

Subject:	Homeless & Rough Sleeper accommodation – Covid-19 Pandemic Next Steps		
Date of Meeting:	14 August 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director Housing Neighbourhood & Communities and Executive Director of Health & Adult Social Care		
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Wards Affected	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

By reason of the special circumstances, and in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the 1972 Act, the Chair of the meeting has been consulted and is of the opinion that this item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency for the following reason:

In response to the Covid-19 emergency and in line with Government guidance we have made an accommodation offer available to all rough sleepers in the city and those at risk of sleeping rough. Subject to Policy & Resources Committee approval the council is intending to provide appropriate support and accommodation for all rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping currently accommodated. The next stage of accommodation arrangements needs to be agreed urgently in order to secure the accommodation in time to prevent people returning to the street when the current accommodation arrangements come to an end at the beginning of September.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 On 26th March 2020 a letter was sent to local authorities from the Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing which provided instruction on the actions expected of councils in relation to Covid-19 and rough sleeping.
- 1.2 This report and appendix provide an overview of the work that has taken place to accommodate rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic and offers proposals for the recovery strategy to support individuals to move on from short term accommodation into a suitable sustainable alternative which meets individual's needs.
- 1.3 Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee (14 May 2020) approved a report to agree the next steps and moving to the next phase of accommodation so that people were not at risk of returning to the street when restrictions are lifted. This included that, in addition to acquiring units of accommodation within the University of Brighton student halls, units were retained across the hotel accommodation already acquired as part of our initial response to housing rough

sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping in response to the Covid-19 emergency up to early September.

- 1.4 Housing Committee (17 June 2020) approved a response to Notice of Motion – ‘Next Steps for Homeless Following Covid-19 Response’ and our Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy recommendations (also agreed at Policy & Resources Committee), including setting up a Homeless Reduction Board which will ‘monitor progress toward achieving safe reconnection and re-housing of all rough sleepers currently housed in hotel/other temporary accommodation’ and ‘work toward minimising the need for rough sleeping’. Both the response to Notice of Motion and Homeless & Rough Sleeper Strategy recommendations were subject to costed options and funding.
- 1.5 The council currently (as of 3 August 2020) has 372 units of accommodation acquired in response to the Covid-19 emergency housing that do not form part of our usual stock of emergency or supported housing. At present (as of 3 August 2020) we are accommodating 287 people in this accommodation. Figures are reported weekly to the Homelessness and Housing Working Group of movements in and out and move on accommodation secured plus demand modelling. Figures will also be reported to the Homelessness Reduction and Operational Boards.
- 1.6 Agreements in relation to the short-term accommodation initially procured under Covid-19 emergency provisions come to an end in early September (University of Brighton Halls on 4th September). Continuation of existing and acquisition of additional interim accommodation will be required if we are to be able to maintain an accommodation offer to all those rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping we currently accommodate until we are able to move people onto more sustainable housing.
- 1.7 We are currently working with officials from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) and Homes England on producing our proposals for future funding in response to the Government’s Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), including funding for shorter-term/interim accommodation and immediate support. Bids are due back to MHCLG on 20 August.
- 1.8 However, we are advised by MHCLG officials that the outcome of the NSAP bid will not be known until September at the earliest. It is also not certain that the bid will be fully funded.
- 1.9 Resourcing and sourcing sufficient accommodation is imperative if people are not to return to the street in September. This report identifies a shortfall in accommodation resources necessary to avoid people returning to the street and options to address this.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Policy & Resources delegates authority to the Executive Director of Housing Neighbourhoods & Communities and the Executive Director of Health and Adult Social Care to secure accommodation up to the end of December 2020, as set out in Option 2, by entering into contracts to extend existing arrangements (where possible) and by entering into alternative arrangements where necessary.

- 2.2 That Policy & Resources note that the council is currently bidding for interim funding for rough sleepers up to 31 March 2021 as part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) bid. The result of this bid will not be announced until September. Therefore, a further report to this committee will be required to consider the outcome of the bid, the on-going financial implications and options for future provision.
- 2.3 That Policy & Resources delegates authority to the Executive Director of Housing Neighbourhoods & Communities and the Executive Director of Health & Adult Social Care to enter into sub-lease arrangements with a third party provider where appropriate.
- 2.4 That Policy and Resources notes that both the upcoming Homelessness Reduction Board and Housing Committee will receive a standing item, updating members in a way that enables them to monitor and record net progress needed towards safe re-connection and rehousing of rough sleepers (and those at risk of rough sleeping) currently housed in hotel/temporary accommodation to both reduce the future need for this accommodation and to achieve the council's goal of not returning rough sleepers to the street.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In May 2020 Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee agreed to enter into a contract with University of Brighton for 222 units of student accommodation to replace some of the previously acquired hotels which were coming to an end. This contract ends on 4th September when the accommodation must be returned to the university in readiness for new students. Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee also agreed to retain a proportion of hotel accommodation already acquired as part of our initial response to housing rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping in response to the Covid-19 emergency up to early September.
- 3.2 As well as expiry of the contract with University of Brighton, all other contracts for existing accommodation, and the Care Hub, that were acquired for rough sleepers and to provide accommodation for other homeless during the Covid-19 emergency also end in early and mid- September 2020.
- 3.3 The Care Hub is a staffed, ensuite accommodation available to house people experiencing symptoms of Covid 19 who would otherwise be in a shared facility accommodation (including emergency and supported accommodation) and unable to self-isolate. This service has 15 rooms and at peak occupancy has had 11 occupants at any one time. The delivery of the service enables the effective management of potential outbreaks and supports the Local Outbreak Plan. There are currently no occupants in the Care Hub (as of 3 August 2020) and there may be options we can review as to how we continue to provide this accommodation in partnership with Health colleagues or through spot purchasing. It is therefore proposed that the current provision is not extended.
- 3.4 Overall, current demand is exceptional due to Covid 19. As outlined in the report Appendix, as of 3 August 2020 we have 372 units of accommodation acquired in

response to the Covid-19 emergency, housing 128 rough sleepers and 109 clients who would otherwise be at risk of rough sleeping. In addition, we have a further 156 clients who would otherwise be at risk of rough sleeping in our other emergency accommodation. This brings the total of those currently accommodated under Covid-19 emergency provisions to 393 (as of 3 August 2020). Owing to pressures on accommodation we also currently have 50 clients to whom we may owe a statutory housing duty accommodated at University of Brighton Halls to avoid over use of spot purchase emergency accommodation.

- 3.5 At present we are accommodating around 287 of the above people in accommodation acquired under the current Covid-19 emergency provisions that does not form part of our usual stock of emergency or supported housing.
- 3.6 As outlined, this accommodation is currently only available to us until early September. We are working hard to move people into more sustainable options and/or reconnect them safely to their areas of connection. However, this work takes time and we will be unable to meet everyone's accommodation needs using existing resources by September 2020 unless additional resources are approved. We have managed to maintain numbers, moving on sufficient numbers to offset the new clients currently becoming homeless. Continuing provision of short-term accommodation we have acquired, with the addition of new accommodation to replace units being lost in September, would allow further planning and acquisition of alternative longer-term housing but has significant cost implications.
- 3.7 The Council have been working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) who recognise that councils do not have the resources to provide move on accommodation for the rough sleepers including those from congregate accommodation (dormitory style) who have been accommodated during the pandemic. The council have estimated there is a shortfall of approximately 235 units to avoid people returning to the street.
- 3.8 We have also been working with MHCLG who have been talking to the major accommodation providers in the city to influence them to work with us as part of the solution, but this has not yielded the hoped-for outcomes.
- 3.9 We are assessing move on requirements for all rough sleepers and have identified some move on but there is a significant shortfall of provision for which resources are required. We are working with MHCLG to submit a bid for revenue and capital funding under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to enable us to provide the additional move on. However, in the interim we are seeking to identify resources to start moving people on.
- 3.10 To mitigate some of the risks and costs to the council going forwards, we are exploring the option to enter into sub-lease agreements with a 3rd party. Third sector organisations can claim a higher rate of Housing Benefit which can be used to offset the cost of security and building management. This is anticipated to reduce the overall cost of delivering the accommodation.
- 3.11 As reported to Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee in May, the initial focus of work was to procure accommodation and house people in a very short timeframe. In total we acquired 379 rooms in various hotels, guest houses and

the Youth Hostel Association (YHA). Those contracts were subject to 7 days' notice, and some of the hotels indicated they would return to commercial use as soon as restrictions were lifted. To offset the risk of losing accommodation at short notice, we subsequently acquired 222 units of student accommodation from the University of Brighton which is available until 4th September along with the YHA and two of the hotels.

3.12 We are planning how people move on from this short-term accommodation. In partnership with St Mungo's we are completing holistic needs assessments of everyone accommodated and Housing Options are developing Personal Housing Plans. The project plan covers:

- Assessment of the 393 people accommodated under Covid-19 emergency provisions;
- Identifying move on needs;
- Supply of accommodation;
- Remodelling congregate accommodation into self contained units. (work on this is underway - our nightshelter and No Second Night Out services have been remodelled so that we are now providing 17 units of ensuite accommodation to people who would otherwise have rough slept for the first time. This is funded via core budget and RSI grant funding from the MHCLG, (Somewhere Safe to Stay Service).

We are in the process of remodelling our Somewhere Safe to Stay Service funded by the MHCLG into a No Second Night Out Service providing 49 units of ensuite accommodation for people who have been found rough sleeping for the first time. Both services work to rapidly resolve people's homelessness).

3.13 This is a good opportunity to work with all people who were sleeping rough or about to sleep rough and to develop an alternative model going forwards taking into account the impact of Covid-19 for accommodation with shared facilities. It is likely that most people will broadly require one of the following types of accommodation to move on to:

- Reconnection where safe to do so
- Housing First
- Supported accommodation or accommodation with floating support
- Private rented accommodation
- Social housing.

Of the assessments undertaken:

- 33% are extremely clinically vulnerable or have significant underlying health needs which mean they will require self-contained accommodation.
- 67% have support needs which will require some form of support when they are placed in accommodation.
- At the last estimate, around 30 individuals being supported have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) meaning that their options for move on accommodation are extremely limited or non-existent.

As of the 27 July 2020 ;

- we had successfully supported 21 people to safely return to areas of connection.
- 111 Personal Housing Plans(PHP) had been completed with 279 outstanding. We have six additional officers in post to enable this .
- At our last estimate around 30 individuals being supported have No Recourse to Public Funds meaning that their options for move on accommodation are extremely limited or non-existent. To address the needs of EEA nationals we will be bidding for a specialist worker to support people to apply for settled status

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 **Option 1**; Revert to business as usual. This would be inconsistent with the Notice of Motion agreed at April's Housing Committee. The core pre-Covid offer for rough sleepers was:

- Street outreach service to engage, assess and support people on the street to enable them to access sustainable accommodation.
- No Second Night Out – immediate access accommodation for verified rough sleepers with the aim of moving them to longer term accommodation in a short timeframe. This was limited in size and was often full.
- Severe Weather Emergency Provision - operates when there is an amber weather warning or temperature drops to freezing to prevent people dying.
- For people not owed a statutory accommodation duty and who had not rough slept but would rough sleep for the first time if not accommodated; Somewhere Safe to Stay - immediate access accommodation with a rapid move on model.

Existing Move on options:

- Supported housing where someone was assessed as requiring a period of resettlement support prior to more independent living
- Access into private rented accommodation with floating support
- Social housing

At present supported housing is offering approximately 3 spaces a week, insufficient to meet the current need, we have successfully placed 17 people in private rented, and 1 client in social housing. Without extending and providing short term additional accommodation until the end of the year, most people will have to return to the street.

4.2 **Option 2** Extend short term and additional accommodation to the end of the calendar year. This would provide additional time to obtain additional move on accommodation. It will also allow time for the bid to the MHCLG to be resolved. The replacement of the Care Hub provision to the end of March 2021 with alternative provision agreed with Health colleagues, or through spot purchasing, would enable us to manage the increased risk of an outbreak during the winter period. Estimated costs are shown in paragraph 7.3 at a total of £1.561m

- 4.3 **Option 3** Wait until MHCLG have received and considered Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding bids for additional resources for both revenue and capital. The deadline for submission of bids is 20th August and we are realistically unlikely to have confirmation of funding until September, leaving very little time to prepare with some leases expiring prior to any MHCLG decision.

If the bid is not or only partially successful a significant number of people are likely to return to the street. If the bid is successful we will have a very limited period of time to negotiate extensions of existing arrangements and risk losing interim accommodation, seeing a risk of significant numbers of people returning to the street.

- 4.4 **Option 4** – Extend short term and additional accommodation for 4 weeks to 30th September pending funding decisions from MHCLG (costs are shown in para. 7.3. However, we have no guarantee around when the outcome of the NSAP bids will be announced or any guarantee over what funding we are likely to receive with the same risks of significant numbers returning to rough sleeping as outlined above.

5. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 This is a joint report from Housing and Health & Adult Social Care Commissioning in conjunction with Public Health. Given that an urgency decision is required there has not been sufficient time for wider public consultation.

6. **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 To avoid returning rough sleepers to the street this report outlines the case and options for short term emergency accommodation provision to support our Covid-19 emergency response to house rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to be extended beyond September. To support the management of any outbreaks within supported housing or in the short-term accommodation services we have set out options for the Care Hub symptomatic service to be extended beyond September. In addition, more settled move on options are to be developed.
- 6.2 Move on provision requires additional resources and we are applying for grant funding from MHCLG to meet this need. However, the outcome of this NSAP bid will not be known until September at the earliest. In this report and appendix we have sought to outline resources we are seeking to identify to commence developing move options. There are risks attached to this if MHCLG do not provide the level of funding required.
- 6.1 Without additional resources we do not have sufficient move on accommodation to continue provision for all rough sleepers currently accommodated. Without increased move on from the current short life accommodation we will be unable to meet the needs of new rough sleepers.

7. **FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 To date the Communities Secretary announced in March 2020, Emergency Funding for Rough Sleepers of £3.2m nationally to enable rough sleepers to self-isolate. The council has claimed back the maximum £0.066m to which it was entitled. The council has received £18.762m of Emergency Response Funding (to cover all council services), however, this is insufficient to meet the current estimated deficit caused by the pandemic. The recent Budget Planning and Resources Update Report to this committee on 9 July 2020 estimated the deficit for the Council to be between £17m - £39m for 2020/21.
- 7.2 The MHCLG has allocated £105 million nationally for shorter term/interim accommodation and immediate support to keep rough sleepers off the streets (part of the NSAP programme). Brighton & Hove City Council are co-producing a bid with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government for what the city needs, however, as this is a fixed pot of money, it is not certain that the bid will be fully funded. The bid is due back to the MHCLG on 20th August 2020 with a decision on funding expected in September. Therefore, there is a risk of a significant shortfall in funding which will add to the forecast 2020/21 budget deficit for the council.
- 7.3 A summary of the estimated costs for different periods of extension is shown in the table below and further details are shown in Appendix 1 of the part 2 report.

	Estimated Net costs to 30/09/2020	Estimated Net cost to 31/12/2020	Estimated Net cost to 31/3/2021
	£	£	£
Care & Protect 1	25,100	106,800	188,400
Care & Protect 2	79,800	339,300	598,800
Care & Protect 3	70,200	298,400	526,600
Replace University	172,600	733,200	1,293,800
Move on staffing	19,500	83,100	146,600
Interim accommodation	367,200	1,560,800	2,754,200

- 7.4 The table above outlines the costs of providing housing and support to those who would otherwise rough sleep for 1 month to end September, to the end of December 2020, and to 31 March 2021. The costs are net of assumed Housing Benefit and take account of current budgeted costs for rough sleepers that have been diverted to the care and protect model as part of the 'everyone in' project.
- 7.5 Officers are currently working to ensure that all costs are scrutinised further to ensure they offer good value for money. Any spend commitments made prior to funding being in place should ensure future costs are minimised. So, for example, contracts with hotels should be for as short a period as possible to avoid a commitment to future costs that are not funded.
- 7.6 The MHCG will not announce the funding allocations until sometime in September. Therefore, to mitigate the funding risk this report recommends that provision is extended to the end of the calendar year (as per Option 2 above) and

that a further report is brought to Policy & Resources in early December to consider the next phase in light of both the outcome of the funding bid and the Government 3-year Spending Review which may give further information about the government's longer term intentions.

- 7.7 The committee should note that if the MHCLG funding bid is not successful, in whole or in part, this could result in a funding shortfall of up to a maximum of £1.561m for Option 2. If this situation arises, any shortfall would therefore add to the potential budget deficit for the current year reported to the 9 July Policy & Resources Committee which, at the 'Moderate View' level, was estimated to be approximately £27.5m. While this has potentially improved to £23.5m following the July government funding announcements, it remains a very substantial deficit.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 12/08/2020

Legal Implications:

- 7.8 Legal Services will advise on the proposed contracts which will be terminable on short notice if accommodation is no longer required.
- 7.9 The reasons why an Urgency Sub-Committee is required are set out in the report. Policy & Resources is the appropriate committee to authorise entering into leases and licences.

Lawyer Consulted: Alice Rowland

Date: 10/8/20

Equalities Implications:

- 7.10 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of developing the move on accommodation.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.11 The current short term arrangements are not sustainable. This is an opportunity to develop more robust accommodation provision for rough sleepers, many of who have compound and complex needs.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.12 There are a number of EU nationals who have become homeless during covid and we are working with them to apply for settled status and to get back into employment.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.13 People sleeping rough are amongst the most vulnerable in the city. Many have compound and complex health needs and in addition are more vulnerable if

exposed to Covid. Having suitable accommodation reduces the risks to the individuals and also reduces the public health risks in the event of localised outbreaks or a wider second wave, and also reduces the impact on health services in the winter which is generally a pressure time.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.14 There are crimes associated with rough sleeping and so if we are able to ensure adequate provision, there should be a positive impact on crime and disorder.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.15 Risks and opportunities are set out within the body of the report and appendix.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.16 Housing and ASC & Health have worked closely with Public Health in the response to the pandemic and on-going accommodation provision. Rough sleepers have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group which we need to provide accommodation for to protect them, manage infection control and outbreak prevention and management. The Brighton & Hove Local Outbreak Plan identifies that homeless communities and settings are high risk for Covid-19 outbreaks. This includes the provision of a pathway including integrated medical input to enable symptomatic people to self-isolate safely including a Care Hub. Maintaining the local joined up multiagency approach involving primary care, community health, mental health and substance misuse services is vital for this to be effective.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. **Appendix 1** - Rough Sleeping and Accommodation during Covid 19 Pandemic and Recovery Planning.