

Policy Development and Review Committee

Development of Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2023

Introduction

This report provides an overview to PDRC on the work currently underway to develop the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Swale for 2019-2023, it sets out some of the key challenges that Swale is facing and the recommended objectives and priorities for the Strategy.

Background

The Council have commissioned HQN consultancy to carry out an independent Homelessness Review and develop a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy ensuring that Swale embrace the requirements of the Housing Reduction Act (HRA). Their work has led to a detailed assessment of the housing situation in Swale and details the national issues that we also need to respond to.

Summary of national issues to respond to:

- Reduce homelessness and meet requirements of new legislation (HRA).
- Housing growth – to meet the needs of current and future population. Encourage diversity in the market including through encouraging SMEs and considering modern methods of construction that speed up delivery of housing. Greater diversity in the housing offer including through self-build, Starter Homes and other initiatives (subject to need) such as increased investment in the private rented sector.
- Improve conditions in the private rented sector.
- Ongoing welfare reforms as they impact on housing.
- Role of housing in prevention – helping vulnerable people to live independently and reducing costs on acute health and social care services.
- Reduce rough sleeping.

Issues effecting Swale

- Failure of the local market to meet the housing needs of local people;
- Disparity between house prices and incomes;
- The cost of the private rented sector compared to Local Housing Allowance rates;
- The availability of services to support people in sustaining their tenancies;
- The general lack of affordable housing;
- Properties not meeting the decent home standard,

Emerging Objectives and Priorities

The following Objectives have been identified:

1. Preventing and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.
2. Reducing numbers in temporary accommodation.
3. Delivering new housing in Swale.
4. Improving conditions in existing homes so residents can live longer and safer in their homes.

The following priorities have been identified:

1. Promote early intervention and a more customer focused homeless prevention service.
2. Further develop strategic partnerships to address homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough.
3. Ensure support is available for vulnerable households.
4. Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation; in particular by removing the use of Bed and Breakfast and reviewing the allocations Policy.
5. Plan for objectively assessed housing needs in Swale.
6. Work in partnership to deliver housing growth including affordable housing, supported housing, rural housing and regeneration initiatives.
7. Improve private sector housing conditions and management practices including helping older, disabled and vulnerable people to live in safe adapted homes through a range of initiatives.
8. Working with Landlords, Housing Associations and private owners to increase the number of households that meet the decent home standard, especially in Sheerness where the need is greatest.

Questions to consider

1. Do the findings reflect your experience of housing in Swale?
2. Are there any gaps, and if so what?
3. Do you support the Council's emerging Objectives and Priorities?

Next Steps

- The feedback from the Stakeholder event held (15/1) and feedback from PDRC will be utilised to shape the final Strategy before formal consultation and adoption of the Strategy in the summer.