

'Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting'

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

09 January 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Clayden (Chairman), Edwards, (Vice-Chairman) Bicknell [from minute 7], Mrs Bower, Mrs Harrison, Mrs Oakley Mrs Pendleton and Squires

Councillors Dingemans and Mrs Madeley were also present.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors; Elkins and Mrs Goad.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 07 November 2013 were approved by the Working Group and were signed by the Chairman.

4. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

With the agreement of the Chairman, the Head of Human Resources and Customer Services updated Members on the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review prior to the next meeting of the working group. It was confirmed that the Peer Review Team would consist of:

- Stuart Davy, Chief Executive, East Lindsey (lead peer)
- Cllr Andrew Proctor, Leader, Broadland DC
- Cllr Melvyn Caplan, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Customer Services, Westminster City Council
- Liz St Louis, Head of Customer Service & Development, Sunderland City Council
- David Armin, LGA Challenge Manager

The date for the Challenge was confirmed as 19th to 21st March 2014. It was explained that, as part of the review, the team had requested an opportunity to observe a Housing and Customer Services Working Group Meeting, to meet separately with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group and informally meet with a

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

group of elected Members for general discussion about the role of a Councillor.

It was agreed that the Peer Review Team would be invited to observe the Housing and Customer Services Working Group Meeting on Wednesday 19th March at 6pm. The Chairman then requested volunteers to meet with the Peer Review Team, informally, prior to this meeting. Councillors Clayden, Edwards, Mrs Bower, Mrs Oakley, Mrs Pendleton (subject to diary commitments) and Squires agreed to meet with the Peer Review Team.

The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services stated that arrangements would be confirmed with Members prior to 19th March 2014.

5. GAS SAFETY CERTIFICATES VERBAL UPDATE

The Head of Housing reported that of the 11 Gas Safety Certificates that were outstanding, 4 had been booked for inspection, 5 final reminders had been sent, 1 was related to a void property and 1 was pending with the Council's Legal Team.

6. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Head of Housing requested a change to the order of the agenda and the Working Group agreed to consider the Council's Rough Sleeper's Strategy prior to the update on progress from Stonepillow.

7. ROUGH SLEEPERS' STRATEGY

The Housing Services Manager presented this report to the Working Group which updated Members on the current situation of rough sleeping in Arun, outlined the services available to respond to the needs of this client group and requested recommendation to Cabinet to adopt and extend the Rough Sleepers' Strategy until 2016/17.

The Housing Services Manager clarified the Statutory Duty that local authorities had to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. The Council also had a duty to provide assistance and advice to those people deemed not in priority need.

It was explained that the Rough Sleepers' Strategy set out the services available in the District and the partnerships that had been developed between the Council and statutory/voluntary agencies to respond to rough sleeping and reduce homelessness to as low a level as practically possible.

Services in Arun were outlined, these included:

- the six month pilot period of the Glenlogie night shelter that would help the Council understand the need for emergency housing solutions for rough sleepers and provided an opportunity for closer work with Stonepillow.
- that Arun District Council had become a member of the SHORE partnership (Sussex Homeless Outreach Reconnection &

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

Engagement) which was funded by Central Government to aid the development of rough sleeping solutions across East and West Sussex.

- Housing Options Service that provides housing advice and assistance.

The Working Group discussed the report. Following questions from Members it was confirmed that:

- the gap in services for rough sleepers, following the closure of Homelink in Littlehampton, had been filled mainly by Stonepillow and Churches, including the Worthing Homeless Churches Project that had provided assistance in Rustington.
- approximately 70% to 80% of rough sleepers had substance misuse problems as well as mental health issues.
- the Council provides a Rent Deposit Scheme as well as a scheme that provides financial assistance to help pay for one month’s advance rent.
- rough Sleeper statistics were calculated on the numbers of people sleeping rough in an area, on a particular night, and did not include those that had been accommodated within a shelter.

The Working Group also discussed their concerns with respect to the homeless issues that surround seasonal farm workers. The Housing Services Manager informed Members that Sussex Police had appointed two Police Community Support Officers to liaise with the farm employers and workers.

The Housing & Customer Services Working Group

RESOLVED - That

an update on Rough Sleepers be provided at every meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group.

The Housing & Customer Services Working Group

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET – That

- (1) the Rough Sleeper’s Strategy be extended until 2016/17;
- (2) the Strategy be adopted.

8. ROUGH SLEEPER AND COLD WEATHER PROVISION

The Head of Housing introduced Stonepillow’s Chief Executive and Head of Client Services and the Chairman welcomed them to the meeting. This report and Stonepillow’s update provided Members with the progress on the Nightshelter that opened at Glenlogie on 1st November 2013.

The Head of Housing presented his report and alerted the Working Group to developments since the Nightshelter opened. He reminded Members that the operating costs for the building would be met by the Council and that Stonepillow had agreed to support staffing costs via Housing Benefit

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

Payments. It was explained that a rent officer assessment had been carried out which resulted in a significant funding shortfall. It was advised that the shortfall had been met by DWP funding and this would continue until the end of the pilot. In the meantime Stonepillow and the Council would explore ways in which the payment of Housing Benefit could be used to support the Nightshelter’s operations.

The Head of Housing also explained that the building works in connection with the temporary accommodation at Glenlogie would be completed during the first half of May 2014. It was proposed that, in order to test the viability of the Nightshelter operating alongside temporary accommodation, the pilot project should be extended by a further two months.

It was pointed out that the temporary accommodation was vital to help the Council’s need to reduce bed and breakfast costs.

The Stonepillow Chief Executive and the Head of Client Services then provided the Working Group with a summary of their activities at Glenlogie from November 2013. Stonepillow’s vision was outlined as the commitment to supporting people who find themselves sleeping rough on the streets, providing them access to safety, improving their wellbeing and preventing homelessness by breaking the cycles that lead people to insecure accommodation. The focus of Stonepillow’s work was described as helping clients to help themselves and providing the best possible outcome through Health, Housing and Work.

It was noted that Stonepillow and the Council began the Rough Sleeping pilot on 1st November 2013 when Glenlogie opened as a day centre, hostel and cold weather shelter.

Members were informed that the day centre, known as the Hub, had received 45 individuals. One week saw 31 individual clients. A variety of support was offered including mental & physical health, Housing and getting in to work.

It was advised that the Hostel was staffed by 4 project workers who had been trained to engage with entrenched rough sleepers. Members were informed that the issue of female homelessness had been overlooked but this was rectified with the provision of a separate sleeping area using a partition wall. During the first two months the Hostel accommodated 19 individuals on a provisional 28 day stay basis. Members were pleased to note the excellent news that to date 5 clients had moved on into more secure accommodation which means 5 less people sleeping rough. Comment was made that this was a good result, over a short period, and provided evidence that the pilot had been operating successfully thus far.

It was pointed out that a large number of rough sleepers suffered from substance misuse as well as mental health disorders where one of these issues would exacerbate the other. Stonepillow often helped individuals with these problems as it was noted that this section of the community were particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Stonepillow had also seen increasing

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

numbers of people presenting homeless under the age of 30. It was felt that family breakdown had contributed to this.

The Chairman thanked Stonepillow for their informative presentation. The Working Group discussed the report and presentation and agreed that the pilot had progressed successfully. Following questions from Members it was confirmed that:

- Glenlogie had the capability to support 20 Rough Sleepers during cold weather.
- There were 5 to 6 people on the waiting list for homelessness provision as the facility was currently full.
- Stonepillow’s Housing Team ensured that clients were successfully rehabilitated into accommodation as any problems caused by an ex-client would be to the detriment of Stonepillow.
- Glenlogie had good security at reception and the temporary accommodation was separate from the basement area.
- Stonepillow worked well with other organisations such as the British Legion to secure grants to help in client rehabilitation into accommodation.

Further discussion centred on a particular homeless case where a hospital patient was discharged from hospital and sent direct to Stonepillow. Members expressed that they were appalled at this occurrence and the Working Group felt the way the NHS discharges homeless patients needs to be improved. Stonepillow’s Head of Client Services informed Members that they had recently secured a 12 month post that would concentrate on liaising with the NHS and Psychiatric units that unethically discharge patients.

The Working Group then considered the report’s recommendations. Recommendation 1 and 2 were agreed and a further recommendation added.

The Housing and Customer Services Working Group

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET – That

- (1) an extension of 2 months (starting May 2014) to the initial 6-month trial period so that any operational issues can be considered in relation to the Nightshelter operating when the temporary accommodation units above are commissioned in May 2014.
- (2) the existing method of funding Nightshelter clients be continued for the 2-month extension period.
- (3) viable future funding options are explored by the Council’s Housing Team and if a viable solution is found present to Cabinet to ensure Arun District Council’s support continues, on an ongoing basis, from the end of June 2014 when the pilot finishes.

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

The Housing & Customer Services Working Group then

RESOLVED – That

a Cabinet Report concerning viable future funding options for Glenlogie be circulated to Members of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group prior to its submission to Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services made comment that the pilot had been very successful so far and he would support the idea that investigations would be made with respect to how this pilot scheme could be made permanent.

The Chairman and the Working Group extended their thanks to Stonepillow for their attendance at this meeting.

9. RETENDER OF THE GAS SERVICING AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR COUNCIL DWELLINGS AND CORPORATE PROPERTIES

The Head of Housing presented this report to the Working Group which sought approval to tender a contract for Gas Servicing and Maintenance of Council Housing and Corporate Properties for a five year period with the option of extending the Contract for a further two years dependant on performance, effective from 1st April 2015.

In discussing this item Members supported the proposals set out in the report.

The Housing & Customer Services Working Group

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET – That

- (1) a contract for Gas Servicing and Maintenance of Council Housing and Corporate Properties be tendered for a five year period with the option of extending the contract for a further two years without resubmitting the Contract for tender. The value of the Contract over the initial period of five years is estimated to be approximately £4 Million.
- (2) a tender evaluation model be approved based on weightings of 60% for price and 40% for quality and focused on the following:-
 - Technical and Operational arrangements
 - Quality Assurance Systems (with particular reference to customer care and involvement in continuous service improvement during the life of the contract)
 - Systems and Procedures for ensuring all aspects of Health & Safety Policies, Procedures and Regulations are maintained.

'Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting'

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

The working group considered the work programme. The following points were made:

- It was agreed that the Rough Sleeper Update item would be included at every meeting.
- As a new Municipal Year was approaching Members were keen that issues such as Welfare Reform would be carried forward to any future work programme and not omitted. It was noted that provision had been made, on this work programme, to note items that would be carried forward for consideration during 2014/15.

(The meeting concluded at 7.30pm)