

## Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029

<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Rachel Chubb</b> , Strategic Lead for Supporting Communities (Housing Options and Homelessness)  rchubb@melton.gov.uk
<b>Chief Officer Responsible:</b>	<b>Michelle Howard</b> , Director Housing & Communities, Deputy Chief Executive mhoward@melton.gov.uk
<b>Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Landlord Services (Leader of the Council)

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Healthy Communities and Neighbourhoods
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):</b>	N/A
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes: It has a significant impact on persons living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Borough.
<b>Subject to call-in:</b>	Yes

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Council's Homelessness strategy outlining the Council's approach and priorities to prevent and relieve homelessness and reduce the risk of rough sleeping across the Borough between 2024 and 2029. It has been developed through collaboration with key partners.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Strategy can be found at Appendix 1. The associated action plan can be found at Appendix 2.

## 2 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the Melton Borough Council Homelessness Strategy and associated action plan for the period 2024-2029.
- 2.2 Delegate authority to the Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Landlord Services to make any subsequent changes arising from legislative or operational changes.

## 3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement for a local authority to have a homeless and rough sleeping strategy.
- 3.2 A robust strategy will support the Council to effectively discharge its statutory duties in relation to homelessness.
- 3.3 The strategy and action plan are locally relevant and respond to feedback from local partners regarding homelessness within the Melton Borough.

## 4 Background

- 4.1 The Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029 provides information on the current position and homelessness challenges across the Borough, sets out the priorities and actions that together aim to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping. Homelessness is not just a term for someone that is rough sleeping, but covers those that are in temporary accommodation, are at risk of losing their home, are in unsuitable accommodation or cannot afford to remain in their current home.
- 4.2 Government policy focuses on the prevention of homelessness and has made funding available to tackle homelessness. It is considered that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring. A focus on prevention is more effective, as it enables a proactive rather than reactive approach and the council and partners have a key role to play in encouraging households at risk of experiencing homelessness to seek advice and support at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.3 Working to prevent and address homelessness and rough sleeping is not just about the provision of accommodation. Homelessness is complex and there are many other factors that can lead to or compound a homelessness situation, and so partnership working is key to respond to these challenges and to provide the right support at the right time.
- 4.4 The rise in the cost of living is now presenting new difficulties especially around sustainment and availability of accommodation. The council recognises the need to continue to work together with partners to make best use of resources available and to reduce the risk of people losing their homes wherever possible.
- 4.5 This strategy aims to tackle the issues leading to a risk of homelessness in a practical and effective way and in partnership, recognising the roles and strengths of key partners and opportunities of working together. The strategy demonstrates that Melton Borough Council

is committed to the national vision that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring and has a proactive and pragmatic approach at a local level.

- 4.6 The strategy was formulated following a consultation event with partners who work with our priority groups such as Storehouse, Leicestershire Partnership Trust, MADMAC, Leaving care and domestic abuse agencies. Partners provided feedback on the challenges they face and the opportunities that could be presented by working together.
- 4.7 By delivering in line with the accompanying action plan, Melton Borough Council will be well placed to respond to the challenges it faces, particularly for its most vulnerable residents.

## **5 Main Considerations**

- 5.1 Data from households who have approached the council as homeless since April 2022 was used to look at the themes and common causes of homelessness across the Borough. There are some notable trends and matters to consider:
- 5.1.1 Increased costs to the housing market and fuel poverty have meant for some that renting is unaffordable. The strategy aims to identify how the council can work to overcome this.
- 5.1.2 Extra commitments to the Government's resettlement strategies for refugees and asylum seekers have caused additional pressures on the housing system. This is not unique to Melton.
- 5.2 The strategy (Appendix 1) aims to tackle the issues and challenges in a practical and effective way, recognising our roles and opportunities in working together. The strategy demonstrates that we are committed to the Government's vision that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring.
- 5.3 The strategy has five priority areas:
- Priority 1: Reduce demand for emergency homeless support through proactive support.
  - Priority 2: Increase the number of positive outcomes for homeless households.
  - Priority 3: Reduce the need for expensive nightly paid emergency accommodation.
  - Priority 4: Better meet the needs of those with complex needs.
  - Priority 5: End rough sleeping.
- 5.4 Appendix 2 sets out an action plan to accompany the strategy, aligned to the five priorities set out above. Monitoring progress and delivery against the action plan will be important. A review will be carried out midway through the period of the strategy to provide an update on progress against the aims and actions agreed, and to reflect on any changes to the homelessness situation locally, regionally and nationally at that time.

## **6 Options Considered**

- 6.1 Having a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is a statutory requirement. Should the Council choose not to progress a strategy it would not be able to demonstrate it was meeting its statutory duties and could be open to legal challenge.

## **7 Consultation**

- 7.1 The strategy has been developed in partnership with local stakeholders, and is based on evidence, data and their direct experiences of supporting people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the borough. It was formulated following an internal strategy and data review, but with particular emphasis on the consultation with and feedback from stakeholders.
- 7.2 A shared consultation event with neighbouring authorities took place on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023 through which the Council collated vital feedback. This provides confidence that the strategy will meet the needs of the Borough.

## **8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication**

- 8.1 Subject to approval, the homelessness strategy and action plan will be published to the council's website and shared with local partners. The action shows a plan for delivery over the next 5 years and will be integrated into the work plan for Strategic Lead for Supporting Communities (Housing Options and Homelessness) who will oversee its delivery.

## **9 Financial Implications**

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report, however, ongoing government funding via the Homelessness Prevention Grant and any associated funding streams are crucial to deliver an effective and sustainable service. It will be important that any adverse changes or risks to the continuity of the homelessness prevention grant or associated funding sources are brought to the attention of the senior leadership team and Cabinet as soon as possible. It will also be important to highlight any issues of unmanageable demand leading to cost and resource pressures that cannot be managed within the existing budget.
- 9.2 It is noted that officers are engaged with a housing benefit specialist to ensure that the council is maximising housing benefit income for eligible households in temporary accommodation. This is important both for council and household finances. The outcome of this work should be incorporated into the work of the housing options team.
- 9.3 This is a high-risk budget and is largely demand led. It is monitored on a monthly basis by the budget holder and relevant service accountant with a focus on demand, spend and trajectory.
- 9.4 Financial Implications reviewed by: Assistant Director for Resources

## **10 Legal and Governance Implications**

- 10.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on English local housing authorities, to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy every five years, to keep it under review and to modify it as required because of any review. Prior to formulating and publishing a homelessness strategy a housing authority must carry out a review of homelessness in their district.
- 10.2 The Council must take its homelessness strategy into account when exercising its functions and should be taken into account by the social services authority when

exercising its functions in the Council's area. A strategy may include specific objectives and actions to be taken in relation to the Council's functions and those of the social services authority for the Council's area. It may also include actions which the Council expects to be taken by other public bodies or voluntary organisations which are capable of contributing to achieving the objectives in the strategy.

- 10.3 The proposed strategy sets out objectives and actions which are within the scope of the 2002 Act.

### **Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer**

## **11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

- 11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and reviewed by the Council's internal Check and Challenge group. Equalities Impact Assessments can be found [here](#).
- 11.2 Preventing homelessness, taking direct action in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act and responding proactively to risk factors positively contribute to safeguarding vulnerable children and adults.

## **12 Data Protection Implications (Mandatory)**

A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed because there are no risks to the rights and freedoms of natural persons arising directly from this report.

## **13 Community Safety Implications**

- 13.1 To be effective, the homelessness strategy must be embedded through collaborative working with wider colleagues such as the safer communities team, police and other partner agencies to support joint working to prevent homelessness and to reduce the risk of reoffending or people becoming victims of crime.
- 13.2 The strategy has a specific section aimed at those leaving prison or with an offending background, seeking to prevent homelessness and directly support community safety objectives.

## **14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications**

- 14.1 None arising directly from this report.

## **15 Other Implications (where significant)**

- 15.1 The strategy acknowledges the impact of homelessness on health and wellbeing. Residents in accommodation that is appropriate for their needs improves mental and physical health as well as social aspirations, ability to find and maintain employment and access health care.

## **16 Risk & Mitigation**

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Lack of resource within the council will mean we are unable to fulfil the objectives within the action plan	Very Low	Critical	
2	A reduction in funding can mean a reduction in homeless prevention opportunities.	Low	Critical	
3	Changes in Government guidance over the next 5 years could mean areas are asked to be focused on leading to a change in policy focus increased or unmanageable demand.	Low	Marginal	

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low			2, 3	
	2 Very Low			1	
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	Highlight at the earliest opportunity the impact of any proposed major changes and the effect this would have on delivery of the strategy.
2.	To highlight any adverse changes or risks to the continuity of the homelessness prevention grant or associated funding sources. To highlight any issues of unmanageable demand leading to cost and resource pressures that cannot be managed within the existing budget. Raise awareness with the public, staff and elected members of challenges associated with homelessness, the importance of prevention and early intervention and options to relieve homelessness. To maximise the impact of limited budgets, ensure value for money and sustainability where possible in the deployment of financial resources.

<b>3</b>	The strategy would need to be refreshed and action plan updated with any changes requested by Government departments. Officers will monitor any associated policy changes that could have an impact on the strategy.
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## **17 Background Papers**

17.1 None

## **18 Appendices**

18.1 Appendix 1: Melton Borough Council Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029

18.2 Appendix 2: Homelessness Strategy Action Plan