

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: Monday, 1 March 2021

Report Title: Reducing Rough Sleeping

Report By: Andrew Palmer, Assistant Director Housing and Built Environment

Key Decision: Y

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

To update members on progress to reduce rough sleeping over the past year and plans to continue this work from April 2021.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To grant an exemption under rule 21c of the council's financial operating procedures to commission services for the Rough Sleeping Initiative in 2021/22**

Reasons for Recommendations

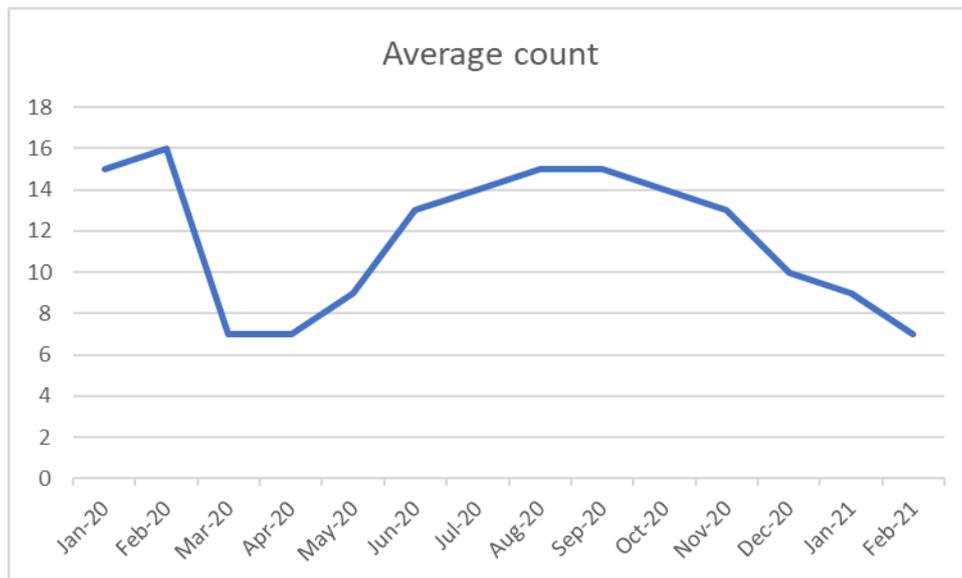
- The council is leading work with partners across East Sussex to reduce rough sleeping. A proposal is currently being developed to continue these services beyond March 2021, which will need to be mobilised at pace to avoid any gaps in provision.

Introduction

1. The council and our partners have a longstanding commitment to end rough sleeping. We have continued this work over the past 12 months, including responding positively to the Everyone In instruction in March 2020.
2. The council is offering temporary accommodation to rough sleepers and has been working with a range of partner services to provide holistic support including help to find a longer term home.

Number of people rough sleeping

3. The graph below shows the average number of people rough sleeping in Hastings each month over the past year:



4. The latest outreach count of rough sleepers was 7. There are currently 43 former rough sleepers living in discretionary temporary accommodation in Hastings.
5. During 2020, 30 former rough sleepers from Hastings have moved into longer term accommodation. This includes 7 into supported accommodation (longer term), 6 into social housing, 15 into the private rented sector and 2 into Housing First. This is positive progress, given the significant restrictions on lettings which have been in place for much of the year.

Next Steps Accommodation Programme

6. The council lead a joint bid in partnership with the housing authorities in East Sussex and secured £964,000 worth of short term revenue funding to minimise the number of former rough sleepers returning to the streets as lockdown measures were eased. The council has used this funding to continue the temporary accommodation placements we made during the Everyone In instruction, provide additional specialist temporary accommodation as an alternative to winter night shelters, and provide extra support to help people find a settled home. We have also been working with public health colleagues to provide additional mental health and substance dependency support for former rough sleepers.

7. We also secured funding of £1,855,000 (which includes £742,000 worth of match funding from the council) to create 10 new Housing First properties for former rough sleepers. The grant includes additional revenue funding to provide tenancy sustainment services for a 3 year-period. The council has completed the purchase of 3 units so far. However, due to the shortage of suitable accommodation for purchase and the additional restrictions that were introduced during lockdown at the end of the year, we are seeking to revise our delivery plans for the project with Homes England. Without such a revision it is unlikely that the council will be able to draw down and commit further capital funding for the project within the given timescales.
8. Over the current winter period, we have led work with our partners to secure funding from the Cold Weather Fund, Protect Programme, Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health to ensure we have capacity to continue to offer accommodation for rough sleepers and deliver support services safely during the pandemic. We have also taken the opportunity to pilot new approaches to providing move-on options for rough sleepers, including a private sector leasing scheme, which we can seek to expand in the coming months.
9. We have also been working closely with voluntary sector partners to adapt services over the winter. Example of this include the new weekend day centre which has been opened at the Seaview Centre and the food delivery service for former rough sleepers living in temporary accommodation, which is being provided by the Snowflake Night Shelter team.

Rough Sleeping Initiative – Year 4

10. Existing services commissioned through the Rough Sleeping Initiative are due to come to an end in March 2021. The process to bid for further funding has been delayed by the pandemic.
11. The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has confirmed that Rough Sleeping Initiative grants will continue in 2021/22. The grant funding will be for a fixed 12 month period and is likely to be at a similar level to 2020/21 (East Sussex received a grant of £1,584,000 last year). MHCLG has invited bids by the middle of March and work is underway with partners to review and develop our approach. To avoid gaps in provision, the first quarters worth of funding will be paid in advance, while our proposals for the rest of the year are finalised. We will also incorporate 12 months worth of funding from the Next Steps Accommodation Pathway Housing First project, within the Rough Sleeping Initiative service.
12. East Sussex Housing Officers Group has agreed to continue our approach to collaborative working across the county, with Hastings Borough Council as the lead authority for the project.
13. It is recommended that the council grant an exemption under rule 21c of its financial operating procedures, to enable the council to negotiate directly with providers to commission services. This is to avoid any potential gaps in provision as a result of delays to the application process.
14. Priorities for the next year will include:
 - Continuing a successful multi-disciplinary approach to reduce rough sleeping, working closely with health, mental health, substance dependency, social care, criminal justice and housing to provide holistic support to rough sleepers
 - Developing outreach and temporary accommodation options, to minimise the amount of time people spend rough sleeping

- Developing a range of move on options for rough sleepers, including bespoke solutions such as Housing First and improving access to the private rented sector
- We are using learning from the Rough Sleeping Initiative to develop our homelessness prevention services to help minimise the number of people at risk of rough sleeping in the future

15. We are also working with partners to explore how learning from our rough sleeper services can be applied to other areas of homelessness and services working with people facing multiple disadvantage.

Risks

16. *An increase in rough sleeping* – demand for all our homelessness service is expected to increase during the recovery period from coronavirus, in particular once the existing restrictions on evictions are lifted and the government’s job retention scheme comes to an end. It is important that the council continues to provide regular outreach services and a range of temporary accommodation options, to link people who are newly rough sleeping to advice and support as quickly as possible.
17. *Rising demand for temporary accommodation* – over the past 12 months we have increased the range of temporary accommodation options for rough sleepers, including accommodation with on-site support and self-contained units. It is important that the council maintains a supply of temporary accommodation for us to sustain low levels of rough sleeping.
18. *A lack of move on options* – we will be creating additional Housing First units through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, however, it is important that the council continues to explore all funding opportunities to increase the supply of move on accommodation for individuals with multiple and complex needs. We are also continuing to work with social housing providers to deliver additional Housing First units. Through the Protect Programme we have been piloting new approaches to improving access to the private rented sector and will seek to expand these in the year ahead.
19. *Short term funding* – short term grant funding creates challenges for the council and partners to develop a sustainable approach to ending rough sleeping. We will continue to lobby government for a multi-year funding settlement in the future. We are also sharing learning from our rough sleeper services with partners, to help design services for people with multiple and complex needs in the future.

Financial Implications

20. The council is continuing to lobby government to highlight the additional cost pressure of rough sleeper services, in particular the rising cost of temporary accommodation. MHCLG have indicated there may be some uplift in the grant to support these interventions, but this will need to be explored as part of the co-production exercise for the bid.

Timetable of Next Steps

21. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible

Submit application for rough sleeping initiative funding in 2021/22	Bid submitted	12 March 2021	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager
Rough Sleeping Initiative delivery	Contracts mobilised	1 April 2021	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager

Wards Affected

(All Wards);

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 35.9

Have you used relevant project tools?: Y

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Y
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	N
Risk Management	N
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	N
Economic/Financial Implications	Y
Human Rights Act	Y
Organisational Consequences	Y
Local People's Views	N
Anti-Poverty	Y
Legal	Y

Additional Information

Insert a list of appendices and/or additional documents. Report writers are encouraged to use links to existing information, rather than appending large documents.

Officer to Contact

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