

# Green Paper: Rough Sleeping Strategy

## Adults' Health, Adults' Care and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018

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Author: Head of Housing

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

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### 1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The report sets out the key current challenges facing the Council with recent increases in Rough Sleeping and successes in the Housing Service.
- 1.2 Members of this Committee views are sought on the emerging priorities for the Rough Sleeper Strategy and the related bid to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government for additional resources to support those sleeping.
- 1.3 The links to the Swindon Vision in particular, Priority One: Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low carbon economy and Priority Four: help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable adults and children.

### 2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Comment on the emerging priorities for the Rough Sleeper Strategy identified in section 3.12.

### 3. Detail

- 3.1 In line with the national trend, Swindon has seen a significant increase in rough sleeping over the last 3 years. The rough sleeping census in Swindon in 2014/15 identified 6 rough sleepers, by the summer of 2016 this had climbed to 31, during 2017 numbers have fluctuated between 20 and 30.
- 3.2 Approximately 80% are male and 30% under the age of 25.
- 3.3 Many people who end up homeless will be at risk of mental and physical ill health, violence, drug and alcohol use. Homeless Link in its study established that 33% had complex multiple needs, 31% had a drug problem, 23% an alcohol addiction, 6% a learning disability and 32% a mental health problem. These are strong similarities with those currently sleeping rough in Swindon.
- 3.4 Swindon spends just under £1.4m every year on supported housing schemes for the single homeless. This is mainly in the form of Direct Access hostels but also other 'move on' accommodation. The hostels in Swindon are well established, but find it difficult to engage with individuals with complex needs due to the level

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of support they are able to offer and also the regime required to run a busy hostel in a safe and supportive way for the majority of residents.

Many rough sleepers will also choose not to be housed in such a way due to the management structure of the facility and also, importantly, to keep a distance from former associates that have caused their condition to deteriorate on previous occasions.

Under the Council's statutory duty to accommodate, often the only option available is specialist Bed and Breakfast accommodation at a cost of £60 per night.

- 3.5 The Council and its partners recognised this gap in provision following the consultation on the Draft Homelessness Strategy in 2017. The wider Homelessness Strategy was put on hold whilst the final drafting of the Homelessness Reduction Act and its associated Statutory Regulations were completed. In order to respond better to the immediate needs of rough sleeping it is useful to consider this specific strategy that will later be incorporated into the new Homelessness Strategy.
- 3.6 Traditionally homelessness services in England have taken a "staircase" or linear approach to housing people experiencing homelessness, where people progress through a series of accommodation and treatment services until they are "housing ready". After this point they are deemed ready for independent housing. However, UK research conducted initially by Homeless Link in 2015 and followed up in more detail by the Centre for Social Justice in 2017, established clear evidence that a "Housing First" approach, which makes no conditions and provides an immediate housing solution with wrap around support to an individual, can help maintain longer term tenancies.
- 3.7 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.  
  
The Homelessness Reduction Bill Received royal assent in May 2017 and was enacted in April 2018. This Act introduces a new duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment in all cases where an eligible applicant is homeless, or threatened with homelessness regardless of whether there is any priority need or possible intentional homelessness. During 2016/17 there was 115 homelessness applications that were found to be either intentionally homeless or not in priority need, which this new duty would apply to. 2017/18 figures are currently being ratified.
- 3.8 In addition, the Act has extended the period for when the local authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days. This is intended to ensure that interventions take place earlier to avoid homelessness applicants from reaching crisis point. Of the 545 homelessness decisions made in 2016/17, 234 (43%) were found not to be homeless. This is likely due to them

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being outside of the 28 day criteria. The change in legislation is already seeing an increase in caseloads.

- 3.9 Additional funding to help local English councils finance the new burdens was announced March 2017.

Swindon's Homelessness Reduction Act - allocation of new burdens funding:

2017/18 - £69,940

2018/19 - £64,065

2019/20 - £71,565

Total - £205,570

Overall, the proposal is for the Council to set out a **Rough Sleeper Strategy** that acknowledges the new challenges brought about by statutory changes and also to provide solutions that fill the gaps in need not met by more traditional provision. This is also explored in the Council's bid to central government for additional resources to combat rough sleeping

- 3.10 **A new approach** to provision. Members may be familiar with the recent work of the Temporary Winter Housing Provision. The main driver behind this was to dramatically reduce estimated numbers of rough sleepers, thought to be 45 in November 2017 down to a much more manageable level. The new approach was to take some of the most chaotic individuals, who were refusing to engage with traditional solutions, directly into a winter provision and wrap a multi-agency service around them for 10 weeks. The detailed findings will be reported to Cabinet in July 2018, but early results are very promising with more than half of the "guests" sustaining their move on accommodation. Some would describe this as a form of *Housing First*.

- 3.11 We have secured £195,000 from Government for the period September 2018 – March 2019 for the following:

3.11.1 Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator role

3.11.2 Assertive Outreach Team

3.11.3 Expanding the Housing First Model with an Accommodation Officer

3.11.4 Increased 'Move-On' support for clients in the Key Scheme

3.11.5 Personalised Housing Plans

3.11.6 Temporary Winter Housing Provision

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- 3.11.7 Mental Health Training for Front Line Officers & Supported Housing Staff
- 3.12 The key priorities for the Rough Sleeping Strategy embody 3 main outcomes and these are that ***No One Arrives on the Street, No One Should Return to the Streets*** and the town centre remains ***Safe and Clean*** for all town centre users. The priorities are:
- 3.12.1 Work in partnership to prevent people sleeping rough in the first place – *No One Arrives on the Street*
- 3.12.2 Rapid joined up multi-agency response when people do end up on the streets. This is currently led by the Rough Sleeper Panel and arrangements will be reviewed as part of the consultation process
- 3.12.3 Provide an Outreach Service for those with complex or multiple needs. Currently this is seen as a vital mobile co-ordination and first response service
- 3.12.4 In partnership, once housing solutions have been identified for individuals, then a range of services are available to support them including the services offered by the Rough Sleeper Bid funding above. - *No One Should Return to the Streets*
- 3.12.5 Develop a range of accommodation and support solutions tailored to individual needs
- 3.12.6 Tackle anti-social behaviour and crime that encourages those sleeping rough to engage and that keeps Swindon's town centre *Safe and Clean* for all users.

## 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could continue with an exclusive and more linear approach to resolving the housing needs of rough sleepers. Feedback on this report is welcomed.

## 5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from this report. Final financial implications will be reported to Cabinet when the strategy is finalised

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### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act requires every local authority to establish an overview and scrutiny function to hold the Executive to account, undertake policy development and review, monitor, and improve performance.

### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other direct implications arising from this report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and in any recommendations made by it.

### Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment has not been completed at this stage but will be drawn up in parallel with the formal consultation process.

### Risk Management

- 5.5 No risk management issues have been identified at this stage. Any risk management issues will be identified at the appropriate time when a topic is under review by the Overview Scrutiny Committee and if it makes any recommendations.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 None.