

## HOMELESSNESS SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Cabinet – 14 November 2024

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer, People and Places

**Status:** For Information

**Key Decision:** No

**Also Considered by:** Housing and Health Advisory Committee – 5 November 2024

**Executive Summary:** Scrutiny Committee resolved at its meeting on 6 July 2023, to set up an In-depth Scrutiny Working Group to evaluate the challenges and available measures relating to homelessness prevention, including the approach and sustainability of out of district placements.

The Chair of the working group presented the outcome of the Members Working Group on the challenges and measures relating to homelessness prevention to Cabinet on the 8 February 2024. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health provided an update on the recommendations that were already adopted and resolved to discuss the remaining recommendations with the Head of Housing and report back to a future Cabinet meeting.

This report provides an update on the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group recommendations, the current challenges for the Housing Service and outlines how the Council can effectively deliver an enhanced service that meets the current and future needs of the residents of the Sevenoaks District.

**This report supports the Key Aim of:** The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2028

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Perry Cole

**Contact Officer(s):** Alison Simmons, Ext 7272

**Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee:**  
To receive and note the report.

**Recommendation to Cabinet:**  
To receive and note the report.

**Reason for recommendation:**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health resolved to discuss the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group recommendations with the Head of Housing and report back to a future Cabinet meeting. This report provides an update on the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group recommendations, the current challenges for the Housing Service and outlines how the Council can effectively deliver an enhanced service.

## Introduction

- 1 The Scrutiny Committee resolved at its meeting on 6 July 2023, to set up an In-depth Scrutiny Working Group to evaluate the challenges and available measures relating to homelessness prevention, including the approach and sustainability of out of district placements.
- 2 The Chair of the working group presented the outcome of the Members Working Group on the challenges and measures relating to homelessness prevention to Cabinet on the 8 February 2024. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health provided an update on the recommendations that were already adopted and resolved to discuss the remaining recommendations with the Head of Housing and report back to a future Cabinet meeting.
- 3 This report provides an update on the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group recommendations, the current challenges for the Housing Service and outlines how the Council can effectively deliver an enhanced service that meets the current and future needs of the residents of the Sevenoaks District.

## Recommendations made by the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group

- 4 The table below details the recommendations made by the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group and the actions that the Housing Service has taken:

Recommendation		Response
a	KPI for all applicants being offered a homelessness assessment within 10 working days of an application, when an applicant has submitted all the required documentation for the assessment to be completed, be implemented	<i>The Housing Service strives for continuous improvement and would be happy to introduce a key performance indicator. Recommendation A would not be able to be delivered without additional budget to support the required staffing resources indicated in Recommendation B</i>
b	Review whether the current staffing levels of the housing advice and support team are suitable to deliver good support to applicants and to be confident of meeting Recommendation A	<p><i>The majority of homelessness customers are not homeless on the day. Customers who are homeless on the day will continue to be given priority. It should be acknowledged that the majority of applicants are threatened with homelessness with at least 56 days or more notice</i></p> <p><i>The Housing Service was restructured in 2020 to bring a greater focus on homelessness prevention in line with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act</i></p> <p><i>The Council is reliant on ongoing Government funding to help provide successful prevention measures and support its staffing structure</i></p>

		<p><i>The Council is in the last year of its funding from the successful bids for the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme which contributes to the provision of 2 posts and much needed supported accommodation</i></p> <p><i>We are seeing increased burdens being placed on the Council and our partners to deliver services with no additional Government funding being made available for homelessness and commissioned services such as substance misuse, early prison releases, care leavers and domestic abuse</i></p> <p><i>With the current restraints on the Council budgets and without the confirmation of external funding to increase the levels of staffing the Head of Housing has suggested a target of 15 days could be put in place</i></p>
c	Consider extending the Corporate Satisfaction Survey, where possible, for applicants who contact the Council about housing matters	<p><i>The Housing Service is included in the Corporate Satisfaction Survey and we have incorporated the request for feedback in applicants Personalised Housing Plans to ensure the process is as smooth as possible and to identify continuous improvements to the service</i></p>
d	When monitoring the Personal Housing Plans with the applicant, Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) must ensure that the applicant understands the homeless process and SDC should seek feedback to ensure the process is as smooth as possible and to identify continuous improvements to the service	<p><i>The Housing Service are currently undertaking a Customer Journey Audit of all services provided by the Housing Options and Solutions Team to improve the customer journey through the Homelessness and Housing Register process, review and promote the options that are available to residents and at the same time manage their expectations of the affordable housing that is available across the District</i></p>
e	The SDC HERO service, housing advice and homelessness website pages, be reviewed to ensure that advice and guidance is readily available and details the way people can make an application and contact the Council for urgent assistance	<p><i>The Housing Service regularly reviews the website to ensure that we are providing the most up to date information for residents and the way people can make an application and contact the Council for urgent assistance</i></p> <p><i>The Housing Service does not only promote its services through the website, it provides an annual update of its services in the InShape magazine and hosts a monthly Housing and</i></p>

		<p><i>Community Hub at the Council office providing a drop in service for customers</i></p>
f	<p>An annual review of the incentives that Sevenoaks Landlords Hub can offer (dependent on funding availability, landlord incentives are funded by the Homelessness Prevention Grant) to increase the number of private sector landlords working with the Council, be undertaken</p>	<p><i>The Landlords incentives are funded through the Homelessness Prevention Grant allocated to the Council by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government</i></p> <p><i>A review of the incentives is completed on an annual basis and is dependent on the external funding to decide what the Council can offer each year</i></p> <p><i>The Council hold regular Landlords Forums in Sevenoaks and as part of the West Kent Partnership</i></p> <p><i>At the last Sevenoaks Landlords Forum in May 2024 the Portfolio Holder and Deputy Portfolio Holder attended and discussed with the Landlords what they would like to see as incentives going forward</i></p> <p><i>The number one ask was for Landlords Insurance, which we are now investigating an offer that we can provide</i></p> <p><i>It should be noted that 21 new landlords have signed up to work with the Housing Options and Solutions team since April 2024</i></p>
g	<p>As part of the Housing Allocations Policy review consider the viability of placing customers in permanent accommodation an hour away from their support networks, and whether this could be reduced to 45 or even just 30 minutes</p>	<p><i>The Council operate a Choice Based Lettings Scheme and the Housing Associations advertise their available accommodation and this enables residents to make a choice of where they wish to live in the District</i></p> <p><i>The reference to timescales within the Housing Allocation Policy relates to Care givers and receivers only and not all applicants</i></p> <p><i>The Housing Register currently has 1,017 live applications and since April this year, we have received 1,509 applications to join the Housing Register (284 homeless applicants out of 368 live cases and 298 over 55 applicants)</i></p> <p><i>The increase in the numbers of applications has been due to the:</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cost of living pressures</li> <li>• affordability in the Private Rented Sector</li> <li>• reduction in the provision of supported accommodation (mental health, substance misuse etc) in the District and across Kent</li> <li>• Social housing is their only affordable option</li> </ul> <p>Since April, we have had 115 Social housing lets in total, equating to 19 lets per month which is currently above last year's average of 16. Overall lets reduced from 257 in 2022-2023 to the last financial year to 187</p> <p>West Kent Housing Association have advised that they have seen a 35% decrease in their lets and a 32% increase in households moving through a mutual exchange</p>
h	Ensure all staff through the Council's DAHA Accreditation process receives domestic abuse awareness training in order to further support individuals seeking council support from domestic abuse	<p>All staff across the Council undertake mandatory domestic abuse and safeguarding training as part of their induction and ongoing learning and development programme</p> <p>The Council has a dedicated Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Officer in post and the Housing Service has a Domestic Abuse single point of contact/champion</p> <p>The Council are working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation</p> <p>A Customer Domestic Abuse Policy has been introduced in conjunction with domestic abuse training arranged across all Council services to improve support and services to victims</p> <p>The Council's website has been updated with further information for victims seeking support</p> <p>The Council has White Ribbon Accreditation Membership, with 3 Ambassadors championing the awareness of domestic abuse across the Council</p>
i	A note be sent out to all Councillors of SDC by the Housing Team identifying how Councillors can make	A note has been sent to all Councillors by the Chief Officer - People and Places advising to contact the Chief Officer - People and Places

	<p>enquiries or escalate housing issues for review by the Housing Team, subject to the applicant's written consent</p>	<p><i>or the Head of Housing to make enquiries or to escalate housing issues for review by the Housing Service</i></p>
<p>j</p>	<p>All avenues to ensure the increased delivery of affordable housing within the District and include a KPI to show progress in reducing the numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation outside of the District, be explored</p>	<p><i>The Council are, through the development of the Local Plan and the enabling role of the Housing Service, working with partners to increase the delivery of more affordable housing</i></p> <p><i>It is critical that members support the emerging Local Plan, which outlines the housing need and spatial plan for delivering all tenures of housing, including affordable housing</i></p> <p><i>The Housing Enabling Officer and Housing Strategy Manager are working closely with Quercus Housing and registered providers to increase the amount of affordable housing in the District utilising Section 106 and Local Authority Housing Fund 3 funding</i></p> <p><i>3 additional Registered Provider partners have come on board to deliver new affordable homes across the District since April 2023</i></p> <p><i>Lobby Homes England and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide grant to enable Registered Providers to deliver Social Housing rather than affordable housing and shared ownership to meet the needs of the residents on the Council Housing Register</i></p> <p><i>With the reduced levels of Affordable housing secured through the Section 106 process as a result of greater challenges to achieve viability of new developments lobby Homes England and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide grant funding for the delivery of social housing on Section 106 sites</i></p> <p><i>With the increase in demand on services and the Council's statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation, lack of accommodation in the District applicants are placed in properties that are available on the</i></p>

## Challenges faced by the Housing Service

- 5 The Council faces significant challenges because of key external factors, such as the lack of affordability, the small supply of Affordable housing and the implications of inflation and the rising cost of living. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy can only be delivered in collaboration with partners, and we continue to nurture good partnerships to ensure that the priorities set out in the Strategy are delivered.
- 6 The Council adopted its Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy by Full Council in February 2023. The Strategy is a working document used by the Housing Service and other Council colleagues and external partners. The Strategy contains an Action Plan detailing how we will deliver our priorities.
- 7 Since the adoption of the Strategy the political and financial landscape continues to evolve having an impact on delivery of both operational and strategic actions, with the following challenges identified.
  - Welfare reform and changes to the cost of living are continuing to impact residents, in particular those out of work and single people under the age of 35. Managing the impact will be necessary to prevent homelessness occurring, including a focus on supporting households by assistance with benefits, getting into employment or with their financial management skills to ensure rent arrears do not arise and homelessness is prevented.
  - Demand for temporary accommodation is increasing as a wider range of people are owed interim housing duties. The rate of exit from temporary accommodation is slowing as the number of available lets in the Social housing and Private Rented Sectors have diminished.
  - The rising cost of temporary accommodation met by Councils remains unchanged as the Local Housing Allowance rate payable for temporary accommodation through the Housing Benefit Subsidy system is capped at 90% of 2011 Local Housing Allowance rate which does not cover the total cost of temporary accommodation.
  - Moving people on to settled, sustainable accommodation is becoming increasingly difficult. The gap between Local Housing Allowance rates and rent has widened, which presents a significant and rising cost implication for the Council. Although Local Housing Allowance rates rose in April 2024 to the 30th percentile of local market rents, this will not alleviate the ongoing and current financial pressure on struggling low-income renters.
  - With fewer affordable properties available within the Local Housing Allowance rates, there is a growing shortage of accommodation and significantly increased demand for support from housing and homelessness services.
  - The number of private sector landlords leaving the sector combined with Local Housing Allowance rates not reflecting private sector rental values which are continuing to increase.

- Increased number of customer referrals from other Districts and Boroughs to support domestic abuse cases, which under the Domestic Abuse Act, the Council has to accept.
- Steady number of friends and families no longer willing to accommodate people under the age of 35. This demographic are challenging to help secure permanent accommodation as they are only entitled to the shared accommodation Local Housing Allowance Rate unless they are in receipt of a disability benefit, restricting the amount of affordable housing available.
- Increase in the number of approaches and from households with more complex needs mental health, substance, and alcohol abuse. Support for these households continues to be challenging due to reductions in Kent County Council's service due to budget cuts. The decommissioning of the Kent Homeless Connect services resulting in the reduction of supported accommodation across the County.
- Increase in approaches from Homes for Ukraine scheme guests and uncertainty about future funding for this scheme.
- Refugee and Asylum Seekers redistribution schemes introduced by the Government where all local authorities are expected to take part, to ensure a fairer distribution nationally.
- Reduced turnover and available lets in the existing Social housing stock which restricts our ability to help those on the Housing Register.
- Reduced levels of Affordable housing secured through the Section 106 process this is as a result of greater challenges to achieve viability of new developments owing to rising costs of raw materials, labour and private finance, alongside further pressures due to the requirement for Kent County Council contributions to take precedence over the delivery of affordable housing.
- Uncertainty in future Government revenue and capital funding for homelessness services and delivery of new affordable housing.
- The new Government launched a consultation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which closes on 24 September 2024, with far reaching proposals which will have implications for our Local Plan. A key boost for housing will be to bring more land into the system with priority to develop on Brownfield sites and low quality 'Grey Belt'. Where land in the Green Belt is developed, new rules will require provision of 50% affordable housing, with a much needed focus on Social rent, alongside accompanying infrastructure, and community needs. The consultation proposes more flexibility on the Affordable Homes Programme with Homes England, rent stability and a review of Right to Buy, all of which will positively impact the delivery of Social and Affordable housing in the Sevenoaks District.

8 Over the past 2 years, the staff within the Housing Service have seen an increase in the level of verbal abuse, physical threats and in some cases, racism, being directed at them from customers, which continues to impact staff morale and wellbeing. The Housing Options and Solutions team have regular case reviews and check ins with their Team Leaders and access to BUPA counselling support at work.



## Homelessness Rough Sleeper Strategy Successes

- 9 The Housing Service have made significant progress in addressing some of the key housing issues, with a focus on improving the customer journey and supporting housing options, achieving the following:

### *Housing Service and Customer Experience*

- In line with the duties set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which requires a thorough housing assessment to be undertaken and a Personalised Housing Plan of the steps that will be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness agreed with the applicant.
- In early 2020, a new structure with realigned resources was implemented. This ensured the team could respond to demand and meet the Council's statutory obligations.
- Duty teams are in place across the service to respond to customers' telephone calls.
- A fixed term Temporary Accommodation Project Coordinator has been appointed. The purpose of the role will be to ensure we are receiving value for money with our providers, that the accommodation offered is to a high standard and to identify alternative temporary accommodation providers and opportunities. During the visits, occupancy will be confirmed, welfare status reviewed, any change in circumstances identified and condition of the accommodation is checked.
- Homeless customers continue to be supported to secure private rented accommodation with rent in advance and deposits. Where appropriate, we are referring customers to the HERO Service for support with setting up payment of rent and bills.
- The HERO Service coordinates the Homelessness Prevention Project, identifying and supporting customers before they reach crisis point. The HERO Service continues to foster partnerships with food banks, family hubs and produces the Here for You and HERO Service leaflets for customers and partners.

### *IT systems*

- In July 2023, a new County wide Housing Register and Homelessness system was implemented (Huume). Through this, there is more capability of automated processing to make the process easier and give more control to the customer, for example customers can upload documents directly to their application rather than email them or bring them to the offices to be scanned.

### *Website review*

- Work is underway to make the website easily accessible with quick links to specific information required by the customer.

### *Developing our Housing Options*

- Sevenoaks Landlord Forum held in May 2024 and championed by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health, resulting in 4 new landlords. Landlords provided feedback at the Forum on what they would like to see in future offers through our Sevenoaks Landlord Hub Gold, Silver, and Bronze packages. Each package offers different incentives, including rent in advance, rent deposit and HERO Service support. The Gold package includes a £1,000 financial incentive payable to the landlord.
- We continue to provide specialist accommodation at Stay Green House (mother and baby unit), Vine Court Road and Orchard Close (low to medium level supported accommodation) through the partnerships we have with HfT (formerly Home Farm Trust) and West Kent Housing Association. All customers accommodated have move on pathways through the Housing Register.

### *Housing Delivery*

- Through the work of the Housing Enabling Officer and Housing Strategy Manager, we are working closely with Quercus Housing and registered providers to increase the amount of affordable housing in the district utilising Section 106 and Local Authority Housing Fund 3 funding.
- 10 new affordable homes delivered for rent affordable rent via Quercus Housing, including 8 units in Edenbridge and 2 units in Sevenoaks
- Secured capital funding of £1.3m as part of the Local Authority Housing Fund towards the delivery of temporary accommodation for our general homelessness need in the district and affordable housing to support Ukrainian and Afghan households. Longer term, the affordable housing acquisitions can be used to support our general homelessness need.

### *Temporary Accommodation*

- The Temporary Accommodation Charging Schedule has been implemented and is generating an income from customers who are being provided nightly paid emergency accommodation at a cost to the Council.
- Controls are in place to ensure a decision regarding placement into temporary accommodation is made at the right level and to ensure it is based on a robust application of the statutory threshold.

### *Innovation*

- The Changing Spaces Scheme went live in November 2023, following approval by Cabinet and the recruitment of the Changing Spaces Officer. The Scheme, enables residents currently living in Social housing that is too big for their household composition to apply to downsize, receiving an incentive payment. The Changing Spaces Scheme scope has been widened to include making better use of adapted properties when residents no longer require the adaptations and to assist residents following a

bereavement and having to move from their family home. The Scheme has successfully supported 6 customers to downsize.

- Promoting the Two Generations initiative to voluntary, public sector and housing associations organisations, to promote 'Homeshare', which matches householders with a spare room, who may be struggling to live on their own and would like some company, with people who may need accommodation. It works similar to a lodging arrangement. There is a thorough vetting process in place and the householder will get to interview the homesharer and agree what support (at least 10 hours a week) the homesharer will give. This agreement is flexible and can include a variety of tasks like shopping, gardening, cleaning, cooking, or accompanying visits to the doctor. No personal or nursing care is involved.

### *Partnerships*

- The Housing and Community Hub is held monthly, attended by partners including Citizens Advice, Imago, Involve, CGL and DAVSS and the Council's Housing Advice, Housing Register Teams and HERO Service offering a "one stop shop" for customers to be able to seek advice from different areas. The Hubs have been themed for young people, the Housing Allocation Policy, Changing Spaces Scheme and in June, our Hub was veteran themed to coincide with Armed Forces Day.
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy Forum continues to be held quarterly and attended by partners. Future forums will include presentations on key topics such as Modern Day Slavery, HERO Service, DAHA Accreditation and West Kent Housing Association Tenancy Sustainment.
- Monthly Rough Sleeper Initiative multi-agency meetings now being held to identify and discuss our known rough sleeper cohort and take a partnership approach to support and intervention.
- Since February 2022, we have been working in partnership with KCC and Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees to support Ukrainian families fleeing the war. To date, we have helped 31 families to secure permanent accommodation following move on from their host with only 3 households currently needing to be provided temporary accommodation.

### **The best possible Customer Journey**

- 10 As a Housing Service, when vulnerable residents seeking our help with housing, including temporary accommodation, we aim to treat them with dignity and respect.
- 11 Access to our Housing Service can be made face to face, by telephone, video call or online. We have meeting rooms in Reception, which are accessible and enables confidentiality. We provide an out of hours service for people that are at risk of immediate homelessness.
- 12 We make sure the 'first advice is the best advice' is the goal; achieved through

our Triage Service. Customers are given time to tell us about their situation. With the complexity and vulnerabilities that we are seeing with many of our customers, many of our telephone conversations and assessments will take in excess of 2 hours to complete.

- 13 Staff training and development is undertaken regularly in order to review cases, service delivery and best practice from the LGA and other Local Authorities. The Housing Service reviews customer feedback to help deliver continuous improvement.

### **Other options Considered and/or rejected**

The following Acts set out the statutory responsibilities of the council to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are eligible for assistance:

- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

### **Key Implications**

#### Resources

Delivery of the Housing Services involves staff resource that is met within existing budgets and external funding.

#### Financial

The Council is reliant on ongoing Government Homelessness Prevention Grant funding to help provide successful prevention measures

The Council is in the last year of funding from the successful bids for the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme which contributes to the provision of 2 posts and much needed supported accommodation.

The Council are waiting for the announcement in the Autumn Budget 2024 for the allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant and other forms of funding that may be available to continue the successful prevention work the Council has completed and the delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative.

We are seeing increased burdens being placed on the Council and our partners to deliver services with no additional Government funding being made available for homelessness and commissioned services such as substance misuse, *early prison releases, care leavers and domestic abuse.*

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires all local housing authorities in England to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy

every 5 years. The adopted Strategy is compliant with current homelessness legislation.

### Risk Assessment

The table below summarises the risk register considered relevant for this report.

Type	Description	Mitigation
Housing Service Resources	Insufficient staff resources and funding to meet the customer demand for the service, sickness, and holiday cover.	Source external funding to increase the number of officers working on the service, including RSI Further training as required to upskill staff to make new demands for the service Coaching to be sought for all Team Leader posts.
Temporary Accommodation	Increased demand and use of temporary accommodation resulting in an overspend of budget or lack of temporary accommodation	Provision of advice and support through HERO Service. Increased partnership working to identify initiatives to improve signposting to services and prevent homelessness Homelessness prevention project to be introduced Housing and Community Hub provided at Council offices to support households. Negotiate with Moat and West Kent Housing Association to provide more temporary accommodation.
Housing Provision – Registered Providers	Lack of affordable housing to meet demand for housing for people on low/no income	Work with a range of Registered Providers and Developers to increase affordable housing stock in both urban and rural areas across the District. Contributing to the Local Plan (2040) and SPD for affordable housing. Rural Housing Needs

		surveys programme in place
Housing Provision – Private Sector Housing	Sevenoaks Landlords Hub ceases to identify sufficient properties and lack of S106 or other funding to offer incentives to landlords to support low income households who are homeless	Current processes and procedures to be regularly reviewed Source external funding to increase or offer new incentives to Landlords to work with the Council KPI target set and in place Accommodation team deliver events programme to encourage landlords to join the scheme Accommodation team attend national events to promote the Landlords Hub

### Equality Assessment

A full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the adopted Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### Climate Change Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the Council's ambition to tackle the challenge of climate change. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

### **Conclusions**

This report provides an update on the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group recommendations, the current challenges for the Housing Service and how we can effectively deliver an enhanced service that meets the current and future needs of the residents of the Sevenoaks District.

A great deal of work has begun as part of the joint working around earlier interventions that contribute to the prevention of homelessness. Much of this has been progressed through the work undertaken as part of the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

At a recent meeting with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Housing Advisors the Council have been commended for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy adopted by Full Council in February 2023. The Council's

Strategy will be added to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 'good practice' data base as an example that other Local Authorities might want to look at when considering a new strategy of their own. In particular the detailed action plan with SMART targets etc is especially strong insofar as the Council continue to review and update it and report on progress to the Housing and Health Advisory Committee.

In addition the HERO Service was commended by the Housing Advisor for the upstream prevention and support services provided that generates downstream savings that might not necessarily be apparent but is nonetheless an innovative approach that undoubtedly adds value to the work we are doing.

The Housing Services has reviewed protocols and pathways with partner organisations and we will build on many of the new ways of working preventatively that have been trialled. The current financial climate remains challenging and where appropriate remedial actions have been considered.

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2024

[https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/3767/homelessness\\_and\\_rough\\_sleeper\\_strategy\\_2023\\_to\\_2028](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/3767/homelessness_and_rough_sleeper_strategy_2023_to_2028)

Homelessness Review – August 2022

<https://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s51512/09%20-%20App%20A%20-%20Homelessness%20Review%20-%2014th%20October%202022.pdf?J=3>

**Sarah Robson**  
**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – People and Places**