

Agenda item:

Decision maker: Cabinet

Subject: Homeless Working Group

Date of decision: 29th June 2017

Report by: Elaine Bastable, Housing Options Manager

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Budget & policy framework decision: No

1. Summary

This report details the findings of the Homeless Working Group and makes recommendations on work streams that will assist in the reduction of homelessness.

2. Purpose of report

To seek clarity on the future of the Homeless Working Group, and to agree support for the recommendations to better understand the causes of homelessness and the solutions needed to reduce the number of homeless rough sleepers.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the Cabinet clarifies the future role of the Homeless Working Group.

- a) Does the Homeless Working Group continue in its current format, OR
- b) Does it become a steering group to oversee the recommendations moving forward and the preparations for implementing the Homeless Reduction Act , OR
- c) Is the group disbanded, and the recommendations moved forward as 'business as normal'

3.2 That the Cabinet gives support and approval for the following recommendations.

- a) To complete the Safer Portsmouth Partnership complex needs work to understand how services work together (housing, mental health, substance

misuse etc) when dealing with individuals with multiple & complex needs, including findings from Scrutiny Panels.

This piece of work is an action from the SPP Board and has already commenced.

- b) To complete the review of the supported housing provision for the homeless, and use the findings to redesign/recommission services to meet the increased demand and more challenging support needs.

This piece of work is ongoing and part of the preparation for the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act.

- c) Undertake community asset mapping to maximise the contribution of the voluntary & community sector.
- d) Consider an annual event and/or regular forum that would raise awareness and help co-ordinate the work of voluntary & community sector working groups.

Several meetings have already been held with the voluntary & community sector in relation to c) & d) - incorporated in the work led by Flick Drummond MP, 'Working together for the City'.

- e) Review current enforcement measures and develop a co-ordinated approach to enforcement between police and PCC to reduce duplication of operational responses.

4. Background

The Homeless Working Group was set up in July 2016 in response to the huge increase in the number of homeless people sleeping rough in the City.

4.1 Membership of the Group

Elected Members

Cllr. Paul Godier - Chair
Cllr. Jennie Brent
Cllr Colin Galloway
Cllr Suzy Horton
Cllr Stephen Morgan
Cllr Gemma New
Cllr Tom Wood

Supporting Officers

Rachel Dalby, Director of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Lisa Wills, Strategy & Partnership Manager
Elaine Bastable, Housing Options Manager
Vicki Plytas, Senior Local Democracy Officer

4.2 The Agreed Scope of the Homeless Working Group

- a) Understand the differences and relationship between homelessness, rough sleepers and begging
- b) Understand what is driving the recent increase in people sleeping rough in the City.
- c) Understand the demand for homeless services and resources available to provide them
- d) Understand whether there is a gap between service provision and demand
- e) Understand any problems with service delivery and what we could do differently
- f) To look at good practice elsewhere and consider whether it could be applied to Portsmouth

5. The Findings

5.1 Understand the differences and relationship between homelessness, rough sleepers and begging

It was important for the group to understand the various definitions of homelessness and agree a focus for the group's work.

Homelessness- the definition within the Homelessness Legislation is that a person is homeless if he or she has no accommodation in the UK, or elsewhere, which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy, and it is reasonable for them to occupy that accommodation.

Rough Sleepers - Rough sleepers are defined for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates as:

- people sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments)
- people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes').

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelter

Begging - is the practice of imploring others to grant a favour, usually a gift of money, with little or no expectation of reciprocation. Whilst some rough sleepers do beg not all beggars are homeless/rough sleepers.

The group decided that to best meet the agreed aims, the work would initially relate to the Homeless as defined by the definition of rough sleeper.

5.2 Understand what is driving the recent increase in people sleeping rough in the City.

The National data

Table 1: Rough sleeping in England, 2010–15

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of rough sleepers	1,768	2,181	2,309	2,414	2,744	3,569
Numerical increase on previous year	N/A	413	128	105	330	825
% change on previous year	N/A	23%	6%	5%	14%	30%

Source: DCLG

- Rough sleeping has increased the most in South East England (up 167%)
 - Up to 80% of rough sleepers have mental health problems (Homeless Links 2014; The unhealthy state of homelessness)
 - National cross party parliamentary enquiry into causes of homelessness - report published August 2016
 'Homelessness is **not caused by any one single issue**, and tackling it therefore requires a **multi-faceted approach** and **collaborative leadership**; causes can be roughly divided into those that are structural/societal or personal/individual'

National summary

- Shortage of social housing - total number of social homes has fallen by 26% since 1979
- Changes to welfare system - two thirds of local authorities in England reported the 2010 -2015 welfare reforms had increased homelessness in their area; more in London (93%) than in the North (49%). (Crisis Homeless Monitor 2016)
- Availability of private rented sector- in London, number of people accepted as homeless due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy up from 925 to 6790 between 2010 and 2015 (Crisis Homeless Monitor 2016) - the demand for housing pushes up rents, creating a gap between private sector rents and the Local Housing Allowance.

The Portsmouth data

- Number of rough sleepers in Portsmouth is increasing in line with the national trend
- 8 in 2014, 15 in 2015, 37 in 2016 (actual street count) *current estimate @ May 2017 is up to 60*
- Rapid Scoping Homeless Health needs Assessment (Aug 2015) - estimated up to 2000 may be living in the City without a home of their own.

Statutory Homeless Data for Portsmouth

	14/15	15/16
Number of homeless approaches	995	1088
Total number of households accepted	418	498
Number of 'prevention and relief' cases	966	771
Number of homeless acceptances where a private sector tenancy has come to an end	156	212

The gap between private sector rents and the local housing allowance in Portsmouth

Property Type	Average Monthly Rent	Local Housing Allowance Level	Difference
1 Bedroom Flat	£606.38	£504.96	£101.42
2 Bedroom Flat	£750.83	£625.56	£125.27
3 Bedroom Flat	£877.50	£747.93	£129.57
2 Bedroom House	£801.41	£625.56	£175.85
3 Bedroom House	£964.00	£747.93	£216.07
4 Bedroom House	£1,257.12	£1040.00	£217.12

The data for Portsmouth reflects the national summary. We are seeing a rise in homelessness and less availability of affordable private sector accommodation, resulting in an increased demand on a declining social housing stock.

5.3 Understand the demand for homeless services and resources available to provide them

What services do we currently provide?

See appendix (i)

The number of supported bed spaces in the City is 205, of which 160 is for single people

During the past year there have been 387 referrals for supported housing from single people.

The cost of accommodation based homeless services for single people is £1,174, 300 pa and the Homeless Day Service is £200,000 pa

The total local authority expenditure on homelessness is attached (**see appendix (ii)**)

5.4 Understand whether there is a gap between service provision and demand

The Homeless Working Group invited individuals from voluntary & community groups as well as members of the public, to share their experiences of working with rough sleepers.

The issues raised were;

- Lack of suitable accommodation - wet and dry
- Availability and quality of move-on accommodation and support (both social housing and private sector)
- Lack of practical support and advocacy for rough sleepers
- Lack of coordination of voluntary sector
- Some concerns about existing commissioned services
- Access to information about local services available
- Prevalence of mental health issues
- People don't want to engage with the council - another knock back/rejection
- Hard hitting messages about giving to beggars can be difficult
- Lack of understanding by communities - residents, businesses
- Balance required between support and enforcement
- Providing services on the street do not encourage or support change
- Need for immediate support during winter months
- Concerns about the 'vulnerability' assessment as defined in the homelessness legislation

A local survey of rough sleepers was undertaken in Nov 2016

- 22 rough sleepers responded (59% of the estimated cohort in Nov 2016)
- 75% were Portsmouth residents, and their last settled accommodation was in the city.
- 80% had at least one disability/health problem
- 64% had a mental health condition

- 50% were known to substance misuse services.
- 50% had been asked to leave their last accommodation as they couldn't pay the rent.

What rough sleeper's identified as important to them:

- Being treated in a non-judgemental way by caring staff
- More local services (quantity not quality)
- Services open at night and weekends
- Having a roof over their heads
- Support with managing mental health and substance misuse issues
- Practical assistance: lists of employers/landlord who would accept homeless employees/tenants, assistance with managing finances, access to phones/computer with internet access, an interpreter or help with admin such as filling out forms.

5.5 Understand any problems with service delivery and what we could do differently

Summary of Supported housing review information presented to Homeless working group - 01/11/16

The purpose of having supported housing provision in the city is:

'To support clients who have identified support and accommodation needs, and enable clients to obtain the skills and abilities needed to sustain independent living within the community'

- *Terms of Reference (Supported Housing Panels): July 2014*

Looking at the data relating to referrals made to the Single Persons Supported Housing Panel from 2013 to 2016, we highlighted the following:

- The main reasons that single people were referred for supported accommodation were:-
 - I. Sustaining recovery in a substance free environment
 - II. Mental health needs
 - III. Budgeting issues
 - IV. Domestic abuse (perpetrator and victim)
 - V. Emotional support
 - VI. Finding accommodation
- There was an increase in referrals being made, year on year. (This continues to be the case, looking at the current data for 2016/17).
- Around 50% of people referred did not move into a supported housing provision
- A small proportion of people who accessed a supported housing provision attained settled accommodation upon leaving it.

- Some people were re-referred, a number of times. -**see appendix (iii)**

Using the above information, a review of current supported housing provision for single people, young people and families commenced with a focus on the following:

- Why so many referrals do not progress beyond the referral/assessment stage.
- What's happening that means some people are being referred a number of times
- Why do so few people leaving supported housing attain settled accommodation
- Do services have the right things in place to understand a person's support needs and the purpose of making a referral
- Are we asking our supported housing providers to provide people with right support to meet their individual needs? Are we commissioning the right service & do we have the right contract monitoring tools in place.

The review is ongoing and there has been a very positive response from the services providers, who are working with us to challenge current practice and understand the changes needed to improve outcomes for individuals with more complex needs.

5.6 To look at good practice elsewhere and consider whether it could be applied to Portsmouth

Not all 'good practice' can be replicated in other areas, understanding the local context is essential

Some research was undertaken to explore what is happening in other areas, for example:

- Plymouth - 'co-operative' commissioning for complex needs.
'The public sector and citizens making better use of each other's assets, resources, and contributions to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency'
- Southampton - one stop shop approach
'Offers 24 hr intensive support, accommodation, and crisis intervention'
- Brighton and Hove - hospital pathway team
'Provides support to homeless people on discharge from hospital to ensure that their health recovery is sustained'
- Bournemouth - housing first
'Offers secure long term accommodation with intensive support to individuals who have multiple complex needs and have experienced chronic recurrent homelessness'

Whilst these were all examples of 'good practice' there is no evidence that any of these interventions would be successful if replicated in Portsmouth. The group decided that we needed to fully understand the issues for Rough Sleepers in Portsmouth before considering solutions.

5.7 The Actions taken by the Homeless Working Group;

- Research into what is driving increase in rough sleeping
- Members listened to and worked with volunteers
- Survey with rough sleepers
- Homeless street count
- Service mapping
- Supported housing review
- Joined up work with the Safer Portsmouth Partnership's complex needs priority to reduce duplication
- Joined up work with 'Working together for the City', led by Flick Drummond MP
- Established the Winter Bed Scheme, to provide shelter for rough sleepers during December to March
- Launched new homeless day service, incorporating outreach support for rough sleepers

6 Enforcement

Superintendent Will Schofield attended a meeting on 06/12/2016 and outlined available legislative responses:-

- **Vagrancy Act 1824-** s4-sleeping outdoors,s3-begging
- **S4 the superseded by 1925 Act** -there are some caveats eg have you directed the person to accommodation? As far as he is aware this has never been used.
- **S3- begging** - this is used from time to time but the only sanction is to impose fines and so it is used as a last resort as it is pointless to fine people in these circumstances.
- **Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014-s35 dispersal notice** - where there is likely to be anti-social behaviour, it is possible to use a dispersal notice. This allows clearance of a designated area and lasts for 48 hours. This tends to be used sparingly and is much more commonly used in connection with the night time economy rather than to deal with homelessness. Experience has shown that s35 is only effective if used sparingly.
- **Criminal Behaviour Orders** (these have replaced ASBOs). The fundamental difference though is that a CBO is always post-conviction. LAs and Police can apply for a CBO only if an offence has been committed. These tend to be used for hard core persistent anti-social behaviour.
- **Community Protection Notice** - this aims to prevent unreasonable behaviour that is having a negative impact on the quality of life of the local community. A notice can be issued to anyone over the age of 16 and will require the behaviour to stop and if necessary reasonable steps can be taken to ensure the behaviour is not repeated.
- **Public Space Protection Order** - This is an order that identifies the public place and prohibits specified things being done in the restricted area and/or requires specified things to be done by persons carrying on specified

activities in that area. The order may not have effect for more than 3 years and the Local Authority must consult with the chief officer of the police and the local policing body before issuing the order.

Superintendent Schofield advised that policing across the city varied in experience of dealing with these issues, and a greater consistency of approach is needed. There is a need to develop an overall strategy to integrate all options and take a carrot and stick approach.

There is a need for a co-ordinated approach to enforcement between police and PCC to reduce duplication of operational responses.

7 Conclusion

It is not possible to identify an immediate cost effective solution to reduce rough sleeping without a better understanding of the causes; how services work together; and whether we are commissioning the right services.

The aim of the recommendations in 3.2 is to gain this understanding and work towards appropriate solutions.

8 Equality impact assessment (EIA)

Not relevant at this stage

9 Legal implications

No legal implications at this stage

10 Head of finance's comments

No budget implication at this stage

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
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The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by [title of decision maker] on [insert date of meeting].

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Signed by: [title of decision maker]