



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Multi Agency Strategy for Tackling, Preventing and Reducing Rough Sleeping in Northampton
---------------------	--

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	8 June 2016
Key Decision:	Yes
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	Yes
Directorate:	Housing and Wellbeing
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval of a 3 year Multi Agency Strategy that is designed to end the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton.
- 1.2 This new Strategy – called 'Together we change lives' – marks a fresh approach that has been supported and inspired by more than thirty services and organisations, all of which have pledged to work differently to tackle, prevent and reduce rough sleeping.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves 'Together we change lives' (which is attached to this report as Appendix A) as Northampton's 3 year Multi Agency Strategy for ending the need for people to sleep rough in the borough;
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegates to the Cabinet Member for Housing & Wellbeing the authority, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to make minor changes to the Strategy; and

- 2.3 That Cabinet delegates to the Chief Executive the authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Wellbeing, to establish a temporary nightshelter, subject to due diligence and the production of a detailed business case that has been signed-off by the Section 151 Officer.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 According to Government figures, an average of 3,500 people slept rough in England each night in 2015. This was 30% higher than in 2014 and more than twice the number of people who were sleeping rough in England 5 years ago.
- 3.1.2 In Northamptonshire, the average number of people sleeping rough in 2015 was estimated to be 61 and, of these, 25 were sleeping rough in Northampton.
- 3.1.3 Although the number of people sleeping rough in Northampton reduced significantly when Oasis House (a 48-bed supported housing scheme for single homeless people) opened in 2012, the sharp and visible rise in the number of people sleeping rough during the past couple of years demands a fresh and more innovative, multi agency approach to what is an extremely complex problem.
- 3.1.4 On 5 February 2016, the Council's Housing & Wellbeing Service and Community Safety Team hosted a half day Workshop to kick-start the development of a 3 year Multi Agency Rough Sleepers Strategy that will not only help rough sleepers to leave the streets and rebuild their lives but also tackle the main causes of rough sleeping.
- 3.1.5 Attended by more than 50 participants – representing around thirty services and organisations, including charities, faith groups, health and social care professionals, housing projects, advice and support providers, the neighbourhood wardens, the Police and the anti-social behaviour unit – the Workshop considered the causes and extent of rough sleeping, the action being taken to prevent and reduce rough sleeping, and the services that are helping rough sleepers move off the streets.
- 3.1.6 Everyone attending the Workshop agreed that the problem of rough sleeping can only be resolved if all services and organisations work more effectively with one another, deliver a consistent message and actively encourage rough sleepers to engage with housing and support providers and leave the streets. They also agreed that, although much more needs to be done to help people sustain their tenancies, an emergency nightshelter is required (at least in the short-term) to accommodate rough sleepers.
- 3.1.7 On 24 March 2016, a team of 32 volunteers took part in Northampton's Rough Sleepers Count, covering all of the wards in the borough between Midnight and 3.00am. Although it was too unsafe for the volunteers to enter the derelict St Edmund's Hospital site to check for rough sleepers, they observed a total of 21 people (19 men and 2 women) 'bedded down' in the borough.
- 3.1.8 On 29 April 2016, the Council organised a second half day Rough Sleepers Strategy Workshop that showcased the innovative and inspiring work of the Council's new Outreach Workers, provided details of the town's plans for a temporary nightshelter and considered the themes, priorities and actions for the new Strategy.

3.1.9 During the Workshop, Goodwill Solutions and Hope Enterprises (two local charities) pledged to work proactively with other organisations to help people who have been sleeping rough to rebuild their lives through volunteering, training and employment.

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 During the first Rough Sleepers Workshop in February 2016, everyone agreed that the Council and Oasis House cannot resolve Northampton's rough sleeping problem on their own and that all services and organisations are spending too much time dealing with the symptoms, rather than the causes, of rough sleeping and homelessness.

3.2.2 Although sleeping rough is very dangerous and seriously detrimental to people's physical and mental health, Northampton now has an established community of people who are choosing to sleep rough, as a lifestyle, and are resolutely refusing to leave the streets. A significant proportion of these people are unemployed European migrants who are failing to exercise their treaty rights.

3.2.3 Everyone agreed that there is a need for services to be a lot more persistent and assertive in their work with people who are sleeping rough, and to make it clear that sleeping rough is not a lifestyle that Northampton is prepared to sustain.

3.2.4 During the two Workshops, it was agreed that:

- Everyone needs to work together to tackle the causes of rough sleeping;
- Everyone needs to work together to tackle and prevent repeat homelessness;
- Everyone needs to engage more effectively with entrenched rough sleepers;
- Everyone needs to deliver the same, clear messages to people sleeping rough
- Everyone needs to work together to help people sustain their tenancies;
- Everyone needs to encourage people who are sleeping rough to engage with housing and support providers, and to leave the streets; and
- Everyone needs to work together to maximise move-on from supported housing.

3.2.5 Participants in the two Workshops agreed what they wanted from the 3 year Multi Agency Rough Sleepers Strategy:

- A clear direction, with everyone knowing what they need to do;
- Priorities and actions that everyone has agreed;
- A dramatic improvement in the way in which everyone works together;
- Better, more responsive services for people who are sleeping rough;
- Improved co-ordination and integration of services.
- Better communication between all of the services;

- More efficient use of everyone's resources; and
- More positive outcomes for people who are sleeping rough.

Northampton's Multi Agency Rough Sleepers Strategy

- 3.2.6 **'Together we change lives'** (see Appendix A) is the borough's 3 year Multi Agency Strategy for ending the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton.
- 3.2.7 With its emphasis on partnership, community and collaboration, the Strategy actively encourages everyone to combine their ideas, energy and resources, reduce duplication, improve efficiency and deliver better outcomes.
- 3.2.8 The Strategy is ambitious. It seeks to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in Northampton from 25 in June 2016 to less than 10 in November 2016 (the date of the next Rough Sleepers Count) and as close as possible to zero in June 2017.
- 3.2.9 **'Together we change lives'** is not just about ending the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton. It is also about rebuilding people's lives: dealing with any addictions, addressing any physical or mental health problems, resolving any outstanding tenancy issues, and helping people access training and employment.
- 3.2.10 In order to end the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton, the Multi Agency Strategy contains 10 strategic objectives:
- Set up a temporary nightshelter that has the capacity to offer all local rough sleepers emergency shelter until they are able to move into settled housing;
 - Make it clear that there is no need for people to sleep rough in Northampton and that anyone choosing to do so will not be helped to sleep rough;
 - Review the way in which food, blankets and sleeping bags are distributed to people who are homeless in Northampton, to ensure that it is coordinated and supports, rather than undermines, everyone's efforts to discourage rough sleeping;
 - Encourage services and organisations to work proactively with the Council's Outreach Workers to establish a multi-disciplinary Street Services Team that is able to engage with people who are sleeping rough during Outreach sessions;
 - Promote the use of the reconnection service and work with the Immigration Service to help people who have no local connection with Northampton, want to move closer to family support or are not exercising their treaty rights;
 - Work proactively with the hospitals, prisons, supported housing schemes and social landlords to ensure that people leave hospital and prison in a planned way and that, where someone is living in supported housing or social housing, tenants are provided with all of the help they require to sustain their tenancies;
 - Develop and implement an information sharing protocol and make optimum use of a shared, multi-agency database;

- Produce comprehensive support plans for everyone who is sleeping rough and promote the use of multi agency case conferences for rough sleepers who have complex needs and/or a history of entrenched rough sleeping;
- Undertake a comprehensive review of the move-on arrangements at Oasis House and in NAASH's 'No Second Night Out' Project in order to ensure that residents of both schemes are moving on in a timely and appropriate manner; and
- Develop and promote a comprehensive programme of volunteering, training and employment for people who have recently been sleeping rough.

Development of an Action Plan

- 3.2.11 Although a comprehensive Action Plan would normally have been included within the Strategy when it is considered by Cabinet, everyone who attended the Workshops said that they were keen for the Strategy to be published as soon as possible, rather than wait a few months until the Action Plan has been produced and agreed.
- 3.2.12 The Action Plan will describe, in detail, what the services and organisations are planning to do to achieve the 10 strategic objectives in 'Together we change lives'.
- 3.2.13 Although most of the actions in the Action Plan are likely to be carried out within existing resources, it is anticipated that the Council will need to fund at least part of the refurbishment costs – and most of the weekly running costs – of the nightshelter.

Provision of a temporary nightshelter

- 3.2.14 Following its strategic purchase of the former British Rail Sports & Social Club in St Andrew's Road, Northampton, the Council intends to apply for planning permission for a temporary change of use to enable the building to be used as a temporary nightshelter for people who would otherwise have to sleep rough.
- 3.2.15 Although the Council has received a number of offers of help towards the cost of refurbishing and running the nightshelter – and it is hoped that optimum use can be made of the generosity of the community and volunteers – the likely cost of providing a temporary nightshelter is not known at present.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 Cabinet can choose to approve 'Together we change lives', the 3 year Multi Agency Strategy for ending the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton.
- 3.3.2 Cabinet can choose to amend and approve 'Together we change lives', the 3 year Multi Agency Strategy for ending the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton.
- 3.3.3 Cabinet can choose to do nothing.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The Strategy for ending the need to sleep rough in Northampton is in line with Council policy and reflects the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2016-20.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 As this Multi Agency Strategy is designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of everyone's efforts to tackle, prevent and reduce rough sleeping, its overall impact on town centre businesses and the cost of delivering public services (including homelessness, policing, community safety and enforcement) is likely to be positive.
- 4.2.2 Although the provision of a temporary nightshelter will require some initial set-up costs, these are likely to be under £50k and will be the subject of a business case.
- 4.2.3 The business case and financial implications of setting up, and running, the temporary nightshelter for a period of up to 18 months will be fully costed and these will require approval through the Council's appropriate financial process.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 The Council has wide and extensive powers to implement the proposals contained in this report through the Power of General Competence in the Localism Act 2011.
- 4.3.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced the requirement for housing authorities to take a preventative approach to homelessness.
- 4.3.3 This Multi Agency Strategy will provide a useful framework within which the Council and its partners will operate.

4.4 Equality and Health

- 4.4.1 A full Communities Impact Assessment has been completed.
- 4.4.2 By improving the co-ordination and effectiveness of local services and organisations, and striving to end the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton, this Multi Agency Strategy will improve the wellbeing and life chances of people with protected characteristics, including homeless people and people with disabilities, and it will, therefore, have a positive impact on Equality and Diversity.
- 4.4.3 The development of this Strategy is part of the Council's commitment to improving communities and our town as a place to live. During all stages of this project, the Council will have due regard to its Public Sector Duty and will continue to work to tackle discrimination and inequality and contribute to developing a fairer society.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1 In February 2016 and April 2016, the Council hosted two half day Workshops to obtain the views of a wide range of stakeholders – including charities, faith groups, health and social care professionals, housing projects, advice and support providers, the neighbourhood wardens, the Police and the anti-social behaviour unit – on the causes of rough sleeping and the action that is required to help people off the streets and end the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton.
- 4.5.2 Everyone who attended the Workshops was enthusiastic about the idea of adopting a fresh, multi agency approach to tackling, preventing and reducing rough sleeping. 'Together we change lives' captures their ideas and reflects their shared resolve.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 **'Together we change lives'** will help meet 3 of the priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- **Safer Communities:** The new Strategy will help people (including rough sleepers, residents, shoppers, visitors and businesses) to feel safe and secure by reducing rough sleeping, beggars and street drinking.
- **Housing for Everyone:** The new Strategy will end the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton by providing people with access to a safe and secure home and helping people to achieve and maintain independence.
- **Working Hard and Spending your Money Wisely:** The new Strategy will actively promote collaborative multi agency working and, in doing so, it will help the Council to be economic, efficient and effective and get the best from the resources available.

4.6.2 The new Strategy will also make a positive contribution to 2 of the 3 Business Development Priorities that support the Corporate Plan and help manage the Council's future financial challenges:

- **Empowering Communities:** The new Strategy will encourage communities to become actively involved in tackling homelessness and improving the neighbourhoods where they live in order to help make everywhere in Northampton a great place to live, visit, work, study and invest.
- **Partnership Working:** The new Strategy will help build strong and effective relationships between partners, based on a coherent, consistent and clearly defined approach to partnership working. As well as increasing efficiency and effectiveness, this will reduce duplication, deliver better outcomes and improve residents' housing, health and wellbeing.

Appendices

Appendix A – 'Together we change lives. Ending the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton' (Multi Agency Strategy 2016-19)

Background Papers

Communities Impact Assessment

Phil Harris
Head of Housing and Wellbeing
01604 837871