

**MINUTES OF THE ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING
HELD AT 7PM ON WEDNESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2017
BOURGES VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors H Fuller (Chairman), A Ali, R. Brown, M Hussain, D King
S. Martin, J Whitby, JR Fox, A. Shaheed, K. Aitken, B. Rush

Also Present: Councillor Murphy Labour Party Group Leader
Dr. Russell Wate QPM Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding
Adults Board

Officers in Attendance: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn Executive Director, People and Communities
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Councils
Sean Evans Housing Needs Manager
Clair George Prevention & Enforcement Service Manager
Rob Hill Assistant Director: Community Safety
Joanna Morley Democratic Services Officer

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bull, Councillor Serluca and Parish Councillor Neil Boyce. Councillor Rush attended as substitute for Councillor Bull and Councillor Aitken attended as substitute for Councillor Serluca.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of Interest or whipping declarations.

14. MINUTES OF THE ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2017 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

15. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

16. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PETERBOROUGH SAFEGUARDING ADULT BOARD 2016 - 2017

The Chairman of the Peterborough Safeguarding Adult Board introduced the report which covered the period from April 2016 to March 2017. The report was brought before the Committee as there

was a statutory requirement of Safeguarding Adult Boards, under section 14 of the Care Act 2014, to publish an Annual report detailing the work of the board.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- In Peterborough there had previously been a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) but it was very much Authority led.
- The role of the board was to ensure the safeguarding of adults at risk in Peterborough and to prevent and abuse and neglect happening both within the Community and in service settings.
- The six main principles of the Care Act 2014 were Empowerment, Protection, Prevention, Proportionality, Partnerships and Accountability.
- In the last 12 months the Board had focussed on making safeguarding personal and making sure that this ethos went through everything that the Board and service providers did.
- Wherever possible, Adults had to consent and agree to what was being done to them.
- In January 2017 an Executive Safeguarding Adult Board was set up which was made up of senior statutory members from Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.
- The Safeguarding Adult Board in Peterborough sat four times a year and had a number of subgroups which helped inform the Board's processes.
- The Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) was a subgroup of the Board that investigated when an adult died as a result of abuse or neglect or where it was known that an adult had not died but had experienced serious abuse or neglect. Adults with learning difficulties or disabilities who suffered abuse were also investigated.
- The SAB worked with other boards including the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Safer Peterborough Partnership, the Domestic Abuse Governance Board, the Children and Families Joint Commissioning Group and the Strategic MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) Board
- The first business priority of the Board was to work in partnership with all agencies to safeguard adults at risk of abuse and neglect.
- The SAB held a conference looking at domestic abuse with particular emphasis on abuse within the older population and what they could do as a partnership to combat this. All those involved said that it had been a very successful and valuable event.
- The Local Government Association conducted a peer review which was very complimentary of the work that the SAB was doing in relation to safeguarding. The SAB was considered to be working well with good attendance from partners and strategic focus.
- The SAB had statutory partnerships with the Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Peterborough County Council, and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group who had all undergone an internal audit to check what they had done to improve the safeguarding and welfare of adults in Peterborough.
- Three priorities had been set for the year ahead and these were; Domestic Abuse, Self-neglect (including hoarding) and Adults living with mental health issues.
- The report outlined a case of an elderly lady who had died and where the neglect of her health needs was suspected. Although this review had started in 2015, conclusions were yet to be drawn as SAR was still waiting for the Coroner's inquest report.
- Councillors asked whether there had been any particular challenges from the Asian communities in Peterborough and were advised that time was spent with the communities informing them of their role and work and emphasising the need for early intervention if any abuse or welfare issue was suspected.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee RESOLVED to note and comment upon the work and progress of the Peterborough Safeguarding Adult Board.

17. UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF ROUGH SLEEPERS: MONITORING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing Needs Manager introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update of progress on the recommendations of the Task and Finish group which were agreed by Cabinet on the 20 March 2017.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- A strategic group had been set up to review what services and resources were available to rough sleepers and to help develop a rough sleeper strategy. Once any gaps in or duplication of services were found a re-alignment of resources could take place.
- The officer dedicated to supporting rough sleepers had gone on maternity leave but recruitment was taking place to fill her post.
- Housing Officers and representatives from the Light Project, Peterborough had visited local schemes to ascertain the availability of suitable all year round night shelter. The Light Project were currently debating whether they had enough spare resources to increase their own provision.
- The Council was looking at its own provision to see whether it could accommodate extra rough sleepers, particularly those with dogs
- The flexible approach to activating severe weather emergency provision (SWEP), which meant that other weather conditions could be taken into consideration rather than having a fixed temperature level which instigated the provision, was unique to Peterborough City Council.
- The Council was examining its contract with Aspire to see whether support for rough sleepers with drug and alcohol issues could be increased.
- A bid had been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Control and Migration Fund in order to secure funding for three extra members of staff over two years.
- There would be more engagement with rough sleepers when the temperature started to drop, however the housing team were relatively confident that the number of rough sleepers had stabilised and would not reach the high level of last winter when the Task and Finish group had undertaken their review.
- Councillors debated whether the increase of boats and barges moored on the River Nene was due to rough sleepers taking up residence there. Housing officers stated that this was not a preferred option for rough sleepers as boats would have to have the correct mooring permissions and officers would have to be satisfied that they were fit for purpose.
- The Light Project accommodated rough sleepers with low to medium needs in a dormitory style setting at eight churches around the City.
- Axiom Housing and hostels at New Haven and Fairview Court had agreed that its communal areas could be opened up to provide additional, dormitory style accommodation at times of increased demand.
- There was no specific reference in the report to the treatment of Veterans as all rough sleepers were treated exactly the same.
- Councillors expressed concern that the sense of urgency, which had first instigated the review into rough sleepers, was now being lost and that little had been achieved since March when the Cabinet had agreed the Task and Finish group's recommendations.
- Many of the actions and recommendations would be driven from the work of the strategic group which was meeting in October.
- Officers were confident that the current officer dedicated to supporting rough sleepers would be replaced in the next few weeks.
- The success of the review into rough sleepers would be judged on having good resources in place. Officers felt that there would be enough provision and resource if rough sleepers chose to take it up

- More engagement with rough sleepers would take place as the temperatures started to drop and therefore the effectiveness of the review and its recommendations could be better assessed then.
- Housing officers were not in favour of enforcement action and would rather engage with rough sleepers in attempts to move them off the streets. The priority was always to support rough sleepers rather than to drive them away.
- A Mental Health Team worker would be part of the strategic group that had been set up to review services for rough sleepers
- Businesses that had a night-time economy were bearing the brunt of the City's rough sleepers as in some instances rough sleepers had entered restaurants and pubs and caused a disturbance. This had resulted in some businesses threatening to withhold their rates unless the Council took action.
- Communications had gone out to businesses informing them how they could report rough sleepers.
- Support was primarily for local people who were rough sleepers although support was given to others from outside of the area who were unable to return home. Individuals were given assistance to help them reconnect with their home areas.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee RESOLVED to consider and comment on the updates provided on the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 20 March 2017.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that an alternative strategy or option 'B' be developed **if** funding is denied following the submission of a bid to the DCLG for extra funds to recruit 3 additional workers. This bid would provide the required resources to progress many of the recommendations.

18. HOMELESSNESS AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

The Housing Needs Manager introduced the report which was submitted to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the levels of homelessness and homelessness prevention taken by the Housing Needs team in 2016/17.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Committee called for this report as it was a matter of great concern for them and also as it had been highlighted by the Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic development as an issue that needed urgent review.
- There had been 1586 homelessness presentations in 2016/17 which was a 43% increase on last year. These presentations were people who were homeless or who believed they would be in the next 28 days.
- In the last year the Council had bought into use additional self-contained temporary accommodation to try and reduce the amount of B&B type accommodation used. In total 216 units of temporary accommodation was now available at St. Michaels Gate, Elizabeth Court and Cross Keys hostel.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of households requiring temporary accommodation; up from 97 households two years ago to 300 households currently.

- It was predicted that, even with Council's temporary accommodation being fully utilised, there would still be an extra 90 – 100 households every year who would need to be accommodated in B&B type accommodation.
- A major driver of the increased need was the lack of supply of social and affordable accommodation for families to move on into. The number of affordable rentals as part of the new build programme had been reducing year on year and additionally Housing Associations were finding it more difficult to evict people. This was double edged as although it meant people were kept in their homes it did mean that there were fewer homes available for those who had been made homeless.
- As rental costs in the private sector had risen, the majority of private rental properties were no longer affordable for those households who relied on benefits to pay their rents.
- The shrinking number of properties in the private rental sector added additional pressure on the housing situation.
- Landlords were now unable to claim tax relief on their mortgages and so many were selling their properties as they had become financially unviable.
- Landlords were becoming increasingly reluctant to accept households who were in receipt of benefits as tenants. As benefits were paid in arrears, any issues that arose which resulted in payments being suspended or reduced meant Landlords then suffered financially.
- The number of evictions had increased as Landlords could bring tenancies to an end using a section 21 notice which didn't have to state reasons or be presented at court.
- The Council had been successful, in a joint bid with the other Cambridgeshire authorities, in securing funding to tackle some of the causes of homelessness. The increased funding would enable the creation of a homelessness prevention hub which would allow landlords and other agencies to highlight those who were at potential risk of becoming homeless. A multi-disciplinary team would then work with clients to formulate an action plan and prevent them becoming homeless. Additionally, the funds would assist the Council in working with private sector landlords to prevent the eviction of tenants by taking over the management of their properties and by creating a private landlord liaison service which would support landlords who were experiencing problems.
- Two officers were currently working north and south of the City to encourage private landlords to bring their properties into use.
- There had been significant changes since 2014 when the Housing Allocations Policy had first been adopted. At that time the Council had not been facing the demand that it was now and so it had not factored in how some would be disadvantaged. The Council and partner Housing Associations had therefore made a number of recommendations to change the policy to try and alleviate some of the pressures that they were facing.
- Under the Homelessness Reduction Act which would be implemented in April 2018, the Council would have a duty to support people who were at danger of being made homeless at an earlier stage; 56 days instead of the current time of 28 days.
- The requirements of the new Homelessness Reduction Act would significantly increase the workload of the Housing team and have an impact on other resources and the delivery of services. In order to meet the new challenges, the Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development requested that a new Homelessness Reduction strategy be developed and that a Task and Finish group be created to assist and work alongside officers.
- Although the cost of B&B accommodation seemed high and Members could see cheaper headline B&B rates, the pricing was driven by availability and so often fluctuated. The Council was also hindered by the fact that unfortunately the majority of establishments did not want to deal with and accommodate the homeless.
- Members discussed the need for more permanent homes for families to move on to in order to try and clear the bottleneck situation that existed. In addition to tackling the immediate problem of homelessness, the Council needed to be looking for longer term solutions which could include, in addition to more houses being built, the use of pre-fab housing or the conversion of business premises to provide more permanent affordable accommodation.

- Alternatives to the use of B&B as emergency accommodation, such as disused industrial units that could be subdivided, needed to be considered. Any alternative provision needed to have flexibility to be used in other ways so that if demand dropped it could still be utilised.
- The average time taken to re-house people out of B&B accommodation and into permanent accommodation depended on the size of the household to be rehoused. The biggest demand in Peterborough was for two bedroomed houses. If you were a single person looking for accommodation it would take on average six weeks. A family looking for a 4/5 bedroom house could be re-homed in 6-12 months but people waiting for a two bedroomed property could be waiting in excess of a year.
- Members expressed concern about the length of time that families stayed in B&B accommodation and the effect that it must have had on their school, work and family life. Behind these statistics were personal tragedies and the Committee was determined to do something to help those affected.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee RESOLVED to consider, scrutinise and comment on the contents of the report *and*
2. requested that the Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration provide a comprehensive briefing note on the current plans for the additional provision of both temporary accommodation and permanent/move-on accommodation

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The Committee RESOLVED to agree to the recommendation to establish a Cross Party Task and Finish Group to support the development of a new homelessness reduction strategy as outlined in paragraph 4.47 of the report
- 2) The Committee RESOLVED to endorse the terms of reference for the Task and Finish group as stated in paragraph 4.49 of the report subject to the following addition:
 - that the Task and Finish group, in developing a new homelessness strategy, give particular consideration to the medium and long term solutions to homelessness and take into account if there is a link between homelessness and the lack of affordable housing.
- 3) The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to agree to the proposed amendments to the Housing Policy as listed below:

Under occupation

To allow households with a 2 bedroom need, with 2 children, who are working and will not be affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy to express interest in and be housed in 3 bedroom accommodation.

Additional Preference

As demand for accommodation has grown it has become apparent that households to which the Council owes a full housing duty but who do not have additional preference through a strong local connection, face the prospect of not being successful for an allocation of accommodation as they are always considered after a household who does. It is proposed that a category for accepted homeless households who have been accepted for at least 3 months is added as an additional preference category.

Refusals and non-attendance at viewings

The demand for accommodation is now so great that we now no longer have the luxury that we are able to give applicants extensive choice when it comes to allocations. Applicants are currently permitted to refuse up to 3 offers of accommodation before they are penalised. It is proposed that this be reduced to 2 offers for general applicants. No change is proposed for applicants who are accepted as homeless, they must still accept the 1st offer of suitable permanent accommodation.

Number of bids

Currently applicants are able to bid on up to 3 properties per week. They could also shortlist for up to 3 properties per week. This has often resulted in delays in lettings and some applicants bidding for properties without any knowledge of the area the property is located in as they face no penalty. It is proposed that the number of bids applicants can place be reduced from 3 to 1. This should encourage applicants to review all properties in more detail and to place their bids on properties they are really interested in securing.

19. UPDATE ON EMERGENCY STOPPING PLACE PROVISION FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS WITHIN PETERBOROUGH

The Prevention and Enforcement Service Manager introduced the report which was submitted to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee to provide them with an update on the review of emergency stopping provision for gypsies and travellers within Peterborough and the progress made against recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 20 March 2017.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Council had submitted a planning application to convert the existing emergency stopping place in Dogsthorpe into a temporary site. This would mean that the site could be used for 365 days a year rather than the current 28 days. The application had gone out to consultation and it was hoped that planning would be granted by the beginning of November.
- Since the report had been published, 2 families had used the emergency stopping place this month.
- Of the 30 unauthorised encampments this year, 9 had been on private land and 21 on Council land. A section 77 notice which is used by the Police to move on travellers and gypsies had been issued 12 times and summons to court had been used 9 times.
- It was felt that the length of time for moving on an illegal encampment had reduced this year because the Council had made more visits, gathered more evidence, applied to the courts more quickly and worked more closely with the Police.
- Members agreed that it seemed that there had been a much better response time, with Police taking more action and illegal encampments moved on much more quickly.
- The Council had allocated a budget of £50,000 to deal with unauthorised encampments which was split between the clearing of the site and legal costs. If there was any budget remaining the Council looked at where it could defend sites and hinder access.
- The Task and Finish group that had been set up to review emergency stopping provision had been unable to identify any other suitable Council owned sites. Although the Cabinet had been asked to consider purchasing other non-Council owned sites in the City the decision was made to develop the Dogsthorpe site and then to wait and review how that was being used and the impact that had before considering any alternative.
- There had been a reduction in the number of unauthorised encampments this year, down from 50+ to 30.

- Councillors expressed concern that by turning Dogsthorpe from an emergency site into a temporary site, the police would be unable to use their powers as effectively, as there was a need for an immediately available place that was not blocked up by temporary users.
- It was always preferable to have more than one site for unauthorised encampments as occasionally the site would not be suitable if for example it meant that two families would clash.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee RESOLVED to consider and comment on the updates provided on the recommendations made by Cabinet on 20 March 2017.

20. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee received the latest report outlining the responses to recommendations made at the previous meeting. Members were invited to comment on the report and identify any recommendations they felt required further monitoring.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee RESOLVED to consider the response from Cabinet Members and Officers to the recommendations made at the previous meeting, as attached in Appendix 1 of the report and agreed that no further monitoring of the recommendations was required.

21. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and where appropriate identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

22. WORK PROGRAMME 2017 – 2018

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2016/17 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the work programme for 2017/18

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

- 14 November 2017
- Joint Scrutiny of the Budget: 29 November 2017

7.00pm - 8.45pm
CHAIRMAN