

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Key
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 09 March 2022
Subject:	Bury Homelessness Strategy 2022 to 2025	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Housing Services	

Summary

1. The Homelessness strategy from 2022 to 2025 sets out how we will deliver services and meet homeless and rough sleeping demands over the next 3 years to provide the best support and accommodation within the Borough.
2. At the heart of this strategy is a new commitment to prevention, early intervention, sustainment both support and accommodation and the co-design of solutions with communities aligned with the Councils corporate 'Let's Do It!' and Housing Strategies.
3. Bury's Homelessness Strategy for 2022-2025, has been co-produced by the Homeless partnership and key stakeholders and sets out the vision for how the strategic objective to eliminate rough sleeping and prevent homelessness will be achieved and how outcomes for these vulnerable people will be secured through a proactive, multi-agency approach.
4. The focus will be prevention and sustainment of accommodation but importantly support.
5. The strategy has been delayed but refreshed and reviewed due to the impact of Covid 19.
6. The strategy will be delivered in co-production with the Homelessness partnership with a clear action plan based on the strategy key themes and objectives.

Recommendation(s)

7. To approve the strategy to formally implement and deliver with clear objectives and timescales.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

8. The Council has a statutory duty to support people that are homeless in the Borough as determined through legislation described in the Homelessness strategy document. Therefore, the Council must have an updated and robust Homelessness Strategy to clearly demonstrate how we will meet the required statutory duties and obligations for homelessness in the Borough.

Alternative options considered and rejected

9. N/a

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Background

10. The former Homelessness Strategy expired in 2018 and needed urgently refreshing and updating and following the introduction of new legislation, the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 which came into effect in March 2018. This new legislation was to provide and enable more advice and support to a greater cohort of people at risk of homelessness but to also intervene earlier and focus on prevention.
11. Over the past decade Bury has seen a gradual increase in homeless cases within the Borough but data shows greater increases over the past 3 years. This increase is consistent with national and regional trends. This aligns with the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and increased expectation and duty on Local Authorities. Covid 19 has also impacted and added further pressures and expectations particularly around rough sleepers and keeping them off the streets but at the same time of increases in homeless cases needing advice, support and accommodation.
12. In 2020 partners across Bury adopted 'Let's Do It - Bury 2030', the vision and blueprint of how the Council and its communities want to see Bury flourish over the next 10 years. At the heart of this strategy is a new commitment to prevention, early intervention and the co-design of solutions with communities.
13. The new strategy will focus to achieve the required outcomes and expectations of the new legislation but also focus on local and specific needs within the Borough to ensure we have a well-developed strategy aligned to robust operational processes to meet the required outcomes and alleviate homelessness pressures but importantly support our customers with clear objectives over the next 3 years.
14. The strategy aligns with Government's objective to eliminate rough sleeping by 2025.
15. The prevention and management of homelessness and rough sleeping in Bury is managed by the Council but in a multi-agency partnership comprised of community leaders; voluntary and faith organisations, service users and others with lived experience.

Strategic Priorities and Legislation

16. This strategy aims to deliver the agreed objective of eliminating all rough sleeping in the Borough of Bury by 2025, by preventing homelessness and providing "enabling support" towards independence. The strategy describes how the Council and its partners will discharge duties under the relevant legislation, which includes:-
 - Housing Act 1996 – Part VII

- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

17. These provisions cover people who:

- Want or need general advice about housing options
- Are at risk of homelessness in the future
- Are already homeless
- Are rough sleeping
- Are staying in supported housing or temporary accommodation
- Are settling into their new home after becoming homeless

Preventing Homelessness – Let’s do it!

18. The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 requires local authorities to take a preventative approach to managing homelessness. Homeless prevention and meaningful response can only be achieved on a system-wide, multi-agency basis. The Homeless partnership has therefore worked as a collective to agree the following seven key themes to drive its work:-

- Prevention
- Person
- Property
- Promotion
- Purpose
- Place
- Partnership

19. These themes align to the action plan that sits below the strategy to ensure we have deliverable objectives linked to the strategy outcomes over the next 3 years.

Governance

20. The strategy and action plan will be a living document to reflect the continual challenges and changes that homelessness brings. The strategy and action plan will be reviewed annually by the Homelessness partnership and outcomes reported to the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Summary

21. There is no doubt that homelessness trends will continue to increase in the short-term following the impact of covid and until the benefits and outcomes of the Governments new funding streams are realised. Partners must remain focussed around prevention and sustainment activity, to ensure the whole system is robustly supporting all homeless people from rough sleepers to statutory homeless families and single people.

22. This strategy proposes a clear framework for delivery over the next three years including priorities for 2022/23 as follows:

- Specific awareness raising for young people around homelessness
- Promoting life skills and managing debt in schools and colleges

- Early tenancy sustainment support for people at risk of homelessness
 - Performance and data measured correctly for local needs, as well as national and regional insight to align resources.
 - Prevent people being discharged from hospital before housing options in place.
 - Resolutions to the challenges created by welfare reform.
 - Strengthening Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlord support, advice and assistance to avoid S21 notices and evictions
 - A clear plan to be ready for people - ‘in-reach’” prevention work (how to manage a tenancy) with prisons / prison liaison
 - Training offers for all frontline staff to address barriers to housing, including debt management and mental health.
 - Ensuring that the Asylum and Refugee community are given early housing options and support.
 - Partnership approach with all stakeholders to help prevent homelessness and improve resources and capacity.
23. Delivery of these priorities will be managed by all partners within the Homelessness Partnership through a detailed delivery plan which will be produced annually and reported to Bury Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
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Links with the Corporate Priorities:

24. At the heart of this strategy is a new commitment to prevention, early intervention and the co-design of solutions with communities which aligns to the 'Let's Do It - Bury 2030', vision and blueprint in how communities want to see Bury flourish.
25. The strategy also aligns with the Councils corporate objective to end rough sleeping in the Borough by 2025.
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Equality Impact and Considerations:

26. An initial screening has been undertaken and as there were no negative impacts identified for affected groups, there is no requirement to proceed to a Full Impact Assessment.
27. The strategy was also co-produced with all relevant stakeholders including inclusion and feedback from people of all back grounds including lived experience and a full diversity of people to ensure all potential impacts of equality and inclusion were considered in the production and development of the strategy. Further EIA's will be considered and produced as required during the implementation of the strategy action plan and themes to ensure equality is fairly considered.
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Environmental Impact and Considerations:

28. None identified.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Potential risks to homelessness people due to the delays in the implementation of the strategy due to Covid.	Continued to develop the strategy with the Partnership and took the opportunity to review due to the impact of Covid. Ensured we continued to meet Council statutory duties and obligations.

Legal Implications:

Every local authority must carry out a homelessness review and formulate and publish a strategy based on that review. The strategy sets out how the council will prevent homelessness, secure accommodation and provide support for those who are or may become homeless or need prevention support. The strategy sets out how the Council will meet a range of statutory duties. The Council has taken in to account the prevention and relief duties as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The strategy sets out how the Council will work with other service providers to ensure it has early contact with those at risk of becoming homeless.

The strategy must be made available for public inspection without charge and copies made available on payment of a reasonable charge .

Financial Implications:

This report recognises that the homeless strategy is a multi-partner approach. The Council receives a homeless prevention grant which for 2022/23 is £463,255. In 2021/22 the authority also received a one-off top-up to the homeless prevention grant of £97,134 to help vulnerable households with rent arrears to reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless, there is no indication that there will be a further grant in 2022/23.

This needs to fund direct staff costs and delivery of the strategy. For 2022/23 the Mayoral budget for a bed every night will also continue.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Bury Homelessness strategy from 2022 to 2025

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
HRA	Homeless Reduction Act 2017
PRS	Private rented sector
S21	Section 21 notices by private landlords
RSi	Rough Sleeper Initiative
RSAP	Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme
NSAP	Next Step Accommodation Programme
'Let's' principles	Local, Enterprise, Together & Strengths
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
GMHF	Greater Manchester Housing First
GMCA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
ABEN	A Bed Every Night