



## **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **SCRUTINY PANEL 3 – HOMELESSNESS**

**26 JANUARY 2017**

#### **BRIEFING NOTE: REPORT BACK FROM VARIOUS SITE VISITS**

##### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, Scrutiny Panel 3 (Homelessness) agreed that it would undertake a variety of a site visits to inform its evidence base.
- 1.2 Site visits were scheduled :
  - Two representatives of the Panel to visit the Hope Centre based at Oasis House
  - Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel to visit a variety of temporary accommodation around the borough

##### **2 HOPE CENTRE**

- 2.1 Councillors Zoe Smith and Janice Duffy visited the Hope Centre on Monday, 12 December 2016 between the hours of 10am and 11:30am. Phil Harris, Head of Housing and Wellbeing and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer also attended.
- 2.2 Councillors visited the day centre and observed a number of clients eating breakfast. Porridge is provided free of charge, as are cups of tea. Should individuals require a cooked breakfast a small charge is made. There is also a small charge for cereals.
- 2.3 Lunch is also provided at the centre. There is a small cost for the lunch. Individuals can also use the showers.
- 2.4 Clothes are donated and individuals can buy items for a small cost. There is a real need for underwear.
- 2.5 Various groups and sessions are put on during the day such as foot care, cookery, art, life skills, sport, Internet café (free of charge for 90 minutes use).

- 2.6 Councillors also visited Hope Enterprises. Hope Enterprises is a social enterprise and community interest company set up by Northampton's Hope Centre, a charity, with more than 40 years' experience working with the town's homeless, poor and excluded.
- 2.7 Through giving training and work, at a fair rate of pay, in a supportive environment, we help people to re-join society and stand on their own two feet
- 2.8 Hope Enterprises has three elements: -
- Hope Catering - contract catering and buffets for business meetings, parties and events.
- Hope Tools - a recycling and training social enterprise, refurbishing second-hand garden tools
- Hope PAT Testing - routine safety checking for all electrical appliances
- 2.9 Councillors had sight of the refurbished tools that had been refurbished by Hope Tools. Staff work alongside Hope Centre clients to recycle and refurbish tools and build products for gardens.

### **3 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

- 3.1 On Wednesday, 14 December 2016 between the hours of 2pm and 4pm, Councillors Zoe Smith and Rufia Ashraf, along with Bev Brown, Temporary Accommodation Officer, Tiffany Whyte, Senior Homelessness Officer and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer visited a variety of temporary accommodation.
- 3.2 The site visit started with a visit to one of the units at County Chambers in the town centre. Councillors met with a woman who was temporarily living here. The flat was airy and spacious. It had one bedroom with two single beds and bed settee in the lounge area. She had been at the flat since August 2016 and had recently bid successfully for a property. Councillors were informed that on one occasion the woman had observed a rough sleeper sleeping inside the doorway of the shop next to the temporary accommodation. The Management Team at County Chambers are aware and are monitoring the situation, individuals temporarily residing at County Chambers have been advised to ensure that the main access door is kept closed.
- 3.3 The site visit then went to an 8 bed and breakfast property in Abington. The proprietor will only take couples and families. The property is spacious. Three of the rooms have the provision of an en-suite and there

are also two shared bathrooms and a kitchen that can be used. Councillors were please to note that free wi-fi is provided.

- 3.4 The site visit went on to a recently acquired temporary accommodation flat in Blackthorn. It had been recently decorated and furnished. The flat has one bedroom, with two single beds. The lounge area has a sofa along with a dining table and chairs. The kitchen had been recently refurbished which consisted of Electric Cooker, Washing Machine and Fridge, the bathroom consisted of a bath, over bath shower, toilet and wash basin.
- 3.5 The site visit concluded by driving to another location observing a couple of houses that are designated temporary accommodation, from the outside.

#### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 That the findings from the various site visits informs the evidence base of the Scrutiny Review – Homelessness.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Zoe Smith, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3 - Homelessness

15 December 2016