

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Update (Housing, Andy Kefford)

Synopsis of report:

To update Members on the progress of Runnymede Borough Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24.

As part of the Strategy's commitment to ending rough sleeping in Runnymede, Officers have developed a policy to ensure that rough sleepers are offered accommodation and do not have to spend a second night sleeping out. This is known as the Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy.

Recommendations:

- i) Members to approve the Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy
- ii) Members note the progress of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on every local authority to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy. This is to set out how the local authority intends to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Strategy 2019-24 was presented to this Housing Committee in March 2019 and was approved.
- 1.3 Officers undertake an annual review of the progress the Council has made against the objectives and update the Strategy and action plan in accordance with emerging legislation, case law and housing need in the borough. In 2020 the title of the Strategy was renamed the "Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy" to link into the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy and Central Government's commitment to end rough sleeping.
- 1.4 The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is available on the [Council's website](#).

2. Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy update

- 2.1 The Strategy set out four key overarching objectives, with sub-objectives under each theme to achieve over the 5-year life of the document:
 - Early intervention for homeless prevention
 - Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation
 - Partnership working and holistic support
 - Meeting the needs of those in temporary accommodation
- 2.2 The Council achieved a number of the objectives in the Strategy in the first year, such as the re-modeling and introduction of two shared houses for single homeless individuals (objective 2.1). This initiative significantly reduced bed and breakfast (B&B) placements and provided accommodation in the

borough for those that may not ordinarily have qualified for housing assistance. An overview of the successes in year one is attached at Appendix A.

- 2.3 The implementation of some of the objectives for year two were significantly impacted by the global pandemic and the challenges that this brought with it. However, the department responded and ensured that all front-line services continued to be delivered, albeit some of them remotely. The team worked extremely hard to make sure that lettings of both social and private rented properties were made so that void times were minimised and so that households were able to successfully secure alternative housing before they became homeless. Despite the challenges, including implementing the Government's "Everyone In" Scheme, which at short notice placed a requirement on local authorities to accommodate all homeless households, the department still achieved a number of the objectives in the strategy, such as keeping B&B spend to a minimum, making successful bids for funding and starting the thorough review of the Housing Allocation Scheme. An overview of the second year is attached at Appendix B.
- 2.4 The third year continued to be impacted by the pandemic and emergency Government priorities, such as the requirement to "Protect and Vaccinate" which was announced on 22 December 2021. This was a request from Government to accommodate all homeless households in the borough and to encourage and support them to access the Covid-19 vaccine should they have wished to do so, however, the department have continued to make significant progress against the objectives within the strategy. An overview of the third year is attached at Appendix C.
- 2.5 One of the biggest highlights of the review is the successful external funding bids that the department have made. Objective 2.12 of the Strategy was to bid for relevant funding to implement new initiatives that would fulfil our objectives in the scheme, prevent homelessness and lead to better outcomes for customers. The department have been successful for eight bids in the last two years and the total grant of these is **£553,897**. In the last year, **£488,607** of the total grant was achieved. The Table on the following page shows the breakdown of the grant funds and the purpose of these.

Fund	Description	£
Covid Rough Sleeping Fund	A grant for up to a maximum of £1,650 in response to the pandemic. Maximum grant awarded and used to get emergency accommodation ready to let.	£1,650
Cold Weather Fund	Application made for £1,000 for the charity justahelpinghand , who provide rucksacks with essential items to rough sleepers. £200 for The Salvation Army to provide food and towels to users of the pods. £5,300 external funding to cover the costs of B&B.	£6,400
NSAP (Next Step Accommodation Programme)	Purchase of two emergency sleep pods in partnership with The Salvation Army, including installing CCTV. Additional funding to cover staff costs. Additional funding for Magna Carta Lettings to arrange 5 private sector tenancies for rough sleepers	£52,240
Protect Plus	A grant up to £5,000 maximum. Full grant awarded to facilitate an additional 5 moves into the private rented sector through Magna Carta Lettings.	£5,000
RSI (Rough Sleeper Initiative)	A bid for a "Housing Navigator" role to respond to reports of rough sleepers, to build rapport and arrange pathways for them to come in off of the streets, including the development of a rough sleeping: no second night out scheme. Funds for a Housing First style scheme that provides housing to a rough sleeper and then wraps around support in a holistic way to address all their ongoing needs. A personalisation budget that homeless individuals have been able to access for essentials i.e. a mobile phone to contact the Council, food, bedding and access to funds for transport for education, employment and property viewings.	£130,000
AFEO (Accommodation for ex-offenders)	A joint Surrey wide bid for funds to enable ex-offenders to access accommodation in the private rented sector. This includes additional financial incentives to landlords to encourage them to accept an ex-offender when they may not have done otherwise. Provision for accommodation for 5 ex-offenders.	£18,607
RSAP (Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme)	To purchase 3 one-bedroom properties on the open market and to be used for rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs. This links into the RSI bid and the housing first element. £40,000 of the fund will go towards the provision of additional support for the individuals housed.	£265,000
Surrey CC	In support of the RSAP bid, Surrey CC have contributed and will play a role in ensuring the health needs of anyone accommodated in this scheme are adequately addressed.	£75,000
		£553,897

- 2.6 In addition, the Council has also received Government grants of £72,696 to support vulnerable renters in the private rented sector that fell into rent arrears due to Covid-19 restrictions, and a further £11,573 to implement the Government's Protect and Vaccinate program. These funds have enabled the Council to reduce rent arrears for tenants in the private rented sector, which has resulted in positive homeless prevention outcomes and reduced the risk of homelessness for many renters that had previously been struggling to pay their rent.
- 2.7 The Strategy has a specific focus on ending rough sleeping, objective 2.11 and preventing homelessness. The successful funding bids have enabled the team to make huge strides in achieving this objective and ensuring there is a route out of homelessness for those unfortunate to experience it.
- 2.8 We have purchased and implemented two emergency sleep pods, which are solar powered and have chemical toilets. These were delivered in partnership with The Salvation Army, who we have worked with before to install a shower in their building for rough sleepers to access. This initiative has enabled the Council to build rapport with rough sleepers who ordinarily wouldn't be interested in engaging with the Council, whilst also taking them off the streets and sheltering them from harm. This has also enabled us to reduce B&B use and creates an additional interim housing option.
- 2.9 The funding has enabled us to appoint a Housing Navigator who has started to establish clear and up to date pathway plans (objective 1.10) so that there is a route out of prison or hospital into accommodation rather than to the streets. This role will be responsible for implementing the Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Scheme, see section 3 of this report. The role has also

relaunched the homeless task group, also known as FUSE (Facilitate, Understand, Support, Empower), which is local services, organisations and the voluntary sector pulling together for a united approach to ending rough sleeping in the borough (objective 3.2). This includes supporting local charities to provide rucksacks with essential items for the homeless.

- 2.10 The successful RSAP (Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme) bid through DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities) and Homes England, has enabled the Council to make offers to purchase three properties on the private market, including buying back two former Council homes. These three properties will generate an income for the general fund, whilst also providing accommodation for individuals with complex and multiple needs. We will provide wrap around intensive support to these individuals to enable them to manage their tenancy and start to overcome the difficulties in their lives.
- 2.11 Another key objective for the housing department is to minimise the use of B&B (objective 4.1). This is because placements are often out of the Council area, expensive and unsuitable for homeless households in the short or long term. The team take a proactive approach to resolving all cases that go into B&B to ensure rapid move on where possible. With the additional external funding generated, it is extremely likely that we will have minimal B&B spend this financial year and will come in significantly under budget.
- 2.12 The department have achieved a number of objectives over the life of the Strategy so far and despite the impact of Covid-19, we remain on track to achieve the objectives set out in the 5-year plan. However, we remain realistic that there are still a number of objectives outstanding and there is work still to be done. These remaining objectives have been built into the Team Workplan over the next 12 months and will be kept under regular review. The up-to-date objective tracker is attached at appendix D.

3. **Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy**

- 3.1 When a person makes a homeless application to the Council, we are required by law to carry out an assessment of their needs (s.189A) and we will consider whether they are classed as a priority need (s.189). For individuals that are not classed as a priority, there is no duty on the Council to provide interim accommodation and if they have nowhere else to go, this can result in a person becoming a rough sleeper.
- 3.2 The Council take part in an annual rough sleeper count, coordinated by HomelessLink for Central Government. This estimate/count is based on the number of rough sleepers identified on one night of the year in autumn. This is to give a snapshot figure only. The recent returns for Runnymede are:

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
8	6	2	13	3	5	4	4	2	2	2

- 3.3 Rough sleepers are people who sleep or bed down in the open air, such as on the street, in tents, doorways or bus shelters etc. There is evidence to suggest that the longer a person sleeps on the streets, the greater the risk of harm that may come to them. In Runnymede we are fortunate not to have a large

number of people that have to sleep rough in the borough, however, we feel that even one person is one too many.

- 3.4 The Council are committed to ending rough sleeping in Runnymede in accordance with our Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, and the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy. The Council propose to introduce a Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy, attached at Appendix E, to assist with this aim.
- 3.5 The intention of the scheme is to identify those at risk of rough sleeping before they become homeless and provide interventions to prevent them from becoming homeless, in effect a "no first night out". However, we anticipate that there will be individuals that we are unaware of and therefore unable to intervene with at an early stage, it is these people that this policy will support in terms of a no second night out on the streets. The Policy will enable Housing Staff to offer emergency accommodation to individuals that we would not ordinarily owe an interim housing duty to. This will enable us to safeguard the person's welfare and remove them from the risk of harm posed by remaining on the street.
- 3.6 The Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out model is not a statutory requirement, but it is considered good practice and has resulted in multiple successes elsewhere in the Country, including reducing the risk of rough sleepers dying on the street. We have provision of two emergency sleep pods with access to food, showers and rucksacks with essential items and a personalisation budget. These facilities enable the Council to build a relationship with the rough sleeper and subsequently enable us to provide a details personalised plan to support them into longer term suitable housing and to address any other long-term needs.

4. **Policy framework implications**

- 4.1. The Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy, links to the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy and sets out our commitment to ending rough sleeping. This policy will complement our existing work within the Housing Solutions team and the statutory homeless prevention casework.

5. **Resource implications (where applicable)**

- 5.1 The Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy includes provision of emergency accommodation for those that may not ordinarily qualify for it, and therefore this could increase the financial cost to the Council. However, these costs are anticipated to be minimal. Through the successful NSAP bid we have installed the two emergency sleep pods and we have resources such as the shared houses. In some circumstances we may provide B&B, however all three of these options are eligible for housing benefit recovery and therefore, providing accommodation for this small number of people would have minimal additional cost to the Council. It is anticipated that any costs for B&B unrecoverable from housing benefit would come out of the existing B&B budget for the homeless team and no additional resources are being requested.
- 5.2 Given the success of No Second Night Out schemes nationally and the proven impact that these have on the health and lifestyle of rough sleepers, the benefits of providing this scheme will have significant cost savings to the

wider public purse as there are likely to be less hospital admissions, fewer ambulances call outs and/or police attendance. These benefits as well as positive outcomes for individuals outweigh the minimal costs that may be incurred by the Council.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There is no statutory requirement to provide a Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Scheme, however it is considered best practice. The Council are able to exercise their discretion to provide emergency accommodation under existing powers.

6.2 In cases of no recourse to public funds, the Council has the discretion to offer emergency accommodation under Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006.

7. Equality implications

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed during the drafting and consultation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24 and continues to be kept under consideration at each of the yearly reviews and when any relevant legislation or case law is passed.

7.2 The Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy has undergone an equality impact assessment screening and Officers have concluded that a full EIA is not required.

8. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

None

9. Other implications (where applicable)

9.1 None

10. Conclusions

10.1 The overview of the successes of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is for information only.

10.2 The Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Policy is for approval.

(To resolve)

Background Papers

None