

Temporary Winter Housing Provision

Cabinet

Date: 11th July 2018

Author: Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety
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Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report provides a review of the Temporary Winter Housing Provision (TWHP) and requests Cabinet to consider whether a similar provision is set up this coming winter and subsequent winters.
- 1.2 A Cabinet Member Decision Note in Oct 17 approved the setting up of the TWHP at Carfax Street, with a recommendation that the Head of Housing submit a report to the One Swindon Board and the Adults' Health, Adults Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings from this project. Subsequently a decision was made to review the findings at Cabinet.
- 1.3 A report reviewing the TWHP is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.4 In pursuit of delivering the Vision for Swindon, this report links to Priority Three: Ensure Clean and Safe Streets and improve our public spaces, as well as Priority Four: Help People to help themselves while always protecting the most vulnerable children and adults and Pledge 25: Deliver a Borough wide approach to increase volunteering enabling more people to become active citizens.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the setting up of a temporary winter housing provision to run for no more than 4 months over the winter period 2018/19 for an identified group of rough sleepers in Swindon.
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety and other interested parties to set up the project

3. Detail

- 3.1 A full report providing the background to the TWHP and an evaluation of the project is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 In summary, the provision was set up to offer a safe and comfortable environment for an identified group of street homeless who due to their needs, found it difficult to engage with existing outreach services and who would have

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opportunities to engage in a programme of activity to support their multiple needs.

- 3.3 The provision was opened beginning of Jan 2018 and closed mid-March 2018 and ran for just short of 11 weeks.

Key Lessons

- 3.4 The short time scale from Cabinet Member approval to opening the doors of the project, including the recruitment of staff and volunteers to safely run the project was probably the biggest challenge. A 4 month lead period would be the preferred option meaning work needs to start mid-summer to have a facility open at start of December
- 3.5 The original idea was to have up to 14 rough sleepers engaged and using the facility. With limited staff and volunteers this was deemed too many and a lower number of 12 was determined to be the maximum number. In reality, there were approximately 8 -10 guests each night which seemed to be a workable option.
- 3.6 This reduced number of guests in fact created a positive, more homely environment where the guests supported one another and relationships were built between guests and between guests and staff and volunteers. 10 would perhaps be an optimum number depending on needs of the individuals for any future provision.
- 3.7 Guests were referred by the multi-agency Swindon Rough Sleeper Panel and were introduced gradually into the project over the first few weeks. This allowed each individual some space and time to familiarise themselves with the rules and to build relationships slowly, this phasing would be the way to manage such a project in future.
- 3.8 A few guests failed to keep their place in the project and new guests who were referred in took their place. Clear rules for guests were set out at the beginning although with a new project it was difficult in the first few weeks to get a consistent approach from staff and volunteers. This was resolved with improved communications.
- 3.9 Over 50 volunteers were utilised amounting to 1850 volunteer hours, approx. value of £17,575 if a financial sum attributed. Two part time Volunteer Coordinators were recruited to manage the volunteers. The maintenance of the volunteer rota amounted to a full time role and the resource required to manage volunteers was underestimated, any future project will need to consider this.
- 3.10 The goodwill of the volunteers from across the Swindon community was overwhelming. The genuine desire to make a difference was evident and there was probably a lot more activities we could have used the volunteers for

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including extending the project's opening hours to include some day time activities.

- 3.11 The feedback received from the volunteers was positive and the volunteers felt good about what they had been part of. If the project runs again then by providing further training, volunteering and employment opportunities this resource could be harnessed more effectively to produce a longer term benefit for Swindon.
- 3.12 Much collaborative partnership working was evidenced through HOSTS (Homeless Organisations Standing Together in Swindon) and good working relations were established by having regular meetings, sometimes almost daily in the first few weeks and then weekly thereafter. This communication was important to enable trust and the success of the project.
- 3.13 Feedback was sought from a range of agencies on the outcomes of the project and the feedback was on the whole positive. There is an ambition from the majority of the agencies dealing with rough sleepers that this should not just be a one off project, but that there should be a regular winter housing provision in Swindon.
- 3.14 Positive outcomes were achieved for the majority of the clients. At the beginning of the project all the guests had been rough sleeping in car parks and other places. At the conclusion of the project, eight were housed and none of these have returned to the streets. 2 are in work and a couple of the others are volunteering. Health issues were addressed and the clients gained self respect and respect for others.
- 3.15 It is important to note some challenges remain concerning a number of the former guests, specifically around rent payments and behaviour.

Next steps

- 3.15 If Cabinet approve the recommendation of providing a temporary housing provision then officers will work with Cabinet Member and all interested parties for a suitable location for the project for winter 18/19.
- 3.16 The Rough Sleeper Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy are currently being drafted and these will focus resources around single homeless and rough sleeping.
- 3.17 Following an invite to bid for funding from the Ministry of Housing and Communities Local Government (MHCLG) to reduce rough sleeping in our area Swindon BC has been awarded £194,000 to be spent by March 2019.
- 3.18 Within this award there is an allocation of £60k this current financial year and £30k for 19/20 to fund a Temporary Winter Housing provision.

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- 3.19 This funding will also be used to launch initiatives such as a Housing First model in Swindon. This will mean that guests at TWHP can move on to the Housing First model. Please see 4.4 below for further information.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are different models that could be looked at including using a converted bus and the Housing First model.
- 4.2 The “Bus Shelter” project has been running with a converted double decker bus in Dorset and the Isle of Wight. However, consultation in Swindon with the local voluntary sector resulted in a stronger preference for a bricks and mortar offer, hence the TWHP. There are also current limitations with the redevelopment of the town centre, as to a suitable location for the Bus.
- 4.3 One of the successes of the TWHP was the community / homely feel of the building, which helped the guests to change their lifestyles, this would be difficult to replicate in a bus.
- 4.4 The Housing First model is based on the principle that a homeless individual’s primary need is to access stable accommodation, and that other issues that affect the individual can and should be addressed once housing is secured. This stands in contrast to more traditional homelessness pathways, where a ‘stepped’ or ‘ladder’ model is often adopted, as seen in the Swindon housing pathway, which operates a tiered system toward independence. The Housing First model and the TWHP will complement each other, with guests having that clear move on to accommodation with the intensive support, when required.
- 4.5 The volunteers from the TWHP can also be used to develop the Housing First model, offering befriending and mentoring opportunities and support and activities to the guests moving on from the TWHP to the Housing First provision.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The cost of the project 17/18 was £ 42,000. This included building refurbishment and compliance work, staff costs and other miscellaneous provisions.
- 5.2 Depending on what facilities are available then the anticipated budget required for 18/19 is £60k
- 5.3 It is anticipated that the grant allocated from MHCLG of £60k will fund the TWHP for 18/19.
- 5.4 In August 2012, the government published an *Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness* in which it estimated that the gross cost of homelessness is between £24,000 and £30,000 per person. This comprises benefit payments,

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health costs in supporting homeless persons with mental health, substance abuse or alcohol dependency problems, and costs to the criminal justice system from crimes committed by the homeless. Most of the identified costs relate to non-statutory homeless single rough sleepers and hostel residents. If only a handful of rough sleepers were moved on from the streets each winter and changed their lifestyles then the TWHP would demonstrate value for money.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.5 The offer of accommodation under this provision is compliant with the current legislation and statutory guidance (Homelessness Act 2002 and Homeless reduction Act 2017) as will more permanent offers under the Housing Act 1996 ensuring individuals are given the best possible opportunities to access and sustain their home; it is therefore considered that our duty under the Human Rights Act is met.

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

- 5.6 The Housing Options Team will be required to work closely with the winter provision over the 12 week period.
- 5.7 Staff will be recruited to project manage the TWHP and to fulfil the roles required to manage the volunteers and the guests.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.8 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been carried out on the draft Homelessness Strategy, this proposal is consistent with the priorities set out in that strategy. A copy of the DIA is available from the report author. If approval for the scheme is granted for winter 18/19 then a specific DIA will be produced for the TWHP using the evidence on equality issues gathered from the initial project.

Risk Management

- 5.9 The proposal requires clear risk assessments for the operation of the building, professional support will be provided to the volunteer organisations involved in the running of this project

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Council's Report Writing standard requires authors to consult appropriate Corporate Directors, Directors or Heads of Service, other officers and relevant partners on the purpose, content, and recommendations of the report before it is presented for decision. In respect of reports to Cabinet, authors are also required to consult the relevant Cabinet Member.

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7. Background Papers

7.1 None

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Review of Temporary Winter Housing Provision. May 2018 (*The appendix is available online at the Council's website or on request from Committee and Member Services*).

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme

9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme for July 2018.