

HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 11th December 2012 at 6pm (to be agreed at the next meeting of the Working Group)

Present: Councillors; Clayden (Chairman), Edwards (Vice-Chairman), Bicknell, Mrs Bower, Haymes, Mrs Pendleton (from minute 38) and Squires

Also

Present: Councillor Elkins (Cabinet Member Housing), Councillor Dingemans (Cabinet Member Customer Services)

Officers: Housing Projects Manager, Democratic Services Officer, Head of Human Resources and Customer Services (Leader Officer)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing & Customer Services Working Group recommends to the Overview Select Committee that:

- 1) It notes the progress made to date with implementing and/or developing actions to address the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities.
- 2) No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 from the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness as described in the report on Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities by Frank Hickson dated October 2012 and as attached to these minutes.

35 APOLOGIES

35.1 Apologies were received from Councillors; Chapman, Mrs Goad, Mrs Harrison, Mrs Oakley and Oliver-Redgate. Apologies were also received from the Head of Housing, Lead Officer to this working group.

36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

36.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

37 MINUTES OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING MEETING ON 15TH AUGUST 2012

37.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11th October were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

37.2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING WORKING GROUP ON 15TH AUGUST 2012

37.3 With respect to minute 33, Council Housing Stock Expansion Opportunities, the Housing Project Manager confirmed that Cabinet had agreed the Housing & Customer Services Working Group's recommendations at the Cabinet Meeting on 10th December 2012. The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the working group that Cabinet had wanted maximum flexibility for the purchase of suitable

properties or land and an initial sum of £500,000 had been recommended for this purpose in 2012/13. It was noted that a Housing Development Officer had been appointed.

38 CUSTOMER SERVICES ACCESS STRATEGY

38.1 The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services presented her report on the Review of the Customer Access Strategy requesting Member's feedback on the direction and focus for this strategy. It was noted that the overall aim of the Customer Access Strategy is to channel customer contact in a way that improves services to our customers whilst reducing costs for the Council. The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services stated that the Council is committed to delivering services through a variety of methods including telephone, reception (face to face), and written communication and emphasised the importance of resolving queries at first point of contact. It was explained that the Customer Access Strategy must establish a Corporate approach so that customers receive the same level of service regardless of what method of communication they use.

(Councillor Mrs Pendleton arrived at 6.20pm and gave her apologies)

38.2 The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services informed the working group that, in recent weeks, several Councillors had visited the Arun Direct Call Centre and thanked Members for their interest which had been greatly appreciated by the Manager and Staff of the Contact Centre. The Councillors discussed their visit and agreed that they had been impressed with the excellent management from the Contact Centre Manager and the efficient, self-motivated staff. Members reported that the main weaknesses they had observed was a lack of IT integration, which caused difficulties for staff, and E-Forms that have to be printed in order to process the information supplied. The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services agreed that these were areas for improvement and informed the working group that whilst the Lagan System is being upgraded there is a lot of work to do with respect to the integration of IT software across the Council. Members were also informed that the Arun Improvement Programme would be addressing the issues surrounding the use of E-Forms.

38.3 The Working Group agreed with the aims of the Customer Access Strategy outlined in section 2 of the report. The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services invited members to contact her should they have any concerns or feedback from their ward members. It was confirmed that an outline strategy should be made available at the next Housing & Customer Services Working Group meeting in February 2013.

39 TENANTS SCRUTINY OF HOUSING SERVICES

39.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services which provided an update to the verbal report made at the meeting on 11th October 2012. Members noted that the Homes and Community Agency now have a statutory role to enforce the Regulatory Framework Standards and intervene only when there is a risk of serious harm to tenants. It was explained that this approach is known as co-regulation and aims to move the focus of decision making and performance management from the regulator towards tenants and their local needs and priorities. The Housing Projects Manager outlined the principles of Regulation, tenant scrutiny, good practice examples from other landlords and the Council's options for introducing tenant scrutiny.

- 39.2 The working group discussed the report and Members expressed concern that there may not be sufficient interest and consistent attendance from tenants. It was felt that the Council should provide a programme of development and support encouraging good representation from tenants. It was noted that the Housing Department's Budget 2012/13 included funding for role of tenant involvement in scrutiny.
- 39.3 Members identified the key challenge as encouraging tenant participation and discussed how to offer tenant scrutiny meetings at accessible locations and suitable times. It was suggested that tenants should be asked their opinions on how they would like to proceed. Members expressed their concern that the exercise could be money wasted without full tenant involvement and perhaps a system that relies on a robust complaints procedure would avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.
- 39.4 The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that the Council has to provide tenant scrutiny and ways must be found to engage tenants in the process. Members were informed that a meeting of the Arun District Council Tenants and Leaseholders Organisation would take place on 12th December 2012 and officers had been requested to encourage attendance from tenants who had not previously participated. It was confirmed that expenses and travel payments had been re-established and the importance of training to equip tenants with the necessary skills would be a priority. Members were requested to inform the Housing Project Manager should they have any interested ward residents.
- 39.5 The Working Group concluded their discussion with the assertion that Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services should begin as a modest scheme, kept as simple as possible and developed over time according to its success.
- 39.6 It was agreed that a further report will be prepared for the next meeting on 27th February 2013.

40 HOUSING COMPLAINTS ARRANGEMENTS

- 40.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Housing Complaint Arrangements setting out the requirements for change to the way in which Housing Complaints are dealt with from 1st April 2013. It was explained that the Local Government Ombudsman Service would no longer deal with housing matters and they would, instead, fall under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 40.2 The Housing Projects Manager proposed three options for Members to consider:
- Option 1 - The minimum required by law – identify Elected Members or Members of Parliament who could fulfill the role of the democratic filter
 - Option 2 - Establish a designated Arun Tenants Complaints Panel
 - Option 3 - Establish a Multi-Landlord Complaints Panel
- 40.3 Following discussion the Working Group favoured Option 1 to meet minimum legal requirements but aspired to Option 2 by setting up a designated Tenants Complaints Panel. Members requested that The Housing Project Manager also investigate the potential use of an Independent Person to deal with Housing complaints about the Council, until a Tenants Complaints Panel can be established.

40.4 The Housing Projects Manager confirmed that a further report would be submitted to the meeting of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group on 27th February 2013 outlining how proposals could be implemented.

41 JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HEALTH INEQUALITIES & HOMELESSNESS

41.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Joint Scrutiny of Health Inequalities and Homelessness updating Members on progress with the recommendations made under the last themed report on Access to Health Services for Homeless Households and providing information about access to support services.

41.2 Members noted the progress with previous recommendations and the Housing Project Manager's advice that no further work is required for recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9. It was confirmed that recommendation 3 had been progressing with the Housing Projects Manager continuing this work with Adur & Worthing Borough Council. It was proposed that recommendations 10, 11 and 12 require more work and it was agreed that a report, specifically addressing these three recommendations, be presented to the next meeting of the working group on 27th February 2013.

41.3 There was general discussion concerning homelessness and it was pointed out that Arun District Council concentrates on preventing homelessness in a realistic way with resources focused on those that the Council has a duty to assist. The importance of signposting was mentioned so that the appropriate agencies can be readily identified by those in need of their services.

41.4 After discussing the report the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Overview Select Committee that:

- 1) It notes the progress made to date with implementing and/or developing actions to address the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities.
- 2) No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 from the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness as described in the report on Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities by Frank Hickson dated October 2012 and attached to these minutes.

42 COLD WEATHER SHELTER 2012/13

42.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Cold Weather Shelter 2012/13 providing details of the arrangements for Rough Sleepers/Street homeless individuals during the period 1st December 2012 to 31st March 2013. It was explained that the Council no longer has a statutory duty to provide cold weather shelter but is obligated by the receipt of additional funding of £50,000 through the Homelessness Prevention Initiatives outlined in its Rough Sleepers Strategy.

42.2 Members were pleased that Glenlogie had been retained and is available for use as a cold weather shelter this Winter.

42.3 Although the Working Group was pleased with the arrangements in place for 2012/13, there was concern that Glenlogie is currently only available for temporary use for this purpose. It was requested that a strategy for future cold weather

shelter provision be put to Members in due course.

42.4 The Working Group noted the arrangements for Cold Weather Shelter during the period 1st December 2012 to 31st March 2013.

43 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Work Programme 2012/13 was noted. Following request by the Housing Project Manager an additional item was allocated to the meeting on 27th February 2013 on Combating Tenancy Fraud – photo identification upon tenancy agreement.

44 NEXT MEETING- 27 February 2013

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP –
11TH DECEMBER 2012

Decision Paper

Subject : Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness

Report by : Frank Hickson

Report date: October 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report updates the Housing and Customer Services Working Group on progress with the Recommendations made under the last themed Report on Access to Health Services for Homeless Households and focusses on the second agreed theme, Information about and access to support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to recommend to the Overview Select Committee that:

- 1) It notes the progress made to-date with implementing and/or developing actions to address the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities.
- 2) No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 from the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness.

1.0 UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 At the meeting on 15th August 2012, the Working Group recommend (to the Overview Select Committee) to:

Agree that a further communication be sent to the Secretary of State for Health, the Registrar of the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Coastal West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group to seek a response to the letters sent in March 2012. Any or all responses to be circulated to the Working Group and further actions reported to the Working Group for approval.

Agree that arrangements are made for the Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership and Arun and West Sussex Local Strategic Partnerships to consider the Report of the Joint Scrutiny Review.

- 1.2 In respect of the further communications, a letter was received from Dr. Katie Armstrong of the Coastal West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (previously circulated to Members of the Working Group) explaining she had passed copies of the correspondence to Primary Care Commissioning at NHS West Sussex and West Sussex Local Medical Committee. I wrote to Dr. Armstrong asking her to identify the name and title of the individuals at these organisations she has copied the correspondence to so that I can pursue them if no response is received.
- 1.2.1 Letters have also been received from the Department of Health (on behalf of the The Secretary of State), NHS Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committees (LMC's). The latter two were in response to Dr. Armstrong's letter which was copied to them. These have been circulated to the Working Group as previously agreed.
- 1.2.2 The letter from the Department of Health states that a reply was previously sent to the Cabinet Members of Adur, Arun and Worthing Council's in June 2012 and enclose a copy of that reply. The letter was addressed to all three Councillors at Worthing Town Hall so it is likely that it was never sent on to Councillor Elkins by Worthing Borough Council.
- 1.2.3 The letter clarifies that it is not necessary to have a permanent address to register as a patient with a G.P. Practice and that some practices register homeless people by using the practice's address or the address of a hostel which appropriate. It also states that G.P. Practices are not required to check, record or take copies of any supporting documentary evidence of their identity. It does however also state that it is not unreasonable for a G.P. Practice to request supporting documentary evidence at the time of application to join its N.H.S Patients List is made. However, this should be a policy for all new patients.
- 1.2.4 The letters from NHS Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committees (LMC's) also clarify various points in relation to identification required by G.P. Practices. In particular, NHS West Sussex state that identification may include current benefits or State Pension notification letter confirming rights to benefits for the current period. It was a recommendation of the Joint Scrutiny Review that identification of this nature be accepted so it is pleasing that this is acceptable.
- 1.2.5 It should also be noted that in response to the letter from Dr. Armstrong, NHS Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committees (LMC's) have agreed to register people who are homeless and do not have a permanent address by entering the G.P. Practice address on the patient's demographic system. This should assist households living in temporary accommodation such as a Hostel or Bed and Breakfast establishment to register with a local G.P. Practice.
- 1.2.6 However, whilst these changes do provide some level of improvement in existing arrangements, the change does not altogether address the requirements of the original Recommendation 3 which states "That a Protocol be agreed in agreement with the Adur/Worthing and Arun Chief Executives and with all homeless support agencies providing support for homeless people to accept alternative proof of I.D. from a list of approved providers such as DWP Giro letters to enable homeless people to identify themselves and access services". I have recently attended discussions with Officers and Members of Adur and Worthing Councils about all the Joint Scrutiny Review recommendations and a stakeholders event organized by Adur and Worthing Councils to see how Recommendation 3 can be taken forward. At the Stakeholders Event, a number of organizations attended and came forward with ideas to provide additional/alternative forms of ID. These ideas are being transcribed and will be circulated for further consideration. I will update the

Working Group on these two aspects of this work at the meeting on 11th December 2012.

1.2.7 In view of the responses now received from the Department of Health, Primary Care Commissioning at NHS West Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committee it is proposed that no further work is undertaken on Recommendations 1 and 2.

1.3 In respect of arrangements for the Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership and Arun and West Sussex Local Strategic Partnerships to consider the Report of the Joint Scrutiny Review, I attended Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership on 23rd October 2012 to present a Report (Copy attached as Appendix 1 for information).

1.3.1 The Wellbeing and Health Partnership made the following comments:

1.3.1.1 The PCT will pick up the main recommendations from the Joint Scrutiny review as many of the gaps in service need addressing through national commissioning. Wellbeing Hubs could not be expected to deliver such an Agenda but will be encouraged to support initiatives, both local and national and Arun Wellbeing Hub does work at a low level with Clients of local homeless service providers. It was agreed each Operational Partnership (i.e. Community Safety, Community Cohesion) should be expected to look at the groups of people they deal with and work out how they can help homeless people practically. The AWHP could then draw up an information pathway to ensure clear referrals and information. The Chairman will approach and collect statements in support from other partnerships together with how joint working can be better co-ordinated.

1.3.1.2 The Report has been added to the Work Programme for the Arun Local Strategic Partnership but a date for its consideration has not yet been fixed. The Report will be considered by West Sussex Wellbeing and Health Partnership, following discussion with the Chief Executive of West Sussex County Council. This will be at the meetings on 22nd November 2012 and 31st January 2013.

2.0 INFORMATION ABOUT AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

2.1 This is the second broad theme agreed by the Working Group to focus on the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review. The recommendations covered under this theme in the Report are:

Recommendation 4

That Homelink and other service providers, acting as a co-ordinating body in conjunction with the Homelessness Forum, bring in other representatives and give energy and presence on the streets to pull all interested parties together to take the lead in education in schools and of the public in these issues.

Recommendation 5

That the Homelessness Forums in each District be reconstituted and amalgamated to include all of the statutory and voluntary agencies in the Council areas to improve co-operation and efficiency in examining current homelessness issues; and

Recommendation 6

That the Adur/Worthing and Arun Council Chief Executives agree a protocol to determine which Council will take the lead when clients are dual registered and go to more than one authority for services to help improve outcomes for homeless people.

Recommendation 7

That all Agencies involved in promoting support for homeless people be encouraged to provide additional training for their staff about the needs of homeless people. A training module be developed for all front line Council Staff who have contact with homeless people to be part of their professional development. This training needs to include guidance to help with on the spot signposting.

Recommendation 8

That training and support be provided in schools and further education to spread the word about homelessness issues.

Recommendation 9

That Councils use their media resource to educate the public on homelessness issues via press releases and poster campaigns to identify how homeless people can be helped rather than how they can be turned away, which should include a strengthening of the duty to advise and assist.

Recommendation 10

That all relevant agencies utilise available support to help tenants maintain their tenancies thus preventing homelessness.

Recommendation 11

That tenants be provided with details of available support and a dedicated telephone number provided by one of the Local Authorities or a named body to help them find help. This line should provide answers to those services such as financial help and education, information on utility companies and literacy and language.

Recommendation 12

To prevent social isolation, a support worker service be provided either by a Local Authority or through a Service Level Agreement to help people maintain their housing and links to existing services and opportunities. This could include appropriately trained staff, learning from existing service models, helping them to access services and be included in the wider community.

3.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS 4 AND 5

- 3.1 The Arun Homelessness Forum is now co-ordinated and chaired by Voluntary Action in Arun and Chichester (VAAC) which was formed in April 2012 following the merger of CVS - Arunwide and Voluntary Community Action Chichester District.

The attendees of the Arun Homelessness Forum include Homelink, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Bognor Housing Trust, Shelter, Stonepillow, CRI, Sussex Police, Surrey and Sussex Probation Service, Arun and Worthing MIND.

Its functions include:

Monitoring the implementation of Arun's Homelessness Strategy and provide support for that process;

Identify and disseminate good practice and share with the group; Discuss national and local issues that affect homeless persons and the provision of services, with a view to service development

Provide support to other members in meeting the needs of homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness.

Issues of particular importance to the Homeless Forum can be raised at the Arun Local Strategic Partnership, through Hilary Spencer as its Chairman.

- 3.2 Although Officers from Arun District Council attend the Forum Meetings, the Forum is independent of the Council. It is chaired by a representative from Voluntary Action in Arun and Chichester (VAAC). Other Statutory Agencies such as Sussex Police and Surrey and Sussex Probation Service attend to give information on their activities/services. The Homeless Forum itself is the most appropriate group to act in the Arun District as a Co-ordinating body to bring together representatives of the various groups who are involved with homeless people.
- 3.3 To develop the approach outlined in Recommendation 4 of the Joint Scrutiny Review, the Homeless Forum would need to carefully consider if it wanted to or how it could evolve in a way envisaged. This would have to be a matter for the Homeless Forum to address itself, with input from its representative organizations.
- 3.4 The Forum would need to consider if there is the willingness and capacity to develop itself in the way envisaged in the Recommendation. The Forum has no direct funding, relying on administrative resources provided by the VAAC and the capacity/resources of the organisations involved in the Forum to achieve its aims and objectives. It does appear that some organisations which are identified by the VAAC as providing services to homeless people/households do not attend the Forum.
- 3.5 Equally, the proposals outlined in Recommendation 5 of the Joint Scrutiny Review in relation to reconstituting and amalgamating the Homelessness Forums, must be a matter for the Forum to consider and decide upon itself.
- 3.6 A meeting has been held with the Chief Executive of VAAC and Chair of the Homeless Forum to discuss the detail of Recommendations 4 and 5. They have expressed concern about the practicality and validity of implementing most aspects of these Recommendations.
 - 3.6.1 They advised that the Homelessness Forum has already considered its role as a co-ordinating body to improve and expand communication between the Agencies and Service Providers working with the homeless. This involved the VAAC, Homelink, CRI and Stonepillow. The Forum is now devising a co-ordinating role in this respect for Stonepillow. The Forum has established links with the education sector which it utilizes effectively to create an awareness for young people at school about homelessness. As an example, Year 8 students at Littlehampton Academy

undertook a project on homelessness, focusing mainly on issues affecting Littlehampton.

- 3.6.2 They advised that the Terms of Reference for the Homelessness Forum are regularly reviewed and are changed to reflect the priorities the Forum agreed were of local importance/priority. As part of this last review, the Forum considered disbanding as an option but decided to continue because those organizations who regularly attend wanted to continue. They believe their role as Reference Group for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Council's Homeless and Rough Sleepers Strategies is key to being effective in addressing and preventing homelessness in Arun. It is felt that the Forum actively helps to foster good relationships between all agencies/organizations working with homeless people and helps to quell antagonism that sometimes occurs towards the Council.
- 3.6.3 With regard to proposals for amalgamating the Adur and Worthing and Arun Homeless Forums, there is a real concern that this would result in some organizations who work in Arun no longer wishing to be involved because it is felt there would inevitably be a lesser focus on homelessness issues within Arun. It should be noted that Adur and Worthing Homelessness Fora have already amalgamated and this arrangement is apparently working well. It has been suggested that rather than amalgamating the three Fora, there could be an annual meeting of the three, at which issues or topics of mutual interest or concern are discussed. This option may provide a worthwhile alternative to complete amalgamation and would likely be more acceptable to the Arun Homelessness Forum.
- 3.6.4 In the light of the explanation outlined in the above, it is proposed that no further action be taken in respect of Recommendations 4 and 5 but Adur and Worthing Homelessness Forum be approached regarding setting up an annual meeting of the three Forums to consider issues or topics of mutual interest.

4.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATION 6

- 4.1 Anyone seeking assistance with homelessness from a local housing authority must take the initiative and approach that local housing authority. Each local housing authority must make arrangements so that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is available to everyone in its District (Section 179(i) Housing Act 1996).
- 4.2 Local housing authorities are obliged to have arrangements in place so that anyone who wants to make an application for homelessness assistance can do so (Section 183(i) Housing Act 1996). People seeking accommodation or assistance in obtaining accommodation can apply to any local housing authority they choose, as they need not have any residence requirement or other preliminary condition.
- 4.3 On this basis, applications for homelessness assistance can be made consecutively or concurrently. The Statutory Homeless Scheme is based on the premise that the applicant will apply to the local housing authority for the area in which they wish to be accommodated. Therefore, if the local housing authority to which the homelessness application is made decides to accept the duty to house the applicant in its area, there is no redress against that decision (for the applicant) even if they would prefer to have been referred to another local housing authority to meet the homelessness duty.

4.4 There is no eligibility or geographic connection required to make a homeless application. The local housing authority cannot turn away homeless applicants who seem to have no local connection with its district. The proper course of action if an applicant does not appear to have a local connection is for the local housing authority to make enquiries into:

- (i) whether the applicant is eligible for services under Part 7, Housing Act 1996;
- (ii) if so, whether any duty is owed to the applicant under Part 7 Housing Act 1996.

The scope of the latter enquiries may (but does not need to) include considering whether an applicant has a local connection with the local housing authority and, if not, whether they have a local connection elsewhere.

A local housing authority can accept a duty is owed to an applicant but refer them to another local housing authority if it is believed they have a stronger local connection with that authority's area.

4.5 On the basis of the legal obligations/requirements owed to homeless/potentially homeless households, it is believed that the Protocol as proposed by the Joint Scrutiny Review goes against the legal requirement for the local authority where an application is made to provide advice and assistance. It is, therefore, proposed not to take any further action on this recommendation.

5.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS 7, 8 AND 9

5.1 Statutory and Voluntary Agencies involved in providing support services for homeless people have their own bespoke training programmes for their staff. These programmes reflect the agreed key development needs/priorities/targets for the individuals and the organizations as well as updates on existing elements of skills and knowledge. Some voluntary organizations/agencies involved in the homelessness in Arun have very limited resources available to cover training and as volunteer time commitments can be very limited, they prefer that volunteers focus on their work duties rather than training. It is proposed to put training on the Agenda for future Homelessness Forum to try and identify what arrangements are in place.

5.2 The Housing Department draws up training plans for its staff in Homelessness and Housing Options Sections on an annual basis. These training plans are devised from the annual appraisal process and reflect both personal development and Departmental priorities. These plans will cover a range of issues/topics relating to homelessness. Training is also provided for Reception, Neighbourhood Management and Housing Allocations staff on issues/topics relating to homelessness.

5.3 For example, in 2012/2013, the Housing Department was able to access a free training Programme delivered by National Housing Advice Service, part of the homeless charity Shelter. The topics covered included domestic violence and young homeless people. The Department also has access to test effective quality training through the joint training events with other Local Authorities in West Sussex.

5.4 There are a variety of sources of training programmes available which can provide detail for staff who have contact with homeless or potentially homeless households. Staff dealing with homeless enquiries are well briefed in relation to directing homeless people to a range of support or advice services. Team meetings are

utilized to provide up to date information on available services and contact/referral arrangements.

- 5.5 Training on homelessness for schools is carried out on request from individual schools. From time to time schools invite the Department to contribute to a related topic in the curriculum. In 2009 the annual Youth Council Conference concentrated on housing and homelessness issues. It has been established that the Joint Review Recommendation was particularly focused on Further Education Colleges and Adur and Worthing Councils are preparing to approach Northbrook College. In Arun, University of Chichester would be the equivalent but it could be difficult to secure interest of students at this level. A contact at Felpham Community College has been identified to discuss how or if appropriate training could be considered for Year 10 or above students at secondary schools.
- 5.6 With regard to use of media resources, in the Summer of 2012, Arun District Council ran a co-ordinated campaign to raise awareness about homelessness. The campaign involved placing posters on buses and in bus shelters, press releases, features on BBC Radio Sussex (including BBC Sussex online), Spirit FM, Splash FM and articles in the local press. Information is also available on the Council's Website. Staff in the Housing Options Section reported a 10% increase in contact calls following the campaign.
- 5.7 The Housing Department have available a variety of leaflets and information about how to secure accommodation and access support services which is given to homeless/potentially homeless people who approach for advice. It should be noted that the cost of producing additional promotional or publicity material has to be found from existing budgets and in the current financial climate this can prove to be difficult, particularly if it is at the expense of or detriment to services specifically provided for homeless/potentially homeless households.
- 5.8 It is therefore believed that the Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 are already being addressed within available resources, but Recommendation 8 could be developed further, subject to interest/involvement from secondary schools and the availability of staff time to prepare and to undertake the training. It is therefore suggested that the existing arrangements for promoting the awareness of services, training for staff are continued and no further action is taken on these recommendations.

6.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATION 10, 11 AND 12

- 6.1 I have been investigating/researching how these recommendations can be progressed. There are resource implications, both financial and staffing, involved in successfully implementing them.
- 6.2 In order to provide the necessary detail to the Working Group to properly consider the implications of implementing them, further work is required and I am not able to report as planned to this meeting. I am therefore proposing that a Report specifically addressing these three Recommendations is presented to the next meeting of the Working Group on 27th February 2013.

Background Papers: None.

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