

**Wards Affected:**

All Wards

**ITEM 11****CABINET****12 SEPTEMBER 2017****ROUGH SLEEPING REDUCTION STRATEGY 2017 - 2020**

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Long, Cabinet member for Adult Social Care & Housing

Report Sponsor: Michael Kelleher, Service Director Housing & Regeneration

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**Executive Summary:**

The Council Plan 2016-2020 highlighted tackling homelessness as a priority for the Council.

The primary focus of this administration is to ensure the long-term wellbeing of our citizens. Through this Strategy we intend to use our resources to ensure an evidence driven, professionally-led and co-ordinated partnership approach to preventing homelessness where possible, making sure support is available to those in need and ensuring people have a pathway to long-term stability.

In February 2017, the Council approved a new Homelessness Strategy which focussed on the Council's statutory responsibilities. Both the Council Plan and the Homelessness Strategy highlights the need to tackle wider homelessness issues such as rough sleeping and homelessness prevention.

This Strategy has been developed to support individuals where historically the Council has not had a statutory duty to provide accommodation.

Milton Keynes Council has been working with partners in the voluntary sector, to co-ordinate appropriate support services, ensure they were accessible when needed and to assess gaps in existing provision.

This Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy 2017-2020 aims to pull various work streams and revised statutory responsibilities from April 2018 together to progress current partnership working and deliver a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to significantly reduce the number of rough sleepers in Milton Keynes by 2020.

**Councillor Nigel Long**  
**Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Housing**

**1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That the draft Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy 2017-2020 be agreed for a 12 week consultation with stakeholders including members of the Homelessness Partnership.

1.2 Following the consultation the final Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

## 2. **Issues**

2.1 The Council has a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category. There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people, for example, there is no statutory duty to secure accommodation for homeless single people or couples, without children, who are not deemed to be vulnerable for some reason. These duties are set out in the 1996 Housing Act at Part VII.

2.2 Although these duties assist some client groups central government have expressed its concerns for single people and childless couples that do not receive the same offers of help. This is contributing to the problems this client group face when seeking accommodation and in turn this is having a direct impact on the number of those sleeping rough.

2.3 Central Government has recently introduced new legislation through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which will amend Part VII of the 1996 Act to ensure all those that approach the Council that are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, and are eligible, will be offered assistance under the new statutory duties to prevent homelessness.

2.4 The main aims of the Act which is likely to come into force from 1 April 2018 are to:

- Place a stronger duty on local authorities to help prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants regardless of priority need status, local connection or intentionality.
- Extend the definition of threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days to provide local authorities with more flexibility to tackle homelessness at a much earlier stage.
- Place a new relief duty on local authorities requiring them to take reasonable steps to help to secure accommodation for all eligible homeless households who have a local connection. This will include providing advisory services to all who need them and agreeing a plan to identify actions the applicant and the Council will take to secure accommodation.
- Place a new duty on public services to notify the local housing authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Place a duty on individuals to cooperate to ensure they take reasonable steps to resolve their own homelessness.

2.5 In September 2016, the Council approved a report that recommended the creation of a Homelessness Partnership. Its purpose was to lead and co-ordinate services for non-statutory homeless people including advice,

information and assistance. The Council's role was to facilitate, assist and support the Partnership in its objectives.

- 2.6 The Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy 2017-2020 provides a coordinated progression from the work of this Partnership. The Strategy outlines a clear direction of how collectively MK Council will work with partners to address recognised issues in one document, allowing for an improved coordination and accountability for delivery. The Strategy will be supported by a clear action plan based on the defined objectives within the document.
- 2.7 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires a shift in how we work with individuals who are rough sleeping. The Strategy outlines how we will meet these revised responsibilities recognising that whilst MK Council has a clear duty from April 2018 to work with all individuals at risk of homelessness, it is vital we work with partners to ensure positive outcomes in the reduction of rough sleepers.
- 2.8 This Strategy aims to co-ordinate partners and encourage them to invest their time and expertise in delivering a multi-agency approach. Our overarching ambition is to significantly reduce the number of rough sleepers in Milton Keynes by 2020, and to address the harm it brings to individuals, the community and the economy.

### 3. Options

- 3.1 The options to consider are as follows:

**Do nothing** – homelessness is a serious national and local problem. There is a wealth of evidence to show clear links between ill-health and homelessness (for example the Marmot Review in 2010, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health 2014). Additionally there is a link between the fear of crime and community safety concerns, for example, the impact of aggressive begging. Consequently this option is not recommended.

- 3.2 Accept the recommendations made in this report – the strategy aims to reduce rough sleeping in Milton Keynes. *This is the recommended option.*

### 4. Implications

- 4.1 Policy

- 4.2 The Council Plan 2016-20 identified tackling homelessness as one of the key priorities, therefore this Strategy provides a key part of the delivery of the Council Plan 2016-2020.

- 4.3 The Council's primary aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, and to support households to find alternative accommodation quickly.

- 4.4 The Homelessness Strategy approved by the Council in April 2017 aims to address those who are statutory homeless; this Strategy aims to address individuals who the Council has historically not had a duty to support and often considered as rough sleeping.

4.5 The Milton Keynes Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2018 has an aim to reduce homelessness, with a focus on family homelessness, by early identification of those at risk and developing local capacity to provide accommodation.

4.6 Resources and Risk

4.7 **Contribution from Finance needed.**

N	Capital	N	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

4.8 Carbon and Energy Management

No significant impact

4.9 Legal

4.10 The Council has a legal duty to secure accommodation for homeless households, mainly families (Housing Act 1996).

4.11 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to have a Strategy for preventing homelessness in their district.

4.12 The Care Act 2014 recognises the contribution of housing to the care and support system (as 'suitable housing' is one of the nine areas of wellbeing in the Act).

4.13 The Homelessness Reduction Act is likely to come into force in April 2018. Under the Act the Council will have further duties with regards to the advice and assistance that it offers all homeless households. The full duty will be discharged under the Act by the Council taking reasonable steps to secure suitable accommodation, of any tenure, where there is a reasonable prospect of that accommodation being available for 6 months or more.

4.14 Other Implications

4.15 An Equality Impact Assessment has been published and found that the approach will have a positive impact on individuals. However, it highlighted that support will need to be sustained especially for those with mild or severe mental health problems. Furthermore, positive outcomes could be at risk, due to the necessary limitations of such an ambitious strategy. These risks will require continual assessment and include:

- possible denial of essential services to people without a local connection
- uncertainty regarding the legitimacy and/or severity of risk to rough sleepers amongst partners
- rough sleepers' issues being highly complex and difficult to assess
- weak or non-existent ongoing support or/and networks

4.16 There a number of crime and community safety issues, key implications are outlined below:

- A) Individuals who rough sleep are more vulnerable to be victims of crime and have increased risk of exploitation and safeguarding concerns.
- B) Public safety is paramount and it is recognised that fear of being a victim of crime increases where individuals rough sleep, this is mainly due to both the complex needs of some individuals and a perceived increase in anti-social behaviour issues such as aggressive begging.

Y	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	Y	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers: None

Annex: Draft Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy 2017-2020