

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2025-2030

Document Version Information	
Policy Owner	Housing Options Manager
Committee	Full Council
Committee Approval Date	
Implementation Date	
Review Date	
Version	2

## Contents

1. Foreword by Leader of the Council .....	Page 2
2. Executive Summary .....	Page 2
3. Introduction .....	Page 3
4. Developing the Strategy .....	Page 3
5. Legal Framework .....	Page 4
6. National Context .....	Page 5
7. Local Picture and Challenges .....	Page 5
8. Priorities and Actions .....	Page 12
9. Delivery and Monitoring .....	Page 13
10. Appendix 1 – Action Plan .....	Page 15

## **1. Foreword by Leader of the Council**

- 1.1 Homelessness and rough sleeping have increased across the Country, and these problems blight the lives of those directly and the wider community. This strategy is the Council's response to these pressures and focusses on prevention, as well as increasing access to accommodation and supporting residents to prevent homelessness. Tackling homelessness is one of our top priorities which we believe can be addressed through the delivery of secure, affordable housing and working with service delivery partners across the Borough.
- 1.2 This strategy is to be read in conjunction with the Council's Housing Strategy. We recognise that a decent, secure, and affordable home is central to all residents of the Borough of Oadby & Wigston being able to live full, prosperous, and happy lives; it is vital to wellbeing, employment, children's education and managing household debt.
- 1.3 We recognise the need for an increased supply of housing which should be delivered through new council housing and by working collaboratively with partners who share our commitment to providing secure, affordable homes. There is also the need for a broad approach for housing and planning services to deliver affordable housing to meet the needs of priority groups and those wanting to live in the Borough.
- 1.4 The Council has introduced a Temporary Housing Strategy and will seek to reduce the use of B&B's and the placing of homeless households out of the Borough. This will be achieved by acquiring Council run temporary accommodation in the Borough and working with the private sector.
- 1.5 Rough sleepers are often the face of homelessness to the general public. A coherent response of outreach work, and support is in place to help the rough sleeper community, and we will continue to work with partner agencies with the aim of turning around as many lives as possible.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy identified the main issues surrounding homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough of Oadby & Wigston and sets out the Council's priorities for dealing with them. This strategy supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan and Housing Strategy supporting the strategic framework for the delivery of our four priorities:
  - Increase the supply of housing
  - Manage the demand for housing
  - Provide high quality local authority landlord services
  - Create great places to live
- 2.2 It is our commitment to deliver the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy which considers options to prevent homelessness and meet demand, and to reduce the number of households placed in temporary accommodation outside of the Borough. To achieve this,

we are committed to developing Council owned and managed temporary accommodation within the Borough.

- 2.3 In developing this Strategy, we have given consideration to ensure that most vulnerable groups can be assisted.
- 2.4 We are committed to collaborating with local landlords, both private and Registered Providers to prevent homelessness and to provide more affordable homes in the Borough.

### **3. Introduction**

- 3.1 This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how over the coming five years we will prevent homelessness and support those who face or are at risk of becoming homeless.
- 3.2 Whilst rough sleeping (those who live or sleep on the street) is often the most visible form of homelessness, other forms of homelessness are hidden and include anyone who does not have access to suitable, stable accommodation. This can include people who are staying with friends or family ('sofa surfing'), those at risk of violence or domestic abuse, and those living in temporary accommodation provided by the council when they urgently need a home and are being helped to find long-term housing.
- 3.3 Becoming homeless is a traumatic event that can have long-lasting impacts on health and wellbeing of those affected. Circumstances vary from person to person, however in general the health, wellbeing, and life chances of those who are homeless are significantly worse than those of the general population. We are committed to continue to prevent and reduce homelessness and taking steps to end rough sleeping by providing the right support to ensure that where it does occur, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- 3.4 This new strategy is intended to further the council's existing approach to preventing homelessness, and to focus our efforts on identifying new and innovative ways to respond to the challenges we are likely to face over the coming five years. Our priorities to achieve this are:
  - Priority One: Reduce the demand for emergency homeless action through proactive support
  - Priority Two: Increase the number of positive outcomes for homeless households
  - Priority Three: Reduce the demand and improve the quality of emergency accommodation
  - Priority Four: Make improvements in meeting the needs of people with complex needs
  - Priority Five: End rough sleeping

### **4. Developing the Strategy**

- 4.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all Local Authorities carry out a review of homelessness in their areas, formulate and publish a strategy based on the findings of this

review, keep the strategy under review and consult with other local or public authorities and voluntary organisations before modifying or adopting a strategy. The strategy should:

- Assess the levels of homelessness now, and the factors likely to impact on future levels of homelessness
- Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or may become, homeless
- Provide services that help to prevent people becoming homeless
- Ensure that through effective partnerships, support services can be accessed for those people who are, or who may become, homeless – or to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- Promote a cultural change so that homelessness is viewed in a wider context than just a lack of accommodation

4.2 This strategy has been formulated following our strategy review, but with particular emphasis on the consultation with stakeholders. A shared consultation event collated vital feedback, which will enable this strategy to meet the aims of the borough. This strategy will be supported by a more detailed action plan that can evolve should new pressures arise. To allow a collective and robust approach to homelessness, this strategy incorporates the council's Rough Sleeper Strategy.

## **5. Legal Framework**

5.1 Homelessness cannot be tackled in isolation. This is shown in key legislation, the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) Part 7 is the overarching piece of legislation used by councils in determining the way in which they respond to homelessness. The Act has been amended by:

- The Homelessness Act 2002  
Included notable changes in the way local authorities use temporary accommodation, with greater emphasis on the role of prevention
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017  
Brought new legal duties to local authorities so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will access to support, irrespective of their priority need status, if they are eligible for assistance.

5.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, introduced to address the needs of people experiencing domestic abuse, the act imposes a duty on local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation.

5.3 The Care Act 2014, sets out a wider framework with the expectation that agencies would work together to protect children, young adults and people with care and support needs.

5.4 The Armed Forces Bill 2021 places a Duty of Due Regard on local authorities to recognise the Armed Forces Covenant in their policies as well as the delivery of front-line services.

## 6. National Context

6.1 Over recent years, homelessness has been rising nationally, in October 2023, the department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities released the national statistics for Statutory Homelessness in England for 2022-23. Below are some of the key findings in comparison to 2021-22:

- 4.8% increase in households owed a prevention duty
- 8.6% increase in households owed a relief duty
- 10% increase in households residing in temporary accommodation
- 18.9% increase in local authority making main homelessness duty decisions

6.2 The most common reason for loss of last settled accommodation for those:

- owed a prevention duty was due to the end of private rented assured shorthold tenancy
- owed a relief duty was due to domestic abuse

6.3 In September 2022, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published its national Rough Sleeping Strategy 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good'. The strategy has four main elements:

- Prevention
- Intervention
- Recovery
- A Transparent and Joined-Up System

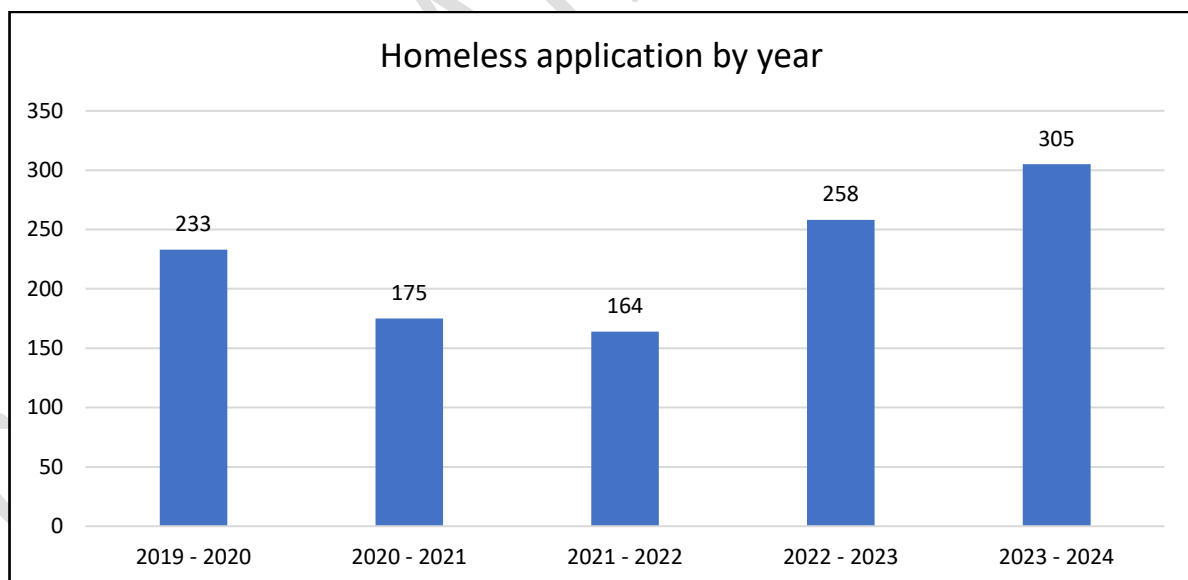
6.4 The Government considers rough sleeping will have ended when every local area ensures rough sleeping is 'prevented wherever possible and, where it cannot be prevented, it is rare, brief and non-recurring experience.'

## 7. Local Picture and Challenges

7.1 The Borough of Oadby and Wigston is a relatively small, compact, and urbanised Borough. The Borough consists of three main settlements Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. Each of the three settlement areas have quite different perceived levels of affluence as well as levels of social deprivation. Oadby is perceived as the most affluent area within the Borough, Wigston is somewhere in the middle and South Wigston is perceived as the least affluent area.

7.2 The number of households requiring support has increased in recent years, affected by the changes in legislation with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis. The number of homeless households in temporary accommodation in the Borough has increased significantly, largely driven by the lack of affordable housing.

- 7.3 The average rents per calendar month in the private rented sector are significantly higher than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for Leicestershire which creates a barrier for low-income households in accessing affordable accommodation within the private rented sector.
- 7.4 Since the last strategy, we have seen several challenges facing our residents. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a difficult time for homeless services however this allowed the redesign services to be delivered remotely and has allowed us to widen opportunities for people to access our services through Hub appointments if required.
- 7.5 We are part of a Countywide Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) led by North-West Leicestershire. This has both improved the range of services and support available to rough sleepers but also allowed us to better understand the true level of need in the district. This is one of a number multi-agency and sub-regional initiatives now in place covering areas such as prison release, hospital discharge and leaving care.
- 7.6 Over the lifetime of the last strategy we saw an increase in demand for our homeless services whilst at the same time a reduction in available accommodation options. Over the lifetime of this strategy, we need to work smarter to address these challenges.
- 7.7 The graph below shows the number of approaches for help received by the Council's Housing Choices Team that were assessed under the Homeless Reduction Act over the last five years.



## 7.1 Rough Sleeping

- 7.1.1 The Homelessness Code of Guidance sets out that “in districts where there is evidence that people are sleeping rough, the homelessness strategy should include objectives to work toward eliminating rough sleeping.”

7.1.2 We are fortunate that in Oadby and Wigston Borough that reports of rough sleeping are relatively low and for our annual rough sleeper count for the last two years we have reported zero on the particular night.

7.1.3 However we recognise that we need to work with other districts across Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland to reduce rough sleeping to reduce any potential impact this may have on our borough. If options are reduced for people, then rough sleeping numbers will increase and so it is important this remains a key priority in our strategy.

7.1.4 The issue no matter how small needs to be addressed, and Leicestershire has tackled this head on with a rough sleeper initiative which operates across the county. As part of the rough sleeping initiative funding, we are required to develop an annual ending rough sleeping plan through co-production with our rough sleeping advisor and we will continue to do this however there are several key actions that interrelate with the wider objective of this strategy. We have adopted a definition of ending rough sleeping in keeping with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) publication "Ending Rough Sleeping for Good." Our end goal is for rough sleeping to be prevented wherever possible but when it does occur, it must be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

## **7.2 Meeting the needs of groups**

7.2.1 Section 179 of the Housing Act 1996 set out an obligation on the local housing authority to provide advice around homelessness to people in the borough.

7.2.2 Section 179(2) sets out particular groups the service must be designed to meet the needs of:

- a) people released from prison or youth detention accommodation
- b) care leavers
- c) former members of the regular armed forces
- d) victims of domestic abuse
- e) people leaving hospital
- f) people suffering from a mental illness or impairment

7.2.3 Furthermore we should consider any other group identified as being particularly at risk of homelessness in the borough.

7.2.4 When developing the evidence base for this homeless strategy we have specifically looked at each key group to determine what the demand is and what existing service provision looks like. Our consultation work has then identified any gaps in provision and opportunities to improve support which we have then sought to include as potential actions under our identified priorities.

## **7.3 People released from prison or youth detention accommodation**

7.3.1 Less than 1% of homeless cases in Oadby & Wigston are identified as homeless due to leaving custody. However, there are significantly more who have an offending history, but



this may not be their primary reason for approaching the council. This could suggest that the impact of offending goes far beyond the initial homelessness that occurs for some on release from prison.

- 7.3.2 The majority of referrals that are received through the duty to refer, a statutory requirement for certain agencies to refer homeless households to the local authority are for those within the criminal justice system.

#### **What we are currently doing**

- 7.3.3 Oadby & Wigston Borough Council takes a sub-regional approach to those released from prison and youth detention being a signatory to a protocol shared with Leicester City Council, the other Leicestershire districts, and Rutland.
- 7.3.4 The protocol is currently being reviewed and one of the emerging issues is the fact that because of the structure of the criminal justice system prisoners may be released from a number of prisons and courts across the region.
- 7.3.5 We have therefore begun work to try and develop more regional approaches to managing ex-offenders.

#### **What we need to do**

- 7.3.6 Two areas identified within the consultation that partners felt were key to this group were ensuring appropriate accommodation was available recognising that those with an offending history often face additional barriers to accommodating both emergency and long-term accommodation with specific offences, such as arson making it particularly difficult to access emergency accommodation.
- 7.3.7 It was also identified that ensuring that prisoners can access the right advice and services in a timely manner whilst still within prison was key to positive outcomes.

#### **7.4 Care Leavers**

- 7.4.1 Only 3% of applications are identified as having support needs as having been in care (within the age group 18-20) and a smaller proportion again as older care leaver's.
- 7.4.2 The County Council are subject to the duty to refer in terms of children leaving their care.
- 7.4.3 We do take a proactive approach to supporting care leavers access accommodation before their care placement ends, we are able to keep the number of homeless cases low.

#### **What we are currently doing**

- 7.4.4 The Leicestershire Districts work closely with the County Council leaving care team to ensure positive pathways for young people leaving care in the County.

7.4.5 As well as reviewing and updating a county wide leaving care protocol. Additionally, Oadby & Wigston Borough Council treat Care Leavers as an additional protected characteristic.

#### **What we need to do**

7.4.6 Whilst wherever possible we work jointly to ensure young people transition into settled accommodation in a controlled way there are occasions where this does not happen. Also, a number of people leaving care will not settle effectively in their accommodation and require further assistance after moving into independence. Anecdotally people who have been in the care system are particularly prone to repeat instances of homelessness within a relatively short period of time.

7.4.7 One particular challenge which we have seen is an appropriate offer of support for those within the care system who form relationships with much provision geared up for single people only.

7.4.8 The consultation identified the need for appropriate move on accommodation for young people when they are leaving care but also the need to ensure staff are appropriately trained to understand the needs of care leavers. We also need to ensure that support can meet the range of needs that care leavers present with.

#### **7.5 Former members of the regular armed forces**

7.5.1 Oadby & Wigston does not have any Ministry of Defence (MOD) estate within the borough however we do have a strong tradition of support veterans who approach us for support. The numbers presenting as homeless because of leaving the forces is extremely low.

#### **What we are currently doing**

7.5.2 As a council we have signed up to the armed forces covenant. We have also framed our allocations policy to offer additional preference to former members of the armed forces.

#### **What we need to do**

7.5.3 The support available to veterans and agencies working in the district has changed in recent years and we need to ensure all frontline staff are aware of the current offer.

#### **7.6 Victims of domestic abuse**

7.6.1 Around 17.5% cases approached where domestic abuse is the cause of homelessness.

#### **What we are currently doing**

7.6.2 We have identified the advantages of taking a pro-active multi-agency approach to supporting victims of domestic abuse. As a result, we have funded a domestic abuse link worker to work within the Housing Option Team for a number of years.

7.6.3 Recent changes to legislation in particular the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 have widened the responsibilities toward victims of domestic abuse. It is a particular challenge then to ensure we are working effectively with other statutory partners as well as the voluntary sector to ensure that our response is suitable, sustainable, and sensitive.

7.6.4 Work is underway to develop a multi-agency pathway for victims of domestic abuse to ensure a clear and consistent offer to those seeking support. Because a number of key partners work across the Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR) area and because on occasions those fleeing domestic abuse will want to move away from their existing localities for safety reasons this work is being carried out at a sub-regional level. A scoping workshop with all key agencies is already scheduled.

#### **What we need to do**

7.6.5 A consultation identified the need to increase the availability of dispersed accommodation for people fleeing domestic abuse. The County Council are currently in the process of commissioning additional accommodation services, and we will work with them to support the delivery of these units.

### **7.7 People leaving hospital**

7.7.1 Whilst most people leaving hospital will have safe and secure accommodation to return to a small number will have lost accommodation because of their medical situation or no longer have a home to return to suitable to their needs.

7.7.2 A lack of suitable accommodation to discharge into to continue recovery is a significant drain on health resources and so effective joint working is key to making the best use of scarce resources across the public sector. Around 1% of cases approaching as homeless are recorded as homeless due to leaving hospital.

#### **What we are currently doing**

7.7.3 We are part of a sub-regional partnership with our local authority peers and the local NHS services to provide pro-active support to patients who face barriers to discharge from hospital. The service provides both practical support to allow those with accommodation to return home as well as assistance with accessing alternative housing options where this is not an option.

#### **What we need to do**

7.7.4 A consultation has identified the advantages that having appropriate stepdown accommodation for people leaving hospital would make. It also identified the importance of having appropriately trained staff within housing teams.

## **7.8 People suffering from a mental illness or impairment**

7.8.1 People with a mental health illness or impairment is the biggest support need of people approaching as homeless in Oadby & Wigston Borough Council. Anecdotally this group is the one that have the greatest difficulty securing, and maintaining appropriate accommodation whether that be emergency placements, short term supported accommodation or longer-term housing options. They are also disproportionately represented within the rough sleeping community a group that are the most excluded from many services.

### **What we are currently doing**

7.8.2 As part of a collaboration with Leicestershire Partnership Trust, Oadby & Wigston have a Senior Mental Health neighbourhood Lead focused on bringing together an integrated mental health offer that meets the needs of residents of the borough.

### **What we need to do**

7.8.3 The overwhelming feedback from consultation was the need for more specialist accommodation for this client group. This mirrors the conclusion of other work within the County.

## **7.9 Other Groups**

7.9.1 The Act encourages us to consider whether there are other groups within the locality who would benefit from a focussed homelessness response. Whilst there have been no other specific groups identified as part of this strategy development; we have identified that groups with multiple needs find it particularly difficult to secure appropriate services to meet their complex needs.

## **7.10 Supporting those with complex needs**

7.10.1 As part of the homeless assessment, officers must identify both the accommodation needs of the household but also any support needs.

7.10.2 Recorded cases with more than one identified support need may be low but they require intensive resource to achieve a positive outcome. The resource needed is disproportionate to those with 1 support need identified. It is also those with multiple support needs that are at a higher risk of repeat homelessness and often require a disproportionate amount of resource to secure positive outcomes.

7.10.3 The Rough Sleeping Initiative has introduced the concept of the Target Priority Group. This involves an assessment to identify those individuals at particular risk of rough sleeping and with additional needs. We are then encouraged to monitor the housing situation of these clients and identify when they are at risk of further homelessness.

7.10.4 Oadby and Wigston Borough Council is now part of a programme called "Complex Needs Accommodation Board" with health and colleagues in adult social care. Individuals with

complex needs whose accommodation needs are not being effectively met can be escalated to a panel of senior staff to unblock barriers and seek creative solutions. We will continue to support this programme and use the learning to improve services more widely.

7.10.5 As a result of the challenges those with multiple needs face, we have included a priority in this strategy to better meet the needs of this group.

## **8. Priorities and Actions**

8.1 This strategy sets out five priority areas that will drive the Council's work over the next five years and allow us to deliver our vision for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.

8.2 We cannot deliver this work alone and we will therefore work closely with the community and partner organisations to ensure these commitments are delivered.

### **8.1 Priority One: Reduce the demand for emergency homeless action through proactive support**

8.1.1 To achieve more sustained outcomes for people approaching the council as homeless we need to be more proactive earlier and focus on prevention. We need to keep people in their homes where possible making long term housing more attainable. Where this is not possible, we need to be assisting people to move in a planned way so they can move into their best possible home to meet their needs.

8.1.2 The Council will continue to ensure that residents can access all the services they need to help them resolve their housing problems from one point of contact. This will include assistance to prevent homelessness through giving comprehensive advice and guidance to private sector tenants, registered social landlord tenants and leaseholders. We will continue to try and resolve landlord disputes, disrepair issues and rent/mortgage problems.

8.1.3 We will continue to consider the accommodation needs of eligible care leavers as part of their individual needs assessment and Pathway Plan.

### **8.2 Priority Two: Increase the number of positive outcomes for homeless households**

- Actively pursue any opportunities to work proactively with the private sector
- Explore the use of supported accommodation available and work with the providers to ensure it meets the needs
- Explore a regional approach to prison release protocols and pre-release assessments

### **8.3 Priority Three: Reduce the demand and improve the quality of emergency accommodation**

- Explore emergency accommodation options which are best value for money for the council and more appropriate for the customer

- Produce a temporary accommodation strategy
- Adopting a temporary accommodation standard which will be reviewed regularly

#### **8.4 Priority Four: Make improvements in meeting the needs of people with complex needs**

- Work with Leicestershire County Council to help roll out a homeless mental health service in the borough
- Agree a definition of “complex cases” and ensuring cases and individuals are identified and outcomes monitored

#### **8.5 Priority Five: End rough sleeping**

- Promote the streetlink service so that the public can effectively report potential rough sleepers
- Work with our Leicestershire district and Leicester City colleagues to explore opportunities
- Increase off the street accommodation options for rough sleepers
- Work with providers of supported accommodation locally to increase the support available to rough sleepers

### **9. Delivery and Monitoring**

- 9.1 Our strategy covers a period of five years. It is hard to predict what is going to happen in this time, and undoubtedly, there will be changes to legislation, regulation and wider societal and economic shifts that will have an impact on our communities and what we can and need to do as a Council.
- 9.2 Whilst there will undoubtedly be changes to the context within which we operate and need to deliver this strategy, we do not anticipate that the priorities set out in this document will have to change significantly. We will remain committed to these throughout the strategy period.
- 9.3 To take into account a change in context, challenges and our need to respond and adapt to these the strategy action plan will be reviewed and updated annually – see **Appendix 1**. This will ensure the strategy and its delivery is able to adapt depending on the circumstances the Borough finds itself in, remains relevant, and plays a key role in driving work around housing, homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 9.4 The priorities set out within the strategy cannot be achieved without the collective commitment of the Council and its key partners and stakeholders. This partnership approach should apply to all housing in the Borough, which means that everyone involved in building and managing homes and supporting the people who live in them have an important role to play.

9.5 We will know if our actions are working if:

- Increased number of homelessness preventions and reduced cases of repeat homelessness are reported
- An increased proportion of personal housing plans which achieve a positive outcome
- Improved satisfaction with the Housing Options Service
- Funds secured to deliver rough sleeping initiatives will be maximised
- The number of rough sleepers in the Borough of Oadby & Wigston will be reduced over the lifetime of this strategy
- Increasing the number of homes within the Borough for temporary accommodation
- Reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation
- Increase the number of affordable housing in the Borough

9.6 We will:

- Involve residents and partners in developing detailed proposals to deliver the strategic objectives
- Be inclusive and transparent in developing our policies and delivery plans
- Publish details of our progress against the strategic priorities and the Council's Corporate Plan
- Report progress against the strategic priorities to Committee

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Ref No	Action	Priority	Tasks/Milestones 2025/2026	Responsible Service / Officer
1	Introduce effective robust homelessness prevention strategies	One	QTR 4	Housing Options Manager
2	Adopt early intervention practices through collaborative working with partners to develop referral procedures and ensure advice/information is available	One	QTR 2	Housing Options Manager
3	Work with providers of supported accommodation to ensure positive outcomes for homeless individuals with support needs	Two	QTR 1	Housing Options Manager
4	Proactively work with the private rented sector through promoting our Private Sector Letting Scheme	Two	QTR 3	Housing Options Manager
5	Implement a Temporary Accommodation Policy to ensure best use of temporary accommodation	Three	QTR 1	Housing Options Manager
6	Explore temporary accommodation options which are best value for money for the Council	Three	QTR 4	Housing Options Manager
7	Support Leicestershire County Council to help roll out a homeless mental health service in the borough	Four	QTR 2	Housing Options Manager
8	Promote the streetlink service to capture effective reports of potential rough sleepers	Five	QTR 2	Housing Options Manager
9	Work jointly with our Leicester colleagues to explore opportunities to reduce rough sleeping in the borough	Five	QTR 4	Housing Options Manager