

MINUTES OF HOMELESSNESS SCRUTINY SUB-GROUP

12 JANUARY 2017

PRESENT

Members of the Group: Councillors Roodhouse (Chairman), Mrs Garcia, Claire Edwards, Mrs New and Sandison

Officers: John Hier (Housing and Regeneration Manager) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

In attendance: Fiona Palmer (Manager of Rugby/Bedworth/Nuneaton/North Warwickshire/Coventry Wellbeing Hubs, Coventry and Warwickshire MIND)

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. OUTCOMES OF THE HOMELESSNESS SCRUTINY WORKSHOP ON 23 NOVEMBER 2016

The Housing and Regeneration Manager informed the sub-group that the workshop was well received by the partners.

The notes from the workshop were circulated to the members prior to the meeting and the key messages were discussed in detail at the meeting.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- Officers are in discussions with Warwickshire County Council who are recommissioning a disability service which includes a mental health floating support. Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group is also part of the discussions.
- The Manager of Rugby/Bedworth/Nuneaton/North Warwickshire/Coventry Wellbeing Hubs (Coventry and Warwickshire MIND) has provided the sub-group with a brief overview of the service:
 - 7 wellbeing hubs throughout Warwickshire
 - The three key areas for the service are:
 - to raise awareness about mental health, services available and resilience
 - targeted support for the people at risk of developing mental health issues; and
 - early intervention strategies to help people with mental health issues to keep well and stay well.
 - Drop-in twice a week (mainly accessed by people with ongoing mental health issues)
 - One to one sessions (up to six half hour sessions/targeting people with the risk of developing mental health issues)

- At present, there is a waiting list (10/12 people) in Rugby. Extra sessions are being arranged to address the issue. The current waiting time is four weeks which was reduced from eight to 12 weeks. Numbers of people accessing the service have increased significantly over the past 12 to 18 months.

Members were informed that the Citizen Advice Bureau has secured funding for the Breakthrough programme (part of the Building Better Opportunities project) which aims to support vulnerable people within a wide range of areas.

Members have raised questions with regards to medical support for rough sleepers, services provided by Salvation Army and YMCA. The Housing and Regeneration Manager will investigate and inform the sub-group via email.

During the discussion, the following questions were raised:

Is pre tenancy support available for young people only?

The current scheme concentrates on under 25s (generally people that are taking on their first tenancy). The service will be assessed to see what the outcomes are and what difference it made. Around 30 people were trained.

What are the other two services that have launched at the same time as P3 and St Basils which provide supported accommodation?

Stonham/Home Group provides 18 units of accommodation for homeless adults and ex-offenders leaving prison at Ashwood Court. Chapter 1 provides 11 units of accommodation for under 25s at Deepmore Road. Both services have been up and running since early August 2016. A referral process is in place for all four organisations and they work well together.

6. UPDATE FROM THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION MANAGER

- In the last quarter (ending 31 December 2016) 48 people were housed in B&B comparing to 63 in the previous quarter. B&B would only be used if there is no other alternative. There is a downward trend in the use of B&Bs.
- With families, the council has a statutory duty not to put them into B&B for longer than six weeks.
- Numbers of properties in the Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSLS) are increasing. Currently, there are six properties including two Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) which are used for single people. A further property has been secured and is due at the end of January 2017.
- The PSLS is having an impact and starting to reduce the use of B&B.
- With more properties coming forward, the aim is to reduce B&B spend significantly over the next three months (by 31 March 2017).
- In terms of right to buy receipts which are time restricted, officers are looking at options.
- Rough sleeper count was completed on 4 November 2016 together with P3 and Homeless Link representatives. The count recorded nil rough sleepers which is a snapshot at that particular time.

- The Homelessness Reduction Bill will increase duties of local authorities to prevent homelessness earlier and to prevent homelessness for priority and non-priority cases. The bill is anticipated to come into effect from 1 April 2018.
- Government put £20 million into Trailblazer pilots to come up with innovative ways to introduce the new legislation. The pilot will need to:
 - collaborate with other services to identify at-risk households and target interventions well before they are threatened with eviction – 56 days;
 - offer help to a wider group of people than just those owed the main homelessness duty; and
 - test new, innovative approaches to preventing homelessness.
- Warwickshire is one of the 28 Trailblazer areas being funded by the Government with the aim to stop people from becoming homeless in the first place.
- The bid secured was £865,000 across Warwickshire for three years.
- Focus of the pilot is early intervention for households including those losing private sector tenancies, violent relationship breakdown, parents no longer willing to accommodate, people with rent arrears, affordability, health issues including mental health and substance misuse.

During the update, the following questions were asked:

How long would you expect someone to remain in a PSLS accommodation?

The accommodation is used as temporary accommodation and is a much better option to using B&Bs. Applicants are given priority under the Housing Waiting List to access social housing, however given the increase in number of people with high priority waiting times for being rehoused has increased, which will impact on the time applicants will spend in PSLS properties.

Is Biart Place full most of the time? Are there some vacancies?

Biart Place tends to have vacancies mainly due to the sheer number of flats (120 at Biart Place/160 at Rounds Gardens). They are let out relatively quickly. Families would be housed in the two bedroom flats which are relatively large comparing to new builds.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the sub-group will take place on Monday 27 February 2017 at 5.30pm where the sub-group will:

- be presented with the findings of the six week analysis carried out in October/November 2016 and priorities for the Trailblazer project;
- extend an invitation to Bill Basra from Warwickshire County Council; and
- draw up conclusions and recommendations linked in with the Trailblazer project as priority.

CHAIR