



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE - 12 MARCH 2025
Subject	PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2025-2028
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing, Interim Executive Director Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Caroline Clissold, Business Manager Housing Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To present a new Preventing Homelessness Strategy to support the councils statutory duties towards those households facing homelessness
Annexes	Annex A – Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2025 –2028 Annex B - Action Plan Annex C – Equality Impact Statement (EIA)
Recommendation(s)	That Executive resolves to: I. Approve the implementation of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2025-2028
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• A Good Quality of Life for All• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	Executive Member for Finance, Chief Executive, Director of Place, Chief

Consultation	Finance Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services, Interim Executive Director, Interim Managing Director (Publica), Internal and External Stakeholders
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The strategy outlines the aims and objectives that West Oxfordshire will implement to prevent and reduce homelessness and therefore reduce the use of expensive and inappropriate B&B type accommodation
- 1.2** Local authorities have the statutory duties that they must adhere to in order respond to and prevent homelessness which were introduced in the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017. HRA increased new duties including the requirement to prevent homelessness.
- 1.3** In response the council has invested in ensuring that the Housing Team have the right services and resources to tackle this often-complex problem.
- 1.4** Although homelessness is rising across the country, which is also reflected within the district, West Oxfordshire has had many successes since the HRA was introduced. This investment in resources and services has meant that there has been a significant reduction of rough sleeping to low to zero numbers at any one time.
- 1.5** For 2025-2028 therefore there must be a strong focus on preventing homelessness at the earliest possible stage to achieve the aim of reducing temporary accommodation usage.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Section 2(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to undertake regular reviews of homelessness within its area. Section 1(4) requires local authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy based on the results of this review.
- 2.2** The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced significant changes to how local authorities must statutorily assess and support households who are both at threat of homelessness (the Prevention Duty) and to those that become homeless (the Relief Duty).
- 2.3** To support local authorities with these duties, each council receives an annual ringfenced Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) which sets out three key outcomes:
 - Embed the Homelessness Reduction Act by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness and rough sleeping
 - Reduce the number of families in unsuitable temporary accommodation by maximising family homelessness prevention.
 - Reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families and eliminate family B&B placements beyond the statutory six-week limit.
- 2.4** Any Preventing Homelessness strategy must therefore be mindful of both the legislation and the ringfenced conditions of the HPG.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** A full review of the increasing demands on the Housing service and client groups most at risk of homeless has been undertaken.

3.2 A review of available emergency accommodation, countywide services, Supported Accommodation pathways, and longer-term housing options has also been undertaken to inform the Aims and Priorities included in the new Preventing Homelessness Strategy.

3.3 The strategy sets out 4 Key Aims and Priorities:

Priority 1	Preventing Homelessness
Priority 2	Establishing effective partnerships and working arrangements.
Priority 3	Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs.
Priority 4	Increasing Accommodation Options

3.4 The adopted West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2031 describes housing provision as critically important and sets out ambition to provide 15,950 homes throughout the plan period. The plan describes the importance of protecting the existing stock in meeting the housing needs of our residents

3.5 The Preventing Homelessness Strategy will work alongside other strategies to increase accommodation options such as the Long-Term Empty Homes Strategy 2024-2029

3.6 A full Action Plan has also been developed to chart progress of the short-term and long-term aims of the Strategy

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 An annual Homelessness Prevention Grant is awarded to each local authority to assist in preventing homelessness.

4.2 A separate Update on Funding for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Executive Report has been prepared which outlines the funding allocation for West Oxfordshire in more detail.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Section 2(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to undertake regular reviews of homelessness within its area.

5.2 Section 1(4) requires local authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy based on the results of this review.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 This strategy seeks to define how the Council will meet its statutory duties to Prevent and Relieve homelessness, ensure that rough sleeping is kept to a minimum, but preferable to zero. Expanding accommodation options to meet rising demand is also a key focus for the Council.

6.2 Failure to prevent homelessness occurring will result in further rises in the use of expensive and inappropriate B&B, which is both detrimental to the client and has severe financial implications for the Council.

6.3 A strong, person-centred Prevention approach is therefore essential, for both the best interests of residents and the Council.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 1.1. An equalities impact assessment has been completed that show no negative impact on those who shared a protected characteristic and those who do not.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None

(END)