

NOTICES OF MOTIONS - STREET HOMELESSNESS

STATEMENT TO CABINET ON 3 OCTOBER 2017

PROVISION OF EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION FOR STREET HOMELESS

At the Cabinet meeting held on Tuesday 12 September, Cabinet approved a draft Roughsleeper Strategy for consultation.

The strategy aims to ensure that we have the right medium and long term policies in place to ensure we help people who have found themselves sleeping on the street, work with partners to provide help and support, and tackle increasing levels of anti-social behaviour reported by members of the public.

We have consistently stated that tackling all homelessness, including roughsleeping, is a priority for MK Council and the Labour Administration. Levels of roughsleeping and other forms of homelessness continue to place a huge strain on our resources as a local authority at a time of huge financial pressure and central government cuts.

Later in the Cabinet meeting we will discuss a re-structure of the Housing Department and extra resources to deal with extra responsibilities being placed on MK Council and to improve our housing service, including faster referrals and decision making which if agreed, will help to manage our housing duties better and provide a better service.

Over the past months we have made significant progress in establishing services and provision for roughsleepers in Milton Keynes. We have secured premises and provided funding for a One Stop Shop, the Winter Night Shelter is working to provide emergency accommodation all year round and extra beds in winter and I'm pleased to announce we have secured a temporary site, subject to planning, for The Bus Shelter MK. We are also working to improve the MK Homelessness Partnership.

Tomorrow evening the Budget Scrutiny Committee will start to review the pressures facing the 2018/19 budget. I am pleased to state that as part of those pressures we will be proposing to commit funding in the 2018/19 budget towards:

- Expanding the Outreach Worker service to enable more work to be done identifying and supporting those sleeping rough.
- Funding for the ongoing costs of the One Stop Shop based at the Old Bus Station.

However we are well aware that despite 46 new emergency accommodation beds for street homeless people being provided by partners this winter, the progress to ensure enough emergency provision for roughsleepers in Milton Keynes has not been as we would have liked. I am today announcing after discussions with officers:

- We will use one-off resources to fund at least 30 emergency placements over the coming winter. I have asked the Corporate Director of Place to bring forward this proposal for decision as quickly as possible. We will use the Roughsleeping Strategy consultation and the budget process to determine if we should include this as part of our permanent base budget.
- We believe that providing nearly at least 80 emergency placements and an expanded outreach service will help us move substantially towards our goal that all those who have a genuine housing need from Milton Keynes, and wish to take it, will be able to be offered a safe place to sleep at night.

Furthermore I have requested:

- That MK Council work with the MK Clinical Commissioning Group and partners to bring forward plans for a support service for those roughsleepers with a mental illness, drug or alcohol issue. We will then request funding for this service from Central Government in the first instance given our difficult budget position.
- That MK Council develop plans, both as an employer and facilitator with businesses, to provide offers of training or employment to people sleeping rough.
- That MK Council investigate ways to offer an alternative to cash begging to enable people to donate funds to those that help homeless people in the knowledge it will be used for the reason given.

The current consultation on the draft Roughsleepers Strategy will continue and it is very important to establish the policy this council works towards, however it is clear that until that consultation has taken place and we have a clear strategy for the future, more urgent action was required for this winter. I hope this announcement will be able to add to the responses and feed into the work we do moving forward as a baseline for services.