

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 96

Subject: **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping update**
Extract from the Proceedings of the Housing Committee meeting held on the 16 March 2022

Date of meeting: 7 April 2022

Report of: **Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities**

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

Action Required of the Council:

To receive the report from the Housing Committee for consideration and the recommendations for approval.

Recommendations:

That the Emergency Accommodation Charter as outlined in paragraph 3.12 of the report and included in Appendix 4, as an aspirational document and a standard against which the Council and its partners judge our policies, practices and outcomes be adopted.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Housing Committee

4.00pm 16 March 2022

Hove Town Hall, Council Chamber

Minutes

Present: Councillor Gibson (Joint Chair), Hugh-Jones (Joint Chair), Williams (Opposition Spokesperson), Barnett, Fowler, Meadows, Osborne, Platts and Phillips.

Apologies: Councillors Hills, Mears

Part One

68 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING - UPDATE

68.1 The Head of Temporary & Supported Accommodation introduced the report to the committee and gave two presentations.

Answers to Committee Member Questions

68.2 Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that a number of other authorities are responding to re-connections and there does not appear to be a pattern as different authorities are involved at different times. It was noted that the percentage of special needs accommodation had increased over the last two years.

68.3 Councillor Platts was informed that when the Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEP) is triggered the Street Services team go out and let rough sleepers know SWEP is open. It was noted that during COVID sleepers could just turn up, however, this has reverted to being sent by services. The standards of emergency accommodation were a challenge during COVID restrictions. The standards are set into contracts and the number has expanded significantly. The re-procurement of emergency accommodation will be started by the council soon. It was noted that the Street Services team generally know where rough sleepers are in the city.

68.4 Councillor Williams was informed that the emergency accommodation standards are set in all new contracts and the accommodation is inspected. It was noted that some persons have no recourse to public funds, and there is no homogenous group. The council has different powers available to support these persons in this complex area. The Councillor will receive a written response on this matter.

68.5 Councillor Gibson noted that the Emergency Accommodation Charter was not adopted, but the council are trying to align with the charter.

- 68.6 Councillor Meadows was informed that the Homeless Reduction Board (HRB) oversees the homeless strategy and reports to the Housing committee. The Councillor noted that no minutes from HRB had been seen by the committee who are the decision makers.
- 68.7 Councillor Gibson noted the HRB elements in the report which reflects the work done by the HRB. It was agreed the HRB minutes would come to the committee.
- 68.8 Councillor Williams noted that the HRB were not a decision-making body and were only advisory and they would welcome the minutes at committee.
- 68.9 Councillor Meadows was informed by the Principal Accountant that the report was for noting and therefore required no financial implications information, which is all within budget. It was noted that all grants were given before the last Housing committee. The Head of Temporary & Supported Accommodation informed the Councillor that the two hotels used for emergency accommodation were within the city. It was noted that allocations of social housing were not given straight from the street, as rough sleepers were given temporary accommodation first.
- 68.10 Councillor Platts was informed by Councillor Gibson that the emergency accommodation in Kendal Court, Newhaven, had been frozen and the investigation was ongoing. The Head of Temporary & Supported Accommodation informed the Councillor that it was possible that a person could lose the right to council housing if they turned down offers of accommodation. However, there is no enforcement and people are offered private rented accommodation, which some prefer. Customers bid on properties and only those at the end of bidding cycle who have not given good reasons for turning down properties are given the option of the private rented sector.
- 68.11 Councillor Osborne was informed that the SWEP was open at all times during COVID restrictions and operating under triggers now. The SWEP is located in one place. Once the winter provision has ended the council are looking to prevent 'second night out'. It was noted that many are re-connected, and the emergency accommodation protocol is currently in place. It was noted that those evicted under Section 21 would not always go direct to private sector. Three months support is given by the council to landlords and tenants.
- 68.12 Councillor Gibson noted that the council wanted to reduce evictions and that the in-house team were not evicting residents.
- 68.13 Councillor Meadows was informed that the Emergency Accommodation Charter was an aspirational document. The Councillor stated they would not support the recommendations.
- 68.14 Councillor Williams noted the Emergency Accommodation Charter was presented to the committee some time ago and then COVID arrived. The Councillor supported the charter.

68.15 Councillor Meadows expressed concerns that the policy of not entering street tents, where attacks or drug overdoses could not be seen, was not good for people's health. The Councillor considered an aspirational document still needs to be measured.

68.16 Councillor Gibson considered that not all documents could be measured, and the charter was a positive document.

68.17 Councillor Osborne noted that a tent officer had a welfare approach to the street community and the Homeless Bill of Rights does not encourage issues.

68.18 A vote was taken, and by 7 to 2, the committee agreed the recommendations.

68.19 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the update on Rough Sleeper & Single Homeless Services be noted;
- (2) That the update on the Homelessness Transformation Programme be noted;
- (3) That the contents of the Homes England Compliance Audit Report on the Next Steps Accommodation Programme be noted;
- (4) That the update requested following the Notice of Motion agreed at January Housing Committee on the action proposed to ensure homeless people and rough sleepers placed in emergency accommodation by Brighton & Hove City Council have proper support to ensure their safety and wellbeing be noted;
- (5) That the Emergency Accommodation Charter as an aspirational document and a standard against which the Council and its partners judge our policies and practices and outcomes be agreed;
- (6) That it be noted that the measurable and feasible aspects of the Charter have been embedded in our revised Emergency Accommodation specification; and
- (7) That the Charter be subject to review periodically and upon renewal of the associated contracts be agreed. Where the Charter is not embedded in the contract, this will also be kept under review with JustLife and Fulfilling lives.

68.20 **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:** That the Emergency Accommodation Charter as outlined in paragraph 3.12 of the report and included in Appendix 4, as an aspirational document and a standard against which the Council and its partners judge our policies, practices and outcomes be adopted.