

Item No. 5	Classification: Open	Date: 15.07.24	Decision Taker: Lead Member Cllr Helen Dennis
Report title:		Revised formal consultation plan for Southwark's draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Jerome Duffy, Programme, Policy and Change Manager, Housing Solutions	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Commission review the revised formal consultation plan and communications plan, together with our draft survey and strategy summary report for Southwark's draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (hereinafter 'the Strategy', which can be found in appendix 1 and accompanying draft action plan in appendix 2.)
2. That the Commission agree the formal consultation plan and supplementary documentation to commence the formal consultation period on 12th August 2024 for 12 weeks, until 10th November 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. The paper provides a brief summary of the development of the Strategy to date. It provides an outline of our rationale and aims of our formal consultation exercise developed from our draft consultation and engagement plan (see appendix 3.)
4. The paper presents the proposed engagement exercises during the 12 week period; outlining the rationale for the draft survey for stakeholders and draft summary report for stakeholders' benefit highlighting the high level elements of the draft strategy.

BACKGROUND

5. To help with reviewing and shaping the strategy, the service completed and presented a comprehensive 4 year data review and draft priorities to key stakeholders to gain feedback in the homelessness forum held on 27th April 2023. The service also undertook an online informal consultation exercise on 5th, 11th and 19th July 2023 with over 30 internal and external partners working in the areas of housing, health, justice and welfare rights.
6. The service also held a housing solution service-wide conference on 26th July 2023 to present the draft priorities and activities and seek feedback.

Finally, the service also held an in-person meeting with ex-service users with complex needs on 10th August 2023.

7. The initial draft strategy and supplementary papers were agreed at Housing Board on 25th October 2023. Following this, the item was reviewed at Cabinet and Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission on 14th December 2023. From these reviews; further revisions to the draft strategy, data review, engagement and consultation plan and action plan were made and on 6th March 2024, Cabinet approved the draft strategy for formal consultation following the election period.
8. In preparation of this formal consultation exercise, advice and guidance has been sought from colleagues within Community Engagement, Resident Participation and Communications teams. Our draft consultation and engagement plan has been reviewed and an initial communications plan has been drafted (see appendix 4.)

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

9. In accordance with our draft engagement and consultation plan and in line with Southwark's consultation and engagement guidance, we wish to achieve a wide reaching and meaningful formal consultation exercise with all stakeholders. The key stakeholders we are seeking to engage can be found at para 6.1 of appendix 1.
10. The proposed method of our engagement is broadly two-fold but interlinked. Firstly, we have developed a draft survey (see appendix 5,) which has been developed by the consultation team as an uploaded version that has been placed on the Council's interactive and accessible 'Citizens Lab' platform ahead of the launch date of our consultation exercise. Supplementing the survey will be all draft documents, including the draft strategy and action plan, as well as a summary sheet outlining the strategy in brief and encouraging stakeholders to take part in completing the survey, (see appendix 6.)
11. This draft survey has been developed in partnership with our Consultation and Community Involvement Team. It is designed to be easy to follow and complete, whilst able to capture significant qualitative and quantitative feedback to inform our further development of the strategy.
12. Our survey initially aims to seek information from respondents to understand their position as a resident, someone employed within the Borough, or a representative of a private, public or third sector organization. For individuals it will identify useful demographic information to enrichen our further analysis of feedback against certain protected characteristics and ensure we understand the views and needs to groups that, through our equalities impact needs assessment (EINA,) are more likely to be affected by housing insecurity, these are:

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups
 - The 25-44 age group (this group is also more likely to have children)
 - Women
 - Households with children/pregnant women
 - Children
 - Lone parents
 - Low-income households.
13. Our questions are grouped to explore views on the drivers of housing insecurity and the barriers that exist in accessing timely support, to check against what we already know and importantly to learn about any new issues that need to be considered as our draft is reviewed and further developed.
14. Our draft survey also seeks to understand where good practice and support exists in the borough for help to those that need this. Our aim is to identify effective provision to check these are included in our existing draft action plan to achieve our strategic aims and similarly with barriers, what further work is needed to establish new ways of working and partnerships to include wider service provision.
15. Our draft survey then seeks to gauge stakeholder feedback across a spectrum of agreement to disagreement on the priorities and high-level activities and to also seek feedback on what further can be done through support with Council and partner delivery to address housing insecurity.
16. In tandem with our stakeholder survey, we will be seeking to promote this and raise awareness of our draft strategy through a number of in person and online events within and external to the Council. This will also be an opportunity to distribute hard copies of the survey for residents who are digitally excluded, or for distribution for support in its completion with partner agencies. As outlined in our draft Communications and Engagement and Consultation Plan, we have made contact with our partners to ensure that during our 12-week period, the strategy as a discussion item is listed at the following events –
- Homelessness forum
 - Southwark Interfaith network event
 - Private Renters forum
 - Local Housing forums
 - Private Landlord forum
17. The service will also invite residents to 4 focus groups of up to 10 residents during the course of the consultation period and we will also be seeking the attendance of our Lead Cabinet Member to observe these discussions. The groups will be organized from the following distinct cohorts who will have varied and important experiences of housing need and service provision to learn from:

- General needs residents who have approached as part of a family.
 - General needs residents who have approached as single.
 - Residents with additional health and support needs who are and have been accommodated and supported through our Supported Housing Pathway and Hostels.
 - Residents who live in temporary accommodation during the course of their homeless applications and also those remaining and seeking settled accommodation once their applications have been concluded.
18. These focus groups will be in person sessions, with the groups identified through our casework data collection to be representative as far as possible from the protected characteristics detailed in paragraph 12 above. These groups will also include those who have been made homeless from Home Office Accommodation through the Streamlined Asylum Process. To maximise the chances of engagement, the service will be offering an incentive of vouchers for residents upon completion of the sessions that can be redeemed. We will aim to hold the session for residents with experience of the supported housing pathway in one of Southwark's four hostels and the remaining three general needs groups to be held at our offices.
19. Through this initial set of fora and focus groups; it is understood further outreach opportunities may arise and these will be scheduled during the 12-week period, dependent on the capacity of the service and to ensure an organized approach is maintained to reach all communities that may be represented for feedback. The service will also be exploring further opportunities to work with volunteers or community leads to help with the promotion and completion of the survey.
20. To note, our 'Citizens Lab' consultation platform will also include the facility to list the in-person and online events to be held where the strategy will be discussed, to improve attendance and opportunity for feedback.
21. With support from Communications, the consultation exercise will also be outlined through the following channels –
- Press release at commencement of consultation period
 - Southwark consultation web page
 - Southwark Life
 - Facebook and Instagram channels
 - Southwark News and South London Press
 - Internal – Source updates, staff bulletins, Chief Executive's blog
22. At the end of our formal consultation period, an easy-to-read short report of consultation findings will be produced and added to our consultation platform for all stakeholders. A formal internal review of consultation findings will also be drafted, together with a full EINA on the revised provisions, so that a finalised draft strategy can be brought back to Cabinet for implantation approval.

Policy framework implications

23. Our strategy will be informed by and imbedded to compliment all relevant existing Southwark policies.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

24. In the course of our development and delivery of our strategy, we will be completing in-depth equalities analyses and our finalised strategy will be one that has equality of opportunity and outcome at its core.

Community impact statement

25. We will ensure our strategy delivers positive outcomes for the communities we are privileged to serve.

Health impact statement

26. We will ensure our strategy promotes healthy outcomes for our residents and staff.

Climate change implications

27. We will ensure that wherever possible in the course of our strategic and underpinning operational objectives are consulted upon and agreed developments to new ways of working will be considered to achieve our commitment minimize climate change.

Resource implications

28. The activities identified in our strategy will be progressed by existing council officers.

Legal implications

29. The strategy will be legally compliant with our statutory duties as confirmed in concurrent from our draft strategy Cabinet approved paper.

Financial implications

30. The strategy has been reviewed and agreed as deliverable within existing resources as confirmed in concurrent from our draft strategy Cabinet approved paper.

Consultation

28. The Southwark Homelessness Forum group and all stakeholders identified in our consultation exercises will be kept informed of Council plans.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
Appendix 2	Draft Action Plan
Appendix 3	Draft Engagement and Consultation Plan
Appendix 4	Consultation Communications Plan
Appendix 5	Draft Survey
Appendix 6	Summary Sheet for Stakeholders

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Councillor Helen Dennis	
Report Author	Jerome Duffy	
Version	Final	
Dated	15 July 2024	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	Yes/No	Yes/No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes/No	Yes/No
Director of Resident Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team / Scrutiny Team		15 July 2024