

Report of the Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration

**Report on the Resettlement Services 2022 update including winter provision
and strategy update**

Summary

- 1 This paper updates the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Committee on the current homelessness situation and the winter night provision for rough sleepers and single homeless people in York.
- 2 In addition, it advises on the wider homeless service and the current homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and relevant developments.

Recommendation:

- 3 Scrutiny is asked to note this information and asked to make comment and recommendations on the issues raised.
- 4 Reason: To update the Committee on homelessness situation and the winter night provision for rough sleepers and single homeless people in York.

Background

The Current Homelessness situation

- 5 City of York Council is currently in a partnership with other organisations across York, working under the 2018-2023 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Together strategy. This partnership approach is well established, operating effectively for many years, and continues to work hard to rise to the challenges of tackling all forms of homelessness. These challenges have continued to be further complicated by the covid pandemic and its aftermath and also the current cost of living crisis. Despite this, we continue to provide a high quality Housing Options Service and a nationally recognised advanced Resettlement Service.

- 6 As part of the ongoing response, the team worked hard to ensure everyone had a place to sleep which was safe and minimised the risk of covid infection. This was supported by funding from central government. We are now moving back to a pre pandemic use of emergency beds in supported accommodation services, without the reliance on hotels and bed and breakfast, so that these can be used for more bespoke support pathways towards independent living. We have retained relationships with local business so that we can utilise this extra accommodation should it be needed due to increased and excessive demand.

Note: We are not currently able to provide the full range of statistics around homelessness and prevention at present. The reporting on this from Open Housing is being worked on across teams to ensure the information is available in full and is accurate. This information forms a statutory performance return to government as well as being used locally for information and performance management. An update will be provided to Scrutiny Committee once available.

2022-2023 Winter night Provision

- 7 This year we will deliver the winter night provision for rough sleepers without the need to adapt to all the extra requirements around infection control due to Covid. This provision will be a combination of emergency beds and supported accommodation, utilising hotel rooms if needed where available.
- 8 On 1 November 2022, we will activate our winter night provision for rough sleepers and single homeless people. This offers direct access to safe and warm accommodation during the winter period from **1 Nov '21 to 28 Feb '22**. The work of service providers, whether statutory, voluntary or faith based, is keeping the number of people sleeping rough as close to zero as is possible. The service will continue to house people over winter despite the extra challenges that cold weather brings.
- 9 It is worth mentioning that this year we activated the SWEP provision during the summer heatwaves. On top of our usual offers of accommodation we also provided hydration, showers, shade and summer clothing during the extreme heat.
- 10 This winter we will offer a minimum of 17 extra beds over winter. As rough sleeper numbers are low this offer is currently effectively managed but should there be a sudden increase in rough sleeping we can utilise hotels and bed and breakfast until we can move them on in to resettlement services.

Addition winter beds this winter period – 1 Nov to 28 Feb	winter bed offer
Peasholme centre – offer of 4 emergency beds, 5 in absolute emergency utilising a back office interview room	5
Howe Hill – offer of 5 Emergency beds	5
Union Terrace Hostel – Offering 2 emergency beds but do prioritise empty rooms on this basis	2
Robinson Court – 1 emergency bed	1
Yes Below Zero (flat 2 Howe Hill site) – 4 emergency beds	4
Totals	17

11 We are also able to utilise the following at short notice if needed:

Salvation Army Nap-pad provision that can accommodate up to 4 rough sleepers in an emergency.	4
Hotel Partners – relationships in place and could be utilised if needed	Dependant on availability and need

A triage approach is used to decide where to place people and those deemed to have complex needs are prioritised into the supported accommodation schemes where skilled staff are on duty 24/7 to support them.

Housing Options, Supported Accommodation and Resettlement Services

- 12 In addition to providing services as usual extra burdens continue to be placed on the teams due to covid related requirements. This includes the effect on sickness levels and isolation of covid positive staff, there is increased numbers of staff vacancies and difficulties in recruitment.
- 13 Contacts to the Housing Options service have increased exponentially in requests for service from 80 per week pre pandemic to around 200 per week post pandemic for the Housing Option team have put increasing pressure on staff and resources, although we have managed to fill vacant posts in the service, new staff take approximately 6 month to induct and train so they can carry full caseloads. The work of housing options is a thankless task and is misunderstood by many service providers, the process of statutory homelessness application is a legislative one and driven by law and can appear harsh to those that are well meaning misinformed, this can cause

lots of criticism towards the housing options team and individuals within the team meaning maintaining moral is becoming increasingly more challenging.

- 14 Initiatives, such 'everybody in' (2020), protect and vaccinate and additional resources to combat rough sleeping successfully over the last few years demonstrates the continued commitment locally and nationally to end rough sleeping. we are pleased that we now have 3 year allocation of funding from central government for York's Rough Sleeping Initiative funding . This means a more consistent approach and better job security for staff. This funding announcement did come with a reduction to the yearly amounts we had previously received.
- 15 The efforts delivered through Rough Sleepers Initiative and the resettlement services have led to a reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in York over the last few years from a peak of 29 to low single figure over the last few years. In the event of a change in circumstances or an extreme weather event, our approach allows us to provide a significant increase in emergency capacity if required all year round as well as over the winter period. The extra winter provision can also be available through March and April should we have adverse weather during this period. As previously mentioned it can also be activated in the event of a heatwave during the summer months. There is also a phased approach to closing down the extra winter beds to ensure no one is returned to the streets or made homeless just because the winter is over. The service continues to work on expanding long term provision to support the goal of ending rough sleeping.
- 16 This year, we are yet to hear about if we will receive any Cold Weather funding from DLUHC to offset the additional cost of an increase in emergency bed provision during winter. In previous years there was additional centralised funding due to covid. We expect a return to more conventional form of funding going forward.
- 17 This 3 year allocation we received of £1,349,100 Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding for a variety of front line workers which has supported our 'in reach' work with rough sleepers currently in accommodation. This has significantly reduced rough sleeping in the city. There was a reduction in York's funding allocation and the DLUHC made the decision to not fund for additional workers within the Salvation Army Early Intervention team. While this was disappointing the DHLUC were clear from the submission of RSI funding bids (agreed by all partners) through to allocation, that we would not receive the same amount of funding and decided to cut this part of the bid due to lower levels of rough sleeping. To mitigate some of this funding cut the rough sleeper navigators are picking up the majority of outreach work, leaving the salvation army to provide street walks, drop in and referrals into emergency and supported accommodation.

RSI staff support in numbers for the next 3 years until 2025:

- 1 Rough Sleepers Coordinator
- 3.5 Rough Sleeper Housing Navigators
- 2 MEAM workers and personalisation monies (MEAM Making Every Adult Matter)
- 1 Private Rented Sector Officer and 1 Private Rented Sector Support Worker.
- 2 mental Health Workers. Fully funded year 1 with partial funding years 2 and 3 we will need to secure additional funds for years 2 and 3 from other areas or funding pots.

18 We have successfully accommodated all of York’s rough sleepers during Covid restrictions and beyond in addition to working hard over the last four years to reduce official rough sleeping from 29 in 2017 to 4 in 2021. This was an increase on 2020 when the figure was 3 rough sleepers. Our 2022 street count is currently being co-ordinated. There is an uptick in numbers currently and maintaining this low level is going to be very challenging. At present the outreach teams continue to engage with the people who sleep rough to gain an understanding of them and aim to support them off the streets and into safe and secure accommodation.

19 Reasons for rough sleeping can be complex and we engage with each individual to address the barriers to them accepting accommodation and support from services. The Rough Sleeper Housing Navigators have made real progress in engaging rough sleepers and York is in the fortunate position right now where, there are no rough sleepers that might be determined as entrenched.

20 Below is a summary of permanent accommodation offers to people in resettlement who have previously been, or are at threat of, rough sleeping. The current high level of voids in our stock means that we are struggling to move people on from our Supported Accommodation (resettlement and homeless) as well as affecting our Housing First (for those most complex people who struggle with shared accommodation) offer.

	TOTAL housed in Resettlement category
2019-20	69
2020/21	76
2021/22	87
2022/23	Current 20 to 15/09/2022 there is large backlog of people in gold band resettlement awaiting offers the current supply issues and skills shortages is exacerbating timely move on

- 21 Support Workers in our accommodation and Resettlement Services continue to be very busy offering housing advice, working to prevent homelessness as well as accommodating and supporting families and individuals who are often very vulnerable and have multiple complex needs. People and families that need a lot of support present real challenges to our services across and beyond the council. If these needs are left unmet it is unlikely that settled accommodation will be held on to, resulting in tenancy failure and repeat homelessness.
- 22 Use of B&Bs for homeless people is still a necessity and we work to minimise this. We have re-opened Crombie House (family supported housing) temporarily to accommodate families that are homeless that we cannot accommodate at James House, our main supported accommodation for homeless families. Crombie House is ultimately due for redevelopment to provide part of a proposed pathway of supported accommodation for people who need support around mental health.
- 23 As previously mentioned creating and maintaining a sufficient supply of 'move on' options for people with complex needs continues to be a significant challenge with residents sometimes ending up in our supported accommodation services for too long. We are currently working with the York Human Rights Board to explore further support and move on options around Housing First through organisations and communities across York.
- 24 This year we facilitated our first housing first arrangement with our RSL partner Joseph Rowntree. This piece of work has been very positive and we are hopeful that our other RSL partners will also begin providing housing first tenancies
- 25 There is tremendously high expectation from other services (many of which are facing high demand and financial pressures) to house people including discharge from hospital and prison, sometimes without any planning or little notice. Many people presenting as homeless have needs that are so complex that they require more support / care than housing can provide. We continue to work with a range of services to share resources and knowledge to ensure as many presentations are as planned as possible. We are also aiming to work as flexibly as possible offering bespoke packages of housing and support/care so it is possible for general needs housing to meet some of these needs. This creates a very challenging environment for staff working across Housing Services with expectations often far exceeding our ability to provide what people want or need.
- 26 Unplanned presentation from people with complex needs often creates short term solutions to long term problems that require more than just housing. Services engaged with long term rough sleepers during the pandemic and

'Everyone In' initiative and we have used Ordnance Lane (due for redevelopment) for a rough sleeping triage service and additional accommodation.

- 27 Resources from our developing Mental Health accommodation pathway have come on line so that we can support more people who previously avoided engaging with services or were too chaotic to accommodate in shared supported housing. We are creating multi agency packages of support and care by increasing the number of housing first offers with wrap-around support to help move this cohort on to more settled accommodation. It is important to note that housing first is only appropriate for a small cohort of complex individuals and is very resource intense.

Housing firsts accommodated

18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
1	4	5	2.	7

There are more 5 agreed and pending accommodation.

We obtained additional resources to expand our resettlement offer through capital and revenue grant funding (Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme – RSAP) and purchased six 1 bed flats for rough sleepers (these are specific for this purpose for the next 30 years). These are former council homes which have been offered up on Right to Buy first refusal and checked off with the Housing Management team. We are focused on properties without front doors opening on to internal communal areas, and we successfully completed the purchase of these properties by April 2022. We also recruited to the RSAP support worker post and all 6 of these properties have been let. These properties are medium term lets and will be used only for rough sleepers for the next 30 years.

- 28 York was part of a successful joint bid for funding for a 12 month pilot to help ex-offenders access private rented accommodation along with Scarborough, Harrogate, Ryedale and Selby. We successfully recruited to this post and partnered up with Selby to provide support across the two LAs to get offenders into private rented accommodation. 7 ex offenders have moved into private rented accommodation via this scheme 6 of whom were York residents, this role has really improved relations with probation and the CFO probation activity hub, improving knowledge and understanding of options available across housing

- 29 Approximately 4 % of customers accessing the service state they are from the LGBTQ community. We continue to roll out training across the Housing Options and Support Team and have included this training into the

mandatory training for new staff and refresher training. We also provide individualised support packages to support people including around LGBTQ issues and are about to embark on a round of refresher training for staff.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 30 The current homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2018 – 2023 is due to be refreshed in 2023. A copy of the current strategy is available as annex A
- 31 The government recently launched the refreshed strategy on Rough Sleeping 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good'. The refreshed Homelessness strategy will need to reference this. A copy is attached at annex BC. Building on the commitment to end rough sleeping by 2027 the emphasis will be on prevention and tailored support with three core components:
- a) Improving housing affordability and accessibility by maximising affordable housing supply and delivering reform for a fairer private rented sector.
 - b) By helping local authorities and partners to better prevent rough sleeping fully embedding the Homelessness Reduction Act approach, a new assessment framework for rough sleepers backed up by Rough Sleeping initiative funding.
 - c) Providing targeted action for people we know are most at risk of rough sleeping using whole system information and
- 32 In York a review of the Resettlement Pathway has taken place over the last year with a view to inform the future of these services and to inform the procurement of the Adults Wellbeing contract and related services which forms .
- 33 This committee had an update on the review earlier in the year. The review has been on hold for the last couple of months pending a decision on the timing of re-procurement of the Adults Wellbeing contract which forms a large part of the overall contract. This runs until January currently but is likely to be extended
- 34 The PowerPoint annex C and the paper at annex D (provided to an earlier scrutiny meeting) provides information on the review and agreed themes to be taken forward. These are likely to be embedded in to the refreshed York Homelessness Strategy for resettlement of rough sleepers alongside an

emphasis on being better at identification and prevention across the 'system' in line with the updates government strategy.

Implications

35 None Identified.

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexe

Annex A – Current homelessness strategy

Annex B – Ending Rough Sleeping for Good

Annex C – Resettlement review update presentation

Annex D – Resettlement review update note