

Council

11 December 2014

Agenda Item 51

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Response to Scrutiny Panel on Homelessness		
Date of Meeting:	11 December 2014 12 November 2014 - Housing Committee		
Report of:	Geoff Raw Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing.		
Contact Officer:	Name:	James Crane	Tel: 29-3316
	Email:	James.crane@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE/NOT FOR PUBLICATION**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Panel on Homelessness was set up in January 2013 to look at and highlight the issues of Homelessness in the City in light of increased levels of homeless including the number of accepted households in temporary accommodation (statutory homeless) and rising numbers of rough sleepers. It set out to look at the provision of services across the city and to see if all that could be done was being carried out by services across the city and to make recommendations on what it feels needs to be done in relation to this increasing problem.
- 1.2 The Members on the cross party Panel were Councillors Andrew Wealls (Chair), Alan Robins and Ollie Sykes. The Panel took evidence from a range of Council departments, other statutory bodies and a number of community and voluntary organisations including Housing, Adult Social Care, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Community Safety Partnership, Friends First, Sanctuary Support Living, Off the Fence, CRI, Shore, Homeless Link and importantly Homeless Service Users.
- 1.3 The Council's Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of 4th February 2014 agreed and endorsed the scrutiny panel report without any amendments. Contained within the Homelessness Scrutiny Panel Report 2014 were 17 recommendations.
- 1.4 This report sets out all the Recommendations in Appendix 1 and notes the progress Housing have made against their areas. . (Appendix 1)

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That committee notes the progress made against the Recommendations by Housing.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Homelessness Scrutiny Panel was established in January 2013 in response to the growing number of people housed in temporary accommodation by the City Council and the rising numbers of people that are found to be sleeping rough of the streets of Brighton & Hove over the past four years.
- 3.2 The panel took evidence from a range of Council departments, other statutory, voluntary and charity sector organisations, both funded and non funded. In addition the panel listened to the voices of people who had had experience of homelessness themselves. The panel noted the complexity of the issues that face the city from those that may need some advice to resolve their housing situation to others that can face sleeping rough through either being unable to find accommodation or those that, for various reasons are unable to accept accommodation.
- 3.3 After taking evidence from a range of professionals and service users the Scrutiny Panel produced a report with 16 recommendations. These recommendations cover a range of topics many of which have been incorporated into the development of the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2014. Appendix one contains the recommendation and progress against each of them since the report was accepted by the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2014.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 This report gives consideration to each of the 17 recommendations contained in the Homelessness Scrutiny Panel report. This report was accepted in its entirety by the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14 February 2014.
- 4.2 The report highlights many of the areas that have been of concern and a matter of action in the City over a number of years. The report notes the complexity and the growing need of different groups within the city. These groups all feature within the Homelessness Strategy 2014.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 There has been no community engagement or consultation carried out in relation to the preparation of this report. The reason that no engagement or consultation was deemed necessary is that this was carried out in the development of the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2014 and further engagement and consultation has been undertaken in developing the commissioning strategies of youth and older people's housing and housing related support.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Homelessness Strategy was agreed in June 2014 by the Housing Committee. Many of the issues that have been raised by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee into Homelessness are now embedded within this strategy. This strategy is owned by the Strategic Housing Partnership and monitored by the

Housing Committee on an annual basis and this will ensure that the recommendations can be monitored as part of this governance process.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The cost of the recommendations required within appendix 1 will be met from existing Housing General Fund revenue budgets, subject to future budget provision
- 7.2 Several of the 17 recommendations by the scrutiny panel are embedded within current strategies and the financial implications have been reported through these separate reports to committee.

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil Smith

Date: 31/10/14

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules require Scrutiny Panel reports to be considered by the relevant Policy Committee. As the body charged with discharging the council's homelessness functions, Housing Committee is the relevant Policy Committee.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 23.09.14

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 None

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 None

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.6 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Response to the 16 Homelessness Scrutiny Panel Recommendations

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. Report of Homelessness Scrutiny Panel February 2014

Appendix 1 – Response to the 17 Homelessness Scrutiny Panel Recommendations			
No	Recommendation	Response	Reporting or lead officer
1	Given the significance of homeless people in terms of city health inequalities, we welcome the fact that the Health & Wellbeing Board is taking an active interest in the health and social care needs of this group. We are very interested in the progression of this work, and request that the HWB’s plans for homeless healthcare be presented to the HWOSC for comment within the next 12 months.	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>Homeless health has been adopted as a key element of the Brighton and Hove Better Care Plan. A Homeless Integrated Health and Care Board has been established to improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people by providing integrated and responsive services that place people at the centre of their own care, promote independence and support them to fulfil their potential. An extended multidisciplinary team approach will be implemented. The Board is also overseeing the delivery of projects currently in place including the newly established hostel nursing team and Pathway Plus (focusing on hospital discharge and A&E attendances). A stakeholder event took place in July 2014 and a user involvement work-stream has been established. In line with the Better Care timetable the full model will be introduced in April 2016. An update for the HWOSC can be presented in early 2015.</p>	Alasdair Hill – Public Health
2	A senior BHCC officer should be appointed as ‘homelessness services integration champion’ across statutory services and other sectors.	<p>Recommendation for Decision</p> <p>The Council provides a range of services across the City for both statutory and non statutory homelessness. Due to the complex nature of homelessness there are a number of officers at senior levels who already have responsibilities to ensure that the services provided are those that meet the needs of homeless people.</p>	Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation. HOUSING

		There is no single officer post in existence that covers the whole homelessness agenda.	
3	The council needs to take action to diversify its 'stock' of hostel accommodation, seeking to spread hostels more evenly across the city, and to offer a range of accommodation options in terms of hostel size and the level of support on offer.	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>In Autumn 2014 the Council is embarking on a review of its Integrated Support Pathway services, including hostels, which will inform future commissioning from April 2015 onwards. The review will consider the O&S Report and the Single Homelessness Needs Analysis published in 2013 as well as the recently published Homelessness Strategy 2014-19, feedback from partner organisations and from commissioners of Housing, Adult Social Care and Health services.</p>	Narinder Sundar , Head of Housing Support HOUSING, (now ASC)
4	We need a more diverse range of supported accommodation available to house single homeless people, particularly those with very complex needs. Whilst this is clearly not going to happen overnight, we would welcome a commitment to move to a model of greater diversity coupled with at least some practical action in the short term.	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>The Council continues to review services to ensure that they meet the needs of homeless people. Recent developments include the complex needs project looking at single homeless people who, for one reason or another are unable to reside in hostels. This project looks to provide a self contained property with high levels of support as an alternative.</p> <p>Recent developments in young people's services have seen a new service commissioned to provide accommodation for young men with high needs in the City. This project is currently at the tendering stage.</p> <p>Brighton Housing Trust were successful in obtaining Big Lottery Funds for the City(Name of Project) to look at</p>	Narinder Sundar, Head of Housing Support HOUSING, (now ASC)

		service models in the City with a view to seeing what works and what does not work for this client group. The City Council is a key partner in this project.	
5	The council needs to produce a clear map of statutory and non-statutory homelessness services across the city and make it available via its website.	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>The Council is in the process of refreshing the Homelessness pages on the Council's Website. A Mapping exercise is underway looking at all services that are available for those that are in danger of losing their homes or who have become homeless. The Housing Options service is in the final stage of producing "Options On-line" this service will carry out an assessment on a person's circumstances and offer an individual action plan to enable them to take appropriate action and obtain the support they require.</p>	Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation, HOUSING
6	Homeless pathways should be revised to allow clients to move directly into band 3 support when it is clear that there is no realistic possibility of them progressing successfully through band 2 support	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>This is being considered as part of the Integrated Support Pathway review along with other modifications to the model which will be intended to create greater flexibility and better outcomes for service users.</p>	Narinder Sundar, Head of Housing Support, HOUSING, (now ASC)
7	New and refreshed BHCC housing strategies must explicitly address the housing needs of victims of domestic violence.	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>The New Homeless Strategy 2014- 2019 was agreed by the Housing Committee in June 2014. This strategy was based on the review of homelessness in the City from 2007-2012. Domestic Violence and non Violent breakdown of relationships still feature as one of the main causes of homelessness in the City. For this</p>	Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation. HOUSING

		particular reason Victims of Domestic Violence are considered to be a Priority Group within the new homelessness strategy.	
8	Training for housing staff dealing with homeless applications must explicitly include information on domestic violence	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>Housing staff routinely have supervision sessions with their line managers and this includes Performance Development Plans(PDP) Part of the PDP process is to identify the training needs of staff. These needs feed into the Training Plans for each service area. Courses are provided as part of the Council's membership of the BEST & NHSS training programmes to ensure that staff are provided with the relevant skills to deal with cases of Domestic Violence.</p>	Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation HOUSING
9	New and refreshed BHCC housing strategies must explicitly address the housing needs of LGBT people.	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>The City has one of the largest concentrations of LGBT communities in the country. Homelessness is a significant issue for the LGBT community and therefore this group is considered to be one of the cities Priority Groups within the new homelessness strategy.</p>	Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation HOUSING
10	Training for housing staff dealing with homeless applications must explicitly include information on LGBT needs.	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>Training needs which encompass skills to understand the needs of the LGBT community are regularly reviewed and updated..</p> <p>This action overlaps with the work of the Trans Scrutiny Panel with similar recommendations specifically geared to those working with the Trans community. Work is</p>	Sylvia Peckham, Head of temporary Accommodation HOUSING

		being carried out corporately to deal with Trans awareness across the Council.	
11	<p>Relevant new and refreshed homelessness strategies (e.g. the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Young people) should explicitly address need with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> services for young people with high support needs; <input type="checkbox"/> ensuring that there is sufficient specialised housing to support young people; <input type="checkbox"/> the need to deliver ‘holistic’ support to young people (i.e. helping make young people work-ready at the same time as housing them) 	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>In the Autumn of 2013, the Joint Commissioning Strategy with Children’s Services for young people was approved. One of the key outcomes from this strategy was the development of a ‘positive transitions’ pathway for young people. In April 2014 the new Young People’s Accommodation and Support pathway was launched. This included action on designing the future shape of services to meet the needs of young people and to provide value for money.</p> <p>We are still working through some of the changes, which are may be linked to other areas of the council, but in order to meet the needs of high need young people we have successfully tendered Barnardo’s to provide a supported lodgings service, and we are in the process of tendering a small accommodation based service for high need young males.</p> <p>With regards to ensuring there is sufficient specialist housing we are looking at the services with the intention of remodelling of re-commissioning services to ensure they meet the needs of young people and provide value for money, and provide as much accommodation with support as possible within the constrains of the resources available.</p> <p>The ‘positive transitions pathway’ model is a national good practice model which the Department of</p>	<p>Narinder Sundar, Head of Housing Support HOUSING (now ASC)</p>

		<p>Communities and Local Government are promoting local authorities to use in developing their responses to young people with Housing and Support needs. This pathway emphasises 'positive transitions to adulthood', which requires an integrated approach from agencies in terms of young people achieving in education, economic independence, being healthy, having positive relationships and being involved in meaningful and enjoyable activities. The Young people's accommodation and Support pathway in Brighton and Hove have adopted this model with a requirement that agencies work to meet these needs in young people as well as their housing needs, and measure this by using appropriate tools such as the outcomes star.</p>	
12	<p>The Council should consider lobbying central Government (on the issue of people who are receiving employability training being required to attend the Job Centre to sign-on), reflecting the concerns of local voluntary sector providers that the rules dictating the ability of Jobcentre + to relax its signing-on requirements are still too inflexible.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>Following on from a regional event set up by DWP/Homeless Link in June, the Work and Learning working Group have set up a Task and Finish Group with the Sussex and Surrey DWP Social Justice Partnership Manager and Work Programme providers to improve outcomes for homeless ESA and JSA claimants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP Easement Rules for Homeless people • Upcoming changes to signing on procedures eg online • DWP/Homeless Services Brighton & Hove/ Pilot August-Sept 2014/Proposed Phased rollout October 2014 onwards. - Identifying "vulnerable" ESA/JSA claimants on the DWP local market system in order to give flexibility in the work related activity regime 	<p>Narinder Sundar, Head of Housing Support HOUSING</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flagged on system – trigger for JCP Work Coaches/Work Programme Providers to contact named support worker prior to any sanction decision for non-engagement in work related activity - Work related activity undertaken with homeless providers included in claimant commitment (JSA)and Work Related Action Plan (ESA) as part of agreed work related activity requirements. - Homeless/Social Justice Champions at both Job Centres - Consent forms a) Named support worker contacts for homeless clients to be contacted if any issues – b) authorises the named worker to speak on client’s behalf c) Outlines issues/barriers for the client 	
13	<p>New or refreshed homelessness strategies should explicitly address the issue of working with private landlords to maximise the supply of private rented accommodation accessible to homeless people.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>The Council currently works with the private rented sector to provide housing solutions to meet the needs of individuals in the City. The Council has adopted a prevention approach to assist those in difficulty with their housing to sustain tenancies wherever possible.</p> <p>Where tenancy sustainment is not possible the Council works to find alternative housing solutions many of which are in the private rented sector. The Council makes maximum use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to assist people to move into the private sector. The Council also operates a Deposit Guarantee Scheme, working with private landlords to</p>	<p>Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation HOUSING</p>

		<p>supply accommodation by issuing a damage bond for up to six weeks rent. This enables those that we would otherwise have a statutory housing duty towards, to move into the Private sector both in the City and beyond.</p> <p>The Council continues to work with Private landlords and agents in the City to provide temporary housing solutions via it's long term leasing scheme. In addition we are in the process of a procuring short and long term accommodation that will be managed on our behalf through Framework Agreements.</p> <p>In partnership with Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes we have refurbished and brought into management over 400 flats and houses for use by homeless households that we have a duty towards, with the remaining properties to bring the total to 499 to be delivered by the end of 2015. These properties are procured with rents at the Local Housing Allowance so.</p>	
14	<p>The council should explore what can be done to maintain people's tenancies should they be imprisoned for a short period of time. The aim should be to minimise the number of people with a local housing connection being made homeless as a result of imprisonment</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>We have continued to work with offenders with a local housing connection who are in HMP Lewes and are on remand or sentenced to less than 12 months. This work is carried by our Housing Options Officer, Offender Pathway post under the Prevention of Offender Accommodation Loss project.</p> <p>The post holder works to both maintain people's tenancies where possible, through negotiation with landlords, housing benefit department and DWP. These tenancies may be in supported accommodation,</p>	<p>Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation HOUSING</p>

private rented sector or social housing.
Work is done to ensure that placements in supported accommodation are maintained for prisoners on remand / in custody. Support needs are common amongst this cohort, and are often best met in supported accommodation. Maintaining these placements allows not only for the bricks and mortar of accommodation to be maintained, but also that support to address need and reduce the potential for future re-offending remains in place.

Of note in the recommendation is that it is questioned whether social housing tenants are able to resume their tenancies when released. Those on remand can claim housing benefit for up to 52 weeks, and those on short term sentences can claim for up to 13 weeks. This enables a certain amount of flexibility in negotiation with social landlords to ensure that tenancies are kept open where possible.

Further of note is that social tenants can nominate a caretaker to their property while in custody, either on short or long term sentences. Throughout the 5 and half years of its existence the Offender Pathway post has worked with prisoners and social landlords to facilitate caretaker arrangements.

This post also works towards finding accommodation for prisoners who were homeless on reception to HMP Lewes. Much of this side of the work is focused on referral to supported accommodation.

However, we also assist ex-offenders to access private sector accommodation via a deposit guarantee.

		<p>In the year to date we have sustained 14 tenancies across tenure types and ensured that new accommodation is available on release for 5 individuals..</p> <p>In addition to this , since June, we have begun working closely with the Inspire Project / Women’s Centre to offer advice and, where appropriate, assistance to female prisoners with a local housing connection. We have a named officer who runs a drop-in service at the Women’s Centre once a month and who is also available to take referrals from staff at the Women’s Centre on behalf of prisoners in the most local women’s prison, HMP Bronzefield. Again, we aim to sustain tenancies where possible or make referrals to local supported accommodation providers.</p> <p>Alongside the Women’s Centre and Children’s Services we also plan to identify women whose children are in local authority care due to their offending. The plan is to reunite these families, and our role will be to look at identifying suitable accommodation for these women both while work is done to address their offending issues and assess suitability for children to return to their care and once the family has been reunited.</p> <p>At present this work is dependent on The Women’s Centre recruiting a member of staff to take this work forward.</p>	
15	<p>New and refreshed homelessness strategies must explicitly recognise that social care and housing increasingly</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>See recommendation 1 above.</p>	<p>Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation HOUSING</p>

	need to work in an integrated manner, and should establish structures to enable this		
16	New and refreshed homelessness strategies should specifically address the support/advice needs of those who have been deemed ineligible for statutory housing support, recognising that this is a significant group of people, many of whom have genuine support needs	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>The Homelessness Strategy acknowledges the wider impact of homelessness in the City and includes those to whom the Council does not have a statutory duty to accommodate, The Council is obliged to provide advice on prevention of homelessness to all persons in its area free of charge, The Council's Housing Options team includes Advice and Assessment officers who discharge this duty. In addition to this the council has a number of partners in the voluntary sector who also give advice and assistance including Downslink YMCA and BHT.</p>	Sylvia Peckham, Head of Temporary Accommodation HOUSING
17	The OSC should monitor the implementation of agreed panel recommendations on an annual basis until the committee is satisfied that all recommendations have been implemented	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>As part of the part of the homelessness strategy the Housing Committee will receive an annual update report of the activities of the Council and its partners of the progress of meeting the aims and objectives in the area of homelessness. This will include an up date of the recommendations of the Homelessness Scrutiny Panel .</p>	OSC