

ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED IF THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES IT IS URGENT

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 11
11 JANUARY 2017	Public Report

Report of the Service Director: Adult Services and Communities		
Contact Officer	Adrian Chapman	Tel. 863891

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CROSS-PARTY TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO REVIEW THE MANAGEMENT OF ROUGH SLEEPING

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for a cross-party scrutiny task and finish group to be formed to review current approaches to managing rough sleeping, and to make recommendations based on that review to improve or enhance those approaches.
- 1.2 This report is urgent due to the issue of rough sleeping being particularly highlighted during the Christmas and New Year period, which has led to the request to create a task and finish group being received after the publication of the agenda for the January meeting of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 (i) The Committee is asked to agree to the formation of a time-limited cross-party task and finish group, and to the outcomes of the work of that group to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee at its March 2017 meeting.

(ii) If agreed, the Committee is asked to make any initial nominations from the scrutiny committee members to join the task and finish group.

3. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND RELEVANT CABINET PORTFOLIO

- 3.1 Whilst this work supports all of the council's corporate priorities, it is most closely aligned to the priorities of keeping our communities safe, cohesive and healthy.
- 3.2 Responsibility for the management of rough sleeping sits within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Committee will be aware of the perceived increase in rough sleeping over the Christmas and New Year period in and around St Peter's Arcade in the city centre, which led to significant public and media interest.
- 4.2 The Leader of the Council has requested that a cross-party task and finish group of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee be established to review the existing arrangements for the management of and support provided to rough sleepers, to consider this in the context of homelessness generally, and to make recommendations back to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee about how these arrangements can be improved or enhanced.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 Many towns and cities across the UK have experienced an increase in the number of people rough sleeping. Official government figures for the 2015 rough sleeping count showed that 3,569 people were rough sleeping in England on a single night, up 102% from 2010. It is expected that figures for 2016 will be greater still.
- 5.2 In Peterborough local intelligence, which comes from a number of different sources including support agencies, the police and from conducting a physical rough sleeper count, estimates that there are 21 people sleeping rough. This is up from 15 last year, a 33% increase.
- 5.3 There are a wide range of services and support arrangements in place to help rough sleepers move into accommodation, overseen by the council's housing service. These include night shelter arrangements, support with housing applications, close working with government agencies to resettle foreign nationals back to their country of origin, and close working with a number of support agencies to help with substance misuse and mental health issues.
- 5.4 However, despite this Peterborough still has a number of rough sleepers. It is because of this that the Leader of the Council has asked the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee to approve the establishment of a cross-party task and finish group, to review these arrangements.
- 5.5 The Committee is being asked to consider the recommendation to create a task and finish group under the urgency procedure set out in the council's constitution¹. The issue of rough sleeping was particularly highlighted during the Christmas and New Year period, which has led to the request to create a task and finish group being received after the publication of the agenda for the January meeting of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee. By not using the urgency procedure, the creation of a task and finish group would need to wait until the March 2017 meeting of the scrutiny committee meaning that two months would pass before any recommendations could be made. As we are already into the winter season, it is imperative that the work of the task and finish group can commence as quickly as possible, in order that any early improvements or enhancements to services can be implemented.
- 5.6 A proposed terms of reference for the task and finish group are included at appendix 1.
- 5.7 In order to ensure that opportunities are taken quickly for improving or enhancing our support to and management of rough sleepers, it is proposed that the task and finish group reports back its findings to the March 2017 meeting of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee. If the creation of a task and finish group is agreed, Group Secretaries will be contacted immediately following that decision seeking nominations to join the group.
- 5.8 The task and finish group will then need to meet during January to review the current position regarding rough sleeping, the services and support available, and the context nationally.
- 5.9 An all-councillor briefing will then be held on the evening of February 2nd, followed by a walkabout visit for task and finish group members to known rough sleeper hotspot locations. This will enable the task and finish group to experience at first-hand the circumstances rough sleepers are facing, and potentially to engage direct with those who are found to be rough sleeping.
- 5.10 The task and finish group will then need to meet at least once more between February 3rd and February 23rd to hear from any expert witnesses it wishes to meet, request and consider further information and research, and consider its recommendations.

¹ Part 4, Section 1 of Council Standing Orders, section 3, Ordinary Meetings of Council and Committees, paragraph 3.2, Urgency.

The request was received after the publication of the agenda and therefore Part 4, Section 6 – Access to Information Rules of Procedure, Section 5. Access to Agenda and Reports before the meeting, Paragraph 5.2 refers.

5.11 The task and finish group will be fully supported by relevant officers, including the Service Director for Adults and Communities.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The cross-party task and finish group will make recommendations to the March 2017 meeting of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee, with the aim of reducing the levels of rough sleeping in Peterborough and ensuring that those who do find themselves sleeping rough have access to the most appropriate services and support.

6.2 During the course of its deliberations, the task and finish group may identify operational issues and opportunities, and if a decision on these matters falls within the delegations of the relevant officers these will be actioned immediately although still included in the full report to the Committee in March.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 A full briefing note on the current position regarding rough sleeping, the services available and the arrangements for a cross-party task and finish group will be circulated to all councillors following this evening's meeting if the committee agree to the creation of that task and finish group.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 As previously described, Group Secretaries will be contacted to confirm nominations for the task and finish group, meetings will be diarised and arrangements made to provide relevant information about context, services and support.

8.2 The task and finish group will report back to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee in March 2017, with recommendations being made to Cabinet where appropriate.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- Council Constitution

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1 – proposed terms of reference for the task and finish group.

Appendix 1

DRAFT Terms of Reference

Cross-Party Task and Finish Group to Review the Management of Rough Sleeping

Membership

To be confirmed.

Advisers

Adrian Chapman, Service Director – Adults and Communities

Belinda Child, Head of Housing, Prevention and Wellbeing

Sean Evans, Housing Needs Manager

Sarah Scase, Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer

Purpose

To make recommendations to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee to improve, enhance or create services and support in order to reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough.

Scope

1. To review all available data and information relating to rough sleeping and wider issues of homelessness in Peterborough, in similar councils and nationally.
2. To review all existing services and support arrangements for rough sleepers in Peterborough, and to commission research into the services available in other council areas.
3. To identify and meet with expert witnesses to help inform discussions and recommendations.

Reporting

The working group will report to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee.