# Making vacant buildings within Oxford available for the use as temporary homeless shelters (proposed by Councillor Thomas, seconded by Councillor Simmons)

Green member motion

Recognising:

* the growing number of individuals sleeping on our streets;
* the dangers of sleeping rough;
* the significant number of long and short-term vacant buildings within the city [1];
* the potential to move on with their lives and off the street (into permanent accommodation and employment) that a period of stable and safe accommodation could offer many of those current sleeping rough;

**The Council requests the City Executive Board to commission and give consideration to an urgent report that would enable the City Council to:**

* Make policy that allows for all vacant City Council owned buildings – including commercial premises - to be made freely available for use as temporary homeless shelters, to be run by community charity and voluntary organisations that are able and willing to do so [2];
* Encourage other parties with similarly vacant buildings – particularly Oxford University and Oxford Colleges – to make those buildings available to be utilised as part of this initiative;
* Publicises the availability of relevant vacant buildings to the voluntary and community sector, and calls for expressions of interest from the community to operate these spaces;
* Assist in the co-ordination of the provision of key “wrap-around” services to residents making use of the temporary accommodation;
* Make preparations for this at the earliest possible time, and offers clear guidance frameworks and assistance to all interested parties;
* Sets terms of reference for use of spaces, conditions of use, and clearly sets out the arrangements for reclaiming possession of the relevant premises when circumstances require it [3]

[1] As witnessed by the on-going, serial occupation of empty premises being organised by the 'Open House' project

[2] Recent experience of Iffley Open House that the willingness and capacity for such an undertaking exists within Oxford’s voluntary community

[3] For example, Iffley Open House was vacated without issue on a date agreed between the free-holder and the homeless community.

**Amendment 1 proposed by Councillor Rowley:**

Delete all after *'Council requests'* in the middle emboldened part of the motion , and replace with : ' *Council requests the CEB to commission a report from officers early in the new municipal year on the processes and procedures that could be used to make empty properties available for use as temporary homeless shelters*.'

**Amendment 2 proposed by Councillor Wade, seconded by Councillor Gant:**

Replace the first three bullet points after ‘*enable the City Council to*:’ with

* Take legal advice as to whether registered charities could act as agents for the City Council in providing accommodation on licence in vacant City Council owned buildings for rough sleepers;
* Compile a list of charities willing to operate such licences as agents for the Council;
* Encourage other landowners in Oxford City with similarly vacant buildings to make their buildings available as part of this initiative;
* Publicise the list of available buildings to the charities which have expressed a willingness to consider providing accommodation on licence for rough sleepers;

And omit ‘*and capacity’* in Note [2] of the footnotes

**Motion as amended by Councillor Rowley (1) reads:**

Recognising:

* the growing number of individuals sleeping on our streets;
* the dangers of sleeping rough;
* the significant number of long and short-term vacant buildings within the city [1];
* the potential to move on with their lives and off the street (into permanent accommodation and employment) that a period of stable and safe accommodation could offer many of those current sleeping rough;

**The Council requests the City Executive Board Council to commission a report from officers early in the new municipal year on the processes and procedures that could be used to make empty properties available for use as temporary homeless shelters.**

**Motion as amended by Councillor Wade (2) reads:**

Recognising:

* The growing number of individuals sleeping on our streets;
* The dangers of sleeping rough;
* The significant number of long and short-term vacant buildings within the city [1];
* The potential to move on with their lives and off the street (into permanent accommodation and employment) that a period of stable and safe accommodation could offer many of those currently sleeping rough;

**The Council requests the City Executive Board to commission and give consideration to an urgent report that would enable the City Council to:**

* ~~Make policy that allows for all vacant City Council owned buildings – including commercial premises – to be made freely available for use as temporary homeless shelters, to be run by community charity and voluntary organisations that are able and willing to do so [2];~~
* ~~Encourage other parties with similarly vacant buildings – particularly oxford University and Oxford Colleges – to make those buildings available to be utilized as part of this initiative;~~
* ~~Publicises the availability of relevant vacant buildings to the voluntary and community sector, and calls for expressions of interest from the community to operate these spaces;~~
* *Take legal advice as to whether registered charities could act as agents for the City Council in providing accommodation on licence in vacant City Council owned buildings for rough sleepers;*
* *Compile a list of charities willing to operate such licences as agents for the Council;*
* *Encourage other landowners in Oxford City with similarly vacant buildings to make their buildings available as part of this initiative*
* *Publicise the list of available buildings to the charities which have expressed a willingness to consider operating temporary accommodation on licence for rough sleepers;*
* Assist in the co-ordination of the provision of key “wrap-around” services to residents making use of the temporary accommodation;
* Make preparations for this at the earliest possible time, and offer clear guidance frameworks and assistance to all interested parties;
* Set terms of reference for use of spaces, conditions of use, and clearly set out the arrangements for reclaiming possession of the relevant premises when circumstances require it [3]