



Cabinet
14 January 2020

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Community Wellbeing**

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2020 – 2025)

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| Wards Affected: | All |
| Key or Non-Key Decision: | Key |
| Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small> | Open |
| No. of Appendices: | Three Appendix 1: Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy Appendix 2: Consultation Portal Feedback Appendix 3: Homelessness Forum Feedback |
| Background Papers: | None. |
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report presents the feedback gathered through the recent consultation on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2020 – 2025) and includes an amended strategy draft following this feedback.

2.0 Recommendations for Cabinet

2.1 That cabinet note the consultation feedback and subsequent amendments to the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2020 – 2025).

2.2 That Cabinet approves the finalised version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2020 – 2025) for publication.

3.0 Background

3.1 Under Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002, every local authority in England has the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and

formulate a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. In order to appropriately inform this strategy, a homelessness review must take place. Section 2(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 states that a homelessness review should consider:

- The current and likely future levels of homelessness within the local area;
- The activities which are carried out for preventing homelessness as well as securing accommodation or providing support for those who are, may become or have been homeless; and
- The resources allocated to these activities.

- 3.2 Pursuant to section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council must exercise its power to carry out and publish a homelessness strategy so as to ensure that a new homelessness strategy for their area is published within the period of five years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.
- 3.3 In August 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) published the Cross-Government Rough Sleeping Strategy, which committed to ensuring that all local authorities have an up to date homelessness strategy, which is available online by winter 2019. They also asked that strategies be rebadged as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies.
- 3.4 In February 2019, a review of homelessness in Brent was undertaken, in order to evaluate current services, identify need and set a strategic vision. The team worked with local delivery partners, through the Brent Homelessness Forum, to conduct a gap analysis, take a snapshot of homelessness services available across the borough and identify any gaps in services. The review also included some qualitative research on the services available to those experiencing rough sleeping across the borough. Interviews and two focus groups were carried out with both service-users and support staff from Crisis. The findings from this review informed the development of five core strategy commitments and the basis of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 3.5 The draft strategy was presented to CMT on 19 September, and Cabinet Members on 26 September and the decision of the Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, in consultation with the Leader, was to approve and commence the consultation process from 30 September – 25 November.
- 3.6 Throughout this period, a number of approaches to consultation were undertaken, including; the use of Brent's online consultation portal, staff drop-in sessions and two strategy focused meetings with the Homelessness Forum. Specific engagement was focused on the Homelessness Forum as it is made up of key homelessness sector partner organisations and individuals who regularly work closely with service-users in Brent, giving them an unrivalled understanding and knowledge of the key challenges faced, as well as oversight of gaps in current services.

3.7 From review of the feedback received during this consultation period, it is apparent that the drafted strategy has been well received, resulting in only minor changes being made to the final version.

4.0 Detail

4.1 The five core commitments set out in the strategy are as follows;

4.1.1 We seek to fully understand the challenge of homelessness in Brent and how it is experienced by individuals, so we can develop informed, targeted solutions and continually improve the quality of the services we deliver.

4.1.2 Our services are prevention focused and we ensure the right advice and support is available to those who need it.

4.1.3 We work to increase the supply of and access to stable and affordable homes across the borough.

4.1.4 We minimise the use of temporary accommodation, but where this is unavoidable, work to improve the quality of accommodation offered and keep the stay as stable and as short as possible.

4.1.5 We seek to personalise our services to individuals' needs, and work collaboratively with our partners to ensure those needs are met.

4.2 Feedback received during this consultation is summarised below and resulting amendments are highlighted within the updated strategy draft (Appendix 1). Please see Appendix 2 for details of the results from the consultation portal and Appendix 3 for detailed outputs of the Homelessness Forum consultation sessions.

4.3 All proposed strategy commitments received positive support as part of the consultation activities during the 8-week time period.

4.4 59% of those consulted with agreed that **Commitment 1** would effectively address the key issues raised as part of the homelessness review, and respondents highlighted the need to embed a culture of respect and empathy, driving forward a person-centred approach in our services as the priority action under this commitment. Although this commitment received a lower level of support than others as part of the customer portal feedback, it is important to note that it received strong support from the Homelessness Forum, where it was acknowledged that actions around good quality data and effective service-user engagement were the building blocks of delivering improvements to homelessness services.

4.5 62% of those consulted with agreed that **Commitment 2** would effectively address the key issues raised as part of the homelessness review, and respondents highlighted the need to enable earlier, more effective prevention through the use of predictive analytics as the priority action under this commitment. Although this commitment also received lower levels of support

than others as part of the customer portal feedback, it is important that Brent continues to develop its approach to prevention, focusing on early intervention in order to reduce the number of people reaching crisis point.

- 4.6 81% of those consulted with agreed that **Commitment 3** would effectively address the key issues raised as part of the homelessness review, and respondents highlighted the successful delivery of the housing service's own new build programme as the priority action under this commitment.
- 4.7 78% of those consulted with agreed that **Commitment 4** would effectively address the key issues raised as part of the homelessness review, and respondents highlighted that increasing the supply of council-developed temporary accommodation, avoiding the need for nightly paid accommodation as the priority action under this commitment.
- 4.8 78% of those consulted with agreed that **Commitment 5** would effectively address the key issues raised as part of the homelessness review, and respondents highlighted that providing additional training for staff to deliver tailored advice (e.g. family mediation, supporting LGBTQ individuals etc.) as the priority action under this commitment.
- 4.9 All feedback received during this consultation has been considered when making amendments to the drafted Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2020 – 2025). Please see highlighted sections of Appendix 1 for these changes.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Financial modelling of the projected reduction in the use of temporary accommodation indicates that delivering a revised Homeless Strategy is likely to lead to significant financial savings and cost avoidance. Where the Council obtains greater capacity to meet housing demand in house, this lowers demand for accommodation from external providers resulting in lower costs.
- 5.2 Further improvements will also be obtained through working collaboratively with other London boroughs on the Capital Letters project. This is expected to lead to more properties becoming available for those in Temporary Accommodation, leading to a reduction in the time families spend waiting for a permanent home.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The relevant legislation relating to homelessness reviews and strategies are set out in sections 1 to 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 ("the 2002 Act"). Further details as to what should be included in a homelessness strategy are set out in section 3 of the 2002 Act. Details as to what a homelessness review should cover are set out in section 2 of the 2002 Act and in section 2(3) of the 2002 Act, it states that the results of the Council's homelessness review must be available for public inspection after its completion.
- 6.2 Under section 1 of the 2002 Act, local housing authorities may from time to time carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a

homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. They must ensure that a new homelessness strategy is published within five years of the date of the publishing of their last homelessness strategy.

- 6.3 As set out in section 3(7A) of the 2002 Act, in formulating or modifying a homelessness strategy, a local housing authority shall have regard to—
- (a) its current allocation scheme under section 166A of the Housing Act 1996;
 - (b) its current tenancy strategy under section 150 of the Localism Act 2011; and
 - (c) in the case of an authority that is a London borough council, the current London housing strategy that is prepared by the Mayor of London. The Council's allocations scheme was amended by the Cabinet in June 2019. The Council's tenancy strategy is currently being reviewed and a draft amended tenancy strategy is likely to go out to consultation in December 2019.
- 6.4 Section 3(8) of the 2002 Act states that before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy, the a local housing authority shall consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as it considers appropriate.

7.0 Equality Implications

- 7.1 As we have identified within the strategy, we are placing a renewed focus on improving the data we hold; which currently limits our ability to fully understand both the nature of the homelessness challenges in Brent, and the potential equality impact of these strategy commitments. We have plans in place to address this, both through specific data collection and cleansing projects, and through collecting evidence from pilot initiatives such as our complex needs panel, which will inform more robust EIAs to be completed.
- 7.2 Where an initiative has already started, such as Capital Letters, an EIA has already been carried out, but in the most part, initiatives detailed within the strategy will have a project specific EIA carried out as they are being developed. This in turn will then enable us to carry out a cumulative impact assessment of the strategy as a whole

8.0 Proposed Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 8.1 The 8 week consultation period is now complete which gave the opportunity for key stakeholders to engage and give feedback on the proposed strategy commitments.

Report sign off:

PHIL PORTER
Strategic Director of Community Wellbeing