

**Subject:** Next steps - Rough Sleeping and Accommodation during Covid 19 Pandemic and Recovery – Extract from the Housing Committee meeting held on the 17 March 2021

**Date of Meeting:** 18 March 2021

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**Wards Affected:** All Wards

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**Action Required of Policy & Resources Committee:**

To receive the recommendations of the Housing Committee for consideration.

**Recommendation:**

- (1) That the Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities be granted delegated authority to secure accommodation up to the 31st October 2021, by entering into contracts to extend existing arrangements or alternative arrangements where necessary to extend the provision of shorter-term/interim accommodation acquired in response to the Covid 19 pandemic, including a building to deliver the No Second Night Out service up to the beginning of October 2021;
- (2) That it be agreed to continue to support people in the accommodation secured as para 2.9 which includes security, support and food where necessary estimated to cost £2.900m to 1st October 2021 and
- (3) That it be noted that if Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) funding is not available, this could create a service pressure of £2.043m.

# **BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

## **HOUSING COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 17 MARCH 2021**

### **VIRTUAL MEETING**

#### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Gibson (Joint Chair), Hugh-Jones (Joint Chair), Phillips (Deputy Chair), Williams (Opposition Spokesperson), Mears (Group Spokesperson), Appich, Atkinson, Barnett, Fowler and Osborne.

#### **PART ONE**

#### **146 NEXT STEPS - ROUGH SLEEPING AND ACCOMMODATION DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC AND RECOVERY**

- 146.1 The Assistant Director of Housing introduced the report to the committee.
- 146.2 Councillor Atkinson was informed that the Homeless Reduction Board (HRB) have had a number of meetings and the minutes of the meetings can be made available to Members. Although it is hard to move people on, this is continuing. Reconnecting people is a lengthy process and mediation services are being used to assist. A sub regional approach has been used with regard to other cities and only those with a duty are linked to the city. There are no clear numbers on the loss of private rented accommodation and landlords are being asked to talk to the council before the pandemic restrictions are lifted. It was noted that the Homeless Bill of Rights is aspirational.
- 146.3 Councillor Williams extended a vote of gratitude to Emily Ashmore and Jenny Knight for their outstanding work and was sorry to see them leave.
- 146.4 Councillor Mears was informed that the officer correction had occurred as there had been a misunderstanding with the legal team. It was noted that the Homeless Reduction Board will report back to the Housing committee and are not a decision making body. The councillor expressed concerns at the amendments to the recommendations and considered the original recommendations to be suitable and there was no need for the amendments.
- 146.5 Councillor Appich was informed that some houses of multiple occupancy (HMO) have been used to accommodate homeless people. It was noted that those being placed in HMOs were also being given support. The HRB action plan is being developed and will come to the Housing committee every six months (approximately) for the committee to agree the actions.
- 146.6 Councillor Gibson considered the work by officers to be amazing and considered the strategy should be fully operational by June 2021. It was noted that although many people were moving on, more were arriving in the city and prevention should proceed

as soon as possible. The councillor was informed that the customer facing services were on the corporate road map to be reintroduced as soon as possible ahead of the end of lockdown restrictions. The councillor noted that the HRB were not a decision making body and will report to the Housing committee.

- 146.7 Councillor Williams proposed and introduced the amendments and stated that they considered the amendments to strengthen the recommendations.
- 146.8 Councillor Gibson seconded the amendments and asked the committee to support the amendments.
- 146.9 The Chair invited the committee to vote on the amendments which were agreed by a majority with 2 abstentions.
- 146.10 The Chair invited the committee to vote on the recommendations as amended and they were agreed by a majority with 2 abstentions.

**RESOVLED:**

- (1) That Housing Committee note the progress to date.
- (2) That Housing Committee note the continued role of the Homeless Reduction Board in monitoring progress on meeting the conditions of NSAP funding and next steps.
- (3) That Housing Committee note the move on projections outlined in the report for those clients covered by Next Steps Accommodation Funding (Covid-1 in the report) and the continued emergency accommodation requirements for this cohort beyond 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- (4) That Housing Committee note the move on projections for those assessed as at risk of rough sleeping who we have continued to accommodate (Covid-2 in the report) and the ongoing emergency accommodation requirements of those we have housed during the on-going pandemic into the new (2021-22) financial year.
- (5) That Housing Committee agree that by 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, the accommodation offer to those assessed as at risk of rough sleeping made for the duration of the pandemic (Covid-2 in the report) is ended where no accommodation duty is owed by the council as outlined in paragraphs 3.11 – 3.13. This to be reviewed if there is a further increase in the pandemic.
- (6) That Housing Committee note the low number of verified rough sleepers (para 3.23) and that the Council will continue to seek to offer accommodation to all verified rough sleepers where this is permissible within the Council's powers to consolidate this achievement.
- (7) That Housing Committee agree Homeless Reduction Board oversee progress with the recovery of homelessness services, including face to face services,

income recovery, move on and reconnections with a report on progress to the next Housing Committee.

- (8) That Housing Committee recommend to full council:
- To adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights (as referred to in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25) as an aspirational document and as the standard against which the Council and its partners judge its policies and practices and outcomes;
  - That a copy of this resolution is signed by the Leader and sent to FEANTSA to mark its commitment to the international movement of solidarity with homeless people;
  - To commit to a process of continuous commitment, improvement and engagement to uphold rights of homeless people.

This committee Notes:

- That on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 a Petition with (currently) 2,667 signatures was presented to the Council by Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition, with the support of FEANTSA and Just Fair, calling on it to adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights.
- That the Council Plan 2019-23, states that “We will ... adopt a Bill of Rights for homeless people”;
- That the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy approved by the Housing Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020 states that “The values of the ... Strategy align to aspirations within the Homeless Bill of Rights as amended for Brighton & Hove by Housing Rights Watch, FEANTSA and Just Fair” (page 11).
- That the Next Steps report presented to the Housing Committee of 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 proposes that Housing Committee recommend to Full Council the use of the Homeless Bill of Rights, as a standard against which the Council and its partners judge our policies and practices.

**That Housing Committee recommend to Policy & Resources committee:**

- (1) That the Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities be granted delegated authority to secure accommodation up to the 31st October 2021, by entering into contracts to extend existing arrangements or alternative arrangements where necessary to extend the provision of shorter-term/interim accommodation acquired in response to the Covid 19 pandemic, including a building to deliver the No Second Night Out service up to the beginning of October 2021.
- (2) That it be agreed to continue to support people in the accommodation secured as para 2.9 which includes security, support and food where necessary estimated to cost £2.900m to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.
- (3) That it be noted that if Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) funding is not available, this could create a service pressure of £2.043m.

- That the Homeless Bill of Rights User Guide, by Housing Rights Watch, states that “The bravest municipalities believe that endorsing the Bill of Rights was something they wanted to do. They did this showing a public commitment to its content and sending a signed copy of the Bill to FEANTSA. The bill is only a starting point for continuous commitment, improvement and engagement to defend rights of homeless people”;
- That according to the Legal Implications section of the said Next Steps report, “According to the council’s constitution, the ‘Endorsing, approving or otherwise committing the Council to any charter, alliance or pledge’ is a full council function. The recommendation at 2.8 is consistent with the constitution’s requirements”.

**This committee resolves to recommend to full council:**

- (1) To adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights (as referred to in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25) as an aspirational document and as the standard against which the Council and its partners judge its policies and practices and outcomes;
- (2) That a copy of this resolution is signed by the Leader and sent to FEANTSA to mark its commitment to the international movement of solidarity with homeless people;
- (3) To commit to a process of continuous commitment, improvement and engagement to uphold rights of homeless people.

