

Terms of Reference and outline programme for the Task and Finish Group

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

Date of Referral – 7 October 2021

Proposer - Councillor Barbara Denning

Nature of the Scrutiny Topic..... a review to be undertaken on potential evictions, the homeless and housing.

Membership

Councillor M Mitchell (Chair)
Councillor A Jobson
Councillor J Moore
Councillor T Oliver
Councillor T Rees
Councillor R Sutton
Councillor A Wardle

Scrutiny Process regarding this Topic

Stage 1 – Briefing Meeting for Task and Finish Group Members : Meeting Date 27th June 2022

Terms of Reference

- To consider the work programme including the key issues to be addressed and timetable.
- To agree a Briefing document for each witness. These documents will contain the key issues and questions about which the Task and Finish Group require the person/organisation to provide information and responses.
- Agree a timescale for the return of written submissions allowing time for Members to review material prior to any evidence session.
- Public Involvement - the nature of the work of this Task and Finish Group should be promoted on the City Council website and interested bodies or individuals should be invited to submit evidence in person or writing.

Stage 2 – Causation and Prevention

Prior to taking formal evidence, the Group will consider the responses received and identify key elements and questions that need to be further explored during the session.

- Gathering evidence regarding the pattern and causes of homeless in Exeter over a period of time and in regard to national trends and similar cities the size of Exeter.
- Review of the impact of issues relating to the pandemic, cost of living rises and recent Government policy changes and their likely impact upon the homeless situation in Exeter.
- Consideration of early intervention and prevention strategies.

Evidence providers – Exeter City Council, Exeter Well Being, Citizens Advice and Shelter

Stage 3 - Handling the process of homelessness

Prior to taking formal evidence, the Group will consider the responses received and identify key elements and questions that need to be further explored.

- How Exeter City Council handles homeless cases and the resource implications.
- The involvement of other statutory bodies and voluntary agencies.

Evidence providers – Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, Citizens Advice, Social Housing rep, Shelter spokesperson, potentially some case studies.

Stage 4 – Assessing the evidence

Drafting a report and recommendations to be presented to the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee.

Contents of the initial meeting of the Task and Finish Group circulated on the request of the Groups' Chair to help Members understand the style of approach to scrutiny

1 - Councillor Denning – the Proposer of the Scrutiny to outline the rationale for the scrutiny proposal

2 - Consideration of the proposed work programme below and suggested evidential material and outside contributors.

- a- Do the structure/issues raised in the Work Programme meet the need of the proposed scrutiny?
- b- Consideration of the range of evidence to be provided by Exeter City Council - see below for list of evidence.
- c- What other bodies/individuals do we wish to invite to submit evidence and/or appear at a session?
- d- What are the key questions/issues we wish to raise with outside contributors?
- e- Gathering evidence from others - public involvement?
- f- Agree the time scale for evidence submission and future meeting dates.

3 - Format of future sessions – Proposed two-part meetings. The first part of the session Members discuss the evidence submitted in advance and determine the questioning approach; topics, questioning order. This is not intended to preclude any Member participating when they wish, but it may be helpful if there is a structure that ensures that core evidence is gathered. The second part of the meeting involves Members formally scrutinising the evidence presented at the meeting. It is hoped that having given each witness a brief and evidence being submitted in advance lengthy presentations can be avoided to concentrate on scrutinising the responses and the issues. Need for consideration of how to share information with partners and others as the work progresses.

4- Initial consideration of the structure and content of the Task and Finish Group's Report.

5 - Provisional list of evidence from Exeter City Council (Housing Needs)

- Four year profile (graph format) of demand to Exeter City Council Housing Advice service denoting key data and trends of numbers of households approaching for advice and numbers where a homelessness application was taken and a homelessness prevention or relief duty was taken by the Council.

- Graphs to show the last 12 months of the primary reasons why households have presented to the Council for housing advice and/or to make a homelessness application. This includes the primary causation being affordability/cost of living, landlord/housing market-driven, domestic abuse related, institutional (e.g. prison, hospital) leaver, health-related including mental health, social care, substance use etc.
- Referral sources (if household or individual is not self-presenting) e.g. from partner agencies including statutory homelessness referrals.
- Online/digital referrals evidencing methods of homelessness approach to the Council.
- Early intervention work.
- Prevention work.
- Time-lined process of average homelessness application (with indicative costings per stage).