

TITLE OF REPORT: **Homelessness Strategy and Strategic Review of Homelessness and Allocations**

REPORT OF: **Colin Huntington Strategic Director - Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet endorsement of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and to recommend that Council approve the Strategy as part of the Council's policy framework. To advise Cabinet on progress with our reviews of homelessness and allocations, including next steps and a recommendation to develop a new Gateshead allocations 'marketplace' and proposed next steps.

Background

2. It is a legal requirement to undertake a statutory homelessness review to inform the development of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. A copy of Gateshead's Statutory Homelessness Review, which has now been completed, can be found via this link [Homelessness Review Report](#).
3. The [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) will provide a framework for achieving our vision 'To prevent and end homelessness, in all forms, in Gateshead' by delivering the following four aims:
 - Aim 1 – Make homelessness a rare occurrence
 - Aim 2 – Where homelessness occurs, there will be positive outcomes for people
 - Aim 3 – No-one sleeping rough or in unsuitable accommodation
 - Aim 4 – Homelessness is a one-off occurrence
4. The strategy has been developed together with both internal and external partners and will be delivered collaboratively with our local partners through our newly established Homelessness Forum. It will not operate in isolation and should be read in conjunction with Thrive and our Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
5. To support the delivery of the Strategy a new **Homelessness Charter** has been developed, which enables partners, businesses, services and members of the public to pledge their support, get involved, and/or offer assistance to help us achieve our strategic ambitions. A copy of our new digital Homelessness Charter can be accessed via <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/18960/Homelessness-Charter>.
6. An **Integrated Impact Assessment** has now also been produced which considers the likely impact of this Strategy and Charter to ensure we are not discriminating against anyone and promoting equality of opportunity. This outlines a number of mitigating

actions to be undertaken as we progress with the actions set out under each aim within our Strategy. A copy of this document can be found via [Homelessness Strategy and Charter Impact Assessment](#).

7. **Allocations and Tenancy Review.** The first phase of this review has now also been concluded. This included a **review of our Lettings Policy and procedures** alongside a **review of our Strategic Tenancy Policy**. It also included a review of our existing Choice Based Lettings Scheme. An Allocations and Tenancy Review Report was produced which outlines the detailed findings from this review and key recommendations. A copy of this report can be accessed via [Allocations Tenancy Review Campbell Tickell Final Report](#).
8. Key findings and recommendations from this Allocations and Tenancy Review were shared with the Tyne and Wear Homes Programme Board, including the recommendation from our review, that Gateshead develops its own Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme. The Tyne and Wear Homes Partnership has also now consulted with its partners on the future of the partnership and all partners have since agreed to disband the partnership in 2022. This will mean that Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and North Tyneside will each operate their own Choice Based Lettings Scheme, when the partnership draws to a close.
9. Campbell Tickell have now also been commissioned to work with officers, partners, customers, and Members to develop our new Allocations Policy and new Tenancy Strategy for Gateshead. To take this forward Campbell Tickell are facilitating a number of workshops, where officers, members, customers, providers and wider partners will contribute to the drafting of the new Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy and understand the impact to residents and the wider community.

Proposal

10. We have drafted a project plan for phase 2 which **aligns our Homelessness Review together with our Allocations and Tenancy Review** under our new overarching 'Housing Improvement Programme'. This is to ensure we deliver a whole system response, to best meet our customer needs/demand. The review will aim to deliver the following outcomes:
 - Cabinet and Council approval of our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Homelessness Charter, Gateway, and an allocations Marketplace for Gateshead – January 2022.
 - A launch of the Homelessness Strategy and Charter – February 2022.
 - A new Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy - April 2022.
 - A planned and co-ordinated withdrawal from the Tyne and Wear Homes Scheme, alongside other partners - May 2022.
 - Recommissioning and remodelling of homelessness accommodation and support - September 2022.
 - A new Gateway and Gateshead Allocations Marketplace - March 2023
11. As outlined within the key milestones above, it is also proposed that the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Charter** are launched in February 2022. An Annual Delivery Plan will also be developed to sit alongside the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This will include all of the actions set out, under each of the four strategic aims. The Homelessness Forum will lead the

implementation of the delivery plan in collaboration with both internal and external partners.

12. Implementation of the strategy will be monitored through the Strategic Housing Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Corporate Performance Management & Improvement Framework.

Recommendations

13. Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Recommend to Council that the Gateshead Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Homelessness Charter be approved, and the strategy be included as part of the Councils policy framework.
- (ii) Approve the completion of a joint homelessness and allocations review, which will include delivery of the proposed outcomes/milestones as outlined above. This will include:
 - A new 'Gateshead Model' for allocations, which will include a 'marketplace' and a homelessness 'gateway' to accommodation and support.
 - Remodelling and recommissioning allocations and homelessness pathways, processes, systems and services to better meet customer need and demand.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To ensure the Council takes appropriate action to prevent and end homelessness, in all forms in Gateshead
- (ii) To deliver upon the aims set out in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 'Good jobs, homes, health and friends' and our strategic approach of 'Making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives'.
- (iii) To ensure services and pathways best meet the needs of our customers and deliver more efficient ways of working.
- (iv) To ensure we are meeting all related statutory and regulatory requirements.

CONTACT: Vicky Sibson extension: 3013
 Kevin Scarlett extension: 5306

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. Gateshead's strategic approach is set out in 'Making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives'. Within this strategy, the Council has pledged to put people and families at the heart of everything we do and to tackle inequality, so people have a fair chance.
2. Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 'Good jobs, homes, health and friends' also aims to reduce inequalities and improve health and wellbeing, for people living in our communities. A key aim of the strategy is to strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention. This includes a priority action to prevent homelessness and better understand its root causes and how we address them.
3. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness and to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 also legally obliges local authorities to assess and provide more meaningful assistance to all people who are eligible and homeless, or threatened with homelessness, irrespective of their priority need status.
4. The Housing Regulatory Standards also require us to let our properties in a fair, transparent and efficient way, make best use of our stock, reduce the amount of time properties are empty, address under occupation and overcrowding and to meet our strategic housing needs, including homelessness.

Background

5. It is a legal requirement to undertake a statutory homelessness review to inform the development of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. A copy of Gateshead's Statutory Homelessness Review, which has now been completed, can be found via [Homelessness Review Report](#).
6. This statutory review provides detailed findings from recent data analysis and information gathering, in addition to completed stakeholder and service user consultation. It shows that 'domestic abuse' is the biggest reason for homelessness in Gateshead, followed by 'family/friends unwilling to accommodate' and the ending of 'assured short hold tenancies' (usually via private landlord/lettings agent). Conclusions and recommendations from the review have been embedded within the strategies aims and actions.
7. The [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) sets out our vision to 'prevent and end homelessness, in all forms, in Gateshead'. The aims of the strategy will be delivered in partnership with others and to strengthen this approach, the strategy outlines an agreed common set of values and principles that will underpin its delivery. Our shared values will include:
 - Delivering on the rights and needs of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
 - Listening to those with experience of homelessness

- Enabling a personalised approach
- Providing high standards of communication, co-ordination and consistency in decisions
- Being fair and transparent

Our shared principles will include:

- Seeing potential, working with strengths
- Listening, learning and responding through co-production
- Working together, inclusively
- It's all about people

8. A new Gateshead Homelessness Forum will collaboratively take forward the delivery of this strategy and have committed to working to our strategic shared values and principles.
9. The strategy has 4 key aims:
 - **Aim 1 – Make homelessness a rare occurrence.** This aim is about early intervention to prevent homelessness and make this event a rare occurrence. We know that domestic abuse is the primary cause of homelessness in Gateshead, followed by friends or family being no longer willing, or able, to accommodate. The ending of private rented tenancies is also one of our leading causes of homelessness. Preventing homelessness for these reasons will therefore be a priority and the actions set out under this aim detail how we will achieve this.
 - **Aim 2 – Where homelessness occurs, there will be positive outcomes for people.** This aim is about intervening quickly to provide appropriate accommodation and support for those who are homeless. To achieve positive outcomes, the right accommodation and support will need to be provided at the right time. Reviewing accommodation and support services and developing a homelessness gateway to accommodation and support will be key to helping us deliver this aim.
 - **Aim 3 – No-one sleeping rough or in unsuitable accommodation.** This aim is about ending rough sleeping in Gateshead so that no-one is bedded down on the streets. It is also about intervening to prevent those who are at risk of rough sleeping ending up on the streets due to living in unsuitable accommodation.
 - **Aim 4 – Homelessness is a one-off occurrence.** This strategic aim is about preventing repeat homelessness and breaking the homelessness cycle. We need to ensure we have the most appropriate housing and support options for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as placing people in inappropriate accommodation can lead to repeat homelessness.
10. An **Annual Delivery Plan** will be developed to sit alongside the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Its purpose will be to capture and prioritise the actions Gateshead Council and its partners are taking to deliver the four key aims set out within the strategy. This will include making sure we are meeting any related grant or statutory requirements.
11. Some of the key actions outlined within the strategy include:

- Developing youth homelessness **joint working protocols with colleagues in social care** for those aged 16/17 and care leavers
 - Early intervention and greater **homelessness prevention focus for victims of domestic abuse** i.e. home security and outreach support
 - Undertake further needs analysis (Domestic Abuse, Young People and those with Multiple and Complex Needs) and **review/remodel supported accommodation and floating support to better match need/demand**. This will include 24/7 access to accommodation to prevent rough sleeping/use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - Develop **a new homelessness pathway** where referrals are made/coordinated via **a central 'Gateway'** with 'trusted assessments', a performance monitoring framework and a better understanding of needs/demand.
 - **Work with registered providers and private landlords** to increase housing options for those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness
 - **Implementing the changing futures programme** for those with multiple and complex needs, to inform learning and system change in Gateshead as well as regionally and nationally.
12. The **Homelessness Forum** will lead the delivery of the Strategy in collaboration with both internal and external partners, with the support of our new Strategic Housing Service. Implementation of the strategy will be monitored through the Strategic Housing Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Corporate Performance Management & Improvement Framework. Agreement is sought to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Gateshead, prior to seeking Council approval.
13. To support the delivery of the Strategy a new **Homelessness Charter** has been developed, which enables partners, businesses, services and members of the public to pledge their support, get involved, and/or offer assistance to help us achieve our strategic ambitions. A copy of our new digital Homelessness Charter can be accessed via this link <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/18960/Homelessness-Charter>.
14. The Homelessness Charter currently includes our vision, 4 key principles and options for:
- Reading our pledges
 - Viewing our Homelessness Strategy (once approved)
 - Signing up to the charter
 - Offering information on who we work with and advising on ways to help
 - Providing information on our new Homelessness Forum
15. An **Integrated Impact Assessment** has been produced which considers the likely impact of this Strategy and Charter to ensure we are not discriminating against anyone and promoting equality of opportunity. This outlines a number of mitigating actions to be undertaken as we progress with the actions set out under each aim within our Strategy. A copy of this document can be found via this link [Homelessness Strategy and Charter Impact Assessment](#).
16. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy includes actions that will need to be delivered on a systems-wide basis, involving the Council working closely with internal and external partners. This means working closely with Adult Social Care

and Children's Services as well as other partners including health, housing providers and the voluntary and community sector.

17. Gateshead is participating in the delivery of the Changing Futures programme over the next three years, aiming to improve outcomes for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, including homelessness. The learning from Changing Futures will inform the ongoing development and delivery of this strategy.
18. All homelessness accommodation and support across the borough has now been mapped so we have a full picture of what is available in terms of the physical aspects of properties, eligibility criteria and the support provided. We have also used feedback from the homelessness review to scope out an initial model for accommodation and support which can be shaped further as we gather more insight. A deeper dive of the data on domestic abuse has begun, with a domestic abuse working group to be set up to use this data insight, to further shape the model for this client group. We intend to do the same for Young People and for those with Multiple and Complex needs.
19. **Allocations and Tenancy Review.** The first phase of this review has now also been concluded. This included a **review of our Lettings Policy and procedures** alongside a review of **our Strategic Tenancy Policy**. It also included a review of our existing Choice Based Lettings Scheme. An Allocations and Tenancy Review Report was produced which outlines the detailed findings from this review and key recommendations. A copy of this report can be accessed via this link [Allocations Tenancy Review Campbell Tickell Final Report](#). Key findings included:
 - **Gaps in our supporting housing strategies**, including a lack of understanding of need and demand.
 - Current **policies are dated and a compliance risk**, no longer prioritising support for the most vulnerable.
 - Service offers, pathways and **customer journeys are unclear and fragmented** with a lack of support planning.
 - **Void processes require alignment with lettings and tenancy management** for effective end to end pathway delivery.
 - Delivery **quality is impacted** in terms of quality, outcomes and efficiency by **having two partially interfacing systems**
 - The **ability of the Tyne and Wear Homes Partnership, to deliver what Gateshead needs is limited** and its intended direction of travel will exasperate issues for us.
 - There is **inadequate support for tenants** in establishing tenancies.
 - **Services are siloed and delivery fragmented**, with too many specialist support areas with no end-to-end ownership
20. To address this the following key recommendations are being proposed, to develop:
 - A '**Gateshead Housing Model**'
 - A **whole system response** – that includes support commissioners, registered providers and private landlords
 - **Policies and processes** focused on delivering **solely to meet the needs of Gateshead**
 - Consolidated '**pool**' of **specialist and general housing**
 - A **digital marketplace**, that enables self service

- A **coordinated approach to assessing housing and support needs**, commissioning and allocating solution, with oversight of the customer journey
 - Improved **formalised partnership working with accommodation providers through a new Tenancy Strategy**
 - A **single allocations scheme/policy with registered providers** working with us collaboratively
21. Key findings and recommendations from this Allocations and Tenancy Review were shared with the Tyne and Wear Homes Programme Board, including the recommendation from our review, that Gateshead develops its own Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme. The Tyne and Wear Homes Partnership has also now consulted with its partners on the future of the partnership and all partners have since agreed to disband the partnership in 2022. This will mean that Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and North Tyneside will each operate their own Choice Based Lettings Scheme, when the partnership draws to a close.
22. We have also now shared the key findings of the Allocations and Tenancy Review with our Lettings Team and key cross service leads. Feedback has been positively received, with both operational staff and managers keen to be involved in the next stages of this review.
23. The costs associated with leaving the Tyne and Wear Homes Partnership and migrating data across are currently being discussed with the existing systems provider and the current partnership to minimize the financial impact, which is likely to be minimal. Ongoing costs associated with a new solution will be met from the existing budget.
24. Campbell Tickell have now been commissioned to work with officers, partners, customers, and Members to develop our new Allocations Policy and new Tenancy Strategy for Gateshead. To take this forward Campbell Tickell are facilitating a number of workshops, where officers, members, customers, providers and wider partners will contribute to the drafting of the new Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy and understand the impact to residents and the wider community.
25. We have now drafted a project plan for phase 2 which **aligns our Homelessness Review together with our Allocations and Tenancy Review** under our new overarching 'Housing Improvement Programme'. This is to ensure we deliver a whole system response, to best meet our customer needs/demand. The review will aim to deliver the following outcomes:
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 - A new Gateway and Gateshead Allocations Marketplace - March 2023
26. Internal staffing resources are being identified to deliver phase 2 of this review. This will require the release of relevant staff from current duties and reprioritization of

existing workloads. This will have an inevitable impact on service delivery and performance over the short term. Any potential financial implications will feed into the overall resource requirements for the Housing Improvement Plan, as part of the current budget setting process.

27. Aligning existing reviews underway to form one Homelessness and Allocations Review, with the key milestones as outlined within this report, will further support the delivery of the aims set out within our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This will include securing agreement with Registered Providers a new Tenancy Strategy and Allocations Policy for Gateshead. It will also aim to deliver an improved customer journey, greater value for money and earlier intervention to prevent more costly interventions from health and social care services.

Consultation

28. This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and our new Homelessness Charter have both been developed collaboratively, in partnership with internal and external partners. Related feedback, data and information was sought through internal and external homelessness working groups, workshops, returns and surveys. This also included seeking feedback and information from those with lived experience of homelessness. All of the information considered and consultation which has taken place, that has contributed to the development of the Strategy and Charter, can be found in our Statutory Homelessness Review and supporting reports.
29. Consultation on the drafted strategy has now also taken place with Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities Homelessness Advisors in addition to:
 - Strategic Housing Board
 - Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Housing Providers Partnership
 - Community Safety Board
 - Domestic Abuse Forum
30. On 3rd November we launched Gateshead's first Homelessness Forum, with both internal and external invitees from a range of services including (but not limited to) Registered Housing Providers, Homelessness Accommodation and Support Providers, Housing Options, Social Care, Commissioning, Health Services, Police and Probation. During its first meeting, members of the Forum were consulted on the Strategy, Charter and Homelessness Review Report.
31. Following consultation, the response to the drafted strategy and charter has been very positive, particularly around it having four simple key aims. Key amendments have included:
 - The actions under each aim were reviewed and amended to reflect current programmes of work including recent successful grant applications
 - There is now a greater focus on Young People, Domestic Abuse and Multiple and Complex Needs within outlined actions.
 - Aim 2 has been simplified to positive outcomes as it was felt too much focus on timeliness in an earlier draft, could rush people through the system who may still need more intensive support, thereby risking tenancy sustainment/repeat homelessness.

- Design/graphics – we had a lot of feedback from internal and external partners on this, particularly the visuals on our gateway and person-centred approach, which are now reflective of the views received.

Alternative Options

32. The alternative is to not produce a strategy and operate without a clear set of shared policy objectives, against which decisions on priorities and resources can be made and/or not to undertake a joint review of Homelessness and Allocations.

Implications of Recommended Option

33. **Resources:**

a) Financial Implications

- i. The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that the costs for external support for the Homelessness and Allocations review, data migration costs and ongoing systems costs can be met through existing budgets
- ii. Resources required to deliver phase 2 of the Homelessness and Allocations Review are being considered as part of the current budget setting process.
- iii. There will be a need to undertake a major recommissioning of relevant accommodation and support services. Current providers have been advised accordingly and a commissioning strategy will be concluded as part of phase 2 of the review.
- iv. Both the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Homelessness and Allocations Review will aim to seek more efficient use of existing resources to deliver greater value for money and prevent wider costs to health and social care services with earlier intervention, improved customer pathways and greater joined up working. This will also support delivery of the Council's Thrive vision and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

b) Human Resources Implications

- i. Internal staff and trade unions have been briefed on the broader Housing Improvement Programme and several employee engagement sessions have been held. Further briefing sessions will be held with operational staff within homelessness and allocations related services to raise awareness of the scope of the review, reasons for it and to seek further engagement and consultation.
- ii. Staffing resources will need to be identified to deliver phase 2 of this Homelessness and Allocations review. This will require the release of relevant staff from current duties and reprioritization of existing workloads. This will have an inevitable impact on service delivery and performance over the short term.
- iii. The impacts of disbanding the Tyne and Wear Homes Partnership and developing a new allocations and homelessness service on existing staffing resources, job roles and current ways of working will be considered as phase 2 progresses. At all times staff and trade unions will be involved in any change management implications.

c) Property Implications

- i. Through the development of a new Gateshead Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy (in partnership with our Registered Providers) and the development of a Gateshead 'Marketplace' for housing allocations we are aiming to have a broad impact on improving our communities and neighbourhoods, through greater partnership working with others to deliver our strategic aims.
- ii. This Homelessness and Allocations Review will also seek to make best use of our existing stock, reduce the volume of empty properties (and length of time empty) and reduce anti-social behaviour.

34. **Risk Management Implications** - the risk management implications of the strategy and review will be assessed by the Strategic Director of Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities as part of the Housing Improvement Programme management process and governance arrangements.
35. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – the strategy and review will aim to reduce inequalities within Gateshead. An integrated impact assessment has been carried out to identify potential implications and impacts related to protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.
36. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – the strategy and review will contribute to the achievement of reducing crime and disorder in Gateshead.
37. **Health Implications** - the strategy and review will contribute to the achievement of improving health and wellbeing outcomes for local people and aim to reduce inequalities within Gateshead.
38. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – the strategy and review will contribute to the achievement of having sustainable communities and neighbourhoods within Gateshead.
39. **Human Rights Implications** - there are no Human Rights implications relating to this report.
40. **Ward Implications** - all wards within the borough are covered by this strategy and review.