

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

12 November 2019

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 ROUGH SLEEPER UPDATE

A report was brought to the Communities and Housing Advisory Board in February 2019 updating Members on the annual Rough Sleeper Estimate carried out in November 2018 and the work that the Council was completing as a result of the increase seen in numbers rough sleeping in the district. This report is to update Members on the work that has been ongoing since the previous report. The current workstreams specific to working with Rough Sleepers have been funded via bids to central government and as such the work within this report has no direct financial implication but does demonstrate the value of an approach that reduces rough sleeping to mitigate the financial implications of those cases to the Council.

- 1.1** As set out in the February 2019 report, each year the Council is required to complete an annual estimate of the Rough Sleepers in its district. This is a snapshot estimate based on a typical night in October or November and is verified by Homeless Link prior to submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This “snapshot” then forms the annual figure which is published by Government in January of the estimated numbers Rough Sleeping nationally.
- 1.1.1** In 2018 the Council completed this snapshot on 21 November and returned a figure of 12 to MHCLG which was an increase from 8 in 2017 (an increase for the district of 50%). This year we will hold our estimate on the night of the 13 November into the morning of the 14 November 2019.
- 1.1.2** Following this the Council brought a report to the Communities and Housing Advisory Board in February 2019 updating them of this increase in numbers rough sleeping and setting out a number of workstreams related to this. These were to:
- agree the Rough Sleeper Protocol;
 - agree a revised Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which allowed the Council to take a more flexible approach to the activation of SWEP;

- agree to the feasibility of a Night Shelter being considered; and
 - endorse the submission of applications for funding to support the Council's work relating to the housing of those Rough Sleeping.
- 1.1.3 Since this report there has been significant work relating to rough sleepers and developing the Council's approach to this issue.
- 1.1.4 The Council was successful in its bid for funding and, although the amount was revised, was awarded £100k in Rough Sleeping Initiative Funding from MHCLG. This was for a Housing First Pilot project to deliver three units of accommodation working in partnership with Clarion Housing, Look Ahead and Porchlight.
- 1.1.5 We also worked in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Look Ahead and Porchlight and submitted a successful bid for £150k to MHCLG for Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding. This was for 15 units of supported lettings and 2 Rough Sleeping Navigators to work with the most complex rough sleepers across the three districts.
- 1.1.6 Whilst the Council was successful in securing the funding it has however taken time to mobilise these projects. This is due to the short term nature of the funding, initially only for 1 year and exacerbated by many local authorities receiving funding for similar projects. This has resulted in difficulties in recruiting for these posts. However we now have in post a Housing First Support Worker, and more recently Look Ahead have managed to recruit one Supported Lettings Worker who is currently going through their induction and Porchlight have recruited the 2 Navigators, who are also being put through their induction.
- 1.1.7 Work has now begun on moving those who are currently Rough Sleeping into accommodation via these projects. We have two applicants who have been assessed for Housing First and Clarion are seeking suitable properties for those, and we have accommodated one Rough Sleeper in a Clarion property and he is receiving support from the Rapid Rehousing Pathway Supported Lettings Worker - A case study attached at **Annex 1** for information.
- 1.1.8 To further support this work and also in response to the visibility of Rough Sleeping in Tonbridge, Housing set up and leads on a Rough Sleeper Task and Finish Group. This was initiated to focus specifically on individual rough sleepers. An action plan is produced at each meeting with key partners taking away actions to complete before the next meeting.
- 1.1.9 The Group was initially set up for a period of three months to address the ongoing issues, but has been so successful that it has been agreed by partners that this will continue indefinitely. It will also be used as the group who will coordinate the intelligence for Tonbridge and Malling's return to MHCLG for its Rough Sleeper Estimate for 2019. This group has also committed its support for the Rough Sleeper Protocol.

- 1.1.10 More recently a letter has been sent to all Chief Executives advising that there was a cold weather fund that all authorities are able to submit a bid for money from. The amount that could be bid for by each authority was determined by the numbers of Rough Sleepers returned in the 2018 count. As Tonbridge and Malling returned a figure of 12 the bid could be for up to £50k. At the time of writing this bid had been submitted in the previous week and was submitted on the basis that this could support the ongoing work of the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway by moving those who are Rough Sleeping from the street and allowing the support workers to work with them and find sustainable accommodation options with support for move on.
- 1.1.11 If successful this will be an addition to SWEP, which runs from 01 October to 31 March each year and this will be activated if the temperature drops below zero degrees for one night or more between now and March 2020. However, the more flexible approach to SWEP agreed by the Communities and Housing Advisory Board allowed us to activate SWEP during the very hot period we had in the summer and we accommodated one Rough Sleeper through this period. We also worked with Porchlight to ensure that any who chose not to be accommodated had access to water and suncream to protect them.
- 1.1.12 An action from the last report was to explore the feasibility of a night shelter. A number of meetings have been held in recent months with the Chair of the Night Shelter in Tunbridge Wells alongside other key faith groups, and organisation such as Porchlight to explore if this may be an option to support those rough sleeping. Given the level of resource currently being targeted at those Rough Sleeping combined with Tunbridge Wells announcing that they would not be opening their winter night shelter this year, the conclusion was reached that whilst it was good to develop the relationships with faith groups, due to the level of resource that there is unlikely to be the demand for a night shelter in Tonbridge.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced the requirement for housing authorities to take a preventative approach to homelessness and this was further strengthened with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act which has placed new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness on Councils. Therefore this work ensures that the Council is delivering against its statutory functions.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 A report completed for Government to support its rough sleeping strategy suggests that a rough sleeper can cost the public purse anything between £14,300 and £21,200 per person per year compared to the average cost of public services provided to an average adult which is estimated to be £4,600. The estimated cost of rough sleeping is between £7,100 and £15,200 per person per year. Therefore working to remove rough sleepers from the streets or preventing them from entering rough sleeping is more cost effective to the Council and other

services than dealing with them once on the street and will assist in the reduction of costs to the Council.

- 1.3.2 The successful bids have generated £250k for the Council to work with key partners and deliver key interventions for those rough sleeping and therefore meet it statutory relief of homelessness duties.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 Risk associated with not addressing rough sleeping relate to the Council failing to meet its statutory duties to those who are homeless and sleeping rough on the streets.

Background papers:

Nil

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