
Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

5th February 2019

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities – Councillor Ed Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

Ward(s) affected:

Petition relates to St. Michael's

Title:

Response to the Petition – To get homeless people accommodated and not living in the Barracks Car Park, Barracks Way, Coventry CV1 1DD

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report responds to a petition containing 70 signatures, which calls upon the Council to identify suitable accommodation for homeless people, who are currently residing at the Barracks Car Park. The petition states that people should not have to live in such circumstances and asks the council to respond.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities is recommended to:

1. Continue to identify alternative, suitable housing and personal support solutions to the people at Barracks Car Park.

List of Appendices included:

N/A

Other useful background papers:

N/A

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

This particular petition is not scheduled to be considered by Scrutiny.

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No.

Will this report go to Council?

No.

Report title: Response to the Petition – To get homeless people accommodated and not living in the Barracks Car Park, Barracks Way, Coventry CV1 1DD.

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The issue of a number of homeless people residing at Barracks Car Park, has been raised by 70 petitioners, who are seeking that the council resolve the matter, which is far from an ideal set of circumstances, both for the individuals' who reside there, as well as people who use the Barracks Car Park on a daily basis to park their vehicles.
- 1.2 The people residing at Barracks Car Park are well known to the council and its' partner agencies, such as The Salvation Army and a series of interventions have been introduced and are on offer to attempt to resolve the current situation. That said, the majority of people residing at Barracks Car Park are foreign nationals, which under legislation means that they do not have recourse to public funds and consequently do not qualify for the council's housing services or housing benefit/universal credit. However, housing alternatives are available, which are set out below
- 1.3 In 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy surrounding prevention, intervention and recovery. The Council will consider this when assessing available options.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The Winter Night Shelter provides accommodation for the City's rough sleepers (including those at Barracks Car Park) between December and 31st March. This 21 bed facility is regularly offered and is, on occasion, taken up by the people residing at Barracks Car Park. The facility is offered at churches around the city and provides support, a hot meal, a bed for the night and breakfast.
- 2.2 In addition to the Winter Night Shelter, there are established emergency shelter arrangements in place, such as at Doe Bank Lane, which provide additional accommodation when the severe weather protocol is triggered. This provides a temporary roof over peoples' heads in time of most need.
- 2.3 The particular circumstances of the client group in question present challenges in developing a longer term intervention. Officers are therefore considering making a specific bid for external funding that addresses functional skills, employment support, health issues and lifestyle factors. Any successful bid would require a partnership approach particularly shaped around this group of individuals and their circumstances.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 The council recently closed the consultation for the revised Housing and Homelessness Strategy, which is due to be considered by Cabinet in March 2019. The council is also due to consult on revising the existing Homefinder policy

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 On going.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services

5.1 Financial implications

There are no additional financial implications as a result of this report. The recommendations propose support through either existing arrangements, or to bid for and use additional grant funding through the Controlling Migration or other appropriate Fund.

5.2 Legal implications

A large proportion of local authorities are facing similar challenges in providing support to rough sleepers. There are a number of legal mechanisms that have been used in order to seek to address the situation. However, any action must have due regard to the human rights of the individual, in particular, their rights under Article 8 European Convention on Human Rights which gives an individual the right to respect for private and family life, his home and his correspondence. It is not a right to have accommodation. Any restriction on this right must be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

If an individual has no recourse to public funds this means that they are unable to access mainstream assistance provided by the Council. Paragraph 6 of the Immigration Rules provides that public funds includes, amongst other things: housing under part 6 or part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, council tax/housing benefit or council tax reductions. Allocation of funding to support does not amount to public funds. Certain categories of people are able to access certain forms of social assistance, for example, under the Care Act 2014 if there is an eligible care need. A needs assessment should be conducted, if the person consents, in order to consider what options are available to provide support and assistance.

6. Other implications

None.

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The recommendation of this report will help contribute to the council's core aims of supporting homeless people and families.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Not applicable.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken in relation to this report.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The council continues to work with a number of partner agencies in relation to homelessness.

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None