

ROUGH SLEEPER'S OUTREACH SERVICE

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Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To request for Cabinet to support the re-provision of the Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service from April 2012 and reserve future years third sector commissioning funding for a three year period.

Recommendation

To jointly commission a future service with Stoke on Trent City Council to combine both Council's resources and develop a service which meets the needs of both authority areas whilst maximising efficiencies.

Reasons

The provision of a Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service has been the main force behind keeping the numbers of rough sleepers on the streets of Newcastle at low levels.

For a number of years both authorities have separately commissioned a Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service. Both authorities' contracts are due to end in March 2012, therefore creating an opportunity to jointly commission a single service in April 2012.

1. Background

- 1.1 Rough Sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness. It is a fundamental issue for society and can impact upon housing, community safety, health and the well being of individuals.
- 1.2 In November 2008, the Government announced its 'No One Left Out' Rough Sleeping Strategy which signalled the Government's intention to work with partner agencies to end rough sleeping in England.
- 1.3 For many years, the Council has tackled the issue of rough sleeping in Newcastle by funding a Rough Sleeper's Street Outreach Service. This service works with rough sleepers to get them off the street, into hostel accommodation and linked into social care and other support services. This service has helped to keep the number of people actually sleeping rough in Newcastle very low. The current service and service provider has been given 'rough sleeper champion' status by the CLG and is recognised nationally as best practice for successfully addressing the issues of rough sleeping.
- 1.4 The severe weather emergency protocol is also delivered as part of the service. This is where arrangements are made between agencies to ensure that when the temperatures fall below zero degrees for three consecutive nights, people in Newcastle are not at risk of dying on the streets due to the cold weather and have access to safe shelter.
- 1.5 The Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service is currently funded via the Council's Third Sector Commissioning process. Prior to the Third Sector Commissioning process it was funded by the Council, through its voluntary grants for voluntary organisations.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The current service is in its final year of a three year contract and is due to end in March 2012. The cost of the service during the 2011/2012 financial year is £14765.
- 2.2 A very similar service is also provided in Stoke on Trent but on a larger scale. The services have always worked well together and complemented each other. Officers from both authorities are in agreement that this service could easily be commissioned through one process and delivered through one contract. Stoke on Trent Council has approached the Borough to enquire whether we would like to joint commission any future service provision using Stoke's commissioning process as both current contracts are due to expire in March 2012.
- 2.3 In order ensure continuation of this valuable service between the end of the current contract and the commencement of a future contract, plus the opportunity to joint commission with our partner authority, Officers are keen to start work on the re-commissioning process straight away.
- 2.4 At present Officers have not been advised on what funding, if any will be made available for commissioning from April 2012 and would need confirmation of funding availability in order to work with Stoke to re-commission this service.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 For Council to continue to fund this service and agree to embark on a joint commissioning process with Stoke on Trent City Council.
- 3.2 For Council to continue to commission this service via the borough's Third Sector Commissioning Process.
- 3.3 For Council not to commission a future Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service in Newcastle.

4. **Proposal and Reasons for this Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 To embark on a joint commissioning process with Stoke on Trent City Council to combine both Council's resources and develop a service which meets the needs of both authority areas whilst maximising efficiencies.
- 4.2 The Council's approach has been informed by the following:
 - Discussions are ongoing between the Council's Procurement Officer to ensure that Stoke's commissioning process is as open and transparent as the Borough's own process.
 - The two authorities have individually funded a rough sleepers outreach service for many years, historically these services have always been delivered by the same service provider who has a wealth of expertise in managing this client group. Also no other organisation tendered for the service during the last commissioning processes for both authorities.
 - It has always been clear that due to economies of scale the delivery of the Stoke service has enabled the Newcastle contract costs to remain low. It would be questionable as to whether a provider would be able to offer to same level of service for a similar amount in Newcastle if there was not the Stoke contract also in operation or provided by a different service provider.

- Due to the economic climate and organisations in the area are evolving, both Newcastle and Stoke anticipate that when this service is re-tendered there will be more competition than in previous years. By jointly commissioning the Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service, it means we are able to influence service provision and identify any further savings that could be made as part of the new service, rather than re-commissioning our service alone which could result in being more expensive if the authorities chose different providers.
- The majority of the hostel accommodation accessed via the Rough Sleeper's Team is based in Stoke as Newcastle does not have its own hostels. Having a joint contract will go some way towards overcoming any issues that may arise around local connection priorities as proposed in the fourth coming Localism Bill.
- The loss of the service would have a detrimental impact upon the borough in many ways. Firstly if there was not a Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service operating in the borough, the prevalence of rough sleeping may increase and incidents of rough sleeping may become more visible throughout the borough and more difficult to tackle.
- Secondly, addressing the causative factors behind rough sleeping and assisting individuals who are sleeping rough to reach their full potential requires a specialised and focused approach. Without the specialist service it would be inevitable that further demands would be placed upon the Council's main homelessness service (Newcastle housing Advice) which is not set up to deal with the intensive needs of addressing rough sleeping.
- Finally, without a rough sleepers outreach service the Council would have to develop additional services to meet the rough sleeper severe weather provision requirements. This would like lead to an increase in temporary accommodation costs.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

5.1 The service contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

- **Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable borough**
The service has had a positive impact upon community cohesion, working closely with the police and other agencies they offer support to rough sleepers getting them off the street and minimising the potential for anti social behaviour.
- **Creating a borough of opportunity**
By its assertive outreach work the service provides support and assistance to improving the life chances of people who are sleeping rough.
- **Creating a healthy and active community**
By linking rough sleepers into services, this promotes health and independence.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 **Homelessness Act 2002**

The Act includes the requirement for Local Authorities to formulate reviews and strategies in order to tackle and prevent homelessness.

6.2 **Housing Act 1996**

The Act includes the duty of the Local Authority to provide advisory services and assistance to voluntary organisations in respect of homelessness.

6.3 **Local Government Act 2000**

The Act gives Local Authorities the power to do anything likely to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 A full equality and impact assessment is included in the commissioning process.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The current service has cost £14,765 to deliver in 2011-2012, by entering into a joint commissioning process with Stoke City Council there would need to be a similar amount to be committed by the Borough Council for the next three years.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 By not commissioning a Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service could impact on the delivery and costs of other services in the borough and could result in the Council having to spend more money than the current service value addressing the future issues of rough sleeping in Newcastle, especially during the winter period.

10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 The provision of a Rough Sleeper's Outreach Service has been the main force behind keeping the numbers of rough sleepers on the streets of Newcastle at low levels.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

None.

12. **List of Appendices**

None.

13. **Background Papers**

None.