

Report of: Neighbourhood Renewal Business Manager

To: Executive Board

Date: 17 July 2006

Item No:

Title of Report : Response to Community Scrutiny recommendation on Local Connection



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: To respond to Community Scrutiny's recommendation:
ask that the Executive Board support the work ongoing, including the requests for help from the Homelessness Directorate, with the issues of rough sleepers; and to further request that consideration be given by the Executive Board to the possible introduction of a "local connections" policy as a last resort"

Key decision: No



Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ed Turner

Scrutiny Responsibility: Community Scrutiny and Housing Scrutiny

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by:



emy King - Legal and Democratic Services

Andy Collett - Finance and Asset Management



Councillor Patrick Murray

Michael Lawrence - Strategic Director



Policy Framework:



Homelessness Strategy

Recommendation(s):



To note the comments of Community Scrutiny

2. The Street Homeless Co-ordinator will meet with the ODPM's Specialist Advisor for the South East in May 2006 to discuss the City's ability to sustain its rough sleeping numbers, whilst working within OPDM policy and in partnership with key stakeholders such as Supporting People and the voluntary sector.



Background

1. Over the last year (April 05 – March 06) the numbers of rough sleepers in Oxford has risen. The average count over the last 12 month has been 11; 3 over our ODPM target of 8.

2. One of the reasons for this increase in numbers is due to new arrivals in Oxford, from out of area, with these numbers far outweighing the numbers of resettlements.

3. Oxford has a myriad of quality services that are relied upon by other districts, neighbouring boroughs and in fact, many areas around the country. With no local connection policy in place, all are able to access services in Oxford.

4. In August 2005, Terrie Alafat, Director of the Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate at the ODPM issued a letter containing a policy briefing on the application of stringent local connection policies:-

5. *"We are now however, faced with increasing concern from across the sector that the application of stringent local connections policies are denying vulnerable people access to services. Concerns expressed to us include that these policies will lead to a rise in rough sleeping and that a mobile client group will be encouraged to become more so. Such policies are clearly contrary to the spirit of our strategy for tackling homelessness "Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives" I am sure you will agree that further disenfranchising vulnerable and mobile client groups does not meet our shared interests nor meet need."*

6. It is clear from this letter that the ODPM stresses that services should meet this vulnerable client group's needs and policies should not be developed that marginalise those who are already at risk and disenfranchised from receiving the help and support that they need.

7. The development of a local connections policy could only be done in partnership with Supporting People, other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector.

Name and contact details of author:

Nerys Parry

nparry@oxford.gov.uk

01865 252825

Background papers:

Letter from Terrie Alafat – Rough Sleeping and Local Connection Policies

