

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 16 June 2021  
**Report of:** Executive Director of Housing  
**Title of Report:** Report on County-Wide Transformation of Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness.

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To update Cabinet on the county-wide transformation work and seek the necessary approvals to proceed. To also seek approval to retender and award the current outreach, engagement and assessment contract.
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing and Housing the Homeless
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Thriving Communities.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021
<b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Note</b> the progress developing the County-Wide Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, attached in Appendix 1;</li><li>2. <b>Note</b> that work will be done to review the current decision making arrangements as described in the report. Any revised arrangements would be subject to a further report to Cabinet for Member consideration;</li><li>3. <b>Note</b> the ongoing development of an alliance approach to commissioning and the approved timetable for delivery;</li><li>4. <b>Approve</b> Oxford City Council's 5-year financial commitment from its base budget to the pooled budget arrangement of £4,842,900 in total;</li><li>5. <b>Approve</b> the re-procurement of the Outreach, Engagement and Assessment hub contract at a value of £1,420,507 and delegate the responsibility for the award of contract to the Executive Director for Housing;</li></ol>	

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| <p>6. Approve the procurement of a Navigator service, as a separate lot, at a value of £150k and delegate the responsibility for the award of contract to the Executive Director for Housing; and</p> <p><b>Note</b> the potential wider operational changes required to support the county-led transformation.</p> |
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<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	County-Wide Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Strategy Title
Appendix 2	County-Wide Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Action Plan
Appendix 3	Draft Alliance Model
Appendix 4	Commissioning Timetable
Appendix 5	Financial Appendix (Confidential)
Appendix 6	Financial Appendix for the Outreach, Engagement and Assessment Service (Confidential)
Appendix 7	Risk Register

## **Introduction and background**

1. This report provides an update on various work streams linked to the work to deliver a county-wide strategy and transformation of rough sleeping and single homelessness services, including revised commissioning arrangements from April 2022.
2. The recently published [Crisis Feasibility Study](#), coupled with the independent Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board - [OSAB Mortality Review](#) make a series of recommendations regarding a future direction of travel towards a housing-led approach with a particular focus on multi-disciplinary working. This has significant implications for Oxford City Council, other statutory partners and third sector providers. (Please note that there is a glossary of terminology on p82 of the Crisis feasibility report).
3. These recommendations, combined with the development of the County-Wide Strategy on Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness, have harnessed significant senior officer engagement and commitment across all public sector disciplines to take this work forward. This was consolidated during a roundtable discussion at the end of April 2021 as part of an ongoing demonstration of commitment to support the development of the various work streams. A formal 12 month Partnership Agreement with Crisis is now in place to provide further support and expertise.
4. There are currently 8 distinct work streams within the scope of this work namely governance, strategy, commissioning, 'By Name' approach, data systems, workforce development, resources, prevention and communication. The key priorities are highlighted in this report.

## **County-Wide Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Strategy**

5. The draft county-wide single homelessness strategy went out for public consultation in February 2021 and the publication of the final strategy and action plan is now imminent. Final draft copies are attached in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. This is an important strategy and a significant achievement for the City and its many partners across Districts, the County Council and Health in terms of the shift to a collective commitment to end rough sleeping. The City cannot deliver the ambition on its own and this is a significant step forward, underpinning the importance of this partnership approach.
6. This multi-agency strategy will underpin the transformation in the way housing, social care and health services work together and with people in need of housing and support. It will inform future commissioning of services within Oxfordshire and will be subject to annual review by partners. The focus of the strategy is on rough sleeping and single homelessness including couples without dependants. There will be close working and connection across to the work on families, young people, people with mental health problems and people experiencing domestic abuse. The draft priorities are as follows:
  - Proactively prevent homelessness
  - Rapid response to rough sleeping
  - Focus on the person not the problem
  - Timely Move-On
  - The right home in the right place
7. It is recommended that Cabinet notes the county-wide strategy and action plan and that these should be reflected in the City's new Housing and Homelessness Strategy due for publication in Feb/March 2022.

## **Decision Making**

8. It is crucial to be able to bring together all the stakeholders who have responsibility for services with an inter-dependency on a person's homelessness (e.g. substance misuse, domestic abuse, criminal justice, health and mental health) but who also therefore have the strategic and commissioning levers to deliver structural changes for its prevention and relief. Decision making needs to be co-ordinated to ensure that strategy can be delivered and wherever possible existing structures will be used.
9. The publication of the new county-wide strategy combined with the recommendations of both the Crisis feasibility report and the OSAB review all point to a need for a strengthened structure to enable the full transition of existing homelessness services to a housing-led approach in Oxfordshire.
10. The current County-Wide Steering Group (CWSG) (which reports directly to Local Authority Chief Executives and Leaders) alongside a number of other existing bodies and groups is being reviewed to ensure that the decision making structure is fit for purpose to deliver the ambition.
11. Structures similar to a Homelessness Prevention Board (executive level, multi-disciplinary governance structures) are emerging in some other areas which comprise multi-disciplinary senior management, and sometimes also include

political representation. Work is now underway to examine learning and best practice and apply it to our local, county-wide context.

12. Cabinet are asked to note the work that is underway and that further updates will be brought back to Cabinet for approval at a later stage, if necessary.

## **Commissioning**

13. It is recognised that not only does the commissioned pathway need transforming but in order to achieve this the actual process of commissioning itself needs a step change. This is a clear recommendation from the Crisis feasibility study.
14. It has been agreed by CWSG that Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Council will jointly lead the commissioning process for the future revised pooled budget arrangement. The lead commissioner will be Oxfordshire County Council but the joint arrangement will retain sufficient leverage and influence for the City reflecting its investment and policy ambition. This arrangement is formalised in a Partnership Agreement between the two parties.
15. Furthermore, the City Council's ambition for a more agile, dynamic and equitable commissioning process which will cater for changing needs over time is taking shape with the emergence of an alliance commissioning model.
16. An alliance model is a form of partnership. There is a higher level of collaborative decision making and shared responsibility for all activities than is usually seen in most partnerships. Rather than a group of individual organisations or providers who each undertake to deliver part of the system or a set of interventions, an alliance is formed which takes responsibility for the whole system approach. Everything from planning, implementation, overall financial responsibility, risk and delivery of outcomes is shared. It should be noted therefore that the City Council's financial contribution, as noted below, will no longer be City-specific (i.e. for Oxford City clients and/or Oxford projects) but rather contribute to a county-wide solution to ending rough sleeping supported via a pooled budget. It is acknowledged that it is likely however that many of the crisis based services will continue to be based in the City, whilst enabling greater collaborative working amongst partners across the county on housing and support solutions.
17. A draft alliance model is attached in Appendix 3 which demonstrates how commissioners will play an active role in an Alliance Leadership Team and therefore will have ongoing influence at both operational and strategic levels.
18. In terms of the actual commissioning intentions, these are based on the housing-led approach recommended in the Crisis feasibility study where choice and control will be integral to the designing and commissioning of services, alongside a flexible, responsive, harm-reduction approach to providing support. The overarching areas that will be commissioned will be:
  - Intensive case-management for Housing First
  - Shared/dispersed transitional housing with a clear identity and function
  - Fluctuating support that is flexible and responsive.
  - Specific provision e.g. gender, substance misuse
  - Floating Support
  - Outreach and Navigator support

- Step down houses and embedded workers to facilitate discharge from hospital.
19. Therefore, it should be noted that “what” will be commissioned will not necessarily be the same. The shift towards a housing-led approach will see more intensive case management in the form of flexible support coming forward (rather than specific numbers of units in specific locations and projects) as well a requirement over time to reduce large congregate settings. This transition will need to be managed carefully and collaboratively with our existing third sector providers. It should also be noted that this does not mean that there won’t be any congregate settings going forward but there is a desire for them to be smaller in size and more therapeutic in nature.
20. There is a competitive element to the process and the Invitation to Tender is scheduled to be launched on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2021. It is anticipated that the final details of the model and approach will be co-produced between commissioners, providers and people with lived experience and the ongoing performance and health of the system will be the responsibility of all parties (requiring commissioners to actively participate on an ongoing basis in the work, unblocking issues, helping with solutions etc).
21. Cabinet are asked to note and agree the ongoing development of this alliance commissioning approach and timetable attached in Appendix 4.

### **Finance**

22. The funding for this commissioning is multi-year and pooled in nature. The initial contract length will be for five years with the option to extend for a further two years. The following services are agreed within scope:
- Accommodation-based services, including Floyd’s Row
  - Outreach and related teams
  - Floating Support
  - Step Down from Hospital and Embedded Housing Workers
23. Based on these principles, the City will make an annual contribution of £1.9m to the pooled budget. This is made up of £968,580 from the City Council’s base budget and £942,819 from RSI funding. The City’s 21/22 spend in this area is £9m and this contribution is already identified within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and reflects the City’s ambition to contain the financial pressure in this area of work. RSI funding is now conditional on it being part of a county-wide approach. The overall combined county-wide budget, with contributions from all other parties will be £3.8m in total per annum. Please see Appendix 5 (Confidential) for a full breakdown of expenditure. It should be noted that Matilda House is not included within this scope and financial envelope, as it is currently contracted directly by the City Council until the end of March 2024, after which the intention is that it is re-tendered.
24. Cabinet are asked to note and approve the commitment of the above base budget finances to the pooled arrangements over a 5 year period, starting from April 2022, noting that it extends beyond the current MTFS, at a cost of £968,580 per annum and therefore a total of £4,842,900 over a 5 year period.
25. Cabinet are also asked to note that the financial envelope above includes RSI funded services in the City at a total cost of £942,819 per annum, given that RSI monies fund such significant services across the whole of the County since 2018.

All Districts are committed to taking this approach and should there be changes to this funding at a national level then break clauses within the contracts would apply in the worst case scenario.

### **Floyd's Row and Contract Arrangements**

26. The pandemic impacted Oxford City Council's original plans for Floyds Row but what remains apparent is that an evolving assessment centre is central to the ambition of ending rough sleeping and therefore it should be within scope for the pooled budget arrangements with a contribution from the City as set out in Appendix 5.
27. It should be noted that this is not without risk however as these contributions are less than the current contract value (£1.4m per annum) which is further made up by St Mungos's contributions, HB income and District and County contributions which are currently in place. (This is in line with the City's MTFP and reserves planning position).
28. At the start of the financial year 2020/21 the Council was planning to enter into contract arrangements with St Mungo's for the provision of the new Engagement and Assessment centre at Floyds Row. This represented a step change in the way rough sleepers were supported. Instead of being assessed on the street, people would have a place to stay for a short time while they were assessed and whilst a solution to their homelessness was found.
29. The pandemic necessitated a change to our plans which included entering into revised arrangements with St Mungos to manage and provide support for our 'Everyone In' initiative with a range of accommodation providers which has now centred on two sites namely YHA and Canterbury House.
30. Due to Covid 19 and the speed of the changing environment and requirements set by government in terms of housing all rough sleepers, the Action note PPN 01/20 published in March 2020 covering exceptional circumstances, enabling authorities with a need to procure goods, services and works with extreme urgency was used. The Covid PPN was used to extend the existing contract and the Chief Executive agreed the use of the additional funding under emergency powers on 10 July 2020, which was subsequently reported to Cabinet on 12 August 2020. A single contract was drawn up for the repurposed Floyds Row services including the outreach service, the assessment and temporary accommodation of rough sleepers and the management of the "Everyone In" accommodation, and the new requirements for supporting the residents in Canterbury House and Oxford YHA.
31. From 1 April 2022, these services will be included in the joint countywide recommissioning of accommodation and support services for people experiencing homelessness. In the meantime, they need to be recommissioned by Oxford City Council for the period from 20 July 2021 to 31 March 2022. The value of the contract will be £1,420,507 (a full breakdown is found in Appendix 6). A procurement process has commenced in terms of the specification, and award criteria ready to feed into tender documents subject to this Cabinet's approval in June. A full FTS tender process will be followed to ensure that a compliant contract will be in place before the end of the current contract period.
32. Cabinet is asked to approve this procurement exercise, which is already underway due to the timescale involved and to delegate the authority to the Executive Director of Housing to award the contract.

33. In addition, Cabinet is also asked to approve a separate procurement exercise to tender for an additional navigator service to support the exit of Everyone In, and funded for £150k by COMF.

### **Changes to Operational Activity**

34. Alongside the commissioning changes, there are a raft of potential operational changes that will be needed as part of the transformation. Key areas to note at this point are:

- The need for District Authority housing teams to continue to improve and increase levels of prevention activity, with a particular focus on early prevention (which sits outside statutory legislation). This is critical to pave the way for a housing-led system but will require further change in the City Council's Housing Needs service. This is currently within scope of the system change work which forms part of the wider Council transformation programme under the Transformation Board and is already underway in the service area.
- A co-ordinated and centralised referral route into services. These are currently managed by each District individually and there is an aspiration to create one centralised (possibly virtual) team.
- A critical improvement needed to achieve this will be the ability to have comprehensive real-time data and therefore Commissioners are investing now in improved data systems that will improve the data capture and understanding, allowing the operational activity to inform the strategic view on a cyclical basis leading to learning and evaluation, dynamic change and flexibility to changing needs. ICT solutions for this are currently being evaluated with recommendations due in May 2021.
- The development of a “By Name List” (essentially a new, system based approach for managing homelessness, by understanding individual needs and ensuring individuals remain visible even when entering settled accommodation or leave the area temporarily.) which reflects a strengths-based approach, no wrong door and the ability to not lose sight of individuals within the system. It also serves as a data dashboard showing trends in terms of emerging and changing needs, and critically gaps especially in supply that may require new interventions. Its development will take a “test and learn” approach, currently underway with the existing ‘Everyone In’ cohort in real time, with significant support from Crisis.
- The supply and pipeline of 1 bed units is a critical aspect of this transformation and the City Council will need to show leadership and commitment to this agenda. In addition, changes may also be necessary to the current Allocations Policy to remove barriers to housing on a county-wide basis.

35. Cabinet are asked to note these operational changes.

### **Financial implications**

36. Note here the financial implications as described in paragraphs 22 and 23 required to fund the pooled arrangement over a 5 year period, in line with the current MTFS but extends beyond by one year and further financial implications as described in paragraphs 30 and 32

## **Legal issues**

37. Legal implications linked to changes to decision making will need to be brought back when proposals have been clarified, if necessary.
38. The procurement, commissioning and award of contracts for the service described in paragraph 32 will be undertaken in compliance with the Council's contract rules contained in part 19 of its Constitution.

## **Level of risk**

39. The Risk Register is attached in Appendix 7

## **Equalities impact**

40. The commissioned services will be subject to monitoring of its performance and impact on individuals including matters of equality and diversity.

<b>Report author</b>	Nerys Parry
Job title	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Service area or department	Housing Services
Telephone	01865 529181
e-mail	<a href="mailto:nparry@oxford.gov.uk">nparry@oxford.gov.uk</a>

**Background Papers:** None