

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 5 July 2021

**Report Title:** Homelessness Recovery Plan

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

  

**Key Decision:** Y

**Classification:** Open

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### **Purpose of Report**

To set out some of the new projects and services we have been developing to continue to improve the council's homelessness prevention services, during the recovery period from the pandemic.

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### **Recommendation(s)**

- 1. That the notice period for people to leave discretionary temporary accommodation placements is extended from 1 week to 3 weeks until mid-August 2021**
- 2. That Cabinet recommend to Full Council to amend the council's capital programme to include £1,855,000 for the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme, including match funding of £834,750 provided by the council**

**Subject to approval of the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme bid:**

- 3. Delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director for Housing and Built Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, to vary our existing Housing First contract under urgency provisions (paragraph 21c of the Financial Operating Procedures)**

**Subject to approval of the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders bid:**

- 4. Delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director for Housing and Built Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, to vary our existing Rapid Rehousing Pathway contract under urgency provisions (paragraph 21c of the Financial Operating Procedures)**

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1. The council has been working in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations to develop additional services to support those in need. Demand for the**

council's homelessness services has remained high during the pandemic and is expected to continue to increase in the months to come.

## Introduction

1. Throughout the pandemic we have continued working to support people effected by homelessness. This included:
  - Responding positively to the Everyone In instruction by offering temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, and enhancing the holistic support services provided through the Rough Sleeping Initiative
  - Ensuring people can access homelessness advice services by offering telephone appointments and a face to face service for emergency cases
  - Working with Public Health to provide additional health, mental health and substance dependency support to vulnerable people living in temporary accommodation
  - Securing additional capital funding to expand our Housing First service for rough sleepers through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme

Demand for homelessness services is expected to increase across the country during the recovery period from the pandemic. We've been working with partners to build on what we've learnt over the past year and develop a range of new services

## New Projects and Services

2. We are working on a range of new projects to continue to improve our homelessness prevention services. The recovery plans supports the council's corporate priority to tackle homelessness, poverty and ensure quality housing.

## Ending Rough Sleeping

3. The council is continuing to work with partners to end rough sleeping. The average number of rough sleepers verified in the past month was 12.
4. Hastings led a successful bid to continue the RSI for a further year, securing of funding of £2,100,000 for the county-wide service. This includes a team of health, mental, health, social care, substance dependency, housing, and criminal justice specialists alongside dedicated outreach services. We are working closely with Public Health to continue our holistic approach, including a mobile health unit which will support outreach to vulnerable people.
5. We are continuing to offer temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, to help people leave the streets as quickly as possible. We provide ongoing support to help people access settled housing, so they can continue their recovery.
6. The council also secured funding through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) to provide Housing First units for former rough sleepers. The programme was subject to a very short delivery period, but we have successfully brought 4 new units into use.
7. The council also led a successful bid to the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) to continue this work in 2021/22, securing funding to provide 10 new Housing First units by the end of March 2022. The council will need to amend it's capital programme to

include £1,855,000 for RSAP (previously NSAP). This will include a £1,020,250 grant plus £834,750 worth of match funding provided by the council.

8. The council's math funding is made up of £722,000 carried over from NSAP and Section 106 affordable housing receipts.
9. The RSAP programme also includes additional revenue funding to provide Housing First support services. This will be delivered by varying the existing Housing First support service through the RSI. There will be opportunities to bid for further RSAP funding in July and September this year.

### **Employability Support**

10. In October 2020, the council launched Live, Work, Thrive a partnership project with Rother District Council, Education Futures Trust, Fellowship of St Nicholas and Sussex Community Development Association funded by the CHART programme. The aim of the project is to improve access to employment and housing for homeless people.
11. Since the launch, the project has supported 20 people to access settled housing and a further 8 people to find employment. Public Health have also approved funding for a new Wellbeing Co-Ordinator who will be able to provide a complimentary support service for people living outside the CHART areas.
12. Through CHART, we have also secured funding for a dedicated employability support team for people placed in Hastings through the Syrian Resettlement Programme and the wider migrant community.

### **Supporting Victims of Domestic Abuse**

13. Hastings is leading a bid to the MHCLG's Respite Rooms. If successful, the bid will provide funding of £310,000 to pilot safe spaces for homeless female victims of domestic abuse to access support services and accommodation.
14. Our proposal compliments the broader preparations for the new Domestic Abuse Act taking place across Sussex, including an intention to co-locate an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) within our housing options team.

### **Reducing Homelessness and Re-Offending**

15. We are working with partners to reduce homelessness and re-offending amongst people leaving prison across East Sussex.
16. The five local housing authorities have agreed to jointly fund a specialist housing solutions worker, who will be co-located within Lewes Prison to improve our homelessness prevention services.
17. The council has also led a bid for £287,000 to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Programme. If successful, this project will improve access to private rental accommodation through a tenancy sustainment service and landlord incentive package.

### **Improving Access to Housing**

18. The council's social housing allocation scheme is now due for review. It is important to ensure that the council reviews its policies to reflect changing demand for our homelessness

services, while ensuring we can continue to create mixed and sustainable communities throughout the town.

19. Through Fulfilling Lives, we have secured funding for a policy officer role who will oversee a review of the allocation scheme. The review will include engaging with the housing team, accommodation providers, people on the waiting list for social housing and other stakeholder to identify good practice. The review and development of the new scheme will take approximately 12 months to complete.

## **Changing Futures**

20. The council is supporting a pan-Sussex bid to the MHCLG's Changing Futures Programme. If successful the bid will provide funding for a 3-year programme to deliver systems change across services working with people experiencing multiple disadvantages, including homelessness. Our application builds on existing examples of good practice, including the RSI.
21. The Sussex proposal was shortlisted by the MHCLG and a decision on our final application is expected in July.

## **Emergency Accommodation**

22. Demand for emergency accommodation has continued to increase during the pandemic. The reasons for this are:
  - A lack of move on accommodation in the private and social rented sector, partly caused by the restrictions on evictions
  - New homelessness presentations, often following the breakdown of insecure housing arrangements (sofa surfing etc.)
  - The Everyone In instruction issued by the government
23. During the pandemic, local authorities were directed to continue accommodating people who had been issued with a negative decision on their homelessness application, to prevent a rise in rough sleeping. The cost of these placements was to be met from the additional funding given to local authorities to contribute to the cost of the pandemic. Now that lockdown measures are easing, local arrangements need to be put in place.
24. There are currently 284 households living in emergency accommodation compared to 186 at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. The average cost of a single placements is £168 per week. Of our current placements, 44 are for verified rough sleepers and will continue to be funded by our Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) grant. A further 4 individuals were accommodated during the pandemic, and it is recommended that these placements are ended from 19 July.
25. We estimate that approximately 70 people currently living in emergency accommodation will be issued with a negative decision over the next 3 months. We are recommending extending the notice period for people to leave their temporary accommodation following a negative decision from 1 week to 3 weeks. This is because turnover of move-on accommodation is still low, particularly in the private rented sector. We will continue to provide support to people to access settled housing and extending the notice period is an important way the council can keep rough sleeper numbers low. The additional cost of extending the notice period is estimated at £24,000. The notice period will be reviewed again at the end of August.

26. To reduce our overall use of emergency accommodation, it is vital that the council continues to develop plans to increase the supply of affordable housing locally.

## Financial Implications

27. The additional revenue cost of increasing the notice period from 1 week to 3 weeks for people who are due to be issued with a negative decision on their homelessness application is estimated at £24,000.
28. The council will need to amend the entry in its capital programme to include £1,855,000 for the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (previously the Next Steps Accommodation Programme).
29. The council is heavily reliant on external grant funding to enhance its homelessness prevention activities, much of which is for short term periods.
30. Demand for homelessness services is likely to continue to increase in the coming months, particularly if the recovery period coincides with an economic downturn. There also remains a shortage of affordable accommodation options in the town. This increase the risk of additional financial pressures to the council, particularly in terms of its spend on emergency accommodation.

## Urgency

31. This is an urgent decision under Rule 26 of the Access to Information Rules contained in the council's constitution.
32. The council has bid for several additional funding streams to support its homelessness prevention work. If these bids are successful, there will be a short time to mobilise the new services.

## Timetable of Next Steps

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

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Rough Sleeping	RSAP funding approved	June 2021	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager
Domestic Abuse	Respite Rooms funding approved	July 2021	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager
Ex-Offenders	AFO funding approved	July 2021	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager
Multiple Disadvantage	Changing Futures Programme approved	July 2021	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager

Social Housing	New Allocation Scheme adopted	July 2022	Housing Options Manager / Strategic Housing and Projects Manager
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## Wards Affected

(All Wards);

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## Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 31

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	Y
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

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## 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.

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## Officer to Contact

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