

Divisions Affected – All

Cabinet
19 October 2021

Oxfordshire’s Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026

Report by Corporate Director of Adult & Housing Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to agree Oxfordshire’s draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2021-2026 (annex 1).

Executive Summary

2. This is our first county wide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and marks our commitment to inter-agency and cross sector partnership working. It is the result of ongoing partnership working to arrive at a common vision, set of principles and agreed actions for preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in the county.

Background

3. Three pieces of work primarily influenced and informed the development of the county-wide strategy: a ‘Housing-led Feasibility Study’ carried out by Crisis during 2019-2020 (annexe 2), recommendations of a Safeguarding Adult Board review of homelessness in Oxfordshire, and the ‘Everyone In’ response delivered across Oxfordshire.
4. The County-wide Homelessness Steering Group has completed consultation on the draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy for Oxfordshire with partners and members of the public, including people currently sleeping rough or in temporary accommodation.
5. The strategy does not replace councils’ own homelessness strategies, which are a statutory requirement of housing authorities, but sits above those to set out a common vision and set of priorities for Oxfordshire.

Key points

6. This multi-agency strategy will underpin the transformation in the way housing, social care and health services work together with people in need of housing and support.

7. The focus of the strategy is on rough sleeping and single homelessness, including couples without dependants. There will be close working and connection across to the work on families, young people, people with mental health problems and people experiencing domestic abuse.
8. A draft Governance Proposal, in line with OSAB and Crisis recommendations, for a Director level Board to oversee this transformation is being worked up. This would be able to mitigate key risks like shared information processes across Authorities. The first meeting is planned to take place in November.
9. The draft priorities are:
 - Proactively prevent homelessness
 - Rapid response to rough sleeping
 - Focus on the person not the problem
 - Timely Move-On
 - The right home in the right place
10. Action plan - Underpinning the strategy is the attached action plan which is being overseen by the countywide homeless steering group (annex 2).

Corporate Policies and Priorities

11. The strategy directly contributes to Oxfordshire County Council's aims set out in our Corporate Plan to: create thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire where people live safe, healthy lives and play an active part in their community and provide services that enhance the quality of life in our communities and protect the local environment.

Financial Implications

12. An important part of delivering the strategy is via the commissioning of services to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Although the County Council is leading on the commissioning process on behalf of the partners that are contributing to the pooled budget of £3,820,886 (Oxfordshire County Council's contribution to this is £940,000 per year), the commissioning is a truly collaborative effort. The City Council in particular, is informing and jointly leading the commissioning, as a major investor in services.
13. There are no direct financial savings achieved. The value of the existing contracts has been set as the annual budget for the new service. The impact of the Alliance working together to deliver the service will be increased efficiencies, better value for money and the provision of better and more impactful services.

Reviewed and Checked:

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Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. There is no statutory requirement for Oxfordshire County Council to formulate a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy however it provides the opportunity to set out a common vision and set of priorities for Oxfordshire.

Comments checked by:

Christian Smith, Principal Solicitor (Contracts and Conveyancing)

Equality & Inclusion Implications

15. The attached Equality and Climate Impact Assessment has been completed for the strategy (annex 3).

Risk management

16. The county wide strategy is not required by law but is a county wide commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness. It complements the district councils' statutory homelessness and rough sleeping strategies.

Consultations

17. The draft strategy went out for consultation to the public and key stakeholders in February 2021. The strategy has been amended because of the feedback we have received which, included comments from people with lived experience of homelessness.

Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director of Adult and Housing Services
October 2021

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October 2021

