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Southend Faces Rising Homelessness Driven by Domestic Violence and Evictions

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Southend-on-Sea City Council is facing a sharp rise in homelessness driven by domestic violence, evictions and family breakdowns, and has announced a £100million, five–year plan to tackle the crisis. In the 2024/25 financial year, the council’s spending on private temporary accommodation for homeless households surged to about £2.5million, almost double the previous year’s figure.

A proposed “housing delivery board” will oversee the ambitious plan, funded through a combination of government grants, council housing revenue reserves, and borrowing. The

primary causes of homelessness in the area include a surge in evictions from private rentals, which have increased significantly in recent years. Additionally, councils face growing responsibilities to support those escaping domestic violence, with more individuals seeking safety from abusive situations. Family and friend evictions, often due to young adults being unable to remain in their current residences or irreconcilable relationship breakdowns, are also major contributors.

“Southend is seeing a high proportion of evictions by family or friends, alongside private rental evictions and domestic violence cases,” a council spokesperson noted. “These factors have converged to create a significant upsurge in homelessness, a trend affecting councils nationwide.”

Southend currently has almost 600 households in urgent need of affordable homes, including seven requiring five-bedroom properties and 66 needing adapted homes, but only 382 social homes became available last year. This mismatch has exacerbated the crisis, leaving many in a precarious situation. Daniel Cowan, leader of Southend-on-Sea City Council, described the initiative as an “ambitious programme” to meet local housing needs and create permanently affordable homes.

The use of temporary hotel and B&B placements is part of a wider picture: many households either lack eligibility for temporary accommodation or are sofa—surfing or overcrowded with family.

Pending cabinet approval, the council plans to allocate £10.5 million to its acquisitions programme for smaller home purchases, £85 million for new housing developments, and £4.5 million towards a temporary accommodation project that may include modular homes. These measures aim to address the immediate need while tackling the long-term shortage of affordable housing.

As the council moves forward with its plans, the focus remains on delivering practical solutions to a growing problem that shows no signs of abating.

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