

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Housing Services Cabinet Committee

Date: 5 September 2023

Reporting officer: Vicky May, Head of Housing Solutions
Florentina Bela, Rough Sleeping Partnership Manager

Subject: Introduction of a new Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023

Purpose and summary of report:

To provide Housing Services Cabinet Committee with an overview of the Councils Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2025, to help achieve the Government’s target of ending rough sleeping.

Recommendations:

1. For Members to discuss and provide feedback on the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2025 prior to being ratified by the Cabinet Member for Housing Services.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	
Finance and Value for Money	The Rough Sleeping Service is funded using Rough Sleeping Initiative money. Gravesham submitted a bid for a 3-year funded rough sleeping service for 2022-2025 and obtained £999,631 for this 3 year period.
Corporate Plan	In line with the objectives of the Corporate Plan 2019-23 strategic objective #1 People, the RSI team provide assistance to rough sleepers to get into accommodation and come off the streets. Fulfilling our objective for Gravesham borough to be an area ‘where residents can call a safe, clean and attractive borough their home’ It also safeguarding residents by providing support to vulnerable adults with mental health and drug and alcohol misuse. This will also fit into #2 Place ‘Improve residents wellbeing’
Climate Change	No climate change implications.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government's National Strategy for Rough Sleeping is committed to ending rough sleeping for good by 2027. The experience of the pandemic has redoubled the government's determination to ensure that housing, public health, social care and healthcare and the voluntary and community sector work more closely together in the future than ever before.
- 1.2 Throughout the pandemic, the government worked with Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and National Health Service England (NHSE) to ensure that people sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation have their health needs met. It is vital that local authorities build on this unprecedented collaboration and make sure that the health and well-being of people supported through the RSI is central to our priorities.
- 1.3 Following a successful bid, the Department of Levelling-up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) awarded Gravesham with funding to spend between April 2022- March 2025 to support rough sleepers, help them into accommodation and provide wrap around support.
- 1.4 The Rough Sleeping Initiative funding received by DLUHC has enabled the service to develop a number of initiatives to combat rough sleeping in the borough which is led by the Rough Sleeping Partnership Manager. There is also a Resettlement and Sustainment Officer, 3 Outreach Support Workers, Outreach Harm Reduction Worker, Mental Health Practitioner, and funding to assist clients with move on accommodation, wrap around support and a welfare budget.
- 1.5 The interventions in place reflect Gravesham's Ending Rough Sleeping Plan submitted to government (Appendix A) and demonstrates prevention and early intervention, street-based response and pathways from the streets into accommodation with support.

2. Current Position – Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 2.1 Currently Gravesham Council has a Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy which was adopted in 2019. However, this does not reflect current priorities or practice. Although it is not a statutory duty to have a rough sleeping strategy, it is in the public's interest to be made aware of how the funding received will help rough sleepers in Gravesham.
- 2.2 Residents of Gravesham are not always aware of the support available to rough sleepers in the area. Having a new bespoke Rough Sleeping Strategy in place allows the public to be kept well informed and direct them to the relevant supporting departments. The rough sleeping team received a total of 295 StreetLink reports from April 2022- March 2023. In July 2023 there were 11 verified rough sleepers on the streets of Gravesham Borough.

3. Benefits of publishing the Rough Sleeping Initiative Strategy

- 3.1 Publishing the rough sleeping strategy on the Council's website is an important step towards addressing the issue of rough sleeping in the local area. There are several key reasons why this is important:
 - 3.1.1 Transparency: By publishing the rough sleeping strategy on the Council website, the public can access information about the council's approach to

tackling rough sleeping. This can help to build trust and accountability, as members of the public can see how the council is using resources to address the issue.

- 3.1.2 **Accessibility:** Making the Rough Sleeping Strategy available on the council website ensures that it is easily accessible to anyone who needs it, including individuals who are sleeping rough, service providers, and other stakeholders. This can help to ensure that everyone has access to the information they need to address the issue effectively.
- 3.1.3 **Awareness:** Publishing the rough sleeping strategy on the council website can also help to raise awareness of the issue of rough sleeping among the wider community. This can help to reduce stigma and promote greater understanding of the issue, which can in turn lead to more effective solutions.
- 3.1.4 **Collaboration:** A published Rough Sleeping Strategy can facilitate collaboration between the council and other stakeholders, including local businesses, community groups, and service providers. By making the strategy publicly available, it is easier for other stakeholders to understand the council's approach and find ways to contribute to addressing the issue.

4. Budget

- 4.1 Following a successful three-year bid, the RSI has been allocated funding of £999,631 over period 2022-2025
- 4.2 There are no new cost implications as a result of creating this new strategy.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Rough sleeping is a significant social issue in the UK, and Gravesham is no exception. Individuals who sleep rough are often vulnerable and face a range of complex issues, including mental health problems, addiction, and financial difficulties. Rough sleeping can also have a significant impact on local communities, leading to increased crime, health problems, and reduced social cohesion.
- 5.2 Adopting a bespoke Rough Sleeping Strategy is essential to addressing these issues and can provide a framework for tackling rough sleeping, including prevention, early intervention, and support for those already sleeping rough. It can also provide a coordinated approach across different departments and agencies, ensuring that resources are used effectively. It is an important step towards effectively addressing the issue of rough sleeping in the local area. It can help to promote transparency, accessibility, awareness, and collaboration, all of which are essential to developing effective solutions.

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Risk Assessment	The RSI strategy is aligned with the DLUHC guidance and the national governments commitment to ending rough sleeping for good by 2027.																					
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p>A <i>data protection impact assessment (DPIA)</i> should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk. N/A</p>																					
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes as this is likely to target the most vulnerable residents of Gravesham area.</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>																					
Crime and Disorder	<p>By reducing the number of rough sleeping and providing support to those with vulnerabilities we expect the crime rate and any ASB issue to be reduced.</p> <p>There has been a decrease in the total number of crimes committed in Gravesend since 2018, please see below;</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Historical Crime Rates for Gravesend</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Crime Rate per 1,000 people</th> <th>Total Crimes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>118</td> <td>6,937</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>112</td> <td>6,543</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>117</td> <td>6,876</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>128</td> <td>7,522</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>132</td> <td>7,743</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Historical Crime Rates for Gravesend			Year	Crime Rate per 1,000 people	Total Crimes	2022	118	6,937	2021	112	6,543	2020	117	6,876	2019	128	7,522	2018	132	7,743
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Digital and website implications	The current RSI strategy can currently be accessed via Gravesham’s website.																					
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	The provision of safe accommodation contributes towards meeting the needs to vulnerable adults.																					