1 Executive Summary

1.1 At Full Council on the 17th of June the Mayor made a commitment to create a Taskforce that brought together stakeholders to develop a long term solution to the Homelessness and rough sleeping community in Newham.

1.2 On the 9th of July 2019 a report was submitted to Cabinet detailing the following recommendations:

- To note the Mayor's commitment to establishing a Homelessness Taskforce which will help to identify strategic priorities to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough with an initial focus on Stratford Mall chaired by the Deputy Mayor – Cllr John Gray.

- To note the draft terms of reference for the Homelessness Taskforce and acknowledge full membership was yet to be finalised. This has been completed and will be published following this Cabinet meeting (Appendix 1).

- To receive an update on the Taskforce's progress at the October Cabinet meeting with emerging themes and initial proposals for a sustainable approach to homelessness for reducing rough sleeping, including any...
associated impact and next steps identified.

- To note the context and the measures identified within the report to continue to support vulnerable individuals that are currently rough sleeping.

1.3 This report is the first update to Cabinet on the progress of the Taskforce. A further update with recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in December 2019. This will also include a request to approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Stratford Action Plan in addition to the recommendations that will be evidenced through the work of the Taskforce to address the complex challenges across the borough in relation to rough sleeping.

1.4 Any immediate improvements or opportunities to address the challenges ahead of the December Cabinet will be implemented in an agile manner with sign-off from the Deputy Mayor and the Corporate Director of Adult Social Care to ensure that positive progress can be made in a timely manner.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To note the Homelessness Taskforce activity and the agreed Terms of Reference (Appendix 1).
2.2 To note the Governance arrangements (Appendix 1)
2.3 To note that a further update will be provided to Cabinet in December 2019

3. Background

3.1 Newham is ranked as the third highest in London for its rough sleeping population. This remains the same as the previous year. A total of 612 instances of rough sleeping were reported in the borough in 2018/19. This represents a 46% increase of instances when compared to 2017/18.

2.2 Newham has started from a very low base and for a period of time did not have dedicated resources to assist rough sleepers with their complex needs or any suitable accessible accommodation. Rough sleeping was addressed primarily through enforcement officers with a crime and anti-social behaviour approach. Therefore, a significant investment of time has been required to start building trust with our rough sleeping population and other stakeholders to agree to work in partnership with Newham Council and combine efforts to address the situation. This work is still in its infancy but huge inroads have been made since the establishment of the Taskforce.

2.3 Accommodation for single people in Newham is limited and the private rented
sector is often unaffordable for most of our local residents. The borough only has one hostel type accommodation. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates fall short of meeting current market rents significantly, for example, an average single room (shared accommodation) in Newham costs £150 per week and the maximum (LHA) rate is £83.67, the difference therefore of £66.33 per week. Another example is that a 1 bedroom apartment will cost approximately £300 per week but the maximum LHA rate is £192.87 per week, with a difference of £107.13 per week.

2.4 Lack of suitable assessment accommodation, supported housing and move on accommodation has been a constant issue and seeking this accommodation remains challenging.

2.5 The Stratford Centre has been used as a place of shelter for a number of years, although in recent months, this has become a growing concern due to the sharp increase in rough sleepers. There is also a visible detrimental impact on the environment and on the health and wellbeing of our vulnerable rough sleeping population. Further concerns have also been expressed by residents, visitors of the area and local businesses.

2.6 In May 2019, action was taken to remove a number of people who had taken residence in a private office development in Stratford (Stratford Office Village) which has largely attributed to the increase in the numbers bedding down in and around the Stratford area. Many of whom are vulnerable due to poverty, mental health, drug and alcohol dependencies.

2.7 Rough sleepers are at high risk of being exploited and it is well evidenced the negative impact this has on their health and wellbeing. It is known circa 50 people currently bed down each night in the Stratford Centre and surrounding area.

2.8 Since the new administration came into office the area of homelessness and rough sleeping has been given the much needed attention and focus with a mandate to address the challenges with compassion and care.

2.9 Working with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Newham was able to secure funding of £1.6m to implement a series of initiatives which will provide provision up till 2020. Historically, the Council has not prioritised investment into services for rough sleepers. However, there is an opportunity future investment to be considered as part of the budget setting process and proposals will be presented as part of that process in February 2020 detailing the requirements.

2.10 A new Newham Street Population Team was created with a dedicated outreach service using funding secured through the MHCLG. This consists of a Street Population Manager and four outreach staff.

4 Taskforce update
4.1 The first meeting of the Taskforce was held on the on the 5th August 2019,
The Taskforce meeting was well attended and included Members from Stratford New Town, Crime and Enforcement, Housing, Adult Social Care. Partner agencies also attended such as MHCLG, Crisis, ELFT, CCG, Police and Local Charities.

The first meeting agreed the:

4.3.1 Membership, including all partners and stakeholders for the Taskforce.
4.3.2 Finalised Terms of Reference (Appendix 1)
4.3.3 Governance structure including the appropriate workstreams and working groups. (Appendix 1)
4.3.4 Commitment to the principles that Newham’s approach will be predicated on compassion, treating people with dignity and ensuring that Newham’s plan is well informed through consultation and evidence.
4.3.5 That ‘not helping the homeless’ is not an option regardless of their needs.
4.3.6 Requirement to continue providing support to rough sleepers across the borough in parallel with the activity of the Taskforce. Where immediate actions and improvements are identified this will be implemented in an agile manner and fed back to the Taskforce to include in the longer term proposals.
4.3.7 Requirement that all residents must be protected from exploitation or any criminal behaviour through appropriate statutory means including where necessary enforcement.
4.3.8 Principles that partnership working across the borough with residents, Members, 3rd Sector and other statutory services is paramount to the success of achieving positive results for our rough sleeping population.
4.3.9 Focus on the Stratford Mall and surrounding area will take priority but notwithstanding the need to address the rough sleeping crisis borough wide.

The Taskforce is made up of five workstream, all of which are attended by external stakeholders, partner agencies including the voluntary sector, business leads, Councillors and residents with current or previous lived experience of rough sleeping. The five workstreams and their responsibilities are as follows;

4.4.1 **Strategy and Policy**; Chaired by the Lead Commissioner for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. Responsible for:
- Developing the “Stratford Strategy” and associated action plan, which include preventing further rough sleeping in the borough
- Development of the Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Development of Policies and Protocols required with the above

4.1.1 **Data and Evidence**; Chaired by the Director of Public Health. Responsible for:
- Developing a rough sleeper needs assessment by evidence
gathering and profiling the current rough sleepers in Stratford including their health and housing support needs.

- Overseeing consultation & engagement with key stakeholders on any plans that require wider assurance or appropriateness.
- Inform any necessary EqIA

4.1.2 Rough Sleeping Pathway; Chaired by the Cabinet Lead and Corporate Director of Adult Social Care. Responsible for:

- Development of the short term pathway to address the Stratford Action plan
- Development of the long term pathway and solution which address the challenges of starting engagement from the street, support through the assessment process and interventions through to long term accommodation, including the sustainment of a tenancy.

4.1.3 Accommodation; Chaired by the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Lead for Housing and the Corporate Director of Adult Social Care. Responsible for:

- Understanding the current provision the Council has available
- Sourcing and supplying accommodation in accordance with the needs identified through the Rough Sleeper Pathway and Strategy

4.1.4 Mobilisation and Implementation; Chaired by the Director of Operations. Responsible for:

- Delivering on activity and implementing the key deliverables from across all of the workstreams
- Multiagency meetings will be used as a conduit to support this activity
- Feeding back to each of the workstreams on any challenges, issues or opportunities identified in implementation

4.5 All of the workstreams give consideration to the following themes; Strategy and Policy, Finance, Communications and Operations.

4.6 Each workstream has met a number of times ahead of the 2nd Taskforce meeting held on the 5th of September. These have initiated and started to develop key intelligence to ensure deliverables are identified from an informed position.

4.7 Through these meetings the following activity and actions have been undertaken:

- Daily recording through LBN outreach of the rough sleeping population in the Stratford area to gather health and support needs of those currently not willing to be supported into accommodation, but willing to engage from the streets
- Removal of abandoned items on the streets left by previous rough sleeping activity
- MHCLG have approved for Newham to be included in a Health Needs Audit which will run for 2 weeks at the end of October
A number of “hard to engage” individuals that have been living on the streets of Newham for several months have been successfully supported into accommodation and engaging with support services.

- Regular cleaning of the streets around encampments has commenced
- Draft procedure to work with those not willing to engage with service
- Draft procedure for removal of tents and bedding
- Draft Target Operating Model for rough sleepers
- Identification of accommodation requirements

4.8 The second Taskforce meeting was held on the 5th September 2019, chaired by Cllr Gray. This meeting was also well attended and included additional agencies such as Liberty, Greater London Authority and Frogmore.

4.9 The meeting acknowledged and discussed the emerging themes that were born through the collation of all the evidence collected from residents, businesses, crime statistics, national statistics and local outreach work to build a current picture of the complexities, challenges and concerns regarding the situation in Stratford. This data although much richer than previously understood, still has some work to ensure all recommendations are thoroughly researched and evidenced.

4.10 This information will be used to inform the rough sleeping strategy and hone the tailored approach to address the health and wellbeing needs of our rough sleeper population based on evidence. The information will also inform any action to address the concerns or our local residents, businesses and visitors of Stratford.

4.11 A proposed rough sleeper pathway has been designed that details from referral through to maintaining a tenancy with appropriate levels of support to increase the opportunities of breaking the cycle of rough sleeping. This model has been designed ambitiously - taking proven models of excellence and tailoring it to meet the needs of our local rough sleepers. The model is also predicated on giving rough sleepers dignity and support when they are willing to engage and streamlining the process to ensure that effective outcomes are not delayed.

4.12 The additional requirements for accommodation, including day centres, assessment hub and interim accommodation and long term accommodation has been detailed based on current evidence and planning and financial implications understood.

5 Key Considerations & Proposals

5.1 The key themes that have been identified through the taskforce are as follows:

- Shortage of suitable interim/emergency accommodation to undertake a full comprehensive assessment of a rough sleeper's needs and coordinate support.
- Shortage of suitable accommodation for ‘move on’ when an individual is prepared to live independently.
- 64% of rough sleepers were seen bedded down for only one or two nights within a year in Newham. This highlights the transient nature of rough
sleepers or the possibility they are able to return to access accommodation through other means.

- Lack of a clear pathway of support rough sleepers from the point of referral through to achieving successful outcomes of breaking the cycle of rough sleeping
- Significant number of the rough sleeper population in Stratford have NRPF, this poses significant and complex issues in gaining access to accommodation and funding housing support.
- Lack of protocols locally and nationally on how to tackle issues surrounding rough sleeping e.g. protocols for non-engagement, encampments, storage of belongings
- The need to develop the referral process to enable a rapid response and provide services
- The need to strengthen the preventative pathway and offer for single adults threatened with homelessness
- Residents, Businesses, visitors of Stratford and those that have been Rough Sleeping in Newham for a long time no longer feel safe in the Stratford Centre
- Residents, Businesses and visitors of Stratford are concerned about the public health risks associated with the level of poor sanitation and waste materials attributed to the rough sleeping population

5.2 The Taskforce will be addressing each of these themes and developing proposals and solutions in consultation with relevant stakeholders. These proposals will be detailed and presented back to Cabinet in December with a number of various options to address the challenges.

6 Policy Implications & Corporate Priorities

6.1 Newham has a firm commitment to reduce levels of ‘rough sleeping’ and provide support and assistance to those in need and who are most vulnerable both as a matter of principle and in accordance with its various legal duties.

7 Alternatives considered

7.1 Not applicable as part of this update. However, this will be included as part of any future proposals

8 Consultation

8.1 The Taskforce membership includes key stakeholders associated to Stratford Mall, surrounding area and at a borough level. Full details of membership can be seen in the Terms of Reference in Appendix 1.

8.2 This report is due to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny on the 25th September 2019.
9 Implications

9.1 Financial Implications

9.1.1 The grant funding from Central Government is time limited, with allocations announced for 2019/20 only. Further announcements for future years grant funding is expected later in the year, however, no details have been provided as yet.

9.1.2 Any costs arising from the recommendations of the Homelessness Taskforce will need to be considered as part of the Councils Budget setting process and ongoing discussions will be held with Cabinet lead for Finance and the Corporate Director of Resources

9.1.3 Initial costings, based on benchmarking analysis and unit costing, has been carried out to identify the total funding required to develop and implement a pathway for the strategy. These costings are at an early stage with further evidence gathering being carried out and which will be presented to Cabinet and senior officers as part of the Budget Strategy for 2020/21 onwards

9.1.4 Future years’ budgets are subject to review given the substantial reductions in Local Authority Funding over the next three years. Any commitments against future years’ budgets may pre-empt funding decisions that may be required in the context of savings elsewhere in the budget.

9.2 Legal Implications

9.2.1 The work that will be undertaken by the taskforce will relate to the legal duties the Local Authority has in relation to homelessness which are principally set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. This is the legal background against which the Taskforce will develop strategies and set priorities.

9.2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 sets out specific duties about the steps that a Local Housing Authority where they are satisfied that a person is threatened with homelessness and eligible.

9.2.3 The report makes reference to the provision of long term accommodation. The Council must maintain an Allocation Scheme relating to how preference for allocation of social housing is determined. The legal framework for this is within Part 6 Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Localism Act 2011. Any strategy to deal with reduction of homelessness and provision of long term accommodation will likely require consideration of the Allocation Scheme.

9.2.4 Where individuals do not have recourse to public funds, they may be precluded under legislation from accessing housing or benefit support provided by the Local Authority and so there may need to be
consideration of what, if any, support can be provided in those circumstances.

9.2.5 As identified in the report, the taskforce and officers dealing with rough sleepers may be faced with individuals with complex needs. In addition to statutory functions relating to housing and homelessness, the Local Authority may also need to consider other statutory obligations, for example under the Care Act 2014.

9.3 **Equalities Implications**

9.3.1 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising its functions to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not. This is the public sector equality duty. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

9.3.2 There are no equalities implications at this stage. The measures outlined within this report are intended to support vulnerable individuals within the borough. Depending on the future options arising from the Homelessness Taskforce these may be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

9.4 **Other Implications relevant to this report: N/A**

10 **Background Information used in the preparation of this report**

10.1 Rough sleeping in London (CHAIN reports)