

OPEN

## **Economy and Growth Committee**

**Date: 09 September 2025**

### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-30**

---

**Report of: Phil Cresswell – Executive Director Place**

**Report Reference No: EG/10/25-26**

**Ward(s) Affected: All**

**For Decision or Scrutiny: Decision**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 This report presents the draft 2026-2030 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Appendix one).
- 2 The Economy and Growth Committee are asked to consider the draft strategy and approve it for public consultation.
- 3 The draft strategy aligns with the commitments outlined in the Cheshire East Plan (2025-2029) including unlocking prosperity for all and improving health and wellbeing.

#### **Executive Summary**

- 4 The Homelessness Act 2002 mandates that councils conduct a review of homelessness within their jurisdiction and develop and publish a strategy based on the review's findings. Additionally, the strategy must detail how the Council plans to support the Government's goal to end rough sleeping.
- 5 The existing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2021-2025) requires updating to reflect the current status of homelessness and rough sleeping and to outline future actions to address these issues.
- 6 A comprehensive review of homelessness and rough sleeping was conducted in 2024-2025, providing the necessary evidence to formulate a new strategy. Approval is sought to proceed with public consultation on the draft document.

- 7 As a statutory document, it is crucial for the Council to demonstrate extensive consultation with internal services, external agencies, and residents in the development of the final strategy.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy and Growth Committee is recommended to agree:

1. That the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2030 go out to public consultation and
2. Note, that following consultation the final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2030 will be presented to the Committee for approval to adopt.

### Background

- 8 Homelessness or the threat of becoming homeless can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and families. It can have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing. Rough sleeping is the sharp edge of homelessness and it is the Government's intention in partnership with Councils to end rough sleeping.
- 9 On 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021, the Economy and Growth Committee approved the 2021-2025 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the associated action plan.
- 10 During the lifetime of the existing strategy the Housing Options Team have completed a number of interventions to prevent and relieve homelessness including:
- Publishing the Unlawful Eviction and Harassment Policy to ensure tenants are aware of their legal rights and landlords are aware too. It also outlined the action the Council can take against landlords or agents who do not follow the law.
  - Reviewed, consulted and amended the Cheshire East Allocations Policy, aligning it with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to ensure that those facing domestic abuse receive priority.
  - The Housing Options Team were awarded the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation (DAHA)

- Reviewed our Housing Related Support Contracts and undertook a recommissioning procurement to ensure that our provision meets current needs.
- Restructured our service to reflect the changing demands of the service, to prioritise frontline services and to deliver savings.
- Improved partnership working with mental health services, adult social care and drug and alcohol services through a multi-disciplinary team pilot to tackle long term and repeat rough sleeping.
- Commissioned and recruited support services to encourage non-UK nationals with new immigration status to access work and independent accommodation and to reduce reliance on Council Services.
- Developed Housing Led supported accommodation to meet the needs of people who are not suited to shared accommodation but need high level support.
- Provided a specialist support role to meet the needs of Domestic Abuse Survivors leading to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation and the delivery of a successful Whole Housing Approach pilot.

11 The evidence to support the development of a new strategy was established through a comprehensive review of the current position.

12 A robust review was undertaken in 2024-2025 and the key findings highlighted were:

- There has been a notable increase in individuals experiencing multiple, interconnected needs that hinder access to temporary accommodation and independent living. These overlapping issues often fall below the threshold for statutory homelessness assistance but present challenges when placed in mainstream supported accommodation.
- There is a subset of clients with multiple disadvantages who frequently re-engage with services, indicating a need for more tailored and sustained support.
- Specific attention is required for individuals affected by:
  - Private rent evictions
  - Refugee status
  - Domestic abuse

- Discharges from prison and hospital settings
  - There is a lack of public awareness of the Housing Options Service and how to access it.
  - Referral pathways are unclear, and many residents struggle to find suitable, affordable, and settled accommodation.
  - A shortage of appropriate 'move-on' accommodation is causing bottlenecks, leaving individuals in unsuitable housing for extended periods.
  - Access to the private rented sector remains limited due to rising rents, despite increases in Local Housing Allowance. Collaborative efforts with private landlords and partner agencies are essential to address this gap.
- 13 The Homelessness Strategy Steering group, which several external and internal services attend, including Adult and Children's Services, Mental Health, Drug Services, and Police and Probation Services have played a fundamental role in the development of the draft strategy and support the priorities which the strategy focuses on.
- 14 The priority and aim of the strategy is to ensure that: "Through strong partnerships and shared experience homelessness in Cheshire East will be rare, brief and not reoccurring."
- 15 The strategy themes are:
1. Increase the prevention of homelessness
  2. Prevent rough sleeping
  3. Improve access to accommodation
  4. Enhance partnerships to improve health and wellbeing outcomes
- 16 There are a number of actions which underpin the priorities which are outlined within the action plan which accompanies the strategy.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 17 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the priority areas of work, based on the evidence collated during the review of homelessness within the area and prior to the development of the strategy. It is good practice to consult with individuals and agencies, providing them with the opportunity to comment on priorities and actions which inform our strategic direction. By publicly consulting on the draft strategy, the Council negates the risk of implementing a strategic direction that does not properly reflect the range of needs and views within the Borough, ensuring it is representative

18 It is our intention to consult with a wide range of organisations on the draft strategy including but not exclusively:

- People with lived experience
- Internal Council Services
- Local Registered Housing Providers
- Health
- Supported Accommodation Providers
- The voluntary sector and charities, including “by and for” organisations
- Local residents
- Key Stakeholders and external agencies

19 We are proposing to commence consultation on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025 for a period of 12 weeks, ending on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2025.

20 The consultation will take place through a number of mechanisms including:

- Online questionnaires
- Briefing sessions
- Team meetings
- Strategic groups
- Direct approach to relevant partners

and will be promoted through social media channels and a press release.

21 The aim of the consultation is to seek views on the strategy including:

- Whether the priorities and themes of the strategy accurately reflect the local picture and provide the right amount of detail
- To determine if the evidence base included within the strategy reflects other organisations understanding
- If the proposed action plans for each priority will achieve the aims of the strategy
- Are there other issues relating to homelessness which should be prioritised
- Any further observations on the strategy as a whole
- The contribution other services can provide to support the delivery of the strategy to provide wrap around support to some of our most vulnerable

## Reasons for Recommendations

- 22 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on Council's to conduct a review of homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a strategy for the future based on the results of that review. The strategy is required to set out how services will be delivered to prevent and relieve homelessness
- 23 As a statutory document, it was important that the Council can demonstrate that they have consulted widely with internal services, external agencies and residents.
- 24 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2026-2030 is a significant contributor to achieving the priorities of the Corporate Plan including unlocking prosperity for all and improving health and welling.

## Other Options Considered

- 25 There are no alternatives to the recommendations as it is a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy in place, which sets out how the Council will prevent homelessness.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	The Council will not have a statutory strategy in place.	The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will require the Council to put in place a strategy and without one we could jeopardise the Homelessness Prevention Funding which is allocated to the Council to prevent homelessness

## **Implications and Comments**

### *Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance*

- 26 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that local authorities have a strategy in place to prevent and deal with homelessness. A new strategy should be published every five years.
- 27 In conducting a public consultation exercise, the Council should have regard to settled legal principles (known as the Gunning principles) to ensure that as the consultation is lawful and to mitigate challenge:
- 1) proposals are still at a formative stage - A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers.
  - 2) there is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration' -The information provided must relate to the matters being consulted on and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response.
  - 3) there is adequate time for consideration and response- There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation.
  - 4) 'conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses when reaching a final decision.
- 28 The proposal to go out to consult on a draft strategy, in a timeframe sufficient to allow consideration and in doing so to provide sufficient information and return to Committee with a revised strategy that takes into account the consultation responses will meet these principles.

### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 29 The development of a draft strategy has been undertaken taking into consideration the Medium Term Financial Position and the resources available to the Housing Options Service currently. A number of actions will require partnership working and do not place a financial pressure on the Council.
- 30 Some actions will be funded through the Homelessness Prevention Fund. These grants have been in place for a number of years but could be reduced or cut and if this happens the actions associated with this funding will be reviewed.
- 31 All major projects for example the review of temporary accommodation, any reviews to the common allocations policy that stem from work around the allocation of adapted homes or changing in priorities to address

balance or any additional housing pathways or significant commissions will be subject to detailed business cases and if not supported will not proceed.

### *Human Resources*

- 32 It is not anticipated that there will be any additional staff resources required to enact the actions in the strategy, and any resulting tasks and workgroups will be facilitated and completed within existing staff resources.

### *Risk Management*

- 33 Priorities are derived from a strong evidence base which have taken consideration of resident requirements, as well as other local authority departmental ambitions. We are however working in a very fast changing environment which may result in other Government requirements being placed on services, this would have the potential to impact on our ability to deliver the outlined actions. We would therefore have to review the deliverability of the actions and reprofile time frames.
- 34 A number of actions within the strategy will involve collaborating with external partners, stakeholders and other Council departments. They may also be impacted by future financial pressures and changes. We will try and mitigate this risk via regular communication and monitoring.
- 35 There is a risk that delivery of actions within the strategy may be delayed due to the availability of staff and resources, particularly as central government reviews the Allocation of Grant funding. These risks will be monitored and the action plan reviewed on a regular basis.

### *Impact on other Committees*

- 36 There are no direct implications for committees, however the strategic themes within the strategy will require full engagement from all relevant departments. There is a great deal of co-dependency between Housing Options and Homelessness and the outcomes of both Ofsted and CQC inspections.

### *Policy*

- 37 The Cheshire East Interim Housing Strategy approved in June 2025 outlines a number of priorities including “Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping” and identifies within the action plan the requirement to develop a new Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and action plan.



38 The draft strategy aligns with the commitments outlined in the Cheshire East Plan (2025-2029) as outlined below.

<b>Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all</b>	<b>Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing</b>	<b>Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council</b>
Collaborating with partners to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping, providing our residents with the ability to sustain a tenancy through money advice, will contribute towards commitment 1.2 “Child, family and adult poverty is reduced through a coordinated approach with partners”	Homelessness or the threat of becoming homeless can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and families. It can have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing through homelessness prevention we can improve the health and wellbeing of our residents contributing to the commitment 2.2 “Improved independence, quality of life, health and wellbeing through early intervention and prevention”	Consulting and shaping our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy with internal and external partners will contribute to commitment 3.4 “Service delivery and new ideas are shaped by effective communication, consultation and active engagement with all our communities”

### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 39 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and will be submitted for approval to the Council’s Equality and Diversity Officer.
- 40 The EIA will develop further during consultation and engagement with service users
- 41 There are always significant Equality implications for any Homelessness Strategy mainly because legislation prescribes that certain vulnerable groups are given priority to services. This will be reflected in the EIA, with clear justification and balances, main affected groups are those with physical and mental health needs, nationality and ethnicity because of ineligibility to access services and gender and sex because of the current approach to benefit allocation prescribing bedroom allowances based on the sex of children for example.

### *Other Implications*

- 42 A report by Public Health England – Health matters: rough sleeping February 2020 indicates that “those who are rough sleeping or homeless

experience some of the most severe health inequalities and report much poorer health than the general population – The draft strategy outlines how we will work to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and therefore improving the health and wellbeing of our residents.

- 43 Following an inquiry into children in temporary accommodation, a series of House of Commons committee reports were published outlining the detrimental impact of homelessness on children. The reports highlighted the impact on educational attainment, especially for children residing in temporary accommodation, demonstrating the importance of homelessness prevention. - The draft strategy outlines how we will work to prevent homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation for families with children.
- 44 Rural communities are supported throughout our Common Allocations Policy to protect local accommodation for residents in small communities. Outreach services and bespoke delivery models are deployed to ensure engagement opportunities are fair to those with mobility needs or without access to transport.
- 45 There are no climate change impacts of the strategy, although social and environmental impact is included as a priority in all our partnerships and commissions.

### *Consultation*

<b>Name of Consultee</b>	<b>Post held</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date returned</b>
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	20/08/25	26/08/25
Julie Gregory	Acting Monitoring Officer	20/08/25	26/08/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Julie Gregory	Acting Head of Legal Services	08/07/25	11/07/25
Wendy Broadhurst	Lead Finance Partner (Place)		

*Other Consultees:*

*Executive  
Directors/Directors*

Phil Cresswell	Executive Director – Place	26/08/25	26/08/25
Peter Skates	Director of Growth and Enterprise		

**Access to Information**

Contact Officer:	Karen Carsberg <a href="mailto:Karen.carsberg@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Karen.carsberg@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a> Nic Abbott <a href="mailto:Nic.abbott@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Nic.abbott@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	Appendix one – draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 26-2030
Background Papers:	