

Wards Affected:

All Wards

ITEM 12**CABINET****12 SEPTEMBER 2017****REVIEW OF MILTON KEYNES HOMELESSNESS PARTNERSHIP**

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Long, Cabinet member for Adult Social Care & Housing

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Executive Summary:

The Council Plan 2016-20 approved by Full Council, highlights tackling homelessness as a priority for the Council. Homelessness can take many forms and has many causes.

In February 2017, the Council approved a new Homelessness Strategy 2017-22. Both the Council Plan and the Homelessness Strategy highlights the need to tackle wider homelessness issues such as rough-sleeping and homelessness prevention, where MK Council has no statutory duty.

The primary focus of this administration is to ensure the long term wellbeing of our citizens. We intend to use our resources to ensure an evidence driven, professionally-led and co-ordinated approach to preventing homelessness where possible, making sure support is available to those in need and ensuring people have a pathway to long-term stability.

In September 2016, Milton Keynes Council established a Homelessness Partnership with the voluntary sector to review the provision of homelessness support in Milton Keynes and to seek to develop a means to work across agencies to develop a strategic plan for homelessness and a sustainable model that provides a pathway to support, recognising the need for external funding in light of reduced Council resources.

A key aim was to establish a 'one-stop shop' style service to assist all those at risk of homelessness and support those in crisis, which is the subject of a separate report. Further objectives included exploring additional emergency short-term shelter for those in crisis and requiring immediate support, and the provision of emergency support for those without accommodation including sanitary facilities and an outreach assessment service.

In July 2017, Cabinet agreed that the Council will review the terms of reference and operation of the MK Homelessness Partnership to ensure that it works effectively and that any changes be recommended to the next meeting of the Cabinet. This report gives details about the review and recommendations to improve the operating of the Partnership.

Councillor Nigel Long
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Housing

1. **Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That a Partnership Steering Group be formalised to meet monthly to progress the objectives of the Partnership.
- 1.2 That Council be recommended to support the work of the Partnership Steering Group.
- 1.3 That the full Partnership meetings take place on a quarterly basis.
- 1.4 That the Partnership Steering Group conduct the agreed annual review of the terms of reference before submission to the full Partnership meeting in October 2017. A further update can then be provided to Cabinet.
- 1.5 That formal Partnership arrangements be put in place.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Milton Keynes Council (MKC) has a duty to secure accommodation for households that it accepts as statutorily homeless (within the meaning of the 1996 Housing Act).
- 2.2 In addition, there are people to whom the Council does not have a statutory duty, but nevertheless can still be homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 2.3 The Council may also have wider duties to assist those who have no recourse to public funds and those who have been found intentionally homeless where children form part of the household.
- 2.4 In September 2016, Cabinet approved a report that recommended the creation of a Homelessness Partnership. Its purpose was to lead and co-ordinate services for non-statutory homeless people including advice, information and assistance; bringing together help and support into a 'One Stop Shop' style of delivery. The Council's role was to facilitate, assist and support the Partnership in its endeavours.
- 2.5 The Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership has been in operation for a year in September and has terms of reference (Annex A). Since it was set up the Partnership has achieved a number of the priority objectives including -
 - (a) Gap analysis of the provision to meet the needs of non-statutory homeless people.
 - (b) The development of an initial costed proposal, approved by Cabinet in December 2016, detailing how best to support the aims of supporting non-statutory homeless people.
 - (c) Explored options for the provision of emergency support for those without accommodation including sanitary facilities and an outreach assessment service.
 - (i) A homelessness one-stop shop service provision is due to be in operation by Winter 2017 (including sanitary facilities).

- (ii) The Partnership was successful in a bid for DCLG Rough Sleeper Grant Funding in partnership with Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton councils. A rough sleeper outreach service including mental health crisis intervention workers is in operation for 2 years as a result of this funding.
 - (d) Explored options for the provision of emergency short-term shelter for those in crisis and requiring immediate support.
 - (i) A sub-group of the Partnership is currently developing a specification for the commissioning of additional emergency accommodation for those over the age of 35 – identified as a gap following the analysis work above.
- 2.6 In July 2017, Cabinet agreed that the Council will review the terms of reference and operation of the MK Homelessness Partnership to ensure that it works effectively and that any changes be recommended to the next meeting of the Cabinet (September 2017).
- 2.7 The Council has reviewed the Partnership and undertaken consultation, which has shown –
- (a) Uncertainty amongst partners of what the Partnership is, what the roles of organisations are, and what the aims are.
 - (b) The need for more focussed objectives and clarity around who is leading.
 - (c) The group is too large to be effective.
 - (d) It lacks project management and strategy.
 - (e) A small group of key stakeholders with clear aims and objectives should be set up.
 - (f) Members of the group need to be able to make decisions.
 - (g) A more formal constitution needs to be established and clear leadership.
- 2.8 The most common theme was that due to the size of the membership of the Partnership, it is difficult to effectively deliver the objectives, and suggestions were made around setting up smaller groups to focus on progressing the priority objectives.
- 2.9 The full results of the survey can be found at Appendix B.
- 2.10 As a result of the consultation it is proposed that -
- (a) A Partnership Steering Group is formalised to meet monthly to progress the objectives of the Partnership, supported by the Council.
 - (b) The full Partnership meetings are reduced to quarterly.

- (c) The terms of reference are due to be reviewed by the Partnership in October 2017 (an annual review). It is recommended that the Steering Group conduct this review prior to it going to the full Partnership meeting in October 2017. A further update can then be provided to Cabinet.
- (d) Formal Partnership arrangements are put in place.

3. **Options**

3.1 The options to consider are as follows -

- (a) Do nothing and allow the Partnership to operate in the same way and therefore not achieving its full potential. This is not a recommended option.
- (b) Endorse the recommendations made in this report to improve the operating of the Partnership. This is the recommended option.
- (c) Dissolve the Partnership and lose a multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness, and provide only minimal support through advice and support to those where there is no statutory duty. This is not a recommended option.

4. **Implications**

4.1 Policy

4.2 The Council Plan 2016-20 was approved by Cabinet on 6 June and by Full Council on the 8 June 2016. Homelessness is identified as one of the key priorities so failure to tackle the homelessness crisis will lead to a key part of the Council Plan not being delivered.

4.3 The Homelessness (Statutory Need) Strategy 2017-22 approved by the Council in April 2017 emphasised that becoming homeless creates a crisis for any household. The uncertainty about the future, the challenges of living in temporary accommodation, the impact on health, are all well-documented. The Council's primary aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, and where this is not possible to support the household to find alternative accommodation quickly.

4.4 The Milton Keynes Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-18 has an aim to reduce homelessness, with a focus on family homelessness, by early identification of those at risk and developing local capacity to provide accommodation.

4.5 Resources and Risk

4.6 The costed proposal referred to in para 2.5 (b) has been resourced through a £200k one-off pressure in the 2017/18 budget (Cabinet decision of 7 February 2017). Provision for any ongoing costs will need to be made in the 2018/19 budget through the current budget-setting process.

- 4.7 The homelessness One-Stop Shop referred to in para 2.5 (c) (i) is estimated to require expenditure of £25k per year for 2.5 years in running costs. The costs for 2017/18 are anticipated to be resourced via the one-off pressure as above, and provision for ongoing costs will need to be made in the 2018/19 budget through the current budget-setting process.
- 4.8 The DCLG Rough Sleeper Grant Funding referred to in para 2.5 (c) (ii) amounts to £624k. The project is led by Luton Borough Council, who will account for this income and expenditure.
- 4.9 The Council's membership of the Partnership may result in the identification of additional potential costs. Any contribution from the council toward such additional costs will need to be covered by existing budget provisions, or provided for through the normal budget-setting process.

N	Capital	N	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

4.10 Carbon and Energy Management

No significant impact

4.11 Legal

4.12 The Council has a legal duty to secure accommodation for homeless households, mainly families (Housing Act 1996).

4.13 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to have a Strategy for preventing homelessness in their district.

4.14 The Care Act 2014 recognises the contribution of housing to the care and support system (as 'suitable housing' is one of the nine areas of wellbeing in the Act).

4.15 The Homelessness Reduction Act is due to commence in April 2018. As a result the Council will have further duties with regards to the advice and assistance that it offers all homeless households. The full duty can be discharged by use of any suitable accommodation secured of any tenure with a reasonable prospect of being available for 6 months or more.

4.16 Other Implications

4.17 The Council's Equality Policy and Scheme 2016-2020 makes it clear that Equality, Diversity and Cohesion are key ingredients in building a diverse, competent workforce, excellent people-centred services and promoting the general well-being of Milton Keynes' communities and its citizens. It lies at the very heart of everything we do in employing people, providing services to people and in shaping the place they live and work. This is encapsulated in the Council's Equality Vision: 'Improve the way we engage, think, plan and act to deliver equality and accessibility for everyone, every day'. Alleviating homelessness will in turn help the Council to deliver this Vision.

Y	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	N	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers: Annex A – Homelessness Partnership Terms of Reference
 Annex B – Homelessness Partnership Survey