

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS)** will be held at **BURGESS HALL, WESTWOOD ROAD, ST IVES PE27 6WU** on **THURSDAY, 8 JULY 2021** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) meeting held on 3rd June 2021.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01223 752549

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01223 752549

3. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (Pages 7 - 12)

A copy of the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions is attached. Members are invited to note the Plan and to comment as appropriate on any items contained therein.

Contact Officer: H Peacey
01480 388169

4. HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY (Pages 13 - 48)

The Panel is invited to consider and comment on the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review & Strategy 2021.

Contact Officer: J Collen
01480 388218

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FLOODING TASK AND FINISH STUDY (Pages 49 - 62)

The Panel is invited to comment on the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Flooding task and Finish Group and approve its submission to the Cabinet.

Contact Officer: O Morley
01480 388103

6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 63 - 70)

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme is to be presented to the Panel.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01223 752549

7. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

To appoint a non-voting co-opted substitute Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01223 752549

2 day of July 2021



Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non - Statutory Disclosable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings

The District Council permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening at meetings.

Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

Please contact Mrs Beccy Buddle, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Tel No. 01223 752549/e-mail Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

This page is intentionally left blank

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Marys Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 3 June 2021

PRESENT: Councillor T D Alban – Chairman.

Councillors S J Criswell, Miss R D'Souza, I D Gardener, D A Giles, Mrs M Kadewere, H V Masson, C Smith and Mrs S R Wilson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B S Banks, D M Tysoe and Mrs S Smith.

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Inspector Paul Rogerson

5 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 4th March 2021 and 19th May 2021 were approved as a correct record by the Panel.

6 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

7 NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st June 2021 to 30th September 2021.

8 New Neighbourhood Policing Model

By means of a presentation by Chief Inspector Rogerson (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel were appraised of the local policing profile for Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

The Panel were advised that Cambridgeshire Constabulary had split into command units allowing for a leaner and more efficient service. Neighbourhood Policing was discussed with Councillors signposted on best contacts to ensure effective and swift handling of enquiries.

Following a question from Councillors, Chief Inspector Rogerson advised that issues should be reported online wherever possible to allow for effective and targeted response. The Panel were also advised that data is mapped and analysed to highlight where preventative work and intervention is required to minimise and prevent future issues. Police use local knowledge as well as

working with other local authorities and agencies to identify areas and individuals where intervention would be beneficial.

Councillors were advised that Huntingdonshire District Council takes the lead when dealing with fly tipping crimes but that they work collaboratively with the police and Environment Agency for criminal investigations.

Councillors were advised that 89 new police officers have been recruited for Cambridgeshire and reassured that special constables as well as volunteers were utilised wherever possible. It was also noted that whilst this uplift is beneficial to the force, more administrative support is also required.

9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

Councillors were advised that the draft report from the Flooding Task and Finish Group had been shared with partner agencies and would be presented at a future meeting of the Panel. Councillors were advised to send any concerns or comments to the Chairman, Councillor Tysoe for consideration.

10 CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

As the Councillor previously appointed to be substitute Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee had submitted apologies for the meeting, it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting of the Panel.

Chairman

NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Prepared by: Councillor R Fuller, Executive Leader of the Council
Date of Publication: 16 June 2021
For Period: 1 July 2021 to 31 October 2021

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

Councillor Details		Councillor Contact Details
Councillor Mrs M L Beuttell	Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment	Care of Huntingdonshire District Council Pathfinder House St Mary's Street Huntingdon PE29 3TN Tel: 01480 388388 E-mail: Marge.Beuttell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Bywater	Executive Councillor for Community Resilience and Well-Being	9 Crabapple Close Sawtry Huntingdon PE28 5QG Tel: 07984 637553 E-mail: Simon.Bywater@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor R Fuller	Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development	8 Sarah Grace Court New Road St Ives Huntingdon PE27 5DS Tel: 01480 388311 E-mail: Ryan.Fuller@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Councillor J A Gray	Executive Councillor for Strategic Finance	Vine Cottage 2 Station Road Catworth Huntingdon PE28 OPE Tel: 01832 710799 E-mail: Jonathan.Gray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor D Keane	Executive Councillor for Corporate Services	1 Bells Villas Mill Street Houghton Cambridgeshire PE28 2BA Tel: 01480 467147 E-mail: David.Keane@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor J Neish	Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning	7 Willow Green Needingworth St Ives Cambridgeshire PE27 4SW Tel: 01480 466110 E-mail: Jon.Neish@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor K Prentice	Executive Councillor for Leisure and Regulatory Services	2 Ushers Court 89 Great North Road Eaton Socon St Neots PE19 8EL Tel: 01480 214838 E-mail: Keith.Prentice@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Page 8 of 178

Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

A notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01480 388169 or E-mail Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.

Agendas may be accessed electronically at the [District Council's website](#).

Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)

Page 9 of 178

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
 - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

- Notes:-
- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated ***
 - (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Community Chest Grant Aid Awards 2021/22	Grants Panel	21 Jul 2021 18 Aug 2021 15 Sep 2021 13 Oct 2021		Claudia Deeth, Community Resilience Manager Tel No: 01480 388233 or email: Claudia.Deeth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Bywater & J Neish	Customers & Partnerships
Homelessness Review and Strategy	Cabinet	15 Jul 2021		Jon Collen, Housing Needs and Resource Manager Tel No: 01480 388220 or email: Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		R Fuller	Customer & Partnerships

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Consultation	Cabinet	15 Jul 2021		Clara Kerr, Service Manager - Growth Tel No: 01480 388430 or email: Clara.Kerr@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J Neish	Performance & Growth
Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document***	Cabinet	16 Sep 2021		Clare Bond, Planning Policy Team Leader Tel No: 01480 388435 or email: Clare.Bond@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J Neish	Performance & Growth

Page 11 of 18

This page is intentionally left blank

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Homelessness & Rough Sleeping – Review & Strategy
Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny (Customers & Partnerships)
– 8 July 2021
Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader & Executive Councillor for
Housing and Economic Development
Report by: Housing Needs & Resources Manager
Ward(s) affected: All

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to consider and comment on the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review & Strategy 2021 included in the Cabinet report attached at Appendix A, prior to consideration and adoption by the Cabinet as a consultation document.

This page is intentionally left blank

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Homelessness & Rough Sleeping – Review & Strategy 2021

Meeting/Date: O&S (Customers & Partnerships) – 8 July 2021
Cabinet – 15 July 2021

Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader & Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development

Report by: Housing Needs & Resources Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The Huntingdonshire Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review & Strategy sets out how the Council intends to address homelessness issues within the district. It is a statutory requirement to complete a review of homelessness and produce a strategy and it is a sub-strategy to the Council's Housing Strategy. It is also a statutory requirement to consult widely before formally adopting a Strategy. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to consult on this Strategy before formal adoption takes place.

A draft version of this Strategy was previously approved by the Cabinet in February 2020 but the consultation process planned for April and May that year was postponed as we responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Strategy has been updated in light of the response to the pandemic, in particular to the Everyone In initiative aimed at protecting vulnerable rough sleepers during the public health crisis.

The Review & Strategy has four main purposes:

- To address the causes of homelessness in the area;
- To introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible;
- To ensure that the Council provides sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; and
- To ensure that appropriate support is available for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

The Strategy gives a national and local context to homelessness, explaining the main trends. It also explains the new legislative framework introduced in 2018 by the Homelessness Reduction Act, and the range of initiatives within the Council

as well as those being progressed with partners that aim to stem the flow of homelessness by earlier interventions through a range of prevention measures.

The Strategy, together with the Housing Strategy, explains the options that the Council will follow to deliver an adequate supply of housing providing a range of affordable tenures, to help meet local needs – another key component in the prevention of homelessness by helping households into new homes.

The Strategy identifies four main priorities that our work will focus on delivering. These are:

Priority 1: Preventing homelessness

Priority 2: Providing appropriate temporary accommodation and aiming to reduce its overall use by securing accommodation for people who are homeless.

Priority 3: Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are threatened with homelessness, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk homelessness occurring.

Priority 4: Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Cabinet approves the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review & Strategy 2021 as a consultation document; and
- b) That Cabinet give delegated authority for the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Executive Leader to adopt the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review & Strategy 2021 after reviewing consultation responses.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Homelessness Strategy is a major policy item for the Council. The Strategy sets out the key role that the Council plays in preventing homelessness, assisting households where homelessness cannot be prevented and how homelessness can be resolved, primarily by ensuring that there are sufficient options within the private or social rented sectors to provide new homes.
- 1.2 Cabinet previously approved a consultation draft of the Strategy in February 2020 but the consultation period did not go ahead as planned as we responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Strategy has been updated in light of the response to the pandemic, in particular to the Everyone In initiative aimed at protecting vulnerable rough sleepers during the public health crisis.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to consult widely on this Strategy prior to formal adoption.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY

- 2.1 There is a statutory requirement for all housing authorities to publish a Homelessness Strategy every 5 years. Although the last review and strategy was completed in 2017 and is therefore not due again until 2022, it was timely to go through this process given that we are three years into a transformed way of working, as introduced by the implementation of new legislation, and we are just emerging from a pandemic that is likely to bring additional homelessness challenges as a result of the economic hardships that it brings. It also allows us to reflect on more recent changes within the national policy context as well as reflecting on emerging local issues and pressures.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 Homelessness has a devastating effect on households and delivering on the priorities and objectives contained within the Strategy will help to prevent homelessness and mitigate against its causes. The potential risks are that prevention measures are not successful and that the Council delivers insufficient numbers of affordable housing solutions for households requiring new homes. The Housing Strategy focuses on the delivery of affordable housing, amongst other things, and ensuring that the objectives of that Strategy together with the new Homelessness Strategy are met, will help contribute to the health and wellbeing of our residents, especially those faced with the threat of homelessness..

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 A great deal of work has already begun as part of the joint working around earlier interventions that contribute to the prevention of homelessness. Much of this has been progressed through the Homelessness Trailblazer programme and the Housing Needs team reviewing protocols and pathways with partner organisations and we will build on many of the new ways of working preventatively that have been trialled.
- 5.2 This five-year strategy covers the period 2021-26 and from the review of homelessness in the area we have highlighted 4 broad priorities that will be the focus of our efforts over the life of this strategy. There are a range of objectives linked to each of these priorities and we will develop annual action plans around these objectives to help us, working with our partners and the wider community, achieve those objectives. By developing an annual action plan this will allow us to respond to the evidence base as this develops throughout the lifetime of the strategy as well as any emerging national and local policies.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The Homelessness Strategy links to specific actions within the Corporate Plan:
- Continue to develop and support early homelessness prevention initiatives in line with the new duties contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act, to help residents remain in their current homes or find alternative housing
 - Ensure that the principles of earlier interventions aimed at preventing homelessness are embedded within public sector organisations and other stakeholder partners

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Council is required to consult widely prior to adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. We will consult for a period of 8 weeks and responses will inform whether the priorities and objectives that we have identified are the correct ones.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Preparation of the Strategy involves staffing resource that is met within existing budgets. The annual Action Plans that will be developed will commit the Council to exploring and delivering on various activities that are likely to have resource implications, should the Council decide to pursue any of these options. These resource implications will be explored as part of the delivery against the Action Plan.
- 8.2 The cost of providing temporary accommodation for households that become homeless is a significant one. As homelessness has risen the Council has incurred increasing costs as more households have been accommodated in temporary housing. However the most significant resource implications are likely to be associated with the delivery of adequate numbers of affordable housing solutions through the Council's

Housing Strategy Action Plan. The cost of providing successful prevention measures, together with these affordable housing solutions will need to be considered as proposals are brought forward.

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 9.1 The Council is required to publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years to review homelessness in the area and produce a strategy to say how it will prevent homelessness and fulfil its wider duties under the homelessness legislation.

10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Homelessness & Rough Sleeping - Review & Strategy 2021

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities – MHCLG Feb 2018](#)

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title	Jon Collen, Housing Needs & Resources Manager
Tel No:	01480 388218
Email:	<u>Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</u>

This page is intentionally left blank

Consultation Draft

Huntingdonshire District Council

**HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH
SLEEPING - REVIEW & STRATEGY**

June 2021

	Contents	
1	<u>Introduction</u>	3
2	<u>Our Strategic Priorities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priority 1: Preventing homelessness - Priority 2: Providing appropriate temporary accommodation and aiming to reduce its overall use by securing accommodation for people who are homeless. - Priority 3: Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are threatened with homelessness, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk homelessness occurring. - Priority 4: Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs. 	
3	<u>National Policy Context</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homelessness Reduction Act - Rough Sleeping Strategy - Welfare Reform Policy - Troubled Families Programme 	
4	<u>Local context – policies, projects and transformative programmes.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Huntingdonshire District Council Housing Strategy 2020 -2025 - Housing Advice & Options preventative service - Homelessness Trailblazer Programme - Housing related support commissioning and the potential for wider homelessness system transformation - Think Communities Approach - Project Prevent - Huntingdon North Project 	
5	<u>Homelessness in Context - The National Picture</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Causes of homelessness - Impact on numbers of households placed into temporary accommodation - Types of households owed a homelessness duty - Rough Sleeping 	
6	<u>The Local Picture – a review of homelessness and rough sleeping in Huntingdonshire</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-Homelessness Reduction Act - Post-Homelessness Reduction Act - Temporary Accommodation - Rough Sleeping - The Cost of Homelessness 	
7	<u>The Covid-19 Pandemic And Homelessness</u>	

1. Introduction

The Council is required to review homelessness within the district and update its Homelessness Strategy every five years. The previous review and strategy took place in 2017 just prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into effect in April 2018. The Act implemented the most significant changes to the homelessness legislation in 40 years, by amending certain parts of Homelessness Act 2002, and this review and revised strategy is timely given that we are three years into a transformed way of working. It also allows us to reflect on more recent changes within the national policy context, the impact of the pandemic as well as reflecting on emerging local issues and pressures.

The legal framework that we must consider when preparing this strategy is contained within the Homelessness Act 2002, as amended. The Act requires all Councils to formulate a Homelessness Strategy and in preparing this they must carry out a review of homelessness in their area. The strategy must then:

- address the causes of homelessness in the area;
- introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible;
- provide sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; and
- ensure that appropriate support is available for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

The Council recognises the devastating effect that homelessness can have on households and that good quality housing providing a stable and secure home environment contributes to the health and wellbeing of our residents. It was one of key themes highlighted within the Council's 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement (AGS). This identified the link between housing affordability leading to homelessness and constraining growth.

Each theme within the AGS is wide ranging and will be delivered only if a strategic and collaborative approach is taken. The fact that homelessness and the associated area of affordable housing delivery is registered as a key risk places this on the highest possible footing in terms of the priorities that the Council must tackle.

The Council has included within its strategic priorities, contained within the Corporate Plan 2018-22, objectives and key actions that support the work that will flow from this strategy to help address homelessness:

Corporate Plan 2018-22:

Vision:	People – Support people to improve their health and well-being.	
Objective:	Meeting the housing & support needs of our population	Develop stronger and more resilient communities to enable people to help themselves
Key Action:	<p>Continue to develop and support early homelessness prevention initiatives in line with the new duties contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act, to help residents remain in their current homes or find alternative housing</p> <p>Ensure that the principles of earlier interventions aimed at preventing homelessness are embedded within public sector organisations and other stakeholder partners</p>	<p>Working with communities to build resilience.</p> <p>Supporting community development and enabling the voluntary and community sector to develop</p>

2. Our Strategic Priorities.

This five-year strategy covers the period 2021-26 and from the review of homelessness in the area we have highlighted 4 broad priorities that will be the focus of our efforts over the life of this strategy.

There are a range of objectives linked to each of these priorities and we will develop annual action plans around these objectives to help us, working with our partners and the wider community, achieve those objectives. By developing an annual action plan this will allow us to respond to the evidence base as this develops throughout the lifetime of the strategy as well as any emerging national and local policies.

Priority 1: Preventing homelessness.

Given the challenges we face around increasing homelessness it is critical that we continue to put homeless prevention at the heart of everything we do. In particular this principle will form the basis of how we respond to the economic hardships faced by our residents impacted by the pandemic. Being flexible and agile, adapting to local needs as we emerge through the recovery stages of the pandemic will be key in meeting future issues that may lead to homelessness if not tackled.

We will find new ways of both understanding and addressing the factors that can lead to homelessness - such as the ending of private sector tenancies, family/relationship breakdown and discharge from institutions. We will also

develop a greater understanding of the impact of wider social issues such as poverty and disadvantage, unemployment, poor health and wellbeing and lack of access to affordable, decent homes. We believe this will greatly increase the chances of positive outcomes for people at risk of becoming homeless.

Key Objectives

- Develop further preventative actions based on the evidence of what has previously been successful in preventing homelessness both at a local and national level.
- Understanding and tackling the economic impacts of the pandemic that may otherwise lead to homelessness.
- Embed the early intervention principles and systems that were seen to be successful through the Homelessness Trailblazer pilot.
- Develop greater understanding of the ‘triggers’ that are causing tenancies to end, especially in the private rented sector; and why relationships and/or families are breaking down – to allow new opportunities for prevention to be identified and implemented.
- Monitor and act on the impact of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act within the Council’s Housing Advice & Options service and with partner agencies.
- Review and analyse the information that we gather in relation to homelessness and we will adapt future services and interventions in response to what we learn.
- Continue to effectively communicate with people about how to avoid the risk of homelessness, ensuring that advice and appropriate support is readily available.

Priority 2: Providing appropriate temporary accommodation and aiming to reduce its overall use by securing accommodation for people who are homeless.

Key Objectives

- To link this strategy with the targets to increase affordable housing supply including an increase in the supply of move on accommodation for all supported housing pathways.
- Reduce the use of bed and breakfast and nightly paid temporary accommodation, instead providing appropriate temporary accommodation options in partnership with Registered Provider partners.
- Provide support to households placed in temporary accommodation to help them address issues that may be barriers to moving into settled housing.
- Develop a greater understanding of what may encourage private landlords to increase the supply of affordable rented accommodation and how we may assist with making this a realistic housing solution.

Priority 3: Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are threatened with homelessness, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk homelessness occurring.

The previous homelessness strategy emphasised partnership working to co-ordinate activity and focus combined energies on preventing homelessness and improving services for homeless people. With this new strategy we wish to develop this approach further. Over the life of this strategy, we will forge new relationships with our partners and ensure that our collective efforts to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping are effectively aligned.

Key Objectives

- Continue to establish appropriate pathways for customers between agencies which reinforce the early identification of factors that may be likely to lead to a risk of homelessness.
- Align efforts and resources with partners to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Build on and improve existing processes to ensure an effective 'duty to refer' from all relevant public sector bodies as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Work with Cambridgeshire County Council to embed the 'Think Communities' approach across the district.
- Ensure that the Council's workforce have the appropriate skills to apply 'Making every contact counts' principles when assisting customers
- Challenge and resolve barriers to effective service delivery as part of business as usual.

Priority 4: Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs.

Although the intelligence-based estimates show relatively low numbers of rough sleepers in the district our priority remains to prevent all forms of rough sleeping. We recognise that these figures represent just the 'tip of the iceberg', for example with many more people having to 'sofa surfing' and at risk of rough sleeping.

Key Objectives

- Support and evaluate the pilot Street Outreach service, in particular to better understand the causes of local rough sleeping as well as the pattern and locations of rough sleepers.
- Support rough sleepers who are ready for independent living to move into longer-term accommodation and to sustain their tenancy.
- Evaluate and adapt housing pathways, and develop new ones where they do not exist, to ensure they meet the needs of those living with complex needs as well as new/emergent client groups.

- Build on existing work with partner organisations to develop appropriate supported housing solutions, such as a 'Housing First' model, for homeless people with the highest level of need.

3. National Policy Context

Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homeless Reduction Act was introduced in April 2018, making some of the most significant change in terms of how local authorities should work towards preventing homeless in their area. The Act's main thrust is to refocus local authorities' efforts to prevent homeless and to do this in co-operation with other local partners. The Act has amended Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and its measures include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness irrespective of priority need.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants irrespective of priority need.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a section 21 notice of intention to seek possession from an assured shorthold tenancy.

Rough Sleeping Strategy

The Government launched its Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018. It is based around three core pillars:

- Prevention - providing timely support before someone becomes homeless;
- Intervention – helping people who are already in crisis get swift, targeted support to get them off the streets;
- Recovery - supporting people to find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives via a new rapid rehousing approach.

The principles of this strategy are very much in line with those introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Government's commitment is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027.

The Government has introduced several funding bid rounds since the launch of its strategy to help local authorities devise innovative solutions to help deliver on the three core pillars explained above.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy highlights that those who sleep rough are more likely to have experience of institutions such as prisons, the care system or the armed forces. Local authorities should be mindful of the impact of these types of institutional backgrounds that may lead to rough sleeping and put in place assistance and timely interventions. This should include putting in place effective pathways for those prior to leaving these types of institutions to minimise the chances of homelessness and rough sleeping.

Welfare reform policy

In 2015 the Government announced a package of welfare reforms which would have an impact on household incomes in general, with some having a direct impact on the ability of households to meet their housing costs. These included:

- Lowering the household benefit cap threshold from £26,000 for a family and £18,200 for a single person, to £23,000 in London (£15,410 for a single person) and £20,000 (£13,400 for a single person) elsewhere in the UK.
- A four-year benefits freeze.
- Limiting support through Child Tax Credits/Universal Credit
- Replacing Support for Mortgage Interest with Loans for Mortgage Interest
- Reducing social housing rent levels by 1% in each year for four years from 2016-17

The National Audit Office's report 'Homelessness' in 2017 examined the impact of certain welfare reforms. It found that a substantial amount of variation in levels of homelessness between different local authorities is associated both with the broad character of different areas and with the proportion of households in an area receiving housing benefit to help pay their rent. The risk of homelessness is greatest for households in areas of high economic activity on the margins of being able to pay market rents for their homes.

The impact of welfare reforms that change the balance between welfare benefits received and the affordability of local housing is therefore likely to have a wider impact on homelessness.

Troubled Families Programme

This programme has been running from 2015 to 2020, being run and delivered by all 150 upper tier Local Authorities and their partners. Although this programme is not specifically aimed as homeless prevention it aims to address many of the issues that are the main risk factors associated with homelessness, for example worklessness and problem debt, poor school attendance and attainment, mental and physical health problems, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and abuse and children who are deemed as in need of help.

The programme is driving service transformation in local authorities, changing structures and processes, strengthening partnership working and promoting 'whole-family' working. These are the same objectives that local housing

authorities are aiming to achieve in order to deliver effective homelessness prevention. Innovative local authorities are therefore building on the foundations of the Troubled Families Programme in order to help achieve transformation in the delivery of homelessness prevention services.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The new Act received Royal Assent in April 2021 and it is expected that most of the provisions will come into force during 2021/22. The Act will improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice. It will also strengthen the support from statutory agencies for victims of abuse.

In terms of homelessness the Act will amend the legislation to that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance. This may previously have been a barrier for some receiving assistance from local housing authorities at a time when they most needed it and so this amendment to the legislation is welcomed.

4. Local context – policies, projects and transformative programmes.

The Council has a clear commitment to address and resolve the housing difficulties faced by our communities, and in particular those that lead to homelessness. There are a number of local policies, projects and transformative programmes that will shape how public services as a whole respond to homelessness. These are summarised below:

The Grand Challenges

The Cambridgeshire Public Services Board (the Chief Executives' group representing the public sector agencies across the area) defined a vision for Cambridgeshire. This vision is split into four Grand Challenges that each public sector service should aim to contribute to and there are clear links as to how successful homelessness prevention may contribute to these challenges. The Grand Challenges are:

- Giving people a good start in life
- Ensuring that people have good work
- Creating a place where people want to live
- Ensuring that people are healthy throughout their lives

Huntingdonshire District Council Housing Strategy 2020 -2025

The Council updated its Housing Strategy in 2020 and states the ambitions of the Council to address the housing needs of the area. This highlights the link between the economic growth and the associated housing pressures that this can

create, in terms of providing a range of affordable tenures for a growing workforce.

This links back to the National Audit Office's report on homelessness referred to above, that the risk of homelessness is greatest for households in areas of high economic activity on the margins of being able to pay market rents for their homes. Similarly though, the risk of homelessness is also great in times of an economic downturn and this is why the economic effects of the pandemic are most likely to have an impact on homelessness in the immediate future. These issues are covered later in the strategy.

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping form one of the main priorities of the Housing Strategy and this document is a sub-strategy to that document that covers this in more detail.

Housing Advice & Options preventative services

The Council invested in a restructured and increased homelessness prevention service at the time of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Initially the immediate response was for Council to ensure it fulfilled the new duties contained within the Act but recognised that the change in the law was only the beginning. A significant cultural shift was needed to change ways of working; to accelerate the better use of data, use new methods and improve collaboration between different institutions and services early on.

Establishing these new ways of working has been the focus of this team and continues to be so. The following transformative programmes link directly to this different way of working and so must be considered in the whole to ensure that efforts and resources are aligned with partners to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

Homelessness Trailblazer Programme

The Council together with partners from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough successfully bid for funding through the Government's Trailblazer scheme in September 2016. This was in preparation for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, identifying distinct areas of work that could contribute to homelessness prevention through earlier interventions. The funding was available for 2 years, going live in the second half of 2017.

The Trailblazer team has led on reviewing pathways between partners that contribute to the homelessness prevention agenda and establishing new pathways where they previously did not exist. Through these pathways they received 1365 referrals from other agencies and achieved 482 successful homelessness preventions across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. Although the funding from Government lapsed the partnership committed to continue with the Trailblazer programme through to December 2020. This allowed the completion of certain priority areas of work as well as an evaluation

of the programme and how it links into the wider homelessness transformation agenda (see below).

Housing related support commissioning and the potential for wider homelessness system transformation

In counties with two tier local government, the County Council has historically received the funding for and commissioned housing related support services.

These services help people to live independently or move on to independent living, supporting a wide range of client groups such as: older people or frail elderly people with mental health problems; homeless people; women at risk of domestic violence; people with substance misuse problems; offenders; young people and teenage parents; people with physical or sensory disabilities; and people with learning disabilities.

A key part of these services is to support the individuals or families to be able to sustain their accommodation, or help set up their home for the first time, so that they are able to live independently successfully. They play an important part in both preventing homelessness across all the client groups listed above as well as helping households move through a homelessness crisis back into settled accommodation.

Cambridgeshire County Council is currently reviewing the services it commissions, specifically looking at those that support homeless households. To support this the County Council has consulted with the District and City Councils on the steps it intends to take to re-commission certain services as well as investigating whether there are opportunities at the same time to re-design services. This work is being supported by a commissioned piece of research to ensure that the Housing Related Support review and service redesign work is underpinned by the best possible understanding of the needs of our vulnerable homeless population.

The research reported in April 2020 informing the drafting of the County Council's Housing Related Support Strategy and the possible opportunities to redesign or reconfigure models of delivery, taking account of relevant recommendations and any identified good practice. The County Council has delayed its re-commissioning of those housing related services supporting adults until 2022 and the local housing authorities continue to be consulted and involved with this process as it is progressing.

Think Communities Approach

The Think Communities Approach is being developed with partners from across the public sector in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This approach focuses on developing an innovative set of principles and ways of working that the public sector across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will implement to ensure our citizens are at the heart of our decision making.

8 workstreams have been identified as part of this approach with many of these intrinsically linked to the delivery of 'joined up' services that will help facilitate homelessness prevention within our communities. Examples of how these principles will be linked to transforming homelessness prevention services include:

Strategic Coherence & System Facilitation – that will provide the system with the strategic leadership to ensure Think Communities is delivered, and to ensure the public sector works as a single system, with communities at the heart of place-based delivery.

Communications - developing new communication platforms that engage our communities and workforce, making it easier to find the right information, and that enable new behaviours that help residents and staff identify and access alternative services.

Workforce Reform - transforming and engaging our workforce to deliver Think Communities outcomes. This will be achieved by:

- Developing new skills and core behaviours
- 'Unlearning' traditional ways of working
- Listening to and understanding our communities
- Enabling our staff to work in a 'less permission, more innovation' environment
- Blurring organisational boundaries where appropriate, lawful and safe to do so.

As the Think Communities approach is developed and refined this will help inform any transformative opportunities for the delivery of homelessness prevention activities across the range of public sector organisations.

The following two projects commenced prior to the pandemic and although our response to Covid-19 has meant that these initiatives did not receive the same focus, the principles within them formed much of the basis for how the Council and its partners worked together during the response stages of the pandemic. They have strong synergies with the 'Think Communities' approach and we will ensure that the commonalities between these are brought together to avoid duplication and to maximise efficiency and scale in terms of transforming multi agency prevention working.

Project Pathways

Prior to the pandemic the Council initiated a project examining how we structure and deliver services to our most vulnerable customers, preventing a revolving door of presentations. This took into scope all frontline customer contact and the interplay between Citizens Advice, Job Centre Plus, CGL (substance misuse services) and Everyone Health (health & well-being services) who all offer services at the same location in Huntingdon.

We recognised that despite ever greater collaboration between our teams, the risk is that services remain silo based. This project aims to create a seamless service for customers. Evidence showed that to meet growing demand the most cost-effective response is to tackle the issues that generate the demand and so working in partnership with others to proactively predict and solve problems, building self-reliance and social capital on the way, we aim to deliver services to customers that better resolve the range of difficulties they face.

A particular strand of this project will include workforce development and reform, with the aim of achieving the same outcomes as highlighted under the Think Communities approach above.

Huntingdon North Initiative

The Oxmoor is within Huntingdon North ward making up the majority of its residential areas. It is characterised by social housing built between 1965 and 1975 as 'London Overspill' to accommodate the additional housing needs of the capital. Individuals with their families moved to the area with their employers and as a result enjoyed a life as one big community.

More recently things have changed and Huntingdon North Ward is now one of the most deprived wards in Cambridgeshire. This deprivation assessment takes account of factors such as income, employment, education, health, crime and access to housing.

The Council held two 'Developing Oxmoor' events in 2019 involving a wide range of partners and stakeholders to identify the local issues. The priorities identified at those events all linked to the Grand Challenges that have been set by the Cambridgeshire Public Service Board and operational boards were established under each of these headings to deliver against the identified priorities for the ward.

Although the pandemic has meant that the focus shifted to responding to Covid-19 the learning from this initiative, the priorities for the local community, together with the wider public sector services and networks that have been established will continue to be developed as we move through the recovery stage of responding to the pandemic.

Delivery of affordable housing

The Council's Local Plan to 2036 was adopted in May 2019 and it sets out the approach to securing sustainable development in the district to meet identified needs. This includes ensuring that housing development in Huntingdonshire contributes to the delivery of affordable housing. As is looked at in later sections of this strategy, affordable rented housing is one of the main ways in which homelessness can be prevented and relieved and so making sure that sufficient numbers of affordable homes in order to meet identified needs, is essential.

The Council's Lettings Policy

This policy determines who will be considered for the social rented housing that becomes available in the district and how these households should be prioritised. The policy ensures that those households that legislation states must be prioritised, including those that are owed certain homelessness duties, are offered sufficient priority. This helps with the prevention of homelessness as well as assisting those households placed in temporary accommodation to move into a settled home so as to minimise the impact of becoming homeless.

The Lettings Policy was amended to take account of the changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act and has been reviewed again in 2020/21 to ensure that it continues amongst other things to contribute to the prevention of homelessness and relieve homelessness where prevention is not possible. The policy will go live in the summer of 2021 as all Home-Link partner authorities take the revised policy through their local adoption processes.

Health & Well-Being Strategy

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have consulted on a joint Health and Well-Being Strategy that aims to address many of the important factors which affect residents' health and social, economic and environmental well-being. The upper tier local authorities recognise that the lower tier authorities, including Huntingdonshire, provide many services which are key to health and wellbeing, and so are engaged in the development of this strategy.

Many of the factors affecting health and well-being are recognised as contributory factors leading to homelessness or are experienced as a consequence of someone suffering homelessness. The Health & Well-Being Board's draft strategy includes an objective directly relating to the prevention of homelessness and improving pathways into housing for vulnerable people and the Council will be actively involved in the contributing to the workstreams that develop from this.

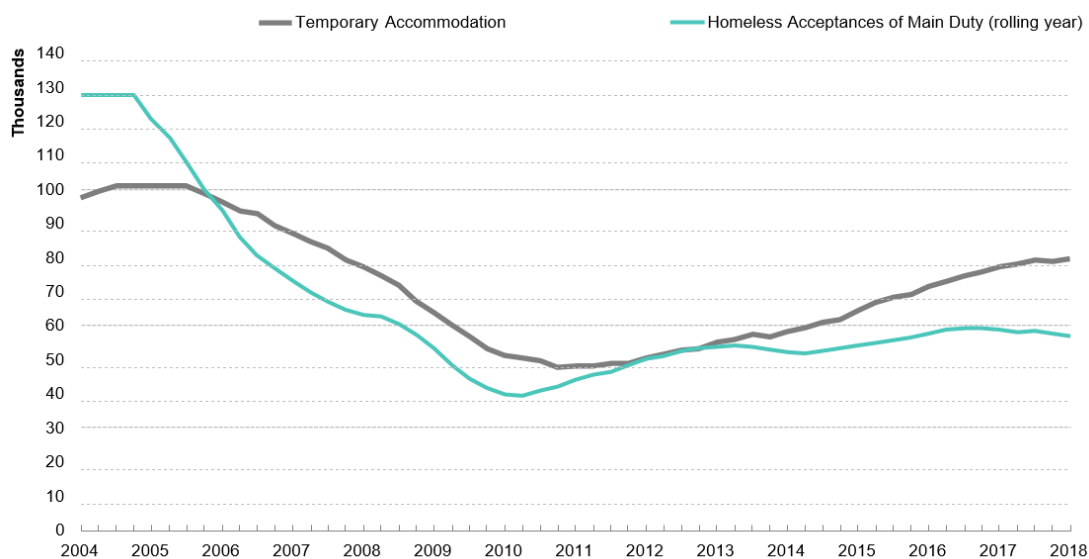
5. Homelessness in Context - The National Picture

The introduction of new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) from April 2018 has led to changes in how homelessness is recorded by local authorities and reported nationally. This has led to some issues with comparing trend data across the years. It is therefore best to consider what happened before the introduction of the HRA and what has changed post-April 2018.

Prior to April 2018 local authorities recorded the number of households that they owed a duty to secure accommodation because of their homelessness. Over the last 9 years prior to the introduction of the HRA the general trend had been an increase in homelessness, measured by the number of households that local authorities in England accepted as 'statutorily' homeless.

The financial year 2010/11 saw a 10% increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities over the previous year, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/4. Homelessness acceptances continued to rise over the next three years but fell by 3% between 2012/13 and 2013/14. The 2014/15 financial year recorded a further increase, with acceptances 36% higher than in 2009/10. Acceptances increased again in 2015/16 and 2016/17 but fell by 4% in 2017/18 compared to the previous year.

Households accepted by local authorities as owed a homelessness main duty, and the number of households in temporary accommodation, quarterly 2004 to 2018, England



Source: MHCLG Housing Statistical Release December 2018

Impact on numbers of households placed into temporary accommodation

As homelessness rates increased local authorities were required to find temporary accommodation and ultimately settled housing solutions for those households in need. The ability to find permanent housing solutions is challenging and influenced by the affordability of the housing options available in local housing markets. Many households approach local authorities for housing assistance when faced with homelessness because they are unable to find an affordable solution themselves. This often means that the local authority is not able to resolve their homelessness by helping to source a private rented tenancy, particularly for those households on lower incomes. In these circumstances social rented housing is likely to be the only realistic affordable solution to resolve a homelessness situation.

The availability of social, or affordable rented properties in appropriate numbers therefore affects the ability of local authorities to move households from temporary accommodation into settled homes. During a period where lower numbers of new affordable homes were been delivered, at a time of rising

demand, the impact was increasing numbers of households being accommodated in temporary accommodation awaiting moves into settled homes.

The chart above illustrates the link between the growth in the number of households in temporary accommodation from 2013, above the rate of homelessness growth, because of the inability of local authorities to provide sufficient number of affordable settled housing solutions to move these households through temporary accommodation.

Causes of homelessness

The most significant factor contributing to the increase in homelessness since 2010/11 has been the growth in the number of households being evicted from private sector tenancies through no fault of their own. This growth correlates to the financial crash of 2009 and the resulting austerity measures, in particular the introduction of the welfare reform programme and changes to the Housing Benefit system. The indication is that this has led to housing affordability becoming an increasingly significant issue, as more households facing the end of a private tenancy are unable to find an alternative that they are able to afford through their own income or with the assistance offered through the Housing Benefit system. This affordability issue has led to some households having only one option, to approach local housing authorities for help with housing.

This trend continued, leading to it becoming the single largest cause of homelessness in 2014. There was a downturn in the number of households accepted as homeless caused by loss of a private sector tenancy in 2017/18, although it still accounted for 1 in 4 of all homelessness acceptances by local authorities. By the end of 2017/18 evictions of households by family or friends becoming the highest cause of homelessness nationally, being slightly above evictions from private sector tenancies.

The National Picture – Post April 2018

Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 households are now initially assessed as being owed either a prevention or a relief duty. In general terms the prevention duty applies where someone is threatened with homelessness within 56 days. If their homelessness is not prevented and they become homeless they are then owed a relief duty for a further 56 days. If their homelessness is not relieved within this timescale and other conditions are met, then the person may be owed a main housing duty (similar to the old legislation prior to the introduction of the HRA).

In 2019-20, 288,470 households were owed the new prevention or relief duties, which is four times the number of households owed the 'main duty' in 2017-18 prior to implementation of the HRA. Whilst these types of duties are not directly comparable, there has clearly been a significant increase in the number of households receiving a statutory homelessness service through the change in legislation.

There has been no notable change in the number of households who are owed a prevention duty at first assessment from 2018-19 to 2019-20. However, there has been an 18,170 household or 14.9% increase in households owed the relief duty and 71.0% of this increase is attributed to single adult households, which indicates that the overall increase in those who are recorded as homeless and owed a relief duty, is driven by more single adults coming forward for and receiving help.

Households with children are more likely to be owed a prevention duty at initial assessment (63,650 households) than a relief duty (33,530 households), which suggests that more families are receiving help earlier. Single adult households are the largest group of households owed a prevention or relief duty, representing 60.1% of all households who had a duty accepted. Single adult households are more likely to access support when they are already homeless than when they are threatened with homelessness, 99,910 or 57.6% of single adults are initially accepted under the relief duty. Of the households that were owed a duty in 2019-20, those that were owed a prevention duty were more likely (58.5%) to have an accommodation secured outcome than households owed an initial relief duty (40.0%).

Accommodation secured under the prevention duty is more likely to be in self-contained private rented sector accommodation at 36.3%, or in a social rented sector registered provider tenancy at 21.7%. This reflects households with children being more likely to receive help under the prevention duty, and being more likely to be in private rented sector accommodation on approach. Accommodation secured at relief is more likely to be a social rented supported housing or hostel offer at 26.6%, which reflects the higher proportion of single adults being assisted under relief duties.

Rough Sleeping

Local authorities are required to carry out street counts or evidence-based estimates of the number of people sleeping rough in their local areas. These are single night snapshots of the number of people sleeping rough that allow authorities to understand the extent and impact of rough sleeping so that they are able to provide or commission appropriate services to assist rough sleepers off the streets.

The most recent published figures coincided with a national lockdown throughout November 2020 and the tier restrictions in October. This is likely to have impacted people's risk of rough sleeping and should be noted when comparing this year's annual snapshot figures with previous years. The ongoing 'Everyone In' scheme helped to protect thousands of vulnerable people during the pandemic, including those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. By November 2020, the scheme had supported around 33,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation at that time and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation since the pandemic began.

As a result the number of people estimated to be rough sleeping had fallen with 2,688 people estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2020.

This was down by 1,578 people or 37 % from last year and down 43 % from the peak in 2017. Nearly half (44 %) of all people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2020 were in London and the South East.

The national statistics break down instances of rough sleeping by region and certain regions have seen significant decreases with the East of England recording the second largest reduction of 42% from 2019 to 2020.

Although rough sleeping is not solely problem faced by men, of the 2,688 people found sleeping rough in the autumn 2020, 85% of these were male.

6. The Local Picture – a review of homelessness and rough sleeping in Huntingdonshire

Pre-Homelessness Reduction Act

The trend in homelessness in the district has been similar to national trends, showing an increase in the number of statutory acceptances by the Council up until the introduction of the HRA in April 2018. The number of households accepted as homelessness increased from 169 in 2010/11 to 254 in 2017/18, a 50% increase, although the number of homelessness acceptances plateaued and remained constant between 2015 and 2018.

The welfare reform programme and continued increases in the cost of privately renting in the district has meant that more households see social/affordable rented housing as their only realistic option. This has undoubtedly contributed to the number of households approaching the Council for assistance when faced with homelessness.

The lack of properties available within Local Housing Allowance rates in the private rented sector meant that opportunities to help households into this sector as a successful homelessness prevention reduced, resulting in fewer successful preventions from 2010 to 2014.

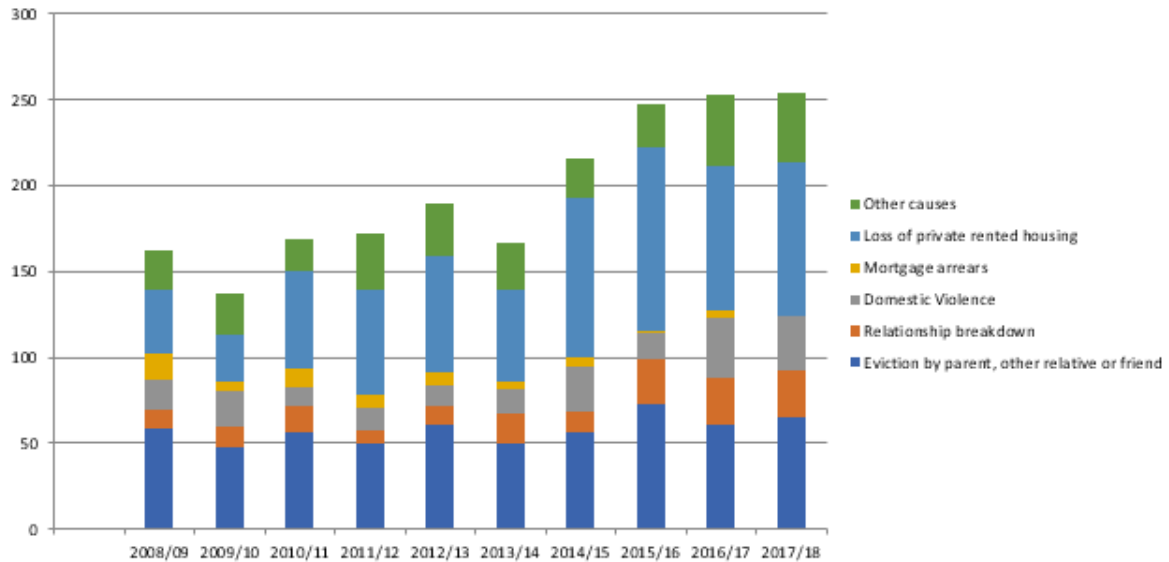
However, refocusing prevention efforts in areas where earlier interventions have been able to have an impact has led to an increase in overall preventions since 2014. This undoubtedly contributed to keeping statutory homelessness acceptances constant from 2015 to 2018 and it is likely that acceptances would have been at a higher level without these successes.

Local main causes of homelessness

The causes of homelessness within the district are consistent with the national picture: eviction by parents, other relatives and friends and relationship breakdown (violent and non-violent) continues to be significant causes but as at the national level the end of private sector tenancies has grown considerably and since 2010/11 has been the single largest cause of homelessness in the district.

Although national trends saw a downturn in the number of households becoming homeless from the private sector in 2017/18 this was not experienced locally (although the previous year had seen a slight downturn). It remained the largest cause of homelessness accounting for a third of all homelessness acceptances.

Households accepted as statutorily homeless (main duty) by reason for loss of last home - for Huntingdonshire between 2009/10 - 2017/18



Source: MHCLG Statutory Homelessness Live Tables

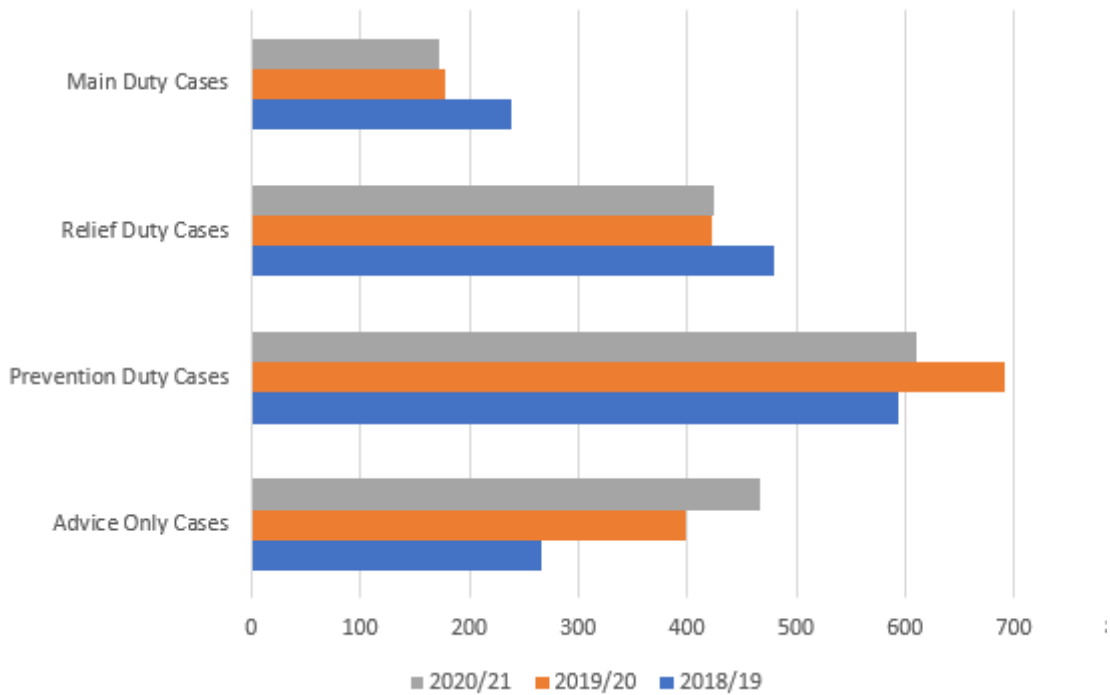
Post Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

2018/19 saw the first year of recording homelessness under the terms of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA). It is important to remember that some households that did not have their homelessness prevented at the initial stage will have been considered under later duties (leading to some double counting). The breakdown of the differing stages of assistance are shown in the chart below. The data from 2020/21 is include but this has yet to be verified by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. It is also important to remember that 2020/21 data will be affected by the pandemic which will be reviewed in a later chapter.

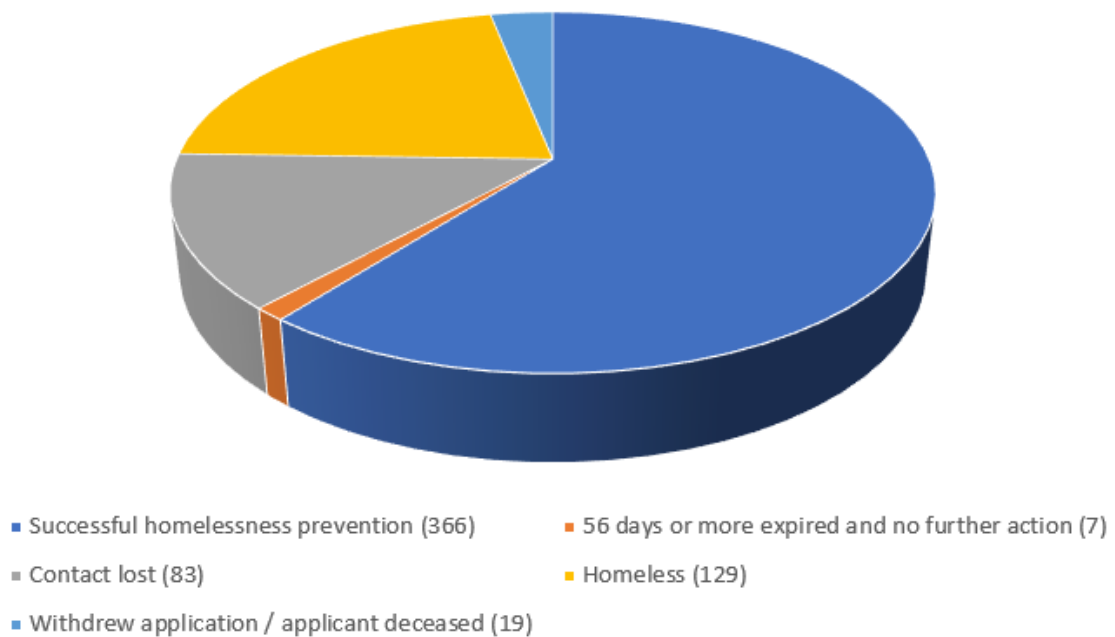
Considering 2018/19 to 2019/20 we can see that:

- There was a 50% increase in advice only cases (ones that did not trigger a prevention or relief duty) and a 17% increase in prevention duty cases as the focus on earlier interventions improved.
- There was a 12% reduction in relief duty cases and 26% reduction in cases reaching the main housing duty stage as issues were resolved at the earlier prevention stage.

Number of Homeless Applications Opened At the Various HRA Duty Stages, Huntingdonshire 2018/19 to 2020/21



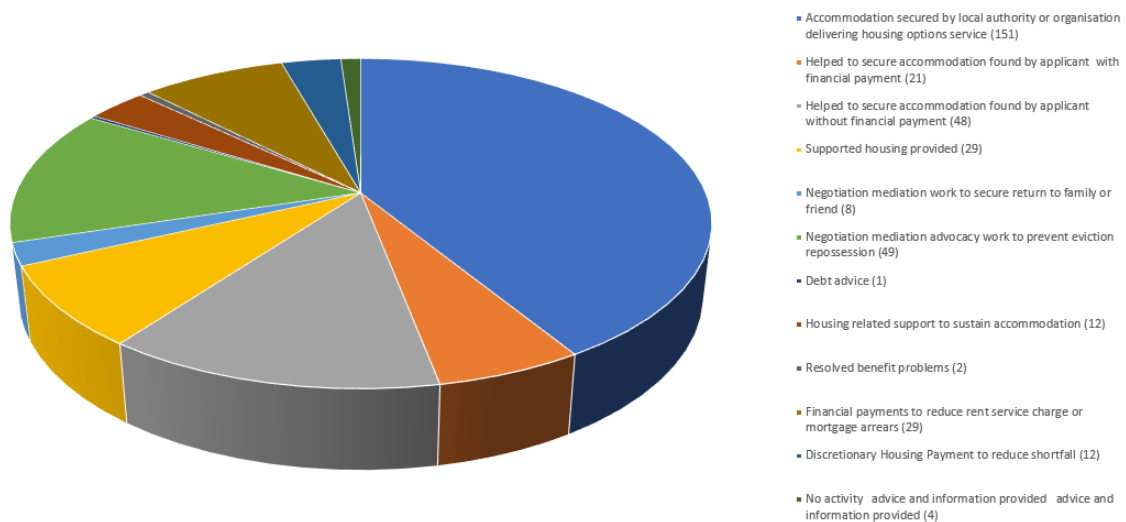
Outcomes At The Prevention Duty Stage, Huntingdonshire 2019/20



The chart above shows the outcomes that were achieved from preventatively working with households prior to their actual homelessness (the Prevention Duty stage). Almost two out of every three instances of homelessness at this stage resulted in a positive outcome, by either securing the household’s current home or helping to find alternative accommodation.

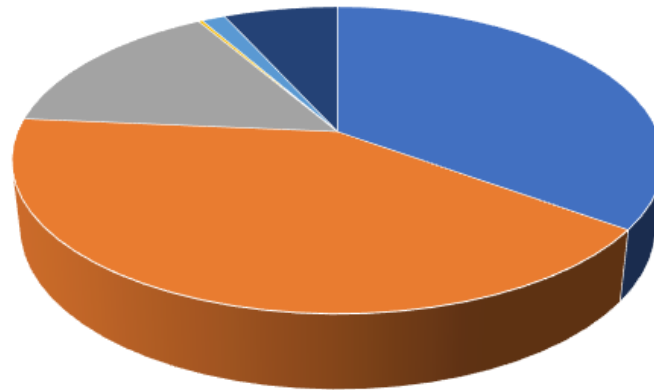
The 'prevention toolkit' offers a range of options that may be used to try and prevent a household losing their existing home or where this is not possible, find an alternative home before homelessness actually occurs. The options investigated at this stage will be informed by the particular cause of homelessness and what actions and solutions may help prevent this. In 2019/20, 1 in 4 successful outcomes were achieved by resolving financial issues and arrears that were threatening homelessness. These actions included negotiating with landlords; resolving benefit problems; helping access Discretionary Housing Payments or homeless prevention payments. Over 40% of cases were resolved by helping households into alternative accommodation through the Home-Link scheme, ensuring that they were appropriately prioritised when under a threat of homelessness (see chart below).

Actions to achieve successful homelessness preventions, Huntingdonshire 2019/20



For those households where prevention work was unsuccessful the Council would then go on to see what assistance could be offered to help relieve their homelessness (the Relief Duty stage) – see the following chart.

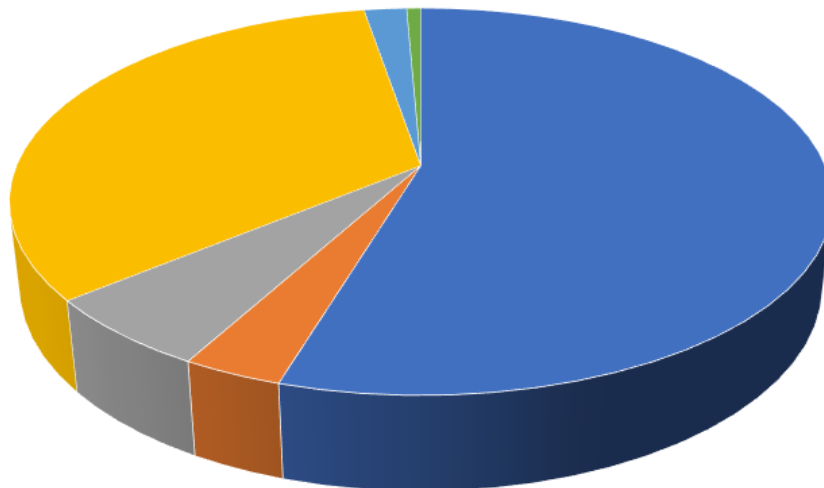
Outcomes At The Relief Duty Stage, Huntingdonshire 2019/20



- Successful homelessness relief (150)
- Contact lost (65)
- Local connection referral accepted by other LA (6)
- Withdrew application / applicant deceased (29)
- 56 days elapsed & still homeless (177)
- Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided (1)
- No longer eligible

In situations where households reached the crisis point of homelessness, triggering a relief duty, the Council managed to help to successfully resolve their homelessness in one-third of cases. This stage of assistance lasts for a period of 56 days after actual homelessness.

Actions to achieve successful homelessness relief, Huntingdonshire 2019/20

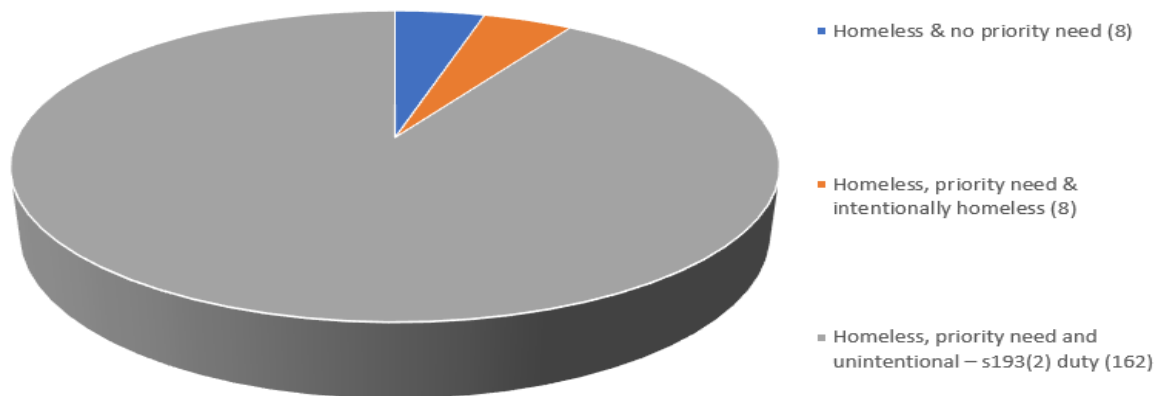


- Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service (82)
- Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant with financial payment (5)
- Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant without financial payment (9)
- Supported housing provided (50)
- Negotiation mediation work to secure return to family or friend (3)
- Other activity through which accommodation secured (1)

The chart above shows the actions that were successful in relieving homelessness, with 88% of successes being as a result of helping the household access social rented housing through Home-Link scheme or sourcing appropriate supported accommodation.

Where this is not successfully resolved the Council must consider whether it owes the household the main housing duty. If the Council does not owe a main housing duty it can continue to assist the household at the relief stage in order to try and achieve a positive outcome.

Outcomes At The Main Duty Stage, Huntingdonshire 2019/20



The Council accepted over 90% of households as ‘statutorily’ homeless at the main duty stage – see chart above. By reaching this stage it means that their homelessness was not successfully prevented by earlier interventions, the 56 day relief period did not give further opportunity to come up with solutions and so, subject to final assessment, the main homelessness duty is owed to those households. The solution for households that are accepted at the main duty stage is not limited to, but most likely to be, an offer of social rented housing through the Council’s housing register.

Temporary Accommodation

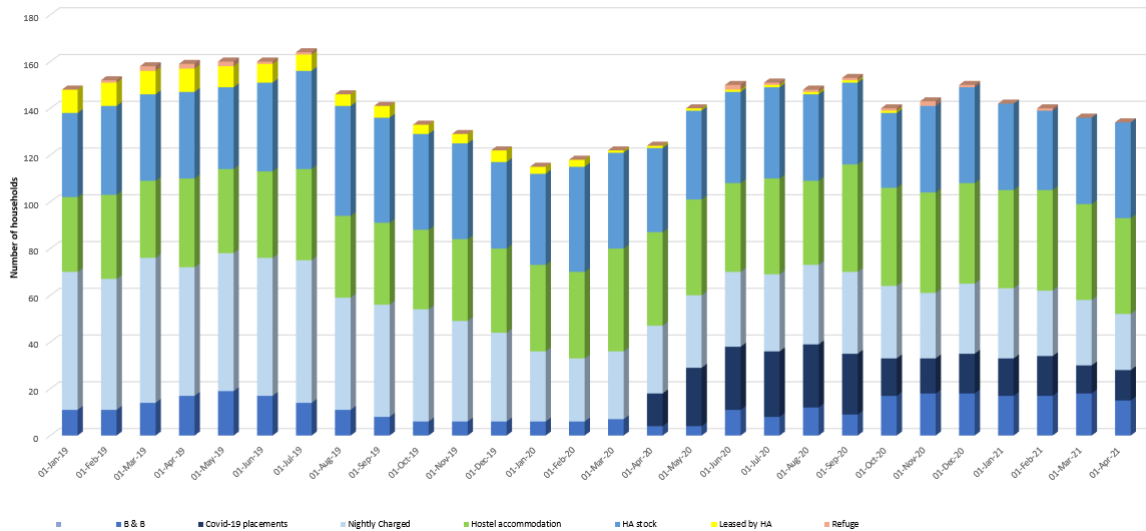
The HRA did not amend the Council’s duty to provide temporary accommodation to certain households that become homeless. Under the new legislative framework Councils must consider whether to provide temporary accommodation at the relief duty stage when homelessness actually occurs. As with the national picture, we have seen an increasing number of households placed in temporary accommodation, whilst relief activities are carried out.

There is a significant cost to the Council associated with the provision of temporary accommodation placing an increased emphasis on achieving positive outcomes at the prevention stage, so that households do not have the need to be placed into temporary accommodation. It is similarly important that there is a steady supply of suitable properties through the housing register as this allows households to quickly move into settled homes, resolving their homelessness and limiting their time in temporary accommodation.

The number of new build affordable rented homes completed in 2019/20 contributed to a reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation in the latter stages of 2019. We then saw an increase in the

overall number of households accommodated in the summer of 2020 as the pandemic took affect and the Council accommodated up to 30 rough sleepers under the Government’s Everyone In initiative. This resulted in a peak of 153 households in temporary accommodation in September 2020 but this number has reduced over the following months as these rough sleepers have been assisted into alternative housing – see chart below.

Number of households in temporary accommodation, Huntingdonshire January 2019 onwards (including rough sleepers accommodated under Everyone In)



The Council, in partnership with a partner housing association, has delivered an additional scheme providing a further 22 units of accommodation to be used as short term lets. The scheme opened in May 2021 and will further contribute to our reduced use of bed & breakfast and nightly paid accommodation.

Rough Sleeping

The Council is required to carry out either an annual count or an intelligence based estimate of the number of people sleeping rough in the district on an average night. As in previous years the Cambridgeshire local authorities agreed to complete this on the same night in November 2020 so as to avoid the potential for double counting of rough sleepers who may move between districts.

Given the large geographic area of the district we completed an intelligence based estimate collating information from a wide range of partners from the public sector, voluntary organisations and faith groups that work with or come into contact with rough sleepers. This information and the processes used were then independently verified.

From the intelligence gathered it is estimated that there were 8 people sleeping rough on the chosen night. These were people that had been made offers of emergency accommodation under the Everyone In initiative and refused the offer.

This figure was surprising given that at the same time the Council was already accommodating 15 rough sleepers that we had been working with over the preceding weeks. The main cause of homelessness for rough sleepers at that time was due to family or friends being unable or unwilling to continue to offer accommodation during the pandemic.

The Council was successful in securing funding from Government in 2019 through the Rough Sleeper Initiative which has allowed us to pilot a homeless street outreach service. This is a service covering the combined areas of Huntingdonshire, South & East Cambridgeshire Councils and was launched in December 2019. It provides rough sleepers with a level of support to help them address a wide range of issues, such as accessing health services, but with the ultimate aim of trying to assist rough sleepers off the streets. The services will be continued in 2021/22 following a successful further bid to the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative funding stream.

The Cost of Homelessness

Homelessness has a huge impact on the households affected in both social and economic terms. Homelessness also has a huge financial impact on local authorities particularly in relation to the provision of temporary accommodation, with many authorities having to make significant provision within their budgets to meet these costs.

Further investment in enhanced ways of working preventatively, achieving higher rates of success and limiting the number of households that require help with temporary accommodation, will help reduce this cost to the Council as well as minimising the devastating effect of homelessness on those households affected.

The range of measures in place to try to prevent and relieve homelessness, together with the links that we will continue to make as highlighted earlier in this strategy, show a commitment to combat homelessness wherever possible. The annual action plans associated with this strategy will also focus on the financial impact of homelessness and how this may be addressed.

7. The Covid-19 Pandemic And Homelessness.

The Government introduced the 'Everyone In' initiative at the end of March 2020 asking that local housing authorities ensure that during the pandemic rough sleepers or those who are at risk of rough sleeping are accommodated and supported. This initiative has continued throughout the various stages of lockdown with rough sleepers seen as one of the most vulnerable groups during the pandemic.

The Council has provided emergency accommodation for 108 individuals under Everyone In during the 12 months up until the end of March 2021. A number of people have also been offered emergency accommodation but not taken up the offer but have continued to be offered support to try and resolve their homelessness. A small number of rough sleepers have refused all offers of help

but the Council has attempted to maintain contact in the hope that they reach a point where they are ready to accept offers of help.

Of the rough sleepers accommodated under Everyone In:

- 41 have been helped to move on positively from emergency accommodation
- 13 chose to leave and make their own arrangements
- 18 were evicted because of anti-social behaviour, drug use or criminal activity
- 12 are still in emergency accommodation

The remainder have since been assessed as having a priority need under the homelessness legislation and accommodated, and in some cases have moved into settled accommodation.

The Council is committed to continue working with those rough sleepers currently accommodated under Everyone In to find appropriate housing solutions so that they do not have to return to the streets.

In terms of the possible wider impact of the pandemic on homelessness, the likely economic hardships that households may experience have been partially mitigated by the Government's initiatives over the last year. Specifically relating to measures that support households who may otherwise face problems such as rent or mortgage arrears, and possible eviction or repossession, these have included:

- The Job Retention Scheme – where employers were supported to continue to employ staff, claiming a proportion of their usual monthly wage costs. The scheme will be phased out between 1 July and 30 September 2021. The unknown at this stage is what impact the phasing out of the scheme may have on unemployment, a key risk factor leading to possible homelessness.
- Extended notice periods for certain types of private sector tenancies – notice periods in most cases were initially increased from 2 to 3 months in the early stages of the pandemic. They were extended further to 6 month notice periods and from June 2021 have now reduced to 4 month periods. By introducing extended notice periods this gives tenants the opportunity to address and resolve the reason that have led to the landlord giving notice or find alternative housing in advance of any possession proceedings.
- The suspension of housing possession claims – a bar on possession action being taken in the Courts between April and 20 September 2020.
- A range of initiatives to support tenants that may be faced with possession action:

- A pre-action protocol for possession claims – that landlords seeking possession must follow.
 - The Housing Possession Mediation service – available free of charge to landlords and tenants in advance of Court action.
 - The Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) – available as a measure to delay possession action to address wider debt issues in certain circumstances.
- A mortgage payment holiday option for landlords and owner occupiers.
 - Increases in the support through Local Housing Allowances – meaning that the payments to those eligible for Housing Benefit were closer to market rates with tenants therefore less likely to fall into significant arrears because of previous shortfalls in these amounts.

The Government introduced these measures to help households retain their homes, particularly those who are renting. The English Housing Survey's most recent Household Resilience Study (produced by MHCLG) highlights that in November – December 2020, 9% of private renters were currently in arrears, up from 3% in 2019-20. 1% were more than 2 months in arrears with the main reasons cited for such difficulties were being furloughed on reduced pay or working fewer hours/less over time.

On a positive note, the study found that mortgage arrears have returned to pre-pandemic levels, following a significant increase in June – July 2020.

The full economic impact of the pandemic and how this may lead to future homelessness is not yet fully apparent. The most recent economic downturn prior to 2020 was the financial crisis of 2009 and we mention earlier in this document the consequences that this had on increasing homelessness. The impact then was delayed until 2010 and we then saw year on year increases in homelessness through until 2013/14.

As mentioned above, the Government's steps to help mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic may assist with reducing the effect on homelessness but the success of these measures in the medium to longer term remains uncertain. It is likely that this latest downturn will lead to a growth in demand from our residents for housing and homelessness assistance and a key part of our ability to address these risks will be how we continue to develop targeted early and upstream interventions with those most at risk.

We will learn from the early interventions that we have made, for example the welfare calls we made to residents during the early stages of the pandemic, to try and identify circumstances that may lead to future homelessness. By taking earlier action we will aim to prevent future crises and homelessness developing.

As an example of this we have begun work with the main stock holding housing associations in the area to work together with tenants that may be most at risk of possession action because of increasing arrears. Early interventions and help for social and private sector tenants in these situations to prevent possession action

progressing will be one of our main priorities as we emerge out of lockdown and the Government mitigations measures begin to be withdrawn.

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Overview and Scrutiny Flooding Task and Finish Study

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partners) – 8th July 2021

Executive Portfolio: Councillor J Neish – Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning

Report by: Corporate Director (People) - Oliver Morley

Wards affected: All

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to comment on the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Flooding task and Finish Group and approve its submission to the Cabinet.

Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Overview and Scrutiny Flooding Task and Finish Study
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partners) – 8th July 2021 Cabinet – 15 July 2021
Executive Portfolio:	Councillor J Neish – Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning
Report by:	O Morley – Corporate Director (People)
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

Cambridgeshire and its neighbouring counties experienced widespread flooding in December 2020 and January 2021. Huntingdonshire was particularly affected. Subsequently, an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was established to conduct an evidence based investigation into the nature and extent of the flooding, the lessons that could be learnt and the steps that might be taken to ensure communities are adequately prepared going forward.

A focussed study methodology was devised. It identified primary sources of evidence, namely Cambridgeshire County Council, the Environment Agency and Anglian Water. Separate meetings were held with each of these organisations. The report summarises the evidence submitted, the discussions that took place and the actions agreed with partners that address the Terms of Reference.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

- a) **to publicise links to flooding advice through the District Council's own communication channels and forward the advice to all Town and Parish Councils;**
- b) **to support the establishment of local flood groups as a means to develop community resilience against future flooding and as an important additional source of information for forecasting flooding;**

- c) a study be undertaken by a group of technical experts to understand fully the causes of floods linked to climate change, to look at the issue of cumulative impacts and to make a series of recommendations to feed into the next SPD document review, ensuring the refreshed document responds to changing realities and technology;**
- d) to accept an offer by Cambridgeshire County Council to provide training for Planning Officers and Members on how to consider flood risk in relation to planning applications, and**
- e) to investigate with partners the development of a joint drainage and waste water management plan.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report contains the background, justification, process, conclusions and recommendations arising from a Task and Finish Group study into the flooding in Huntingdonshire in December 2020.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cambridgeshire and its neighbouring counties experienced widespread flooding in December 2020 and January 2021. Huntingdonshire was particularly affected. It was immediately decided to hold localised flooding conferences in the areas that were most affected to capture experiences and data. This decision was led by Councillor Jon Neish in his capacity as Executive Councillor with responsibility for emergency planning. Following the conferences, an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was established to conduct an evidence based investigation into the nature and extent of the flooding, the lessons that could be learnt and the steps that might be taken to ensure communities are adequately prepared going forward.
- 2.2 The Task and Finish Group (The Group) was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships). It was Chaired by Councillor Darren Tysoe and also comprised Councillors Sarah Conboy, Steve Corney, Ian Gardener and Richard West.
- 2.3 The rationale for the study was that the flooding throughout Huntingdonshire during December 2020 affected the lives of residents in multiple locations and involved significant multi-agency resources. This was not the first flooding event within Huntingdonshire, and it was important to establish its causes, the likelihood of future flooding and what action might be taken before and during to mitigate the risk and impact of future flooding.

3. METHODOLOGY

consider its Terms of Reference, approach, sources of evidence and outcomes to be achieved. The aims of the investigation were to:

Understand what happened:

❖ **Review the response:**

❖ **Consider future prevention/mitigation:**

- 3.2 Three primary sources of information were identified, and each was invited to a separate meeting to discuss the issues under consideration:

❖ Cambridgeshire County Council

Q Carrol

Joint Interim Assistant Director

H Ellis

Principal Sustainable Drainage Officer and
Flood Risk Contract Manager

S Grace Director Customer and Digital Services

E Price Local Highways Officer

❖ Environment Agency

P Hulme Flood and Coastal Risk Manager

P Burrows Flood and Coastal Risk Manager

❖ Anglian Water

J Glerum Regional Flood Risk Manager

S Love

A Shaw Regional Network Manager

3.3 The Group was supported by N McCurdy, Corporate Director (Place), and J Illingworth, Emergency Planning Adviser.

3.4 The Group wants to place on record its appreciation of the willingness of the three partner organisations to assist with the study. All have been represented at an appropriately high level and have provided very full and open responses to Members' questions. The partnership approach adopted by all should be recognised and will be beneficial if it is carried forward. The findings also have been informed by the contributions made by groups and representatives in the course of the local conferences. The joint progress that has been made against the aims is described in the following paragraphs.

4. UNDERSTANDING WHAT HAPPENED.

4.1 There were two separate but related flooding incidents over the festive period. Surface flooding largely before Christmas, and river flooding over Christmas and beyond. The Group heard that the period leading up to the flooding events of Christmas 2020, had already been very wet, with ground levels already approaching the point at which they could absorb no more rain.

4.2 Members were informed that there was significant rainfall on already saturated ground and the infrastructure was not able to cope. There was 188mm of rainfall in December 2020, which is 195% of what was expected. This was compounded by the fact that the three preceding months were wetter than expected. The soil moisture deficit in December was 3mm. Soil moisture refers to the amount of moisture held in a given amount of soil. It determines how much rain goes into rivers and streams or, in extreme cases, into flooding. A figure of 3mm indicates that the soil was virtually saturated. In other words, the soil already contained 97% of the water that it was able to absorb. There followed 55mm of rainfall over Christmas. The soil moisture deficit at the end of January 2021 was 1mm. This demonstrates there was a long lead in period where the catchment was

saturated over a long period of time. Soil moisture is one of the metrics employed by the Environment Agency to monitor water levels.

4.3 The County Council recorded 659 incidents of flooding across the County. (See paragraph 5.4).

4.4 Anglian Water provided analysis in terms of the water that went through its systems and of the flooding of its assets. The greatest impact was experienced on foul sewerage. To put the impact into context:

- The workload was five times greater than was usual for the period.
- 80,000 customer calls were received
- 30,000 jobs were raised
- Anglian Water agreed 28 Temporary Local Enforcement Positions with the Environment Agency, whereas there had previously only ever been six of these.

4.5 What was presented was a consistent view that the circumstances either side of Christmas 2020 were exceptional. The response and recovery provide important learning and action points.

4.6 One key clarification received during the review, was that no responsibility within the public agency network for the provision of sandbags exists. HDC has a supply of sandbags for use when there is a threat to life. The Fire and Rescue service decide when / where they should be deployed. Some were deployed on 23rd December.

5. THE RESPONSE

Recovery

5.1 The District Council initiated a series of local flooding conferences across areas directly affected by both surface water flooding, and the threat of river flooding. In addition to these, the County Council held conferences in the other affected areas of Buckden and Broughton. Information generated from them have been fed into the study and into the immediate and ongoing responses.

5.2 After the initial response, the Environment Agency entered a recovery phase. It inspected all assets which are designed to prevent or alleviate flooding issues, most of which served their purpose. In total 4,500 inspections took place. The Environment Agency are using drones to do the majority of inspections; however, the Environment Agency have completed 80% of inspections on foot. Members were informed that 30 failures of assets have been identified and that each will require remedial action to be taken. The Environment Agency are also building an understanding of how third-party assets have coped. The Environment Agency are also closely liaising with Cambridgeshire County Council, to enable the County Council to complete Section 19 (Floods and Water Management Act) reports.

- 5.3 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum (CPLRF) is a multi-agency group made up of emergency services, local authorities, military, public health organisations and others who would all have a role to play should a disaster or major emergency occur. The Group has learnt that the full CPLRF was convened and met throughout Christmas. It subsequently held a debriefing session. The outcome will be made available to the partner authorities.
- 5.4 The County Council has been in touch with all those who contacted it to establish whether any assets/infrastructure for which the County Council is responsible require maintenance works.
- 5.5 The Environment Agency is closely liaising with Cambridgeshire County Council, to enable the latter to complete a Section 19 (Floods and Water Management Act) report. The report will set out which authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and whether those authorities have exercised those functions. The Environment Agency is also collaborating with the County Council on the Flood Action Plan.

Information

- 5.5 The information that was available to the responsible organisations during the flooding was frequently referred to during the investigation. The Environment Agency receive weather warnings from the Met Office. The latter warnings are issued when rainfall happens; however, Environment Agency Warnings relate to river levels. There is, therefore, a significant difference between the two types of Warning.
- 5.6 Environment Agency Warnings are based on main rivers such as the Great Ouse. In December much of the local flooding was caused by water from gullies and ditches, which are not part of the Environment Agency warning system. This is a learning point.
- 5.7 Whenever a flood Warning is issued the Environment Agency reviews its effectiveness and timeliness. The Environment Agency's communications and engagement function are currently analysing the flooding events of December 2020 for this purpose. It is hoped that the Environment Agency will secure funding for an improved and more sensitive warning system which would provide better early notice of issues in the future. The Group has suggested that consideration should be given to including information on moisture deficit into the telemetry as this seems to have been a key factor in the December 2020 floods. Telemetry is the in-situ collection of measurements or other data at remote points and their automatic transmission to receiving equipment for monitoring. Furthermore, the system could be improved by effectively drawing on intelligence from the ground. In paragraph 5.14 the point is made that using local knowledge held by the community helps significantly when working out the conditions that make areas susceptible to flooding.
- 5.8 The public are not always clear about the differences between Met Office and Environment Agency Warnings. Importantly, both take account of flooding defences. However, the Environment Agency issues three types

of communication in relation to flooding. The Environment Agency has a workstream on how well the public understands its advice and how it is acted upon. It is already known that there is a need for education on warnings. The Environment Agency will act on this.

- 5.9 The County Council is compiling comprehensive maps of the County, which clearly identifies where each watercourse is located and who is responsible for its maintenance and when flooding arises. The District Council has provided large scale maps to the affected parishes to enable them to mark where flooding occurred. The returned maps have been forwarded to the County Council. The maps should improve information flow as part of the County Council's wider commitment to improve reporting systems.
- 5.10 The Group has been acquainted with the functions of regional flood and coastal committees (RFCC). There are twelve such regional Committees. They have an important role in helping to protect communities from flooding and coastal erosion. They help the Environment Agency and partners to understand local issues better, and to balance local and national priorities. The Anglian (Great Ouse) RFCC covers the eastern region. More specifically in relation to the investigation, it looks into the wider catchment water management. Members from the County Council sit on the Committee. It is suggested that establishing improved communications channels with them on water management could be beneficial to the Council.
- 5.11 The next section of the report states the importance of localised knowledge and makes recommendations on how to improve its availability.

Preparedness

- 5.12 The Group looked at two areas of preparedness: individual and community. It has been clearly established that individual households are responsible for protecting their own properties. There are many websites that contain extremely useful information in respect of preparing for flooding, what to do during a flood and what to do after a flood occurs. The following are recommended by the Environment Agency:

- How to plan for flooding - <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/plan-ahead-for-flooding>
- What to do in a flood - <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/what-to-do-in-a-flood>
- What to do before, during and after a flood - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/403213/LIT_5216.pdf
- Prepare for flooding <https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding/future-flooding>

These links have been provided to some Parish Councils to post on their websites. It is **recommended the links to flooding advice are publicised through the District Council's own communication channels and forwarded to all Town and Parish Councils.** The District

Council's flood advice page has been updated and contains a number of useful links. <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/environmental-issues/flooding/>.

- 5.13 The second area of preparedness, community resilience, was mentioned at all The Flooding Study Group's meetings. In particular, discussion took place on the potential benefits of local flood groups. All the organisations that participated in the study recognised the value of local flood groups and confirmed they are committed to supporting them.
- 5.14 Local flood groups have local knowledge, including the ability to augment centrally held data, by identifying who is responsible for areas of riparian land. They can recognise problems and act when issues arise. To be successful they need to have communication and engagement channels with key agencies. This will help the Environment Agency and Anglian Water to improve their telemetry.
- 5.15 It is, however, recognised that residents require the knowledge and training to recognise issues when they arise. The Group welcomed the decision of the County Council to provide more support to community flood groups, such as training, providing equipment and establishing groups where they do not exist and to develop a toolkit. Initially, flood groups will be established in Buckden, Brampton, Offord, Godmanchester and Kimbolton.
- 5.16 Toolkits are widely used. Some recommended examples are:
- Northamptonshire Flood Toolkit - <https://www.floodtoolkit.com/>
 - Devon & Cornwall Flood Resilience Pathfinder - <https://www.befloodready.uk/>
- 5.17 Other recommended examples are the Welney Floodwatch Page and the Riseley Flood Group. They use social media effectively to inform residents about the risk of flooding. The groups and the Environment Agency are engaged in two-way information flow.
- 5.18 A further example, which has been drawn to The Group's attention is the Norfolk Association of Local Councils, which has role in capturing knowledge.
- 5.19 It is suggested that the initial contact would be the Parish/Town Council or the District Councillors to identify volunteers for the flood groups.
- 5.20 It is **recommended that the Council supports the establishment of local flood groups as a means to develop community resilience against future flooding and as an important additional source of information for forecasting flooding.**

Infrastructure

- 5.21 The Environment Agency is responsible for the maintenance of rivers, Internal Drainage Boards are responsible for ditches and the County Council has a regulatory role in respect of other watercourses.
- 5.22 In 2021/22, The County Council will be increasing the gully maintenance budget.

The Role of Planning

- 5.23 The Group has followed up on questions at the local flooding conferences about the impact of planning decisions on flooding. Members have been advised that good developments address flooding risks and actively manage them. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the flooding either side of Christmas was caused by more recent developments. The Group has examined the planning position relating to individual dwellings and small-scale developments and the cumulative effect of applications from a flooding perspective. Discussion took place on whether there might be a benefit in reviewing the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2017, and subsequent discussions have taken place with Planning experts. This document is a legal Countywide document that all Local Planning Authorities have adopted, and covers a wide range of issues, such as future approvals and the five-year housing land supply. The power to change this does therefore not sit with Huntingdonshire alone.
- 5.24 The Group is, nevertheless, of the view that work does need to be undertaken in this area. It is suggested that initially **a study should be undertaken by a group of technical experts to understand fully the causes of floods linked to climate change, to look at the issue of cumulative impacts and to make a series of recommendations to feed into the next SPD document review, ensuring the refreshed document responds to changing realities and technology.** These recommendations can feed into a much broader review of the SPD at the appropriate time, which is likely to involve all the local authorities working with the Environment Agency on the Strategic Flood Risk Maps to include further modelling on climate change. The Internal Drainage Boards and the Middle Level Commissioners also would have a role to play here.
- 5.25 The Environment Agency is involved in work on the spatial framework for the Ox-Cam Arc. It will ensure that flooding risk is factored into the plans, mitigating the flooding risk on the largest foreseen development project in the District.
- 5.26 The County Council has offered to provide additional training for District Council Planning Officers and Members on how to consider flood risk in relation to planning applications. **It is recommended that the offer to provide training for Planning Officers and Members is accepted.**
- 5.27 A query was raised on whether the County Council has a mechanism to capture flooding related information so that the knowledge of individual officers is not relied on. Mrs Ellis confirmed that the County Council does collate information and that it is shared amongst partners.

Policy

- 5.28 The County Council will be reviewing the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The District Council will be consulted as part of this process.
- 5.29 During the flooding Anglian Water had to be flexible and were operating double the normal number of tankers. To do this it had to divert vehicles from transporting biosolids. This in turn required the agreement of the Environment Agency as it had public health implications. Anglian Water made the point that it deals with foul sewerage while other organisations are responsible for other water. There is, therefore, a requirement for joint working on water management. Given the public health context, there is a common need for understanding amongst the authorities of who does what and who meets the costs. **It is recommended that partners investigate the development of a joint drainage and wastewater management plan.**

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 In summary, it is RECOMMENDED that
- a) **links to flooding advice are publicised through the District Council's own communication channels and forwarded to all Town and Parish Councils;**
 - b) **the Council supports the establishment and running of local flood groups as a means to develop community resilience against future flooding and as an important additional source of information for forecasting flooding;**
 - c) **a study be undertaken by a group of technical experts to understand fully the causes of floods linked to climate change, to look at the issue of cumulative impacts and to make a series of recommendations to feed into the next SPD document review, ensuring the refreshed document responds to changing realities and technology;**
 - d) **the offer by Cambridgeshire County Council to provide training for Planning Officers and Members be accepted, and**
 - e) **partners investigate the development of a joint drainage and waste water management plan.**

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Notes of meetings of the Flooding Task and Finish Group.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Oliver Morley

Email: Oliver.morley@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21

Performance and Growth

In Progress

Topic	Membership & Scope	Lead Officer	Progress
Transport Strategy	Councillor S J Criswell Councillor I D Gardener Councillor P L R Gaskin Councillor M S Grice	Corporate Director Place	Study has not commenced.
Asset Management Strategy	Councillor I D Gardener Councillor D A Giles	Jackie Goldby/Justin Andrews	1st February 2021 – Members met with the Interim Commercial Estates Manager and provided input and feedback into the Strategy. Next Step The Strategy will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny in Autumn 2021.

Completed

Topic	Membership & Scope	Lead Officer	Progress
Housing Strategy to 2025	Councillor A Roberts Councillor S Wakeford Councillor D Wells Councillor Mrs S R Wilson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment and make suggestions on the emerging Housing Strategy. 	David Edwards/Liz Bisset	6th August 2020 – A meeting took place with Members; the Interim Corporate Director (Place), David Edwards and Liz Bisset. The vision for the strategy was outlined and Members had an opportunity to comment and make suggestions. 7th October 2020 – The Housing Strategy was presented to Overview and Scrutiny.

			22nd October 2020 – The Cabinet approved the Housing Strategy and the accompanying one year action plan.
--	--	--	---

Customers and Partnerships

In Progress

Topic	Membership & Scope	Lead Officer	Progress
Digital Strategy	Councillor D M Tysoe Councillor R J West	Tony Evans	Next Step The Digital Strategy will follow the completion of the Core Service Strategy.
Climate Change Strategy	Councillor T D Alban Councillor Mrs S R Wilson One Vacancy	Neil Sloper	18th October 2020 – The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) attended the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Government Association Scrutinising Climate Action Webinar on 18th September. Next Step The remit for strategy development has not been established.
Flooding Review	Councillor Mrs S J Conboy Councillor S J Corney Councillor I D Gardener Councillor D M Tysoe Councillor R J West Compile and review evidence (quantitative and qualitative) relating to the December 2020 flooding events, to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Understand what happened. 2) Review the response. 3) Consider future prevention/mitigation. 	Corporate Director Place	28th January 2021 – The Task and Finish Group met and began the review. 25th February 2021 – Quinton Carroll, Hilary Ellis, Sue Grace and Emyr Price of Cambridgeshire County Council attended the meeting and answered Members' questions. 11th March 2021 – Paul Burrows and Phillipa Hulme of the Environment Agency attended the meeting and answered Members' questions. Next Step

			A final report is being presented to the Panel at it's next meeting.
Strategic Review of Markets	<p>Councillor B S Banks Councillor S J Corney Councillor Ms A Dickinson Councillor Mrs A Diaz (also the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment, Councillor Mrs M L Beuttell)</p> <p>To conduct a Strategic Review of HDC Markets and produce a Vision statement and a Strategy.</p>	George McDowell	<p>5th November 2020 – The Panel received a report and suggested scoping document for the Strategic Review of Markets. Members agreed to endorse the approach and aims as set out in the scoping document and appointed five O&S Members to join the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment in conducting the Strategic Review.</p> <p>18th February 2021 – The review commenced and Members discussed the survey.</p> <p>23rd March 2021 – Members reviewed the survey and provided feedback.</p> <p>22nd June 2021 – Members reviewed the results of the survey and provided feedback.</p> <p>Next Step The next meeting will take place on 20th July 2021.</p>
Waste Strategy	<p>Councillor Ms A Dickinson Councillor D A Giles Councillor Mrs S Smith Councillor Mrs S R Wilson</p>	Neil Sloper	<p>Study has not commenced.</p> <p>Update (provided on 24th November 2020) – The delivery of HDC's Waste Strategy is linked to two other strategies.</p>

			<p>The first is DEFRA's Resources and Waste Strategy. This strategy determines any changes to waste collection practices and the options available for the collection of household waste. This has been delayed until spring 2021.</p> <p>The second is the RECAP (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership) Waste Strategy, which is the parent strategy to HDC's Waste Strategy. The partnership has conducted modelling work with DEFRA to look at the impacts and alternatives of different approaches to waste and recycling collection models but is unable to continue the work until DEFRA's strategy is clear.</p> <p>The delay in the delivery of DEFRA's Strategy has had a knock-on effect for the expected date of RECAP's Strategy, meaning that the delivery of HDC's Strategy has been delayed until January 2022.</p>
Lifelong Health – Part Two	<p>Councillor S J Criswell Councillor Mrs A Dickinson Councillor K P Gulson Councillor Mrs S Smith Councillor Mrs J Tavener Councillor Mrs S R Wilson</p>	Oliver Morley	<p>12th September 2019 – The Panel received the final report of Part One and agreed to continue the study under the guise of 'Part Two'.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways of developing better health outcomes for residents. • Identify the benefits of a whole system approach for the Council. 		<p>14th October 2019 – The Task and Finish Group met with Liz Robin, Public Health.</p> <p>10th December 2019 – Following the presentation of the Part One report to Cabinet and the meeting with the Director of Public Health, the Task and Finish Group met to refocus the scope of the study. The study will now focus primarily on collaboration with Parish & Town Councils and community groups in order to improve residents’ physical activity and well-being.</p> <p>13th January 2020 – The Task and Finish Group received a presentation from Active Lifestyles and assessed the interaction the service has with Parish & Town Councils and community groups.</p> <p>28th January 2020 – Alyce Barber, Community Development Officer, attended and informed Members of her work with projects that helps build social contact, builds support networks and addresses mental health issues. Members will also discuss the evidence that links an individual’s mental health with physical health.</p>
--	--	--	---

			<p>12th February 2020 – The Task and Finish Group received and discussed a number of case studies.</p> <p>26th November 2020 – The Group met and conducted an evidence review. Members recognised that the health issues discussed were around before the pandemic, however they have been affected by it. Despite this, it was decided that any health plan for the District should look beyond the pandemic and be a post Covid-19 plan. The Group decided that the recommendations should be focused on the following themes: access to healthy food, mental well-being and physical health.</p> <p>Next Step – A final report is in the process of being drafted.</p>
--	--	--	--

Completed

Topic	Membership & Scope	Lead Officer	Progress
Healthy Open Spaces and Play Strategy	Councillor Mrs A Dickinson Councillor K P Gulson Councillor Mrs S Smith Councillor Mrs J Tavener Councillor Mrs S R Wilson	Helen Lack	11th March 2020 – A meeting took place with Working Group Members, the relevant Executive Councillors, Helen Lack and Sarah Wheale-Smith of PleydellSmithyman so that Members could give their views on the draft Strategy.

			<p>29th July 2020 – A second meeting took place with Working Group Members, Helen Lack and Sarah Wheale-Smith of PleydellSmithyman. Members were shown the executive summary and a full draft of the Strategy.</p> <p>8th October 2020 – The Healthy Open Spaces Strategy was presented to Overview and Scrutiny.</p> <p>22nd October 2020 – The Cabinet endorsed the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy and 10 year action plan.</p>
--	--	--	--