
Cabinet
Council

10th December 2024
14th January 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:
Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities – Councilor N Akhtar

Director Approving Submission of the report:
Director of Adult Services and Housing

Ward(s) affected:
All

Title: Agreement and Adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-29

Is this a key decision?

Yes - the proposals are likely to have a significant impact on residents or businesses in two or more electoral wards in the city

Executive summary:

There is a statutory duty on all Local Authorities in England to publish a Homelessness and a Rough Sleeping Strategy following a review of homelessness in their area every 5 years.

Following engagement with key stakeholders and people who use the homeless service as well as using the findings from the latest homelessness review 2024, a strategy has been developed for the period 2025 - 2029 (the “Strategy” set out at Appendix A to the report) detailing how the City Council’s responsibilities will be delivered. The results of the consultation that was undertaken are summarised in Section 3 of this report and as Appendix C to the report.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025 - 2029) focuses on three main themes:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Targeted and crisis support
- Move on and tenancy sustainment

And is underpinned by 4 key principles:

- Partnership
- Intelligence led
- Improving life chances and health outcomes
- Maximizing opportunities.

The Strategy is supported by a delivery plan that will remain a live document and be monitored and delivered by the City Council and its relevant partners.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to request that Council:

- 1) Note the consultation responses received to the draft homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025/2029 (set out at Appendix C to the report).
- 2) Adopt the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025/29), (set out at Appendix A to the report), and the supporting Delivery Plan (set out at Appendix B to the report).
- 3) Delegate responsibility to the Director of Adults and Housing and Director of Finance and Resources, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to make variations and updates to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Delivery plan.

Council is requested to:

- 1) Note the consultation responses received to the draft homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025/2029 (set out at Appendix C to the report).
- 2) Adopt the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025/29, (set out at Appendix A to the report), and the supporting Delivery Plan (set out at Appendix B to the report).
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List of Appendices included:

The following appendices are attached to the report:

Appendix A – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
Appendix B – Delivery plan
Appendix C - Consultation report
Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix E - Coventry City Council Homelessness review 2024

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

N/A

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was considered by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) at its meeting on 5th September 2024 and resolved that the Board 1) Agree the priorities and themes within the new strategy and 2) Supports the draft strategy and the development of a comprehensive action plan that will deliver the key priorities and themes.

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes - 14th January 2025

Report title: Agreement and Adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025/29

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. The council has a statutory duty to carry out a periodic review of homelessness in the area and to publish a Homelessness Strategy. The current Housing and Homelessness Strategy was published in 2019 and runs until 2024. It was aimed at providing a high-level plan to set out the main priorities for the Council and its partners for the life of the strategy, to guide the allocation of resources and investment, and provide a framework to inform project development, to achieve the vision that:
 - *Coventry Citizens will be able to access a suitable, affordable, and decent home, with the support they need to sustain their housing.*
- 1.2. In 2019 when the new strategy was developed the previous Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategy were combined into one document, this was done as it was recognised that activities to prevent homelessness were to a degree dependent on the availability of permanent housing.
- 1.3. Coventry published its first Rough Sleeping Strategy in December 2019, in line with a requirement by the Government for all areas to have a strategy to prevent and tackle rough sleeping. From the outset it was accepted that the successful delivery of the Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan was not in the Council's power alone. Therefore, a One Coventry partnership approach was adopted as the only way that we will be able to ensure successful realisation of our vision, therefore the strategy needed to be owned, supported, and delivered by ensuring effective collaboration and partnership working.
- 1.4. The Rough Sleeping Strategy and its Action Plan were reflective of and intrinsically linked to the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy at that time. The two strategies needed to be considered and delivered in tandem. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy set the vision for housing in the city and our priorities whilst the Rough Sleeping strategy detailed specific and targeted interventions for those who were rough sleeping.
- 1.5. The Homelessness element of the previous Housing and Homelessness Strategy has now been combined with the Rough Sleeping Strategy, creating a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.6. The new combined Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focuses on what we as a local authority are doing to prevent people from becoming homeless, what we are doing when people find themselves homeless and how we are supporting people to end their homelessness. There is a focus on partnership alongside how we can ensure we are improving life chances and health outcomes for those affected by homelessness.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1. **Option 1 – Recommended option - To adopt and implement the Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan.** This option is the recommended option. It meets the statutory requirement to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and its creation has taken in the views and comments of the public, key stakeholders and the views of people with experience of homelessness. A partnership approach was used to develop the draft document and once agreed it will form the basis of a co-ordinated and creative work across the city to address homelessness in all its forms.

2.2. **Option 2 – Not recommended. To not adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan.** This is not recommended as an option. There is a statutory duty on all Local Authorities to have a published Homelessness and Rough sleeping strategy.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 The development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and delivery plan was carried out in partnership with key external and internal stakeholders as well as people with lived experience of homelessness. There were also discussions at the Coventry Homelessness Forum as well as workshop sessions that were held with key agencies directly working with and supporting people who are homeless and rough sleeping. These sessions considered the current position, what the collective vision was for homelessness and rough sleeping in Coventry and what actions would be needed to achieve the vision.

3.2 As part of consultation on the strategy it was shared with and presented to a number of key forums both internally and externally including:

- The Marmot Partnership
- The Coventry Care Collaborative
- The Integrated Care Board Inequalities Forum
- The Coventry Homelessness Forum (with direct invitations for members to comment and feedback)
- Coventry City Council's Housing and Homelessness front line staff and managers

3.3 A public consultation exercise was also carried out on the identified key themes and principles set out in the strategy.

3.4 The survey was created on the Let's Talk platform and the consultation was open for a period from 23rd August 2024 to the end of September 2024 and was promoted via a newsletter on 10th September that was delivered to 7,182 recipients.

3.5 The survey was completed by 48 individuals/organisations, the Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was downloaded 62 times, and the Review document had 57 downloads.

3.6 The key messages and findings that came out of the consultation were:

- Most responses were from members of the public (31)
- 1 in 5 responses were on behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (10)
- All the priorities received agreement of over 96%
- Common themes from the open-ended comments received, focused on, the need for holistic support, and that different groups needed different support.
- Partner organisations will be key to delivering this strategy.
- Questions were raised whether we were making best use of accommodation opportunities such as repurposing student blocks.
- All the principles received agreement.
- A need to focus on actions on how they are going to implement the principles.

3.7 These findings have been considered and incorporated where appropriate into the body of the strategy and the delivery plan.

3. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 If the recommendations in this report are approved, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy would be adopted and come into effect from 1st January 2025.

4. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial Implications

The recommendations in this report will not incur any additional financial implications and will be managed within existing resources.

Elements of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan may have financial implications. These will be subject to further Cabinet and Council reports as appropriate or subject to individual business case reports as necessary.

Funding to resource the work set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a mixture of core and grant funding. The service receives several grants from MHCLG including Homeless Prevention Grant and Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding. Grant allocations for Coventry post 31st March 2025 are yet to be confirmed, and any reduction or growth in overall funding would necessitate changes to services as defined by the grant conditions.

5.2 Legal Implications

Adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025/29) ensures compliance with the Homelessness Act 2002 which requires all housing authorities to develop and publish a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness within their district.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, published by MHCLG clarifies that this means a strategy for:

- a) Preventing homelessness in the district
- b) Securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless
- c) Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

The Code also states that “Housing authorities must consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. Housing authorities will also wish to consult with service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people in the district.”

Failure to have an updated Homelessness Strategy may impact the Council’s ability to defend challenges to decisions made under the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. In accordance with s1(4) of the 2002 Act the Council must ensure that the new homelessness strategy is published within the period of five years beginning with the day on which the last homelessness strategy was published; failure to do so would mean that the council has not complied with its legal obligation.

5. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

The adoption of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy will contribute to meeting the priorities in the One Coventry plan particularly in relation to:

- Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities.

6.2. How is risk being managed?

There are no specific risks from the decision to adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

6.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

The adoption of the new strategy will ensure the council meets its statutory duty to publish its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. It will also provide a formal platform to work with partners to further address homelessness and rough sleeping in the city and provide support to people who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness.

6.4. Equalities / EIA?

By having a shared partnership approach to address homelessness and rough sleeping in Coventry, it will improve the wellbeing and life chances of people with protected characteristics, who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, and it will, therefore, have a positive impact.

In the development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy the Council have had due regard to the public sector equality duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

An Equalities Impact Assessment Analysis (EIA) was carried out during the development of the Draft Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2025-29 (Appendix D to the report).

The outcome of the EIA is that the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025-29) will have a positive impact of groups with protected characteristics. By Recognising homelessness as part of a wider system of inequalities, we will seek to improve life chances and health outcomes, through our partnership approach to tackling homelessness and joining systems up. This will include:

- Raising awareness of the impact of homelessness on health and wellbeing outcomes, including how homelessness can exacerbate existing problems, issues and support needs, particularly in relation to mental health.
- Carry out specific initiatives around health and wellbeing for homeless households as well as ensuring our approach to preventing homelessness and supporting households into settled sustainable accommodation provides a basis upon which they can thrive.
- Working in partnership with all agencies and organisations responsible for health and care services when there is a risk of homelessness, or it is the presenting issue.

The results of the formal round of consultation did flag a number of key points in relation to equalities, including:

- It will be important to ensure monitoring of key household characteristics to ensure trends and issues can be tracked and monitored through the Homefinder system and housing decisions.
- The strategy will provide more support to vulnerable citizens and help provide better quality accommodation.
- There are national issues that the council cannot influence that may continue to have negative impacts on vulnerable households – e.g. benefit reform and universal credit.
- The need to make information available in other languages.
- Need to do more to help homeless households into work.

6.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

No impact

6.6. Implications for partner organisations?

There are positive implications for partner organisations. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy highlights the role of partner organisations and the importance of collaborative working. A number of the actions set out in the delivery plan will be delivered in partnership.

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