

Report of: Housing Scrutiny Committee**To: Executive Board****Date: 9th October 2006****Item No:****Title of Report : Hidden Homelessness Scrutiny Review Report****Summary and Recommendations**

Purpose of report: To present the findings of the hidden homelessness
scrutiny review group to the Executive Board.



Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Patrick Murray, Improving Housing Portfolio Holder

Scrutiny Responsibility: Housing Scrutiny Committee



Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: Jeremy King, Legal and Democratic Services and Dave Higgins, Finance and Asset Management.



Policy Framework:

Recommendation(s): There are hidden homeless people in Oxford and the review group hopes that this report will raise awareness of the issue and encourage people to come forward to seek advice about their situation.

The review group recommends that the Council consider a publicity campaign to draw attention to the issue of hidden homelessness so a more accurate assessment of the problem can be made and steps taken to deal with the problems associated with hidden homelessness, such as addressing housing need, health problems, employment difficulties etc.



2. The review group recommends that the City Council or another appropriate agency does some follow up work to track people who have presented as homeless, but have not been housed because they're not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and also those who presented to the duty options

officer but did not have a second homelessness interview. This is so the Council has more accurate information on what happens to these people, their housing situation and support needs. Paragraph 8.12 has more information on this recommendation.

3. The review group recommends that the following issues are referred to the Single Homeless Group or other forums that work with homeless people in Oxford for consideration. These issues have been raised by a significant number of those people who were interviewed or took part in focus groups:

- a). Help with the move to living independently
- b). Assistance in finding a job
- c). Private sector landlords not accepting people receiving housing benefit

4. The review group recommends that the Housing Scrutiny Committee consider a report being prepared by the Elmore Team on the barriers and difficulties facing prison leavers when looking for accommodation.

5. The review group asks the Executive Board to note the letter from Crisis endorsing the review, at Appendix 2 of this report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Housing Scrutiny Committee decided in May 2005 to carry out a review into hidden homelessness in Oxford. A review group was formed to do this work. It was agreed that tenants representatives would be asked to join the group, as well as Councillors from the Scrutiny Committee. The members of the review group were – Councillors Jim Campbell and Gill Sanders, Peter Bonney and Alan Hart. Andrew Davies supported the review group.

2.0 Terms of Reference

2.1 The review group agreed the following terms of reference:

- Put together a definition of hidden homelessness, in the Oxford context;
- Carry out research so that an estimate could be made into the number of hidden homeless people in Oxford;
- Put together a series of case studies to profile the hidden homeless, including their age, how they became hidden homeless, whether they have sought help from a local authority etc;
- Establish whether hidden homelessness is a specific problem in BME communities;
- Identify whether people choose to remain “hidden” through choice, necessity or through experience;
- Identify ways in which agencies can help the hidden homeless, through advice and support

3.0 A definition of hidden homelessness

3.1 Representatives from the homelessness charity Crisis met with the review group in January 2006 to discuss ways to carry out a census of the hidden homeless. Crisis also set out their definition of hidden homeless. They include the following categories of people in their definition:

- Rough sleepers
- People staying in night shelters, hostels and B&B's
- People facing imminent threat of eviction
- People staying in squats, tents or other illegal and unsatisfactory accommodation
- People staying on floors or sofas of friends and families
- People living with friends or family who want them to leave but they have nowhere to go

3.2 Crisis says that these people are hidden because:

- They have been classed as statutory homeless but not in priority need
- They have not applied to be classified as statutory homeless even though their application would be successful
- They have not yet reached the stage where they would be successful in an application for statutory homelessness because their relatives or friends haven't kicked them out or they are staying in another form of accommodation

3.3 The review group has considered this broad definition of hidden homelessness and agrees with its sentiment but believes that local factors need to be taken into account. For example, Crisis includes rough sleepers in its definition. Speaking to a number of agencies during the review, the review group is reassured that the vast majority of rough sleepers are found within a few days of arriving in Oxford or beginning to sleep rough and then recorded on the Client Share list. Whilst at any one time, there may be a small number of people sleeping rough unknown to agencies in Oxford (one person interviewed suggested no more than 10), they are usually found within a matter of days. The review group believes that it is very unusual (although not unknown) for people to sleep rough in Oxford undetected for months at a time.

3.4 To say that rough sleepers in Oxford are hidden homeless would be misleading. There is likely to be a small number that are hidden, but the vast majority are known and have engaged with services. The same can be said for those staying in hostels etc. ***When talking about the hidden homeless, the review group is referring to those homeless people who the City Council or other agencies in Oxford have no record of.***

4.0 Why should we care about the hidden homeless?

4.1 This seems like a reasonable question to ask and one that needs to be considered. Research by Sheffield Hallam University in 2004 has shown that people are more likely to be hidden homeless in the early stages of their time as homeless. According to Crisis, if the needs of the hidden homeless are not addressed they are more likely to appear in visible forms of homeless at some stage. By addressing the problems of hidden homelessness, further difficulties may be prevented from happening in the future.

5.0 How many hidden homeless people are there in Oxford?

5.1 The simple answer to this question is “we’re not sure”. Determining an exact number of hidden homeless people was never going to be feasible. Putting together an approximate number hasn’t been an easy process either. Throughout the review, the group has been told that the number of hidden homeless people in Oxford is higher than would be expected. The review group has collected the following data:

5.2 ***Non-Priority need and intentionally homeless households*** – Between April 2005 and December 2005, 311 households were accepted as homeless because they were eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless.

5.3 During the same period, a further 74 people were classed as homeless, but the City Council didn’t have a duty to house them because they were either intentionally homeless or not in priority need. The City Council offers advice to the people in this situation and often recommends that they use the direct access hostels in Oxford (there is no guarantee of accommodation, although the referrals procedure is being worked on) or consider private accommodation. But these people aren’t tracked and unless they later appear in the Client Share figures we can’t be sure where they are staying.

5.4 The largest single cause of homelessness during this period was parental evictions (89 in total). A further 27 households were evicted from friends or other family. The total number of people approaching Housing Options with a housing need in 2005/06 was 1,829.

5.5 ***Rough Sleepers*** – The number of people recorded at the Client Share meeting on 23rd December 2005 was 90. The client share list includes those people who sleep rough intermittently, and otherwise stay in hostels, squats, friend’s floors etc. Although Crisis would class these people as hidden homeless, in Oxford the different agencies working with rough sleepers share information so that individuals can be tracked and their needs addressed. The review group would not consider these people to be hidden homeless, but it’s important that the number at risk from sleeping rough is known.

- 5.6 **Hostels and B&B** – In March 2006 the number of people claiming Housing Benefit and staying in the city’s hostels (Night Shelter, The Bridge, Simon House, echg and Women’s Aid) is 228. According to the City Council’s Benefit’s Section, at the time of writing (23rd March 2006) there are 7 households staying in B&B accommodation temporarily, claiming housing benefit. These households will be moved on by Housing Allocations once a suitable property is found. Again, the review group does not consider these people to be hidden, but the numbers in these situations are useful in order to put the problem in context.
- 5.7 **People facing imminent threat of eviction** – The tenants at risk group meets monthly to discuss tenants at risk of eviction. The group considers some of the most vulnerable people in Oxford, who are likely to re-appear on the client share list if they are evicted. Between March 2005 and March 2006 the average number of households on the tenants at risk list has been 37. In reality, there is likely to be many more people in Oxford at risk of eviction from their property. For example, there are very few people living in private sector accommodation included on the list, unless they are known to agencies working with homeless and former homeless people in Oxford.
- 5.8 **Squatting, tents and other substandard accommodation** – Information has been gathered from Thames Valley Police on the number of known squats in Oxford. They do not keep official records, but each area inspector has provided information based on their local knowledge. At the time of putting the report together, they were aware of 2 squats in Oxford. The review group has spoken to a number of people who have lived in squats and the impression given by them is that there are more squats in the city than would be expected. The police are also aware of a number of properties where sofa surfing is common but there is a tenant in situ and so the property is not classed as a squat.
- 5.9 It’s difficult to estimate the number of people who are living in squats and the review group doesn’t have exact or approximate information to attempt this. However, the group did speak to people about their experiences living in squats. During the one focus group with homeless people, the cycle of squat life was explained. The group was told that it’s not uncommon for one or two people to establish a squat. However, once more and more people find out about the squat (1 person interviewed had recently stayed in a house with approximately 10 people sharing two rooms), conditions can quickly become intolerable. The squat will eventually be closed and the cycle begins again.
- 5.11 The review group also met a number of people who are living in tents in the city. There has been local media coverage on this issue whilst the review has been taking place. All the people that the review group met who were living in tents are known to Street Services and are

included on the Client Share list. Again, the review group does not consider these people to be hidden homeless.

5.12 The Elmore Team, which works with people who are homeless, keeps information on the situation that their clients are in. Figures for the past 12 months show that of the 133 homeless people they have helped:

- 1 had been living in a squat
- 14 had been living in a car or garage
- 4 people had been living in a tent
- 8 people were of no fixed abode and had left prison

5.13 ***People Staying on floors of friends and family (concealed households)*** – This is much harder to quantify, despite efforts to gather information. Information collected by the review group includes:

- 18 people returned hidden homelessness questionnaires, and of those 9 had stayed with friends and family whilst they have been homeless.
- Of the homelessness acceptances between April 2005 and December 2005 (311 in total), 116 were as a result of exclusion by parents, other family or friends. The total number of people approaching Housing Options with a housing need in 2005/06 was 1,829.
- Data from the Elmore Team shows that in the last 12 months, they have worked with 133 homeless people. The second highest number of clients are sofa surfers (28, compared to 39 rough sleepers). A further 5 people are temporarily staying with family.

5.14 There are two other significant groups of people that also need to be considered when looking at the number of concealed households - asylum seekers and BME communities. Figures on both were very difficult to obtain.

5.15 The review group contacted a member of the Oxfordshire Bangladeshi Association who confirmed that there are young people (couples and individuals) who live with family or friends because they have no alternative and that there is a social stigma attached to this. He also suspected that the same is true within the Pakistani community as well.

5.16 From the information gathered it is difficult to predict with confidence the number of hidden homeless people in Oxford. Based on the evidence gathered the review group believes that the number of hidden homeless in Oxford is likely to be in the hundreds, rather than ten's. In order to predict the numbers with confidence, a tracking exercise should be carried out (see recommendations in section 8).

6.0 Interviews and Focus Groups

- 6.1. As well as trying to estimate the number of hidden homeless people there are in Oxford, the review group wanted to speak to people who had direct experience of hidden homelessness. The review group organised 2 focus groups – one at the Gap and one at the Gatehouse. Interviews were also carried out at the Night Shelter. One person approached the review group after seeing a letter in the Oxford Mail advertising the review and he was interviewed. Another person contacted the review group after being told of the review by a member of OTP. In total, 24 people were either interviewed or took part in a focus group, and out of the 24, 15 filled out a short questionnaire. 3 service users at the Gatehouse also filled in questionnaires, but didn't attend the focus group. Notes of the focus groups and interviews are available on request. The questionnaire results are attached at Appendix 1.
- 6.2 The interviews and focus groups were an important source of information for the review group. As well as being told about distressing incidents and difficult lives, the review group was encouraged that many homeless people and former homeless people spoke in positive terms about a number of services operating in Oxford including The Gap, The Bridge, The Night Shelter, The Gatehouse, The Elmore Team and Street Services.
- 6.3 Below are the notes from interviews with 4 people who have experience of hidden homelessness. The names of those interviewed have been changed to protect their identity:

Kate

Kate is 31 years old and had been living in Oxford since 2003. She is originally from another part of Oxfordshire. She last had a place that she referred to as home in 2003. This was a rented room in a shared house. She had been placed there by the City Council, following a homelessness application. Prior to becoming homeless she had lived in a house in another part of Oxfordshire, although she left there in 2002/03.

Kate has been living in the Night Shelter for approximately 8 months and she hopes to move on soon. She's currently applying for homelessness with the Vale of White Horse DC, as she would like to leave Oxford due to difficulties her and her partner have been having in the city.

She has previously approached the City Council and made a homelessness application. She hasn't been housed by OCC because she is not considered to be in priority need. She hasn't been contacted by the City Council since she made her homelessness application.

Between November 2003 and June 2005 she has lived in a tent, sofa surfed, lived in a bed and breakfast and a squat. She lived in a tent for a number of months and during this time support for her and her partner was limited. Her perception was that there were many people across Oxford living in tents or

squats, more than were known about by authorities. At one stage she was staying with 4 friends in a single room. Although this was for a short period (less than a month) she believed that this was typical of those who are homeless.

Kate believes that a large number of homeless people don't present themselves to Oxford City Council because they would not be considered vulnerable enough to be housed. She feels trapped because she can't afford to work whilst living in the Night Shelter (because of the weekly rent, currently paid for by Housing Benefit). She's also believes it would be difficult to get a job unless she has her own address.

She believes that there is a lot of spare housing in the City, which should be made available to homeless people. She knew a number of properties (which may not be owned by OCC) that are boarded up which she thought could be used to house homeless people.

She would welcome greater contact from both Oxford City Council and Vale of White Horse DC once homelessness applications were put in. When asked what one thing would help her situation, she thought a step between the Night Shelter and independent living would be welcome, where support was available but somewhere that felt more like a proper home.

Simon

Simon is 38 years old and is originally from London. He has lived in Oxford for 13 years. Prior to that he had been homeless and travelling around the country to places like Exeter and Reading but eventually stayed in Oxford as the person he was with at the time fell pregnant.

He is currently living in a flat and has been for 2 months. The Elmore Team has been working with him, firstly to help him secure accommodation and latterly to ensure that he maintains his tenancy. Somebody from the Elmore Team visits him fortnightly to help out with essential tasks such as paying bills.

Simon previously lived on the floors of school friend's houses, in storerooms and in a friend's car, B&B's and hostels. He's done this on and off for a number of years. He preferred living in B&Bs rather than hostels.

Simon has been housed by the City Council. He originally approached OCC several years ago with a support worker to present as homeless. He waited for 18 months without being housed. He was frustrated about not knowing when he was likely to be housed and the lack of information on this matter.

The facilities at Luther Street Medical Centre mean that he doesn't have difficulty accessing health and dental services, but he has found accessing health services difficult in other cities in the past.

Michael

Michael is 44 and has always lived in Oxfordshire. He has been living in Oxford since he was 16 years old, initially living on the streets in the city.

He last had a secure tenancy in 1988, when he rented a room in a shared house. Since then Michael has been homeless and has lived in a variety of places including scrap yards, quarries, a friends workshop and with his sister. The places he has stayed are sometimes connected to the places where he has worked. Currently Michael is living in a van parked on land owned by a friend of his.

Michael has been in contact with Oxford City Council regarding his situation. He hasn't found the staff particularly helpful, especially once it is known he is a single male. He accepts that there is very little chance of being housed through the Council. He last approached the Council two years ago.

Michael has never used other services such as the Night Shelter because he doesn't want to be around people who drink or use drugs. He intends to stay where he is for the time being as private rented accommodation is too expensive.

He has struggled to access health and dental services since becoming homeless. His health problems prevent him from working permanently. He hasn't been to a dentist for some time and has in the past pulled out his own teeth when they have become rotten.

Interestingly, he did say that there are advantages of being homeless, especially in the summer and he does enjoy the freedom. But, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages and he would prefer to be living in permanent accommodation.

Michael mentioned that he a new a number of people in a similar situation to him. He said it was not uncommon for men to be living around building sites while they were working, but when they were out of work would have no where else to go.

When asked what service he would like, if it were available, he was fairly clear that there needed to be a greater supply of affordable housing for single people like himself. He remains homeless because he can't afford to rent in the private sector.

Jane

Jane is 49 years old and has lived in Oxford for 4½ years. Since coming to the city she has lived in accommodation that has been provided by her employer.

In September 2005 she lost her accommodation when the company she worked for was taken over and her new employer decided not to offer accommodation to staff.

From September 2005 to February 2006 she was renting a room, but this arrangement came to an end because she didn't get on with her landlord. Since early February 2006 she has been sofa surfing and sleeping rough. She usually stays with a friend 3-4 nights a week, the rest of the time she sleeps on the streets. Because she doesn't feel safe in the city centre, she often stays in the suburbs of the city.

She has been in contact with the City Council, but hasn't presented as homeless. She is on the Council's housing register. She hasn't stayed at the Night Shelter or come into contact with the Street Services team.

She would like to get a flat of her own and has approached the Lord Mayors Rent Deposit scheme for help in raising a deposit. Whilst they were able to help with a deposit, they couldn't cover on months rent in advance and agency fees. As a result, she hasn't been able to obtain housing in the private sector.

7.0 Common Themes

7.1 The issues raised by Kate, Simon, Michael and Jane reflected the views of many other people who took part in interviews or focus groups. Although this was a review into hidden homelessness, many of the issues raised refer more generally to homelessness. As a result, a number of the review group recommendations don't deal specifically with hidden homelessness. The review group has based its recommendations around the following issues:

- The reasons for coming to Oxford in some cases were completely random. However, others quite deliberately chose to come to Oxford because it is known as a place where there are services for people who are homeless.
- Single people don't always present as homeless because their chances of being housed are slim.
- Those who do present as homeless and aren't housed have little or no contact with the City Council once a decision has been taken on their circumstances.
- Finding work is very difficult when you don't have permanent address. Some people aren't able to afford the weekly rents in temporary accommodation or hostels if they do have a job, but no longer qualify for housing benefit.
- Affordable accommodation is extremely hard to find, even in the private sector. There should be more done to persuade private landlords to house people on benefits.
- Homeless people would welcome more support after moving on from hostels before they move into a place of their own.

- Prison leavers who have served a sentence of 12 months or less receive little housing support on their release.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 Raising Awareness

8.2 There are hidden homeless people in Oxford and the review group hopes that this report will raise awareness of the issue and encourage people to come forward to seek advice about their situation.

8.3 The review group recommends that the Council consider a publicity campaign to draw attention to the issue of hidden homelessness so a more accurate assessment of the problem can be made and steps taken to deal with the problems associated with hidden homelessness, such as addressing housing need, health problems, employment difficulties etc.

8.4 This wouldn't have to be a resource intensive activity. It may be more effective to use networks already established, such as Tenants and Residents Associations, to highlight the issue. The review group also intends to put out a press release to try and attract some media coverage, which again will raise the profile of hidden homelessness.

8.5 It is quite possible (and anecdotal evidence suggests this) that some people may choose to remain hidden because they feel there is a stigma attached to being homeless, and whilst they are staying with friends or family there is no need to come forward. Similarly, people may not come forward, especially if they are sofa surfing, because they are worried that the person they are staying with will lose their accommodation if a landlord finds out that somebody is staying in their property but not paying rent. The review group hopes that in time, these issues shouldn't remain a barrier to discovering the true extent of hidden homelessness in Oxford.

8.6 What becomes of the Hidden Homeless?

8.7 Crisis state categorically that if the needs of the hidden homeless are not addressed then they are far more likely to appear in more visible forms of homelessness, such as rough sleeping, later in their homeless "career". Information from the small number of homeless and former homeless people that returned questionnaires matches this assessment. 13 of the 18 that returned questionnaires said that they had been hidden homeless in the past.

8.8 Therefore, the review group believe it is essential that steps are taken to work with hidden homeless people to help them access advice and information before they are asked to leave their accommodation by friends or family etc. It is important that people are aware that there is

advice and information available in Oxford and that people access those services.

8.9 Tracking the hidden homeless

- 8.10 The review group recommends that the City Council or an appropriate agency does some follow up work to track people who have presented as homeless, but have not been housed because they're not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and also those who presented to the duty options officer but did not have a second homelessness interview. This is so the Council has more accurate information on what happens to these people, their housing situation and support needs.
- 8.11 At present people that fall into these categories are given advice on their housing options, but there is no follow up work from the options service to track their housing situation. Some of these people will appear on the client share list and so their situation will be monitored. The whereabouts of the majority won't be known.
- 8.12 The review group would like some follow up work to take place with a sample of people who present to the options service each year, so that more is known about what becomes of these people. There are two approaches that the review group suggests:
- A postcard should be given to all people who are interviewed by the duty service, which would have a couple of simple questions about the persons housing situation, which should be returned to the City Council after 3 months.
 - A telephone, email and postal survey should be carried out annually with a sample of people who present as homeless to find out about their current housing situation.
- 8.13 The review group is aware that the vast majority, possibly nobody, will return a postcard to housing options, but a handful may. A telephone or postal survey may be a more fruitful source of information. If a person who presents to the options service has a contact address or telephone number, this could be used to follow up later in the year.
- 8.14 The information collected from a survey will be useful so that the Council knows what is happening to those who present as homeless but aren't accepted, the consequence of the decision on their application, their housing situation and support needs. The review group would like to see this work piloted and if successful, carried out on an annual basis and reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- ## **8.15 What would make a difference?**
- 8.16 From the interviews and focus groups, the three issues that were raised by homeless people that they felt would make a difference to them were:

- 8.17 **Help with the move to living independently** – A number of those interviewed were concerned that once they have left the supported environment where they were currently staying, they would struggle to sustain a tenancy and would have to start re-building their lives once again. One case in particular summed up this fear.
- 8.18 “Paul” has been staying at the Night Shelter and attending a drug rehab programme. He is clean at present and is ready to move on from the Night Shelter. He would be happy to move into private rented accommodation, but finding a landlord that accepts benefit would be difficult and he doesn’t feel he would be able to afford the rent, even if he found a job. He would welcome a stage in-between living at the Night Shelter and moving into Council or private sector accommodation. He says it’s not uncommon for people to leave the Night Shelter and return because they were unable to cope away from the supported environment.
- 8.19 There were others who the review group spoke to who felt similarly. They all felt it would be beneficial if there could be a stage between moving from supported accommodation and moving into a place of their own. Some believed that this was too big a jump to make and that without consistent support they may not be able to sustain their tenancies. The value of floating support was demonstrated by “Simon” (see above) who spoke about the help given to him by the Elmore Team.
- 8.20 **Difficulty finding a job** – The review group heard from various people that being homeless meant that it was extremely difficult to find a job. Barriers to employment included:
- There is a perception that potential employers do not tend to employ those who live in the Night Shelter or The Bridge, as they might not be considered “reliable”.
 - Secondly, without a postal address where can people ask for application forms to be sent? You also have to give an address when filling out an application form.
 - Preparing for interviews, making sure clothes are clean for work etc is difficult if you’re living in a tent or sleeping rough. There are places to go where help will be given, but those interviewed saw this as another barrier.
 - Finally, of those interviewed, most felt that they would only be able to get low paid work. They were concerned that they would not be able to afford to pay rent in a city hostel or to a private landlord if they had a job and no longer received housing benefit.
- 8.21 These factors seem to contribute to a sense of defeat amongst those interviewed. Many wanted to work, but couldn’t get a job. If they did get a job they may not be able to afford their rent. The review group met one person who was working and staying at the Bridge. They had been

able to use their parent's address when looking for work, but this option is not available to the majority.

- 8.22 **Private Sector Landlords** – The final issue raised in the interviews and focus groups is the difficulty accessing private sector accommodation because of the reluctance of landlords to accept people on housing benefit. A secondary issue was the behaviour of some landlords to their tenants.
- 8.23 This issue will be well known to the Committee and officers are working with landlords to try and improve this situation. However, the review group wishes to bring it to wider attention.
- 8.24 The review group recommends that these issues are passed to the Single Homeless Group or other forums that work with homeless people and former homeless people to highlight the problem and to ask that they be considered when planning services for Oxford. The impact the City Council can have on these issues alone maybe limited but collective action can improve things.

8.25 Progress since the review has finished

- 8.26 *Since the review has finished, the report and recommendations have been presented to the Single Homeless Group and the Family Homeless Group. Both groups accepted the review findings and acknowledged that the issues highlighted – move on, employment difficulties and private landlords not accepting benefits were of concern in the city.*
- 8.27 *If the Executive Board accepts the Scrutiny Review recommendations it is suggested that these issues are referred again to the Single Homeless Group and Family Homeless Group for further thought as to how they can be taken forward and improved.*

8.28 Prison Leavers

- 8.29 During the review, the support for prison leavers was discussed by individuals working with homeless people and by ex-prisoners themselves. The perception that the review group has been left with is that those who are serving sentences of 12 months or less often have little housing support on their release from prison. The direct access hostels are their only hope of a bed, and if they're full, then it's the streets or possibly sofa surfing.
- 8.30 The review group met with Setarah Campbell who is the Prison Homelessness Liaison Worker at the Elmore Team. Her post has been funded by the ODPM and commissioned by Oxford City Council to work with prisoners at Bullingdon Prison and Bronzefield Prison who intend to return to Oxford when they are released, but are homeless, in order to reduce rough sleeping and break the cycle of offending.

8.31 Setarah will be producing a report outlining the barriers and difficulties faced by prison leavers when they are seeking accommodation. The review recommends that the Housing Scrutiny Committee looks at this report and considers its findings.

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Appendix 1

Hidden Homelessness Questionnaire Results

18 people returned the hidden homelessness review questionnaire. The results were:

Q1. How old are you?

16 – 24:	5 people
25 – 34:	4 people
35 – 44:	7 people
45 – 54:	2 people
55+:	0

Q2. How long have you been homeless?

Less than 6 months:	6 people
6 to 12 months:	6 people
1 to 3 years:	3 people
3 to 7 years:	0
7+ years:	3 people

Q3. Have you ever been hidden homeless?

Each person was given the following examples of hidden homelessness:

- Staying with friends or family
- Staying with friends or family because you have nowhere else to go
- Rough sleeping, unknown to the local authority
- Living in B&B accommodation
- Living in a squat, where there is no alternative accommodation available to them

Yes	No
13 people	4 people

1 person didn't answer this question

Q4. How long were you hidden homeless?

Less than 1 week:	1 person
2 to 4 weeks:	2 people
1 to 3 months:	6 people
3 to 6 months:	0

6 months to 1 year: 0
Over 1 year: 4 people

Q5. What was your hidden homelessness experience?

Staying with friends or family: 9 people
Rough sleeping, unknown to the City Council: 7 people
Living in temporary B&B accommodation: 3 people
Living in a squat: 4 people
Other: 2 people

Respondents were asked to tick the categories that applied to them. Most respondents ticked more than one category.

Q6. Is there anything the City Council could have done better to help you when you were hidden homeless?

- “I didn’t go to see the Council so they didn’t know to help me”
- “The Council should have more options officers”
- “The services available (in Oxford) are very good, e.g. Street Services, the Gap and the Night Shelter”
- “The Night Shelter is too strict...I prefer living on the street”
- “It could help me find a job so I can pay for my own living expenses”
- “Nothing, except sort out a home quicker”.
- “I think they could of kept in contact more”.
- “(The Council should) have more temporary bed-sits or accommodation other than the shelters”.

Q7. Is there anything that the City Council could do to help you?

- “I would like help in finding a place (to live) instead of being put on a 2 year waiting list as I wasn’t vulnerable”
- “Listen more to what we all (homeless people) have to say”
- “Make finding a job easier and provide somewhere dry, clean and safe as a temporary base from where I can apply for jobs and be able to go to interviews”
- “(I would like the City Council to help me) get housed. I’ve been homeless since I was 17 and all these years I’ve been told you haven’t got enough points and that (the City Council) doesn’t have to house (me). This is particularly bad as I come from Oxford”.

Appendix 2