

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Slough Wellbeing Board **DATE:** 20 November 2018

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides the Slough Wellbeing Board with an update of the current homelessness and rough sleeping situation in the borough. Homelessness can be wide-ranging so this report concentrates on the Rough Sleeping element.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Slough Wellbeing Board is recommended to note this report.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Five Year Plan

The priorities of the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy (SJWS) have been taken account of in the production of the draft Homelessness Strategy which, rough sleepers form a part.

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Housing is a key determinant of health and wellbeing and it is a priority in the new Wellbeing Strategy. Being homeless can exacerbate a household's housing situation and therefore their health will be affected as a result.

3b. The JSNA

The Council's Housing Strategy objective's identifies homelessness as a key area. A new Homelessness Strategy has been drafted but the Housing Strategy identifies that *Homelessness and rough sleeping is to be reduced.*

3c. Five Year Plan Outcomes

The key driver for the Housing Strategy is to deliver Outcome 4 of the 2018 Five Year Plan, "Our residents will have access to good quality homes". As homelessness is one of the main routes to accessing accommodation in the borough, this area is really relevant to the outcomes of the Five Year Pan. It also helps to deliver and makes significant contributions to each of the other outcomes:

- Outcome 1 – Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful
- Outcome 2 – Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs

- Outcome 3 – Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay
- Outcome 5 – Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial** – Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, it should be acknowledged that rough sleepers have impacts on budgets across many services, e.g. Health.

(b) **Risk Management** – Rising homelessness increases the financial risks to the Council.

(c) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications** – There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

(d) **Equalities Impact Assessment** - There are no equality issues arising from this report.

5. **Summary**

The Wellbeing Board set up a Task and Finish Group to oversee the rough sleeper work and to ensure that the partnership is engaging sufficiently to support the work which the Council and the voluntary sector are doing. This report forms part of the update for the meeting on 20th November 2018. This report provides the Board with an update on :

- Recent activity to tackle rough sleeping across the borough;*
- The strategy that is being developed to help prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place;*
- Information on the 2018 Winter offer for rough sleepers; and*
- Other work underlay that is connected to rough sleeping.*

6. **Supporting information**

Rough Sleepers

6.1 Until recently, there was no one service responsible for rough sleepers in Slough. A recent successful government bid by Housing Services will augment the multi-agency approaches being seen in the borough. The government have agreed to provide resources of £260k for 2018/19 and below summarises what this will be spent on: -

- A Team comprising a Co-ordinator and two x Outreach Workers
- Blocked booked beds for emergency provision
- Floating support provision
- Opening a Winter Night Shelter
- Providing a Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)
- Security for the Winter Night Shelter
- Reconnection work with home communities
- Incentives/rent in advance to access accommodation

6.2 Rough sleepers are not statutory homeless cases. The rough sleeper population is transient and the figure is difficult to pin down although the official Rough Sleeper Count, last year, was 27 and 25 the previous year. 12 of the current cohort (described in the official count) were UK Nationals and 15 were EU Nationals. The EU Nationals have not exercised their Treaty Rights and therefore are unable to access public services. Anecdotally many of the rough sleepers, who are begging, are receiving benefits and therefore it is difficult to discern an accurate picture of what is really happening.

6.3 There are services provided to rough sleepers by voluntary sector organisations, particularly the Night Shelter run by London and Slough Run, in partnership with the Council. Other organisations provide food, clothes and washing facilities. However, these services are uncoordinated and in some cases conflict with the approach the Council is seeking to promote in the Town Centre, for example.

Recent Activity

6.4 The Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator role and one Outreach Worker post have now been filled and officers are working towards employing a further Outreach Worker. The role of the team is to: -

- Co-ordinate the work of partners working with rough sleepers
- Move rough sleepers from the streets to appropriate accommodation
- Develop targeted multi agency collaboration
- Develop reconnection services
- Develop a local Homeless Charter
- Co-ordinate a multi-agency partnership meeting to oversee the work
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with rough sleepers and single homeless households
- Engage entrenched rough sleepers
- Develop individual plans for each person
- Engage agencies, i.e. Police, NHS (mental health, drug and alcohol services etc.), housing providers etc.

6.5 On 9th October 2018, the Council hosted an event to introduce the work it was undertaking to voluntary organisations. Two of our partners were asked to speak as well as the Service Lead for Regulatory Services, to talk about the Town Centre and the partnership work needed to enable the Town Centre to become successful again. The event culminated in some group work to develop some pledges, which will be turned into the Homeless Charter. These pledges are still being refined.

6.6 The Wellbeing Board set up a Task and Finish Group to oversee the rough sleeper work and to ensure that the partnership is engaging sufficiently to support the work which the Council and the voluntary sector are doing. This report forms part of the update for the meeting on 20 November 2018.

What is the Strategy for Rough Sleepers?

6.7 The Council is producing a Homeless Strategy, which includes a separate section on rough sleeping and single homelessness. The draft will be available shortly as it is currently being updated with information from a recent review carried out on homelessness and how it operates within the Council. Although the strategy has been discussed with partners, once it is refreshed, it will be consulted on again. The new

strategy will be available in December 2018. The rough sleeping section (draft) of the strategy can be found attached at Appendix A.

The Winter Offer for Rough Sleepers

6.8 Extreme cold can cause serious health problems and death for those who are exposed overnight or for long periods of time. Historically, SWEPP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol/Provision) provision was triggered when the forecast was zero degrees or below for three days. It is now best practice to take a common sense approach, where any forecast approaching zero is considered; the impact of rain, snow and wind chill are taken into account; and the 'feels like' temperature is checked, along with conditions underfoot (e.g. ice). There are benefits to opening provision for temperatures that are above freezing but can be just as harmful and for maintaining this provision over longer periods.

6.9 The SWEPP provision had heavy use last year and visits to the Night Shelter were variable. There will be similar night shelter provision run by London and Slough Run this year but the Council has decided to provide an additional provision to deal with its SWEPP obligations and to be used as an extended Night Shelter.

6.10 Serena Hall, which was previously used as a Day Centre will be opened as a Night Shelter from the middle of November 2018 from 7pm until 7am. This provision will be available until the end of March 2019. However, officers are considering extended uses for Serena Hall as a potential Hub for rough sleeper work, although this has to be carefully considered in the light of historical anti- social behaviour issues.

6.11 The reopening of Serena Hall has not been widely publicised and these messages are being put together and will be communicated shortly.

6.12 Officers are currently compiling a list of agencies, who they would want to provide services to rough sleepers, i.e. dental and GP services.

6.13 The Night Shelter at Serena Hall will become the Council's immediate response to the winter problems experienced by rough sleepers. The Council has already secured a number of beds for emergencies and has recently sent out a brief to the Market for a provider to deliver up to 40 rooms/bedsits over a two year period. A number of providers have indicated that they would be interested in working with us on this provision. Serena Hall could add value to this work. For example, there are shower and kitchen facilities available. One of the concerns on the High Street is the feeding of rough sleepers on the street. Serena Hall could provide a solution to this problem but this as an issue that has yet to be discussed and agreed. What is clear, is that the issues, which became problematic at Serena Hall previously, cannot be repeated.

6.14 The aim is to move rough sleepers off of the street and eventually into permanent accommodation. Serena Hall is an important step in this direction and with emergency bed provision available, the portfolio of help is growing.

6.15 The Council will not be relying purely on the private sector to provide tenancies; it has its own provision and will be using this also. The Outreach Workers will be providing a link from rough sleepers to services, which are available and this work has already begun.

6.16 Assuming that Serena Hall will be available in time, it will be used to coordinate and be the base for the Official Rough Sleeper Count on 14th November 2018 at 11.15pm until 15th November 2018 at 5am. This date should not be publicised as it will drive rough sleepers underground and therefore defeat the whole object of the Count.

Other Work Connected to Rough Sleeping

6.17 There are a number of other initiatives working in the borough, which can cross with the work officers are carrying out with rough sleepers: -

- PAUSE: working with women who have had 1 or more children taken into care. They offer intensive support to work through issues which, the women may have. Some of these women are rough sleepers;
- SHOC: provide a homeless day centre offering food, advice, benefit help and access to accommodation;
- London & Slough Run: provide a Night Shelter with 20 beds from January to March each year. Also provide a food run on Sunday lunchtimes;
- Slough Outreach: provide some High Street feeds, advocacy, bike workshop. This organisation works across Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead;
- Browns: funded by Thames Valley Police until March 2019. Assists chaotic individuals with support. This ranges from benefits help, getting people engaged with services and other support. Not all individuals are homeless.

7 Comments of Other Committees

7.1 There are no comments from any other committees.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Homelessness takes many guises but it is becoming an increasing challenge in Slough. The rough sleeping population in Slough is difficult to pin down, as the population is transient and there are close ties to neighbouring boroughs. Slough, however, is improving its offer with the help of government funds. One of the concerns, however, is that the more provision is available, the more rough sleepers will flock to Slough to take this up. This is purely anecdotal but the people in the know are convinced of this. This will have to be watched but it is appropriate to provide sufficient help so that the Council and voluntary organisations can succeed in moving people off of the street permanently.

9. Appendices

A – Single homeless & rough sleeping reduction plan (draft).

10. Background Papers

None