Four blue house icons are arranged vertically on the left side of the page. Each icon is a stylized house with a chimney and a roof, pointing to the right.

REVIEW OF:
THE OVERARCHING HOUSING STRATEGY
THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY
THE TENANCY POLICY
THE HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

STAGE 1 CONSULTATION – RESULTS

October 2021

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the stage 1 initial consultation on the Epping Forest District Council review of the following 'Big 4' Housing strategies and policies.

- The Allocations Policy
- The Tenancy Policy
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- The overarching Housing Strategy

The review began on 4 May 2021 and is due to conclude in Spring 2022.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the review will result in the publication of a new Allocations Policy, and Tenancy Policy (both of which will then be due for review again in 2027), along with both the updated five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 and the overarching Housing Strategy for 2022-2027.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The consultation has been coordinated across all four items; to take account of the interest of some, but not all, stakeholders in more than one of the Big 4, and the interdependencies between many of the proposals.

The consultation has been split into two stages.

Stage 1 Initial Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to influence the review from the outset by suggesting key themes and priorities they would like to be included in the draft updates of any or all the policies and strategies.

The stage 1 consultation opened on 21 June 2021 and closed on 6 September 2021.

Stage 2 Detailed Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to comment on the draft proposals and major changes to the individual policies and strategies for consideration before any revision to the draft recommendations are presented to Cabinet between March 2022 and May 2022 for consideration and approval.

The stage 2 consultation is due to open on 29 October 2021 and close on 10 December 2021 for all but the overarching Housing Strategy which is scheduled to open on 15 November 2021 and close on 24 December 2021.

METHODOLOGY

The consultation has been designed to give everyone with an interest in Housing in the district the opportunity to contribute to the review.

Stage 1 consultation consisted of a range of direct emails, bitesize briefing sessions and webinars, and an on-line survey with simple open-ended questions.

325 stakeholders were sent a link to the on-line survey including:

- Registered providers of social housing in the district
- The clerks to the town councils and parish councils in the district
- The Community Safety Partnership and other statutory services
- Community groups including the Faith Covenant
- Essex County Council and the district, borough and city councils in Essex
- Third sector partners with an active interest in Housing in the district
- All elected Members of the Council and Council staff

The consultation and links to the survey along with background information are widely publicised on the Council’s website, in the Tenant and Leaseholders newsletter, on Facebook, and at relevant forums including the Tenant and Leaseholders’ Forum and Live Well, Be Well and Age Well groups.

RESPONSE RATE

Number of Responses

In total, 68 contributors completed the survey. A further 96 surveys were started and abandoned. It is not known how many of these were duplicate entries from potential contributors who then went on to complete a valid survey, and how many were lost opportunities.

A user group was consulted on the possible reasons for the relatively high number of abandoned responses. The group suggested a few ways of improving the response rate that will be tested for future surveys of this type.

Contributor Interest

Contributors were asked to indicate whether they were responding as a resident of the district or as a representative of an organisation with an interest in Housing in the district. Those contributors with a dual interest were given the option of completing two surveys.

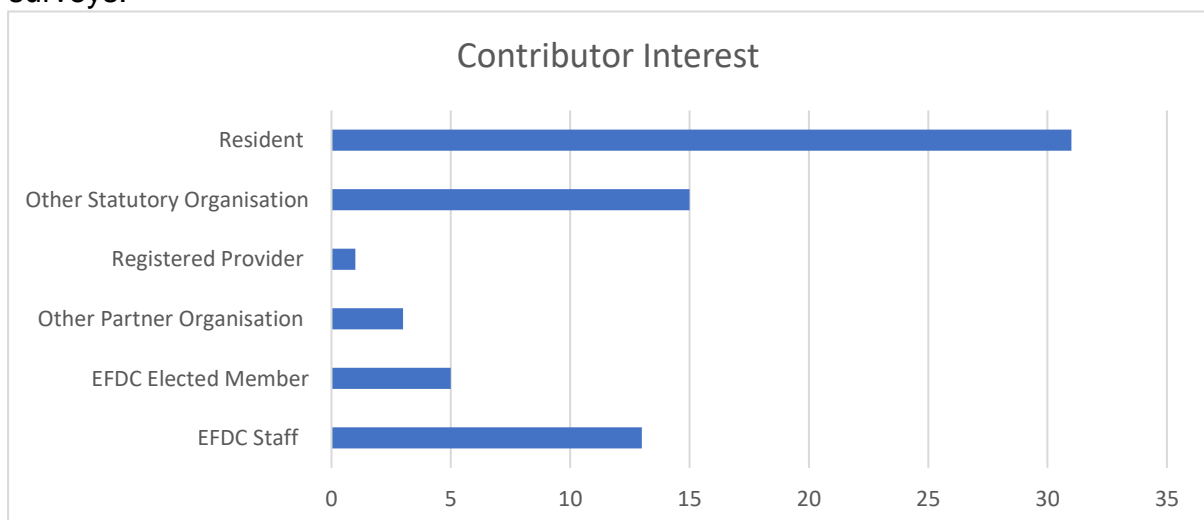


Fig 1

The vast majority of contributors were residents (46%) followed by other statutory organisations (22%) Council staff (19%) elected Members of the Council (7%) other partner organisations (4%) and other registered providers of social housing (1%).

Questions and Answers

Most questions were open ended and produced detailed qualitative data which was then grouped by themes for the purpose of analysis.

OVERARCHING HOUSING STRATEGY

Question: Please list between three and five priorities and say why they are important.

Responses:

Answered: 68 Not answered: 0



Fig 2

The most frequently listed priority related to increasing the supply of affordable housing, either generally (28%), specifically social housing (23%), of the right size and type to meet needs (22%), for local people (13%), or suitably adapted properties for people with physical or mental impairment (13%).

Protecting the environment featured in a high number of responses (25%) as did the Council's local planning policy, particularly with regards to the location and tenure mix of new developments (i.e. social housing, private rent, homeownership (24%) and the regeneration of local areas (10%).

Other reoccurring themes included ensuring good quality safe homes in both the private and public sector (19%); enabling residents (particularly vulnerable residents) to access suitable housing and activities to help improve their wellbeing and life-chances (19%) tackling homelessness (19%) and the allocations policy (19%).

HEALTH HOUSING AND WELLBEING

Answered: 65 Not answered: 3

Question:

Can you suggest other services or organisations that may be interested in working in partnership with Housing to help improve health and wellbeing?

Responses:

The suggestions included 31 specifically named organisations, some of which already have established or developing relationships with Housing. Consideration is being given to engaging with each of the 31 organisations and all positive outcomes will be included in the relevant strategy or policy.

Question:

Do you have any suggestions or practical tips about how partners could work with Housing to help improve the health and wellbeing of residents?

Responses:

Over 25 different practical tips and suggestions are being followed up. These include community-based activities that could also improve the local environment, targeted information sharing on specific schemes and opportunities, design features to assist sensory impairment and social inclusion, and training to raise awareness of neurodiversity amongst staff. All suggestions that are adopted or will be referenced in the relevant strategy or policy.

ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Answered: 60 Not answered: 8

Question:

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band A?

Responses

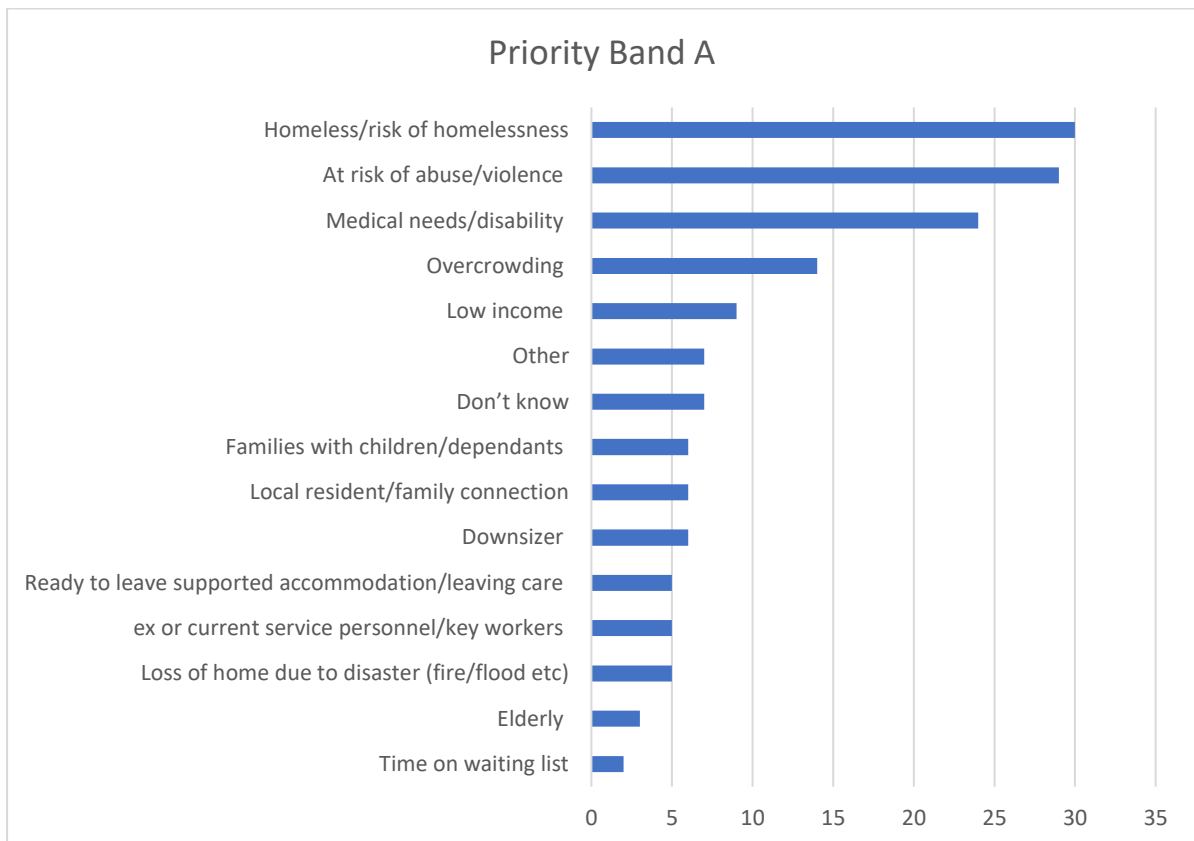


Fig 3

The most common reason that contributors said Band A should be awarded was to address homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless (50%) followed by risk of abuse or violence (48%), medical needs/disability (40%) and overcrowding (23%).

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band B?

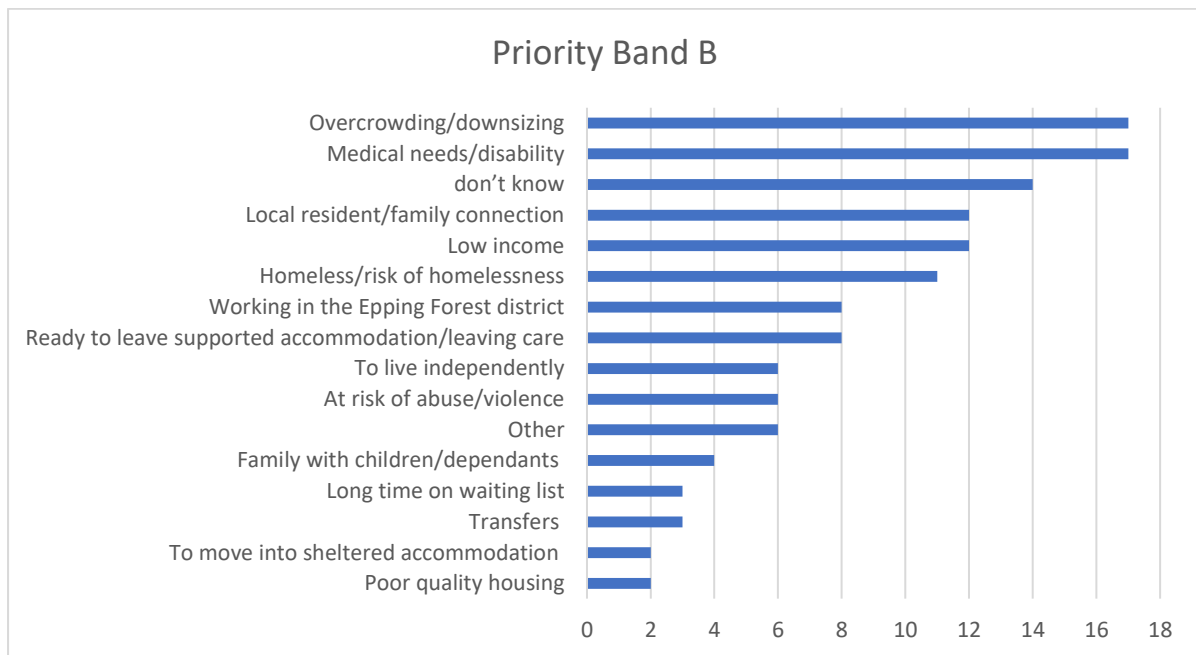


Fig 4

Overcrowding/downsizing (28%) and medical needs/disability (28%) were the most common suggestions for being awarded Band B. A relatively high number of contributors said they didn't know (23%). The next most frequent circumstances proposed for Band B were being a local resident or with a family connection (20%), or on a low income (also 20%) then Homelessness or the risk of homelessness (18%).

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band C

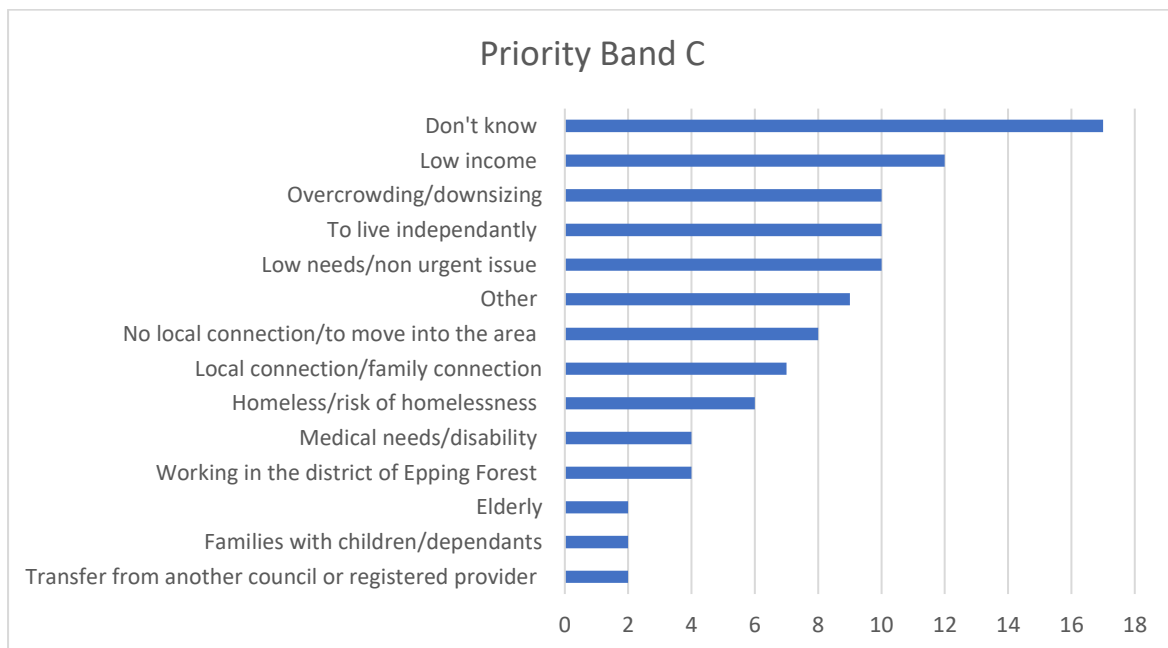


Fig 5

Fewer Contributors made suggestions for Band C than the other bands. The most common suggestion for Band C was low income (20%) followed by overcrowding/downsizing, or to live independently or low needs/non-urgent issues (all 17%).

TENANCY POLICY

Answered: 60 Not answered: 8

Question:

How many years should a council or housing association tenancy be granted for? 10 years, 20 years, a lifetime, or other?

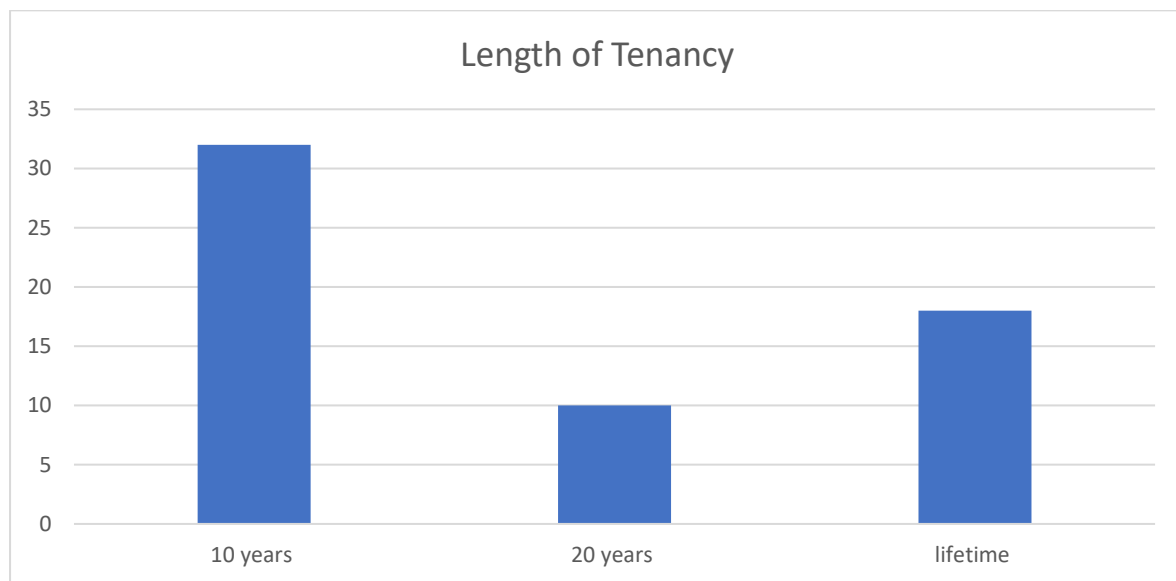


Fig 6

Over half of the respondents (53%) said tenancies should be for 10 years. Fewer respondents were in favour of lifetime tenancies (30%) and the least popular proposal was 20 years (17%).

Should every tenancy be granted for the same length of time?

Yes 53%

No 47%

If you answered no, then for what reason(s) should someone be offered a shorter tenancy or a longer tenancy?

The most common answer was that longer tenancies should be offered to older people, those with disabilities or learning difficulties, or families with young children.

And that shorter tenancies should be offered to households whose circumstances are likely to change and/or who have a realistic prospect of purchasing a property in the near or mid-term future.

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Answered: 57 Not answered: 11

Question:

What help should the Council offer to households who are threatened with homelessness, to prevent them from becoming homeless?

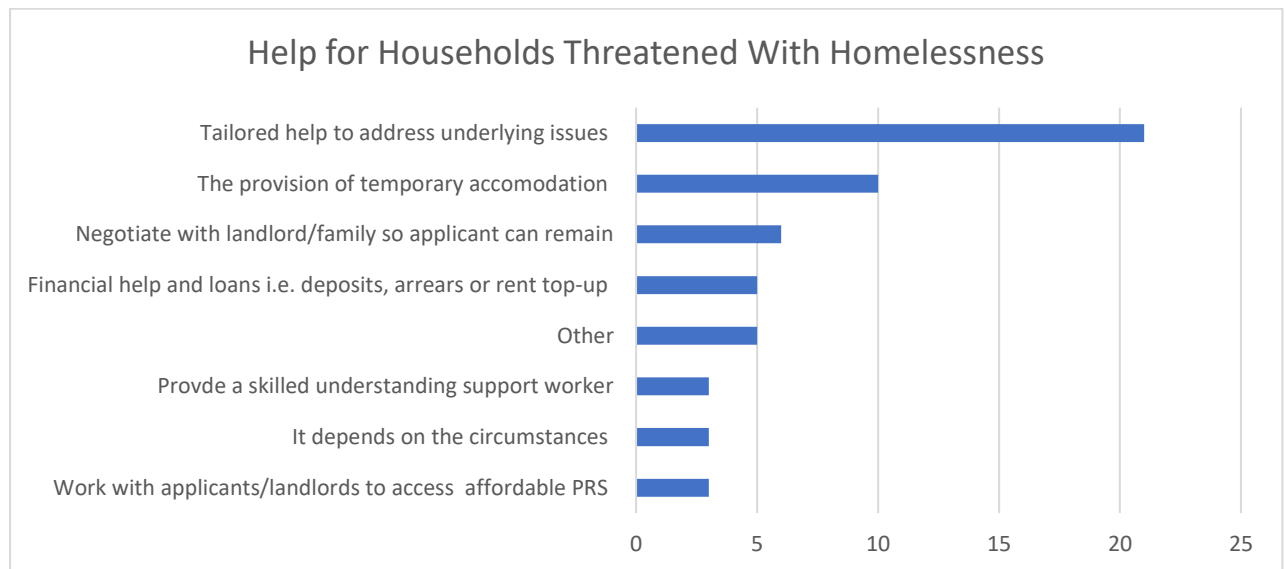


Fig 7

The most frequent suggestion was to offer tailored help to address the underlying causes of homelessness (37%), next was the provision of temporary accommodation (18%) and negotiating with the applicant's landlord or family member to allow the applicant to remain living there (11%).

What help should the Council offer households who are homeless?

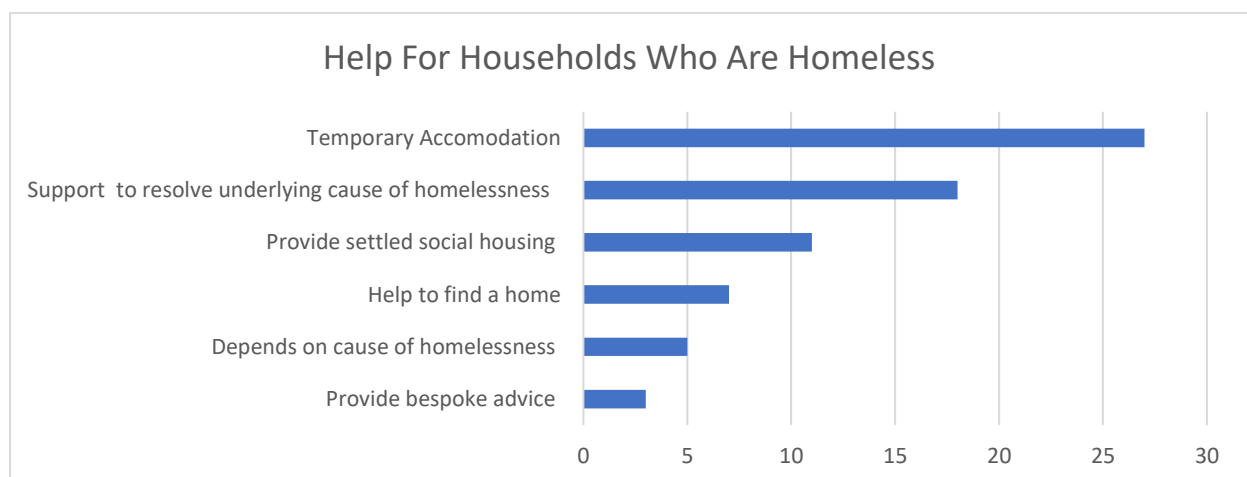


Fig 8

The most recurrent proposal was to offer temporary accommodation (47%), followed by support to resolve the underlying cause of homelessness (32%) and the provision of settled housing (19%).

What steps do you think the Council should take to end rough sleeping?

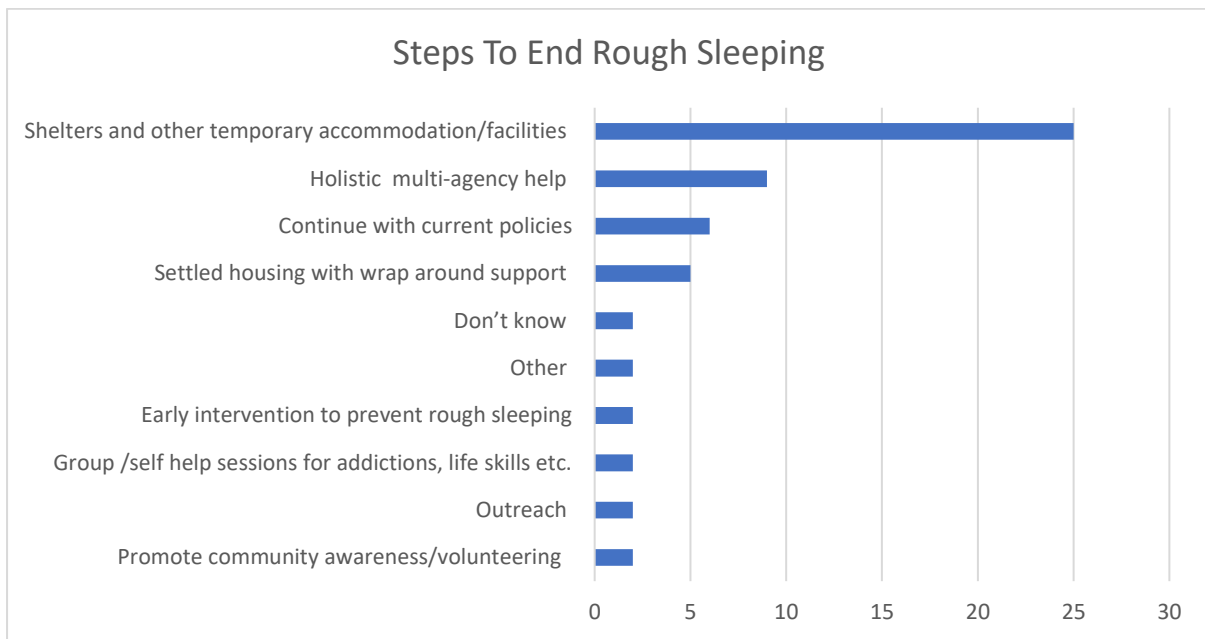


Fig 9

By far the most common suggestion was the provision of shelters and other temporary accommodation along with facilities such as access to a shower and a meal (44%). Holistic multi-agency help featured fairly frequently (16%), and a notable number of respondents suggested continuing with current policies (11%).

FURTHER INVOLVEMENT

Contributors were asked whether they were happy to be contacted to discuss any of their comments or suggestions and/or whether they would like the opportunity to be involved with more detailed consultation on any of the individual policies or strategies.

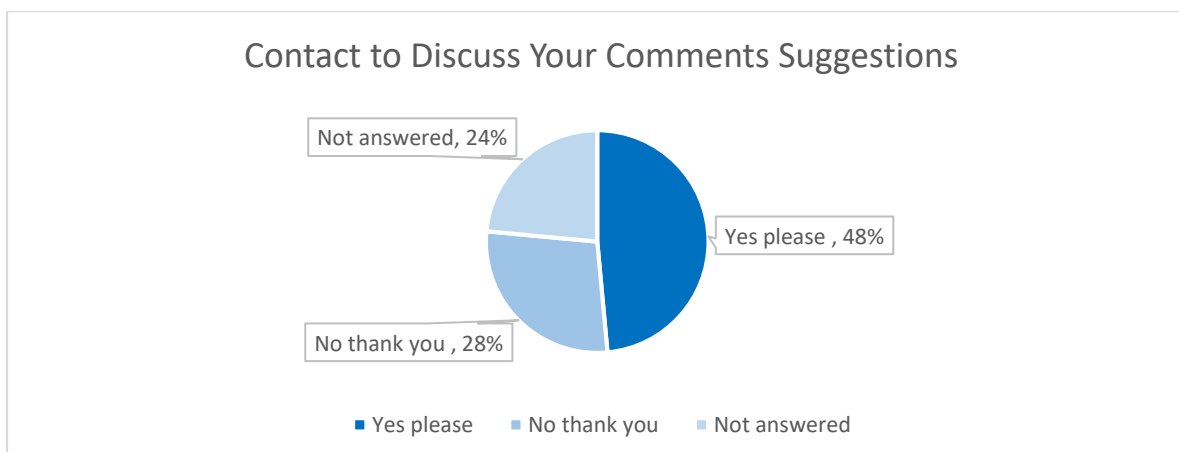


Fig 10

Nearly half of all contributors said they would be happy to be contacted to discuss the comments or suggestions they had made in their response to stage 1 consultation (48%).

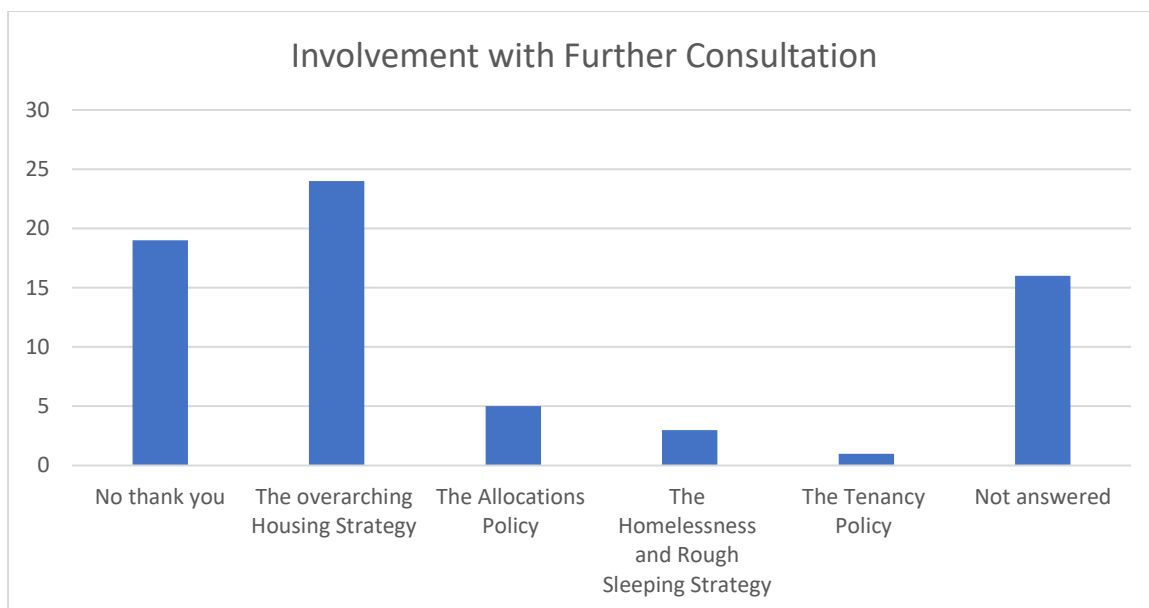


Fig 11

The Overarching housing Strategy generated the most interest in further involvement (35%) and the Tenancy Policy the least (1%).

Overall, 36 contributors said they were happy to discuss their responses to the stage 1 survey and/or would like to be more involved with the detailed stage 2 consultation.

At the time of writing the report arrangements were being made to contact the 36 contributors and discuss opportunities to have more direct involvement with the stage 2 consultation.

PROFILE OF CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors were invited to provide some additional confidential information about their personal characteristics to enable the Council to check whether the consultation process is fair and transparent and to monitor the impact of any recommendations on groups with particular characteristics. The findings will form part of the Equalities Impact Assessment to be published along with the outcome of the full review.

Contributors were given the option to skip the section or indicate that they would prefer not to answer a specific question.

Of the 68 Contributors to the survey, 70% answered most but not all the questions about their personal profile and 22% skipped the section entirely.

Age

Please indicate your age group

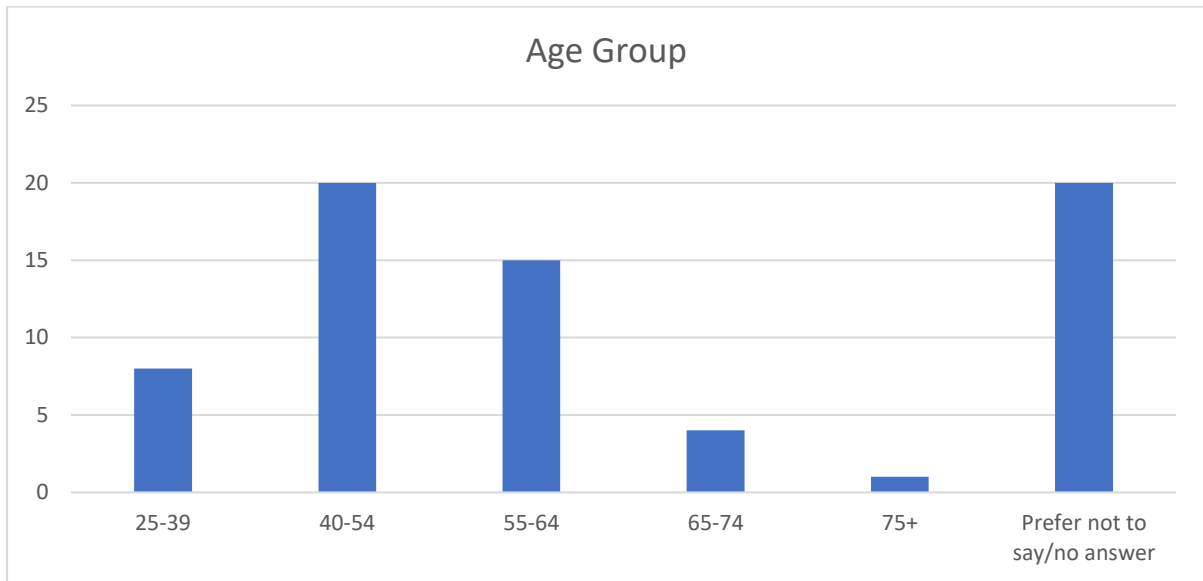


Fig 12

The majority of contributors who specified their age group were between 40-54 years old (29%) and 55-64 years old (22%).

Ethnicity

Please indicate your ethnic origin.

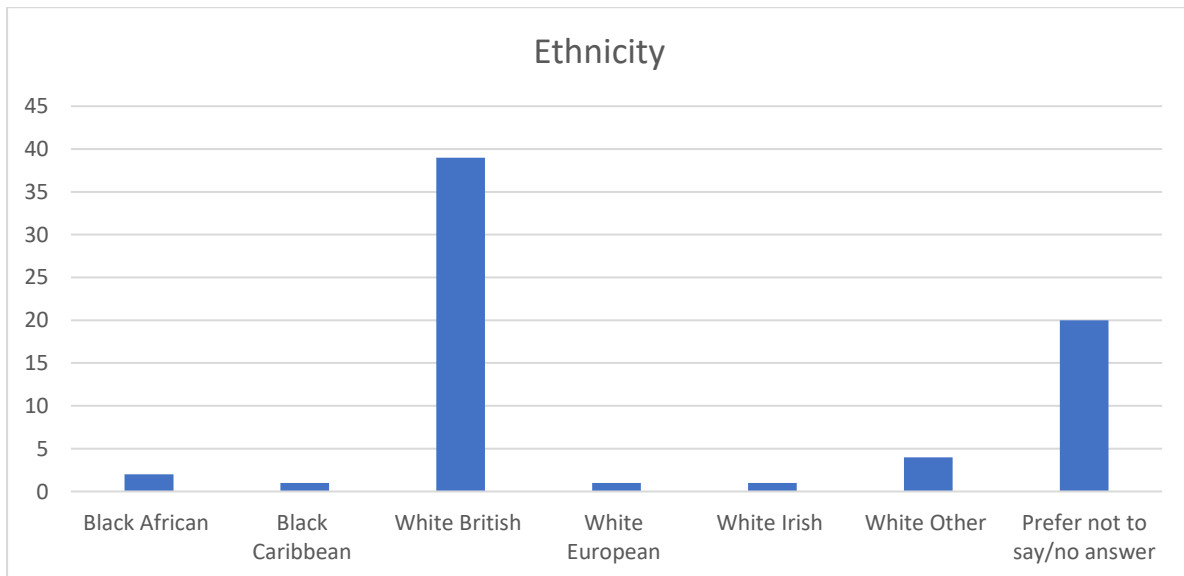


Fig 13

The majority of contributors described themselves as White British (57%) or opted not to provide details (29%).

Gender Identity

How would you describe your gender identity?

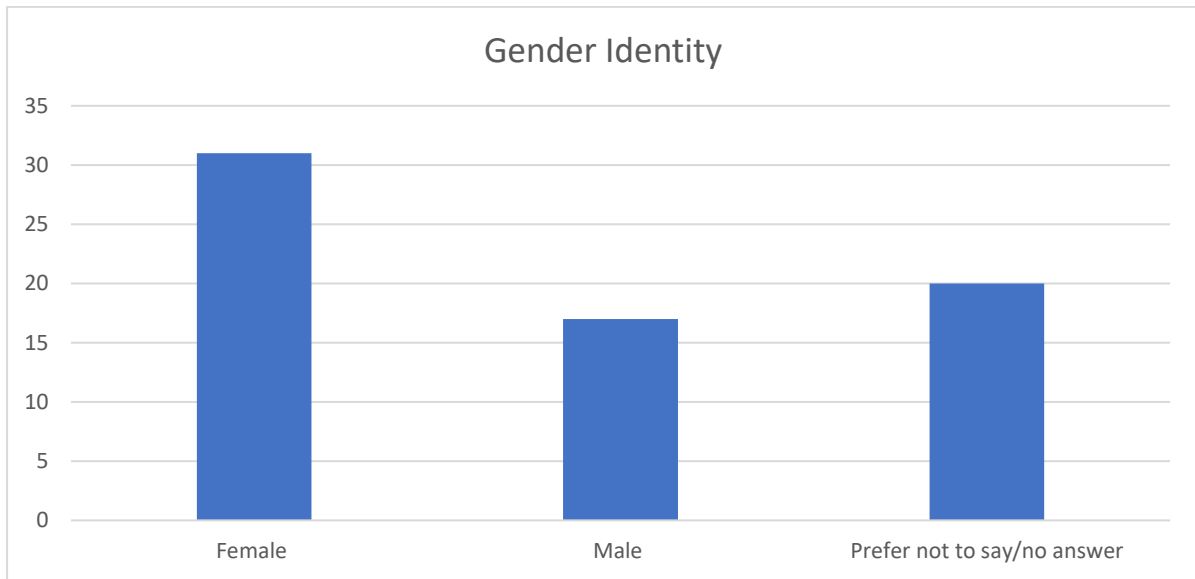


Fig 14

Contributors described themselves as female (46%) male (25%) or chose not to provide details (29%).

Religion

Please indicate your religion

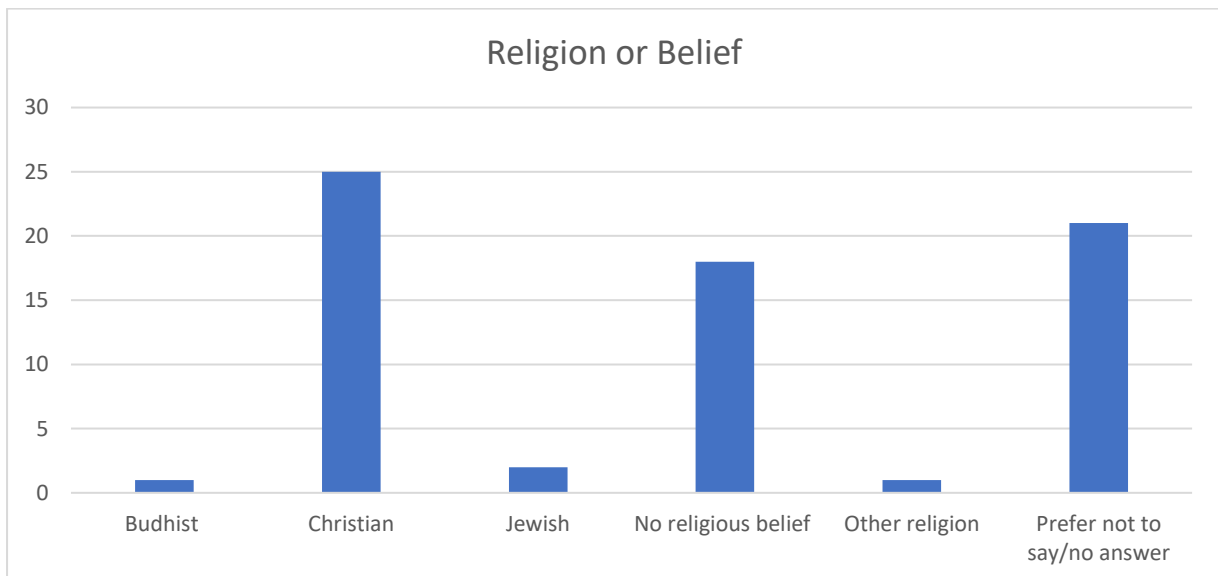


Fig 15

The religion or belief most frequently selected was Christian (37%) followed by no religious belief (26%). A fairly high proportion of contributors opted not to answer (31%).

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

By disability we mean whether you have a long-term difficulty with mental or physical health, or a learning difficulty that affects your ability to carry out day to day activities.

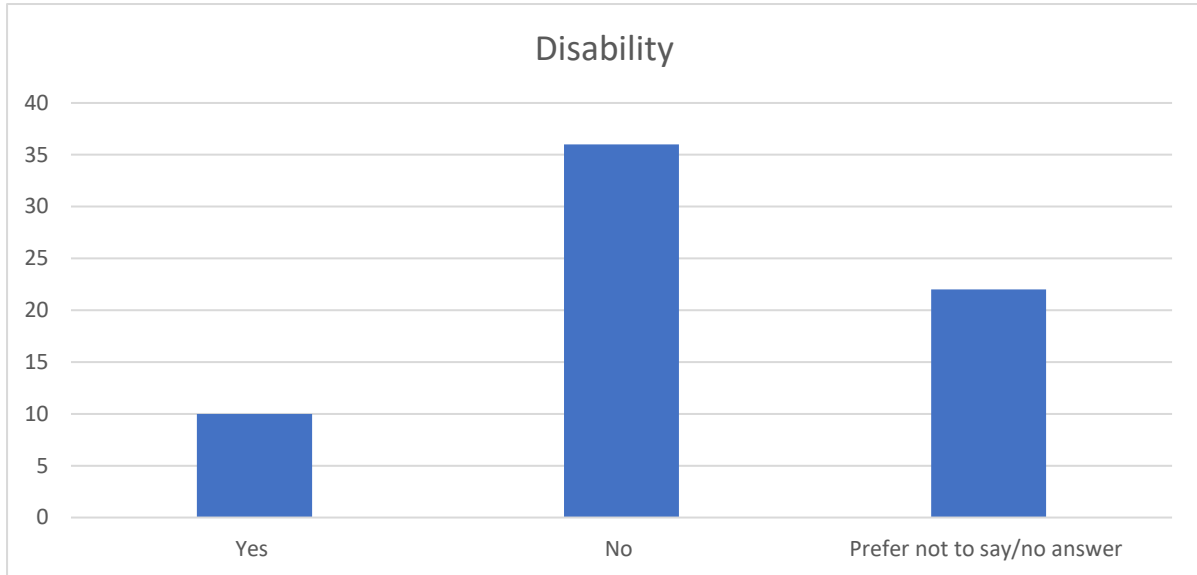


Fig 16

Overall, 15% of contributors said they had a disability, and a notable number chose not to answer (32%).

Sexual orientation

Please indicate your sexual orientation.

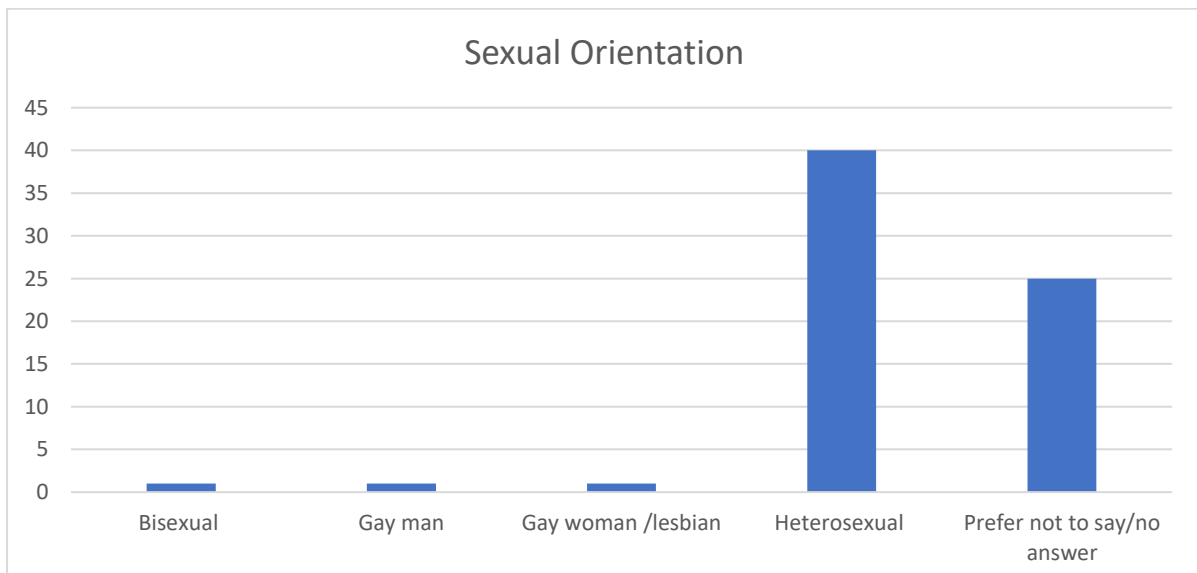


Fig 16

Most contributors said they were heterosexual (58%) or opted not to answer (37%).

NEXT STEPS

The results of the stage 1 consultation have been carefully considered in conjunction with the Councils corporate objectives, a range of staff workshops and its statutory obligations as a Local Housing Authority to inform the recommendations contained within the following four reports for stage 2 consultation.

- [Review of the Allocations Policy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the Tenancy Policy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the overarching Housing Strategy- Recommendations](#)

Stronger Communities Select Committee scrutinised the reports on 21 September 2021 and approved all recommendations contained therein.

Stage 2 Consultation will begin on 29 October 2021 and details can be found on [the Big 4 Housing strategies and policies consultation](#) page on the Council's website.

For further information please contact the Housing Strategy Team
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22 October 2021