

Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

17 March 2026

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Cabinet - Non-key Decision



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Cabinet Member	Cllr Robin Betts, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy
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Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval of a draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan for both Member and stakeholder consultation.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance.
- 2.2 Preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping is a key priority area for the Council both in terms of having a positive impact on those who find themselves at risk and managing the cost to the Council.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet to **APPROVE** the draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 attached at Annex 1 for consultation.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all Local Authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a full review of all forms of homelessness in the district, which should be reviewed and updated every 4 years. This was further extended in 2018 to include rough sleeping which must be considered as part of

the overall strategic objectives. To date the Council has had actions for the delivery of the Council's homelessness service incorporated within the adopted Housing Strategy, however the ambition is to now review and produce a standalone document. The review and the subsequent strategy produced will set out how the Council will continue to tackle an increasing demand for homelessness services and will aim to ensure that homelessness is prevented at the earliest opportunity, and where that is not possible to ensure there is a range of housing options available for those who have lost their homes.

5 Proposal

5.1 A draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed and is attached at **Annex 1**.

5.2 The Government have recently set out its long-term vision for homelessness in the “National Plan to end Homelessness” including an action plan based on five pillars which are:

- Universal prevention
- Targeted prevention
- Preventing crisis
- Improving emergency responses
- Recovery and preventing repeat homelessness

5.3 This new Government plan and approach form the policy basis for Tonbridge & Malling BC's new strategy.

5.4 Within the strategy there are four priorities as below:

- Priority 1 - To prevent homelessness earlier and support those who are at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes.
- Priority 2 - To minimise the use of emergency and temporary accommodation, reduce the reliance on nightly paid out of area temporary accommodation and reduce the numbers requiring temporary accommodation.
- Priority 3 – To build on the excellent work already done to maintain the low levels of rough sleeping with the aim of achieving zero rough sleepers in the district.
- Priority 4 – To work with partners collaboratively to prevent homelessness.

- 5.5 For each priority, aims and objectives along with outcomes to measure performance are detailed.
- 5.6 An annual action plan will also be developed and monitored, and outcomes will be reported to Members via the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee. The proposed Year 1 action plan is attached at **Annex 2**.
- 5.7 An evidence base has also been collated and is attached at **Annex 3**. The evidence gathered through regular performance monitoring, mandatory reporting to Government etc has informed the priorities and actions and this will be kept under review through the life of the strategy to feed into the action plan as required.

6 Other Options

- 6.1 No other options have been considered as it is a legal requirement to carry out a review of homelessness in the district and to have in place a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. To take a “do nothing” approach would place the Council at risk of challenge and a breach of statutory requirements for not developing this document.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 7.1 In a climate where the cost of homelessness services is rising, failure to effectively review, forecast demand and plan homelessness services or meet statutory requirements through the production of a strategy may lead to reputational damage, late approaches to the service which limits the opportunities to prevent the loss of homes, and potential rises in the numbers in temporary accommodation.
- 7.2 The actions contain cost implications but the majority of these would likely be met by using existing resources and grants.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 Not having a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy places the Council at risk of legal challenge as a strategy is a statutory requirement.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to review homelessness in their district and formulate and publish a strategy based on the results. Whilst the Council considered previously that it had met this requirement through having a specific homelessness section and action plan within our main Housing Strategy, having reviewed the legislative requirements it is considered that this approach may not meet them and hence therefore a standalone strategy is now being put in place.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 A range of key partners and stakeholders will be consulted once the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is agreed by Cabinet.
- 10.2 A focussed on-line discussion session with all Members will also be planned for April/May 2026 to allow Member input ahead of the final draft strategy being presented to Cabinet in summer 2026.
- 10.3 Key areas for consultation will be the priorities and objectives as well as how stakeholders/partners can add value to our work.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 Once the draft strategy is approved a period of consultation will take place in April/May 2026. A final draft of the strategy will be presented to Cabinet in summer 2026. The strategy will then be implemented.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

12.1.1 None

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.2.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has not yet been analysed, but a full impact assessment will be completed and will be concluded after consultation has taken place and will be presented alongside the final draft Strategy.

12.3 Other If Relevant

- Healthy Lifestyles

- 12.3.1 Not having a home can impact in all areas of a person's life. It can affect mental and physical health and wellbeing, children's development, and places households under immense pressure. This strategy will assist in improving health and wellbeing for those in housing need.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy Annex 2 – Year 1 action plan Annex 3 – Evidence base