

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
22 NOVEMBER 2021

WINTER PROVISION UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1.1 This report is to update Members on the winter provision being provided for any rough sleepers in the Newark and Sherwood district this year.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Members may recall that in the years prior to the pandemic that the Housing Options service had built up a strong winter offer to rough sleepers with the support and assistance of the local faith and charitable organisations. Their ability to engage this group made it easier to get individuals to participate in using our winter provision, preventing winter death from exposure.
- 2.2 In the early stages of our provision we offered a service known as 'SWEP' (Severe Weather Emergency Provision). This was based on the government guidance that should the overnight temperature reach zero or below on three consecutive nights the local housing authority was required to provide rough sleepers with somewhere to come in from the cold. There was no stipulation that this needed to be a lay-down provision but with the assistance from local faith organisations and their volunteers we were able to provide this.
- 2.3 Each year we were able to enhance our offer as our partnership grew. In 2019 the partnership was so strong that we supported the faith group to apply for some government monies to provide a funded post to work between the council and the church over the full winter period. For the first time, with some contribution funding from ourselves the partnership was able to offer a full winter provision. This meant that the bedding down of individuals took place from November to March without the need to consider the overnight temperatures and for the first time was able to accommodate those at risk of rough sleeping as well as known rough sleepers.
- 2.4 By the time the provision closed in March 2020 the services had dealt with over 60 individuals which was a much higher number than expected and certainly higher than any of our street counts and monitoring had indicated. When reviews of the case data began it became apparent that the service had been used by many individuals who were in the group of 'at risk of homelessness'. We found that many of the group had somewhere to stay the majority of the time, which was why they didn't show up on our street figures but periodically they would leave the addresses to allow the household some time on their own and being able to come to the winter provision meant they didn't sleep on the streets for the period they chose to stay. We also found that many of these displaced individuals were working and yet still could not access housing for themselves.
- 2.5 As we do every year in late spring/early summer whilst carrying out this analysis we began to think about what our winter offer might look like in 2020 amidst a pandemic. As it turned out the government provided local housing authorities with monies to ensure that every person was brought in during the pandemic and therefore the council did not need to provide its winter provision as it had done in previous years.

- 2.6 We did however maintain our relationship with the faith and charity groups during this time as they, in line with government and public health guidance still offered hot food to individuals through the winter period. This connection they have with rough sleepers allows us to trace more individuals and ensure they were accommodated.
- 2.7 The pandemic has changed significantly what response this council has or will be providing in 2021. We have had to wait for government guidance on what provisions are considered safe and appropriate and whilst in previous years we have been able to plan for months in advance this year everything changed in October and so we have had to redesign and rethink our offer.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 In retaining our connections with our partnership (faith and charity groups) we will be offering a 'lay-down' provision under the umbrella of SWEP plus. Many meetings have taken place with ourselves, our faith partners and public health to ensure what we are offering not only meets the needs of the individual but also provides as much safety and reassurance as we can for the volunteers, without whom none of this would be possible.
- 3.2 SWEP plus will mean that the provision will be available to those who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping when the overnight temperature is zero or below for three consecutive nights. The team are monitoring the Met Office 5 day forecast on a daily basis to ensure that we are aware of any upcoming cold snaps and can notify our volunteer partners as soon as possible about any standing up of the service. The "plus" element of our provision will also consider activating the service if we have a number of days with extreme weather, when the actual temperature is above zero but may still have substantial impact on the individual i.e. it may have snowed or we may have had heavy, persistent rain for 3 or more days.
- 3.3 Our faith partner is also running their hot meals service again this year. Details are that they will operate 1 ½ hours per day between 7pm and 8.30pm and a hot meal, laundry, new clothing and a packed breakfast will be made available to those who do not then use the sleeping arrangements. Those who stay overnight will be provided with a hot breakfast and possibly a pack lunch (donations allowing).
- 3.4 The drop in will be open on 22 November 2021 and close the 2nd week in March 2022 and the SWEP offer will be available from 29 November 2021 unless we have a severe weather episode between now and then.
- 3.5 Members should also be aware that all known entrenched rough sleepers who have wanted to work with the team have been accommodated by housing options into our Northgate provision ahead of the winter period so we will continue to work closely with our Framework Street Outreach to manage any new rough sleeping.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 4.1 No equalities implications have been identified from the Equalities Impact Assessment carried out which takes into account the specific needs of persons with protected

characteristics to ensure the Council's responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 have been fully considered and met.

4.2 As we have accommodated all of our existing known rough sleepers we are not expecting that the change to service provision will have any significant impact on any new rough sleepers and there are sufficient referral mechanisms in place to minimise any impact for someone not currently accommodated.

5.0 Digital Implications

5.1 There are no digital implications arising from this report.

6.0 Financial Implications FIN21-22/4408

6.1 There are no additional financial implications resulting from the provision of the service described above. Funding to assist the service provision is budgeted for annually.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 The Winter Provision supports the following objective:

- i. Improve the health and wellbeing of local residents, with a particular focus on narrowing the gap in healthy life expectancy and other health outcomes
- ii. Reduce levels of deprivation in target areas and remove barriers to social mobility across the district

8. RECOMMENDATION(S):

8.1 a) **that member's note the content of the report.**

Reason for Recommendation(s)

Background Papers

The details of any background papers you have used in writing the report (note these would then become public documents available for inspection) or if none used write "Nil".

For further information please contact Maria Cook on Ext 5456.

Suzanne Shead
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