

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 5 September 2024

Present:

Members: Councillor M Ali (Chair)
(Shadow Cabinet Member)

Councillor R Bailey
Councillor B Christopher
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor R Thay

Non-Voting Opposition
Members:

Co-Opted Members:

Other Members: Councillors

Employees (by Directorate):

J Crawshaw
S Hall
G Holmes, Law and Governance
M Salmon, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillor G Hayre, E Ruane and T Sawdon

Public Business

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to recommendation 3) of Minute 3/24, headed 'Water Quality', the Board agreed that for their scheduled meeting on 5th December 2024 they would visit and hold their meeting at Severn Trent Water Finham Sewage Treatment Works.

8. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 29 Consultation

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) received a presentation and briefing note of the Head of Housing and Homelessness on the Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029, the purpose of which

was to consult the Board as part of the current consultation regarding the identified priorities and themes. The Draft Strategy and the Homelessness Review 2024 were attached as appendices to the briefing note.

All Councils in England and Wales had a statutory duty to undertake a periodic review of homelessness and to publish a Homelessness Strategy. The current Strategy, published in 2019 and ran to 2024, was aimed at providing a high-level plan setting out the main priorities for the Council and its partners for the life of the Strategy, to guide the allocation of resources and investment, and provide a framework to inform project development, to achieve the vision that Coventry Citizens would be able to access a suitable, affordable, and decent home, with the support they needed to sustain their housing.

In 2019 when the Strategy was developed the previous Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategy were combined into one document. The rationale was for this was recognition that activities to prevent and relieve homelessness were to a degree dependent on the availability of permanent housing. Coventry published its first Rough Sleeping Strategy in December 2019, in line with a requirement by the Government for all areas to have a Strategy to prevent and tackle rough sleeping. The successful delivery of the Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan was not in the Council's power alone therefore a One Coventry partnership approach was adopted to ensure successful realisation of the vision by supporting and delivering the Strategy through effective collaboration and partnership working.

The Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 and its Action Plan were reflective of and intrinsically linked to the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy and the two strategies needed to be considered and delivered in tandem. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy set the vision for housing in the city and the Council's priorities therefore a separate Housing Strategy would be developed for the city which would align with the Local Plan review that was currently being undertaken. The Homelessness element of the Strategy would be combined with the Rough Sleeping Strategy, creating a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The new Strategy, which would run from 2024 to 2029, would focus on what actions were being taken to prevent people from becoming homeless, what was being done when people found themselves homeless and how they were supported to end their homelessness. There would be a focus on partnership working alongside how to ensure that life chances and health outcomes for those affected by homelessness were improving through early intervention and prevention; crisis and targeted support; moving on and tenancy sustainment and assessing the health inequalities impact through National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Guidance.

In considering the presentation and briefing note, the Board questioned officers, received responses and discussed matters as summarised below:

- The impact on local residents when properties were purchased by the Authority for use as temporary accommodation for the homeless and the steps taken by officers such as regular visits, CCTV and liaison with neighbours.
- The risk around short-term funding for the rough sleeping service and the risk management steps being taken to mitigate this.

- The persistent steps taken to engage rough sleepers who refuse support, including regular early morning visits, work with partners in alcohol and drug services, mental health teams, and probation.
- The data the Rough Sleepers Team collects on rough sleeping figures, including reasons for rough sleeping and service engaged with – the total number of individuals found in August was 120 with circa 25 found each morning. The information gathered then allowed the service to offer the most appropriate support.
- That the numbers of rough sleepers who were asylum seekers granted status and were unable to find accommodation or those refused asylum and appealing the decision, were relatively low.
- The work done with probation, including a dedicated worker, to support those leaving the criminal justice system, including sharing information and working with individuals pre-release.
- How agencies work together to support tenancies once accommodation had been found.
- Information regarding Coventry's role in the women's rough sleeping census, recognising that women slept rough differently from men and weren't always easy to find.
- The success Coventry has had in attracting external funding, which was not solely reliant on the numbers of rough sleepers identified.
- Work with faith groups and those organisations who wanted to offer support.
- The rationale behind not offering overnight shared night-shelters anymore, as it wasn't effective in supporting those who needed support the most and the alternative of self-contained short-term accommodation was more effective in engaging those who needed support.
- The importance of looking more widely than just those who slept rough, but that the vast majority of those facing homelessness were either single people or families whose accommodation had become unaffordable or unsuitable.

Members requested that information on the outcomes on the Women's Census being held in September 2024, together with the statistics for last year's Census, be circulated to them. They also requested that information be sent to them on how the Rough Sleeping Team would be resourced in the future, mainstream or grant funded, and how the risk of short-term funding would be mitigated.

A briefing note detailing the points of discussion, the comments made, and the recommendations agreed by the Board would be sent to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4):

- 1) Agrees the priorities and themes within the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029.**
- 2) Supports the Draft Strategy and the development of a comprehensive action plan that will deliver the key priorities and themes.**
- 3) Requests that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities consider how the Rough Sleeping Team will be resourced in the future,**

via mainstream or grant funding, and how the risk of short-term funding will be mitigated.

9. Work Programme

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) received a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that detailed issues on the Board's Work Programme for meetings of the Board for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) notes the issues on the Board's Work Programme for 2024/25, and requests that 'Parking Permit Fees' be added to the Programme.

10. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.20 am)