

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



Council Offices,
Urban Road,
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 8DA

Agenda

Scrutiny Panel B

Date: **Wednesday, 19th July, 2017**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue: **Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield**

For any further information please contact:

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SCRUTINY PANEL B

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Helen Hollis

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Mike Smith

Councillors:

Rachel Bissett

Glenys Maxwell

Christine Quinn-Wilcox

Sam Wilson

Rachel Madden

Lauren Mitchell

Paul Roberts

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SUMMONS

You are hereby requested to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel B to be held at the time/place and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



R. Mitchell
Chief Executive

AGENDA

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1. To receive apologies for absence, if any.
2. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.**
3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of a meeting of the Panel held on 7th February, 2017. 5 - 10
4. Introduction to Pest Control. 11 - 14

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SCRUTINY PANEL B

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,
on Tuesday, 7th February, 2017 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Helen Hollis in the Chair;

Councillors Lee Anderson, David Griffiths
(substitute for Chris Baron), Rachel Madden,
Cathy Mason, Lauren Mitchell and Paul Roberts
(substitute for Lachlan Morrison).

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Chris Baron, Lachlan Morrison and
Christine Quinn-Wilcox.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Eileen Jackson, Mike Joy and
Ian Scholes.

In Attendance: Councillor Mike Smith.
Jason Marriott (Framework Street Outreach
Team).

SB.10 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

SB.11 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 8th November, 2016 be
received and approved as a correct record.

SB.12 Scrutiny Review of Access to Homelessness Services - Update

The Chairman introduced the item and briefly summarised the business from
the last meeting whereby Members were introduced to the new topic regarding
the provision of homelessness services and how the Council was working with
partner agencies to endeavour to prevent homelessness at its earliest stage.

The Panel were introduced to Ian Scholes, Homelessness Prevention Officer,
Eileen Jackson, Housing Strategy Team Leader and Jason Marriott, a
representative from the Framework Street Outreach Team (currently working
within Nottingham city).

Housing Options Shared Service

To assist with the review, the Council's Homelessness Prevention Officer undertook a presentation to the Panel in relation to the delivery of homelessness services through the Housing Options Shared Service Team.

The shared service with Mansfield District Council commenced in March 2015 with the team remaining based at the Council Offices in Kirkby in Ashfield. The sharing of resources and expertise has led to greater resilience and easier access to advice, assistance and emergency accommodation.

As an example the Panel were informed that in 2014/15 the cost for bed and breakfast accommodation was in the region of £150,000. Since the inception of the shared service only one person has been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation with alternative solutions being found for the majority of people/households presenting as homeless including use of the hostel facilities in Mansfield.

Legislative requirements obligated local authorities to provide advice and assistance to all households who sought it. In addition, the Council had a duty to make accommodation available to household who were:

- eligible for assistance
- unintentionally homeless
- in priority need
- have a local connection.

Demand for this service in Ashfield was increasing year on year but not at the same rate as was presenting nationally.

Current demand was as follows:-

Demand:	Total:
Number of homelessness applications taken in first 3 quarters 2016/2017:	118
Number of new service requests taken to date 2016/2017:	685
Number of households attending drop-in to date in 2016/2017:	940
Number of households prevented from being homeless in first 3 quarters of 2016/2017:	151 (compared to 68 in 2014/2015)
Estimated number of rough sleepers in Ashfield (November 2016):	9 (compared to 8 in 2015 as estimated)

Officers within the Housing Options team utilised a variety of prevention tools to assist people or households under threat of homelessness and these included a Bond Guarantee Scheme, Sanctuary Scheme, informal mediation and referrals for specialist debt advice. All the preventative work was undertaken in partnership with key organisations who offered different areas of

expertise and support i.e. Youth Homeless Forum, Social Services, Women's Aid, Framework and many more.

It was recognised by the Panel that accessibility to the service was of vital importance and various methods of contact included telephone, drop in sessions, appointment at the Council offices, home visits and an out of hour's service.

To conclude the Homelessness Prevention Officer took the opportunity to convey some of the challenges facing the team for the future. It was almost inevitable that demand would rise due to an increasing lack of housing supply exacerbated by the impact and ramifications of the Welfare Reform Act. Casework was becoming increasing more complex with an increase in homeless single people with mental health issues and the ongoing problem of a shortfall in support for vulnerable people within local communities.

However, the team were fully aware of the challenges facing them and had recognised possible solutions for coping with future demands which included enhanced customer focus (understanding recurring issues and causes), great partnership working, cultivating better relationships with private landlords, regular staff training and innovative use of scarce resources.

Framework Street Outreach Team

Jason Marriott took the opportunity to address the Panel and talk about the work of the Framework Street Outreach Team. Up until now, the team had only been working within Nottingham city but were preparing to expand their services out into neighbouring districts following receipt of £370,000 additional Government funding (over a 2 year period) and match funding by the City Council. Recruitment was currently taking place and it was envisaged that the service expansion would commence within the next couple of months.

The Outreach Team worked predominantly with rough sleepers and offered ongoing care and support to hopefully get them back into secure accommodation. However, many rough sleepers did not fit into the category of 'vulnerable adults' and therefore did not automatically fall under the homelessness legislation which placed a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation.

The Panel were informed that Framework offered a 24 hour helpline number and they currently received around 2,000 calls a month. The new outreach service would run in accordance with the principles of a "No Second Night Out" policy and would involve the presence of a nurse from the NHS Homeless Health Team to carry out any necessary health assessments.

The new Outreach Team covering the neighbouring districts would be focussing on need and being available to respond to any referrals they received (day or night). Drop in sessions were also being arranged to offer health and housing advice to anyone who attended and required support and assistance. It was envisaged that a Rough Sleepers Steering Group would be established, with a representative from each district authority, to ensure continuous sharing of information/feedback and to develop cross-district preventative solutions for tackling homelessness and assisting rough sleepers as appropriate.

Homelessness Reduction Bill

The Council's Housing Strategy Team Leader gave an update presentation to the Panel in relation to the draft Homelessness Reduction Bill.

The Draft Bill had already passed through the House of Commons and would be progressing through the House of Lords with the second reading due on 24th February, 2017. It was hoped that the Bill would be enacted by the end of 2017 and twelve new measures were being introduced to amend the existing legislation. A summary of the twelve measures/changes were circulated at the meeting.

It was acknowledged that should the Bill be passed, it would have implications for the Council as follows:-

- expected 25% rise in homeless applications;
- suitable IT and monitoring systems would need to be in place;
- new procedures finalised for non-priority need applicants;
- protocols agreed to work with specified referral agencies;
- enhanced self help and advice services on the website;
- templates for personal plans;
- agreed additional staffing requirements
- development of new prevention initiatives;
- informing partner agencies and stakeholders of changes through homelessness forum.

In relation to timescales for implementation of the Bill, it was noted that funding arrangements would hopefully be clarified by the end of March 2017 when scoping would begin by the Council to ascertain the remit for the enhanced services and the requirement for any additional staff. A report would be consider by the Cabinet in the summer with an intention to pilot the enhanced services and finalise the staffing arrangements as necessary by the autumn. Presentation would commence to forum members and stakeholders around October/November 2017 with the Act hopefully gaining Royal Assent in December with the production of relevant Codes of Practice as appropriate.

The Panel were advised that the changes would be funded by the additional Government funding for rough sleepers, the £61m national Government funding to enable local authorities to implement the changes arising from the Homelessness Reduction Bill and existing budgets. An announcement as to how the £61m would be allocated had not yet been received but it was presumed that the funding would be allocated to local authorities nationally based on their P1E Quarterly returns (for households dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act and homelessness prevention and relief).

It was acknowledged that the Strategic Housing Team would need to give consideration to the following issues to ensure a smooth transition once the Act had been passed:-

- enhanced cross-County working to share best practice and ensure consistency;

- negotiation for new sites to provide accommodation to single people under LHA rates;
- to update the Home Finder Lettings Policy;
- alternative private sector solutions;
- improved links with private sector landlords;
- understanding the impact of Welfare Reforms;
- potential further uses for Discretionary Housing Payments;
- effective working with health and social care to deal with complex cases.

To sum up, the Housing Strategy Team Leader talked around the current homelessness provision and the importance of increasing the Council's homelessness prevention activities in the future. Consideration would need to be given towards staffing requirements as reviews (currently carried out by the Team Leader) would increase significantly following implementation of the Act. Progress of the Bill was being tracked by the Team and initial preparations were being made accordingly.

Following the presentations, the Panel Members debated the issue and considered amongst other things:-

- to what degree the Council publicised contact numbers and guidelines for homeless people in need and what referral mechanisms were in place for partner organisations;
- the possibility of advertising contact numbers and support services in late night venues (i.e. food outlets);
- the methods undertaken for collecting data in relation to rough sleepers within the Ashfield District;
- the potential impact on homelessness from the recent introduction of the Council's new Selective Licensing Scheme;
- how the Council's homelessness prevention fund was currently utilised;
- the difficulties being experienced by 'sofa surfers' and what support was currently being offered to assist them;
- the potential requirements for new staff following implementation of the Act and how this might be funded;
- the success of early intervention strategies in Wales and its impact on homelessness figures and costs (with the cost decrease achieved mainly from a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast provision);
- the process of eviction via a S21 notice;
- the possibility of the Council photographing rough sleepers (with consent) to build up a database of persons requiring assistance and acknowledging that the practice was already utilised by the Outreach Team as necessary.

Following conclusion of the presentations and debate, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank Ian Scholes, Eileen Jackson and Jason Marriott for their expertise and valuable contributions towards the Panel's review.

RESOLVED

that the following recommendations be submitted to the next available meeting of the Cabinet for consideration:-

- a) that Council recognises the importance of developing effective prevention initiatives (the Bill seeks to place extra duties on Councils) to facilitate early intervention with households/persons at risk of homelessness to provide more detailed advice, support and guidance thus preventing homelessness wherever possible;
- b) that Council continues to strengthen relationships with third sector organisations to facilitate the pooling of resources for tackling homelessness or the threat of homelessness within the Ashfield District;
- c) Members to be furnished with a copy of the 'How to Contact the Housing Options Team' leaflet;
- d) to consider the possibility of working with late night establishments and community initiatives to raise awareness and facilitate the necessary signposting should persons present themselves as homeless or are believed to be under threat of homelessness;
- e) to continue to work effectively with local services and communities to ensure the new outreach service is as effective as possible;
- f) to ensure that Panel Members are kept informed of progress with the Homelessness Reduction Bill and to have the opportunity to review any changes to the structure of the Housing Options Team following enactment of the Bill, prior to submission to Cabinet for consideration.

(During consideration of the review, Councillors Cathy Mason and Lee Anderson left the room at 7.37 p.m. and 7.51 p.m. and returned to the meeting at 7.40 p.m. and 7.52 p.m. respectively. Councillor Rachel Madden also left the meeting at 7.28 p.m.)

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman.

Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL B	Date:	19 JULY 2017
Heading:	INTRODUCTION TO PEST CONTROL		
Portfolio Holder:	ENVIRONMENT		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject To Call-In:	NO		

Purpose Of Report

Pest Control, with a particular focus on street vermin (rats) was added to the Scrutiny workplan 2017/18 following consultation. Members were interested in the type of service the Council provides, environmental impact and what preventative methods we use to reduce the amount of street vermin in the district.

This report provides an overview of the service, national picture and sets identifies the main information required to develop a clear terms of reference for discussion. In addition, the Environmental Health Manager will also be in attendance to provide further information, assist the Panel with their discussion and answer any questions.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Panel are asked to;

- Consider the information contained in this report
- Provide views and comments in relation to the topic
- Consider any areas for further development / improvement

Reasons For Recommendation(s)

The topic was added to the Overview and Scrutiny Workplan in June 2017 to consider how the service operates, scale of the issue and what the Council does to improve environmental health in relation to street vermin.

Alternative Options Considered (With Reasons Why Not Adopted)

This is the first meeting of the Panel considering this topic. Any options or considerations put forward at the meeting will be reported back in due course.

Scrutiny can put forward recommendations to Cabinet on any topic that it considers. Any recommendations submitted will be supported with sufficient reasoning to allow Cabinet Members to give full consideration to all options outlined.

Detailed Information

This topic was placed onto the Scrutiny workplan to gain a more detailed understanding of the services provided by Pest Control, consideration of whether there is an increase in the reporting of street vermin and whether there are any improvements that could be made. To assist the Panel on this Topic, the Environmental Health Manager from Environmental Health will also be in attendance.

National Picture

In 2017, the British Pest Control Association reported that rat numbers have increased to an estimated 200 million, from 160 million in 2014, with many now becoming increasingly resistant to poison and losing their fear of humans.

This is increasingly becoming an issue due to rats carrying diseases including Leptospirosis, Salmonella, Listeria, Toxoplasma gondii and Hantavirus – all of which can be fatal.

The Black Rat (*Rattus Rattus*) and the Brown Rat (*Rattus Norvegicus*) are the two main types of rats that cause concern to the public. They are common pests in both private and home businesses.

According to the BPCA National Survey 2016, Rats have continued to be the most popular pest call-out for UK Local Authorities to receive over the past six years. Overall, there were 186,192 rat call-outs across the UK LAs operating a pest control service (247 out of 325) for the 2015/16 financial period, accounting for 46% of total UK pest call-outs.

Reasons for Increased Rat Populations

Primarily, the presence of rats is linked to poor and degraded environments. The English House Conditions Survey 1996 found a high correlation between widespread litter, vandalism, unkempt gardens and neglected and vacant buildings, and rat infestations. Neglected and derelict properties may allow rats to escape from sewers to the surface from dried out U-bends or broken drainage fittings and high density of housing properties can also be a factor.

Rats flourish where there is rubbish as this provides both refuge and food. Any increase in litter and fly tipping create perfect habitats for rats to live and breed, as does rubbish left in gardens.

Keep Britain Tidy reported recently that the rat problem has become more acute in recent years, coming in tandem with increased binge drinking which has led to countless takeaways being eaten and containers and leftover food dumped in the street.

They further added that fast food was not the only reason, It explained that although some people might believe dropping biodegradable fruit peelings was acceptable, that also encouraged vermin.

The group said this kind of litter often gets dropped on pavements at lunchtime, with the food breaking down into a mushy meal for rats.

Pest Control – Ashfield District Council

Ashfield District Council offer a comprehensive, discreet and professional commercial Pest Prevention and Control Service and is “Which? Trusted Trader” endorsed, ensuring services are effective, safe with high levels of customer satisfaction. They offer a rapid response and can often visit within 24 hours.

This service is provided on a commercial basis to both residential and businesses, offering one off treatments, annual contracts or other service levels to meet individual needs. This includes;

- a thorough inspection of the affected property
- A consultation
- Creation of a plan which will minimise the potential for pests and the factors associated with them.

Current charges for rat or mice control are £60.00 for three visits. Where required, additional visits £18.00.

Customer satisfaction / needs

The Environmental Health Section uses a number of customer satisfaction survey methods to enable its customers to rate the service. Gauging customer satisfaction allows the Council to identify customer needs, wants and expectations whilst providing a consistent mechanism to highlight customer satisfaction levels.

The Council’s Commercial Team currently collects customer feedback and satisfaction through paper questionnaires provided to pest control customers on completion of their treatment and with food hygiene inspection letters.

Next Steps

To consider this issue effectively, Members are asked to identify the following to outline a clear terms of reference;

- Particular concerns / queries
- Potential outcomes / recommendations and added value
- Feedback from constituents (if any)
- Potential expert witnesses (if any)
- Any further information

As discussed in this briefing report, the Environmental Health Manager will be in attendance to assist Members with their discussion and questions.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Communities and Environment - Ensure the foundations for a good quality of life are in place; reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and facilitating cleaner and more attractive neighbourhoods.

Legal:

No Legal implications are identified arising from this report

Finance:

Pest control is a commercially operated service. There are no financial implications arising from this report, Finance will be consulted fully should there be any financial implications raised during this review.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Human Resources / Equality and Diversity:

There are no Human Resources / Equality implications arising from this report.

Other Implications:

None

Background Papers

Scrutiny Workplan 2017/18
British Pest Control Association National Survey 2016

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