

SOUTHEND ON SEA CITY COUNCIL
Policy & Resource Scrutiny Committee Meeting
2nd November 2023

Question 1. from Mr Webb for Cllr Garston (Housing & Planning):

How many residents have been homeless 2021,2022 and 2023 and in Corporate priorities delivery plan objectives make any instance of homelessness brief and non-recurrent.

We are aiming for functional zero homelessness what ways is the minority Southend Conservative Council going to reduce from and to and how they going to get to this figure?

Response:

Calendar year	No of households we accepted a Homeless Relief duty to.
2021	627
2022	461
2023 year to date	611

Homelessness includes living in a hostel or refuge, sofa surfing or – at its most visible - sleeping on the streets. Functional zero homelessness refers to a level of homelessness where the number of people experiencing homelessness is below the level at which the council and partners have the capacity to respond effectively. In communities where this is achieved this capacity means that where there is homelessness, this is brief and non-recurrent.

As there are many shifting factors within and outside the council/partners' control which impact levels of homelessness, and the capacity to respond to this, we do not have a 'from' and 'to' figure. However, we aim to maximise the proportion of settled accommodation outcomes following an approach to us, and to have no families with children in private B&B for more than 6 weeks.

This includes a focus on:

- **Prevention:**
 - where an individual approaches us *at risk* of homelessness within the next 56 days, we work with them to try to either keep them in their existing home (where safe and possible to do so), or move them in to another home before they have experienced homelessness. Since April 2023, our officers have supported 177 households at risk of homelessness into settled accommodation in this way (accounting for 55% of all Prevention cases ended).
 - Commissioning a range of local support services for example, addiction support or the [Information, Advice and Guidance service](#) from Southend Citizens Advice which provides advice on a range of matters including debt and money management, dealing with the threat of eviction and maximisation of income.

- **Homeless relief:**

Where an individual approaches us already homeless, or we have not been able to prevent their homelessness, we will seek to resolve that homelessness within 56 days; making the experience as brief as possible. We call this the relief duty, and since April 2023 we have accommodated 118 households into settled accommodation whilst under the relief duty (accounting for 33% of relief cases ended). However, success in this regard (and indeed with respect to prevention) is linked to the supply of well managed and maintained affordable accommodation, and to that end the Council is undertaking several supply-based measures:

- **Increased housing supply:**
 - **The Council is preparing a new Local Plan to manage and assess future development proposals across the**

city, including a detailed review of policies relating to housing tenure.

- **A housing acquisitions programme, where we purchase private sector homes and turn them into lower cost, affordable accommodation.**
 - **Enabling the development of new affordable housing – directly or through working with Registered Provider partners and encouraging developer contributions.**
 - **Working to ensure council owned stock is used in the way which best meets identified need to meet needs.**
 - **Working with owners of empty property to bring these back into use as homes in our city.**
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- **Rough sleeping initiative:**

Successfully bidding for government funds under the Rough Sleeping Initiative to deliver a range of support services for people experiencing rough sleeping including outreach, a rapid assessment hub (with bed spaces) and navigators to help coordinate support from across multiple agencies who may be involved in their recovery from homelessness – with a view to stopping repeat rough sleeping.