

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr McGarry

9 March 2017

Councillor Susan Elsmore
Cabinet Member
c/o Room 520
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



Dear Susan

Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee – 8 March 2017

On behalf of the Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, I would like to thank you and officers for attending for pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet Report entitled 'Cardiff Rough Sleeper Strategy 2017-2020'.

Overall, Members are pleased that officers have developed a Rough Sleeper Strategy. It is clear that more people are sleeping rough in Cardiff. Members wish to thank council officers, third sector workers and volunteers for the sterling work currently undertaken to help people who are sleeping rough; their efforts make a difference daily to those on our streets. However, clearly something needs to change to tackle the growing numbers and the particular challenges facing those who are sleeping rough.

The Strategy sets out a number of steps that will help to identify the changes required. Members are supportive of the overall direction and tone of the Strategy and wish to pay tribute to officers for developing an innovative and admirable approach. Members have some comments, observations and recommendations that we hope will be of assistance in clarifying aspects of the Strategy and in its implementation.

Members note that many rough sleepers have health problems, which are either pre-existing, caused by or exacerbated by rough sleeping. Members are aware that it can be problematic for rough sleepers to gain access to health services, particularly mental health services. Members were pleased to hear that officers propose to gather evidence of the health needs of rough sleepers and that they are confident that an evidence-based approach will lead to improvements in pathways and service provision, as this approach has been proven to work previously.

Members are pleased that there is recognition of the need to expand the number of units used for the 'housing first' approach, accompanied by appropriate support.

With regard to the draft EEA Rough Sleeping Protocol (attached at Appendix 2 of the draft Cabinet Report), Members have the following points they wish to make:

- Members are pleased to note that administrative removal will be the last resort, and will only be used once all avenues to engage EEA rough sleepers have been exhausted

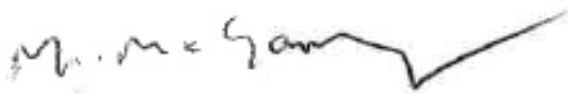
- Members note that it will be council officers that make the referral to the Home Office Immigration Compliance and Enforcement; Members recommend the protocol be amended to make this clear
- Members recommend amending the wording 'site visit' at point 11 of the protocol
- Members recommend amending the wording 'clean and clear' at point 15 of the protocol
- Members note that the resource levels for reconnection services will be reviewed to ensure that the level of reconnection service is sufficient to meet demand
- Members recognise that access to homeless service provision is via the Gateway. However, Members are concerned that some EEA nationals will require significant 'hand-holding' to get them to the point of accessing via the Gateway and wonder how this fits with the approach outlined in the protocol.
- Members remain unclear whether the EEA national rough sleeper will be told when the Immigration Compliance and Enforcement team will be carrying out their visits and would be grateful to receive clarification on this matter.

With regard to the implementation of the Strategy, Members recognise that communication will be vital, given the wealth of groups operating to support those sleeping rough in Cardiff. It will be essential for all groups to be clear about the need to avoid creating dependency and for them to have information to enable them to empower people sleeping rough, signposting them to routes into service provision. Members were pleased to hear officers state that they plan to meet with these groups to have face-to-face discussions with them; we believe this is needed to ensure understanding and buy-in to the Strategy.

Finally, Members note that there will be an additional recommendation in the final Cabinet Report relating to the use of Supporting People funding to support the Rough Sleepers Strategy.

Thank you again for ensuring that Committee was able to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of this item. We will be recommending to a future Committee that they undertake further scrutiny of this area, given the vulnerability of rough sleepers.

Yours sincerely,



COUNTY COUNCILLOR MARY M^CGARRY
Chairperson - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

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