

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS**

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness held on Monday, 26 July 2021 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillor Darren Sanders (in the Chair)

Councillors Cal Corkery  
Scott Payter-Harris

Maria Cole, Residents' Consortium

### **15. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Fielding, Assistant Director, Housing.

### **16. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **17. Updated Safeguarding Policy for Play, Youth and Community Services**

Jo Bennett, Head of Business, Growth & Support, presented the report.

In response to questions from Maria Cole, officers explained that recruitment for youth workers is now live on the council's website; recruitment for summer work has just been completed. Self-isolation can impact on staff and they may have to be deployed to different roles to keep sites open.

Councillor Corkery praised the important work carried out by the Play, Youth and Community Services, who have a number of settings in Charles Dickens ward. The Services are not just about physical places to play but health and wellbeing. Councillor Payter-Harris noted the policy formalised current practice.

In response to questions, Ms Bennett said that recruitment for summer vacancies had been oversubscribed so the Paulsgrove splash pool can open.

Officers are working with the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership and aim to review the Safeguarding Policy frequently to ensure that it is live and reflects developments such as the Online Harms Bill. Councillor Payter-Harris thought it would be good for the Policy to be brought back to the portfolio when there are changes to legislation.

Summing up, Councillor Sanders agreed with members' comments, noting that the Policy is one of the council's most important documents. It is crucial

for parents to know their children are safe and it helps children and young people feel more secure. Updates to the Policy such as the Online Harms Bill could be incorporated into information reports. He was also keen for the Paulsgrove splash pool to open.

The Cabinet Member approved the updated Safeguarding Policy for Play, Youth and Community Services.

## **18. Update on Rough Sleeping Pathway**

Nicola Clannachan, Temporary Head of Housing Needs, Advice & Support, and Sara Wiltshire, Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator, presented the report.

Maria Cole requested that her thanks to the Society of St James and Two Saints for their work with rough sleepers be recorded. She was tired of people maligning rough sleepers as there are all sorts of reasons why someone may be homeless. She herself had been homeless and had been helped by the council.

Councillor Payter-Harris thanked The Housing Network for their support with providing rooms for rough sleepers in Houses of Multiple Occupation. He noted their support may be needed after the current contract ends. He suggested it would be helpful for the portfolio to receive the updates that will go to the Health & Wellbeing Board. He thanked officers for securing £117,000 funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for safe accommodation for victims of violence and abuse who are at risk of rough sleeping.

Councillor Corkery echoed these sentiments and thanked services for their support over the last couple of years. He thought it made sense to relocate the Day Service to a more central location so it is near other services people need to access.

In response to questions from members, officers explained that looking at long-term funding options will be a key role for the partnership and is an ongoing piece of work. Councillor Corkery said that now the council owns some of the buildings where rough sleepers are accommodated it will have more of an idea of the forecasted costs; members could be updated on the revenue costs He would prefer long-term funding as otherwise officers are searching for funding when contracts end.

If rough sleepers do not feel willing, able or safe to move to supported shared accommodation there is now considerable funding for private rented accommodation, which is suitable for those with lower support needs and has not been available until now. The service aims to explore options and make bespoke plans for each person to suit their individual needs. The accommodation at the former Registry student building is more self-contained, for example, with microwaves and en-suite facilities.

With regard to moving on options for people with multiple support needs for whom a hostel is inappropriate, the main one is the private rented sector and

there is funding to support them do this together with support from services such as Money Advice.

Officers can confirm exactly how much funding the council have received from central government in grants (and how many cuts) during the pandemic and over the last 20 years to help solve homelessness.

Officers agreed to arrange for the Residents' Consortium be added to the programme of awareness talks given by the Society of St James, as requested by Maria Cole.

Summing up, Councillor Sanders noted the progress made with resolving homelessness over the last few years and emphasised the importance of treating people as individuals when it comes to their housing preferences. He noted that not all the accommodation for rough sleepers, for example, Kingsway House, is not like traditional homeless hostels. It is unclear what the funding situation will be after 2024 but preventing homelessness is a struggle and needs a long-term sustainable approach. Respite services are crucial. There has been a sea change from getting people off the streets towards a "housing first" approach and asking them what they want to do. Getting people into homes as well as jobs needs a long-term sustainable programme. He would like reports brought back to the portfolio with the Health & Wellbeing Board receiving their own updates. He thanked officers for their fantastic work.

The Cabinet Member noted the report which is for information only and is not subject to call-in.

The meeting concluded at 5.06 pm.

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Councillor Darren Sanders  
Chair