

## **OUTWARD FOCUS SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,**

**on Tuesday, 24th October, 2023 at 7.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor Dave Shaw in the Chair;

Councillors Paul Grafton, Sarah Lewsey and  
Gordon Mann.

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors Trevor Locke and Lee Waters.

**Officers Present:** Lynn Cain, Mike Joy, Emma Lindley and  
Shane Wright.

### **OF.4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **OF.5 Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 13 July 2023, be received  
and approved as a correct record.

### **OF.6 Homeless Prevention Strategy**

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting including Emma Lindley, the Council's Housing Strategy Lead Officer, who was in attendance at the meeting to deliver a presentation in respect of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy for 2024 -2029.

To commence the presentation, Members were advised that the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy was one of four sub-strategies that made up the Council's overall Housing Strategy which had recently been reviewed and refreshed. Both the updated Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategies were due to be submitted to Cabinet in January 2024 for consideration.

All local authorities were required to review homelessness within their areas at least every 5 years and the most recent review by the Council had been commenced the previous autumn, working in collaboration and on average one day a week with Mansfield District Council and Newark & Sherwood District Council. Working in collaboration had ensured that common aims and objectives were aligned across the neighbouring authorities.

The Council had been consulting with internal and external stakeholders since the summer with consultancy support from the Shelter organisation who had facilitated in person consultation events in Ashfield, Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood during June 2023. During September, an online consultation had also been carried out with Council officers, stakeholders, customers and the general public on the proposed Homelessness prevention priorities but unfortunately the response had been disappointingly low.

Looking back at the previous 2019-2024 strategy, the following were noted by the Committee:

#### Aims

- Prevention of homelessness
- Ensuring that no one has to rough sleep
- To minimise the use of emergency and temporary accommodation
- To provide a high quality service

#### Objectives

- Improving financial resilience
- Increasing access to social housing and tenancy sustainment
- Increasing supported housing and housing related support
- Increasing access to the Property Redress Scheme (PRS) and tenancy sustainment
- Ensuring support needs were met
- Ending rough sleeping
- Achieving high customer satisfaction
- Evidence-based approach that was monitored and evaluated

#### Achievements

- Specialist additional roles within the Council and partners
- Training and partnership working on money advice
- Good access to social housing and a minor cause of homelessness
- Additional supported housing available, particularly for low-medium support needs
- PRS access/sustainment improved for a period
- Regular multi-agency case conferences
- Broxtowe Youth Homeless sessions in schools
- Rough sleeping reduced to 4 (Nov 2022 snapshot)
- High levels of customer satisfaction regularly reported
- Strategic forums met regularly

#### Challenges

- Reliance on social housing to end all duties
- PRS affordability
- Lack of throughput in supported and temporary accommodation
- Covid lockdowns.

In relation to the priorities and actions anticipated to deliver the 2024-29 Strategy, Members were advised on the key national policies that were currently in place and some potential changes to legislation that would be implemented within the next 12 months including the Renter's Reform Bill which was introduced into Parliament in May 2023. It was acknowledged that

the asylum seeker population was growing quickly within Ashfield and the Council were hoping to recruit a Relocation Officer to assist with the ever growing workload.

A synopsis of the public sector bodies in Nottinghamshire who directly or indirectly work to prevent homelessness was given, including the work carried out by the County Council's Public Health Team, Adult Social Care team and Children's Social Care Team who each had a number of statutory duties relevant to homelessness prevention. It was also noted that the Devolution Deal had highlighted the tackling of local housing challenges such as homelessness and rough sleeping as a future area of focus and the new Mayoral position was due to go to the polls for election in May 2024.

The Committee were then furnished with some data and statistics from the housing market and then in respect of levels of homelessness and contributory factors in Ashfield, from April 2022 to March 2023. In addition, it was noted that the Code of Guidance was expecting Council's to give predictions on future levels of homelessness as part of their reviews, but this could prove to be difficult to achieve as many factors were involved in driving people to homelessness and sleeping rough.

To conclude, Members were advised in relation to accessing funding streams and allocations to assist with homelessness prevention and then finally, the priorities and aspirations for the Council's homelessness service over the next 5 years, as follows:

- To prevent as many residents as possible from becoming homeless, with a particular focus on those becoming homeless from a private rented sector tenancy or as a result of domestic abuse
- To end rough sleeping
- To help as many residents as possible to move from one home to another without the need for emergency and temporary accommodation. Where it is needed, to make sure that the temporary accommodation is good quality
- To provide a high quality service that customers are satisfied with, provide opportunities for customers to influence the design and delivery of services
- To encourage and support leaders of other organisations to do more to prevent homelessness
- To be a trauma-informed service, by looking after the wellbeing of our customers and staff.

The Scrutiny Research Officer took the opportunity to thank Emma for the detailed and informative presentation and commented that the insight into the homelessness service had been invaluable for Members undertaking their roles within the District and their communities.

A discussion took place and Members considered the following:

- an acknowledgement that recent hikes in mortgage rates might put people at risk of losing their homes in the near future and the fact that the Government's mortgage rescue scheme, as previously administered by the Council, was no longer available
- the impact for Council officers having to assist and support homeless people with complex health/trauma issues and the wellbeing services provided by the Council to support them
- the need to ensure that enough trauma-informed officers are available to support the increasing levels of homelessness within the District, and to request further resources from Cabinet for additional staff if required
- the looming crisis relating to the reduction in available private sector rental properties within the sector, due to:
  - higher interest rates and mortgage payments
  - landlords aging and releasing cash/relinquishing commitments
  - landlord fears regarding increased tenants' rights and obligations as a result of the Renters Reform Bill
  - competition from other markets (i.e. MOD, Asylum Service).

RESOLVED that

- a) progress with regard to the development of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024 -2029, as presented, be received and noted;
- b) the priorities and aspirations for the Council's homelessness service over the next 5 years, as advised, be also received and welcomed;
- c) once the action plans arising out of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024 -2029, are drafted, it be agreed that Committee Members are furnished with the draft plans for consideration and feedback as appropriate.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman.