

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) on Thursday 4 March 2021

www.oxford.gov.uk



Committee members present:

Councillor Bely-Summers (Chair)

Councillor Aziz (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Gotch

Councillor Taylor

Councillor Wade

Councillor Wolff

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Paul Wilding, Rough Sleeping and Single Homeless Manager

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

Also present:

Tony Buchanan, Housing Panel (tenant co-optee)

34. Apologies

None

35. Declarations of interest

None

36. Housing Panel Work Plan

The Panel was advised that with purdah operating in April the scheduled April 2020 meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Panel was cancelled. With no further meetings there was no further work plan to deliver. This was **NOTED**.

37. Notes of previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 05 November 2020 were **AGREED** as an accurate record.

38. Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funding

Paul Wilding, Rough Sleeping and Single Homeless Manager, presented the report on the Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funding.

With Covid, the year had been very challenging, but all partners had worked well to meet those challenges. In particular, accommodation was found for all rough sleepers seeking it by July under the ‘everyone in’ policy. Further, Covid required a refocusing of the contract with St Mungos to deliver services outside the setting of Floyds Row. This, St Mungos had been very willing to engage with.

To ensure sufficient space, 152 bed spaces would be commissioned by the Council, on top of the 79 allocated through pooled budgets for Oxford-connected clients.

Largely, the proposals were continuations of existing arrangements, with a view to bigger changes being implemented when county-wide commissioning arrangements were implemented in 2022/23.

The Panel addressed the take-up of vaccines amongst the rough sleeping population as a way of gauging the threat that services would have to cease at the YHA and Canterbury House prior to being able to use facilities at Floyds Row. It was confirmed that take-up amongst rough sleepers was good – the Council had made special efforts to promote the vaccine’s availability – and that although a risk, the chances of not being able to use Floyds Row at all were low.

The Panel also raised questions about the proposed changes to daycare services at O’Hanlon House and sought reassurances that the slimmer service would remain relevant to the needs of its users. The changes made were reported to be in response to lower demand because so many rough sleepers were presently accommodated, disruption to users of O’Hanlon House and in line with the longer term County-wide strategy.

More information was requested about the shape and scope of the Supported Lettings Pilot for which the Council was seeking grant funding. This was essentially an intensive tenancy sustainment intervention to provide former rough sleepers with the skills to maintain their tenancies and manage the risks that could see them become homeless again.

No recommendations were made on the report.

39. Date of next meeting

The Panel **NOTED** that with the April meeting cancelled due to purdah this was the final meeting of the civic year. The Chair thanked all members for their participation.

The meeting started at Time Not Specified and ended at 7.05 pm

Chair

Date: Thursday 2 September 2021