

# **ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

### **MANAGEMENT OF ROUGH SLEEPERS REVIEW**

*7 MARCH 2017*

#### **Report of the Task and Finish Group**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page No.</b>
1. Introduction	3
2. Summary of Recommendations	5
3. Terms of Reference	8
4. Process and Methodology used for the investigation	9
5. Background	11
6. Findings and Conclusions	13
7. Recommendations	25
8. Financial Implications	28
9. Legal Implications	28
10. List of background papers and research sources used during the investigation	29

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At its meeting on 17 January 2017, the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee recommended that a cross-party Task and Finish Group be established to review the management of rough sleepers within Peterborough and to present their recommendations back to the Committee on 7 March 2017. Due to the urgency of the matter the Committee agreed the terms of reference at the meeting and the Senior Democratic Services Officer sought possible nominations to the Task and Finish Group to be confirmed following the meeting through the Group Secretaries.

The cross party Task and Finish group comprised the following members:



Cllr Ansar Ali,  
Labour, North Ward



Cllr June Bull, Conservative,  
Orton Longueville Ward



Cllr Darren Fower,  
Liberal Democrats,  
Gunthorpe Ward



Cllr Stephen Lane (Chairman)  
Independent, Werrington Ward  
Ward



Cllr John Okonkowski  
UKIP, Orton Longueville Ward



Cllr Keith Sharp  
Liberal Party, Dogsthorpe

Officers supporting the Task and Finish Group were:

- Adrian Chapman, Service Director, Adults and Communities
- Belinda Child, Head of Housing, Prevention and Wellbeing
- Sean Evans, Housing Needs Manager
- Sarah Hebblethwaite, Housing Needs Deputy Manager
- Sarah Scase, Housing Needs Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer
- Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer
- Joanna Morley, Democratic Services Officer

## 2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation 1**

That a strategic group be set up which meets regularly in order to identify duplication and gaps in current provision for rough sleepers and which includes representation from partner agencies including from the faith and voluntary sector. This group will develop a Rough Sleeper Strategy to be developed and approved by Council to support the work of officers and the wider partnership arrangements, and will monitor and respond to fluctuations in the delivery of the council's homelessness policy.

### **Recommendation 2**

The creation of a multi-agency task and targeting group to work on a long-term plan to ensure that individual rough sleepers are supported to move away from a street-based lifestyle.

### **Recommendation 3**

That the staff resource dedicated to supporting rough sleepers is increased beyond the current single officer by one full time additional officer to provide greater resilience and capacity, including provision for weekend outreach work in addition to the existing Monday to Friday service.

### **Recommendation 4**

That, with a growing rough sleeping population, the availability of suitable all year round night shelter accommodation is maintained, or increased if demand increases, to ensure that those most vulnerable are able to get some shelter especially during severe weather conditions.

### **Recommendation 5**

That night shelter accommodation is identified for rough sleepers with dogs where the rough sleeper would not be willing to allow the council to place the dog into kennels as is current practice.

**Recommendation 6**

That consideration be given to establishing formal daytime drop-in advice and advocacy services for rough sleepers, in partnership with the voluntary and faith sectors, focussed on offering advice and guidance as well as case management for service users.

**Recommendation 7**

That consideration be given to a flexible approach to activating severe weather emergency provision (SWEPE), taking into account the good practice guidelines provided by Homeless Link.

**Recommendation 8**

That an urgent solution is found to the deficit of on-street drugs and alcohol support, either through renegotiating the existing contract the council holds with the provider or by increasing the value of the contract.

**Recommendation 9**

That a focussed and ongoing communications campaign is undertaken to encourage the public to report rough sleeping to the council so that the most appropriate support can be provided.

**Recommendation 10**

To design and print business card sized information cards for rough sleepers with contact details for rough sleeper touch points and durable conveniently sized hand-outs, which can be personalised with key advice and action plans for rough sleepers to support them to leave the streets.

**Recommendation 11**

That the existing provision of one Housing First bed for a rough sleeper with complex needs that cannot be accommodated in regular hostels be extended by two further beds, along with the associated wraparound support services.

**Recommendation 12**

That the current Chronically Excluded Adults (CEA) project which provides personalised support to rough sleepers and others with the most complex needs be mainstreamed into normal council business from 1 August 2017, the point at which existing grant funding ceases.

**Recommendation 13**

That the relationship between affordable housing and rough sleeping be further explored. If it is proven that there is a direct correlation between volumes of rough sleeping and availability of affordable housing, that the target for affordable homes to be built in Peterborough that are identified in the emerging Local Plan be increased from 30% to 35%, and that of the 35% at least 70% are affordable rented.

**Recommendation 14**

That, following the conclusion of the task and finish group, the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee continue to provide oversight of the recommendations and support to officers by way of a report to the committee in September 2017.

### 3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### **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**

To review all available data and information relating to rough sleeping and wider issues of homelessness in Peterborough, in similar councils and nationally.

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.

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.

## 4. PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE INVESTIGATION

### 4.1 Methodology

- Desktop Research, national and local
- Local knowledge
- Questioning of key witnesses including voluntary sector groups, council officers and rough sleepers
- Written information received from the Growth and Regeneration Directorate in answer to questions from the Task and Finish Group
- Financial Information – costs associated with dealing with rough sleepers

### 4.2 Process

The timetable of the events leading to the production of this report are set out below:

Meeting Date	Items Discussed / Guests Attending
30 January 2017	Meeting to scope the review and receive research and background briefing from key officers.
2 February 2017 – 9.00pm	Homeless Briefing for all Councillors in the Town Hall.
2 February 2017 – 10.00pm	Walkabout, City Centre accompanied by Council officers. An opportunity to see first-hand rough sleepers and engage with them.
7 February 2017	Question and answer session with expert witnesses from the voluntary sector, key council officers and to feedback from the walkabout. Discussion on conclusions and possible recommendations.
20 February 2017	Meeting to discuss and finalise the contents of the Task and Finish Group's report.
7 March 2017	Presentation of report to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

**4.3 Key Witness's / Expert Advisers interviewed:**

- Adrian Chapman, Service Director, Adults and Communities
- Belinda Child, Head of Housing, Prevention and Wellbeing
- Sean Evans, Housing Needs Manager
- Sarah Hebblethwaite, Housing Needs Deputy Manager
- Anne Keogh, Housing and Strategic Planning Manager
- Sarah Scase, Housing Needs, Rough Sleeper Outreach
- Atiq Rehman and Shujah Saklain, Children of Adam Charity
- Sue Hensby and Arnie Hensby, Light Project Peterborough
- Rough sleepers in Peterborough city centre

Additionally, the task and finish group asked a series of questions in writing of Simon Machen, the council's Corporate Director for Growth and Regeneration.

The task and finish group also contacted Stewart Jackson MP and Shailesh Vara MP to determine what was planned nationally to complement and support the work of councils in tackling rough sleeping.

## 5. BACKGROUND

- 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. Figures for 2016 show an average increase of 16% compared to the previous year.
- 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, estimated that there were 21 people sleeping rough at the time of the official count. 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 and the issue was exemplified over the Christmas and New Year period when St Peter's Arcade in particular became a focal point for rough sleeping and for the public's response.
- 5.5 It is because of this that the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to review the situation via a cross-party task and finish group.
- 5.6 The task and finish group received a comprehensive briefing pack which set out the national policy framework that councils are required to follow to prevent homelessness and provide statutory housing functions, details of how that statute and guidance is implemented in Peterborough, and details of the additional support and services specifically available to people sleeping rough or who are at risk of sleeping rough.
- 5.7 The full briefing pack is attached at appendix 1.

- 5.8 Additionally, alongside input from council officers (described in section 4.3) the task and finish group invited two local charities to meet with them to share details of their services and to explore how the council might learn from them or enhance their offer. These charities were Children of Adam, who provide on-street outreach to rough sleepers including offering food, clothing and sleeping bags, and The Light Project Peterborough who, in collaboration with the council, provide a winter night shelter. Further details about both organisations is set out below. The task and finish group also requested information from Simon Machen, the council's Corporate Director for Growth and Regeneration, and again his responses are included below.
- 5.9 As part of the work of the task and finish group, an all-councillor briefing was held on 2 February 2017 to share detailed information about services and support for rough sleepers, and this was followed by a walkabout in city centre rough sleeping hotspots for members of both the task and finish group and the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

## 6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Throughout the discussions, the task and finish group acknowledged the breadth and effectiveness of services already provided by the council and its partners. It is evident that officers within the council's housing services are providing dedicated support to rough sleepers to encourage and enable them to move away from a street-based lifestyle, and they have developed some strong and effective links with a number of agencies to support them. These include drugs and alcohol services, mental health organisations, local and national enforcement agencies and local charities. Since April 2016 the team has enabled 27 rough sleepers to move away from sleeping rough.
- 6.2 However, the task and finish group recognised that the available resource within the council to carry out this work as intensively as is required is somewhat limited, and this was a cause of concern. To mitigate this risk the officers described how they work closely with other public sector bodies such as the Home Office Immigration Enforcement service and the local police.
- 6.3 Officers clearly understood the situation for every rough sleeper known to them and had established a bespoke package of ongoing support for most rough sleepers. However, the task and finish group heard about a small number of rough sleepers who were consistently refusing support opting instead to continue their street-based lifestyle. The group were anxious to ensure that officers and other agencies were given as many tools as possible to encourage or compel rough sleepers to engage with the support that's available to them.
- 6.4 During the discussions, officers also sought to dispel some myths that exist surrounding the rough sleeping community in Peterborough:
- Not everyone that is begging in the city is a rough sleeper, and not every rough sleeper begs. The focus of the task and finish group was the rough sleeping community, but the group were anxious to ensure that the issue of begging was also addressed as the perception that both groups were the same was confusing the real issues of rough sleeping. For example, agencies are aware that a number of people who regularly beg in the city centre have a home to return to at the end of each day. Officers reported that a new Public Space Protection Order is being proposed which includes an ability for overt aggressive begging to be stopped.

Officers clarified that the PSPO was not being proposed to criminalise those in genuine need, but instead to ensure those that already have access to alternative lifestyles were compelled to change their behaviours.

- The personal belongings of rough sleepers was not being removed arbitrarily. Where items appear to belong to a rough sleeper but there is no evidence of a rough sleeper being present, officers leave a note to offer support and information about access to a bed, and also advising that if the items remain unattended they will be removed. However, where an item such as a sleeping bag appears to have been obviously abandoned Amey are likely to remove it for issues of safety. This is especially true where there is, for example, drugs paraphernalia nearby.
- The recent social media coverage suggesting that the council had removed or was planning to remove the dog belonging to one particular rough sleeper was inaccurate. Officers confirmed that firstly the gentleman is not thought to be a rough sleeper but does partake in busking activity. Unfortunately his current and previous dogs have reportedly threatened and/or attacked other dogs and criminal charges have been brought against him both previously (leading to a dog control order being imposed) and more recently.

## **6.5 Accommodation**

6.5.1 The task and finish group discussed the provision of emergency shelter accommodation and also the plans for increasing the availability of suitable permanent accommodation for those sleeping rough as well as the wider homeless population.

6.5.2 Officers confirmed that:

- There is no need for anybody to sleep rough in Peterborough. The offer of a bed is always available and always made to people found sleeping rough.
- The council provides emergency shelter during prolonged periods of cold weather. This is known as Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP). SWEP is triggered where temperatures are forecast to be at zero degrees Celsius or below for three or more nights, and in Peterborough takes the form of a night shelter provided in partnership with Axiom Housing. Despite the trigger not being reached on many occasions this winter, the council took the decision to keep SWEP provision open and available since December.

- A winter night shelter project, in association with Churches Together, operates in Peterborough between mid-December and mid-March providing overnight accommodation for rough sleepers seven nights a week in various church buildings. The task and finish group subsequently met with the leaders of this project and further detail of the discussion is set out in section 6.6.5.
- A 'crash bed' is available for officers to direct rough sleepers to when it is available. As there is only one it operates on a first come first served basis.
- The council has use of a Housing First bed. Located at Fairview Court and managed by Axiom Housing Association the council has been able to provide accommodation to one of the most entrenched rough sleepers in the city and pull in resources from support agencies to ensure that their needs are met without relying on the service user accessing services through the traditional routes, which does not always happen.
- Peterborough has two direct access hostels, which are funded by the council through the Housing Related Support programme. The YMCA Timestop is for service users aged between 18 and 25 and the New Haven hostel managed by Axiom Housing Association is able to accommodate up to 35 single persons on any one night and for a period of up to 8 weeks. This should be sufficient time for the service user to secure alternative more permanent accommodation through a further supported accommodation setting, a private sector tenancy or an allocation of social housing.

6.5.3 Since April 2016 the council, like many others across the country, has seen a significant increase in households presenting to the council as homeless, and this has led to a sharp rise in the use of temporary accommodation including the use of high street hotel chains. The task and finish group discussed the reasons why this was happening, and concluded that there were a number of factors but that the predominant issue was the shortage of affordable rented housing stock of the right size. This served to create a bottleneck in temporary accommodation with households often unable to move through the system in a timely manner. Although general needs temporary accommodation is unlikely to be suitable for many rough sleepers (because, for example, they may need intensive support) the issue of the increased use of B&B-type accommodation was adding to the negative perceptions associated with rough sleeping in Peterborough.

6.5.4 The task and finish group was therefore keen to understand what measures were being taken to improve the availability of suitable accommodation for homeless and other households, as it was clearly understood that tackling one part of the problem in isolation was not a sustainable or appropriate thing to do.

6.5.5 Officers confirmed that:

- The council has a number of very positive relationships with private sector letting agents and landlords, and that government has enabled councils to discharge their duty to households by placing them into housing in the private rented sector. However, officers also acknowledged that the availability and affordability of privately rented housing was also sometimes challenging.
- Additionally, officers confirmed that the council had recently been awarded additional funding and Homelessness Trailblazer status to work with and support the availability of private rented housing to people in the most need. The funding will include the expansion of existing private sector leasing arrangements which guarantee a rental income for landlords in return for their stock being made available to the council.
- The council has a dedicated empty homes officer whose role is to work with owners of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use.
- Discussions are actively ongoing which seek to convert suitable empty accommodation into additional self-contained temporary accommodation for homeless households. Officers confirmed that, should any such discussions lead to tangible action, the local ward councillors will be informed at an early stage.

6.5.6 The task and finish group issued a series of questions to Simon Machen, the council's Corporate Director for Growth and Regeneration centred on the strategy for increasing availability of suitable and affordable housing in Peterborough. The key points following on from these questions are as follows:

- The emerging Local Plan currently in development strengthens the position for vulnerable households compared to the existing Local Plan by stating that the housing needs of the most vulnerable groups will be prioritised alongside the commitment to seeking provision of 30% affordable housing on all sites on which 15 or more dwellings are proposed.

- There is a solid basis of research and evidence which serves to direct the development of housing supply according to need. This is based on both demographic research and forecasting and the evidenced need of those households who are on the council's housing register.
- In Peterborough the council is seeking to invest in affordable housing through the housing joint venture with Cross Keys Homes, with the first units likely to be delivered in the next 12 months.

## **6.6 Support Arrangements**

- 6.6.1 Officers confirmed that everyone, regardless of circumstance, receives advice and support if they approach the council as homeless. The extent of that support depends though on a wide range of factors which officers have to consider, including whether or not the person presenting to them has made themselves intentionally homeless (e.g. because of excessive rent arrears or because of anti-social behaviour).
- 6.6.2 The task and finish group discussed the additional needs of rough sleepers beyond accommodation alone. Officers confirmed for example that many rough sleepers suffer from issues associated with substance misuse and dependency or have complex mental health problems. The task and finish group heard that although the council benefits from excellent relationships with specialist agencies such as drugs and alcohol services and MIND, these are not accommodation providers too. The task and finish group also learned that there is currently no on-street support provided by the drugs and alcohol service provider in Peterborough.
- 6.6.3 Full details describing the council's services to support people sleeping rough can be found in the briefing note attached at appendix 1.
- 6.6.4 The task and finish group were aware of a number of organisations that were providing direct support to people sleeping rough, but because of time constraints were only able to meet with two of them. These were the Light Project Peterborough and Children of Adam.

6.6.5 The conclusions from these discussions are as follows:

- ***Light Project Peterborough (Churches Together)***
  - The project operates using the Housing Justice Model, providing accommodation for up to eight guests per night at one of seven churches, one church each night.
  - Referrals into the project are made from the council, Outside Links on Wellington Street, and the New Haven Night Shelter.
  - Guests needed to be low risk as the guests are required to sleep in dormitory-style accommodation. The project is also run by volunteers and so is not set up to provide specialist mental health or substance misuse support.
  - Guests benefit from an evening meal, a safe bed for the night and breakfast. Social activities are available, as well as a listening ear.
  - Guests are dropped off each morning at Bayard Place to ensure they know where the council offices are.
  - To date the project has filled 311 beds out of a total of 456, spread over 42 separate guests. Over the three months that the project will run for the volunteer hours total 6,700.
  - So far this year 34 guests have moved on – 3 into private rented accommodation, 10 into hostel accommodation, 1 into prison, 8 of their own accord, 2 were linked back to their family, 2 returned to their home town, and 8 moved into SWEP provision as they were deemed high risk.
  - The direct costs to deliver the project total £17k which funds paid project workers and transportation. The indirect or hidden costs include heating and lighting church buildings and food and refreshments and is estimated to be in the region of £80 per night. The local prison provides laundry services.
  - The project commented that many rough sleepers who they support overnight struggled during the day, and that some form of daytime drop-in service could be offered where information could be provided alongside light touch case management.
  - The project also noted that many rough sleepers wanted to remain in Peterborough rather than return to their town of origin, and vice versa, to make a fresh start. However, it was acknowledged that the local connection rules didn't support this approach.
- ***Children of Adam***
  - The project operates based on the teachings of the Koran that states that Muslims should help their family. Children of Adam recognise Peterborough as their family.

- o The organisation has been helping the homeless of Peterborough for four years. This help includes distribution of between 40 and 50 meals twice a week, and the distribution of thermal clothing, blankets and sleeping bags.
- o The project felt that many rough sleepers were amenable to help from the council but were nervous to do so. They report that rough sleepers believe the council will ask for personal details and identification before assisting them. Officers clarified that this was not the case however.

## **6.7 Rough Sleeping Walkabout**

6.7.1 As previously discussed, the task and finish group along with members of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee, officers and local media attended a walkabout on the evening of 2 February 2017.

6.7.2 The task and finish group discussed their observations from the walkabout with officers, and the following conclusions were made:

- One of the people apparently sleeping rough was actually housed in private rented accommodation. However, she felt unable to stay there because it was in an unsafe condition. During the period between the walkabout and the subsequent discussion, council officers had visited the property and made arrangements for temporary accommodation to be provided to the occupants whilst repairs are carried out.
- Council officers usually visited rough sleepers during the pre-dawn period (c.5am) as this tended to be the time to find genuine rough sleepers.
- Rough sleepers often struggled to live within four walls and to maintain responsibility for paying bills and looking after their accommodation. It was sometimes therefore a slow process to normalise a tenancy arrangements for an entrenched rough sleeper, although officers always continue to provide support during that transitional period. Axiom Housing also provide a 6-month programme of support for new tenants.
- Officers clarified that rough sleepers are able to claim welfare benefits through the use of a 'care of' address.
- Consideration was needed of how best to communicate with rough sleepers when their personal belongings were present but they themselves were not. Currently officers leave a note explaining how to access services, but it is felt that a more formal method should be identified.

- Following on from this, a Personal Action Plan, similar to those used in some other council areas, should be considered setting out the key points of contact for rough sleepers, their accommodation options and their personal actions for completion in pursuit of more permanent accommodation.

## **6.8 Cost of Rough Sleeping**

6.8.1 The task and finish group were keen to establish the true cost of rough sleeping and homelessness more general on the public purse. The group recognised that preventing rough sleeping was likely to be a far more cost effective approach compared with dealing with the consequences of rough sleeping, as well as providing a far more positive outlook for the individuals concerned. Desktop research shows the following:

- That the estimated cost associated with successfully preventing homelessness for a single man in his 30s is £1,426<sup>1</sup>.
- That the estimated cost associated with persistent rough sleeping by a single man in his 30s over a 12 month period is £20,128<sup>1</sup>.
- Similar estimates are identified in other studies, and are described in the Department of Communities and Local Government's Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness, August 2012.

## **6.9 Good Practice**

6.9.1 Alongside research into the cost of rough sleeping the task and finish group also investigated examples of good practice from elsewhere in the country. Of most note was a City of London Pilot project which ran in 2008/2009 which provided personalised support and personal budgets to rough sleepers. At the time the project was evaluated in 2010 it found that most of the people benefitting through the pilot had secured their own accommodation.

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<sup>1</sup> 'At what cost? An estimation of the financial costs of single homelessness in the UK', Crisis/Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, July 2015

6.9.2 This pilot led to the creation of a coalition between Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind and the publication of a new approach to supporting people with complex needs known as Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM). Peterborough partnered with Cambridge City Council to secure funding under the MEAM prospectus to set up and run a chronically excluded adults project which adopts a personalised approach to supporting rough sleepers and other who have the most complex needs. Officers confirmed that funding for the local project ends on 31 July 2017.

## **6.10 Conclusions**

6.10.1 The task and finish group welcomes this opportunity to research and comment on the council's work surrounding homelessness and rough sleeping in the Peterborough area. Having been reliably informed throughout its period of involvement, and from all the collated evidence, it is happy to conclude the following.

6.10.2 Most of us struggle to understand what it is like to sleep on the streets and that's why when many people see rough sleepers they want to extend a helping hand. However, no one needs to be sleeping rough today as there are well trodden pathways to vital services, including housing, which can be accessed by genuine rough sleepers – even the most entrenched.

6.10.3 The council is determined to engage with this issue and to ensure that the right intervention is made, as promptly as possible. It is accepted that this does need to be a collaborative approach between the council, the wider public sector and the voluntary and charitable sectors, so that the safety net is strengthened further.

6.10.4 The task and finish group received a briefing pack from officers outlining all of the council's various statutory duties in relation to homelessness, along with how it will support anyone found to be rough sleeping.

- 6.10.5 The council provides advice and assistance on housing and homelessness prevention to anyone in their district, free of charge. However, it should be noted that where the council is approached by a young person aged 16 or 17 that is homeless, the council will first check if they are in priority need and will be assessed by Children's Social Care to determine whether they are a 'child in need' and owed a duty under the Children's Act 1989, under which they will be accommodated by Children's Social Care. Where the young person is not owed such a duty they will be in priority need and interim accommodation is provided while further investigation is undertaken.
- 6.10.6 Over the last 5 years Peterborough has seen increasing demand on homelessness services. The number of homelessness declarations being made to the council has been steadily increasing. In particular, there were increases in the number of presentations in 2016. While the increase in homelessness presentations has placed additional pressures on resources in the Housing Needs team, at the same time there was a reduction in the availability of accommodation with partner social landlords. The council can secure suitable accommodation in the private sector, but recent increases in the rental costs of private sector accommodation, changes to tax rules for private landlords and a reluctance of some landlords accepting households who will be in receipt of Housing Benefit has meant that its ability to discharge homeless duties is more difficult. The combination of all these factors has resulted in households being accommodated in more expensive temporary accommodation, such as a Travelodge, for longer periods while the council seeks to find a permanent solution.
- 6.10.7 Whilst targeting prevention of homelessness (including rough sleepers) is part of the overall solution it is accepted that there is a lack of affordable homes in the housing market – particularly rented single and two bed accommodation that is inexpensive to lease/rent.
- 6.10.8 The causes of homelessness are complex, some of which relate to the housing market and the wider economy, and others which are personal to the individual because of underlying causes. These may lead to that individual being unable to support themselves in sustainable accommodation, and they end up sleeping on the streets.

- 6.10.9 The council's Housing Needs team has an established Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer, who provides help to individuals who find themselves sleeping rough. The officer will direct them firstly to any of the Council's local partners offering a hot meal and shelter for the night, and then to Bayard Place and the Housing Needs Service in the morning. However, there are a number of individuals who are entrenched rough sleepers and prefer to remain independent.
- 6.10.10 There is a cold weather provision for rough sleepers during prolonged periods of night temperatures being at or below freezing point for more than three days. This winter, the Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) has been sensibly employed for more nights than were necessary and is a welcome, humanitarian gesture to be encouraged for future planning. With a growing rough sleeping population, it is important for the availability of suitable accommodation to be at least maintained, or perhaps increased, to ensure that those most vulnerable are able to get some shelter during severe weather conditions.
- 6.10.11 All rough sleepers are assessed as to whether they are eligible and in priority need in accordance with the current legislation. An assessment is also made on whether they need to be referred to other agencies such as Mind or Aspire, as the Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer does not have the necessary skills. The officer and partner agencies can only provide effective support for those willing to have a dialogue with them. It is desirable for the Housing Needs Team to expand on its current ability to work with rough sleepers, for which additional resources, such as personnel, will be required.
- 6.10.12 The recent contract that was commissioned for drug and alcohol treatment services did not include outreach work. There is currently no available specialist to accompany the Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer when they go out to visit rough sleepers.
- 6.10.13 The task and finish group were especially pleased to meet with two registered charities that offered support and guidance for rough sleepers in the Peterborough area. There are others who operate in the same field but could not attend due to short notice. The task and finish group hopes to see a dialogue and involvement continue after its work is complete.

- 6.10.14 The Children of Adam have been helping the homeless for four years with meals, clothing, blankets and sleeping bags. It has noticed an increase in the numbers it meets throughout this period, including a rise in those coming into the city from other areas. Their opinion is that a large number of its clients are afraid of 'suits' and feel they are better placed to interact and build a rapport to gain trust. The Housing Needs Manager offered to liaise with the Children of Adam to collate their findings, and the charity is willing to work with the Housing Needs team to coordinate resources.
- 6.10.15 The Light Project Peterborough is a charity that has support from seven Peterborough churches. Its Winter Night Shelter Project has been successfully running for two years, offering meals, shelter and advice for low-risk rough sleepers on a nightly rota basis. It takes referrals from three agencies, including the Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer. The project is willing to improve its links with other agencies. In their opinion the council could help with a daytime provision of services for rough sleepers. It is thought a drop-in centre where information and case management could be offered would be of help.
- 6.10.16 The task and finish group, in its short life since inception, is satisfied that there is a significant amount of good work already being done by the Housing Needs team and its lone Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer. Timely and appropriate interventions by the statutory and voluntary organisations do restore and save lives and the public also has a part to play in realising this.
- 6.10.17 It is unlikely that there will ever be a time when there are no rough sleepers in the city, but the current work and aspirations of the team is applauded, given the limited resources at its disposal. The task and finish group is indebted to all those who have contributed to its work and feel confident that the right statutory interventions are being made as promptly as possible and that only minor adjustments need be made to enhance what is already a robust system of managing the city's rough sleepers.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The task and finish group makes the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1**

That a strategic group be set up which meets regularly in order to identify duplication and gaps in current provision for rough sleepers and which includes representation from partner agencies including from the faith and voluntary sector. This group will develop a Rough Sleeper Strategy to be developed and approved by Council to support the work of officers and the wider partnership arrangements. This group will also monitor and respond to fluctuations in the delivery of the council's homelessness policy to ensure there is no impact on rough sleepers within the city.

### **Recommendation 2**

The creation of a multi-agency task and targeting group to work on a long-term plan to ensure that individual rough sleepers are supported to move away from a street-based lifestyle. This group should comprise statutory agencies including the council, police, Home Office Immigration Enforcement and the NHS, housing providers, and voluntary and faith organisations, and will adopt a case management approach to unblock barriers and ensure the appropriate resources are available to individuals based on their circumstances.

### **Recommendation 3**

That the staff resource dedicated to supporting rough sleepers is increased beyond the current single officer by one full time additional officer to provide greater resilience and capacity, including provision for weekend outreach work in addition to the existing Monday to Friday service.

### **Recommendation 4**

That, with a growing rough sleeping population, the availability of suitable all year round night shelter accommodation is maintained, or increased if demand increases, to ensure that those most vulnerable are able to get some shelter especially during severe weather conditions.

**Recommendation 5**

That night shelter accommodation is identified for rough sleepers with dogs where the rough sleeper would not be willing to allow the council to place the dog into kennels as is current practice. As part of this provision, to explore the potential for a qualified vet to attend this provision on a regular basis to offer advice and treatment.

**Recommendation 6**

That consideration be given to establishing formal daytime provision for rough sleepers, in partnership with the voluntary and faith sectors, focussed on offering advice and guidance as well as case management for service users. The task and finish group is NOT recommending daytime shelter as it recognises that this removes incentives for rough sleepers to work with services to move away from a street-based lifestyle.

**Recommendation 7**

That consideration be given to a flexible approach to activating severe weather emergency provision (SWEP), taking into account the good practice guidelines provided by Homeless Link including considering extreme cold temperatures but also wind, rain and other weather conditions.

**Recommendation 8**

That an urgent solution is found to the deficit of on-street drugs and alcohol support, either through renegotiating the existing contract the council holds with the provider or by increasing the value of the contract.

**Recommendation 9**

That a focussed and ongoing communications campaign is undertaken to encourage the public to report rough sleeping to the council so that the most appropriate support can be provided. This campaign should also educate the public on the best ways to support rough sleepers including, for example, donating to the local food banks or to local or national homelessness charities.

**Recommendation 10**

To design and print business card sized information cards for rough sleepers with contact details for rough sleeper touch points and durable conveniently sized hand-outs, which can be personalised with key advice and action plans for rough sleepers to support them to leave the streets.

**Recommendation 11**

That the existing provision of one Housing First bed for a rough sleeper with complex needs that cannot be accommodated in regular hostels be extended by two further beds, along with the associated wraparound support services.

**Recommendation 12**

That the current Chronically Excluded Adults (CEA) project which provides personalised support to rough sleepers and others with the most complex needs be mainstreamed into normal council business from 1 August 2017, the point at which existing grant funding ceases. Additionally, that the project:

- incorporates provision of a delegated budget held by officers to cover costs of items or services that remove a barrier to a rough sleeper engaging or that help a rough sleeper into more permanent accommodation
- provides ongoing support for service users (e.g. mental health support) for a period of at least 12 months.

**Recommendation 13**

That the relationship between affordable housing and rough sleeping be further explored. If it is proven that there is a direct correlation between volumes of rough sleeping and availability of affordable housing, that the target for affordable homes to be built in Peterborough that are identified in the emerging Local Plan be increased from 30% to 35%, and that of the 35% at least 70% are affordable rented.

**Recommendation 14**

That, following the conclusion of the task and finish group, the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee continue to provide oversight of the recommendations and support to officers by way of a report to the committee in September 2017.

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The task and finish group recognises that some of the recommendations made have financial implications. However, the group is also clear that evidence it has seen demonstrates the overall saving to the public purse as a result of reducing rough sleeping through preventative work and personalised interventions.

8.2 The task and finish group are also confident that a number of the recommendations will be cost neutral to implement, or can be implemented by varying delivery arrangements in other parts of the system.

8.3 The views of the task and finish group are as follows:

- Recommendation 1: no direct additional cost
- Recommendation 2: no direct additional cost
- Recommendation 3: cost of additional officer - £29,000 per annum
- Recommendation 4: no direct additional cost if provision is maintained at existing levels
- Recommendation 5: no direct additional cost if existing provision is modified
- Recommendation 6: limited additional cost if developed in partnership with the faith Sector – estimated £10,000 per annum
- Recommendation 7: limited additional cost
- Recommendation 8: no direct additional cost assuming the existing contract can be varied
- Recommendation 9: no direct additional cost assuming the Prevention and Enforcement Service communications officer leads this work
- Recommendation 10: limited additional cost – estimated £500
- Recommendation 11: no direct additional cost if existing provision is modified
- Recommendation 12: cost of officer and associated budgets - £38,000 plus £5,000 per annum
- Recommendation 13: no direct additional cost
- Recommendation 14: no direct additional cost

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no identified legal implications.

**10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND RESEARCH SOURCES USED DURING THE INVESTIGATION**

- **At What Cost? An Estimation of the Financial Costs of Single Homelessness in the UK**, *Crisis/Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, July 2015*
- **Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness**, *Department for Communities and Local Government, August 2012*

Further information on this review is available from:

Democratic Services Team  
Governance Directorate  
Town Hall  
Bridge Street  
Peterborough  
PE1 1HG

Telephone – (01733) 747474  
Email – [scrutiny@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@peterborough.gov.uk)

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