

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING AND HOMES O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1400 hours on Tuesday 8 November 2016, Committee Room 2

Present:

Councillor Victoria Quinn

Councillors Andy Cartwright, Matthew Gregson, Des Hughes, Mahmood Hussain, Mary Locke, Gary Sambrook, Sybil Spence and Margaret Waddington

Also Present:

Hyacinth Blackburn, Housing Service Director, YMCA Birmingham

Jim Crawshaw, Head of Housing Options

Edward Dixon, Service Manager, Birmingham Homelessness Services, Salvation Army

Cath Gilliver, Chief Executive, SIFA Fireside

Alana Gooden, Network Co-ordinator, No Wrong Door Network

Matt Green, Director of Skylight Birmingham and Coventry, Crisis

John Hardy, Commissioning Manager – Prevention, Commissioning Centre of Excellence

Pam Higginson, Have a Heart Help the Homeless

Vicky Hines, Shelter Hub Manager, Shelter

Fuad Mahamed, Chief Executive Officer, Ashley Community Housing

Shirley Mallon, Secretary, Birmingham Christmas Shelter

Amanda Nicklin, Homeless Services Centre Manager, Midland Heart

Jayne Power, Research & Policy Officer, Scrutiny Office

Petra Salva, Director of Outreach Services, St Mungo's

Yassar Taj, As Suffa

Benita Wishart, Overview & Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Office

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Gurdial Singh Atwal, Roger Harmer and Ron Storer.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gary Sambrook declared that he is a Trustee of the Birmingham YMCA.

4. ACTION NOTES – 11 OCTOBER 2016

(See document No 1)

The following matters were raised regarding the Gateway Service:

- The Chair made reference to the Decision Note issued by the Acting City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer;
- The consultation meeting with providers arranged for 17th October had subsequently been cancelled and Members had been notified;
- The officer decision requested at the 11th October meeting had not yet been received;
- The Chair drew Members' attention to a pack of information she had obtained relating to the Gateway launch event and undertook to circulate an electronic copy to Members;

The following matters were raised with regard to the transfer of homelessness services from People to Place Directorate:

- Councillor Gary Sambrook referred to Members having been informed at the last meeting that the transfer took place on 3rd October, however the decision was not formally made by Cabinet until 18th October. Councillor Sambrook advised Members that the Deputy Leader had said he would report back either directly to Councillor Sambrook or to the Committee on this matter. At the time of the meeting neither Councillor Sambrook nor the Chair had heard back from the Deputy Leader.
- The Chair referred to the request she had made for clarification on which particular parts had moved where and the Acting Strategic Director of Place had responded that the Supporting People aspect of Housing remains in People Directorate, as does the Commissioning Centre of Excellence.

RESOLVED:-

To note the action notes and matters arising.

5. EVIDENCE GATHERING FOR TACKLING ROUGH SLEEPING

(See document No 2)

The Chair drew Members' and attendees' attention to the background information pack, with particular reference to the slides indicating an increase in the number of rough sleepers in the city (an 80% rise from 20 in 2014 to 36 in 2015, and a 350% rise since 2012) and the challenge in Birmingham to reverse this trend.

John Hardy, Commissioning Manager – Prevention, Commissioning Centre of Excellence, gave a brief introduction to the background and the anticipated outcomes from the session and witnesses were then invited around the table to contribute to the discussion.

During the course of the discussion, and in response to questions from Members, the following were among the points raised and key themes identified:

- Rough sleeping numbers have been rapidly rising over the last few years and it is anticipated that they will rise again this year;
- The other Core Cities are also seeing huge increases with similar issues and some shared learning around approaches to tackling rough sleeping could prove useful;
- The figures are obtained from the annual count with Local Authorities are required to undertake by DCLG and DCLG sets the definition of who is to be included in the count;
- It is difficult to get a full picture because people are so transitory and the count is carried out in the winter when less people will be sleeping rough. BCC is currently looking at whether we do a quarterly count;
- It was noted that there are a lot of organisations and volunteers providing services to rough sleepers but concern was expressed about the lack of co-ordination of these services. Reference was made to the accreditation scheme launched last year and the fact that bureaucracy had prevented the scheme from achieving its aims. It was, however, acknowledged that there has to be a certain amount of bureaucracy around safeguarding issues;
- One of the things that needs to be explored is the issue of getting people into accommodation. There are some individuals who are not in accommodation and are not presenting. Some people will refuse the offer of support and some do not want to go into shared hostels, but there is an affordability issue here;
- The Midland Heart Outreach Service approaches every person they believe is sleeping rough. They are aware of issues such as substance misuse and mental health and will repeat their offer multiple times if necessary. There are different reasons why individuals do not engage – many have been through complex traumas and can be re-traumatised by repeating their story many times;
- It is important to try to look at the circumstances which have led to an individual sleeping rough so that we can try to prevent people from becoming homeless by intervening at an earlier stage;
- Co-ordination of all the agencies involved is key and it is important to know who is coming onto the street – to know them by name and understand what support they need so that systems can be put in place;
- Officers are keen to explore that we have a supported housing solution in Birmingham and acknowledged that one thing we do not have in Birmingham is an emergency night shelter.

- Reference was made to the No Second Night Out project in London and the fact that it is widely recognised that assessment has to be taken away from the street and there needs to be a clear pathway;
- The Housing First model – where an individual is given accommodation and then receives the wraparound support which is needed – was acknowledged as having huge successes but is very expensive. However, there are variations of the model if the pure model cannot be used and funding opportunities would need to be explored;
- The use of Streetlink, a national reporting line set up with Homeless Link, was discussed. This is a means for members of the public to report rough sleepers and in Birmingham Midland Heart receive referrals from Streetlink. This has proved effective outside of the city centre but in the city centre Midland Heart are usually aware of rough sleepers as they are out there every day;
- Midland Heart reported that they have seen an increase in female rough sleepers – four years ago they had 27 contacts with females, increasing to 137 in the first 10 months of this year. There are more Eastern Europeans on the streets and also couples are increasing, which can be a barrier to housing as they would not want to be split up. Similarly, for individuals with dogs, and there is a need to be more creative about finding accommodation in these situations;
- One of the key issues is flexibility of commissioning to respond to changing needs;
- The City Council picks up intelligence from partner organisations such as SIFA, Shelter and BVSC, but there is a need to explore which other agencies have information and how that information can be drawn together;
- Members heard about the Big Lottery funded Birmingham Changing Futures Together project, which caters for people with multiple and complex needs. It is an 8 year project and it is currently 18 months in.;
- There is a need to have a map of services in the city - what agencies we have, what services they offer, how many bed spaces, etc – and it was suggested that a template be sent out to partners to begin this mapping;
- Members were advised that we have 628 single homeless bed spaces across three providers – Midland Heart, Salvation Army and Trident Reach, but it was stressed that these are for single homeless need, not just for rough sleepers, although a lot of the immediate access beds will be used for rough sleepers;
- Members heard about the Birmingham Christmas Shelter, which operates during Christmas week and which sees a lot of rough sleepers coming in from the suburbs;
- Midland Heart told Members that there is a lot of work going on that people are probably not aware of and they have identified several examples of partnership work, for example joint outreach.

- DCLG have announced a rough sleeping bidding round for which the deadline is 28th November.

The Chair advised Members and attendees that:

- a Be Heard consultation was being launched to gather further information and a report would be taken to City Council in January;
- the annual rough sleeper count would take place on 10th November and at least 12 Councillors were taking part.

The Vice Chair stressed the importance of agencies and the City Council working effectively together and, on behalf of the Committee, thanked all those agencies who had contributed to the session. He also asked for the Committee's thanks to all the agencies working hard on behalf of the citizens of Birmingham to be placed on record.

6. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2016-17

(See document No 3)

The Work Programme was noted.

8. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

10. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

The meeting ended at 1725 hours.