



Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Report Subject	Update on Homelessness Strategy
Meeting date	5 April 2016
Cabinet Portfolio	Councillor Robert Lawton – Portfolio Holder for Housing
Corporate Lead	Bill Cotton - Executive Director for Environment & Economy
Service Director	Gary Josey - Service Director for Housing, Parks, Bereavement Services
Status	Public
Classification	For information
Key Decision	No
Impacts on Key Policy Framework	No
Report author	Caroline Roundhill, Homelessness Strategy Manager  01202 454823  Caroline.roundhill@bournemouth.gov.uk
Executive summary	<p>The current Bournemouth Homelessness Strategy covers the period from 2013 to 2020. Homelessness issues have been increasing both locally and nationally over the last five years. This report provides an update on the Council's work to address homelessness in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of current Homelessness Strategy Including an update on Emergency Accommodation placements, joint work with Children's Social Services, an overview of current rough sleeper services and numbers, and updates on Bournemouth's Homeless Supported Housing Pathway and reductions to housing related support services. ➤ Rough Sleeper Task and Finish Group The report includes an update on the Task and Finish Group work and an overview of the opportunities to work with community and church groups. ➤ Welfare Reform As Welfare Reforms continue to be implemented, it is imperative that the potential impact on homelessness is

	<p>anticipated and responded to. An overview of progress is included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Town Centre Initiative <p>Homelessness and street-based issues such as begging have increased in the town centre over the last three years. The Council has established a multi-agency group to address these issues using both support and enforcement methods. An update is provided here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proposal to develop new Homelessness Strategy <p>In light of the current issues, pressures and changing landscape of homelessness issues, it is proposed that a new Homelessness Strategy is developed for Bournemouth.</p>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Panel is asked to support the Council's ongoing approach to dealing with homelessness and related street-based activity ➤ To support the Council's development of a new Homelessness Strategy and to add this to its work programme for July 2016
Reasons for recommendations	To ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel is informed and satisfied with the Council's approach to the key homelessness issues and agreement to contribute to the development of a new Homelessness Strategy.

Background detail

REVIEW OF CURRENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

- 1 The Council's current Housing Strategy incorporates the Homelessness Strategy. One of the Housing Strategy's eight housing aspirations is to have 'Reduced Homelessness and Rough Sleeping'.
- 2 The key objectives of the current Homelessness Strategy are
 - Partnership working
 - Prevention
 - Increasing the availability of appropriate accommodation
 - Providing the necessary support services
 - Improve access to information about housing options
 - Tackling and reducing rough sleeping

Emergency accommodation for homeless households

- 3 In light of the growing and changing demand for homelessness services, a new role of Homelessness Strategy Manager was created and has been in post since 30 November 2015. This role is focussing on the Council's Homelessness Strategy, work toward the Gold Standard and the rough sleeping agenda. Additional management responses have been provided within the in-house Housing Options Team, focussing on review and redevelopment of the operational delivery of this team and the further development of a robust prevention approach.
- 4 The number of households in temporary accommodation doubled over the last six months, increasing from a total of 24 placed in temporary accommodation as at the end of September 2015, to 48 as at 10 March 2016. 16 of these 48 households are in the Council's homelessness temporary accommodation, whilst 32 are in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation. 21 of the 32 households in bed and breakfast are families. The reasons for this increase are varied and often complex, however it is apparent that eviction from private rented accommodation is the most common reason that households present to the Council as homeless (reflecting a national trend) and this is frequently related to housing market pressures (including a buoyant rental market), rent arrears and impact of Welfare Reform.
- 5 The number of households in temporary accommodation is a key performance indicator that was previously a National Indicator reported to central government. This continues to be reported corporately on a quarterly basis and is a key focus of resources in order to minimise numbers as much as possible.
- 6 As at the time of writing, 18 additional families were also housed by Children's Social Care in bed and breakfast establishments. The Council did not have a *homeless* duty for these families due to 'intentionality' (where households are deemed homeless because of some they did or something they failed to do) but Children's Social Care have a duty based on the welfare of the children. Housing and Children's Social Care colleagues are working together to ensure the best corporate solutions and agree policy position. The Council is in the process of establishing a joint assessment team, which will involve two workers funded by Children's Social Services based within the Council's Strategic Housing Team. This team will ensure efficient joint working between the Housing Options Team and Children's Social Care, and establish a pathway and address accommodation blockages for 'intentionally homeless' families.
- 7 For context, it is worth noting that approximately 1,000 people present to the Council's housing services each month. Hence, in addition to those allocated emergency accommodation and those that are rough sleeping, there are

many others who approach the Council and are given preventative advice, assistance and sign-posting to appropriate services.

Rough sleeping services

- 8 Rough sleeping is the most severe form of homelessness. The last street count in 2015 identified a total of 47 people in Bournemouth. This does not provide a definitive count but is a national methodology that is used every year to identify trends over time and across areas. The street count figures reveal a 52% increase from 2014 to 2015 and a 292% increase since 2010 in Bournemouth.
- 9 Nationally, the total figure for England in 2015 was 3,569. This is a 30% increase on 2014, and a 102% increase on 2010. All regions saw an increase in rough sleeping in 2015. South West England saw the highest proportional increase in rough sleeping (plus 41%). The 'top three' local authorities for rough sleeping were Westminster (265), Bristol (97), and Brighton and Hove (78).
- 10 A key part of the current Homelessness Strategy is the provision specialist rougher sleeper services. This includes the following
 - A rough sleeper team is jointly commissioned and funded by the Council with the Borough of Poole. The service is delivered by CRI, who provide an 'assertive' outreach service to facilitate swift access to accommodation and to ensure individuals are engaged with required support services. The assertive approach involves persistence, challenging the street lifestyle and working closely with the Police and the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Team to use enforcement to bring about change for individuals where accommodation and support is initially refused. Anything that is seen to sustain people in the street lifestyle such as giving out food, blankets and begging is not supported by the Council.
 - We have a proactive reconnections service for those from out of area needing to return to areas where they have family or social networks. This approach is well established within Local Authorities and is endorsed by central government. Each case is considered on its merits and efforts are made to ensure that rough sleeping is not simply displaced to another area.
- 11 The Homelessness Supported Housing Pathway was remodelled in 2013 to ensure a coordinated pathway of schemes that work together. The pathway consists of approximately 200 hostel bed spaces for homeless people and

rough sleepers in Bournemouth, funded by the Council. The first accommodation tier provides short term initial assessment and support planning. All the hostels provide intensive support as individuals move through the pathway and provide life-skills training to enable the residents to move on to independent living. Most referrals into the pathway are channelled through the SP Hub team (the Rough Sleeper Team can refer verified rough sleepers directly into five of the bed spaces) and require just one comprehensive assessment.

12 Housing Related Support Services have been affected by Council savings, including Floating Support, which assists customers to sustain independent accommodation. This has resulted in a reduction to the housing related support available to homeless individuals. Remaining teams will need to work in a coordinated way in order to mitigate the impact of these savings.

13 The current Homelessness Strategy is currently under review as part of the proposed development of a new Homelessness Strategy for Bournemouth (see Part 5). The existing Homelessness Strategy action plan continues to be driven forward, monitored and reviewed via the multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Group. Here follows a summary of updates on the action plan:

- Joint monitoring and responses to Welfare Reform.
- Development of new Council Resettlement Team to support customers to access and maintain private rented accommodation. The buoyant rental market creates challenges in terms of securing private rented accommodation to this cohort as most landlords require guarantors, references and rent in advance, hence a new response is required for resettlement.
- The New Property Company, Seascope Homes, is now incorporated. The purchase of properties is due to commence within the next few months. These units will be used to provide additional housing for homeless households.
- Continued delivery of the joint EPIC Group (see section 4 below).
- Progress of the Housing First Pilot. Four homeless individuals with complex needs are now being supported in accommodation by a Housing First Team delivered by Two Saints. The pilot is due to end in September 2016; an exit strategy is being implemented and outcomes are to be evaluated.
- Input from partners around tackling New Psychoactive Substances (so called 'legal highs'). New national NPS legislation is to come into effect in April 2016. Partners are reviewing enforcement options.
- Phase 2 of Housing Related Support savings for 2016/17 is in process of being implemented over the following two months.

- Ongoing joint work with community and faith-based groups to rationalise and reduce soup runs, develop diverted giving options and consider joint communications plan.
- Joint planning for the proposed combined South East Dorset authority will be added to the agenda for the 2016/17.

ROUGH SLEEPER TASK AND FINISH GROUP

14 A Task and Finish Group was convened in 2015 to develop a more detailed understanding of the approaches taken by Faithworks Wessex (an umbrella organisation bringing together various church groups with an interest in homelessness) and the Council and identify further opportunities for joint working.

15 There has already been closer working between Faithworks and the Council over the last two years. Faithworks representatives are members of the Homelessness Strategy Group and regular separate meetings are held between the Council, Faithworks and other community groups. Each party has agreed to differ on some issues, for example the provision of 'soup kitchens' which the Council considers can sustain people in unhealthy and risky lifestyles. However, understanding and common ground have been agreed and each party recognises that they share a primary goal; that is to address the welfare of rough sleepers and get people inside quickly.

16 As a result of the more joined up approach, Faithworks has undertaken more coordinated planning in respect of the winter 'Sleepsafe' provision. Furthermore, there have been multi-agency discussions around the rationalisation of free meal provision (often referred to as 'soup runs'). Although the Council does not endorse free food provision, it is supportive of a reduction in number and a focus on genuine rough sleepers only.

17 There exists a shared will between Faithworks and the Council to raise awareness of what work is being done with rough sleepers and what different agencies and groups are trying to achieve. To consolidate this understanding, the Council is seeking to draw up a 'compact' document outlining common goals and approaches. Discussions continue around communications with the public, and the possibility of joint communications around effective ways for the public to help homeless people. This will also hopefully include, for example, 'Diverted Giving' (or a donations package), raising awareness of the wide range of work undertaken in the town to address homelessness and 'myth-busting' widely held misconceptions around homelessness.

18 Communicating a clear message around homelessness, rough sleeping and begging is a complex and delicate path to navigate as it can be a contentious

and emotive issue for many people. Of particular complexity are the messages around the twin track approach of support and enforcement, which involves a balance of coordinated work; and the necessity to balance the needs of a very vulnerable cohort with the needs of the wider community.

19 Following the Task and Finish Group, joint working and communications will continue between the Council and Faithworks. There remains recognition of the complexity of the issues at hand, the opportunities afforded by joint work and the possibility of harnessing the abundant goodwill of volunteers and public in effective and sustainable homelessness work.

WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

20 The Welfare Reform changes continue to progress: -

- Universal Credit went live in Bournemouth in June 2015. Claimants are gradually being moved to the new system of one monthly payment for all welfare benefits. Inside Housing magazine reported in December 2015 that nearly 90% of social tenants receiving Universal Credit are in rent arrears because of a seven-week wait for the first payment.
- Payments will be frozen for working-age benefits, including tax credits and Local Housing Allowance for four years starting in April 2016.
- The Benefit Cap for families will be lowered to £20,000 with a provisional launch date in 2017.
- Automatic entitlement to housing benefit element will be removed for new Universal Credit claimants who are 18 to 21 years old and out of work, from April 2017.
- Housing Benefit claims will be backdated for a maximum of four weeks from April 2016 as opposed to three months.
- The Government announced on 1 March 2016 that supported and sheltered housing will be exempt from the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap for a year and there will be a full strategic review of how supported housing is funded. This refers to the amount of rent that Housing Benefit will cover and therefore has significant implications for the future provision of supported accommodation for homeless people.

21 The Strategic Housing Options Team continues to monitor Welfare Reform, along with Government Housing Policy developments and reported impact closely. An analysis of the reforms will inform the emerging new Homelessness Strategy.

TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVE

22 An 'EPIC' (Enforcement, Prevention, Intelligence, Communication) multi agency plan was developed in 2014 to further focus resources on homelessness and street based anti social behaviour (ASB) in the town centre, which has gradually increased. This provides strategic action planning around four themes – Enforcement, Prevention, Intelligence, Communication – with the aim of further preventing street ASB. There are three distinct client groups that overlap but are often different: street drinkers, people begging and rough sleeping.

23 Here follows a summary of current actions arising from this group

- Continued regular joint Patrols between Police, Rough Sleeper Team and ASB Coordinator, comprising 'Days of Action', targeting pre identified individuals and hotspots.
- Police use of Section 35 dispersals where legislative criteria met, disrupting begging sites and addressing ASB.
- Shared intelligence enables multiple legislative actions taken on individuals, including the use of civil orders such as Anti Social Behaviour Injunctions (ASBIs) and Community Protection Notices (CPNs).
- New Psychoactive Substances (NPSs, so called 'legal highs') continue to be prevalent in the town. The ASB Coordinator has convened a separate multi agency group to address NPS use and mitigate its impact. New legislation is due to come into force in April 2016; the EPIC and NPS Groups will closely monitor impact and will be well-placed to take advantage of the new legislation and provide a robust multi-agency response. Action has already been taken against some local shops where anti social behaviour has been proven to be linked to the sale of NPSs.
- 'Design-out' opportunities have used where appropriate, for example, the boarding up of the empty shops at the bottom of Old Christchurch Road.
- Frequent wake-ups, disruption and cleansing from the Rough Sleeper Team, Police and street cleaning team.

24 An additional £200,000 of funding was recently agreed by Cabinet and is in the process of being applied to develop and enhance the town centre work. Developments now under way include

- Additional support resources, including the extension of the ASB Coordinator role and an additional two full time workers based within the Rough Sleeper Team. The ASB Coordinator has been in post for two years and the additional resources mean that this dedicated work can continue. The ASB Coordinator provides both operational responses to street based ASB, undertaking joint shifts

with the Rough Sleeper Team, the Police and cleansing services. The role also acts as a central coordinator for all the involved agencies and ensures efficient communication and coordinated responses to particular issues. The two additional full time workers within the Rough Sleepers Team will have separate remits: one will assist with the ongoing engagement and pathways off the street for rough sleepers and the other will focus solely on rough sleepers without a local connection, developing pathways, assertive techniques and procedures for this hard to engage cohort. A further £25,000 will be used to find creative solutions locally for rough sleepers, including rent deposit use and personalised packages of support for the most complex 'revolving door' cases.

- Enhanced enforcement: At the heart of the new enforcement approach will be use of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) Powers with the Council acting as the provider of this service. This enables a robust and truly multi agency approach to be taken, building on existing practices and protocols. It also maximises the opportunities for information sharing and 'virtual' practice. A 'virtual team' is in the process of being created, which will comprise CSAS officers, the Police and, it is hoped, the Town Centre Ranger team. The enforcement element is reliant upon a strong partnership between the Council and the Police to ensure timely communications, consistent messages, a balance between support and enforcement and coordinated responses and planning. This partnership work is now well established.

PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A NEW HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

25 The Homelessness Strategy is delivered in partnership with many different agencies, although the Council has a duty to publish and review the Homelessness Strategy. A multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Group is chaired by the Council every quarter and focuses energies around delivering an agreed Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. The current strategy and action plan are currently being reviewed in the context of the many changes impacting on homelessness services over the last year, and the national context of reforms and policy change.

26 The responsibility for publishing the Homelessness Strategy, coordinating services and delivering the homeless statutory duties sits with the Strategic Housing Options team. Local authorities are required to publish a new Homelessness Strategy every five years.

27 The Council is working towards the Homelessness Gold Standard set out

by CLG. This sets a high standard cutting across all homelessness provision. Bournemouth Borough Council is working to improve services in order to meet the elements of this standard. The Council has now joined a 'Diagnostic Peer Review Group' with eight other local authorities (Winchester, West Berkshire, Hart, Test Valley, Eastleigh, Swindon Poole and Bristol). Each authority will review and be reviewed by a peer. Bournemouth is set to be reviewed in January 2017. The work toward the Gold Standard will form a key element of the new Homelessness Strategy. Very few Local Authorities have so far achieved the Gold Standard, with Greenwich being the first to meet all 10 challenges necessary to achieve gold status.

28 Homelessness services, including the internal Housing Options Team, the Rough Sleepers Team and accommodation providers, have consistently reported an increase in the complexity of needs of those presenting as homeless. Hence a review of the needs of the cohort is required, mapped against available services and pathways.

29 It is therefore proposed that a new Homelessness Strategy is developed; on the basis of increased rough sleeping and homelessness presentations at the council, Welfare Reforms and changes to Housing Policy, Gold Standard development, reporting increase in the complexity of needs of homeless cases, public and press interest and the impact on the community.

30 Development of the new strategy will involve consultations with all stakeholders including Cabinet, social housing providers, private landlords, homelessness agencies, Police, Social Services and customers. Consultations will take the form of group events, questionnaires and interviews as appropriate. Development of the strategy will also involve a needs analysis comprising profile development of the different customer cohorts, an analysis of the likely impact of continued Welfare Reform and mapping of pathways to homelessness locally. An audit of existing services and resources will include a housing market analysis, mapping of existing services directly and indirectly involved with homelessness and unemployment/economy strength analysis.

31 The new strategy will prompt two new Homelessness Strategy Action Plans; one to be used internally by the Council's Strategic Housing Options Team and the other to ensure robust partnership working, managed through the multi agency Homelessness Strategy Group, chaired by the Council.

Consultation

No Consultation requirement at this stage. Full formal consultations were undertaken as part of the development of current Homelessness Strategy.

Options

To support the development of a new Homelessness Strategy.

Summary of financial/resource implications

N/A

Summary of legal implications

N/A

Summary of human resources implications

Homelessness Strategy Manager in place to progress this work.

Summary of environmental impact

The ongoing work to address homelessness and the development of a new Homelessness Strategy should improve the environment for residents across the Borough. Working in partnership with numerous departments and agencies ensures effective targeted action and enforcement for many environmental issues relating to homelessness.

Summary of equalities and diversity impact

Not required at this stage. A full equalities impact assessment was undertaken as part of the development of current Homelessness Strategy.

Summary of risk assessment

No risk assessment requirement at this stage. A full risk assessment was undertaken as part of the development of current Homelessness Strategy.

Background papers

[Bournemouth Housing Strategy 2013-2020 \(incorporating current Homelessness Strategy\).](#)

Appendices

None

