

PROPOSED HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHANGES TO HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES IN HAMPSHIRE - CONSULTATION RESPONSE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to submit a consultation response to Hampshire County Council (HCC) as part of their current consultation on the proposed changes to homelessness support services in Hampshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 15th June 2018 HCC opened consultation on its proposals to reduce their provision of Homelessness Support Services (also known as Social Inclusion Services) in Hampshire.

- 2.2 Support services are provided by HCC for people over the age of 18 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The support provided by these services is often called 'housing related support' and includes help to:

- find and keep accommodation
- manage money
- find employment training, voluntary work and education
- manage and address drug and alcohol issues
- improve physical health
- improve mental health and wellbeing

- 2.3 The County Council currently funds housing related support within three main types of service at a cost of £4.2m across Hampshire:

- Intensive 24/7 supported housing and night shelter services
- Lower level supported housing
- Community support.

- 2.4 In the New Forest only community support is provided. Two Saints were awarded the contract to provide such support across Winchester, Eastleigh, Test Valley and the New Forest. Applicants are either referred by the local authorities and other agencies and/or are able to access drop in services around the county.

- 2.5 The work of Two Saints complements the work of New Forest District Council's Housing Options Team as they provide more intensive support to many applicants in order to resolve their housing issues.

- 2.6 The consultation pack can be found on line at: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/Homelessness-Consultation-InformationPack2018.pdf>. The questionnaire can be found at <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/Homelessness-Consultation-Questionnaire-2018.pdf> Consultation closes on 10th August 2018.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 HCC will reduce its expenditure, by £1.8m, to £2.4million to directly meet the needs of the most vulnerable homeless people.

- 3.2 The County Council would continue to fund the intensive 24/7 supported housing and night shelter services used by people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. It would reduce the amount of money spent on services in lower level supported housing and community support by approximately 70%.
- 3.3 Community support will be limited to single applicants with complex needs who cannot access support elsewhere.

4. CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 4.1 The County Council has requested a response to three questions:
- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to maintain funding for intensive 24/7 services, and reduce funding for lower level supported housing services and community support services?
 - What type of impact do you think the proposed changes to Homelessness Support Services may have?
 - Alternative suggestions as to how the County Council could achieve savings through changes to homelessness support services
- 4.2 It is clear the proposals will have an adverse impact on service provision in the New Forest with a reduction in the number of households assisted to tackle their housing and homelessness issues.
- 4.3 However, it is important for New Forest District Council to continue to work in partnership with the County Council and any new service commissioned to ensure support is provided to vulnerable people in the New Forest.
- 4.4 A full response can be found in appendix 1.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The consultation will close on 10th August 2018.
- 5.2 The County Council will review the consultation responses through September 2018 and plan to shape their proposals by October 2018, with a draft decision put forward for approval to the Executive Member in December 2018.
- 5.3 The new provision is due to commence on 1st August 2019.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications to this Council as part of the proposals. However, indirectly the reduced provision is likely to affect the prevention of homelessness and as a result, there may be an increase in usage of B&B accommodation, resulting in higher costs to the Council.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Due to the reduction in support services by HCC there may be an indirect increase in crime. For example, individuals, who would have previously been actively supported to access services which reduced drug and alcohol dependency, improved mental health

issues and debt issues, may be more vulnerable to being victims or perpetrators of crime.

9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that the response attached at Appendix 1 of this report is approved to be submitted to Hampshire County Council.

11. PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION

I agree the recommendations contained within paragraph 10.1 of this report.

Signed: CLLR J L CLEARY **Date:** 20 July 2018

Date notice of decision given...20 July 2018.....
Last date for call-in - 27 July 2018

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Appendix 1: Proposed response to Hampshire County Council

New Forest District Council would like to thank Hampshire County Council for the inclusive approach to engaging with us during the consultation process.

This Council actively engages with the Homelessness Support Service, currently provided in the form of Community Support in the New Forest by Two Saints.

Our response to your specific consultation questions are below:

Q) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to maintain funding for intensive 24/7 services, and reduce funding for 'lower' level and/or 'move-on' supported housing services and community support services?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree Strongly

Agree

Not sure

DISAGREE - We are obviously disappointed and naturally concerned with the proposed reduction in funding for community support services which will significantly reduce the number of households receiving assistance in our district.

However, we will continue to work with the County Council in the commissioning and operation of future support services for the benefit of people in the New Forest.

Q) What type of impact do you think the proposed changes to Homelessness Support Services may have?

The current level of service provides access for all types of households facing homelessness across the New Forest, including both single homeless people with complex needs and other households at risk of losing their accommodation.

Due to the volume of approaches for assistance and the administrative work required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 the District Council's Housing Options Team is not able to provide the in depth, and sometimes intensive, support required by many households to resolve their issues.

The Housing Options Team work closely with Two Saints who are able to provide this support, as part of actions listed in the household's personal housing plan, whilst they co-ordinate the overall effort to resolve an individual household's housing issues. Other households will seek direct assistance without contacting the Housing Options Team.

Therefore, we conclude that in the New Forest a reduced service will mean:

- Fewer households will be assisted with a reliance on them instead to seek alternative assistance or resolve issues themselves
- There is real potential for applicants not to engage with addiction, health and mental health services who, under the current level of service, would have been actively encouraged and supported to engage and attend
- Homelessness prevention activities will be reduced which may lead to increasing homelessness, rough sleeping and evictions

- An increase in demand on the Housing Options Team to provide more in depth support to individual households not assisted by the new service

Q) If you have any alternative suggestions as to how the County Council could achieve savings through changes to Homelessness Support Services, then please provide these

The Council has no further suggestions