



Democratic Services

Housing and Community Committee

Thursday, 09 March 2017

19:00

Room 2 (Civic Offices)

Williams (Chair) Ganatra (Vice-Chair) Wallis (Vice-Chair)
Burke Ferrans Geaney Geary Hosking Khan McCall Webb

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A G E N D A

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair to welcome councillors, officers of the Council, witnesses and the public to the meeting and introduce councillors, officers and witnesses who are present.

2. Apologies

To receive any apologies of absence.

3. Disclosures of Interest

Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, or personal interests (including other pecuniary interests) they may have in the business to be transacted, and officers to disclose any interests they may have in any contract to be considered.

4. Minutes

7 - 14

To approve, and the Chair to sign as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Community Committee held on 17 January 2017 (**Item 4**).

5. YourMK – Managing the Council’s Responsive Repairs Service and Planned Works Programme

At its meeting on 21 December 2015 the Cabinet agreed to form a long-term partnership with the Mears Group plc to deliver the repairs and maintenance service to all council owned properties in Milton Keynes and to develop and deliver a regeneration programme. This Partnership is called YourMK.

YourMK is a 50-50 partnership between Milton Keynes Council and Mears Group plc, providing a repairs and maintenance service for over 11,500 homes across Milton Keynes. As well as its remit to manage the Council’s responsive repairs and planned maintenance programme, YourMK also aims to improve neighbourhoods by providing better access to jobs and training and giving genuine power and influence to local people.

Since April 2016 YourMK has been delivering the repairs and maintenance service to all Milton Keynes Council owned properties. Between April and November 2016, they completed 16,500 repair jobs, saved c£2,000,000 by implementing operational efficiencies, completed a 6 month review and put a revised service improvement plan in place.

Representatives from YourMK will be attending the meeting to discuss with the Committee how they are managing the Council’s responsive repairs service and planned works programme, how they have achieved the above savings, improvements made to the service, tenant satisfaction ratings and plans for further improvements in the future.

6. **Government White Paper: Fixing Our Broken Housing Market**

15 - 18

On 7 February 2017 the Government published a White Paper, *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*, which sets out proposals on how it intends to boost housing supply and, over the long term, create a more efficient housing market whose outcomes more closely match the needs and aspirations of all households and which supports wider economic prosperity.

The *Executive Summary* is attached as an outline of the proposals in the White Paper (**Item 6**). The full document is available via the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/hcggd8r>

Following on from the seminar on the White Paper on 6 March, representatives from the Council's Planning Department will be attending to discuss with the Committee the possible implications for Milton Keynes, how the proposals in the White Paper will assist the Council in unlocking more housing and how can it take advantage of these opportunities.

7. **Implications of the Homelessness Reduction Bill**

On 29 June 2016, Bob Blackburn MP introduced to Parliament a Private Member's Bill aimed at reducing the high level of homelessness being experienced across the United Kingdom. The Bill is based on the recommendations in an earlier report commissioned by the charity Crisis.

The Bill has received cross-party support in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. It received its second reading in the House of Lords on 24 February 2017; the next step is the Committee stage in the House of Lords, although no date for this has been announced yet. It will then be subject to a third reading in the Lords before both Houses agree that it is ready for Royal Assent.

The Bill focuses on advice, information and prevention, setting out more clearly the types of housing advice and information local authorities must provide to people before they become homeless or are threatened with homelessness. This new duty on local authorities would apply to all eligible households, irrespective of any priority need or intentional homelessness and means that, in future, councils would have to demonstrate that they were taking reasonable steps to prevent homelessness.

Under the terms of the 1996 Housing Act, a person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he/she will become homeless within 28 days. The Homelessness Reduction Bill seeks to extend this period to 56 days so that local authorities can respond to the threat of homelessness at a much earlier point and provide practical help such as mediation with landlords, payment of a grant or loan, or debt management

support. It will also be incumbent on local authorities to accept a valid notice to quit or equivalent as evidence that the tenant is threatened with homelessness, overturning current rules which state that tenants do not become homeless until physically evicted from their properties.

Other proposals in the Bill introduce a new relief duty for all eligible homeless people who have a local connection, meaning that local authorities must take reasonable steps to secure accommodation, regardless of priority need status. If the local authority is unable to prevent an applicant's homelessness, it should help to secure alternative accommodation, for example, by providing a grant or loan, or advice and advocacy to help secure a tenancy in the private rented sector. This duty would last for a period of 56 days after which, if not accommodated, the applicant would be assessed to see if he/she is eligible for the main homelessness duty.

Another new duty in the Bill is the proposal to provide emergency accommodation for homeless people with nowhere safe to stay, for up to 28 days so that they are not forced to sleep rough. Applicants would only be able to access emergency interim accommodation under this duty for a maximum of 56 days and on no more than one occasion every six months.

However, in return for these obligations on councils, the Bill also places a duty on applicants to cooperate with the local authority's efforts to help them. Local authorities would be permitted to discharge their prevention and relief duties if an applicant unreasonably refuses to cooperate with the course of action that they have agreed to undertake.

A more detailed briefing note, for discussion at the meeting, on the implications of the Bill for Milton Keynes Council is **to follow**.

8a. **Update on the Work of the Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership** 19 - 20

To receive and note the attached update on the work being done and progress made by the Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership (**Item 8a**).

8b. **Update on the Use of Temporary Accommodation**

To receive and note the progress being made by Milton Keynes Council to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, particularly the use of room-only hotel accommodation (**to follow**).

Minutes of the meeting of the HOUSING AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 17 JANUARY 2017 at 7:00 PM in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, Civic Offices

Present: Councillor C Williams (Chair)
Councillors Burke, Ferrans, Ganatra, Geaney, P Geary (from 7:50 pm) Hosking (from 7:50 pm), Khan, D McCall, Wallis and Webb

Officer: E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Also Present: M Smith (Housing Finance Manager), S Snelus (Community Participation Officer)

Representatives from local Residents' Associations and Tenant Participation Groups

Disclosure

of Interests: Councillor McCall declared a interest in Item 7a as an employee of the Milton Keynes Winter Night Shelter and in Item 7b as a Patron of the Refugees Welcome MK Group.

HAC31 CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP

The Chair advised that Councillor Jenkins had stood down from the Committee and had been replaced by Councillor P Geary for the remainder of the 2016/17 committee cycle.

HAC32 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

HAC33 RESIDENT AND TENANT PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Witnesses: S Snelus (Community Participation Officer) and representatives of local Residents' Associations and Tenant Participation Groups

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Community Participation Officer about the Housing Services Forum and how it operated. Its aims were to:

- Provide all Milton Keynes tenants the opportunity and choice to directly influence decisions that affected their homes and the standard of services offered by the Milton Keynes Council Housing Service;
- Increase resident involvement across Milton Keynes, specifically areas with high levels of council owned properties;
- Increase satisfaction with the Milton Keynes Council Housing Service.

The presentation also covered the work done by the Housing Services Forum and its achievements during 2016, the existing

groups which were part of the forum and how it operated, as well as the work of the Residents' Association Network, the Residents Involvement Review Group and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

There were 13 active, accredited Residents' Associations in Milton Keynes. Each Association had to complete an annual Healthcheck in order to receive an accreditation rating which was then used as the basis, along with the number of properties in an area, for funding. Associations now had more freedom and control over how their funding was spent and had become semi-autonomous with their own administrative structures.

The Housing Services Forum met quarterly, in public, and anyone was welcome to attend. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel was an autonomous group set up to carry out independent reviews each year on different parts of the Council's Housing Services. Following any review, the Panel produced a report of recommendations for the Service Director of Housing and Community.

The Committee welcomed the information in the presentation but felt that there was not enough promotion of what was happening in tenant/resident participation and engagement with the Council and that awareness needed to be raised. The Community Participation Officer agreed and explained that she was trying to increase awareness via social media and by publishing a regular newsletter on-line. She was also in the process of developing other on-line materials for use by associations.

Mr Warby, from the Beanhill Action Group, said that the name had been changed on the newsletter which had caused confusion and people had missed seeing it. Although the name had now been changed back again, he was still concerned that publication had changed from monthly to 2-monthly and he would like to see it revert to a monthly publication. The Community Participation Officer explained that she was relatively new to the post (October 2016) and that monthly publication of the newsletter was before her time. So far she had not received enough copy to justify a monthly publication; however she was happy to take this concern away and investigate the possibility of a monthly edition if associations sent her sufficient items to include in it.

Ms Marling, from the Lakes Residents' Association, said that she understood that printing paper posters and leaflets was expensive and the move to on-line publication of information made sense from the Council's point of view. She suggested that a system of text alerts, for which residents could sign up, about the meetings of the Housing Forum and its various sub-groups be investigated. She also raised the issue of no longer being able to claim taxi fares for attendance at council meetings as a representative of a residents' group, meaning she was unable to feedback information to communities about what was happening. The Community Participation Officer confirmed that her section still covered the cost of taxis for recognised representatives of resident / tenant groups to

attend the various meetings held under the aegis of the Community Partnership but not for other meetings.

Concern was expressed at the lack of paper communications and an increasing reliance on social media to get messages across to the public; many council tenants were elderly and were not necessarily computer-literate. The Community Participation Officers explained that the Council no longer had the resources to send out personal letters or invitations to events. Residents' Associations were based in their local communities and there was an expectation that they cascaded down any information locally. They were also in a position to feed information back up the line to the Council. She agreed that the information on resident participation on the Council's website could be better and she had plans to improve and update this once she had received training as a web author.

It was suggested that as elected representatives of their local areas, councillors also had a role to play in providing a communications bridge between the Council and residents' groups and back again.

Representatives also raised the matter of the Building Services Tenant Group being disbanded when YourMK had been formed. Although they had been told it would be replaced with a similar group, so far nothing had been put in place. This group had been a useful forum for tenants to discuss repairs and maintenance works and carrying out this work in a timely manner with the Council's contractor. The issue of repairs was very important to residents and they would like to see continued resident involvement in how this was done.

Mr Wilde, from the Fullers Slade Residents' Association, explained that they were a relatively new group, only being formed in November 2015. However, he thought that they had had a good year and the work had been interesting. The group was very active and had led a successful campaign to reduce anti-social behaviour in Fullers Slade. He also thought that the Association had been successfully integrated into the Council's resident participation network and he thanked the Council for investing time in developing the Association. He added that plans for regeneration of the area were of concern but that the way forward was to remain in discussions with all parties, and not to listen to rumours and misinformation which could be wrong.

Mr Orr, from the Tinkers' Bridge Association, agreed that being involved with a residents' group was a very rewarding activity and he had been struck by the amount of help that was available from the Council, particularly when applying for grants. The Tinkers Bridge Association staged a range of events for local residents throughout the year and had also established a junior Residents' Association to provide sporting and social activities for young people. The work of the Association had helped to improve the estate and it was now integrating activities with the Council. They had recently worked

with the Council on fly-tipping issues, holding a litter-pick around the estate, filling 50 sacks with rubbish.

Representatives were concerned however, that some estates appeared to have been allowed to run down over a number of years and that planned maintenance had stopped until the proposed regeneration programme started. They were concerned that the money from rents was not being re-invested in the estates where it was raised. They also felt that they were not benefitting from government schemes for home improvements in the same way that private residents could. The point was made that managing council housing as an asset in a proper manner actually saved money further down the line.

Representatives of the residents' groups present and members of the Committee raised concerns about the Council's regeneration programme which would be delivered by the partner organisation formed with Mears plc, YourMK. Seven estates had been identified as being in the first tranche of the regeneration programme, but beyond this there was very little information, giving rise to a range of rumours which were causing distress and concern amongst tenants. Some of the representatives from the residents' associations said that they had already tried to seek clarification from YourMK on which estates were designated for regeneration first, but had not received any definite information.

The Committee had been given to understand that no plans in respect of any of the estates had yet been made, as these would depend on the stock condition surveys being carried out for each area, which were not yet complete. A business case and timetable would be produced for each estate and residents would have to be consulted on the proposals as agreed in section 14.1 of the Council Plan. Where a Neighbourhood Plan for an area had already been agreed, this would also have to be taken into consideration when regeneration schemes were being developed.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Council's Community Participation Officer be thanked for her presentation and contribution to the Committee's discussions.
2. That the representatives from the Residents' Associations and Tenant Participation Groups be thanked for their attendance, for sharing their views and positive comments with the Committee and contributing to the discussion.
3. That the Committee is concerned to learn that, given the importance of a proper repairs and maintenance programme for Council owned property and the effect poor maintenance can have on the lives of tenants, the Building Services Tenant Group no longer exists and that a promised replacement group has not yet been established, thus diminishing opportunities for tenants to express their views about housing repairs. The Committee,

therefore, recommends that YourMK be requested to establish such a group.

4. That the Community Participation Officer be requested to investigate the agreed frequency of publication of the Residents' Associations newsletter and that consideration be given to reinstating monthly publication as had been previously promised.
5. That Residents' Associations/Tenant Participation Groups be encouraged to submit items of news, details of events etc on a regular basis to the Community Participation Officer to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of copy in order to produce a monthly newsletter.
6. That the Community Partnership Officer continues her work to establish Resident/Tenant participation and interaction with the Council as a significant presence on social media, particularly Facebook.
7. That the Committee, through the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, be added to the distribution list for the Community Partnership Newsletter and receive notifications of postings on the Facebook page.
8. That the Committee deplored the perceived lack of clarity around YourMK activities in relation to the RegenerationMK Programme and requests that YourMK makes available details of its assessment process and the proposals for each estate.
9. That the Committee, on behalf of the Residents' Associations/Tenant Participation Groups in Milton Keynes, be given a cast-iron guarantee that, regardless of any Neighbourhood Plan which may be in place, residents living on each estate scheduled for regeneration have the opportunity to accept or decline the regeneration proposals by means of a local referendum as set out in clause 14.1 of the Council Plan (agreed by Council on 13/07/16).
10. That the details of the previous arrangements for assistance with transport costs to enable elected representatives of Residents' Associations/ Tenant Participation Groups to attend relevant meetings of the Council (other than Community Partnership meetings for which other arrangements apply) on behalf of their group, be investigated.
11. That once the details of Resolution 10 above have been ascertained, the Committee recommends to Council that this arrangement be re-instated in order to maintain the existing good relationship between the Council and accredited Residents' Associations/Tenant Participation Groups and to encourage public attendance at meetings of the Council.

HAC34 DRAFT 2017/18 BUDGET PROPOSALS: HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND HOUSING AND COMMUNITY GENERAL FUND

The Chair advised that this item had been dropped, as Council had already approved the 2017/18 Budget for the Housing Revenue Account and the Housing and Community General Fund at its meeting on 11 January 2017.

HAC35 UPDATE ON THE MILTON KEYNES HOMELESSNESS PARTNERSHIP AND WORK WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES

The Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership had met on 13 January and the Chair and one of the Vice-Chairs (Councillor Wallis) had attended as observers.

The Partnership had received a submission from the group hoping to convert a double-decker bus into a year-round temporary shelter and support hub for rough sleepers, based on the model recently established on the Isle of Wight. The Partnership had agreed to help them to develop the project and get leverage for funding. Councillor D McCall suggested that the project team be invited to a future meeting of the Committee so that the Committee could be reassured that they had a full understanding of the logistics involved and what might be the pitfalls.

The Partnership was also in the process of developing a Communications Strategy; work had only just started and more information would be available as the strategy progressed.

The Committee noted that the Refugees Welcome MK organisation produced a regular newsletter, circulated by e-mail. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer would arrange for this to be circulated to the Committee as and when she received it.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Vice-Chair of the Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership be thanked for her written update on the work of the Partnership.
2. That the Committee agrees to the Partnership's request to scrutinise the plans to convert a double-decker bus into temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, based on the successful model already established in the Isle of Wight (the 'Bus Shelter' Project).

HAC35 2016/17 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and noted the amended Work Programme for 2016/17.

RESOLVED –

That members of the Committee review the current Work Programme and send any comments, positive or negative, to the Committee's Planning Group for consideration at its next meeting

(date to be confirmed), together with any suggestions for the 2017/18 Work Programme.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8.59 PM

DRAFT

Executive summary

The proposals in this White Paper set out how the Government intends to boost housing supply and, over the long term, create a more efficient housing market whose outcomes more closely match the needs and aspirations of all households and which supports wider economic prosperity.

The challenge of increasing supply cannot be met by government alone – it is vital to have local leadership and commitment from a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, private developers, housing associations, lenders and local communities.

We have listened to concerns expressed by many within the housing and planning sector that the pace of change in policy and legislation can make local delivery more difficult. The White Paper addresses this issue by providing a long-term strategy to build the homes the country needs.

However we also need to help people now to find the right home while our strategy takes effect. So this White Paper sets out how we will address people's housing needs and aspirations in the shorter term. This includes supporting people to buy or rent their own home, preventing homelessness, improving options for older people and protecting the most vulnerable. Central to making our long term strategy work is the partnership between central and local government and developers. This White Paper sets out the support the Government will provide to enhance the capacity of local authorities and industry to build the new homes this country needs. In return we expect professions and institutions to play their part and turn these proposals into reality:

- For **local authorities**, the Government is offering higher fees and new capacity funding to develop planning departments, simplified plan-making, and more funding for infrastructure. We will make it easier for local authorities to take action against those who do not build out once permissions have been granted. We are interested in the scope for bespoke housing deals to make the most of local innovation. In return, the Government asks local authorities to be as ambitious and innovative as possible to get homes built in their area. All local authorities should develop an up-to-date plan with their communities that meets their housing

requirement (or, if that is not possible, to work with neighbouring authorities to ensure it is met), decide applications for development promptly and ensure the homes they have planned for are built out on time. It is crucial that local authorities hold up their end of the bargain. Where they are not making sufficient progress on producing or reviewing their plans, the Government will intervene. And where the number of homes being built is below expectations, the new housing delivery test will ensure that action is taken.

- For **private developers**, the Government is offering a planning framework that is more supportive of higher levels of development, with quicker and more effective processing and determination of planning applications, and is exploring an improved approach to developer contributions. In line with the industrial strategy, we will boost productivity, innovation, sustainability and skills by encouraging modern methods of construction in house building. We will encourage greater diversity of homebuilders, by partnering with smaller and medium-sized builders and contractors in the Accelerated Construction programme, and helping small and medium-sized builders access the loan finance they need. In return, the Government expects developers to build more homes, to engage with communities and promote the benefits of development, to focus on design and quality, and to build homes swiftly where permission is granted. Critically, we also expect them to take responsibility for investing in their research and skills base to create more sustainable career paths and genuinely bring forward thousands of new skilled roles.

- For **local communities**, the Government is offering a simpler and clearer planning process that makes it easier for them to get involved and shape plans for their area. We will ensure they see the benefits of housing growth and have greater say over the design of local developments. In return, the Government asks communities to accept that more housing is needed if future generations are to have the homes they need at a price they can afford.
- For **housing associations and other not-for-profit developers**, the Government has already announced funding worth a total of £7.1 billion through an expanded and more flexible Affordable Homes Programme. We will provide clarity over future rent levels. In return, we expect them to build significantly more affordable homes over the current Parliament.
- For **lenders, institutional investors and capital market participants**, the Government is offering a clear and stable long-term framework for investment, including products for rent. In return we call upon lenders and investors to back developers and social landlords in building more homes.
- For **utility companies and infrastructure providers**, the Government is offering a clear framework and simpler plans to help them understand the demands made on them, and is exploring an improved approach to developer contributions to help pay for new infrastructure. In return, the Government expects infrastructure providers to deliver the infrastructure that new housing needs in good time so that development is not delayed.

At the heart of the White Paper is the acknowledgement that the housing market is very different in different parts of the country. The Government is already putting in place devolution deals and large-scale strategies, such as the Northern Powerhouse, the Midlands Engine and our modern industrial strategy, that bring together public and private sector leaders across different regions.

However, we need a better understanding of the specific local issues that are holding back housing development and economic growth. We need to back mayors and local leaders to deliver in their areas for their communities. We will work with local authorities to understand all the options for increasing the supply of affordable housing.

The policies and proposals set out in this White Paper apply to England only. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, housing and planning policy is the responsibility of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive respectively. The UK Government retains responsibility for housing and planning policy in England, including funding for England-only bodies such as the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The Mayor of London is responsible for the functions of the HCA in London.

List of proposals

Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places

- Making sure every part of the country has an up-to-date, sufficiently ambitious plan so that local communities decide where development should go;
- Simplifying plan-making and making it more transparent, so it's easier for communities to produce plans and easier for developers to follow them;
- Ensuring that plans start from an honest assessment of the need for new homes, and that local authorities work with their neighbours, so that difficult decisions are not ducked;
- Clarifying what land is available for new housing, through greater transparency over who owns land and the options held on it;
- Making more land available for homes in the right places, by maximising the contribution from brownfield and surplus public land, regenerating estates, releasing more small and medium-sized sites, allowing rural communities to grow and making it easier to build new settlements;
- Maintaining existing strong protections for the Green Belt, and clarifying that Green Belt boundaries should be amended only in exceptional circumstances when local authorities can demonstrate that they have fully examined all other reasonable options for meeting their identified housing requirements;
- Giving communities a stronger voice in the design of new housing to drive up the quality and character of new development, building on the success of neighbourhood planning; and
- Making better use of land for housing by encouraging higher densities, where appropriate, such as in urban locations where there is high housing demand; and by reviewing space standards.

Step 2: Building homes faster

- Providing greater certainty for authorities that have planned for new homes and reducing the scope for local and neighbourhood plans to be undermined by changing the way that land supply for housing is assessed;
- Boosting local authority capacity and capability to deliver, improving the speed and quality with which planning cases are handled, while deterring unnecessary appeals;
- Ensuring infrastructure is provided in the right place at the right time by coordinating Government investment and through the targeting of the £2.3bn Housing Infrastructure Fund;
- Securing timely connections to utilities so that this does not hold up getting homes built;
- Supporting developers to build out more quickly by tackling unnecessary delays caused by planning conditions, facilitating the strategic licensing of protected species and exploring a new approach to how developers contribute to infrastructure;
- Taking steps to address skills shortages by growing the construction workforce;
- Holding developers to account for the delivery of new homes through better and more transparent data and sharper tools to drive up delivery; and
- Holding local authorities to account through a new housing delivery test.

Step 3: Diversifying the market

- Backing small and medium-sized builders to grow, including through the Home Building Fund;
- Supporting custom-build homes with greater access to land and finance, giving more people more choice over the design of their home;
- Bringing in new contractors through our Accelerated Construction programme that can build homes more quickly than traditional builders;
- Encouraging more institutional investors into housing, including for building more homes for private rent, and encouraging family-friendly tenancies;
- Supporting housing associations and local authorities to build more homes; and
- Boosting productivity and innovation by encouraging modern methods of construction in house building.

Step 4: Helping people now

- Continuing to support people to buy their own home – through Help to Buy and Starter Homes;
- Helping households who are priced out of the market to afford a decent home that is right for them through our investment in the Affordable Homes Programme;
- Making renting fairer for tenants;
- Taking action to promote transparency and fairness for the growing number of leaseholders;
- Improving neighbourhoods by continuing to crack down on empty homes, and supporting areas most affected by second homes;
- Encouraging the development of housing that meets the needs of our future population;
- Helping the most vulnerable who need support with their housing, developing a sustainable and workable approach to funding supported housing in the future; and
- Doing more to prevent homelessness by supporting households at risk before they reach crisis point as well as reducing rough sleeping.



BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Housing & Community Committee

MK Homelessness Partnership Update

In December 2016, a progress report was presented to Cabinet. The recommendations of the report were endorsed by the Cabinet, and a further report is to be prepared for budget consideration. This report included a gap analysis of services and facilities available to meet the needs of non-statutory homelessness people, which was undertaken by a sub-group of the Partnership.

In January 2017, a sub-group of the Partnership met to develop a communications plan in order to make the general public aware of service provision and how to refer to support services, to give important information to homeless people and those at risk of rough sleeping, and a guide for professionals that are in contact with this group of people.

The Partnership is in support of the current Bus Shelter Project to provide emergency accommodation for homeless people including those that are using alcohol and/or drugs. The project team has been invited to be part of the Partnership membership. In February 2017, a sub-group of the Partnership met to further consider the business plan and operational issues.

The Partnership has been successful in a bid for DCLG Rough Sleeper Grant Funding, in partnership with Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. This funding is to help those new to the streets, or at imminent risk of sleeping rough, get rapid support. The rough sleeper project will include -

- A dedicated rough sleeper outreach service
- Specialist mental health professionals
- Crisis intervention workers to focus on working with those with complex mental health issues
- Rough sleeper assessment hubs

This outreach service will be in place by 1st April 2017.

At the February 2017 Partnership meeting, it was decided that the focus for the short-term is to develop the costed proposal presented to Cabinet in December 2016, to prepare a further report to Cabinet to progress funding. A sub-group will meet initially to develop a project plan and build on the original gap analysis work.

Eleanor Nickless
Housing Services Manager
24/02/17

