



Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Report of: Richard Webb, Executive Director Communities

Subject: Schedule of Requirements for Bed and Breakfast accommodation used to house homeless households

Author of Report: Belinda Gallup, Service Manager Housing Solutions
273 5239

Summary:

Following a presentation to Scrutiny in March 2013 and a subsequent visit by some Members to a B&B establishment used by the Housing Solutions Service, Scrutiny have requested an opportunity to provide input into the revision of the Schedule of Requirements, SOR, that is in place between the Council and B&B establishments.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Scrutiny is requested to suggest any changes for officers to consider during the forthcoming review of the SOR.

Background Papers:

Current SOR

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Executive Director of Communities

Schedule of Requirements for Bed and Breakfast accommodation used to house homeless households

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The local authority is not required to provide accommodation for all homeless people in the city but commissions a range of supported housing and helps people to find private rented accommodation. The Council does have a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation for households who are homeless, eligible for assistance and whom the authority has reason to believe are in a priority need group, i.e. are vulnerable within the definition of the legislation governing homelessness. This accommodation is provided whilst the authority carries out enquiries to determine whether a full rehousing duty is owed.
- 1.2 Many people who experience homelessness are able to secure their own alternative settled accommodation and to return to a stable and settled life. However, many others require the intervention and support of services, including the local authority, to assist them in securing alternative accommodation.
- 1.3 As well as temporary accommodation which is used to house homeless households, the Council also uses B&B accommodation because of the requirement to provide emergency accommodation on the day of presentation. It is widely recognised that B&B is not suitable accommodation for homeless people. There are statutory requirements on local authorities, which the Council meets, to ensure that no family is placed in B&B accommodation for a period of longer than 6 weeks. It is also acknowledged that B&B accommodation is not suitable for 16 or 17 year olds, even in an emergency.
- 1.4 The Council's reliance on B&B accommodation to house homeless people has reduced significantly in recent years. In April 2008 there were nearly 150 households in B&B accommodation, by September 2013 this figure had reduced to around 4 households. Recently there have been a number of days when Housing Solutions have had no placements in B&B and the service now consistently meets its target of 5 or less households in B&B. Where we do have to use B&B the average stay is now less than 5 days.

2. Schedule of Requirements

- 2.1 The B&B establishments that the service uses are run as private businesses and Housing Solutions have a spot booking arrangement with them, and as such the Council cannot require any B&B to agree to any service level agreement or Schedule of Requirements (SOR) and are instead reliant on their willingness to do this.
- 2.2 B&Bs are, however, required to comply with all relevant licensing and registration requirements relating to houses in multiple occupation. Prior

to the service using an establishment colleagues in Private Sector Housing will inspect a B&B to determine whether licensing is required and that they meet the appropriate standards in relation to numbers of bathrooms, WC facilities and possible additional kitchen facilities. Fire safety is also inspected to ensure that there is an appropriate fire detection system in each premises. Additionally, gas, electric and insurance certificates are requested at the required times.

- 2.3 As previously reported to Scrutiny, officers in Housing Solutions, working with the legal team, developed a SOR which was sent to the five B&B establishments which the Council were using at the time for homeless households. This schedule is attached in the background papers.
- 2.4 The service currently refers to three B&Bs and of these, two are signed up to the SOR. Whilst the third has not signed the SOR it does comply with its requirements.
- 2.5 The schedule details a minimum level of service and standards, including, but not limited to ensuring that:-
 - 2.5.1 a member of staff is available on site 24/7;
 - 2.5.2 bedrooms are for the sole use of the customer, with a minimum of a bed per person, wash hand basin and a wardrobe;
 - 2.5.3 customers are able to secure belongings in a lockable space or able to access use of a safe;
 - 2.5.4 bins are emptied daily and rooms cleaned immediately before occupancy and daily thereafter;
 - 2.5.5 bathroom facilities are available at all times and towels changed on a daily basis;
 - 2.5.6 bedding is available for each bed, cot or moses basket and changed weekly, or when there is a change of occupancy;
 - 2.5.7 breakfast is available everyday between 7am – 9.30am, with minimum requirements about what is to be provided.
- 2.6 Establishments are required to report onto the appropriate body any incidents of abuse which are disclosed to them, or where they have a concern about potential abuse or neglect.
- 2.7 Referrals can be made 24/7 and establishments are responsible for booking out customers when the local authority ends its duty to provide temporary accommodation.

3 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?

- 3.1 As the changes in Welfare Reform are rolled out it is anticipated that the levels of homelessness will increase throughout the UK. It is therefore essential that the focus of the Council's homelessness services is to prevent homelessness at the earliest point and thereby reduce the numbers of households in the city who do become homeless. This is currently a priority area for the service.
- 3.2 As reported to Scrutiny in March 2013 the service is working with partners across the city to introduce a supported accommodation pathway which will provide homeless households with temporary or

supported accommodation, dependent on need, with the necessary support to enable people to move on and sustain suitable housing.

- 3.3 Whilst there may always be a need to use B&B accommodation, this should only be regarded as an emergency, short term option, until supported accommodation is available and only in exceptional circumstances. Should the people of Sheffield become homeless they have a right to expect that they will be housed in suitable, appropriate accommodation and there needs to be a range of accommodation available to meet the differing needs of individuals and families.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Officers will be reviewing the SOR over the coming weeks and Members are invited to suggest amendments, revisions and comments for officers to consider as part of this revision process.