

Councillors Written Questions to Cabinet Members and the Responses

Full Council – 17 October 2018

From Councillor Crow to the Cabinet Member for Housing?

In August the Government announced its Rough Sleeping Strategy which plans to end all rough sleeping by 2027 and included additional funding of £100 million. They issued the following press release which is reproduced below. I understand that Worthing Borough Council have bid for some of this funding.

Question 1 –

Has Crawley Borough Council bid for any of this funding or have any intention to do so?

Response –

My understanding is that Worthing were invited to bid because of the high rough sleeper number they submitted for their annual count/estimate last year (2017). Crawley were not invited to bid and I am not aware that there was an open opportunity for other Districts and Borough's to do so at that time. If this changes and there is an opportunity to bid going forwards, we would of course be keen to do so, as long as the bidding criteria gives the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes for the rough sleepers in Crawley.

Question 2 –

Does the Council share the views of the Homelessness Charities Chief Executives quoted in the press release in welcoming this strategy?

Response –

There are a wide range of quotes covering a wide range of viewpoints. Rough sleeping is a very complex and difficult issue and would have already been solved if it was as straightforward as just providing accommodation, and the Strategy does seem to acknowledge this.

My opinion is that the Strategy is long overdue, given the growing numbers of people being made homeless nationally, and indeed that the Strategy has become necessary because in part of the consequences of national Government policy.

Question 3 –

How is the Council constructively engaging and working with the Government, other local authorities and public bodies, as well as charities in tackling rough sleeping and preventing homelessness?

Response –

Crawley will of course be taking the Government's Rough Sleeper Strategy into account as part of its Homelessness Strategy which we have started working on for 2019. As part of this we will be engaging and consulting with various stakeholders and agencies. There is a monthly Multi-Agency Rough Sleeper and Street Community Group to tackle the issues on a local level in partnership with the appropriate stakeholders and agencies, and our officers share best practice with their peers around West Sussex when they meet on a quarterly basis.

Thousands of rough sleepers will be offered rapid specialist assessments and support, as part of a package of new measures announced in the government's [rough sleeping strategy](#).

Launching the strategy today (13 August 2018), the Communities Secretary will confirm government's ambition to halve rough sleeping on England's streets by 2022 and end it altogether by 2027.

The strategy will be backed by an additional £100 million and developed across government in conjunction with charities and experts. It lays out a 3-pronged approach to tackling rough sleeping, including:

- preventing rough sleeping by providing timely support to those at risk
- intervening to help people already on the streets get swift, targeted support
- helping people recover, find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives

The key focus of the plans will be to stop people becoming homeless in the first place. Those in crisis will get swift, targeted support to help them off the streets and into long term accommodation, where they will be supported as they tackle issues that may hamper efforts to rebuild their lives.

The new plan recognises that a housing led approach – giving people their own front door – is vital to restoring dignity and a sense of security, hope and recovery.

The Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Nobody should have to sleep rough, and that's why we must do all we can to help the most vulnerable in our society get the support they need.

But we recognise this is a complex issue – as well as ensuring people have somewhere to live, we have to deal with underlying problems and ultimately help people turn their lives around.

The strategy launched today will help us act to prevent rough sleeping before it happens and make sure targeted support is reaching those that need it.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

It is simply unacceptable that people have to sleep on the streets and I am determined to make it a thing of the past.

Whether people are at risk of rough sleeping, already on the streets or in need of settled accommodation, we have a solid plan to help the most vulnerable in our society.

And this is not just about putting a roof over their heads, but helping them find a place to call home.

These vulnerable people need our support and, through our expert-backed strategy, I am confident they will get it.

The government has also announced that it will carry out a review of legislation around homelessness and rough sleeping, including the Vagrancy Act, to ensure the best measures are in place and that rough sleepers are not discriminated against. Plans outlined in the strategy include:

Preventing rough sleeping by providing timely support to those at risk.

For example:

- piloting suitable accommodation and tailored for those leaving prison so they don't end up on the streets

- researching the nature and scale of LGBT homelessness to determine what measures need to be put in place to prevent this
- making sure that authorities investigate rough sleeper deaths to understand and tackle the root causes
- extending the Homelessness Reduction Act to ensure that more people get the help they need faster

Intervening to help people already on the streets to get swift, targeted support.

For example:

- rolling out a new initiative to help up to 6,000 people who are both new to the streets and vulnerable to rough sleeping, offering support to rapidly identify issues that led them to sleeping rough
- introducing ‘navigators’ – specialists who will act as trusted confidantes – who will help people sleeping rough access the appropriate services and accommodation
- up to £30 million for mental health treatment, informed by the findings of a health provision audit to be carried out this year
- providing training for frontline staff on how to best help people under the influence of Spice and those who are victims of domestic abuse and modern slavery, as well as how best to support homeless LGBT people

Helping people recover, find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives.

For example:

- building affordable accommodation for those leaving hostels and domestic abuse refuges, and to support them in managing this accommodation.
- investing money from dormant bank accounts into housing for those on the streets or at risk of rough sleeping
- launching a new fund to help up to 5,000 former rough sleepers and those at risk to sustain their tenancies by working with them to boost financial independence and access training and employment opportunities
- launching a £50 million fund for homes outside London for people ready to move on from hostels or refuges but need additional support

Stakeholder comments

Rick Henderson, Chief Executive, Homeless Link

Homeless Link welcomes this strategy as a positive starting point setting out a range of initiatives that could make a significant impact on reducing rough sleeping. We welcome the recognition of the role of all government departments and public services including health, care, substance misuse and criminal justice in preventing and ending rough sleeping.

The voluntary sector has a critical role to play in ending rough sleeping and we are pleased that recommendations from our members have been included in the strategy. We will continue to work with our members and government to ensure this plan is built on and progress made on tackling the structural causes of rough sleeping including action on reducing poverty, urgently addressing the chronic shortage of low cost housing and ensuring an effective welfare safety net.

Jean Templeton, Chief Executive, St Basils

Somewhere safe to stay has to be the bottom line for all; with help to find it and to ensure that you are able to secure support you need from mainstream services. For the most vulnerable with least access to resources, extra help is critical. Therefore we welcome the proposals in this rough sleeping strategy and the recognition of the urgent need for resources.

However, this is just the start and we will continue to work with government to ensure that the wider systemic issues which drive all forms of homelessness are addressed, including access to affordable housing, to mental health services and welfare support which provides true 'social security'.

The last thing we want is people having to reach crisis before they receive the assistance they need.

Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive, St Mungo's

Rough sleeping is harmful, dangerous and dehumanising and we share the government's aim that no one should have to sleep rough. This strategy is a really important first step towards meeting the 2027 target and shows the government is serious about understanding the problem and getting the right support to people at the right time.

There is more work to do, especially when it comes to providing enough stable, safe and affordable housing, but I am encouraged the government has taken on board many of the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel's recommendations.

Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive, Crisis

Crisis is pleased to welcome this important step towards ending rough sleeping by 2027. Short term measures, such as new funding for non-UK nationals who sleep rough and for dedicated outreach teams will provide welcome relief for those facing the hardships of life on the streets.

Once people are off the streets, a commitment to a rapid rehousing model can ensure that they never find themselves in this position again.

It is also important the strategy acknowledges that the policies that prevent homelessness, such as the supply of social homes and a benefits system that covers the costs of housing, must be addressed. We look forward to welcoming the practical and concrete steps needed to tackle these issues.

If we're to end rough sleeping, a bold, housing-led approach to tackling the problem is required, alongside a robust strategy to prevent people from becoming homeless that involves departments from across government. We stand ready to work with the Government to meet its ambitions.

Bill Tidman, Chief Executive, Thames Reach

We welcome this strategy and the investment it represents, and believe it's an encouraging start to ending rough sleeping.

We particularly welcome dedicated funding from the Department of Health, and the commitment this provides to ensuring that homeless people have access to the health services they need; as well as the recognition of the specific needs of migrant rough sleepers, who currently have few realistic options available to them.

The real work now begins on implementing this strategy, and making sure we listen and learn from all lessons along the way.