

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Slough Wellbeing Board **DATE:** 26th March 2019

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PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

This report provides the Slough Wellbeing Board with an update of the current homelessness and rough sleeping situation in the borough since the last report on 20th November 2018. 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 and
- 2.2 to further note that there is no indication from government that the Rough Sleeper Initiative money will be available from 2020/21.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the 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 Housing Strategy Key objectives, 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". This is being refreshed for 2019/20. 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 Plan. It also helps to deliver and makes significant contributions to each of the other outcomes:

- 1) Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives
- 2) Our people will become healthier and will manage their own health, care and support needs
- 3) Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit
- 4) Our residents will have access to good quality homes
- 5) Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide jobs and 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**

5.1 **Rough Sleepers**

5.1.1 The Council received £260k for 2018/19 to help with its work with rough sleepers. This work had a slow start but is now fully up and running. Although, because of the slow start, there is a projected underspend this year, the Ministry of Housing have agreed to roll over the under-spend into next year, but to spend on specific initiatives.

5.2 **What has progress been this year**

- A Team comprising a Co-ordinator and 2 x Outreach Workers employed
- Blocked booked beds for emergency provision brought online
- Floating support provision available
- Winter Night Shelter opened since 11th of December 2018
- London and Slough Run Night Shelter open also
- Provision of a Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) available since December 2018
- Incentives/rent in advance to access accommodation
- 15 rough sleepers housed into semi-permanent accommodation

5.2.1 The Official Rough Sleeper Count was 29 and a Night Walk, which took place in January 2019, found 25 rough sleepers in various locations. 40% of this cohort were EU Nationals, predominantly Polish. These EU Nationals have not exercised their Treaty Rights and therefore are unable to access public funds. The Council does not currently have a solution for these households.

5.3 Day time provision for rough sleepers

- 5.3.1 There is already a daytime service for single homeless people provided by SHOC for six days a week, from the morning until about 2pm. The Salvation Army provide a drop-in service, most mornings but not all. These services vary in the Offer they provide. SHOC help with benefit advice, help with housing issues, showers, food and clothes etc. The Salvation Army provide food, showers and clothes.
- 5.3.2 Officers feel that there is no point opening up something similar to what already exists. However, there is a definite need for some alternative provision, which could provide much needed services to rough sleepers, who may feel reluctant to walk into a conventional set-up.
- 5.3.3 Officers therefore feel that there is an opportunity to provide some additional support for rough sleepers in the day time. This could be a hub with: -
- Volunteers providing refreshments and possibly lunch;
 - Befriending services;
 - A number of services – Housing, Mental Health, Nurse, Doctor (GP), drugs worker, benefit advisor, etc. n
- 5.3.4 If this type of provision could be organised, 1 – 2 days would be an appropriate amount of time to provide this, given the existing provision available. Given that the Night Shelter is due to close at the end of March 2019, for the spring/summer, thought needs to go into continuing the service in some guise in order for the gains, with this cohort, not to be lost.
- 5.3.5 On average, 15 rough sleepers a night are occupying each night shelter. There are still a number of people refusing to use this provision and are still occupying car parks and Tescos, at night, for example. It is estimated that the day time provision for two days would cost in excess of £83k for 2019/20.

5.4 The current work of the team

- 5.4.1 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
 - 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.
- 5.4.2 For 2019/20, the Council has bid for a second year of Rough Sleeper Initiative money. These are the work areas being asked to be funded: -

• Existing Team	£130K
• Landlord Incentives and booked beds	£ 92K
• Additional Outreach Worker	£ 40K
• Tenancy Sustainment	£ 48K
• Extended Winter Accommodation (SWEP)	£ 50K
• Resettlement/Reconnection Fund	£ 15K
• Contracted part-time drugs worker	£ 30K
• Contracted mental health worker	£ 30k
• 2018/19 underspend c/f	£ 87K
• 2019/20 final allocation	£ 348K
• Total	£ 435K

5.4.3 This report informs the Wellbeing Board about progress in this area of work. It also concludes that the Task and Finish Group, which was set up to look at the issues and monitor the initial work for rough sleepers, should cease its monitoring role as this work is now currently embedded.

5.4.4 It must be noted however, that there is no guarantee that this work can be sustained after 2019/20, if the government does not continue funding, which it has given no indication that it will do.

5.5 Challenges for this work going forward

5.5.1 There are a number of challenging issues for this work going forward: -

5.5.1.1 The funding is confirmed for 2019/20 but not beyond. Therefore, officers do not know what the government thinking is beyond next year as initially government had indicated that this would possibly be a two year programme. If there is no early indication that this funding is going to be available beyond 2019/20, Housing Services will seek to put forward a growth bid to at least continue some of the services it sees as essential to sustaining some of the work, which it feels is making a difference;

5.5.1.2 At least 40% of the rough sleeper cohort are EU Nationals, in the main polish men. They are unable to access housing as they cannot receive benefits because of their immigration status. There is therefore no housing solution for them as they cannot pay their housing costs. Officers need to be able to find an imaginative solution to these individuals to stand any chance of actually preventing them from remaining on the streets. The limited conversations with these individuals have indicated that they are not prepared to go back to their country of birth. Officers will continue to engage these rough sleepers to find a solution.

5.5.1.3 The Winter Night Shelter/Extended Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) located at Serena Hall has been open since 11th December 2018 and is due to close at the end of March 2019. However, with the Night Shelter at the London and Slough Run also closing at this time, there will potentially be over 30 rough sleepers with no night time provision immediately after that, notwithstanding our continued attempts to house them elsewhere.

- 5.5.1.4 Officers are therefore considering extending the provision of the night shelter at Serena Hall and are looking at the potential for a day time provision, which will then provide a facility going forward for rough sleepers. Costs are therefore being looked at to see how feasible this is and for how long. However, officers feel that closing the provision at the end of March will not be in the Council's interest as well as rough sleepers'.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

- 6.1 There are no comments from any other committees.

7. **Conclusion**

- 7.1 The government resources to help with Slough's rough sleeping problem has gone a long way to beginning the processes of removing people off of the streets. The infrastructure is being built and officers have seen some successes in 15 rough sleepers being housed into semi-permanent accommodation.
- 7.2 Sustaining this into next year and beyond will be the significant challenge of Slough and its partners, particularly as the financial position, in relation to the Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant cannot be relied on after 2019/20.

8. **Background Papers**

- 8.1 There are no background papers or appendices to this report.