

Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness
Date of meeting:	25 January 2021
Subject:	Pathway for rough sleepers and purchase of associated support and property
Report by:	James Hill, Director for Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Report Authors:	Paul Fielding - Assistant Director for Housing Jo Bennett - Head of Business Relationships, Growth & Support Sharon George - Operational Support - Rough Sleeper Adviser
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To present and seek approval for the long-term change in the pathway model of support for rough sleepers to leave the streets and find accommodation.
- 1.2. To seek approval to use government grants to procure support services needed to safely and efficiently operate the accommodation.
- 1.3. To seek approval to use government grants to support the acquisition of a portfolio of accommodation (formerly student accommodation) which will be repurposed for use within the pathway.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness approves the new pathway model to support rough sleepers in the city, as outlined in section 4 of the report.
- 2.2. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness approves the use of the Next Step Accommodation Programme (NSAP) grant to procure support services for the pathway for 2021-2024, as outlined in section 4 of this report.



- 2.3. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness approves capital expenditure of £7,311,200 in addition to the NSAP grant funding of £2,152,100 to purchase a portfolio of accommodation (formerly student accommodation) comprising three properties, known as The Registry, St Michaels Road; 155-157 Elm Grove and Kingsway House, Elm Grove, creating accommodation for 110 self-contained rooms (bed spaces) for rough sleepers.
- 2.4. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness delegates authority to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources & S151 Officer to negotiate the acquisition of the portfolio of accommodation and to commission the necessary works to ensure the buildings are fit for purpose to accommodate rough sleepers, whilst ensuring that the schemes remain financially viable.

3. Background

- 3.1. At the start of December 2020 there were approximately 20-25 people still sleeping rough on the streets of Portsmouth. Various City Council teams and service providers are aware of the rough sleeping individuals and work with them to understand their personal barriers to taking up an accommodation place. Reporting of any persons that are street homeless is encouraged via the app www.streetlink.org.uk
- 3.2. There are others who are on the street who are not sleeping rough, but may be street begging. For this housing pathway only those who do not have other accommodation are considered for accommodation support. A balanced, multi-agency response, based on their individual circumstances, exists for this group.
- 3.3. Portsmouth City Council has, in recent years under various administrations, looked to find innovative ways of helping those who are street homeless and sleep rough. The history of these services, along with how they had changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was reported to Cabinet on 14 July 2020. The decisions made by Cabinet as a result of that report were wide and far reaching, and instructed officers to develop an interim and long-term pathway model, apply to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for suitable funding and find suitable accommodation options for both the medium and long-term.
- 3.4. During the second half of 2020 officers from across the council worked together to progress those actions. This work included oversight from the administration and the Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group (PCRSHPG).
- 3.5. The in-principle outcome of the bid for MHCLG's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) funding was reported to Cabinet on 1 December 2020. Since that report it has been confirmed that the City Council secured all the funding bid for, providing it can acquire and make available all of the property outlined within the bid and deliver the support services required to operate them for three years.

3.6. The funding for the long-term pathway is:

3.6.1 Capital funding to support the purchase of properties within the pathway of £2,152,100.

3.6.2 Revenue funding to support the operation of the pathway within the sites purchased by the capital of £2,456,303 for the period 31 March 2021 - 31 March 2024.

3.7 The report outlines below how the NSAP funding is recommended to be used to provide an accommodation and support model.

4 New Pathway for Rough sleepers

4.1 As COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed during the summer of 2020, individuals were moved from the emergency hotel accommodation into:

- 4.1.1 two accommodation blocks previously used as student accommodation
- 4.1.2 private rented accommodation, including HMOs provided through the Housing Network, and
- 4.1.3 previous night bed accommodation, reconfigured to ensure COVID-19 safety.

4.2 Support has been offered on a 24/7 basis. This has enabled officers, working with the current support providers, to learn how to address the causes of rough sleeping and to respond to their impacts. They have also learned how to operate these facilities safely and securely, and create a pathway where individuals can move through to an appropriate outcome, which for many is to sustain a tenancy either in the private rented sector or take up a social tenancy.

4.3 Working to the City Council's Accommodation First not Accommodation Only (AFNAO) model - which is the foundation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies - the plan is to offer all rough sleepers the opportunity to engage with the Housing Needs, Advice and Support (HNAS) Service to make a homeless application. This enables an initial assessment and to produce a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) which will encompass all of the needs of the individual. Referral into HNAS can be made by the individual, Outreach Services and other statutory and voluntary agencies. It is recognised that some individuals will choose not to engage and, in this scenario, we will robustly offer support via our Outreach teams.

4.4 Following assessment, the most appropriate accommodation and support to meet the needs of the individual can be offered. The intention is to be able to offer immediate accommodation which will be included in this newly formed 'Rough Sleeping Pathway' whilst a rapid assessment takes place. Accommodation can be offered during the assessment phase. The Rough Sleeping Pathway accommodation will include the following elements:



- No Second Night Out accommodation
- Self-contained accommodation across three settings
- Support to access properties in the Private Rented Sector
- Navigators and 'Team around the accommodation'

- 4.5 The learning from previous Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funded activities has influenced the creation of 'No Second Night Out' accommodation, where a rapid insight into what has led a person to the streets can be understood and in some cases resolved so the individual can return back to their previous accommodation. This is particularly relevant in cases of parental eviction, prison release and hospital discharge.
- 4.6 Following the completion of the assessment, the most appropriate intensive support accommodation will be offered. All accommodation is self-contained and support ranges from low level to high level within three properties, which are outlined in section 5 of this report. The learning from the emergency and interim phases has supported the implementation of the AFNAO and provides consistent and long-term support as individuals move through the Rough Sleeping Pathway.
- 4.7 HNAS has been working collaboratively with Public Health England (PHE) and health providers to ensure that service users understand the advice and guidance around maintaining good health and restrictions related to COVID-19. Everyone newly entering the accommodation is offered a health screening, including temperature checks. In the accommodation the use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is utilised by support workers to minimise the risk of transfer of infection. Regular room inspections also take place and enable discussions around hand hygiene and cleanliness and well as the general management of accommodation.
- 4.8 To operate the pathway effectively, the intensive support accommodation requires on-site support services on a 24 hour, seven day a week basis. It is proposed that the funding obtained from the NSAP is used to procure the support service contracts for the accommodation. Procurement will take place during 2021 with the aim being that new support service contracts will begin in autumn 2021 and run until the end of March 2024. It will be the role of the PCRSHPG to identify how these services can be funded beyond this point.
- 4.9 The aim of the procurement is to make the service as flexible as possible to ensure the funding available is used in the most effective way. It is intended that the support is offered both in the accommodation blocks but also in the community once individuals have moved into settled accommodation.
- 4.10 The intensive support accommodation is not permanent, but a resting point for the individual to feel settled and gain the support they need. Service users may only need a few weeks to prepare to move on, whilst others may need a few months. During the stay in this accommodation support will be provided and assessment of progress will be made in conjunction with the service user.

- 4.11 At a suitable point, as assessed by the wrap around support, service users will be supported in moving to longer-term accommodation. This is likely to be accessing the private rented sector or long term supported living. The choice to accept this accommodation, or leave the pathway, will be with the service user.
- 4.12 The City Council will continue to work with landlords in the private rented sector and offer support to the landlord and to the tenant. This model has been piloted during 2020 and there has been success in tenants being able to sustain long-term settled accommodation and in landlords working with us to achieve this.
- 4.13 The successful Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funded Navigator Team will be embedded into the support. All individuals in accommodation will have a named Navigator to offer support around achieving the skills needed to sustain settled accommodation. The intention is that support will be ongoing for as long as it is needed whilst within the pathway. Navigators will be trained in 'Understanding and Working with Trauma'.
- 4.14 The development of a 'Team around the Accommodation' model is also a key part of this pathway. The purpose of this is to include all statutory and voluntary agencies who can support individuals with specific needs, with the resource 'pulled' upon when needed. The 'Team Around the Accommodation' members will include Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Recovery Services, Probation Services, Health based services, local voluntary sector organisations and our commissioned providers. Some of the work undertaken by the services is outlined in Appendix 1, and this will be reviewed and responded to as needs change.
- 4.15 The model is further enhanced with the announcement that Portsmouth will receive funding to provide support for individuals accessing this accommodation that have drug and alcohol addictions. The £682k received for 2021/22 will be used to support a specialist staff team to be integrated with the NSAP accommodation and support model and outreach services for those that remain street homeless.
- 4.16 Oversight, advice and guidance is provided by the Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group (PCRSHPG) which has representation from a wide range of voluntary and statutory sector partners and individuals who have experienced rough sleeping, as well as councillor representation from all groups. The City Council's Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which underpins the work of the PCRSHPG is accountable to the city's Health and Wellbeing Board and the Housing and Preventing Homeless cabinet portfolio.

5 Property acquisition

- 5.1 As part of the interim plan, the City Council leased the use of 60 HMO rooms and two intensive support accommodation properties on Elm Grove and St Michael's



Road. These intensive support accommodation were previously used as student accommodation and leased on a 12 month basis whilst a more permanent solution was considered. A third property, Kingsway House, also on Elm Grove, had been identified for the pathway but was not available for use at the time.

- 5.2 As part of the lease discussions with the current owners of the three identified interim properties, confidential discussions were also had regarding options for the possible purchase of the properties. These negotiations were subject to a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) until early November 2020.
- 5.3 On the 9th November 2020 the NDA was released allowing disclosure in this report that the NSAP long term funding enables the discussion with the property owner to continue involving the purchase by the City Council of the two properties located in Elm Grove, namely 155 - 157 Elm Grove (19 bed spaces) and Kingsway House (50 bed spaces), and the Registry Building at St Michael's Road (41 bed spaces).
- 5.4 Kingsway House, Elm Grove, Southsea, Portsmouth, PO5 1LJ has not been leased as part of the interim housing solution due to various building issues that need to be resolved prior to acquisition. The property can house 50 people and will provide resilience in the event of increased demand in the overall pathway
- 5.5 Full pre-acquisition surveys have been carried out by our Planned Project team to ensure we understand these buildings prior to acquisition.
- 5.6 The properties will be purchased using the NSAP capital funding to support borrowing to bring the properties within the Housing Revenue Account. (HRA) They will then be leased either to the Housing General Fund or support providers to manage.
- 5.7 Prior to permanent use, and therefore purchase, a change in planning permission is required. Planning applications were submitted on 9th December 2020 and due to be presented to the City Council's Planning Committee in late February or early March 2021. If planning permission is not received for these buildings, purchase will not be viable and no alternatives will be possible within the timescales set out by the NSAP bid. This will result in there being no accommodation for the pathway and the loss of the grant funding.
- 5.8 The NSAP project team is working towards a tight deadline in delivering these properties, supported by Homes England.

6 Reasons for recommendations

- 6.1 The experience of bringing 'Everybody In' as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has given an opportunity to change the services available to rough sleepers. The demand for places for the city's homeless and rough sleepers to sleep and receive support increased due to the pandemic. However there is evidence to



show this will not decrease and a desire to eradicate homelessness and rough sleepers is a priority for the city.

- 6.2 By offering accommodation which can be accessed 24/7 and support, the chances of individuals taking the steps to a more stable lifestyle and sustainable accommodation will be increased. The pathway will provide and equip them with the best possible skills to sustain settled accommodation. This includes support around addiction behaviours, financial management and living skills. Encouragement is also offered around education, employment and training.
- 6.3 The proposed Pathway, supported by Government grant funding, enables this change which can support individuals as well as addressing rough sleeping on the streets of Portsmouth.
- 6.4 The existing support provider contracts were not designed for this new pathway. Therefore existing contracts will need to be extended for a short period whilst new contracts are procured.
- 6.5 The purchase of property for the intensive support accommodation is the most cost- effective way to provide the accommodation needed, as it ensures that the City Council can provide that for use to the successful support provider(s).
- 6.6 The ability to provide more suitable accommodation to some of our most vulnerable clients will alleviate the use of hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation which can be expensive.
- 6.7 By purchasing the three properties outlined in section 5, the City Council will be able to provide the necessary types of accommodation, in suitable locations and within the timescale to meet the requirements for the NSAP funding process.

7 Integrated impact assessment

- 7.1 The IIA for this report has been completed and the noted positive impacts of providing this accommodation and support model noted. Further consideration of the IIA will form part of the procurement and tendering exercise for the support contract.

8 Legal implications

There are no legal implications in this report given that the basis of the proposed plan is something that falls within the general competency of the Local Authority and that the basis of proposed purchases along with service use is set to meet the needs of those most requiring assistance. There is a clear set out as to reasoning and risk that would enable delivery of service in a risk mitigated way.

9 Director of Finance's comments

- 9.1 The operation of the pathway for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024, as outlined in section 4 of this report, can be funded from the NSAP revenue grant of £2.46m that has been awarded.
- 9.2 The NSAP capital funding of £2.15m has been awarded to support the purchase of three properties within the pathway, as detailed in the report. An estimated additional capital expenditure of up to £7.3m funded from borrowing will be required to purchase and refurbish the properties. It is proposed that a capital expenditure budget of £9.46m is added to the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme, which is to be approved by full Council in February 2021.
- 9.3 A financial appraisal has been carried out that assess the financial implications over a 30 year period. It shows that the cost associated with borrowing, maintenance and running costs for the three buildings will be met from the Housing Benefit receipts relating to the occupancy of the properties. A revised financial appraisal, using the latest running cost information and the negotiated purchase prices, will need to be completed and approved by the Director of Finance and Resources & S151 Officer prior to the finalisation of the purchases to ensure that the original assumptions are correct.

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Signed by: **James Hill**
Director for Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Support and Health Services provided (inserted below)

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
Cabinet report 14 July 2020	Supporting Rough Sleepers Report.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Cabinet report 1 December 2020	Cabinet 1 Dec 2020 - Update on the Rough Sleeping Work.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Homeless strategy	Portsmouth City Council Homelessness Strategy
Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy	Street-Homelessness-and-Rough-Sleeping-Partnership-Strategy-2018-2020.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Planning application link	Not yet available

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
rejected by on

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Signed by:

Appendix 1

During the interim accommodation phase in late 2020 a wide range of health and other support services were provided as follows

- Public Health undertook a rapid participatory health needs assessment with homeless residents of emergency accommodation during the summer to better understand their health needs and inform the response
- Multi-disciplinary Homeless healthcare team providing in-reach to homeless settings, supporting:
 - Health screening of residents
 - Physical and mental health assessments to understand, prevent and treat long-term health conditions, preventing future hospital admissions
 - Planning for flu vaccination programme amongst this group
 - GP and nurse practitioner drop-in clinics
 - Nurse support for residents with Covid-19 symptoms
 - Link with homeless outreach to support street homeless
 - Continuity of care for patients discharged from hospital
 - Supporting homeless with Covid-19 testing, using the stock of kits Portsmouth has available for this group
 - Training, advice and guidance to housing staff on physical, mental health and creating a psychologically informed environment
 - Link work with patients' existing GP practices to ensure joined up care
 - Providing in-reach into our main acute hospital to support the discharge of homeless clients into suitable accommodation for their needs
 - Drug & alcohol treatment in-reach and outreach
 - Smoking cessation support and Vaping starter kits provided via in-reach to homeless by the Wellbeing Service
 - Blood borne virus screening undertaken