordable and sustainable accommodation options.
- Reducing rough sleeping and supporting those who find themselves on the street.
- Improving the customer service provided to people approaching housing services.

Equalities Impact Assessment- To be carried out once scope has been defined and if deemed necessary.

Recording of meetings- Action notes would be produced as opposed to minutes for each Task and Finish Group meeting.

Proposed Work Plan & Schedule of Meetings

| | Meeting Dates | Task/ considered items | Who is to be invited & interviewed (if applicable) |
|---|----------------------|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | Conclusion/ wash up session before returning to O&S for approval and agreement of final recommendations | |

Proposed and Confirmed dates to Report to Panel and Cabinet / Council (if required):

- Report of Task and Finish Group recommendations to return to O&S Panel on 4th February 2020 for approval and consideration.
- Final report of recommendations to be considered by Cabinet on 26th March 2020.