Birmingham City Council

Report to Homes Overview & Scrutiny Committee

8 May 2025

Title:	**Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-29 Annual Review**
Lead Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness
Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Not applicable
Report Author:	Stephen Philpott, Director of Housing Solutions & Support Stephen.Philpott@birmingham.gov.uk Naomi Morris, Acting Director of Regulation & Strategy Naomi.Morris@birmingham.gov.uk
Authorised by:	Paul Langford, Executive Director for City Housing City Housing Directorate Paul.Langford@birmingham.gov.uk
Is this a Key Decision?	No
If this is a Key Decision, is this decision listed on the Forward Plan?	Not applicable
Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Is this a Late Report?	No
Reason(s) why Late:	Not Applicable
Is this decision eligible for 'call in?'	Not Applicable

If not eligible, please provide reason(s):	Not Applicable
Wards:	All Wards
Does this report contain exempt or confidential information?	No

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Councils' Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 was approved by Cabinet in July 2024. City Housing committed to undertaking an annual review of the strategy as a means of exploring the achievements and challenges across each of the priority areas and to track progress against the commitments made.

1.2 This report fulfils this commitment and responds to the request made by Overview & Scrutiny Committee for an update on progress, by providing an overview of the key projects and actions started and delivered during year one, focusing primarily on areas of progress, as well as any notable challenges that have been a barrier to delivery.

2 COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

2.1 The report outlines the progress and wide range of activities BCC has delivered in the last twelve months and the actions planned for 25/26 onwards. The report sets out the challenges to making the necessary progress and the financial, legal and service risks that must be closely monitored, managed, and mitigated and which contribute to BCC's improvement journey.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Committee to:

3.1 Note and acknowledge the contents of this report and to provide constructive feedback on its contents.

3.2 Note and acknowledge the contents of the appendices.

3.3 Provide comment on the delivery plan and on any additional actions the Committee would like to see presented in the delivery plan.

4 KEY INFORMATION

Context

4.1 In January 2023, The Council launched its Housing Strategy. Priority 2 of the strategy sets out the intention that 'citizens can access and sustain the right home for them.' and committed to reviewing the Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2017), accepting that an up-to-date picture was required.

4.2 In accordance with this commitment and given the Council's statutory obligation to develop and publish a strategy that sets out interventions intended to tackle homelessness, a review of the previous strategy was completed and the Homelessness Partnership Board was re-established, ensuring good governance around the commitments of any future strategy.

4.3 Following in-depth consultation with these partners, citizens with lived experience of homelessness, and current Council tenants, the current strategy was developed and approved by Cabinet in June of 2024. The strategy is underpinned by the principle that homelessness is a debilitating and traumatic experience for citizens across society, and therefore, the goal should be to prevent homelessness whenever possible, and where it does occur, ensure that it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

4.4 Following Cabinet approval, a delivery plan was co-developed with key partners to help realise the aims of strategy, setting out specific actions that need to be carried out by the Council and partners across the lifecycle of the strategy, to help prevent and reduce homelessness.

4.5 Subsequently, actions have been assigned to appropriate action-owners, both within the Council and to external partners, the progress of which is monitored with an action-tracker, whereby action updates are requested quarterly and provided for review and consideration at each board meeting. Accordingly, the Homelessness Partnership Board acts as the governance function for the strategy and is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness.

4.6 The work of the Homelessness Partnership Board over the last 12 months, makes us the basis of this report. The report is designed to give the Committee insight on areas of progress and areas where more work is required. The report invites the Committee to comment on areas of activity, giving oversight of the work being undertaken to improve outcomes for households facing homelessness. The report is split into the three priority areas in the strategy: rare, brief and non-recurring.

4.7 This strategy is predicated on the level of demand in the city; whilst Government data confirms that Birmingham perform in the top 3 core cities for, successful prevention and successful relief outcomes, the number of presentations from residents experiencing homelessness remains static at circa 400 per week for both 2024 and 2025. This is compared with circa 300 presentations per week in 2023, showing a steady increase. Use of temporary accommodation continues

to increase with 6148 households accommodated in different forms of emergency accommodation in March 2025, in comparison with just over 5000 at the same time the year before. This strategy seeks to provide an update on the different solutions put in place to manage the demand in the city over a 5-year period.

5 Rare

5.1 Embedding a model of Early Intervention & Prevention

Achievements	Challenges
• The City Housing Directorate have delivered greater successful prevention outcomes for households facing homelessness than any other core city for the last 12 months, with an average of 57% (compared to the national average of 51%) • The new delivery model for libraries has been approved, supporting the new Homes & Money hub functions. This should support proactive, upstream and targeted advice to households at risk. Hubs are proposed per constituency, so services are equitable across the city. • A new senior responsible officer has been allocated in PPS to deliver activities around Education, Employment and Skills, linking this to inclusive growth, capitalising on relationships with developers and private investors. • The development of the virtual hub has been approved and will centralize citizen information, making it easier for frontline services to identify and support at-risk households. An IT supplier has been selected to deliver this. • The city's first Live & Work scheme has been launched by St Basils at the old Foyer building, providing 80 beds for young people who are working, between the ages of 16-25, freeing up much needed supported accommodation for those more vulnerable • The WMCA Homelessness Taskforce's award-winning approach has generated significant benefits for families (over £100,000 in benefits for 36 selected Birmingham families, from an original grant of £10,000), demonstrating the effectiveness of data-driven strategy. • A citywide response to the cost-of-living crisis has provided a safety net for those facing financial hardship in the city; this includes the delivery of over 300 warm welcome hubs	• Many households do not approach the Council until they become homeless, meaning opportunities for prevention are lost. The virtual hubs should go some way to tackle this, giving greater understanding of risk indicators before statutory services are required. • Much of the funding available to support financial inclusion is project based and time limited. Whilst outcomes have been significant, there is a lack of sustainability that is required for the levels of deprivation experienced in Birmingham. • Whilst advice resources are equitable across constituencies, the Council must consider that some communities require greater support than others and services must be flexible enough to respond to this. • The Assets Disposal Programme being delivered to support the Council's financial challenges has the potential to strip the community of vital support functions and assets, opportunities for community groups and voluntary sector agencies to take on these assets before they are disposed of elsewhere must be capitalised upon.

5.2 Delivering genuinely Affordable Homes

Achievements	Challenges
• A historic lack of tracking and governance and affordable delivery has been addressed. There are clear targets to deliver 1083 affordable homes per year, with all units tracked via a citywide pipeline. This includes schemes delivered by RPs and Developers on non-Council land. For 2024/2025, the city are within 95% of the target number for the first time since 2018. •All providers have signed up to the citywide nominations' agreement, which commits them to prioritising homeless households for allocation and increasing the availability of housing for those in need. • The Council have agreed the handover of previous BMHT schemes at Yardley Brook, Kings Norton Primrose, Long Nuke Road and Pool Farm to RPs, who have committed to deliver over 500 affordable homes on site, with a greater focus on social rent. For example, Midland Heart will deliver 298 affordable homes at Yardley Brook, with over ¾ of the scheme for social rent. • There are several schemes being brought forward for affordable homes that do not involve Council land; Vistry at City Housing and Clarion at Digbeth that have committed to a significant volume of social rented homes. These schemes are being tracked through the pipeline. • The Council appropriated Plot 9 at Perry Barr into the HRA, providing 213 units for social rent. Lettings began in April 2025 and targeted households under-occupying family homes.	• Reliance on external partners to deliver affordable homes, reduces the level of direct control the Council has. Strong relationships will enable negotiations to be more fruitful, but these must be fostered and maintained. • RPs and Developers are reliant on announcements on the grant funding programme post 2026 and how this will be administered. Government have released additional investment for 2026/2027 but there have been no announcements on the longer-term approach. • The way in which grant funding interacts with the planning process is not conducive to delivery, meaning that partners are electing to deliver homes through grant and not through s106, providing challenge for Planning Committee.

5.3 Effective Partnership Working

Achievements	Challenges
• Cllr Francis and the Deputy Leader continue to lobby Government on the importance of tackling challenges in the supported exempt sector and the importance of long-term, sustainable funding. The national consultation is out and will end on the 15th May, Birmingham will continue to work with partners to deliver a comprehensive response. • Cllr Francis has submitted a separate motion regarding the investment available from Government to identify suitable TA (temporary accommodation) options for families, following improved joint working arrangements with Shelter. • Other partnership work has focussed on the joint development of pre-eviction protocols, supporting the	•Progress with respect to incorporating peer network models in Birmingham has been slow, with a model for delivery required. The Council intend to work closely with colleagues at Birmingham Fair Housing Campaign and the Poverty Truth Commission to meaningfully involve residents with lived experience in decision making • The Council's call to action for statutory, voluntary, community and faith groups to help address gaps in service has been somewhat impacted by reductions in formal commissioning. This has created additional resource gaps within partner organisations, leaving them unable to provide an increased service for the Council.

preventing eviction panel citywide. The panel has been promoted at BSHP (Birmingham Social Housing Partnership), with WHG (Walsall Housing Group) and Citizen Housing also buying into this approach. •The Council have managed to sustain buy in and support from voluntary sector agencies and partners, despite reductions in supported housing commissioning. This has led to the purchase of Washington Court from Trident, the mobilisation of Live & Work with St Basils and the potential lease of Snowhill from Midland Heart. • Regular six weekly interaction continues between the Council and MHCLG, on the Council's approach to B&B reduction. These interactions are supportive and endorse the Council's delivery plan and approach. •Corporate partnerships across the Council remain strong; a Corporate Migration Board works as an example of this, pulling together agencies across the Council to focus on effective resettlement for households impacted by migration.	

Topics presented and discussed at The Homelessness Partnership Board (Oct + April):

- Emergency Beds & Outreach Commissioning – Paulina Colomby (BCC)
- Housing Supply – Naomi Morris (BCC)
- Housing Allocations – Hayley Prime (BCC)
- Homelessness Prevention – Paulina Colomby (BCC)
- Homelessness Prevention Action Plan: Updates, Risks & Issues – Ben Brotherton (BCC)
- Regional Perspective – Jean Templeton (St Basils)
- Supported Exempt Accommodation Consultation Overview – Naomi Morris (BCC)
- Supported Exempt Accommodation: Operational Environment – Collette Campbell (BCC)
- Early Help and Corporate Parenting – Carolyn Connor & Liz Davenport (Birmingham Children's Trust)
- HSS Performance Review – Stephen Philpott (BCC)

6 Brief

6.1 Delivery approach in Temporary Accommodation

Achievements	Challenges
• The Council launched its TA Delivery Approached paper to Cabinet in September 2024. This paper was approved and allowed the Council to mobilise new interventions, such as the 10 years plus 1 leasing scheme, increased use of Regulation 10, homeless centre acquisitions and conversions from single to family exempt accommodation. • The 10 year plus 1 leasing scheme is due to begin at the end of April 2025, with the first 175 of the existing private sector leasing providers to be migrated across to the 10 year plus 1 lease. A new procurement exercise is underway, ending in June 2025 to enable new providers to access this model moving forwards. • Regulation 10 arrangements with 3 new hotels have been signed and approved. This significantly reduces the rates that the Council are paying for nightly paid accommodation • New homeless centres are being acquired at Washington Court, Norman Power Centre and a potential lease at Snowhill (previously supported accommodation at Midland Heart). This will release circa 200 units which will provide move on for households in B&B • RPs are supported the Council on a lease and repair model of buildings that are suitable for TA; Northbrook a 12 bed council owned property in Northfield will act as the pilot for this model, working with trusted provider Spring Housing Association. •Following a scaled back acquisitions program, the HRA is now supporting general needs acquisitions. This has allowed the service to continue to purchase large family homes; 300 additional over the last 18 months. Circa £60m has been allocated in the HRA Business Plan this year to support this work.	• Mobilisation of these new interventions is required at pace, in the context of a significant resource reduction in the Housing Solutions & Support team. IRP funding has supported the use of temporary PM support through consultants to mobilise these activities as quickly as possible. • The majority of these interventions require a reliance on the HRA (where applicable within ring-fencing guidelines). The Council need to continue to balance the pressures in TA with the pressures on the HRA to ensure that neither service suffers from the impact of delivering these new approaches, or the savings that sit alongside them. • In March 2024, the number of households in B&B for over 6 weeks was recorded at 448, whereas the number for March 2025 was 658. The increase can be explained somewhat by the wind up the GF acquisitions programme, leading to an alternative approach being submitted to Cabinet in September 2024

6.2 Tackling the growth of Supported Exempt Accommodation (SEA)

Achievements	Challenges
•Council leaders, including Cllr Francis and the Deputy Leader have written to the Government requesting clarity on funding and speeding up the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory) Oversight Act. This communication reinforces the continued cross political support in tackling the impacts of supported exempt growth. • The Government's consultation on the Supported Housing Oversight Act began February 2025, ending in May 2025. This gives the Council ample time to provide detailed feedback on the proposed operating guidance. • Funding for SEA Quality Standards has been extended for 12 months, which will help SHIP (Supported Housing in Partnership) work of improving standards and developing a benchmark for supported housing. The Quality Standards will also employ initiatives to target providers that can assist with provision that better meets the needs of those approaching the housing solutions and support service. •In the absence of clarity around future funding arrangements, the Council have allocated Homelessness Prevention Grant to support the continuation of the SHIP pilot programme. This ended formally in March 2025. • Birmingham has over 9700 properties and 30,000 claimants for supported exempt accommodation, showing the scale of the issue. Despite this, the Council partnership has saved £8.3m in overpaid Housing Benefit and improved over 3000 properties by removing hazards and decommissioning sub-standard provision.	• The supported exempt sector in Birmingham has continued to grow, with over 30,000 live claims, in comparison with circa 24,000 this time last year. This is attributed in part to the delay in the consultation and subsequent operating guidelines being released. •The delayed consultation on the Supported Housing (regulatory oversight) Act 2023 and funding uncertainty jeopardizes SHIP activities. A £700k underspend (approved by S151) allows SHIP to continue for six months, hoping for additional funding from MHCLG. • Lack of certainty around interim funding arrangements from Government has prevented progress with respect to ensuring all services utilise the preferred provider list (supported exempt). This reduces our ability to prevent rogue landlords from operating. • The SEA sector grows locally without the Act's implementation, raising community concerns about standards of service provision. The RSH (Regulator for Social Housing has not acted on providers with Notices of Concern or Regulatory Judgements.

6.3 Communication and Operational Change

Achievements	Challenges
• A communications plan has been developed to ensure regular and accurate information, advice and guidance is issued to citizens, with a view to prevent homelessness and supporting self-service. • Agreement to work with partners to deliver a roadshow that will provide up to date housing information and myth busting with partners and residents. Collaboration with Birmingham Fair Housing Campaign and Shelter supports this work. • In response to deficiencies identified by citizens, cultural sensitivity and humility training has been added to the 2025-26 forward plan, with trauma-informed care principles to be incorporated, acting on resident feedback. • In pursuit of other service improvements, efforts to embed recommendations from Campbell Tickell's review of Housing Solutions and Support service have been undertaken and are regularly tracked and monitored to demonstrate effectiveness. • A full review of the Council's Allocations Policy has been completed, with changes geared towards reducing reliance on the housing register, including maintaining Band B for homeless	• Reduction in resources to support savings plans has impacted motivation and morale within the team. This has been further exacerbated by recent attacks at the Housing Options Centre (Newtown). • Progress on the WMCA race action work, launched in 2022 has stalled due to the change in Mayor and operational changes ongoing at the WMCA.

households accepting private rented properties, auto-bidding, and quotas for certain cohorts. • The Accommodation Finding Team (AFT) have delivered over 600 private rented sector properties, working with landlords to increase lettings in the private rented sector. Further plans in place to expand the team to continue to increase outcomes in this area.	

Topics presented and discussed at The Homelessness Partnership Board (December):

- Temporary Accommodation Move-on - Jennifer Tennant-Foster (BCC)
- Rough Sleeping - Jasvinder Bishop (BCC)
- Exempt Accommodation Pilot – Natalie Allen (SIFA Fireside)
- Regional Perspective – Jean Templeton (St Basils)
- HSS Performance Review – Stephen Philpott (BCC)

7 Non-Recurring

7.1 Pathways for 'Hard to Reach' Groups

Achievements	Challenges
• Adult Social Care has commissioned health and wellbeing services for vulnerable adults experiencing multiple disadvantages. These services are tailored to promote independence, helping residents with a history of homelessness to maintain their accommodation. • The Youth Hub, provided via St Basils has been re-commissioned, providing a service for young people with complex needs, either homeless or at significant risk of homelessness. • A Corporate Migration Board has been developed to ensure re-settlement opportunities are maximised for citizens who have moved into the city through migration. This reduces the risk of homelessness further down the line. • With respect to provisions in place to prevent child homelessness, revised protocols are in progress with amendments suggested in collaboration with Birmingham Children's Trust. The action remains within timescale, with BCT (Birmingham Children's Trust) reporting no risks.	• Some services haven't been re-commissioned because of the Council's financial position, creating gaps. Need to find a joint solution to bridge these gaps. • Progress with respect to developing protocols for early identification of at-risk individuals in healthcare settings has been slow due to difficulty in assigning an action owner. A collaborative response is needed to advance this strategy.

7.2 A Tailored Approach to Rough Sleeping

Achievements	Challenges
• Early progress has been made by promoting available services to the Community Safety Partnership meetings, making partners more aware of what support is already available for rough sleepers, rather than simply taking an enforcement approach • An impact assessment of RSI (Rough Sleeping Initiative) funded initiatives was undertaken in December 2024, with market engagement completed in January 2025, and recommissioning in April 2025. This took into consideration the learning from the previous rounds of funding and helped establish where any future funding would be best utilised. • This work has gone on to influence the new rough sleeping framework, the actions of which will include new contracts to be awarded through the RSI initiative in March 2025. This will enable new services to have better coordination, including links to Street link reporting, and the use of social media to inform homeless individuals. Outreach services have also been commissioned through the framework. New provision will have better coordination and include co-location with other services. •Partnership work with Public Health and Adult Social Care to map out all services currently supporting those who sleep rough underway. • Now that funding notifications from the Homeless Prevention Grant and RSI has been received, work is being done internally and externally to see how the grant can be best used. Existing framework can be used to commission services supporting cohorts eligible for Housing First, however this will place a stronger emphasis on clients engaging with services.	• Rough sleeping and homelessness are increasing nationally, affecting Birmingham too. Alternative measures for improvement are needed as street counts may not accurately reflect the impact of provisions. • While plans are in place for additional homeless centres down the line, the current gap in provision for single homeless households may cause an issue to the service. • Although information regarding funding via the Homeless Prevention Grant and RSI has been received, additional and sustainable funding for the service is likely required, and how this will be obtained continues to be a challenge.

7.3 Supporting Re-settlement

Achievements	Challenges
• Migration Partnership Board has been established and will help prioritize, identify and allocate resources, with the aim of improving the support for sanctuary seekers, helping them settle and avoid recurring homelessness. • Background work is also being done with the Home Office to calculate the cost of migration to Local Authorities, before this can be used to lobby government. Once drafted, the board can revisit its key aims and look to improve the current offer. • A Sanctuary Hub has been commissioned to provide dedicated support for migrants. The Hub is now in development	• There is some funding available for resettlement work, but this funding is finishing soon and there is no guarantee of funding thereafter. • Greater collaboration is needed between services to lobby Government around the costs of migration, the lack of support in place for the citizens experiencing this and the long-term risk of homelessness. • General work is required to form a partnership response and to put these issues more front and centre with respect to priority.

7.4 Effective service provision for survivors of Domestic Abuse (DA)

Achievements	Challenges
• Housing Solutions Delivery Model has been revisited, to align with the recently approved DA strategy, ensuring that survivors of domestic abuse receive appropriate support, helping them to maintain stable housing and avoid recurring homelessness. Proposals for new ways of working were shared and approved by informal cabinet on 6th January 2025. • As part of the new ways of working, the principles of the DA strategy will be embedded in the delivery of services sitting internally within the Housing Options Centre as part of remodelled housing options. • This has also been influenced by best practice and recommendations obtained as part of the Housing First pilot, which has been imbedded into the new delivery model. • The City Housing Directorate are progressing in their aspirations to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, working with industry experts to ensure the Council's housing services support survivors in line with best practice recommendations. • Increased proactive visiting is underway within the Housing Management service, meaning that officers entering Council homes have an opportunity to identify early signs of abuse and signpost appropriately for support.	• The promise to implement principles from the Domestic Abuse (DA) strategy into new ways of working hasn't been tested yet and may need adjustments once implemented and the Housing Options Centre re-opens. • Early help and family support services have been reduced which is likely to impact on the Council's ability to identify abuse early and appropriately signpost.

Topics presented and discussed at The Homelessness Partnership Board (December):

- Public Health Commissioning & Addiction recovery support - Karl Beese (BCC) & Tanya McGougan (Change Grow Live)
- Renter's Rights Bill – Lesley Williams (BCC)
- Resettlement & support – Marsela Hoxha (BCC)
- Homelessness Prevention Action Plan: Updates, Risks & Issues – Ben Brotherton (BCC)

8 Finance

8.1 The Housing Solutions Support service have a controllable budget of £33.9m per year. There is also £8.8m of Council funding directed to the Early Intervention & Prevention programme with circa £2.5m received through external grants. The Council receive Homelessness Prevention Grant amounting to circa £18m which should directly support the Council to prevent homelessness. £14m of this grant was already included in the Council's budget, with £4m provided as additional.

8.2 The budget for Housing Solutions & Support is impacted by savings plans. The Directorate are on track to deliver £6.3m savings for 2024/2025, with a further

£18.2m in 2025/2026 and £9.2m in 2026/2027. Savings that have already been delivered have reduced the service head count by 36 FTE.

8.3 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 has no direct financial implications, in the sense that the strategy is a broader plan to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring, and does not make any financial commitment within it. However, it must be noted that the resources across the city to deliver on the commitments within the strategy have been reduced and therefore the delivery plan must remain flexible so that the Council can appropriately prioritise based on service need and demand.

9 Legal

9.1 Statutory obligations on Local Authorities in relation to supporting households impacted by homelessness are stipulated in the Housing Act 1996 and revised by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which extended and introduced new duties to homeless households. To fulfil these obligations, the Council has a legal responsibility to develop a Homelessness Strategy, setting out its approach to tackling homelessness.

9.2 If the council fails to comply with its duties in accordance with the Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Code of Guidance and LGSCO recommendations, the council may be subject to judicial review court proceedings and/or a Public Interest Report which will result in additional financial risk of compensation and court costs becoming payable to the applicant and their legal advisors.

10 Equalities

10.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed in support of this strategy. The EIA identifies vulnerable groups with an increased risk of homelessness due to their protected characteristic alongside mitigations and the positive impacts of this strategy for these groups.

10.2 The execution of this strategy is the responsibility of the Homelessness Partnership Board. The Board will be responsible for undertaking annual equalities reviews through the collation of data, indicators, lived experience and wider monitoring information to consider whether the proposals of this strategy are meeting the needs of those identified as adversely impacted by homelessness owing to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Through these reviews further actions and mitigations will be proposed, delegated and shared when necessary to ensure the Council and key partners are meeting their legal obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty

11 Procurement

11.1 There are no direct procurement implications at this stage. Any future procurement activity required for the implementation of the strategy will be

undertaken in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Governance Rules.

12 People Services

12.1 There are no direct HR implications because of this report. Any additional resource required to support the delivery of the strategy will be subject to spend control processes, to include s.151 officer sign off.

13 Corporate Parenting

13.1 The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 aims to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people. This considers the need to provide dedicated support to families with dependent children, particularly the circa 9000 children under 18, residing in Temporary Accommodation.

14 APPENDICES

14.1 Appendix 1: Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 - Delivery Plan Action-Tracker