

REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS REES AND SUTTON ON MEETING AT ST. PETROCK'S ON 2 NOVEMBER 2022

Councillor Catherine Rees

Thank you so much Rowan for helping us to gather the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness. You personally have clearly had a huge impact on the lives of the women I spoke to. It was so inspiring to hear about the difference a person (and organisations) can have - quite literally transforming people's lives and giving them hope for the future, and a regained sense of purpose. I'm so incredibly grateful for the work you do Rowan.

Comments from the clients of St. Petrock's

What's worked well:

1. Having Rowan in our lives.
2. Support from St. Petrock's and CoLAB - feel safe and understood
3. Urban Learning Academy
4. Women's group and drama at CoLAB
5. The staff are so supportive and kind
6. Support at CoLAB to help with addictions
7. Wellbeing fund (Council vouchers)
8. Exeter Homeless Project (now stopped due to lack of funding)
9. Trailways

Improvements needed:

1. More 1 to 1 support with someone who really knows you, so you don't have to keep repeating your story
2. Funding that doesn't dry up so support continues and you can plan ahead
3. Separate housing for people with different needs
4. More training for housing officers, including some with lived experience (lack of empathy with some)
5. A men's group should be set up
6. Need access to public toilets
7. More opportunities to build on people's individual strengths and interests - person centred
8. More jobs available for people with lived experience of homelessness

Another clear message that came through to me, was that although you have to do the work yourself, you can only do this with a network of support around you.

Here's a quote to finish: 'No matter how dark it is, you need that little bit of light to give you hope.' Rowan, you are that light for so many.

Councillor Rachel Sutton

It was really helpful and interesting to visit last week. The feedback I had was broadly similar to the comments Catherine heard in particular the ongoing work Rowan does and the way she does the job was both highly praised and greatly appreciated.

I'll try to add 'new' points rather than duplicate:

Service at St. Petrock's is vital and invaluable especially the opportunity to have a long term ongoing relationship with one person when dealing with issues/organisations like British Gas over many weeks and months. Treating each person as an individual and listening to their needs is valued and important.

Areas to improve

Not all organisations really 'listen' to what is being said to them, the City Council in particular in the past (may be an ongoing issue)

Specific needs of people without literacy skills or limited literacy skills are not always acknowledged and met-it doesn't matter how many letters/leaflets you are given if you can't read them!

Avoiding the need to repeatedly have to retell your story to another person (see above for benefits of having someone like Rowan in the team) better record keeping and seeing the same person if at all possible.

Clearly, not all the suggestions are within the gift of one organisation to change but it is important to find ways to feedback comments to hopefully inform or when necessary challenge decision making.