

**Policy and Resources Committee
Monday 29 January 2024**

PART I

**Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 - Final Draft
(ADSPH)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with a review of the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-2022 and a final draft of the Council's proposed Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028, post public consultation.
- 1.2 The final draft of the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 can be found in Appendix One. The review of the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-2022 can be found in Appendix Two. The action plan linked to the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 can be found in Appendix Three.

2 Details

- 2.1 The Council is statutorily required to produce a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 2.2 The Council's previous Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, adopted in 2017, expired at the end of 2022. Therefore, following a review of this strategy, a new strategy for 2023-2028 has been produced.
- 2.3 The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 links to the Council's Corporate Framework 2023-2026, which sets out the Council's vision to make Three Rivers 'a great place to live, work and visit'.
- 2.4 The strategy supports this vision by ensuring that Three Rivers is a district where people have access to good quality housing and where our most vulnerable residents are supported.
- 2.5 The strategy outlines three key objectives for the Council in the area of Housing, over the period of the next five years, these are as follows -
 - 2.5.1 To prevent and relieve homelessness.
 - 2.5.2 Support our most vulnerable customers into permanent, suitable and sustainable accommodation.
 - 2.5.3 To improve the standard of housing across the district.
- 2.6 To ensure the delivery of these objectives, an action plan (Appendix Three) has been developed to run alongside the strategy.

- 2.7 Housing is a dynamic environment; therefore, this action plan will be a live document that will enable Officers to react quickly to any changing priorities or significant legislative reform.
- 2.8 The action plan will be reviewed annually, with reports of our progress against the plan provided to the relevant Committee.
- 2.9 Following agreement at Policy and Resources Committee on 13 November 2023, a public consultation on the proposed Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 was launched.
- 2.10 Although a 4-week public consultation on the proposed strategy was all that was required, extra time was allocated to the consultation to account for the festive period. Therefore, the consultation opened on 24 November 2023 and closed on 1 January 2024
- 2.11 The consultation was administered by the Council's Communications team using the 'haveyoursay' platform.
- 2.12 A Communications Strategy for the public consultation was developed that included the consultation being promoted on the Council's website and our various social media channels. A press release was drafted to release to the public when the consultation opened, and an additional budget was provided by Housing Services to boost the promotion of the strategy on our social media channels.
- 2.13 The consultation received 43 visits to the consultation page and 13 contributions.
- 2.14 The first part of the consultation focused on the proposed vision outlined within the draft strategy, to make Three Rivers a district where our residents feel supported, by ensuring that –
- 2.14.1 Three Rivers is a district where people have access to good quality housing.
- 2.14.2 Three Rivers is a district where the most vulnerable residents, including those who are victims of domestic abuse, are supported.
- 2.14.3 Three Rivers is a district where people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, can access permanent and suitable accommodation.
- 2.14.4 Three Rivers is a district where rough sleeping, or the risk of rough sleeping, is eliminated.
- 2.15 All 13 contributors to the consultation confirmed that they either 'strongly agreed' or 'tend to agree' with the four points above, therefore, we have not made any amendments to our vision post consultation.
- 2.16 The second part of the consultation focused on our three proposed objectives, as listed in 2.5. The results were as follows –
- 2.16.1 To prevent and relieve homelessness – 13 x Strongly Agree or Tend to Agree.
- 2.16.2 Support our most vulnerable customers into permanent, suitable, and sustainable accommodation. – 13 x Strongly Agree or Tend to Agree.
- 2.16.3 To improve the standard of housing across the district. - 13 x Strongly Agree or Tend to Agree.

- 2.16.4 Our proposed objectives received full support in our consultation, therefore, we have not made any amendments to these objectives post consultation.
- 2.17 The third part of the consultation focused on the actions contained in our proposed action plan.
- 2.18 The action plan is set out in three sections, each of which is attached to one of our proposed objectives.
- 2.18.1 All 13 contributors to the consultation confirmed that they either 'strongly agreed' or 'tend to agree' (or stated don't know or not applicable) with the following actions in the action plan –
- Ensure the flexible use of the Council's Homelessness Prevention Fund
 - All tenants of our registered providers threatened with eviction are prevented from homelessness wherever possible.
 - Ensure staff are aware of new trends which will predict our busier periods to enable them to prepare sufficiently.
 - Better understanding of rough sleeping in the district.
 - Promotion of homelessness prevention services.
 - All customers to be referred to any support services they require.
 - Correct and up to date information is always available to customers.
 - New Hope to provide the Council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPP) provision.
 - The Council's Housing Allocations Policy to remain up to date with legislative updates.
 - Revamp of the current Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (RDGS).
 - Increase the level of mediation work and home visits to households.
 - Efficient use of the Council's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) properties
 - Efficient use of the Council's Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) properties.
 - Vulnerable customers housed in the Council's temporary accommodation to be provided support.
 - A single homeless pathway for adults with complex needs, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to be established in Three Rivers.
 - Maximise funding opportunities.
 - RSI-6 funding granted by DLUHC to continue to provide a Housing Navigator post within Housing Services.
 - Support victims of domestic abuse.

- Oversee the integration of a Domestic Abuse Caseworker within the Housing Service.
 - Improve awareness of conditions in the private housing sector.
 - Improve standards in the private rented sector.
 - Clear guidance for discharging our homeless duties into the private rented sector.
 - Establish a protocol for dealing with complaints of housing disrepair, specifically those relating to damp and mould.
 - Adoption of a Housing Enforcement Policy.
 - Ensure we are fully prepared for when the Renters (Reform) Bill becomes an Act of Parliament.
 - Encourage our Registered Providers and developers to build net zero homes, promote sustainable living and make space for nature within any development in the district.
 - Ensure that Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords within the district are aware and fully informed of the funding opportunities available to them to make significant improvements to the standard of their properties.
- 2.19 Only six actions in the proposed action plan did not receive full support from our contributors, with one or two contributors disagreeing with the proposed actions as follows –
- 2.19.1 Implement a cost-of-living homelessness prevention project.
 - 2.19.2 Work in partnership with Planning Policy and Regulatory Services to ensure the ongoing delivery of affordable housing in the District.
 - 2.19.3 Review the target for housing and the affordable housing provision within this plan, following the adoption of the new Local Plan.
 - 2.19.4 Further allocation of Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfEO) funding awarded.
 - 2.19.5 Enable people to remain in their homes and ensure they are appropriate for their needs.
 - 2.19.6 Establish a Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) monitoring programme.
- 2.20 Although the above six actions in our action plan did not receive full support from our contributors, it is clear that the vast majority of our contributors strongly agreed, or tended to agree with these actions, therefore, we have not made any amendments to these actions.
- 2.21 There was a small number of comments made by the contributors on the strategy and these have been considered.
- 2.22 Following these comments and comments from Members at the Policy and Resources Committee on 13 November 2023 and the General Public Services and

Economic Development Committee on 16 January 2024, the following changes have been made in the final version of the strategy –

- 2.22.1 The simplification of some language and/or acronyms used.
- 2.22.2 An action has been added to the action plan under Objective 2. Action 2.10 will ensure the Council's Housing Solutions Manager will undertake ongoing professional development in the form of regular training on the Council's responsibilities as signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant. This will ensure that the Council is aware of any updates to our responsibilities to this cohort at an early stage and can fulfil these as required.
- 2.22.3 A further action has been added to the action plan under Objective 2. Action 2.11 will see the Council's Strategic Housing Manager undertake a review of the Service's policies and procedures to ensure that the Council is undertaking best practice with regard to our responsibilities as signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant. This review will be completed in 2024 and if any changes are required, they will be presented to this Committee.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The final draft of the strategy is being presented to the Committee for approval.
- 3.2 The adoption of a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will ensure that the Council remains compliant with our statutory obligations.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators. -
 - 4.2.1 HN01 – Maximum number of households living in temporary accommodation on the last day of the quarter.
 - 4.2.2 HN03 – Maximum number of households in temporary accommodation throughout the year.
 - 4.2.3 HN06 – Promote access to the private sector lettings in order to prevent and relieve homelessness.
 - 4.2.4 HN11 – Percentage of households prevented or relieved from homelessness.
- 4.3 The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:

The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 will ensure that the Council continue to attempt to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation and ensure we are taking action to consistently prevent or relieve the homelessness of our customers.

The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 details the importance of increasing the Council's access to the private rented stock available within the district.

Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The action plan that has been produced as part of the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 contains several actions to be implemented. Specific actions on this plan have been included to address the expensive cost of temporary accommodation.

6 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 6.1 An Equal Opportunities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as an Appendix to this report.

7 Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The Strategy aims to encourage developers and Registered Providers to increase the delivery of net zero homes, to promote sustainable living and make space for nature within any proposed development.
- 7.2 The Strategy will ensure that private sector landlords within the district are aware and fully informed of the funding opportunities available to them to make significant improvements to the standard of their homes.
- 7.3 An Environmental Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as an appendix to this report.

8 Public Health implications

- 8.1 The Strategy will contribute to the prevention of deterioration of health and wellbeing issues that can be attributed to poor housing condition by improving the overall standard of housing across the district.

9 Communications and Website Implications

- 9.1 Communications will be utilised to promote the adoption of the Policy at the appropriate time. Once adopted, the new strategy will be uploaded to the Council's website and a press release will be drafted.

10 Customer Service Centre, Community Safety, Staffing, Legal Implications

- 10.1 None specific.

11 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 11.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 11.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Housing Services service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
The Council fails to adopt a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	The Council would not be meeting its statutory obligation.	Committee to approve the final Strategy.	Tolerate	2
A significant increase in the use of non-Council owned temporary accommodation	An increase in the budget required for temporary accommodation costs.	Mitigating actions contained within the Strategy's action plan. Committee to approve the final Strategy	Treat	6

11.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ↓ Likelihood	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12

	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
Impact				
Low -----> Unacceptable				

Impact Score

- 4 (Catastrophic)
- 3 (Critical)
- 2 (Significant)
- 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

- 4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
- 3 (Likely (21-79%))
- 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
- 1 (Remote (≤5%))

11.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

12 Recommendation

12.1 **That:**

For Committee to approve the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028.

For Committee to agree to delegate the annual review of the action plan to be presented to the General Public Services and Economic Development Committee.

Report prepared by: Jason Hagland, Strategic Housing Manager,
jason.hagland@threeivers.gov.uk

Data Quality

Data sources: 'haveyoursay' Platform

Data checked by: N/A

Data rating:

1	Poor	N/A
2	Sufficient	X
3	High	N/A

Background Papers

None

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix One - The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028

Appendix Two - The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-2022 Review

Appendix Three - The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 Action Plan

Appendix Four – Equalities Opportunities Impact Assessment

Appendix Five – Environmental Impact Assessment