

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 5th July 2022

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 19th July 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive

Title: Proposed changes and re-procurement of outreach-led rough sleeping services

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

The Council has been working with partners to co-produce how best to further improve the effectiveness of its current commissioned outreach services which help to target and reduce rough sleeping in the city. Following co-production with partners and a recent successful funding bid to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Council proposes to procure a remodelled service to better help meet the needs of people rough sleeping in the city and those at risk of rough sleeping. The remodelled service will merge the former Rough Sleeping Outreach Service (1), Housing First Floating Support (2) and Navigator Service (3).

This particular remodelling project is one of a number of initiatives aimed at further reducing rough sleeping and street-attached lifestyles in the city. It is designed to complement other key activities under the Council's Ending Rough Sleeping plan. As such it is not intended as a standalone leading resolution to the issues of local rough sleeping. It is one project in a number of work streams to follow that will form part of the new Exeter homelessness and rough sleeping strategy (due Autumn 2022). It will join up with the wider strategic work targeted under this strategy including the recommendations arising from the recent ASB summits.

The principle reason for this report is due to the overall value of the contract to be tendered exceeding £1M therefore requiring approval for entering the procurement process.

2. Recommendations:

That Executive recommends and Council approves:

2.1 That Exeter City Council undertakes a procurement process compliant with the provisions of the Council's Procurement and Contract procedures and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in order to identify a provider to deliver a remodelled homelessness and rough sleeping service; and

2.2 That the Council enters into a contract with the successful tenderer

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

Exeter City Council is committed to and shares the government's vision of ending rough sleeping. Additional funding, both capital, through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) and the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), and revenue, through the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), have been made available to support local authorities to achieve this goal. The Council has utilised all funding streams in order to increase resources and assets to help the council to meet the challenge of ending rough sleeping in the city.

The need to operate more flexible services as a result of the pandemic generated a review and needs assessment with partner agencies. This led the Council and partners to recommend and design a more flexible approach to the provision of frontline services to better address rough sleeping and reduce recurrence of rough sleeping. To date services have been procured and delivered individually. Rough sleepers commonly have contact with the Rough Sleeping Assertive Outreach team, Housing First Support service and the Navigator service. Whilst collaborative working exists, an opportunity has been identified to introduce more flexibility across these services.

The proposed remodelled service will see all three above services being brought together and operating as a remodelled homelessness and rough sleeping service. The new provider will work with the Council to further reduce rough sleeping in the city and would have the flexibility to enhance target delivery to where the need is.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources?

The annual contract cost is £638,000 with a total spend over the 30 month contract of £1,619,419.

The contract will be fully funded through the Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant. £170,000 would come from the Homelessness Prevention Grant and £468,000 from Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant.

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

The funds are available in the approved budget to fund the contract. The purpose of the report is to seek approval for entering into a procurement process and ultimately to award a contract in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement and Contract procedures.

6. What are the legal aspects?

All Contracts let by the Council must comply with the Council's Procurement and Contract procedures set out in the Constitution which state all contracts with a Contract Value exceeding £1,000,000 must be authorised by Executive Committee and Full Council and tendered and advertised on the open market. All procurement processes must also comply with the provisions of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

Simon Copper (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

8. Report details:

The remodelled outreach-led rough sleeping service will provide increased capacity and a more flexible service to meet the needs of rough sleepers in the city and to provide preventative support to people at risk of homelessness and early intervention to those who are at risk of repeat episodes of rough sleeping. The service will need to operate 7 days a week with an emergency service offer during evenings and at weekends.

Working on the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing's (DLUCH) four key pillars to ending rough sleeping, prospective providers will need to demonstrate that they are able to deliver the following interventions:-

PREVENTION (Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping for the first time)

- Identify vulnerable adults who are at risk of losing their settled accommodation and preventing them from becoming homeless. Prospective providers will be expected to engage and accept nominations from the Housing Needs Service, The Substance Misuse Service, Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, Social Housing Providers and Private Rented Landlords.
- To provide support to ensure that the individual is signposted to appropriate support that meets their needs. Engaging with landlords to address issues around arrears, ASB and prevent homelessness.
- Provide regular reporting on the service and achievements

INTERVENTION (Providing support for rough sleepers and assertively assist to move away from the streets)

Assist the City Council in meeting its target of zero rough sleepers by the end of 2024. This will be achieved through:-

- Providing regular outreach across the City to identify and verify people rough sleeping in the city including 6 weekly City wide outreach sessions conducted to official rough sleeping count guidance.
- supporting rough sleepers to access healthcare services including mental health support, general practitioner support, drug and alcohol support
- undertaking assessments on the street and in placed-based services with rough sleepers and people at risk of rough sleeping
- identifying rough sleepers individual support needs and to make referrals to the 'Access 2 Accommodation Panel' to identify accommodation services which best meet individuals needs
- To adopt a Trauma Informed, strengths based and person centred approach to ensure that no one makes the street their home.
- To adopt an assertive approach that ensures no one makes the street their home
- To work with people who are engaged in street homelessness activities (begging and street drinking) and support to access support services and work with police and council to address behaviour that is detrimental to the individual.

- To provide monthly and quarterly reporting that meets all DLUCH requirements and the annual rough sleeper count.
- To oversee periods of severe weather in line with ECC Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).
- To update caseload information of all rough sleepers on ECC client information system

RECOVERY (Supporting rough sleepers in accommodation to maintain their housing and reduce episodes of repeat rough sleeping)

- to provide support to the 'Off the Streets Placements' for rough sleepers consisting of 4 Emergency Pods and to take on the lease and management of 'The Junction' which is a 4 bed HMO currently leased by the Council.
- To oversee referrals from the street into 'Off the Streets' Placements (Emergency Accommodation for rough sleepers). Supporting clients to access the provision and working with the provider to provide additional support whilst alternative accommodation is sourced through the Supported Accommodation Pathway.
- To identify former rough sleepers who are at risk of losing their accommodation placements and provide early intervention services.
- To reduce episodes of repeat rough sleeping through early intervention, support to engage with services, support to engage with health services etc.
- To provide a Housing First Support Service- supporting 15 people already accommodated in Housing First Tenancies and work with ECC and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to expand the Housing First Service over the coming years.

SYSTEM (To work with the City Council and other partners to co-produce principles that are Trauma-Informed and strengths based that can be adopted across the Homeless Sector)

- To work with the Council to deliver against targets set with DLUCH and to end rough sleeping in the city by the end of 2024
- To work with the Council to deliver against its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- To work with the Council and other providers to co-produce a suite of Policies and Principles which highlight best practice that can be adopted across homelessness services. To ensure that services are helping people to move forward with their lives with the best possible support.

The service will ensure rough sleepers in the city and people at risk of rough sleeping are well informed with choice and control over the advice, support and opportunities they can access in areas of health and wellbeing, housing, financial and social inclusion.

Many people who are rough sleeping have high levels of complex needs; mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependencies, and institutional experiences are common factors. The longer someone sleeps rough the greater the risk that physical and mental health problems will worsen. Rough sleeping is costly to society as a whole; rough sleepers are likely to have more frequent and sustained contact with public services compared to other citizens.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

The service will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan in the following areas:-

- Building great neighbourhoods - By tackling social inequality through maximising homelessness preventions and reliefs and through maintaining and developing emergency, first and second stage housing options with suitable personalised support to address single and multiple need.
- Promoting active and healthy lifestyles - Supporting households to access key health and advocacy services in primary and secondary healthcare services including mental health assessment and support, physical and social care, and education, training and employment opportunities.
- Tackling congestion and accessibility - By extending access to homelessness & housing support services by extending our reach into the community through outreach and co-location and by developing multiple access points to advice and assistance

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

The primary risk is without the services being enhanced there will not be additional capacity to provide emergency cover during evenings and weekends. This remodelled service will mitigate against that risk and be better able to adapt to meet need.

The secondary risk is limited local market interest to provide the service. This risk has been mitigated by substantive co-production with partners currently delivering the services. Partners have expressed interest in continuing to deliver remodelled services on behalf of the Council.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

The remodelled service will be inclusive and will work with people who are rough sleeping on the streets of Exeter or at risk of homelessness regardless of who they are or where they come from.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

One option is that the services stay the same and the Council procure services individually. The key issue with this approach is that the Council and rough sleepers would not benefit from the additional capacity and flexible approach that is needed to further reduce rough sleeping in the city.

The other option is that the service is provided in-house. The key challenge with this approach is the loss of expertise and independent approach from current providers. It should also be noted that a number of rough sleepers are mistrustful of statutory services and may not engage with the service. The Council does not have the market expertise or capacity to call on additional staff that the voluntary sector has. Providers can provide added value from charitable funds and non-statutory funds to increase capacity into the service which would not otherwise be available to the Council.

Deputy Chief Executive, Bindu Arjoon

Author: Chris Stocks

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

- 1) Rough Sleeping Outreach Service – Council funded service to work exclusively with people rough sleeping in Exeter. The team verify rough sleepers during early morning outreach sessions. The team signpost, assess, provide advice and support to relieve homelessness.
- 2) Housing First Floating Support – Council funded service providing high support to former rough sleepers living in Council tenancies. ‘Housing First’ is an internationally recognised model towards providing housing for people who experience complex lives.
- 3) Navigator Service – Council funded service, providing intensive support from the streets and into accommodation for people with multiple needs (substance misuse, mental health, criminal activity, physical health problems).

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