

Housing and Homelessness Scrutiny Panel  
March 2021

This was the final meeting of the civic year which ends in April. An interim work plan to cover the first quarter of the next year will be developed to give time for Scrutiny to agree its work plan for the remainder of the year.

### **Preventing Homelessness Grant 2021/22**

The HHSP Meeting discussed how the funding allocated in 2020/21 has been spent. Recommendations were made for funding to continue supporting the ongoing arrangements. A future cabinet report looking at how best to expand homelessness support will generate a future work plan going forwards and the grant spend will be determined around future work programmes.

2019/20 was to be the final year of the current pooled budget arrangements for the countywide Adult Homeless Pathway. To support the success of closer partnership working, the Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager is working with county to recommission pathway services from 2022/23 onwards.

There are currently a total of 106 jointly commissioned beds all of which are located in Oxford (79 for OCC) our annual contribution in 2021/22 is predicted to be £219,030.

The Council's priorities for rough sleeping and single homelessness reductions are set out in the Council Strategy 2020-24.

This target remains a key priority. No-one should need to sleep rough and the plan of "Everyone In" is fully supported.

Due to the high levels of uncertainty regarding the provision of ongoing accommodation services at Floyds Row, as well as the extent of services which can be provided there, an unallocated amount of £135,798 has been left as contingency so regardless of policy change, rough sleepers continue to be offered accommodation throughout the year.

### **MHCLG's <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government> - Rough Sleeping Initiative Round 4 Fund**

A joint countywide bid for further funding has been completed.

The proposal includes funding bids for a range of projects and initiatives:

- Supported Lettings Pilot Project
- Women's unit
- Pre-recovery unit
- Engagement & Assessment of rough sleepers

Officers reported optimism the bid, estimated to cost £390,000, will be successful.

In distributing the homelessness budget, the Council will ensure that there are clear outcomes and targets to be reported on quarterly.

Officers will schedule quarterly, 6-monthly or annual performance monitoring meetings with all external service providers to ensure that outcomes and targets are achieved, cost and value for money is achieved.

A new strategy will focus on prevention - identify opportunities for early intervention across and facilitate rapid action where the risk of homelessness is identified.

It is envisaged that all parts of the council will take joint responsibility for avoiding homelessness and ending rough sleeping. This involves thinking about people in terms of their strengths and assets, not just their deficits and challenges. All will share data internally to develop individual solutions and support strategies.

### **Ensuring sufficient provision**

We are expected to commission a further 152 bed spaces in 2021/22. This brings the total number of spaces available to 231 and grant funding comes from the government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)

This excludes Floyds Row which cannot currently be used due to Covid restrictions. It is hoped that Floyds Row will be available as accommodation in full or part, during 21/22.

### **Additional information**

**Cllr Taylor** asked how many vulnerable homeless people have received the Covid-19 vaccination in accordance with government guidelines. Currently 143 have received the vaccination. The welfare teams are trying to increase with support workers assisting in identifying those still in need of the vaccine and encouraging others who are hesitant.

**Cllr Wade** enquired about local day service provisions. **Mr Wilding** (Rough Sleeping and Single Person Homelessness Manager) explained that due to the Covid-19 restrictions these service provisions have had to shut. There is a working group look at how we can restart the local day services.

I asked **Mr Leo** (Interim Director of Housing) about allocated accommodation and it's suitability for people with either complex needs, mental health or addiction issues. Why some people don't take accept accommodation offered or leave the accommodation because of it not being suitable to their needs?.

He explained that whilst the council and support services try to allocate people in their preferred accommodation, due a shortage of housing, especially for single people, and covid-19 restrictions this task is one that requires more work.

St. Mungo's Homeless Charity's contract to supply Oxford's Homeless Services will end this July. The contract will go out to tender.

Below are three **Oxford Mail** links to articles on Oxford City Council fight to end Homelessness.

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19114780.uk-first-new-approach-ending-rough-sleeping-agreed-oxfordshire/?ref=eb>

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19153472.1-6m-prevent-rough-sleeping/?ref=rss&IYA-mail=f319f837-0652-4dfd-a99f-885a24c1d725>

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19118948.data-shows-fewer-homeless-oxford-streets-due-everyone-in/?ref=ebIn>