

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 17 June 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Adult Social Care

SUBJECT: Rough Sleeper Strategy for Halton and Bond Guarantee Scheme Policy

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the final draft of the Rough Sleeper Strategy for Halton and the local Bond Guarantee Scheme Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) The contents of the report and appendices be noted; and**
- ii) Executive Board approve the publication of both documents**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Both documents fall under the remit of Housing Solutions Team and have been developed in response to government guidelines and policy, taking into account the impact of COVID and duties of the local authority. They form part of a suite of policy and strategy in place to support the council's objectives in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.

3.2 Rough Sleeper Strategy

3.2.1 The Rough Sleeper Strategy for Halton covers the period 2021-2026, It is a requirement of the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government that each local authority area has a strategy and action plan in place. A draft of this strategy was submitted as part of a Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government peer review exercise and no further action in relation to the development of the Halton strategy development was noted.

3.2.2 The strategy identifies the following as priority areas:

Prevention

- ✓ People are provided with early, targeted advice and intervention to prevent the loss of their accommodation

Intervention

- ✓ Effective action is taken in a timely manner to relieve rough sleeping/ street homelessness where it has not been preventable. Working with partners to ensure support is aimed at ending, not reinforcing, rough sleeping

Recovery

- ✓ People are supported with the issues that can lead to rough sleeping, to prevent repeat rough sleeping/street homelessness
- ✓ We understand the causes of rough sleeping to prevent rough sleeping from become entrenched in communities
- ✓ Stakeholders work together to protect and increase local housing options

3.2.3 Responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the impact of the strategy will be with Principal Homelessness Manager. A quarterly update on progress against the delivery plan will be given to Adult Social care SMT with an annual report on progress against the strategy presented to the Homelessness Forum.

3.3 **Bond Guarantee Scheme**

3.3.1 The Policy provides the process and tools to improve the local Bond Guarantee scheme. The aim of the scheme is to assist vulnerable people who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, who cannot afford to pay cash deposits. The scheme will help clients to access appropriate, sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible.

3.3.2 The Halton Bond Guarantee Scheme offers:

- Practical support for tenants (e.g. advice on setting up tenancy/deposit)
- Bond Guarantees
- Property inspection
- Rent in advance
- Referral to support services
- Tenancy support service
- Financial Incentives to Landlords to cover rent arrears and damages

3.3.3 The scheme offers increased financial incentives to private sector Landlords with the aim of encouraging Landlords to work collaboratively with the Local Authority and assist with providing increased housing options for vulnerable clients.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Both the strategy and policy are reflective of the legislative requirements, best practice and national policy framework.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Rough Sleeper Strategy

5.1.1 The financial implications for delivery of the strategy are detailed in the action plan ie accessing government funding schemes specific to rough sleeping. The action plan will be reviewed annually and the Homelessness Forum will determine priorities and resources. All recommendations and commissioning decisions will be referred to Senior Management Team for approval and follow normal financial protocols.

5.2 Bond Guarantee Scheme

5.2.1 Over the period 2010 – 2020 the bond scheme activity was;

Bonds issued	Total value
782	£374,870.

Claims Processed	Total value
252 This is 32% of bonds issues and 30% of the total monetary value issued. 74% of bond claims were for the full value amount 23% were for less than that value amount, which led to saving of £10,886 for the Council Claim reasons are evenly split, with 37% Rent arrears, 40% Property condition 20% For both arrears and property condition.	£112,201

5.2.2 Additional funding has been identified within the Homelessness Grant, with a financial uplift of £50,000 identified for private landlords. The funding will be used to encourage engagement, assist with accommodation provision and cover any claims submitted.

5.2.3 The increase in financial incentives for Landlords would also increase the claim bond value, however, the Homelessness Grant has been split across a number of prevention initiatives including the bond guarantee scheme.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Being homeless, or at risk of becoming homelessness, has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Local Strategy, policy and associated initiatives are in place to work with those at risk of homelessness to reduce the risk of homelessness and improve life chances for children and young people.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Being homeless, or at risk of becoming homelessness and rough sleeping, can have a detrimental impact on the ability to secure or hold down employment or access learning and skills. The Rough Sleeper Strategy outlines local holistic initiatives and services in place to facilitate people in accessing employment, learning and skills alongside securing safe, appropriate and sustainable accommodation.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Homelessness, the risk of becoming homeless, or rough sleeping has a significant negative impact on both physical and mental health. The Rough Sleeper Strategy outlines the services that are in place to support this cohort, access appropriate health and social care services at the right time and help move them into appropriate emergency, temporary and settled accommodation.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to protect the most vulnerable households and those who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless. The Authority strives to support community stability and cohesion with the provision of suitable secure tenancies with social and private landlords, supported by the Bond Guarantee Scheme.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Rough Sleeper Strategy outlines the Government funding available to help develop accommodation options for homeless and rough sleepers, and local plans to utilise this to refurbish property specifically for use to tackle local rough sleeping.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Rough Sleeper Strategy

7.1.1 There are a number of challenges facing the local authority, not least managing the legacy impact of COVID and potential future restrictions. The strategy aims to address how Halton can work flexibly to respond to the changing demands on services through collaborative working with partners and accessing government funding to develop a range of initiatives and supports to meet need.

7.2 Bond Guarantee Scheme

7.2.2 The increased demand in homelessness presentations has placed additional pressure upon the Housing Solutions team. The Bond Scheme will provide additional housing options and financial incentives to assist staff in the delivery of homelessness services and reduce/prevent homelessness.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None identified at this time

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None.