

Subject:	Next steps - Rough Sleeping and Accommodation during Covid 19 Pandemic and Recovery		
Date of Meeting:	23rd June 2021		
Report of:	Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities Relevant Executive Director		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 As we move toward easing and removal of lockdown measures and ending of Covid-19 restrictions, this report provides a further update on key areas of action and issues arising up to 30th June 2021.
- 1.2 We continue to work closely with Government on securing further funding and support for verified rough sleepers in the City through future Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme grant (RSAP), Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) and other funding routes. In addition, we will continue to actively engage with Government and neighbouring authorities to better understand and seek to address homelessness pressures on south coast towns and cities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note the progress to date.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Next Steps Accommodation Programme (Covid 1)**

- 3.1 The NSAP Report, considered at previous Housing Committees set out in detail the specifics relating to the amount of grant awarded and the conditions associated with that grant. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have been clear that the grant funding is ringfenced to meet the needs of people accommodated as at 30th September 2020 and for those who are subsequently verified as rough sleepers as set out in the report to Housing Committee on 18th November 2020.
- 3.2 As a reminder the NSAP bid proposal included funding for:
 - Ensuring current provision to safeguard rough sleepers and those assessed as at risk of rough sleeping can continue for an appropriate length of time.
 - Reconnection where safe to do so.

- Expanding Homeless Prevention and Resolution Officers (Brighton & Hove City Council).
- Expanding Housing First coupled with expanded Home Purchase Policy.
- Expanding provision of supported move on accommodation and increasing Private Sector Leasing via partners to provide additional supported accommodation.
- Expanding use of private rented sector accommodation.
- Provision of specialist resource to work to secure the settled status of individuals who are EEA nationals without settled status.
- Access to employment.
- Return Home reconciliation work with young people where this is a safe option.

3.3 Whilst the Council received the largest single allocation of NSAP funding nationally not all the required work was funded. Although the funding was significant it amounted to 70% of the need identified. The resources needed to move on everyone by 31st March 2021 including availability of suitable accommodation was very challenging as reported to Housing Committee in March. At that time, we anticipated being able to move on 220 of the 369 accommodated by 31st March 2021. The remainder of this group, which amount to around 149 people would continue to be prioritised for move on during the early part of 2021/22. In fact, we were able to move on 221 people and had 148 remaining achieving slightly more than anticipated. As at 6th June 2021 346 people have moved on leaving 111 people remaining in this Covid 1 cohort.

3.4 The government ended support for people who were assessed as at risk of rough sleeping, after 30th September 2020. However, people who were verified as rough sleepers were still included in the Covid 1 cohort-for accommodation. Between 30th September 2020 and 31st of May BHCC have accommodated 64 new verified rough sleepers. It is planned that we will move on most of this cohort from emergency accommodation by October 2021 along with those in the Covid 2 cohort when funding from both MHCLG and that agreed by Policy & Resources Committee in March 2021, has expired. As we move out of the pandemic and open up our services we have provision in No Second Night Out (NSNO) and our Off street Offer, under the Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant 4 (RSI4) to provide short term accommodation to enable verified rough sleepers to move off the street.

Those assessed as at risk of rough sleeping - Covid 2

3.5 Policy and Resources Committee on 3rd December 2020, agreed to the continuation of the accommodation offer for those people assessed as at risk of rough sleeping who presented after 30th September 2020 during the pandemic. This group are not covered by Government funding and so we termed them as Covid 2 to distinguish between the funding sources. In line with proposed easing and ending of national Covid-19 restrictions and opening up of the council's usual homeless prevention and housing options services, Housing Committee in March 2021, agreed that by 21st June 2021, the accommodation offer to those at risk of rough sleeping, (the Covid- 2 cohort), made for the duration of the pandemic is ended where no accommodation duty is owed by the council. The number of people in this group who were accommodated reached a peak of 242 in the week

commencing 12th April before starting to reduce. As at 6th June 189 people have moved on, while new people have been accommodated, leaving 208 people remaining in Covid 2.

3.6 Total Figures

We are continuing to focus resources on improving homelessness prevention and move on but there are still challenges with identifying suitable move on options for everyone. The table below shows the number of people who remain accommodated.

Numbers accommodated	30 st Sept 2020	15/02/21	31/03/21	06/06/21
Covid 1	369	191	148	111
Covid 2	0	207	234	208
Total	369	398	382	319

In order to achieve move on within the current funding provided around 319 people need to be offered accommodation, reconnected, re-united or resolve their own needs. This is a challenging target which the Housing Committee's Homelessness Reduction Board will monitor. We are finalising a detailed move on plan in order to monitor progress. Full details of the various moves are contained in the weekly data spreadsheet (as at week commencing 31.05.21 contained in Appendix 2). Moving on the remaining group will be challenging as they include a greater proportion of people with multiple and compound needs. In addition, we will continue to see new people being verified as rough sleepers who are being added to this group which totals 64 as of the 6th June 2021.

Supply of accommodation

- 3.7 We are continuing to identify supply to enable the remaining people to move on as follows:
- 3.7.1 Private rented accommodation - We are working with landlords and agents to increase supply and offer support to both landlord and tenant to ensure the accommodation is sustained. As at 30th May 2021, 84 people had been moved into suitable private rented accommodation.
- 3.7.2 Housing First - Home Purchase Policy is expanded to purchase an additional 30 properties to be used as Housing First. As at 30th May 2021 all 30 purchases have been completed of which 18 of those properties undergoing refurbishment/repair and 12 properties are let.
- 3.7.3 Supported accommodation - An average of 3 units a week becomes available and ready to nominate into. Those ready to move on from supported accommodation are being assisted to do so to facilitate this pathway. Clarion/St Mungo's acquired 25 units of supported accommodation, this forms part of the NSAP grant. These units are now mobilised and let.
- 3.7.4 Social Housing - During the pandemic, due to the restrictions and difficulties undertaking void work, there have been relatively few properties to let. This is now starting to improve as set out below. In addition, there are 10 new flats coming to completion and ready to be let by Brighton Lions Housing Society.

	Properties advertised	Properties let
Jan	22	37
Feb	75	42
Mar	48	66
Apr	45	32
May	31	40
Total	221	217

The table below provides information on the lets to the different priority groups up until the end of March 2021.

Group (target allocation)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total	Overall percentage across all years
Homeless (40%)	306 (42%)	285 (40%)	230 (40.5%)	179 (47%)	1000	42%
Transfers (25%)	190 (26%)	168 (24%)	138 (24.5%)	78 (21%)	574	24%
Homeseekers (25%)	209 (28%)	177 (25%)	126 (22%)	64 (17%)	576	24%
Council's interest (10%)*	30 (4%)	72 (10%)	75 (13%)	55 (15%)	232	10%
Total	735	702	569	376	2382	

*This group is people nominated by Children's services and Adult Social Care, which also includes those for Housing First.

The allocations data above adheres closely to the targets set out in the Allocations Plan during its period of operation. However, the target for properties advertised to accepted homeless in temporary accommodation was increased to 80% owing to the pandemic and the exceptional challenges upon the Local Authority. The Allocations Plan will be next reviewed in September 2021.

3.7.5 Referrals and Reconnections - A total of 53 reconnections have been achieved as at 6th June 2021. As previously advised in earlier reports, there are challenges with statutory reconnections as we must ensure there is suitable accommodation for the person to be referred into and the receiving local authority require evidence that the person has a local connection with them. This can be difficult if people are reluctant to be reconnected. To improve performance on local connection, we are finalising establishment of a cross agency team, which will include Housing colleagues, located at First Base Day Centre and at No Second Night Out (NSNO). We are continuing to have discussions with our advisors at MHCLG and are finalising protocols with neighbouring authorities with respect to these cases. There are potentially 27 people who could be reconnected depending on establishing robust evidence to support a referral.

3.8 **Housing Options**

The Housing Options service is seeing more people face to face in line with the relaxation of restrictions. This is occurring in hotels in addition to expanding capacity to see some people in the Customer Service Centre by appointment only, to refocus as the service recovers onto prevention.

In 2020/2021 the council prevented 598 households from becoming homeless, this compares with the previous year 2019/2020 when 791 households were prevented from becoming homeless. Whilst numbers are lower than 19/20, conditions were significantly more challenging during the pandemic. However, evictions from private rented accommodation have been paused due to the Government moratorium on evictions, this has been extended until 31st May 2021.

Information from the Office for National Statistics shows an increase of people claiming benefits in Brighton and Hove rose from 5,880 in March 2020 to 8,120 as of 10th December 2021. Locally, affordability is one the biggest causes of private rented sector eviction. The end of the moratorium on evictions from private rented accommodation is likely to result in increased demand for homelessness services, but it is difficult to estimate scale of impact at this stage. Action has been taken to contact landlords who have accommodation in the city to contact us if they are considering eviction so that we can try and resolve issues or avoid homelessness. The Housing Options service is preparing for post pandemic changes in service demand, especially in relation to recovery of services from the impact of the pandemic and preparing for refocus on intensive prevention work.

3.9 **Decanting short term hotels.**

Alongside moving on people accommodated under Covid is the necessity to decant the additional hotels acquired during the pandemic to align with the agreement of Policy and Resources in March 2021 Report to extend that hotel provision until the beginning of October 2021. In meeting this goal, the decant of a large hotel was achieved 21st May 2021 ready for return to the provider following dilapidations being agreed. This required moving 69 people, of which 19 have moved on to settled accommodation; 9 are about to move on to their settled accommodation, with the remaining people moved to alternative spaces in other remaining hotels. The people in all the hotels are a mix of Covid 1 and 2 placements in addition to people accommodated under a statutory homeless duty. Moving people on this scale necessary puts a pressure on resources both in terms of the accommodation needed to move people into and for the staffing to support such moves.

3.10 **Out of Area placements**

The council has for many years had to use some emergency short term accommodation outside the city due to the capacity of the market within the city. We have contracted with some providers to procure accommodation in neighbouring areas within the broad rental market so as to provide affordable options. However, following the outbreak of the pandemic and the increasing need for emergency accommodation, these figures escalated to a peak of 330 in Eastbourne and Lewes areas. We have worked hard to identify additional accommodation within the city and have managed to reduce numbers down to

210 as at 7th May which is a reduction of over 100 people. As at 6th June there are 236 households placed in Lewes & Eastbourne authority areas. We are committed to continuing to reduce our need to make placements outside of the city and to reduce our overall need for Temporary and Emergency accommodation as we refocus on prevention.

Funding for 2021/22

3.11 Aside from core funding, there are other main sources of grant as follows:

- a) Homelessness Prevention Grant – as previously notified to Housing Committee this is a combination of the previously called Flexible Homeless Support Grant and Homelessness Burdens Funding. These grants are awarded by MHCLG based on previous figures of homelessness and temporary accommodation. It is primarily to fund the management element of temporary accommodation that was removed from the housing benefit several years ago, and in addition to improve prevention and reduce the need for temporary accommodation.
- b) Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) 4. This is bid for through submissions that aim to support people to move on from rough sleeping. For 2021/22 there is a new element for prevention and early intervention which is very welcome. We bid for a total of £2.8M for various interventions to support single homeless people and prevent homelessness and have been awarded the full amount. This is ringfenced to those projects in the bid.
- c) MHCLG awarded additional funding in April of £0.5M for the continuation of housing rough sleepers up to June 2021.
- d) Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) – This is for capital schemes that can be delivered in 2021/22 or early 2022/23 with revenue support until 2023/24. There are 3 dates for submission. The first was 29th April 2021, with further opportunities in July and in September. Advice from MHCLG is to apply early as available funding may be allocated early in the year with little available later in the year. In April we submitted a bid for 2 schemes as follows:
 - i) Housing Led Support. This is to provide 30x 1 bed properties of which the funding for 18 had already been agreed from the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 which includes £1.200m direct revenue funding to fund 30% of a new £4.000m budget included in the capital programme with the remainder being funded from HRA borrowing, ensuring the borrowing required can be repaid from the new rental income. The remaining 12 x 1 bed properties require capital grant which we have bid for under the RSAP. Revenue support costs for all 30 properties have been requested similar to those of Housing First model provided under NSAP.
 - ii) Rapid Rehousing Scheme. This is to deliver 30x 1 bed or studio properties obtained under 10-year leases with aligned support provision and aimed at those with lower needs to quickly move people into. The outcome of this bid is expected at the end of June/beginning of July.

We are considering other potential capital schemes and are exploring options with a range of registered housing providers, in addition to any potential

options to purchase a block of flats some of which could be used for this group of people with support.

e) Protect Funding - As previously notified to Housing Committee in March, we successfully bid for funding jointly with Health partners; this is working well as follows:

- A Preventing Admissions Worker is based at A&E to work with rough sleeping people.
- 5-bed unit Step Down from hospital service operational to enable patients who are ready to be discharged but are of no fixed abode and require clinical support to be safely discharged.
- An expanded peripatetic Protect team to offer clinical support to medically vulnerable people in emergency accommodation and supported accommodation.

3.12 Government Rough Sleeping Snapshot

The Government's Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2020.

reported on 25.02.21 that Brighton and Hove had the third largest decrease nationally and the highest decrease outside of London with 27 people sleeping rough on 17th November 2020, a 69% decrease. In May 2021 a count was undertaken that reported 16 people sleeping rough in the city. This compares with the previous count undertaken in March 2021, when 16 people were then reported to be sleeping rough in the city. If we are to sustain these l/ow numbers of rough sleepers it is essential that we need to continue to upstream our homeless prevention work, and also continue to provide, where possible, offers of accommodation to all rough sleepers as soon as they are identified (avoiding the risk of entrenchment on the streets with the associated health risks) through the no second night out (NSNO) service and our Off Street Offer funded through the RSI 4 grant. While we used our homeless emergency accommodation as part of the 'Everyone In' pandemic response, as we move out of the Covid-19 emergency provisions, we would no longer usually use council emergency accommodation to house verified rough sleepers but would utilise services funded and commissioned for rough sleepers.

We need to ensure that move on pathways are robust and aligned to prevent accommodation becoming silted up. The performance and outcomes of NSNO are reported to the Homeless Reduction Board.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not applicable

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 None at this time but we will be seeking feedback from customer, partners and providers next year as part of a review of the service going forwards.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 We met the target of moving on 40% of those accommodated under the NSAP provision by 31st December 2020 which was necessary to secure the withheld 30% of the awarded grant.

- 6.2 We focused on the remaining people accommodated under Covid 1 to move on as many people as possible by the end of March 2021, with most of the remainder planned to move on along with Covid 2 by the beginning of October 2021 in line with the decanting of additional hotels.
- 6.3 Following the peak of placements in Covid 2 in mid April 2021, placements have started to decline along with those in Covid 1 and are on track to keep reducing as people are moved on and we have started re-opening our post pandemic offer.
- 6.4 The pandemic has changed the landscape of homelessness and there are further changes anticipated as the full impact emerges and we see implications on loss of accommodation in different groups, particularly those who were previously employed. Future planning and resource allocations will need to focus on the prevention of homelessness through early intervention.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 In February 2021, Budget Council approved £0.650m for 'Ongoing use of emergency (hotel) accommodation for rough sleepers' during 2021/22. There is also further funding in the form of a grant of £0.500m from MHCLG to contribute to additional emergency accommodation, support and move on costs during 2021/22. £0.293m has already been earmarked for the extended lease for the 'No second night Out' venue leaving £0.207m for rough sleeper accommodation. In April 2021, Policy & Resources Committee agreed further funding for accommodating rough sleepers of £2.043m from Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant. Hence, the current budget is £2.900m and has been set with the assumption that all hotels will be decanted by end of September 2021. Any delays to decants will lead to overspends in this area which will need to be reported as part of the Targeted Budget Monitoring (TBM) process.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date 9/06/2021

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 This is a for note report and there are no current legal implication to address.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court

Date: 10.06.21

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 An equalities impact assessment has been carried out

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Weekly data report

