

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ACTION PLAN: SCRUTINY PANEL - Homelessness (Pre-Decision Scrutiny)

Recommendations from Scrutiny Panel (Homelessness (Pre-Decision Scrutiny) completed in April 2017

Proposed dates for monitoring implementation of accepted recommendations

Report received by Cabinet	Response received by Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Monitoring activity	Monitoring complete
June 2017	November 2017	June 2018 and May 2019	

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Council undertakes a comprehensive review of homelessness in the borough and develops a new 5 year Homelessness Strategy that is designed to substantially reduce the number of households that become homeless and the number of homeless families that are living in temporary accommodation.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by:	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a comprehensive review of homelessness • Produce a 5 year, multi-agency homelessness strategy 	<p>Housing Strategy Officer</p> <p>Housing Strategy Officer</p>	<p>An additional Project Officer will be recruited on a fixed-term contract to support this work.</p>	<p>Review to be completed by November 2018</p> <p>Strategy to be produced by March 2019</p>	<p>This piece of work was initially put on hold to enable Officers to focus on the successful implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (which came into effect on 3 April 2018) and reducing the Council's use of Bed & Breakfast and out-of-borough temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Publication of the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018), together with the proposed restructure of the Housing Options & Advice Service, the development of a 14-point action plan for reducing the use and cost of temporary accommodation and the discussions that were taking place with SNC and DDC about the need to work together to produce a West Northamptonshire Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy subsequently delayed Northampton's homelessness review and the production of the new strategy.</p>

				<p>The Housing Strategy Officer and Head of Housing & Wellbeing are working with Senior Officers of SNC and DDC to pool the three councils' resources to carry out an evidence-based review of housing need and homelessness in West Northamptonshire with a view to producing a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and Housing Allocations Scheme for the Unitary Council in 2019/20.</p> <p>To assist this work, the Housing and Wellbeing Team will recruit a Homelessness Strategy Officer, for a fixed term, using funding from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.</p> <p>The Council is also working with the Hope Centre, Homeless Link and Northampton's Inter Faith Forum to organise a workshop (to review and refresh Northampton's rough sleepers strategy) in July 2019 and establish a multi-agency Single Homelessness Forum in September 2019.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 2: The Council establishes a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group to direct, co-ordinate and monitor the action that the Council and its partners take to tackle, prevent and reduce homelessness in the borough				
Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	February 2019	For the reasons described in the response to Recommendation 1, it is now proposed that a West Northamptonshire Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is produced with SNC, DDC and key stakeholders. An Implementation Group will be set up in Dec 2019.
RECOMMENDATION 3: The Council publishes an information leaflet, (electronic, paper base and in languages commonly known to be spoken by rough sleepers), for distribution to all Agencies, services and more widely available to members of the public, which sets out very clearly how its homelessness and housing advice services are organised – together with details of the services provided by other organisations and services – and how people can access them.				
Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write, design and publish an information leaflet 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	Business cards, together with leaflets in a variety of languages, have been produced to provide rough sleepers and members of the public with information about the Single Homelessness Service, Street Outreach Team, SWEP and the Nightshelter.

			<p>Information is also available on the Council's website.</p> <p>In July 2019, consultation starts on the proposed restructure of the Housing Options & Advice Service which, if implemented, will have a huge impact on the way in which the Council's homelessness and housing advice services are organised.</p> <p>These changes – together with the new services that the Government is funding in 2019/20 through its Rough Sleeping Initiative – will need to be reflected in any leaflets.</p> <p>It is now proposed that a suite of leaflets is produced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'local services' guide for single homeless people and childless couples (including rough sleepers) • A 'local services' guide for homeless families • A guide to the Council's homelessness and housing advice services (including how to access them and how they are organised) <p>The first leaflet will be produced in September 2019 and the other two will be produced in October 2019.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 4: A comprehensive review of rough sleeping services is carried out to ensure that all services are operating efficiently and effectively, and that there is no unnecessary duplication of effort between the Nightshelter, the Hope Centre, Oasis House, NAASH and other services.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the way in which rough sleeping services are operating 	Housing Options & Advice Manager and Housing Strategy Officer	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	<p>Significant changes have been made to way in which rough sleeping services have been delivered since the conclusion of the Overview & Scrutiny Review. The appointment of a Single Homelessness Adviser in May 2018 complemented the work of the Street Outreach Team and Nightshelter and made it even easier for rough sleepers to access help, advice and support.</p> <p>New assessment arrangements and the use of Personal Housing Plans (a statutory duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act) had a significant impact on the way in which rough sleeping services and the role of other support services.</p>

				<p>Although Midland Heart’s planned changes to Oasis House placed an additional strain on the relationship between the services (including the Council and the Hope Centre) that are based at Oasis House, the Council made a successful bid for £42k to run an all-weather Winter Shelter and expand its Street Outreach Team to deliver a 7-day-a-week service for 6½ weeks from 14 February – 31 March 2019.</p> <p>Two subsequent bids for funding resulted in Northampton being awarded another £480K to fund 11 rough sleeping posts in 2019/20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator • Two Street Outreach Workers • Mental Health Outreach Worker • Four Navigators • Housing Transitions Officer (Prisons & Approved Premises) • Two Tenancy Sustainment Officers
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			<p>The Council is currently working with the Hope Centre, Homeless Link and Northampton's Inter Faith Forum to organise a workshop in July 2019 (to review and refresh Northampton's rough sleepers strategy) and establish a multi-agency Single Homelessness Forum in September 2019.</p> <p>The review of rough sleeping services has been ongoing since the Scrutiny Review of 2017. It has been assisted by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The changes that have already been made in response to the Homelessness Reduction Act • The experience gained (and the intelligence gathered) during the 6½ weeks that the Council operated an all-winter Winter Shelter and provided a 7-day-a-week Street Outreach Service • The time and thought that has gone into the restructuring of the Housing Options & Advice Service and the job descriptions of the Officers and Managers who will be delivering the Single Homelessness Service.
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The services proposed (based on a review / evaluation of the services already in place and the type of services that are still needed) in the funding bids submitted to MHCLG. <p>Further improvements will be made to rough sleeping services as a result of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Housing Options & Advice restructure, including the creation of a Single Homelessness Pathway • Recruitment and deployment of the 11 Officers who will be funded by the Rough Sleepers Initiative in 2019/20 • The review of the rough sleepers strategy (July 2019) and the establishment of the Single Homelessness Forum (September 2019).
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RECOMMENDATION 5: A Homelessness Forum is established that engages with other statutory and non-statutory Agencies.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Homelessness Forum 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	September 2018	<p>Although it was originally proposed that the Homelessness Forum would be established in Autumn 2018, the Officer recruited to set up the Homelessness Forum and other initiatives did not perform well, so was released early.</p> <p>Unfortunately, other more urgent operational matters have needed to be attended to by the Council's Officers and Managers who would be expected to support and attend the Homelessness Forum.</p> <p>As explained in the responses to earlier Recommendations, it is proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Single Homelessness Forum is set up in September 2019 and meets quarterly

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Homelessness Forum (dealing with all homelessness issues <u>except</u> those relating to single homeless people and childless couples) is set up in November 2019 and meets quarterly
<p>RECOMMENDATION 6: The Council carries out an annual review of rough sleeping in the borough that goes beyond the limitations of the Statutory requirements, for example personalised Development Plans are produced for each rough sleeper and that these continue to be implemented even after they have moved into permanent housing.</p>				
Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an annual review of rough sleeping 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	December 2018	<p>The Council is currently working with the Hope Centre, Homeless Link and Northampton's Inter Faith Forum to establish a multi-agency Single Homelessness Forum in September 2019.</p> <p>Everyone is agreed that the priority is to achieve a consensus on the nature and extent of rough sleeping in the borough and to use the annual Rough Sleepers Count <u>and</u> SWEP, the Nightshelter and the Single Homelessness Forum to inform this assessment.</p>

				<p>Since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (which came into effect in April 2018), every rough sleeper who has engaged with the Council's Single Homelessness Adviser, Street Outreach Workers or Housing Options & Advice Team have been helped to develop a Personal Housing Plan which continues to be monitored and updated until the person is rehoused and it is handed on to their new landlord.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 7: There is active and meaningful involvement of individuals who have lived experience or service users with the development and delivery of services, and the implementation process.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users & individuals with lived experience will be routinely and meaningfully involved in shaping and delivering services 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	March 2019	<p>Nightshelter guests are already routinely involved in shaping services</p> <p>Individuals with lived experience will join the Single Homelessness Forum (planned for September 2019) and will be involved in West Northamptonshire's homelessness review and the development and implementation of its 5 year homelessness strategy.</p>

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Council considers its approach to assisting individuals with multiple and complex needs

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will review the way in which it (and other services) assists people who have multiple and complex needs 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	<p>This work is ongoing and will complement the work that is going on to tackle rough sleeping and determine how best to use the 'Housing First' model.</p> <p>The appointment of a Mental Health Outreach Worker (for 12 months, using funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative) in June 2019 will support our efforts to assist people who have multiple and complex needs. As the postholder will be seconded to the role from NHFT, they will strengthen the links between homelessness services and mental health services in the borough.</p> <p>The appointment of the four Navigators (for 12 months, using funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative) in 2019/20 will ensure that homeless people can be accompanied to appointments when this is necessary.</p>

				Lessons will continue to be learned from the discussions that take place at the Multiple & Complex Needs Task & Targeting Group.
RECOMMENDATION 9: The existing arrangements for meeting the health needs of homeless people (including rough sleepers) are reviewed and strengthened – informed by a Health Needs Audit - to ensure that rough sleepers and people who are living in temporary accommodation are not only aware of, but are also helped to connect with, local support services.				
Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and strengthen the arrangements for meeting the health needs of rough sleepers and people living in temporary accommodation 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	<p>This piece of work was delayed, due to the need to concentrate on other, more urgent operational matters. However, the Head of Housing has attended meetings with the Public Health Team to plan a 2019/20 health screening programme that is targeted at, and delivered to, homeless people.</p> <p>When the restructure of the Housing Options & Advice Team is implemented and the Temporary Accommodation Team is in place, homeless households will be provided (as a matter of routine) with information about local health and support services.</p>

				The appointment of the four Navigators (for 12 months, using funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative) in 2019/20 will ensure that homeless people can be accompanied to appointments when this is necessary.
RECOMMENDATION 10: Details of the medical advice and treatment available to people who are homeless and/or sleeping rough – at various locations, including Maple Access and Oasis House – are communicated to all organisations and services in order that they can be shared with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.				
Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the medical advice and treatment available will be collected and shared with all organisations and services 	Nightshelter Co-ordinator	To be achieved within existing resources	September 2018	<p>This information is already widely known by local services. However, it will be included in the leaflet referred to in the response to Recommendation 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'local services' guide for single homeless people and childless couples (including rough sleepers)

RECOMMENDATION 11: The Council develops an ambitious plan, using SMART outcomes, for minimising its use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and out-of-borough temporary accommodation

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An ambitious plan will be developed to minimise the Council's use of B&B and out-of-borough temporary accommodation 	Head of Housing & Wellbeing	To be achieved within existing resources	April 2018	This was completed in April 2018. Although the overall number of homeless households in temporary accommodation has continued to rise, the vast majority of homeless households continue to live in self-contained accommodation in the borough. Very few households containing a pregnancy or dependent child(ren) are placed in Bed & Breakfast.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The Council works imaginatively and collaboratively with Northamptonshire County Council, and other Agencies and organisations, to provide more support for homeless families in temporary accommodation and mitigating any adverse effects on the families' finances and the children's schooling and healthcare.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council works with the County Council to support homeless families in temporary accommodation 	Head of Housing & Wellbeing	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	The importance of this action has reduced, due to the sharp fall in the number of children placed in temporary accommodation outside of the borough. The proposed reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire offers an opportunity for improving services in the future.

RECOMMENDATION 13: All nightly-purchased temporary accommodation that is used by the Borough Council should provide free Wi-Fi facilities.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All B&Bs used by the Council will provide free Wi-Fi facilities 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	April 2018	This was completed in April 2018.

RECOMMENDATION 14: It is recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that when monitoring takes place, a previous service user is asked to attend the meeting to provide information.

	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A former service user will be asked to attend the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide information 	Head of Housing & Wellbeing	To be achieved with existing resources	June 2018	This occurred during the Scrutiny Review of Homelessness & Rough Sleeping in 2018/19.

Recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION 15: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Included onto the O&S Monitoring Work Programme 2017/2018	Added to the O&S Monitoring Work Programme - Overview and Scrutiny Committee	n/a	Monitoring to take place in June 2018 and May 2019	