



CABINET

Subject Heading:

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Martin Lardner – Cabinet Member for Housing

ELT Lead:

Patrick Odling-Smee - Director of Living Well

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Policy context:

This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt Havering Council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029. The strategy sets out the Council's updated approach to preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping, improving the experience of residents in temporary accommodation and embedding compassionate, trauma-informed, inclusive and timely housing services. It reflects the current pressures facing Havering, including more than 15,000 homelessness approaches over the last five years, the reduced availability of affordable private rented accommodation, wider housing development market pressures, continued reliance on temporary accommodation and the need to move from emergency responses towards earlier prevention, planned supply, stronger partnership working and clearer assurance. It also

aligns local delivery with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework, including outcomes relating to homelessness prevention, rough sleeping, children and family stability, housing quality and multiple disadvantage.

Financial summary:

The strategy does not itself commit the Council to new expenditure. Delivery will be managed through existing service budgets, approved programmes and future decisions where separate authority is required. The strategy is intended to support financial sustainability by strengthening prevention, reducing avoidable homelessness, reducing reliance on nightly paid and hotel accommodation over time, improving case progression and supporting the development of a more stable accommodation pathway.

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

When should this matter be reviewed?

Annual review through Housing Demand performance reporting and a formal strategy refresh before the end of 2028/29.

Reviewing OSC:

Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well	X
Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy	
Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council	

SUMMARY

- 1.** This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029.
- 2.** The strategy sets out four priorities: preventing and reducing rough sleeping by supporting people affected by trauma, family breakdown, exploitation and begging; ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030; improving the temporary accommodation experience; and providing compassionate, empathetic customer care that listens and takes action.
- 3.** The strategy responds to more than 15,000 homelessness approaches over the last five years, continued pressure from the collapse of affordable private rented supply, wider development market pressures, and the need to provide stable alternatives to emergency hotel and nightly paid accommodation.
 - 3.1.** The strategy also reflects the revised emphasis on inclusive access, child and family voice, exploitation linked to street begging, psychologically informed environments, stronger case closure assurance and alignment with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework.
- 4.** The strategy is intended to provide a clear delivery framework for 2026–2029, with progress monitored through service performance, practice assurance, partnership activity, Local Outcomes Framework measures and annual review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.** Cabinet is asked to resolve:
 - 5.1.** To approve and adopt the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029.
 - 5.2.** To note the four strategic objectives and the consolidated action plan set out in the strategy.
 - 5.3.** To delegate authority to the Director of Living Well, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make minor amendments to the final published strategy where required for accuracy, formatting or presentation, provided that such amendments do not materially change the agreed objectives.
 - 5.3.1.** To receive annual progress updates on delivery of the strategy through the appropriate governance and scrutiny arrangements.

REPORT DETAIL

Background and local context

6. Havering Council has received more than 15,000 approaches from households threatened with homelessness and individuals experiencing rough sleeping over the last five years. During the same period, the borough has experienced significant pressure on emergency accommodation, including the use of nightly paid and hotel placements.
7. These pressures have been driven by a combination of external factors, including the impact of COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis, rising rents, higher interest rates and reduced availability of affordable private rented accommodation.
8. Relationship breakdown remains the most common cause of homelessness in Havering. Other causes include loss of private rented accommodation, rent or mortgage arrears, unsafe accommodation, domestic abuse, mental ill-health, substance misuse, leaving care, leaving custody and other life transitions where support is not in place early enough.
 - 8.1. The strategy also recognises that the collapse of affordable private rented supply is linked to wider housing market and development pressures, including higher borrowing costs, rising construction costs, reduced investor confidence and delays or uncertainty in affordable housing delivery. Havering's response is therefore to move from dependence on market availability towards planned, controlled and purpose-led supply through acquisitions, modular accommodation, long-term leasing, build-to-rent nominations, QLM and partnership models.
9. The strategy recognises that homelessness is rarely caused by one issue. It requires early intervention, personalised support, effective case progression, stronger partnership working, inclusive access routes and a more stable supply of accommodation.
10. The strategy sets out the Council's vision that all residents in Havering should be supported through early intervention, comprehensive support and strong partnership working to prevent homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping wherever possible.
11. The four objectives are to support people affected by exploitation and rough sleeping; end the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030; provide a better temporary accommodation experience; and deliver compassionate, empathetic customer care that listens and takes action.

- 12.** The strategy builds on the learning from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2020–2025 and provides a three-year framework for delivery during a period of significant transition in housing demand, supply and national policy.
- 13.** Objective 1 focuses on relationship-based outreach, trauma-informed engagement and support for people affected by exploitation through begging, substance dependency, coercion, family breakdown and complex trauma. It recognises that street begging does not always equate to rough sleeping and that enforcement must be proportionate, targeted at harm and exploitation, and delivered alongside safeguarding, outreach and recovery pathways.
- 14.** Objective 2 commits the Council to working towards ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030 through a planned supply programme, reduced reliance on emergency accommodation, better move-on options and long-term accommodation models that provide greater stability for families and the Council's budget. This includes build-to-rent nominations, acquisitions, modular accommodation, office-to-residential conversions, long-term leasing, QLM and partnership models that give the Council greater certainty over cost, timing and use.
- 15.** Objective 3 focuses on the experience of residents who do become homeless. It commits the Council to embedding trauma-informed practice, psychologically informed environments, clearer information, inclusion, better support for children and families, and practice weeks to test whether services are being delivered as intended.
- 16.** Objective 4 focuses on compassionate, timely and clear customer care. It strengthens prevention and demand management by improving access, reducing digital exclusion, listening to residents, children, families and partners, improving case closure and duty-end assurance, and ensuring households understand decisions, review rights and next steps.
- 17.** The strategy includes a consolidated action plan covering relationship-based outreach, disrupting exploitation, alternative giving, public education, exit from nightly paid accommodation, psychologically informed environments, practice weeks, digital inclusion, child-focused engagement, reflective supervision, case closure assurance and alignment with adult social care, health, education, community safety and children's services.
 - 17.1.** The strategy has also been updated to show how local delivery will align with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework. This includes monitoring against outcomes such as households with children in temporary accommodation, families in bed and breakfast accommodation over six weeks, homelessness prevention and relief outcomes, rough sleeping, housing quality and safety, multiple disadvantage, child poverty and family stability.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

- 18.** To provide a clear strategic framework for preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping and improving outcomes for residents experiencing housing crisis between 2026 and 2029, aligned to local need and the Government's Local Outcomes Framework.
- 19.** To respond to the changed housing market, rising homelessness demand, increased use of temporary accommodation, wider development pressures and the need to reduce reliance on nightly paid and hotel accommodation.
- 20.** To strengthen prevention, partnership working, trauma-informed practice, case progression and assurance across the homelessness pathway.

Other options considered:

21. Do nothing.

- 22.** This option is not recommended. Without an updated strategy, the Council would lack an agreed framework for responding to current homelessness pressures, rough sleeping, accommodation supply constraints and the need for consistent, compassionate and timely service delivery.

23. Approve a shorter operational action plan only.

- 24.** This option is not recommended because it would not provide the wider strategic context required for Cabinet, residents, partners and scrutiny. A strategy is required to connect prevention, accommodation supply, rough sleeping, customer care, assurance and partnership working.

25. Delay approval pending further review.

- 26.** This option is not recommended. Homelessness demand, temporary accommodation pressures and rough sleeping risks require a current strategic framework. The strategy can be reviewed annually and amended through future governance where material changes are needed.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029 provides a strategic framework for service delivery and will be implemented through existing budgets, approved programmes and available external funding where appropriate.

There may, however, be future financial implications associated with the delivery of specific elements of the strategy, particularly where investment is required to support homelessness prevention initiatives, accommodation supply programmes, temporary accommodation improvements or new partnership arrangements. Any such proposals requiring additional capital or revenue resources will be subject to separate business cases and the Council's established approval and budget-setting processes.

The strategy is intended to support the Council's financial sustainability by reducing avoidable homelessness, improving demand management and helping to reduce reliance on higher-cost emergency accommodation over time.

27. Legal implications and risks:

28. The Council has statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996, including duties relating to homelessness prevention, relief and the discharge of the main housing duty. The strategy supports the lawful, timely and transparent delivery of those duties and reinforces the need for clear notices, review rights, personal housing plans, evidence-based decisions and effective case closure assurance.

29. Powers

30. The strategy also supports clear decision-making, appropriate notices, review rights, case closure assurance and management oversight across prevention, relief and main duty casework.

31. Where delivery of the strategy requires procurement, contractual commitments, subsidy control assessment, property agreements or changes to policy, those matters will be considered through the appropriate governance route at the relevant time.

32. There are no direct procurement or property transaction decisions arising from approval of the strategy itself.

Human Resources implications and risks:

33. The strategy has workforce implications for Housing Demand services, particularly in relation to trauma-informed practice, reflective supervision, case assurance, practice weeks, customer care and partnership working.

34. The strategy recognises the impact of vicarious trauma and emotional labour on staff working with residents experiencing homelessness, domestic abuse, family breakdown, exploitation and complex trauma.

35. Any staffing changes required to deliver the strategy will be considered through normal workforce planning, budget and HR processes.

Equalities implications and risks:

36. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- 36.1. The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- 36.2. The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics¹ and those who do not, and;
- 36.3. Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

37. In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has had due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The strategy is expected to have a positive impact on groups disproportionately affected by homelessness, including children and families, disabled people, pregnant women, lone parents, minority ethnic households, care leavers, former and serving armed forces personnel, people affected by domestic abuse, people with mental ill-health and people experiencing rough sleeping, exploitation or multiple disadvantage.

38. Equality risks relate to digital exclusion, accessibility of services, the fairness and transparency of housing pathways, the availability of suitable accommodation, the impact of homelessness on children and families, and the need to hear the voices of residents who may not engage through traditional consultation methods.

39. These risks will be mitigated through assisted access, clear communication, needs-led housing pathways, partnership working, child-focused engagement, practice assurance and ongoing monitoring of strategy delivery.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

40. Homelessness, rough sleeping and prolonged use of hotel or nightly paid accommodation have significant health and wellbeing impacts, including stress, anxiety, disrupted education, reduced access to cooking facilities, interrupted healthcare, social isolation and poorer outcomes for children and families.

41. The strategy supports improved health and wellbeing by prioritising prevention, stable accommodation, psychologically informed environments, trauma-

¹ 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

informed practice, inclusion, access to community support, and closer links with public health, education, adult social care, children's services, community safety, health and voluntary sector partners.

- 42.** The strategy is expected to support better outcomes for residents by reducing crisis responses, improving stability and helping people rebuild connections, confidence and independence.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A: Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029