

Night Stop Rough Sleeper Initiative

Summary

A bid made to the government was successful in attracting £90,600 of funding to support setting up an emergency accommodation scheme. The scheme is aimed at stopping people moving to and staying on the streets. The aim is to provide stop gap accommodation to allow for accommodation needs to be assessed and support needs.

It is proposed that a property be provided by the Council for a Night Stop scheme, to be run by a voluntary sector partner.

Portfolio - Support and Safeguarding

Date Portfolio Holder consulted – 1 October 2020

Wards Affected

ALL

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that

- (i) the Night Stop project be supported;
- (ii) the Night Stop accommodation be provided through re-provisioning of improved accommodation for the Hope Hub; and
- (iii) the final costs and specification for the project be brought to future meetings of the Property Investment Working Group and the Executive for agreement.

1. Resource Implications

- 1.1 The scheme is to be supported by capital contributions from the Council to acquire a property for the Night Stop. The contributions are from affordable housing contributions from developers which can only be used to provide accommodation.
- 1.2 A bid was made to the government to support the costs of developing a Night Stop initiative to support single homeless people and rough sleepers. The bid to the government assumed that the accommodation provision would be managed by a voluntary organisation or other recognised provider with no revenue funding from the Council.
- 1.3 Capital funding is available from existing Council reserves once the recommendations contained in the report are approved. A business case for the Night Stop will also need to be prepared at an early stage of the project. It should be noted that if this scheme as proposed goes

ahead the Council may need to reconsider the issue of ongoing revenue costs in future years.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The bid for the initiative predates the Covid19 outbreak but supports the government's ambition to see Rough Sleeping halved by 2022 and ended by 2027. The causes of rough sleeping are many including substance abuse, breakdown of family life and debt. Homeless people and rough sleepers are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.
- 2.2 In 2019 the annual count of numbers sleeping rough in the Borough rose to from 6 in 2018 to 12 in 2019. This trend reflected the national increase in homelessness and rough sleeping. As at September 2020 there are believed to be 5 people sleeping rough of whom 3 did not seek accommodation during Covid19. There are 13 people on the housing register with no fixed abode and 11 in temporary accommodation who would otherwise be homeless. There will be others that are not known to the Council.
- 2.3 In the period 23rd March to 1st June 2020 the Council accommodated 23 individuals in response to the call to house rough sleepers. A mix of bed and breakfast accommodation, serviced apartments and lodgings secured by the Hope Hub were used. At the end of July five of those housed due to Covid19 remained in temporary accommodation. By end of July 2020 the cost to the Council of housing rough sleepers under Covid 19 was £144,158.99. All of these individuals have now been offered permanent accommodation or have moved on.
- 2.4 For those approaching the Council in an emergency there is often no housing option and no legal duty on the Council to accommodate. This means that while they are provided with advice and assistance to help find a home they are not actually provided with accommodation

3. Options

- 3.1 The options for the Executive are to :
 - (i) Agree to support the Night Stop project
 - (ii) Not to Agree to support the Night Stop
 - (iii) To agree the provision of the Night Stop accommodation through improved accommodation for the Hope Hub
 - (iv) To agree the provision of the Night Stop accommodation through improved re-provisioning of accommodation for the Hope Hub
- 3.2 The Executive is asked to agree the Night Stop project including the provision of the Night Stop with improved accommodation for the Hope Hub

4. Proposals

- 4.1 The proposal is to use money in reserves for affordable housing for the provision of accommodation for the Night Stop. The money is the residual of developer contributions for affordable housing provision after the Connaught Court project has been paid for. The Night Stop project will not be run by the Council and will be managed by a voluntary sector provider, in this instance The Hope Hub. The project will need 24 hour staffing and it is estimated that at least 2.5 staff will be needed.
- 4.2 The final costs and specification for the property will need to be approved by the Property and Investment Working Group and the Executive.
- 4.3 The Council will draw up a service level agreement with the Hope Hub setting out the requirements that the scheme must meet. This will include referrals to come through the local authority for those to whom a duty may be owed under the Homelessness Reduction Act and who have a local connection. The scheme is not a substitute for temporary accommodation and will not be suitable for those who for example are fleeing domestic violence to whom a clear homelessness duty is owed.
- 4.4 The Council will not commit to provide any ongoing revenue funding at this time and the scheme should be self-financing. The Hope Hub will be able to draw down on Universal Credit payments and this provide the necessary funding. For this reason if the scheme attracts those ineligible for this or other public funding, other funding will need to be attracted.
- 4.5 There may be a number of options for provision of the Night Stop accommodation and options considered included: stand-alone modular units, re-provisioning and improvement of the modular accommodation currently occupied by the Hope Hub, acquisition and conversion of a residential property and acquisition and conversion of a commercial property.
- 4.6 Officers have been unable to identify a site immediately available for provision of stand-alone modular units. To date no suitable commercial or residential properties have been identified for acquisition. It is therefore suggested that the preferred approach to be explored is the re-provisioning of the portacabin accommodation occupied by the Hope Hub to include short term accommodation for emergencies.
- 4.7 This option has the advantage of not needing property acquisition and is on land within the control of the Council. Furthermore the Hope Hub accommodation is ageing and has some structural issues. The new accommodation will need planning permission and a contracts will need to be let for preparatory groundworks and the acquisition and construction of the portacabin. The potential for re-use of the existing portacabin will also be looked at as part of this project.

5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 In the 12 months up to 11th September 2020 the Case Officers in the Housing Solutions Team dealt with 496 cases where a household needed assistance because they were legally homeless, threatened with homelessness or had a housing issue that needed advice and assistance to stop it becoming a crisis situation. 87 of these households went on to be owed a Prevention Duty as they were threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days. Of these 67 had their homelessness prevented by the Team's work. 117 households went on to have a Relief Duty, in that they became physically homeless. Of these 30 had their homelessness relieved through the provision of accommodation and a further 55 were provided with temporary accommodation until such time as settled housing can be found for them.

6. Corporate Objectives And Key Priorities

- 6.1 This project supports the objective to build and encourage communities where people can live happily and healthily. In particular, it addresses housing needs within the community.

7. Policy Framework

- 7.1 Policy CP6 of the adopted Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document December 2012 advises that the Borough Council will promote a range of housing types and tenures which reflect the demand for market housing and need for affordable housing, including accommodation for specialised needs.

8. Legal Issues

- 8.1 Any legal issues arising, in particular, for the Night Stop provider will be addressed through a Service Level Agreement.

9. Governance Issues

- 9.1 As above.

10. Risk Management

- 10.1 This will be addressed through the SLA with the provider.

11. Officer Comments

- 11.1 The Housing Services Team has been successful over a number of years in securing additional government support for homelessness prevention and relief work (in 20019/20 this totalled £325,939 and in 2020/21 £319,167). This funding is used to both assist individual households to avoid or resolve their homelessness (e.g. through

upfront costs to secure alternative accommodation) and for project work (e.g. the scoping work and initial funding that led to the setup of the Hope Hub). This additional funding means the Housing Service has been able to be proactive in it's work to prevent and relive homelessness without the need for growth in core budgets.

- 11.2 The funding streams are awarded annually, are often only announced at the beginning of the financial year and are not guaranteed. This makes it difficult for officers to plan longer term work and it also means longer term revenue commitments to both internally and externally delivered projects is not possible.
- 11.3 The Housing Service has taken to the opportunity to access external funding to enhance it's offer to residents at risk of homelessness in 2020:
- 11.4 Using MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative funding and developer contributions the Council has delivered a single homeless persons accommodation scheme. This scheme offers those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness accommodation and support for up to two years in order that they can then move to independence in the community. This provides one of the options for move on from Night Stop; and,
- 11.5 Using Surrey County Council Grant a new Floating Housing Support Service has been set up. This service has a dual function to both support people in their current home, including those who are at risk of homelessness, and to help resettled residents who have been homeless to provide the right support at the beginning of their tenancies to give them the best chance to make it successful.

Annexes	Annex 1 Pathways for single homeless people
Background Papers	None
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Single Homeless Pathway

