

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

HOMELESSNESS (ROUGH SLEEPERS) TASK AND FINISH GROUP

2 November, 2006

PRESENT

Councillor Marion Allen (Chair)
Councillor Jamie Lane
Councillor Margaret Pritchard

Fran Rodgers Corporate Manager
Madeline Spencer Housing Services Manager
Tracy Tiff Scrutiny Officer
Margaret Martin Consortium

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Linda Brede, Housing Needs Team Leader.

2 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE HOMELESSNESS (ROUGH SLEEPERS) TASK AND FINISH GROUP

It was proposed by Councillor Pritchard, seconded by Councillor Lane, that Councillor Allen be elected Chair of this Task and Finish Group.

It was:-

AGREED: That Councillor Marion Allen be elected Chair of the Homelessness (Rough Sleepers) Task and Finish Group.

3 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Homelessness (Rough Sleepers) Task and Finish Group.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Pritchard declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 4 – Scoping Exercise, in her capacity as a Trustee of the Hope Centre.

4 SCOPING EXERCISE

The Task and Finish Group scoped its review (copy attached at Annex I to the minutes).

In scoping the review, the Group heard and commented:-

- When the Annual Count is carried out, the definition of rough sleepers is rather restrictive, such as evidence of people laying down during night time hours.

- Between 85 and 90% of rough sleepers are young people under the age of 25
- The Council did have a Rough Sleepers Strategy but this has now been superseded by the CAN Homeless Action Programme
- The Group should accompany the quarterly rough sleepers count during November/December 2006 and evidence of rough sleepers should be investigated around the town centre, churchyards and various parks.
- Individuals sleeping on buses are not included in the rough sleeping count figures
- Sheila George and colleagues operate from the Cathedral at Barrack Lane and take soup to the homeless on Monday evenings. The Group could ask whether it could accompany Ms George on a Monday evening visit.
- NBC has an agreement with CAN
- CAN has access to individuals who are destitute due to drugs and alcohol issues
- CAN's performance should be monitored, i.e., is the Council getting value for money, how does CAN consult.
- Regarding the management of rough sleepers, there is an element of enforcement such as aggressive behaviour (anti social behaviour and community safety). Solutions such as the siting of collection boxes could be investigated.
- The Group requested Information about the number of spaces at the Bail Hostel.
- Sometimes there are risks and vulnerabilities regarding certain individuals who have been discharged from prison.
- Desktop research with other Local Authorities should particularly include:
 - Cost implications
 - Amount of rough sleepers at the counts
 - National picture regarding rough sleepers
- Members of the Group would attend the Rough Sleepers Sub Group and report back to this Task and Finish Group: -
 - Councillor Pritchard - 6 December meeting
 - Councillor Lane 31 January 2007 meeting
 - Councillor Allen 6 December or 3 January meeting
- Linda Brede would provide supporting information to the Group on the above meetings
- Northampton Borough Council's percentage of affordable housing on new development is 35%.
- Councillor Lane suggested that he could 'sleep rough' one evening and report his findings back to the Task and Finish Group

- There is a need to speak to service users. A leaflet will be produced for the Group to distribute to rough sleepers at the Quarterly Count inviting them to a drop in session during the hours of 12noon and 2pm. A free lunch would be provided. A town centre venue and date to be agreed.
- An email should be sent from the Chair to Chris Porter, Neighbourhood Warden Team Leader, asking whether the Neighbourhood Wardens are aware of any 'hot spots' where rough sleepers are often found.
- The Chair will write to the Portfolio Holder (Residential Operations) informing him that this review is taking place, giving a brief resume of the scope of the review.
- The Chair will write to all potential witnesses inviting them to attend a meeting of this Task and Finish Group. Dates of meetings will be listed and potential witnesses will be asked to indicate two preferred dates.
- A copy of the draft scoping document will be sent to the co-optees asking for comment. The scope will then be finalised and agreed at the next meeting.
- Draft questions to be put to the witnesses would be emailed to the Group for comment. A copy of the questions will then be sent to the witnesses in advance of the meeting that they are able to attend. If they are not able to attend a written response could be provided.

Agreed that:

- (1) The draft scope of review would be sent to the Co-optees for comment. The scope will then be finalised and agreed at the next meeting.**
- (2) The Chair will write to the Portfolio Holder (Residential Operations) informing him that this review is taking place, giving a brief resume of the scope of the review.**
- (3) Draft questions to be put to the witnesses will be emailed to the Group for comment. A copy of the questions will then be sent to the witnesses in advance of the meeting that they are able to attend. If they are not able to attend a written response could be provided.**
- (4) An email to be sent from the Chair to Chris Porter, Neighbourhood Warden Team Leader, asking whether the Neighbourhood Wardens are aware of any 'hot spots' where rough sleepers are often found**
- (5) A draft leaflet/card to be produced and emailed to the Group for comment. A draft leaflet/card to be produced for the Group's comment and distribution to rough sleepers at the Quarterly Count inviting them to a drop in session during the hours of 12noon and 2pm. A free lunch would be provided. A town centre venue and date to be agreed.**
- (6) L Brede to provide information to the Group on the Rough Sleepers sub meetings, such as agendas and supporting paper.**

5 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The schedule of meetings was agreed:-

November 2006 to March 2007

2 November 2006 Scoping the review

November – December Visits:-
Quarterly rough sleepers count
Cathedral (Barrack Road) – Offering soup to Rough
Sleepers'

4 January 2007 Evidence Gathering
8 February Evidence Gathering
27 February Evidence Gathering
19 March Finalise Chair's report

Meetings to commence at 6.15pm

The meeting concluded at 18.40 hours

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

HOMELESSNESS (ROUGH SLEEPERS) TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

To further develop the multi agency approach to rough sleepers.

To view to reduce/eliminate rough sleeping in Northampton.

2. Outcomes Required

To develop an awareness and ownership of the issues of rough sleeping with all relevant partner agencies.

To agree a common definition of rough sleeping.

To understand the impact it has on policy and resources.

To recommend the development of a Rough Sleepers Strategy or Action Plan.

To agree the resources required and to assess value for money.

3. Information Required

- The relevant Council Strategies including affordable housing and the Homelessness Strategy
- The Council's Rough Sleepers' Strategy/Policy
- Best practice Strategies/Policies
- Ethnic origins and immigration status of rough sleepers
- Number of hostel spaces available
- Voluntary sector funding
- Details of the annual Rough Sleeping Count
- Details of the Local Area Agreement and the potential for addressing rough sleeping
- Help provided by local churches to rough sleepers

4. Format of Information

- Baseline Data
- Details of budget allocation
- Officer Reports/Presentations
- Rough Sleepers Quarterly Count

Cathedral (Barrack Road) – Offering soup to Rough Sleepers’

4 January 2007	Evidence Gathering
8 February	Evidence Gathering
27 February	Evidence Gathering
19 March	Finalise Chair’s report

8. Responsible Officers

Lead Officer	Fran Rodgers
Co-ordinator	Tracy Tiff

9. Resources and Budgets

M Spencer, Housing Services Manager, and L Brede, Housing Needs Team Leader, to provide support and advice.

10 Final report resented by:

Completed by 19 March 2007. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

11 Monitoring procedure:

Review the impact of the report after six months (September/October 2007)