

Public Document Pack



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10 December 2018

Dear Councillor

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT a meeting of the **HOMELESSNESS PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** will be held in the Council Chamber at these Offices on Tuesday 18 December 2018 at 2.00 pm when the following business will be transacted.

Members of the public who require further information are asked to contact Kate Batty-Smith on 01304 872303 or by e-mail at democraticservices@dover.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Batty-Smith", written over a white background.

Chief Executive

Homelessness Project Advisory Group Membership:

J S Back (Chairman)
P M Beresford
P M Brivio
M D Conolly
B Gardner

AGENDA

1 **APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

To note appointments of Substitute Members.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members in respect of business to be transacted on the agenda.

4 **NOTES**

To confirm the notes of the meeting of the Advisory Group held on 9 August 2018 (to follow).

5 **ROUGH SLEEPING REPORT** (Pages 4 - 6)

To consider the attached report.

6 **PRESENTATION BY PORCHLIGHT**

To receive a presentation from Porchlight.

7 **HOMELESSNESS PERFORMANCE REPORT** (Pages 7 - 9)

To consider the attached report.

8 **HOMELESSNESS SERVICE OVERVIEW** (Pages 10 - 12)

To consider the attached report.

9 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC** (Page 13)

The recommendation is attached.

10 **PROJECTS UPDATE** (Pages 14 - 16)

To consider the attached report.

Access to Meetings and Information

- The provisions of Part VI of the Local Government Act 1972, The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 do not apply to meetings of this Advisory Group so as to require its meetings to be open to the public.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council will, whenever possible, conduct meetings of the Advisory Group in public in furtherance of its commitment to openness and transparency. However, there may be occasions on which the nature of the business to be transacted requires members of the public to be excluded from the meetings or parts of them.

- All meetings are held at the Council Offices, Whitfield unless otherwise indicated on the front page of the agenda. There is disabled access via the Council Chamber entrance and a disabled toilet is available in the foyer. In addition, there is a PA system and hearing loop within the Council Chamber.
- Agenda papers are published five clear working days before the meeting. Alternatively, a limited supply of agendas will be available at the meeting, free of charge, and all agendas, reports and minutes can be viewed and downloaded from

our website www.dover.gov.uk. Minutes are normally published within five working days of each meeting. All agenda papers and minutes are available for public inspection for a period of six years from the date of the meeting.

- If you require any further information about the contents of this agenda or your right to gain access to information held by the Council please contact Kate Batty-Smith, Democratic Services Officer, telephone: 01304 872303 or email: democraticservices@dover.gov.uk for details.

Large print copies of this agenda can be supplied on request.

Rough Sleeping Report

2018 Rough Sleeping Estimate

There is currently no national mechanism for recording every person who sleeps rough in England. Rough sleepers figures are collected annually either by a street count or an estimate and a 'typical night' takes place between 1 October and 30 November.

In recent years Dover has carried out an estimate. This is a snapshot assessment, based on evidence from the local authority and a range of external agencies, about the number of people sleeping rough in that LA area on a particular night. This is generally accepted as being the fairest way of assessing rough sleeping, as carrying out a count relies on actually finding a person sleeping out rather than taking account of people who are known to appropriate agencies.

Estimates can include a spotlight count as one of the evidence collection methods and this is usually carried out by Porchlight a few nights before the estimate date. Other agencies involved with the process are the Dover Outreach Centre and the Council's Community Safety Unit. This year our estimate was based on the night of the 22nd November and a verification meeting was held on the 26th November where all the agencies discussed the rough sleepers known to each agency to avoid duplication of numbers.

This year we returned the figure of 20 rough sleepers, an increase of 7 from last year's total of 13.

There has generally been a rise across the county which reflects a countrywide increase, according to the organisation Homeless Link who the MHCLG task to gather and verify the information. Recording rough sleeping is acknowledged as having its limitations however the snapshot methodology aims to get as accurate a representation as possible.

See appendix 1 for Kent figures.

Rough Sleeping Related Bids

In August 2018 the Government produced a Rough Sleeping Strategy, setting out its plans to help people who are sleeping rough now and to put in place the structures to end rough sleeping for good. Its vision is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027.

A number of funding streams have subsequently been made available. The Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund was shared between the 83 councils in England with the highest numbers of rough sleepers in their areas. In Kent, three Councils were successful in accessing money from the pot after being invited to bid: Canterbury, Maidstone and Thanet. Included in this initiative is a Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP), and the Govt wants to ensure that this pathway exists in some form, in every area where there are rough sleepers. As such, it recently invited applications from LAs wishing to be Early Adopters, to apply for funding to support the local establishment or enhancement of a RRP for rough sleepers. The four elements of the bid are:

- 15 Somewhere Safe to Stay Pilots – funding 15 assessment hubs that build on the No Second Night Out model in London, to rapidly assess the needs of people who are sleeping rough or those who are at risk of sleeping rough and support them to get the right help.
- Local Lettings Agencies – funding the setup or extension of local lettings agencies, to help local areas to make the most efficient use of rental accommodation, foster the development of strong relationships between landlords and tenants, and where possible develop a property portfolio to meet the needs of rough sleepers.

- Supported Lettings – funding flexible floating support in homes provided for people with a history of rough sleeping. This will provide flexible support funding to help over 5,000 people at risk of rough sleeping, over the next two years, to sustain their tenancies in homes across the housing sector.
- Navigators – funding new specialists who will help people who sleep rough to access the appropriate local services, get off the streets and into settled accommodation. These individuals will work with a range of multidisciplinary teams and provide both navigation and co-ordination support, using strong local relationships, expertise and collective working.

Dover Council, in conjunction with the Dover Outreach Centre, Porchlight and our Community Safety Unit has submitted a bid for a total of £162,718 covering 2018/19 and 19/20. The outcome is expected during December.

In addition, we have also submitted a bid, in partnership with Folkestone & Hythe and Thanet Councils for a £561k part of the £20 million Private Rented Access Fund. The fund is focused on schemes that will enable better access and sustainment of tenancies for those who are, or are at risk of becoming homeless and rough sleeping. The money is available for the financial years 2018/19 and 19/20 and once again, successful bidders will be notified during December.

Severe Emergency Weather Provision (SWEP)

SWEP arrangements are triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below or when there are other severe weather conditions forecast.

During periods of cold weather the forecast for Dover is checked daily on the Meteorological Office website.

As soon as the protocol is triggered, we contact our voluntary and statutory sector partners to advise that the SWEP is in place, with details of who to contact if they identify any rough sleepers. Our out of hour's service is also contacted to advise that the SWEP has been triggered.

Dover Outreach Centre (DOC) Winter Shelter

The DOC will once again be operating their winter shelter provision, working in partnership with six local churches providing the space for up to 15 people per night. The winter shelter is available from the beginning of December until the end of February, with the option of extending into the first two weeks of March depending on the weather.

Dover Council don't currently fund the Winter Shelter from the homelessness budget however a funding support request for £10k has been received from the Chair of Trustees and a report will be going to the Portfolio Holder for consideration.

Contact Officer: Elly Toye, Housing Options Manager, Ext 42259

Kent LAs Rough Sleeping Estimates 2010-2018

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2017 rough sleeping rate (per 1,000 households)
Ashford	2	7	4	1	5	5	8	11	19	0.21
Canterbury	3	22	20	22	38	47	50	36	33*	0.55
Dartford	0	15	16	12	19	10	9	9	12	0.2
Dover	8	14	5	5	4	9	9	13	20	0.26
Maidstone	27	19	19	14	25	38	35	41	9*	0.59
Sevenoaks	0	1	2	2	0	6	2	4	?	0.08
Shepway	9	12	5	4	4	13	9	16	?	0.32
Swale	0	2	6	5	2	6	6	9	32	0.15
Thanet	1	9	8	14	15	17	33	46	23*	0.72
Tonbridge & Malling	1	4	3	4	7	0	4	8	10	0.15
Tunbridge Wells	9	13	10	12	15	15	15	20	7	0.4
England	1,768	2,181	2,309	2,414	2,744	3,569	4,134	4,751	N/K	0.20

Source: MHCLG Rough sleeping returns
(annual)

*All three LAs received Govt funding as their rough sleeping numbers were high in 2017. Maidstone confirmed that they have a cohort of 30+ rough sleepers accommodated using their funding therefore these were not counted as part of their total figure.

Homelessness Performance Report

November 2018

Key Performance Indicators

The figures show the position as at the end of November 2018.

Number of Homelessness Cases

		Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
H1	Number of homelessness applications	3	7	25	19	19	82	67	53	42	36	33	53	20
H2	Number of homelessness cases accepted	28	10	15	26	16	6	8	3	7	2	15	11	12

Comments:

Private sector tenancies being brought to an end and relationship breakdown continue to have a significant impact on the homelessness acceptance figure.

The spike in homelessness presentations following the introduction of the Duty to Refer has reduced as agencies recognise that this route is not a short cut to our service.

The on-going programme of acquiring properties and the re-purchase of former Council properties for use as temporary accommodation continues, with further acquisitions in the pipeline.

Spend on Temporary Accommodation

		Average Apr-Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
H11	Rent arrears on HRA units		£1,391	£3,942	£2,334	£1,545	£2,875	£2,544	£4,593	£2,786	£1,773	£3,968	£6,027	£10,187
H12	Gross monthly spend on temporary accommodation	£90,214	£124,606	£74,034	£93,312	£97,314	£66,905	£82,491	£65,305	£50,316	£82,701	£103,713	£121,594	£82,342
H13	Net monthly spend on temporary accommodation (minus Universal Credit and Housing Benefit income)						£34,971	£58,831	£55,293	£22,250	£63,887	£68,557	£30,572	£30,014

The increased gross monthly spend on temporary accommodation in September and October is as a result of the Prohibition Notice which was served at the end of August 2018.

The invoices have all been submitted and spend in November is back on track.

The increase in the rent arrears on these DDC owned interim accommodation units is in the main due to a number of customers being moved on and the units being relet. We are still awaiting housing benefit on a number of new tenants who have moved in. This money will eventually be recouped.

We work very well with our Housing Benefit colleagues. The lengthy waiting time for benefits to be processed is normally due to a delay in the customer providing the required evidence. This is monitored and chased by our Accommodation and Income Recovery Officer.

Summary of Temporary and Interim Accommodation - September 2018

Ref	Types of TA	Oct-17			Mar-18			Apr-18			May-18			Jun-18			Jul-18			Aug-18			Sep-18			Oct-18			Nov-18		
		Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days			
H3	B&B	48			25			21			19			27			27			21			36			22			31		
			82			130			97			100			71			61			74			66			65			65	
				3936		3250			2037			1900			1917			1647			1554			2376			1430			2015	
H4	Self contained units (nightly)	44			32			37			34			35			40			30			40			37			41		
			135			116			66			62			72			75			76			83			76			95	
				5940		3712			2442			2108			2520			3000			2280			3320			2812			3895	
H5	Shared units (nightly paid)	7			8			4			6			4			6			7			8			7			9		
			76			113			73			74			85			64			36			59			95			89	
				532		904			292			444			340			384			252			472			665			664	
H6	Total (B&B & nightly paid)	99			65			62			59			66			73			58			84			66			82		

Interim Accommodation

Ref	Types of TA	Oct-17			Mar-18			Apr-18			May-18			Jun-18			Jul-18			Aug-18			Sep-18			Oct-18			Nov-18		
		Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days	Number	Av stay (days)	Total no. of days			
H7	Private sector leasing	4			5			4			4			3			4			4			4			3			3		
			345			383			349			380			338			278			249			279			381			411	
				1740		1915			1396			1520			1014			1112			996			1116			1143			1233	
H8	DDC owned stock	6			13			12			13			20			21			22			23			25			26		
			52			102			124			130			99			140			130			154			132			156	
				312		1326			1488			1690			1980			2940			2860			3542			3300			4056	
H9	Housing Association stock	9			9			8			7			7			6			5			7			7			7		
			272			302			355			276			306			350			237			196			224			255	
				2448		2718			2840			1932			2142			2100			1185			1372			1568			1785	
H10	Totals (all types of TA)	118	125		92	152		86	121		84	115		96	103		104	107		89	102		118	104		101	106		118	118	

Pam Millington
 Senior Housing Options Officer
 Tel: 01304 872202

4 December 2018

Homelessness Project Advisory Group

18 December 2018

Homelessness Service Overview

1. Audit Report Recommendations

The homelessness audit that was carried out earlier this year was completed in August and resulted in 23 recommendations, many of which had already been addressed by the time the report was released. Of the 23, 15 are fully completed, 5 are partially completed and 3 are outstanding.

One of the audit recommendations is discussed further in the Homelessness Reduction Act KPI section of this report.

We are meeting the Auditor on Friday 7th December to sign off the audit.

2. Staffing

There are currently six Housing Options Officers (HOO's) employed in the team, carrying a caseload of between 50 and 60 cases. This is slightly higher than many of our peers in other Local Authorities – Gravesham 30 cases per Officer and Ashford 20 cases per Officer.

In addition, during the course of this year we have employed two apprentices who are proving to be a huge benefit to the team as a whole. Their work is mainly around dealing with the huge administrative burden created by the Homelessness Reduction Act. A couple of examples are listed below:

- contacting applicants to gather further information before passing cases on to the Housing Options Officers and
- assisting the Accommodation and Income Recovery Officer in monitoring and chasing any debt.

Both apprenticeships are for two years and are due to end in February and October 2020.

This approach enables our HOO's to focus on the investigative and relief elements of their role.

Many of the audit recommendations referred to earlier, related to how we manage control of expenditure and maximise the recovery of monies owed to the Council.

As a result we have reconfigured the Support Officers roles and created a new Accommodation and Income Recovery Officer post. This has enabled us to bring back into the team some functions which were carried out by East Kent Services and Accountancy resulting in a more consistent way of working.

Despite the pressurized working environment staff morale remains generally good. This was helped by the fact that all our staff have fully grasped and embraced the legislative changes thereby helping achieve relatively smooth implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. However, we are conscious that staff are working at full capacity and that issues such as staff absence or vacancies and 'one off' major incidents such as the HMO closure a few months ago are likely to create resilience problems al-be-it in the short term.

All staff guidance procedures are being simplified (flow chart format) in order to ensure clarity and consistency.

3. Duty to refer

We have had a steady flow of referrals since the introduction of the duty to refer in October 2018. The main referrer is the DWP.

We have received referrals in various forms which caused duplication. Meetings have taken place with our key partners in order to explain the triage process and to encourage them to make their referrals via our website and our prescribed form.

A meeting recently took place with the housing options team and EKH's tenancy sustainment team to work with those failing to pay their rent to ensure referrals are made to the housing options team at a much earlier stage. This has been working much better but there is still a way to go in terms of accessing our discretionary housing payment fund and preventing evictions.

4. Homelessness Reduction Act KPI's

We propose a change to some of the KPI's being reported to the PAG as the current KPI's do not reflect the new legislative requirements. We have had some teething problems with generating the reports but the systems teams are working hard to ensure we will be able to provide accurate and relevant information.

MHCLG has access to live case level data for each Local Authority in order to see the customer journey and they also see statistical information on the following areas:

- Number of triage cases
- Number of prevention cases
- Number of Relief cases
- Full duty owed
- Number of duty to refer cases

It is therefore proposed that we add these to the current KPI's we provide to the PAG.

Attached at **Appendix 1** are the figures relating to the above headings from September to date.

Audit has also made some recommendations in respect of KPI's they would like to see adopted by this Project Advisory Group:

5. Staff safety

There has been an increase in the number of customers who are verbally abusing and threatening our staff. This affects our Customer Services staff but also our Housing Options Officers.

Staff safety is of paramount importance and there are many initiatives in place to ensure staff safety is not compromised and that any identifiable risks are minimized. Where customers are known to be violent or unpredictable, staff are encouraged to:

- visit in pairs
- note the full address of the visit in their calendar and/or on the whiteboard
- ensure they are taking responsibility for their own safety
- ensure they are aware and confident that they can exit a telephone call or interview if things appear to be “getting out of hand”
- ensure they know that they can call for help
- ensure they speak about any incidents afterwards and they know how they can self refer to the workplace counselling service where appropriate
- an easy exit door has been installed at reception
- receptionist is relocated to the main reception area during the afternoons as an initial pilot

It can be difficult to assess when a customer is likely to become aggressive, threatening or violent. Our Health and Safety/Risk Assessment Officer is currently in discussion with Customer Services and Housing Options staff to determine whether additional safety measures are required.

Two nominated Officers have access to the Corporate Risk Register and the team are regularly encouraged to report verbal or physical near miss or actual incidents in order that they are recorded where appropriate.

We will continually review our approach, our policies and procedures and review best practice elsewhere to ensure we put things in place to ensure all our staff are safe whilst doing their job.

Contact Officer: Elly Toye, Housing Options Manager, Ext 42259

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

NON-KEY DECISION

HOMELESSNESS PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP – 18 DECEMBER 2018

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Recommendation

The provisions of Part VI of the Local Government Act 1972, the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 do not apply to meetings of this Advisory Group so as to require its meetings to be open to the public.

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On this occasion the public will be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business:

<u>Item Report</u>	<u>Paragraph Exempt</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Projects Update	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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