

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 42

Subject: Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless Services Commissioning

Date of meeting: 25th September 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Housing

Lead Officer: Corporate Director Homes & Adult Social Care

Contact Officer: Harry Williams – Director of Housing People Services
Aaron Burns – Head of Temporary & Supported Accommodation

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000.

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to recommission the city's core Street Outreach Service (SOS), which is due to end in March 2026.
- 1.2 The recommissioning of this service is part of how Brighton & Hove City Council is delivering on Homes for Everyone, by improving the housing support available for residents. It also aligns with the council's current Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and upcoming strategy for 2025 to 2030.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to recommission the SOS ending 31 March 2026, for 3-years, with a possible extension of up-to 4-years (2+ 2+ years) with an estimated value of £1,635,000 over three years.
- 2.2 Cabinet delegates authority to Corporate Director – Homes and Adult Social Care to procure and award the new contract commencing April 2026, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Homes.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Each November, a snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough on a single night is collected as part of a national return. For Brighton & Hove, the figure recorded for one night in November 2024 was 76.
- 3.2 As of March 2025, Brighton & Hove had a rough sleeping rate of 30.0 per 100,000 people, significantly higher than both the South East average (11.5)

and the England average (13.38). Alongside Portsmouth, Brighton & Hove ranked joint 19th highest for rough sleeping rates across England. While the number of people sleeping rough in the city fluctuates, the overall trend is increasing, mirroring national and regional patterns.

- 3.3 The SOS is the city's primary frontline response to rough sleeping. It is responsible for identifying new people who are experiencing rough sleeping and supporting existing ones.
- 3.4 The SOS engage with and rapidly assess the needs of those living on the streets and provide appropriate support to enable individuals to access accommodation, support, or to relocate.
- 3.5 The SOS also organises and runs bi-monthly street counts of people who are experiencing rough sleeping and jointly facilitates the Autumn rough sleeping count or estimate with the local authority. The service also supports Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) in Brighton & Hove.
- 3.6 The outcomes of SOS over the previous 2 financial years:

Outcome	2023-24	2024-25
Number of people experiencing rough sleeping engaged with	661	559
Number of supported into accommodation	300	274
Of above, the number of people supported to reconnect	42	39
Of above, the number of people supported into 'off street' or supported accommodation	167	111

4. Recommissioning of the Street Outreach Service

- 4.1 The procurement will follow an open tender process, in line with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023. This reflects the specialist nature of the service and ensures compliance with legal thresholds.
- 4.2 The current contract, valued at £474,000 per year, was last reviewed in 2020 and is scheduled to end in March 2026. Future budgets will need to account for rising costs. Based on current projections, the total cost of the SOS service could reach £1,635,000 over three years.
- 4.3 While the proposed contract term is 3 years with a possible extension of up to 4 years (2+2), procurement colleagues have advised that suppliers may only price for the initial 3-year term. A longer initial term may be more commercially beneficial and should be considered to improve market engagement.
- 4.4 The recommissioning of the SOS service was not included in Brighton & Hove City Council's Annual Procurement Plan for 2025/26, approved by Cabinet in February 2025. This exclusion was due to ongoing uncertainty

around Central Government Grant Funding for homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services beyond 2026/27.

- 4.5 Cabinet was briefed on this exclusion at Informal Cabinet in August 2025. Councillor Joy Robinson raised a query regarding the forward plan, which was addressed at that time.
- 4.6 While external funding confirmation is still pending, the SOS service is currently fully funded through the Council's core budget. As a result, it was excluded from the current recommissioning cycle for single adults and rough sleeping services. This decision reflects the fact that the SOS service is not reliant on external funding, with its continuation already secured through internal budget allocations.
- 4.7 The 15% drop in engagement figures between 2023/24 and 2024/25 should be contextualised. While numbers declined in 2024/25, they are expected to rise again in 2025/26. This fluctuation may be due to external factors such as grant funding reductions. It is important to clarify whether the contract is volume-driven or resource-driven to ensure commercial viability.
- 4.8 Decisions on the other services within the same commissioning cycle will be made by Corporate Director – Homes & Adult Social Care, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Homes. These services include: Non hostel based supported accommodation (Housing First) Move through to independence (Transition & Resettlement)
- 4.9 There is no formal handoff between SOS and Housing First or Transition & Resettlement. Housing First is allocated via the supported accommodation panel, and SOS can make direct referrals to Housing Options. This should be clarified to avoid assumptions about co-terminus commissioning strategies.

5. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 5.1 In considering the future of the SOS, three alternative options were explored alongside the preferred approach of recommissioning. These alternatives include: not commissioning the service at all, commissioning only part of the service, and bringing the service in-house.

Recommended Option: Recommission the Full Street Outreach Service

- 5.2 The **recommended option** is to recommission the full SOS through a competitive open tender process, commencing in April 2026. This approach ensures continuity of Brighton & Hove's frontline response to rough sleeping, which has consistently delivered high engagement and accommodation outcomes. Over the past two years, the SOS supported over 1,200 individuals, with nearly half successfully moved into accommodation. The service also plays a critical role in coordinating street counts, facilitating Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP), and supporting reconnection efforts. Recommissioning the full service allows the council to maintain a comprehensive, trauma-informed model that is responsive to the complex and evolving needs of people experiencing rough sleeping.

- 5.3 This as it best aligns with the council's strategic priorities, including the forthcoming Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025–2030), and supports the delivery of Homes for Everyone. It also reflects feedback from service users and stakeholders, who emphasised the importance of trust, consistency, and person-centred support.

Alternative option 1: Do not commission the service

- 5.4 One option would be to allow the current SOS contract to expire in March 2026 without commissioning a replacement. This would effectively end the council's dedicated frontline response to rough sleeping.
- 5.5 The potential discontinuation of the SOS presents a significant risk to Brighton & Hove's coordinated response to rough sleeping. Each year, the SOS engages with hundreds of individuals, offering vital support that helps many move into accommodation or reconnect with services. Without this frontline presence, the city would lose a critical mechanism for identifying and assisting those most in need, leaving vulnerable people without a clear pathway off the streets.
- 5.6 This option is **not recommended** due to the significant risks to individuals, communities, and the council's strategic objectives.

Alternative option 2: Commission part of the service

- 5.7 Another option would be to commission a reduced version of the SOS, focusing on core functions such as initial engagement and assessment, while removing or scaling back elements such as coordination of street counts and Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP).
- 5.8 Delivering only a partial Street Outreach Service (SOS) risks fragmenting the city's approach to tackling rough sleeping. Without a fully integrated service, gaps in support are likely to emerge, leading to poorer outcomes for individuals and inefficiencies in service delivery.
- 5.9 This option is **not recommended** as it compromises the effectiveness of the city's rough sleeping response.

Alternative option 3: Internalise the service

- 5.10 A third option would be to internalise the SOS, delivering it directly through council staff rather than commissioning an external provider. Transitioning the SOS to an in-house model presents several challenges that could compromise its effectiveness. The council does not possess the specialist skills, infrastructure, or operational flexibility required to deliver a responsive outreach service. This could limit the ability to meet the complex and evolving needs of people sleeping rough. In-house delivery also carries the risk of higher costs.
- 5.11 Lastly, external providers often bring added value that is difficult to replicate internally. Their connections to the voluntary sector, use of lived experience,

are key strengths of the current model. Moving away from this could result in a more standardised and less dynamic service, limiting the city's overall approach to tackling homelessness.

5.12 As a result, this option is also **not recommended**.

6. Community engagement and consultation

6.1 Consultation with service users was undertaken through three engagement events hosted by YMCA Brighton, BHT Sussex, and Just Life. A total of 23 individuals with lived experience of rough sleeping participated in these sessions.

6.2 In addition to the engagement events, all providers within the Rough Sleeper and Single Homelessness Support Pathway supported service users to complete an online consultation survey. The survey focused on the support individuals felt was needed when experiencing rough sleeping and invited feedback on their personal experiences. A further 45 responses were received through this online consultation.

6.3 Key themes emerging from the service user feedback included:

- The importance of trust, dignity, and person-centred support.
- A need for consistency and follow-up support.
- Accommodation preferences, including gender-specific provision, lower-density housing, and access to sheltered spaces during adverse weather.
- Improved timing and frequency of outreach visits.
- Enhanced mental health and crisis response.
- Barriers faced by marginalised groups, including verification processes and lack of access for undocumented individuals.

6.4 Stakeholder consultation was also undertaken with internal and external partners who work directly with individuals experiencing rough sleeping and the current Street Outreach Service. A total of 67 responses were received. Stakeholders provided valuable insight into partnership working and the definition of rough sleeping, which has informed amendments to the new service specification.

6.5 Feedback relevant to the Street Outreach Service specification and suggestions for future service design have been incorporated into a new contract, which would commence April 2026, subject to Cabinet's decision.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The recommissioning of Brighton & Hove's Street Outreach Service and associated homelessness contracts, due to end in March 2026, is expected to incur higher costs because of inflation and wage increases. The current annual contract is valued at £474,000, and future budgets will need to reflect these rising expenses. Estimates will be for a 15-20% increase costs as the current contract value was set in 2020.

- 7.2 The commissioning strategy aligns with national policy, focusing on integrated support and performance-based procurement. The increased temporary accommodation costs and a shrinking housing stock are putting unsustainable pressure on the council's finances.
- 7.3 To support financial resilience, finance will work with the service to:-
- Engage proactively with service providers to ensure cost-effective delivery.
 - Design flexible services that can adapt to funding levels, should additional funding be received from MHCLG.
 - Monitor funding risks closely, particularly uncertainties surrounding future MHCLG allocations.
 - Maximise national funding opportunities, such as RSPARG, to help offset local budget pressures.
- 7.4 This strategic approach aims to protect frontline services and align with both local and national priorities.

Name of finance officer consulted: Ferrise Hall

Date consulted: (31/07/2025)

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The Council is required to comply with the Procurement Act 2023 in relation to the procurement and award of contracts above the relevant financial thresholds for services, supplies and works. This procurement is above the relevant threshold of £214,904 (inclusive of VAT) for services and the rules governing open tenders will apply.
- 8.2 The Council's Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) will also apply.

Name of lawyer consulted: Eleanor Richards Date consulted 04/09/2025

9. Risk implications

- 9.1 As outlined in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.4, the recommissioning of the SOS takes place in a context of significant financial uncertainty.
- 9.2 Inflation, wage increases, and the growing complexity of need among people experiencing rough sleeping are driving up provider costs. The current SOS contract, set in 2020, may not reflect the cost of delivering the SOS, and there is a risk that providers may be unable to deliver the service to the required standard, or may choose not to bid at all, within the financial envelope.
- 9.3 To help mitigate this risk, flexible service design will be considered where appropriate, allowing for scaling based on available funding. Further, as outlined in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.4, financial modelling has reflected anticipated cost increases, and uplifts accounted for.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed as part of this recommissioning process. The assessment considered data on individuals experiencing rough sleeping in comparison with the general population. It identified several protected characteristics and areas of disproportionate impact, including homelessness and socio-economic disadvantage. The SOS is commissioned directly by the Council to support individuals affected by these disadvantages. Not retendering the service would remove the city's primary frontline response, with significant implications for individuals with protected characteristics.
- 10.2 The EIA analysis highlights that men, people with disabilities, and individuals who are Black or racially minoritised are overrepresented among those experiencing rough sleeping compared to the general population. The current service delivers a person-centred, trauma-informed approach, tailored to the needs of service users in relation to their protected characteristics. This approach will remain embedded within the new service specification.
- 10.3 The EIA and consultation feedback have also identified areas for improvement in monitoring and data collection, particularly in relation to faith and religion, carers, and experiences of violence beyond domestic abuse. Actions have been agreed to amend the new specification to reflect these areas. In addition, improvements will be made to data monitoring systems, enabling the service to use this information to inform future frontline delivery and strategic planning.

11. Sustainability implications

- 11.1 Sustainability considerations are embedded in the commissioning process. Providers will be required to demonstrate environmental responsibility and contribute to social value outcomes, including community engagement and volunteer involvement.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 12.1 The recommissioning of rough sleeping and single homelessness services has notable health and wellbeing implications. The Health Counts 2024 Survey identified health inequalities in Brighton & Hove, particularly affecting people in insecure housing or experiencing rough sleeping.
- 12.2 People experiencing rough sleeping face some of the highest levels of physical and mental ill-health in the city. The survey found that 0.9% of adults live in temporary or emergency accommodation, and this group reported high rates of mental ill-health, substance misuse, and barriers to healthcare services¹.
- 12.3 Mortality among people experiencing rough sleeping remains an area of concern. Data from the Office of National Statistics² shows that among homeless people, the mean age at death was 45.9 years for males and 43.4

¹ [Health Counts](#)

² [Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

years for females in 2019; in the general population of England and Wales, the mean age at death was 76.1 years for men and 80.9 years for women.

- 12.4 Recommissioned services will be expected to work closely with partners to deliver integrated, trauma-informed support, reduce emergency admissions to health services, and contribute to the Council's wider health equity goals. These services are essential to addressing the city's most acute health inequalities.

13. Other Implications

Procurement implications

- 13.1 The value of this service is over the legal threshold and will be procured in line with the Procurement Act 2023. The open tender process will be used, and clauses will be included in the terms and conditions to allow for changes to services and boundaries that could result from the Local Government Review.
- 13.2 Strategic commissioning post-devolution is being picked up pan-Sussex by Housing Directors. Joint commissioning with East Sussex District & Borough Councils is not recommended at this stage due to differing service models and strategic risks. The BHCC SOS service is significantly larger and structurally different from neighbouring authorities, making joint contracting impractical.

Community Safety implications

- 13.3 The Street Outreach Service and associated homelessness support services contribute directly to the Council's duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. These services help reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB) and visible street homelessness by engaging with individuals who are rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness, many of whom may be vulnerable to exploitation, substance misuse, or reoffending.
- 13.4 The Street Outreach Team includes a dedicated ASB lead officer and works in close partnership with Sussex Police, community safety teams, and local services to address complex cases and reduce repeat incidents. This approach supports the aims of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020–2025, and emerging strategy for 2025-2030, which highlights the need for coordinated, citywide action to reduce the impact of rough sleeping on individuals and communities.
- 13.5 Recommissioning these services will ensure continued alignment with the city's community safety priorities and support individuals to transition away from street-based lifestyles into safer, more stable environments.

14. Conclusion

- 14.1 Recommissioning the Street Outreach Service maintains a coordinated, effective response to rough sleeping in Brighton & Hove. The proposed approach ensures continuity of vital frontline services, reflects current and

emerging needs, and aligns with the council's strategic priorities, including the forthcoming Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

