



# Agenda Item 7

## Report to Safer and Stronger communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 7th April 2016

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**Report of:** Janet Sharp – Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service

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**Subject:** Rough Sleeping in Sheffield

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**Summary:**

A petition calling on Sheffield City Council to open empty buildings as winter shelters for homeless people was brought to full council meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> January. The Council's Petition Scheme requires that any petition with over 5,000 signatures be the subject of debate at the council meeting and as the petition submitted was over the threshold a debate was held. The outcome of the discussion was to discuss rough sleeping at the Safer Stronger Communities Scrutiny and development Committee. As shown in the recommendation below:

“That this council

- (a) welcomes the work taking place across the city to tackle homelessness, and the concerns of local people on this issue;
- (b) Understands that because local services are able to meet demand for homelessness services at present, there is no need to open up empty buildings for rough sleepers, but if this situation was to change in future the Council would consider all options, working alongside its partners, which could include opening empty buildings; and
- (c) Nevertheless, requests that a report on the issue of support for rough sleepers in the city be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee for consideration”

This report discusses the issue of rough sleeping in Sheffield and the provision in the city to support those people who are sleeping on the streets.

**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	X

Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

Note the contents of this report and to provide views and recommendations on the council's approach to working with rough sleepers.

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

## **Report of the Director of Housing and neighbourhoods**

### **Rough Sleeping in Sheffield**

#### **1 Context**

- 1.1 A petition calling on Sheffield City Council to open empty buildings as winter shelters for homeless people was brought to full council meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> January. The petition “To: Sheffield City Council. Follow the lead of Ryan Giggs, Gary Neville and Manchester City Council and open empty buildings to our homeless this winter. Why is this important? For people in one of the wealthiest societies that has ever existed to be sleeping in the open in winter is inhumane. It's also inexcusable when we have so many empty buildings.”
- 1.2 The Council’s Petition Scheme requires that any petition with over 5,000 signatures be the subject of debate at the council meeting and as the petition submitted was over the threshold a debate was held. The outcome of the discussion was to discuss rough sleeping at the Safer Stronger Communities Scrutiny and development Committee. As shown in the recommendation below:

*“That this Council (a) welcomes the work taking place across the city to tackle homelessness, and the concerns of local people on this issue;*

*(b) understands that because local services are able to meet demand for homelessness services at present, there is no need to open up empty buildings for rough sleepers, but if this situation was to change in future the Council would consider all options, working alongside its partners, which could include opening empty buildings; and*

*(c) Nevertheless, requests that a report on the issue of support for rough sleepers in the city be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee for consideration.”*

#### **2 Introduction**

- 2.1 Rough Sleeping is the most visible sign of homelessness. There are many other people who are homeless in the city but are not sleeping on the streets. These people are often in temporary accommodation or living with family and friends. Many people are able to find their own solutions. All of these people can approach the Sheffield City Council’s Advice and Options Service for advice, support and assistance with their housing problems.

Some people who appear to be sleeping rough may be engaged in street activities such as crime, drinking or begging, but in fact have somewhere to stay.

### **3. Rough Sleeping in Sheffield**

- 3.1 In 2014/15 it was estimated nationally that 2,744 people were sleeping rough at any one time. This was up 14% from those estimated in 2013 and a 55% increase from 2010.
- 3.2 In Yorkshire and the Humber there has been a steady decrease in the number of people sleeping rough which is opposite to the national trend. As far as Local Authority areas go the biggest increases in Rough Sleeping have been seen in Westminster (89% increase) and Manchester (79% increase).
- 3.3 There has been a steady decrease in the number of people sleeping rough in Sheffield over the last few years. In 2013 Sheffield had 17 rough sleepers whereas in 2014 there were 10 and in 2015 there were 11. Of the 11 people sleeping rough in 2015/16 one person owned their own house but refused to return, 2 had no recourse to public funds and three others gave up their hostel beds because they preferred to sleep rough.
- 3.4 In Sheffield we are confident that we know who is sleeping rough at any one time and we have mechanisms in place to identify people who find they having to sleep on the streets.

### **4 Identifying and Supporting Rough Sleepers in Sheffield**

- 4.1 SCC's Housing Advice and options Service Manager chairs a multi-agency group where each individual rough sleeper is discussed and an action plan put in place for each person with an aim to getting them off the streets and finding suitable accommodation. This includes putting support in place to help people maintain this accommodation. Members of this group include SCC, health, police, community support officers, drug and alcohol services and the voluntary and faith sector.
- 4.2 SCC commission a Rough Sleepers Service through Turning Point. Turning Point focuses on identifying rough sleepers and supporting them to secure accommodation and support. Every week they undertake a number of early morning outreach sessions to identify and support people sleeping rough.
- 4.3 Once per week a multi-agency outreach session is undertaken early morning led by the police. Staff from SCC and Turning Point also take part.
- 4.4 Many people who sleep rough have high and complex needs and are not engaged with other services such as health. SCC has a monthly complex cases panel to discuss those people with severe and enduring mental health issues who are in housing difficulty to ensure that multi-agency solutions are in place.
- 4.5 If people do find themselves homeless (people without a permanent home but have somewhere to stay which could be sofa surfing or temporary accommodation) and /or roofless (people who have nowhere at all to go and may have to sleep rough) they can contact the SCC Housing Options and Advice Telephone Access Team. Some people are homeless but have somewhere to stay temporarily and others potentially have to sleep on the streets. An experienced officer will offer support and advice to individuals as well as starting to determine if the council

has a duty to provide accommodation. The team will also refer to supported housing if the customer has a particular housing support need. There is also an out of hours for people who find themselves roofless outside office hours.

- 4.6 The Rough Sleepers Service can also be contacted by agencies and members of the public if they identify someone they consider may be sleeping rough.
- 4.7 Sheffield has a number of non – accommodation based services who offer practical help and advice to homeless and vulnerable people. These include offering one to one support as well as food, clothing, showers and laundry facilities. The Archer project also offers a drop in service with a nurse and a local GP and a SCC housing options officer also does a surgery once a week on their premises.

## **5. Severe Weather provision (SWEP)**

- 5.1 There is a humanitarian obligation on all local authorities to prevent deaths on the streets caused by severe winter weather. The council's responsibilities towards those households who are owed a duty under the homeless legislation are not affected by severe weather.
- 5.2 The Met Office weather forecast is used and when temperatures are forecast to drop to zero degrees or below for the three consecutive nights the SWEP should be implemented on day one of the three day forecast.
- 5.3 Once SWEP provision is in place anyone who finds themselves in a position where they have to sleep rough are placed in accommodation. This accommodation includes crash pads, hostels including their communal areas and Bed and Breakfast. The Rough Sleeper Service also works with these customers who were placed in SWEP provision to try and identify move on accommodation.

## **6 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

- 6.1 The people of Sheffield can be reassured that there is provision and support for Rough Sleepers in the city.
- 6.2 If a member of the public finds a rough sleeper to enable the person to get help and support there are a number of organisations that can be contacted. Including the police via 101, Sheffield City Council Housing Options and Advice line, Homeless out of Hours Service and the Turning Point Rough Sleepers team

## **7 Recommendation**

- 7.1 The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and policy development Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and to provide views and recommendations on the council's approach to working with rough sleepers.

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