
STREET HOMELESSNESS IN CARDIFF

Purpose of Report

1. In September 2015, the Committee decided to consider the issue of Street Homelessness, following a request from South Wales Police officers. This report provides an overview of the scope of the scrutiny, background information on homelessness and street homelessness and details the structure of the meeting.

Background

2. The scope of the scrutiny at this meeting is:
 - i) To gain an overview of the situation in Cardiff with regard to street homelessness, in particular identifying the scale of street homelessness in Cardiff and emerging trends in the demography of street homelessness
 - ii) To understand the issues and pressures facing street homeless people and service providers
 - iii) To hear from service providers involved in dealing with these pressures and the work underway to prepare for cold weather pressures, and
 - iv) To hear the views and perspectives on street homelessness in Cardiff from relevant stakeholders.
3. At the Committee meeting, Communities & Housing officers will give a presentation that provides statistics on street homelessness in Cardiff, eligibility for service provision, barriers to accessing service provision, existing service provision and planned future work, including details regarding cold weather provision.
4. Representatives from the following external service providers have also been invited to attend the Committee meeting to share their knowledge, views and perspectives on street homelessness in Cardiff:
 - i) South Wales Police officers
 - ii) Huggard Centre

- iii) Salvation Army
- iv) The Wallich.

Policy Context

5. The Welsh Government 10 year Homelessness Plan, issued in 2009, contains a commitment to address rough sleeping in Wales as well as commitments in a number of related areas to enable homelessness in Wales to be addressed. These include: providing housing advice and maximising financial inclusion; developing the private rented sector, minimising mortgage repossession, sustaining tenancies and enabling move on; improving life chances, employment and health and well being; caring for veterans, supporting care leavers and preventing homelessness from domestic abuse; breaking the cycle regarding criminal justice; housing asylum seekers and refugees; and tackling rural homelessness.

6. Cardiff Council's Corporate Plan 2015-17 prioritises supporting people in vulnerable situations, including people who are homeless. Cardiff Council's Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015 details the aims and objectives to address homelessness in Cardiff and contains the following: *'Aim 4 - To reduce rough sleeping and develop responsive services to support the most vulnerable'*. The Communities Directorate Delivery Plan 2015-16 states that a homelessness review will be used to develop a new Housing Strategy, alongside information from the Local Housing Market Assessment and Allocations Policy review. The new draft Housing Strategy is due for consideration at Cabinet in December 2015.

Street Homelessness

7. Shelter has produced a factsheet on street homelessness, which is attached in full at **Appendix A**. The factsheet was produced in 2006 and so some of the legislation and Government policies referred to are no longer applicable; however the definition of street homelessness, overview of the main reasons people become street homeless and details of different types of service provision to tackle street homelessness are still relevant. The definition on street homelessness is copied below for ease of reference:

‘What is street homelessness?’

Homelessness means not having a home. A home is a place that provides security, and links to a community and support network. It needs to be decent and affordable. Under the law, even if someone has a roof over their head they can still be homeless. This is because they may not have the right to stay where they live or their home may be unsuitable to live in.

Rough sleeping is defined by the Government as ‘people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or ‘bashes¹’).

Street homelessness is a much wider term than rough sleeping, taking into account the street lifestyles of some people who may not actually sleep on the streets. Street homeless people are those who routinely find themselves on the streets during the day with nowhere to go at night. Some will end up sleeping outside, or in a derelict or other building not designed for human habitation, perhaps for long periods. Others will sleep at a friend’s for a very short time, or stay in a hostel, night-shelter or squat, or spend nights in prison or hospital.²

8. At **Appendix B**, Members will find a pocket guide to homeless services in Cardiff, which is available on the Council’s website.

Way Forward

9. At this meeting, Members of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee will have an opportunity to consider general issues around street homelessness.
10. Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member, Housing, Health and Well Being) will be invited to give a statement. If a local third sector organisation has submitted a question on Street Homelessness that has been agreed by the Chair, as part of the pilot of public questions at scrutiny, Members will be pleased to hear and respond to the question.

¹ A ‘bash’ is a makeshift shelter often comprised of cardboard boxes

² Extract taken from Shelter Factsheet, provided in full at Appendix A to this report

11. Sarah McGill (Director of Communities, Housing and Customer Services), Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Communities and Housing), Kate Hustler (Operational Manager, Assessment and Support) and Ian Ephraim (Supported Accommodation & Outreach Manager) will give a presentation to Members about street homelessness and the actions being taken with partners to deal with street homelessness.
12. Representatives from South Wales Police, Huggard, Salvation Army and The Wallich have been invited to attend the meeting, contribute to the discussion and share their knowledge, views and perspectives on street homelessness in Cardiff and how best to address issues relating to this.

Legal Implications

13. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not making policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

14. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Consider the information presented in this report, its appendices and the information presented at the meeting, and
- ii) Determine any comments, observations or recommendations to the Cabinet.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

Director of Governance and Legal Services

01 October 2015