

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing

Date of meeting: 11th September 2018

Subject: Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy 2018-2020

Report by: James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes

Full Council decision: Yes

1. Purpose of report

To seek endorsement of the Street Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Partnership Strategy 2018-2020

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Street Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Partnership Strategy 2018 - 2020 is endorsed
- 2.2 That consultation commences on piloting the Accommodation First not Accommodation only model piloted in Portsmouth
- 2.3 That a Homelessness Working Group is implemented

3. Background

- 3.1 The City of Portsmouth, like other Local Authority areas, has seen an increase in street homelessness and rough sleeping. The City is responding with supported housing provision, a homeless day service, a night bed service, community and voluntary sector support and there is a strong commitment from other services to provide positive outcomes for people who are sleeping on the streets. It should be noted that this inaugural Strategy is not a statutory requirement for the Local Authority and therefore Portsmouth City Council is not under any duty to produce one.
- 3.2 Rough sleeping counts and estimates are single one night snapshots of the number of people sleeping rough in local authority areas. The rough sleepers count in Portsmouth in 2017 identified 42 rough sleepers. This is a year on year increase.

- 3.3 In response to the increase of visibility of people sleeping on the streets and a need for the Local Authority to provide a co-ordinated response, a new temporary post was created - Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategic Programme Manager. The post is a fixed term post from December 2017 - March 2019.
- 3.4 A Street Homeless & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy is needed to provide clear direction and a co-ordinated approach to maximise the contribution of the community and voluntary sector and ensure that the 'right' support is in place to meet demand. It is, though, important to stress that it builds on learning from statutory and voluntary partners and is the start of a continuous dialogue between them and the Council, conducted on an equal footing.
- 3.5 Street homelessness is a complex issue and links to multiple services including housing, mental health, substance misuse and benefits and there is rarely a one size fits all approach to resolve homelessness. A tailored approach to an individual's needs and aspirations is needed to minimise the barriers identified in finding and sustaining accommodation.
- 3.6 This strategy has been developed by exploring
- 3.6.1 What is driving the increase in people sleeping on the streets
 - 3.6.2 How to co-ordinate the current response of the City Council and other stakeholders
 - 3.6.3 How to adjust our offer/services to provide a tailored approach
- 3.7 Some rough sleepers do not appear to want to engage with any offers of accommodation or support and the intention is to develop an approach which seeks to address the challenges of unwanted or criminal behaviour from or to individuals making that choice. That would form part of a balanced package of measures consistent with the 'Prevention, Intervention, Recovery' approach in the Government's 2018 Rough Sleeper Strategy.
- 3.8 The issues around rough sleeping are complex and are often outside the direct control of Portsmouth City Council and other local partners. Many of those within the rough sleeping community have needs relating to mental health and substance misuse. Research has shown that no single agency can effectively tackle street homelessness. The reason individuals become rough sleepers are not fully understood. There are, however, some key characteristics which include early childhood trauma.
- 3.9 The Street Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy proposes a 'Accommodation First not Accommodation Only' programme. The model would focus on supporting individuals into affordable housing and also to provide consistent support to sustain any tenancy. The Accommodation First not Accommodation Only model builds on the provision of a Night Bed Service in the city which has been operational since December 2017. 45 beds are

available each evening for individuals who are experiencing rough sleeping. The Night Bed Service is complemented by the Portsmouth Homeless Day Service. Both services are commissioned by Portsmouth City Council. A personalised housing plan will be developed with each individual to assess their needs which might include employment, mental and physical health and debt advice, in addition to their housing need. Once settled accommodation has been secured, the intention would be to provide support in order to prevent street homelessness happening repeatedly. As this is a new model it has therefore not been consulted on widely. Consultation with statutory partners, other stakeholders and the voluntary sector will commence if the strategy is approved.

- 3.10 The Government is committed to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it altogether by 2027. A Rough Sleepers Initiative funding package has been launched. By the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Local Government.£30m will be available for Local Authorities over the period 2018 - 2020. Portsmouth City Council is the recipient of £384k for the period July 2018 - March 2019. Further funding is available for 2019/20.
- 3.11 A bid has been made for funding for 2019 -2020 for Rough Sleeping Initiative funding. At the time of writing this report, this outcome of the bid is not known.

4. Governance & Accountability

- 4.1 A Homeless Working Group should be implemented. The purpose of the Group should include:
- Monitoring and providing scrutiny for the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the strategy
 - Scrutinise any funding is being used in accordance with the conditions of any grants or public monies
 - Provide expertise, experience and guidance
- 4.2 Membership of the group is to be agreed, but could include:
- Cabinet Members with a responsibility for Housing, Environment &Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing
 - Representatives from the elected members of Portsmouth City Council
 - Voluntary Sector Partners
 - Statutory Partners e.g. Police, Health
 - Individuals with experience of rough sleeping

5. Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 A strategy is necessary to understand the needs of individuals who are rough sleeping and how to offer appropriate support using all of the resources available
- 5.2 The Accommodation First not Accommodation Only model seeks to support individuals into settled accommodation
- 5.3 A Homeless Working group is pivotal to the success of this work and to support collaborative working

6. Equality impact assessment

- 6.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed once consultation has concluded. Consultation will be concluded by 31 December 2018.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The report and attached draft strategy correctly outlines the current obligations under the Homelessness Act 2002 which imposes a duty on the local authority to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness. This duty is further reinforced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which enables the authority to engage with groups who fall outside of any priority status of the Housing Act 1996.
- 7.2 Whilst the new duty is imposed, if rough sleepers fail or deliberately do not engage the authority can serve an appropriate notice as it is recognised that some persons wish to remain homeless.
- 7.3 The current proposed strategy minimalises potential risk from Judicial Review.

8. Director of Finance's comments

- 8.1 The City Council has received £384,000 from the Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant for 2018/19 from the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This ring fenced grant has been awarded to support Initiatives that reduce the number of rough sleepers in the City. The Accommodation First not Accommodation Only' model described in this strategy is funded from this grant.
- 8.2 The Council have submitted a further bid to the (MHCLG) of £1m to further extend the Service for 2019/20, at the time of writing this report the Council is yet to receive notification as to whether it has been successful in this bid.
- 8.3 If the Council is unsuccessful, the Service would either have to reduce or cease unless an alternative source of funding is identified.

- 8.4 In the event that additional funding is unsuccessful, the Service would develop an "exit plan" in collaboration with statutory and voluntary partners to provide services within the available funding.

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Signed by:
James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

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

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member of Housing on 11th September 2018

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Signed by:
Councillor Sanders - Cabinet Member of Housing