

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 9th February 2021

CONTACT OFFICER: Tom Overend, Policy Insight Manager
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875657

WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR DECISION**

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING TASK & FINISH GROUP

1. **Purpose of Report**

To update the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on the findings of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task & Finish Group.

2. **Recommendation**

That the panel endorse the recommendations of the task and finish group, as laid out in section 5.3.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The work of the task and finish group relates to priority three of the SJWS for 2020-25 – Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods.

Housing is often identified as an important co-determinant of health, as the quality of housing will have a strong impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping in Slough will have a major impact on the delivery of the fourth priority outcome of the Five Year Plan – our residents will live in good quality homes.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

It is anticipated that the majority of the recommendations are able to be implemented within existing budgets.

The proposed alternative giving scheme is anticipated to require between £3,000 - £5,000 to set up, the funding of which would need to be agreed with the Business Improvement District.

There may be further financial implications, depending on what course of action is taken by officers to implement the recommendations.

(b) Risk Management

Risk assessments may need to be conducted by officers as necessary in the implementation of the task and finish group's recommendations.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no anticipated legal implications for adopting the recommendations. Legal assessments may need to be conducted by officers as necessary in the implementation of the task and finish group's recommendations.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Should the implementation of the recommendations necessitate such an exercise, it will be carried out as required.

(e) Workforce

The implementation of the recommendations will require significant staff time and support from senior leaders.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the task and finish group were approved by the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel, at its meeting on 22nd October 2020:

To investigate and make recommendations in relation to SBC's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention strategies, with specific reference to:

- Identification and reporting
- Support provision
- Engagement and communication

5.2 Membership

The task and finish group was chaired by Cllr Zaffar Ajaib, supported by the following members:

- Cllr Christine Hulme (Chair, Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel)
- Cllr Harjinder Minhas
- Cllr Waqas Sabah

Stuart Adnitt, Outreach Team Leader, Slough Borough Council also joined the task and finish group to provide officer support and assist the group in forming its recommendations.

5.3 Recommendations

The task and finish group, feel that the council and partners should focus on the areas listed below over the next year. Within these areas, the group would also wish to propose a number of specific actions it feels will be most effective:

Strategic Partnerships, Collaboration & Funding

- The Strategic Partnerships workstream of the Our Futures programme should consider establishing a new strategic board or group, bringing together the various organisations providing services to rough sleepers and homeless people in Slough, to:
 - co-ordinate strategy;
 - identify emerging issues early;
 - ensure accountability;
 - explore opportunities for additional funding; and
 - raise the profile of the issues
- As part of the localities strategy, SBC should also explore opportunities for these partners to operate alongside SBC teams, out of the new hubs and other SBC premises, building on other examples of the co-location of services currently being explored by the council.
- SBC should work with the Business Improvement District to explore the viability of an alternative giving scheme in Slough.

Communications

- The new Associate Director for Community should establish a plan for reviewing and enhancing external communications to improve awareness of where to get help, what type of support is available and how to apply for it, bearing in mind the challenges some clients face in regard to language, literacy and access to the internet.
- This plan should, ideally, include a public directory of services and named SBC contacts for partner organisations.

Commissioning, complex needs and supply

- SBC should form a task group of officers from the housing, benefits and commissioning teams to review the commissioning of accommodation for specific client groups with complex needs –and develop proposals.
- SBC should explore opportunities for using James Elliman Homes, section 106 payments, compulsory purchase orders and void stock to acquire accommodation for this group.

Health and mental health

- Collaboration between the Community Mental Health team and the Housing Team needs to be improved and an action plan established to reduce waiting times and improve referral processes.
- SBC should work with the CCG to investigate the viability of piloting the Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) model in Slough, which has been effective in West Berkshire.

Skills and strengths

- SBC and partners should consider how a strength-based model for supporting homeless people and rough sleepers might be developed, to help them lead their own recovery, gain confidence and improve their networks.
- There may be chances to work with One Slough to identify volunteering placements for clients or generate opportunities through Social Return on Investment.

Localities and customer services

- Once the new localities strategy has had an opportunity to bed in, SBC should evaluate how effective it has been in:
 - enabling homeless residents and rough sleepers to access support
 - helping customer services staff rapidly identify those at risk of homelessness and guide them to necessary support or action

Safety

- The council should review the recent incident of violence against a female rough sleeper (see findings), and consider whether further action, either by SBC or by partners, can be taken in future to protect vulnerable rough sleepers.

6. Comments of Other Committees

This report is yet to be seen by any other committee.

7. Conclusion

This report details the recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task & Finish Group, and seeks the panel's endorsement.

8. Appendices Attached

'A' Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task & Finish Group

9. Background Papers

'1' Agenda and minutes, Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel Thursday, 22nd October, 2020