

### Rough Sleeper Activity

- **The Rough Sleeper Provision Meeting:** The meeting is made up of a range of services which specialise in working with rough sleepers and the street community. The group formed in 2018 in response to the rising number of rough sleepers and street based antisocial behaviour locally. It is developing a range of new initiatives to improve outcomes for these groups through a combination of support and proportionate enforcement measures. The HSCP is dedicated to providing support to enable access to meaningful housing, health and employment solutions to the range of groups who make up the street community, which includes rough sleepers.
- It should be noted that a significant number of those often perceived as rough sleepers are individuals who have accommodation but may suffer with multiple and complex needs. These individuals engage in street drinking and begging often in order to fund drug and alcohol addictions.
- **Safe Space:** The Homelessness Unity Group has established a 2018/19 pilot service within Bexhill delivering a safe and accessible space to rough sleepers through which vital services can be delivered, once a week. It provides a space locally which is accessible to rough sleepers and other groups who may struggle to engage effectively with services in traditional settings. Rother District Council ensures that its Rough Sleeping Housing Officer is present at the weekly Safe Space sessions.
- **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP):** The SWEP is initiated whenever there are forecast 'feels like' temperatures of 0 degrees or below for three consecutive nights or other types of extreme weather are forecast. The Council informs services including the outreach service of the SWEP having been activated. Under SWEP anyone thought to be rough sleeping in the Hastings area is accommodated in B&B until temperatures or severe weather improves.
- **The Housing Options Service:** Hastings Borough Council (HBC) operates a Housing Options Service in line with its duties under the Housing Act 1996. HBC operates a service which is focussed on homelessness prevention. The service offers temporary accommodation to the most vulnerable individuals alongside intensive levels of advice, assistance and support via its dedicated Rough Sleeping Housing Officer initiative. The Council also offers assistance for rent in advance and deposits to all local people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- **The Rough Sleepers Outreach Service:** This service is funded by Rother District Council and delivered by the Seaview Project. The service carries out proactive outreach work, generally between 5am and 7am, to identify rough sleepers and offer appropriate interventions, including reconnections.

- **Sussex Rough Sleeping Prevention Project:** The SRSP is delivered across 13 local authority areas in East and West Sussex. The service is delivered in East Sussex in partnership with Home Works. Dedicated support workers target intensive levels of support to prevent homeless or insecurely housed individuals from being forced to rough sleep for the first time.
- **Snowflake:** The Snowflake Night Shelter is formed of a network of seven Churches which provide accommodation for rough sleepers in the winter months.

## Interventions 2019/20

### Rent in Advance/Deposit Loans

Level of Investment (2019/20)	£80,000
Staff Cost	£22,000
Number of preventions achieved	75
Cost Avoided	£190,000

1. The approach enables low income households to afford the fees associated with accessing private sector accommodation and allows them to pay the Council back at an affordable rate without interest. Households continue to require a high level of funding to secure accommodation. The Council works collaboratively with the Housing Benefit team to allocate an element of Discretionary Housing Benefit to allocate further funding for this purpose.
2. This intervention is the most cost effective measure proposed. However, there are significant additional barriers for households to overcome when securing private rented sector accommodation. This intervention assumes that households can find a tenancy they can afford and a landlord willing to take them as a tenant. The other interventions proposed are designed to overcome these additional barriers.
3. The Council would promote this intervention via the Private Rented Procurement Officer which will increase its reach. The Private Rented Support Officer will also be better able to provide landlords and tenants with a single point of contact after loans have been issued. The officer will be able to offer advice and assistance if tenancies begin to fail and work with Housing Needs Officers to support both parties to either sustain the accommodation or find an alternative.
4. The Council has been issuing loans for use as rent in advance and deposits for some years. The average value of a loan awarded is £1,600 which means the £80,000 allocated will achieve fifty preventions on average. We have calculated that the investment will achieve seventy five preventions as we have assumed a 50% recovery on the loans over twelve months, funds that can be reinvested allowing us to achieve 50% more preventions from the investment.

### Social Lettings Management

Level of Investment (2019/20)	£20,000
Staff Cost	£22,000
Number of preventions	20
Cost Avoided	£50,000

5. The Housing Task and Finish Group recommended that the Council bring forward additional homelessness prevention measures, to include managing a social letting agency (SLA). An SLA operates by the Council leasing property from landlords guaranteeing them a fixed lease payment and taking management responsibility for the property. The SLA will appeal to landlords who do not wish to manage their property directly and wish to secure a guaranteed income. The SLA will be targeted to landlords with no mortgage on their property and who have little experience as a landlord.
6. The skills, knowledge and expertise required to manage this type of accommodation do not currently exist within Rother District Council as it does not own or manage its own housing stock. Wealden District Council is embarking on a new SLA initiative and has agreed in principle to work in partnership with Rother District Council to develop an agreement to provide repair and rent recovery services. Rother District Council would retain the responsibility for procuring properties and offering tenancy support to tenants via the Private Rented Procurement Officer and Private Rented Support Officer detailed below.
7. Officers will bring forward a more detailed paper to Cabinet later in 2018/19 recommending that the Council develop a SLA. The indicative income and cost analysis has been estimated in consultation with Wealden District Council Officers for the purposes of this report.

### **Guaranteed Rent Pilot**

Level of Investment (2019/20)	£55,000*
Staff Costs	£21,000
Number of preventions achieved	40
Cost Avoided	£100,000

\*The total level of investment is £82,500 over 12 months and assumes a minimum 50% recovery rate.

8. The pilot rent guarantee scheme provides landlords with guaranteed rent for a fixed six month period. Landlords are often reluctant to take benefit dependent tenants due to a perception that those in receipt of any benefits are more likely to be unable to afford their rent. We increasingly observe that many households who are in work but who receive some element of income benefit are being excluded from the tenancy market due to this perception. The scheme will be targeted at these low risk households who are unable to access private sector accommodation due to being in receipt of some element of benefit.
9. The Council will pay six months' rent in advance and then require the tenant to pay them back in full. After six months the tenant will have had the opportunity to demonstrate to the landlord that they are a trustworthy and reliable tenant and can begin to pay the landlord directly.

10. The Council would promote this intervention via the Private Rented Procurement Officer which will increase its reach. Tenants and landlords will be assisted by the private sector support worker who will be tasked with supporting tenants to manage their finances and keep up their payments to the Council. Where a tenant is struggling to make payments to the Council the landlord and tenant will be supported to find the tenant new accommodation.
11. The pilot will have strict eligibility criteria and will only be accessible to prospective tenants assessed as being at a low risk of accruing arrears.
12. The model will be piloted in two stages. In the first six months £25,000 will be allocated as rent guarantees. The second allocation of £30,000 will only be authorised by the Assistant Director Resources and Executive Director, if a recovery rate of at least 50% can be evidenced. Registered Providers and stock holding local authorities typically operate a rent recovery rate in excess of 95%. It is felt that a minimum recovery rate of 50% is conservative and is likely to be higher, allowing income to be reinvested into the scheme in future years.

#### **Rough Sleeper Outreach:**

Level of Investment (2019/20)	£15,000
Staff Costs	0
Number of preventions achieved	10
Cost Avoided	£25,000

13. Rother District Council has funded for a trial period of six months a Housing Needs Officer dedicated to working with rough sleeper groups out in the community during 2018/19. The post is held by Hastings Borough Council with Rother District Council investing 50% of the costs for 0.5 FTE officer. The post has been funded from earmarked reserves for homelessness during 2018/19; it is proposed to move this post into the revenue budget for 2019/20.
14. In recent months a range of measures have been brought forward to better manage the issue of rough sleeping in Rother, principally in Bexhill and Sidley. These measures aim to increase the supply and quality of affordable, well managed accommodation while ensuring adequate support is in place to enable rough sleepers to access health, housing and employment solutions. A summary of these measures can be found at Appendix 1.

#### **Work, Live, Thrive (CHART)**

Level of Investment (2019/20)	£40,000
Staff Costs	0
Number of preventions achieved	30
Cost Avoided	£75,000

15. Work, Live, Thrive is a multi-agency bid currently before the Connecting Hastings and Rother Together (CHART) Programme. CHART is a Community-led Local Development Programme with access to European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) to support projects that bring a fresh approach to tackling deep-rooted problems which conventional working has not managed to solve. It is particularly focused on:
- helping disadvantaged people to find and keep work locally
  - helping disadvantaged people to start a business or set up as self-employed
  - stimulating the local economy to create jobs suitable for local people
16. The CHART programme focuses on specific areas of deprivation in Hastings and Rother with Bexhill Central and Sidley being the wards in which the Programme will operate locally.
17. Rother District Council is a main partner to the Work, Live, Thrive bid which is applying to improve employability support to households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The project will provide dedicated employment mentors who will work with households to improve routes to employment and training for those furthest from the job market. The project will take referrals exclusively from those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and operate from within the local CCG funded Health and Wellbeing Hubs at the Pelham in Sidley and the Charter Centre in Bexhill.
18. Partners to the bid include The Pelham, SCDA (Charter Centre), Education Futures Trust, Fellowship of St Nicholas, The Work People and Hastings Borough Council. The Programme will provide 100% match funding to the bid which means that the Council's £40,000 investment will bring a total of £80,000 of resources into the Bexhill and Sidley area during 2019/20.

## **Staffing**

### **Private Rented Procurement Officer (PRPO)**

19. The PRPO will be the Council's lead in delivering the Social Lettings Agency, Guaranteed Rent Pilot and Rent in Advance/Deposit Loans. The officer will proactively engage with local estate agents and landlords in order to promote the benefits of these interventions and procure new properties.
20. The Council has worked with East Sussex housing authorities to develop a standard range of products to private landlords which will avoid local authorities competing with each other for landlords. The approach has also enabled local authorities in East Sussex to develop a joint bid to the MHCLG's £20m fund to *Provide Private Sector Access for Homeless*. If successful the funds will match the investments being made by East Sussex local authorities and represents potential match funding of £45,000 for Rother District Council during 2019/20.

21. **Private Rented Support Officer (PRSO):** The PRSO will support the delivery of the Social Lettings Agency, Guaranteed Rent Pilot and Rent in Advance/Deposit Loans. They will be located within Rother District Council offices and will work alongside Housing Needs Officers. To appeal successfully to prospective landlords, both the Social Lettings Agency and Guaranteed Rent Pilot models need to provide a service that is responsive to landlords as well as tenants. The officer will deliver assertive and proactive budgeting support to tenants with low to medium support needs who struggle to meet their rent payments.