

Item 6 (a) - Homelessness Review 2022 and Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2023-2028

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Cabinet (9 February 2023, Minute 91)

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health presented the report, which presented the findings of the Homeless review and outlined the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy for 2023-28. The strategy had identified the need to increase the number of affordable homes in the District to meet the needs of residents. It aimed to address this through prevention, intervention, and sustainable solutions, delivered alongside partnership organisations. The Housing & Health Advisory Committee has considered the same report.

The Head of Housing advised Members that the consultation process gathered feedback from an online survey, consultation with Members, the new Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy forum, and partnership organisations. This process identified several key priorities, including the delivery of more social and affordable housing, promoting the housing options available, the information available to customers, and the importance of involving people with lived experience of homelessness in the strategy.

She outlined some of the steps taken to address these concerns. The Registered Provider Eligibility Criteria had been approved by Cabinet, which would help enable additional social and affordable housing. The Empty Homes Strategy would aim to bring more properties back into use. Face to face support was being provided at the Council Offices and the Swanley Hub, offering a wide range of support for homelessness and other issues, in conjunction with other Council teams and partners. The Landlord Incentive Scheme was being reviewed, and some successes had been had in working with landlords to transition people in temporary accommodation into 6 and 12-month tenancies. The Council was working with the Kent Housing Options Group to review temporary accommodation providers and ensure consistency and competitive rates.

The strategy would be monitored with the support of the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy Forum on a quarterly basis to feed into the annual update to the Committee to ensure the services provided were meeting the changing needs of residents.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the feedback received from the public consultation be noted; and
- b) it be recommended to Council that the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy be adopted.