

## OXFORD RESETTLEMENT PROJECT

Questions for the Executive Board, May 27 2002-05-24

1 Will the Council agree to examine the practicability of the 'golden scenario' (see the formal call and supporting material sent to the CEO, May 20).

*The services provided by the Night Shelter need to be accessible and centrally located. The site itself is small, enclosed and attached to Luther Street Centre for homeless people. In addition it would be difficult to find an alternative suitable site for the Night Shelter.*

1.1 Will a wide range of portfolio holders and appropriate officers contribute to this examination, ie those with responsibility for Strategic Finance, Crime and Community Safety, Economic Development and Planning, Property, in addition to Housing?

*A wide range of portfolio holders and appropriate officers have been involved in the process of redeveloping the Night Shelter to date and they will continue to do so.*

2 Is it essential for the Oxford Resettlement Project (as opposed to the NS emergency accommodation unit) to be sited in the city centre? If so, will the Council publish the evidence for this judgement?

*25 bedspaces out of 50 are emergency/fast access bedspaces which do need to be in the city centre.*

2.1 If city centre siting is not absolutely essential, could the ORP provide a higher standard of rehabilitation and life-long care services elsewhere?

*This is not a rehabilitation or life-long care project. 25 bedspaces will form a resettlement unit, where residents will stay for 6 to 12 months, while they participate in individually tailored resettlement programmes to acquire the lifeskills necessary to enable them to maintain a tenancy successfully when they move to a flat or bedsit.*

2.2 Is a 45-bed resettlement hostel necessary? Will the Council publish the evidence on how the size of this need has been established?

*50 bedspaces are required because this has been the average nightly demand for accommodation at the Night Shelter over the past few years.*

1.3 Would a combination of a smaller institutional unit and expansion of the Julian Housing project or similar be practicable?

*Julian Housing is used as temporary move-on accommodation from the Night Shelter, before residents move on to self-contained, permanent flats. As the level of support provided is much lower than that at the proposed Resettlement Project, where there will be staff on-site 24 hours per day, there is a danger that many residents would "fail" there and would cause disruption to local communities.*

2.2 Would this allow a larger proportion of homeless people to live in accordance with the Guiding Principles behind Housing with Support (Agenda p.24)? (The ORP proposals do not match these principles for anyone for whom institutional care is not absolutely essential)

*The ORP proposals are not for "institutional care," which is an entirely different model of provision (e.g. a residential home for older people, whose residents have reached the stage where they require help with personal hygiene, etc.).*

*The Guiding Principles Behind Housing With Support make it clear that a range of support levels is required to meet different levels of need for individuals, which may change over time. People who access night shelters have usually spent time (maybe just intermittent nights, maybe years) living on the streets. They tend to be damaged, marginalised people who require a high level of support for some time before they are able to engage in meaningful occupation and live independently, albeit with low level ongoing support in some cases.*

2.2 Could this care then be provided at a lower per capita cost to the Council?

*"Care" will not be provided. The Council will not be paying for support - support will be paid for by Supporting People, a new grant for housing-related support which will come into operation in April 2003.*

2.3 Will the Council agree to investigate whether Oxford produces 60 new people per year who are so damaged by alcohol and substance addiction that residential institutional care at ORP (as projected by the ORP. See Agenda p. 3.2), in addition to the provision already in place at Simon House and Lucy Faithfull House?

*As explained above, ORP will not provide residential institutional care. Numbers of people in hostels and temporary accommodation or sleeping rough over the course of a year who have drug and alcohol problems are shown in the housing and support needs table at the back of the Single Homeless Strategy. Where appropriate and possible, these people will be referred on to one of several specialist projects that now exist that meet their differing needs, if they cannot be met within ORP. There is certainly no surplus of provision. Provision with accommodation for people with drug problems includes the Ley Community, the Dolphin Project, Magellan House, Stonham's Cowley Road Project, the Drugs Recovery Project and Lucy Faithfull House.*

2.4 The (excellent) Julian Housing Project now projects supporting 60+ move-on places (see Agenda p.6 3.3, 3.4). This is in addition to, rather than a replacement for, the present 50 NS places. Will the Council investigate the implications of this additional service provision? Will Julian Housing be establish 60+ new move-on places every year to meet the projected ORP move-on needs?

*This provision is not additional housing, but is very useful because it is under the management of the Night Shelter and provides temporary (about 6 months) move-on accommodation from the Night Shelter, Lucy Faithfull*

*House and Simon House. The impact has been less people having to sleep rough because these 3 hostels are not silting up to the same extent as they were. It is highly unlikely that Julian Housing will continue to expand at this rate, if at all.*

3 Could any way be found to direct some of the financial benefits obtained by alternative development of the present NS site towards enhancing the Council's homelessness programme generally, eg for child homelessness?

*We regard this as the best location for ORP and the land is in the City Council's ownership.*

3.1 What is the value of the site assuming commercial development? (See Agenda p.6 3.1)

*As mentioned above the site is difficult to develop for other purposes as it is small and enclosed. It is a good location for the Nigh Shelter and it would be difficult to identify an alternative location for a Night Shelter.*

4 Given the general public's concern expressed, eg in the Talkback Survey 2000, does the Council accept that it is concerned to reduce social stress in the city centre, provided this can be achieved without damaging the ORP?

*Yes.*

4.1 Will the Council investigate and publish a list of all institutional services provided in the city centre contributing to the present level of social stress? Will it publish comparison lists for other areas of the city?

*The question suggests that services (for homeless people?) are contributing to social stress, rather than, as we believe, alleviating it. A list of provision in the city could be provided if Mr Curran would explain more precisely what he means by "institutional services" - accommodation for people with varying support needs, day centres for homeless people/people with mental health needs, etc.?*

4.1.1 If this investigation finds that the city centre residents, workers and users generally are subject to considerable stress from the pattern of service provision, both absolutely and comparatively, will the Council agree to use the results of this investigation and comparison with other areas of the city in seeking ways to reduce/resist increasing that stress?

*The provision of a list of services in different parts of the city (which can be provided once "institutional services" have been more clearly defined) will not answer the question of whether residents, etc. are being subjected to "stress."*

4.2 Will the Council investigate and publish comparisons for provision per 100,000 population for Bristol, Reading, Swindon, Cambridge? (See Agenda p.10 4.4)

*This would be a large piece of work, for which we have limited resources to carry out. We would question how validity this work would be. May we suggest you contact the DTLR Homelessness Directorate as they will have*

*far more detail in regards to national provision and may have guidance on how to make realistic comparisons.*

4.2.1 Will the Council publish what targets have been set and what 'appropriate action' (see Agenda p.10 4.4) is being taken?

*To date targets have not been set with regard to the number of people coming to Oxford and nothing is available to be published. Although we are collating information.*

4.3 Given the desirability of Oxford as a destination, will the Council consider exploring ways to set in effect a (generous) cap on Oxford's contribution to regional/national provision?

*The word generous is inappropriate as to date services remain extremely busy with people still having to wait for hostel provision. The general message given to other LA's is not to send people to Oxford as the provision is limited. More recently an agency in Reading changed a policy which originally encouraged workers to send people to Oxford. Thames Valley Probation are working not to relocate people to Oxford unless they have a local connection.*

5 Could alternative development for the present NS site contribute to Oxford's economic vitality, regeneration of the area to west of St Aldate's etc? If so, how significant would this contribution be?

*As mentioned above the site is enclosed, small and attached to the Luther Street Centre. It is unlikely that alternative development of the site would contribute to Oxford's economic vitality.*

6 The decision made to establish the Simon Hostel has had a significant impact on the city centre over the last two decades. Does the Council agree that the decision relating to the ORP is comparable in importance?

*The 50-bedspace Night Shelter is already in situ. It will be replaced by another building providing 50 bedspaces.*

6.1 How does the Council assess the risk that need for emergency accommodation may rise again, despite present successes in reducing these numbers? Could this lead to the establishment of a new Night Shelter elsewhere in the city centre in response to this need? Are Members and Officers aware that Simon House itself replaced a previous Night Shelter? *It is not possible to answer the first two questions. Simon House and the present Night Shelter replaced emergency provision in a railway shed. Simon House was established as a "dry" hostel, where people who had consumed alcohol on or off the premises could not stay and the Night Shelter was set up to provide for people who were continuing to use alcohol, but they were not allowed to consume it on the premises.*

6.1 Will the Council accept that some (regrettable) cost and delay is justified in order to establish the best way ahead, especially in view of the fact that the existence of the opportunity for exploring the 'golden scenario' and other alternatives was revealed only in April 2002?

*Please see question 1. We must not risk losing the capital allocation and the Homelessness Directorate wants the Night Shelter replaced a.s.a.p.*