

Terms of Reference for the NCS Homelessness & Rough Sleeping TF Group

Background:

In the summer of 2020, the NCS Scrutiny Panel decided to investigate the issue of homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough. This was mainly driven by concerns over the persistent nature of the problem in Slough and the potential increase in numbers as more people are expected to lose their jobs because of COVID and the winding down of the furlough scheme in October 2020.

SBC has developed a Homelessness Prevention Strategy, which was updated in June 2019 and gives an overview of our existing services for the homeless and rough sleepers; it also outlines the initiatives we have in place to prevent homelessness as well as the risks, challenges and opportunities the council have. SBC's Homelessness Prevention Strategy will serve as a starting point for this Task & Finish Group as they collect evidence and assess how effective the model of state support in Slough is helping those in need.

Purpose of the Task Group

The Task & Finish Group will investigate and make recommendations in relation to the SBC Homelessness/Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy, with specific reference to:

1. Identification and reporting:

- Examine the level of understanding and definition of rough sleeping and homelessness by residents, partners, businesses and councillors.
- How are rough sleepers identified and reported to the council by officers, residents, businesses and councillors?
- How are those at risk of homelessness identified and what measures are taken to help them stay at their homes?

2. Support provision

- What support is available to the homeless/rough sleepers in terms of accommodation, employment, skills, wellbeing and mental health?
- How and why SBC support provision is procured?
- Housing finance model- what are the main areas of spending over the last three years, and what are the financial challenges for this area?
- Understand the voluntary & community sector and private sector involvement.
- Examine the barriers that prevent people from taking advantage of the support available to them.

3. Engagement & Communication

- What is known of the service provided by SBC for this group and how is the service publicised?
- How does SBC engage with partners and residents to help prevent rough sleeping and homelessness? Is this engagement sufficient?
- How to engage local businesses to team up with SBC to join in a strategy to get homeless people start their lives all over.

Outcomes expected

A report covering the areas of investigation identified above, including options and recommendations to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Slough, will be produced at the end of this investigation.

Operational Delivery

- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task & Finish Group will identify evidence and collect data to help understand the current situation. This will include the number of homeless/ rough sleepers in Slough and how many of them have been able to get the help they needed to get off the street and into a normal healthy living.
- A survey may be prepared to capture the views of residents, partners, businesses and councillors on the definition of rough sleeping and homelessness.
- The Group will also look at the work of other councils and identify best practices and innovation.
- In addition, the Group intends to hold meetings, in person or virtually, with various stakeholders, including:
 - SBC officers – including the housing, public health, parks, regeneration, and mental health teams.
 - Charities and other partner organisations, including Shoc, Slough Outreach, Slough BID and local GPs- to understand if/how they help and identify opportunities for further collaboration.
 - Turning point – to understand how they work and how effective their work has been.
 - DWP and Probation services.
 - Homeless and rough sleeping residents.
- The group will aim to hold its meetings and evidence sessions between October and November 2020 and submit their final report to the NCS scrutiny meeting on 6th January 2021.

Membership

- Cllr Zafar Ajaib (Chair)
 - Cllr Harjinder Minhas
 - Cllr Christine Hulme
 - Cllr Waqas Sabah.
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