

Councillor Leah Turner
Cabinet Lead for Communities and Housing
Report for Full Council on 19/7/17

Housing

Rough Sleepers in the Havant Borough

I have asked Officers to look into reports that there has been an increase in the number of rough sleepers in and around Havant. To check whether they were placing a disproportionate demand on the Police, Council and other Partners.

These reports included:-

- Illegal camp sites
- Rough sleeping at the rear of shops
- Aggressive Begging
- Alcohol related disorder

Questions had arisen both from local businesses and the broader Community as to whether HBC had discharged their duty of care towards the people themselves and also whether the Police and Council had been effective in challenging the behaviour listed above.

I also asked whether there was sufficient support available to the rough sleepers and whether the people concerned were able to access this support.

I asked Officers to reassure me that there was suitable cold weather provision for rough sleepers should the need arise. Also whether there was a need for us to investigate initiatives such as the "homeless bus" or other reception, assessment premises or similar facility within the Town Centre.

It seemed to me that to undertake this research now, would prepare us to take any necessary actions before the start of next winter.

The findings given to me are as follows:-

There are approximately a total of 12 different people sleeping rough in and around Havant Town Centre. Although the actual number at any one time is between 5 and 8. The majority (but not all) have chosen this as a lifestyle choice.

They are sleeping either in small groupings of tents or behind premises under cover (outside the town centre.)

They spend their days in and around the Town Centre, many having their "own patch" including St Faith's Churchyard, with the permission of the Church)

They are mobile, often leaving Havant for a few months before returning.

Their identities are all known to Two Saints (on behalf of HBC) and the Police.

Some have access to funds through bank accounts.

Most have access to mobile phones and the Internet.

They are in receipt of support (food, clothing, phone chargers) from Local Churches, Charity Shops and Residents.

There is a Community Homeless Group who meet bi monthly to discuss any issues and to what the options are.

Officers are confident that most of rough sleepers are aware of how to access services through The Plaza or out in the Community via Two Saints on behalf of HBC. Also through Churches and Local Charities.

With the exception of gatherings at the rear of St Faith's Church, there are very few complaints from the Community received by the Police or Council. However, reports have been received by Meridian Centre staff regarding people sleeping in their doorways, aggressive begging or drinking in and around their car park.

Police report that there is some evidence of drinking from open containers but no evidence of drug usage.

Support in place

Two Saints have a hostel in St Albans in Havant which has 6 spaces, and work is commencing this year to increase this to accommodate 9 in total.

Two Saints are aware of most of the rough sleepers in the Borough and work with them. (If they engage,) The waiting list for St Albans is made up of known rough sleepers who wish to be accommodated and by people who are sofa surfing.

HBC also provides support in the form of B&B Accommodation to rough sleepers in times of severe weather. This is known as Severe Weather Emergency Provision. (SWEPE)

Current position

Taking all the above into consideration I believe there is more Community support for the rough sleepers than there is concern/ complaints about their activities.

Any reports of rough sleeping and/or behaviour associated with them is currently reported too:-

Police /HBC as anti-social behaviour
HBC Neighbourhood Quality as illegal encampments
HBC Housing as homelessness

HBC has a responsibility to prevent homelessness and commissions Two Saints to provide outreach/advice to the people concerned and to support those that meet the local criteria into accommodation.

The Police having assessed the needs of the people and the impact of the particular activity reported, will generally advise them about their conduct and signpost them to HBC Housing for support. They will generally seek to move them from the area where they are causing concern.

HBC Neighbourhood Quality will take action where the rough sleeping becomes an encampment on HBC land that requires formal action to retake possession of the land. They will on occasion act on behalf of others such as HCC to undertake work on their behalf.

In conclusion, it is my view that currently:-

There is adequate support for those who choose to sleep rough in Havant.

There is a good level of Community support for rough sleepers

There is information sharing but no clear route for this to be done

We have isolated areas of long term Community concern that need to be addressed. I.e. St Faith's Church Yard and Meridian Centre premises.

Further work that I have suggested our Officers might consider include:-

Undertake work to better understand the needs of the rough sleepers.(Gary Morton)

Record sleeper issues on SafetyNet.

Monitor the "homeless bus" and other initiatives. (Community Homeless Group)

My grateful thanks to Tim Pointer and his team for providing such a full and exhaustive report at my request for information about rough sleeping in our Borough.

Communities

The Spring has been awarded National Portfolio Status from The Arts Council. This brings with it funding of £120,000 per year for the next four years. £480,000 in total.

Events

23 Event applications have been received so far to use our land between May and August. These are mainly being held in Havant and Jubilee Parks.

Councillor Grants

Only six applications have been processed so far totalling £2,100 from the £38,000 budget available. Can I ask members to consider to whom they would like to award their grants in this financial year?

Sport England Active Ageing Bid

Following a successful expression of interest in Sport England's funding stream to tackle inactivity in the over 55's. HBC's project in partnership with HCC Countryside Service and Hampshire Public Health has been successful in reaching the final 47 from over 700 projects nationally. It is the only project from Hampshire to reach this stage and the only Local Authority nationally. Very well done once again to our Officers. We look forward to hearing more about this. The project was presented to a Sport England Panel in late May with a final decision now pending and due by the middle of July. I will of course update Members if this comes in before this report is read.

The application requests a sum of £147,000 Sport England funding with an additional £45,000 secured from partners.

Purbrook Cricket Club - Options Appraisal

The club have ongoing issues surrounding facility and club development and are struggling to identify how best to move the club forward. The current level of guidance offered by HBC Officers will not result in a suitable resolution and as such the club has commissioned HBC's Sport and Leisure team as consultants, to complete an appraisal of all the relevant options.

The objective of this work is to research and evaluate options and opportunities available in the development of cricket facilities for Purbrook C.C. and fed back in a report and presentation. The work aims to allow the club to select a suitable route for ensuring the continuation of high quality cricket provision.

The club will be paying HBC a fee to cover the 74 hours of dedicated Officer time over an 8 week period.

Emsworth Pavillion Development

Users of the Emsworth Recreation Ground have branded it tired and unfit for purpose. Current usage, concerns and future requirements formed a project brief for the refurbishment project focusing on ensuring facilities that are compliant to modern safeguarding standards and are attractive to potential new sports clubs members. A design and construction specialist has produced initial drawings and proposed costings to act as a guide.

Hampshire Cricket Board are very interested in the cricketing offers at Emsworth Cricket Club, specifically the introduction of a ladies team and increased junior usage at the park if the project succeeds. As such they have invited an application for funding to sit alongside £53,000 S106 funding highlighted for Emsworth sports pitches. Further funding is being sought before a procurement process begins, for the tender of a design and build contractor.

Adizone Refurbishment

The Hayling Adizone is in desperate need of refurbishment, Officers will look to utilise the relevant S106 monies to appoint a contractor after having followed the approved procurement procedure.

Bartons Green Pavillion Development

Following Widbrook UT highlighting a desire to refurbish the changing room space at Bartons Green. HBC are supporting this project, working in partnership with the club and Hampshire FA to ensure a sustainable, compliant, modern changing facility is available to allow the expansion of the growing junior girls and boys football offer. The next steps include ensuring the initial drawings and specifications received meet FA technical specifications. we can then apply to the Football Foundations Small Grant Funding Scheme and for planning permission. S106 funds may be used to sit aside this as match funding.

Bidbury Pavillion Refurbishment

The tender for this went live on 7/6/17 and will close on 17/7/17. Once the process closes, evaluation will be undertaken on any bids received to identify a preferred contractor. It is hoped to appoint the contractor for the work by the end of July, for work to begin later this year.

Hayling Island Tennis Pilot Project

Refurbishment works have been completed on the tennis courts in Hayling Park. Work has also been undertaken to assist in appointing a suitably qualified coach to run sessions on the courts. Free coaching sessions were run on an open day on 1/7/17. The open day consisted of these sessions, refreshments and a chance for users to sign up for the booking system. Local Councillors were invited to the event, where Officers were on hand to welcome them.

Waterlooville MDA

A successful Great Get Together event was held at the Berewood site on Sat. 17/6/17, which had over 80 residents in attendance.

Social Media

Our Facebook page, "What's on in Havant" has now reached over 5,000 followers. This page informs residents of what is going on in all areas of the Borough. It is used by Community Groups, The Police, businesses, residents, schools and many more.