

Scrutiny Committee

24 March 2021



Working in partnership with **Eastbourne Homes**

Time: 6.00 pm

PLEASE NOTE: This will be a 'virtual meeting' held remotely in accordance with section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and section 13 of the related regulations.

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Instructions for members of the Committee and Officers to join the meeting have been circulated separately.

Membership:

Councillor Tony Freebody (Chair); Councillors Peter Diplock (Deputy-Chair) Helen Burton, Jane Lamb, Robin Maxted, Amanda Morris, Pat Rodohan and Robert Smart.

Quorum: 2

Published: Tuesday, 16 March 2021

Agenda

- 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 (Pages 3 - 8)**
- 2. Apologies for absence / declaration of substitute members**
- 3. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) by members as required under Section 31 of the Localism Act and of other interests as required by the Code of Conduct**

- 4. Questions by members of the public**

On matters not already included on the agenda and for which prior written notice has been given (total time allowed 15 minutes).

- 5. Right to address the meeting/order of business**

The Chairman to report any requests received to address the Committee from a member of the public or from a Councillor in respect of an item listed below and to invite the Committee to consider taking such items at the commencement of the meeting.

6. **Homelessness placements into Eastbourne by Brighton and Hove City Council (Pages 9 - 14)**

7. **Date of the next meeting**

To note that the next scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Committee is to be held on Monday 12 July commencing at 6:00pm.

Information for the public

Accessibility: This agenda and accompanying reports are published on the Council's website in PDF format which means you can use the "read out loud" facility of Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Public Participation: Please contact Democratic Services (see end of agenda) for the relevant deadlines for registering to submit a speech on a matter which is listed on the agenda if applicable. Where speeches are normally allowed at a Committee, live public speaking has temporarily been suspended for remote meetings. However, it remains possible to submit speeches which will be read out to the Committee by an Officer.

Information for Councillors

Disclosure of interests: Members should declare their interest in a matter at the beginning of the meeting.

In the case of a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), if the interest is not registered (nor the subject of a pending notification) details of the nature of the interest must be reported to the meeting by the member and subsequently notified in writing to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

If a member has a DPI or other prejudicial interest he/she must leave the room when the matter is being considered (unless he/she has obtained a dispensation).

Other participation: Please contact Democratic Services for the relevant deadlines for registering to speak on a matter which is listed on the agenda if applicable.

Democratic Services

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Working in partnership with **Eastbourne Homes**

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of meeting held remotely on 8 February 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Tony Freebody (Chair).

Councillors Peter Diplock (Deputy-Chair), Helen Burton, Jane Lamb, Robin Maxted, Amanda Morris, Pat Rodohan and Robert Smart.

Officers in attendance:

Millie McDevitt (Performance and Programmes Lead), Bryn Mabey (Customer, Communications and Engagement Lead), Jane Goodall (Strategy and Partnership Lead, Quality Environment), Andrew Clarke (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Financial Planning)), Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer) and Ola Owolabi (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)).

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector Di Lewis.

1 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2020 were submitted and approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

2 Apologies for absence / declaration of substitute members

No apologies were received.

3 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) by members as required under Section 31 of the Localism Act and of other interests as required by the Code of Conduct

There were none.

4 Questions by members of the public

There were none.

5 Urgent items of business

There were none.

6 Right to address the meeting/order of business

There were no requests.

7 Community Safety Partnership annual report

Oliver Jones, Strategy and Performance Lead – Partnerships, presented the report. Chief Inspector Di Lewis, Sussex Police, was in attendance also to support the presentation. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- A number of the placements in Eastbourne, of those experiencing homelessness, by Brighton and Hove City Council, had resulted in individuals being placed in vulnerable locations unsupported, which had also impacted on vulnerable people already living in those areas. Further Scrutiny of this issue was welcome.
- Anti-social driving around the town centre, the seafront and other areas was generally attributed to young people. Preventative measures did not include regular road checks but where vehicles had been stopped and where Covid 19 breaches had taken place, fixed penalty notices had been issued. The placement of speed cameras was dependent on the severity levels and frequencies of injuries in potential hotspots.
- Noise issues were of concern across the Borough and the County, however there was a significant financial cost to the use of a noise camera. The Roads Policing team was working with neighbourhood teams to look at other measures.
- There had been an increase in anti-social behaviour, particularly in the town centre and in the street community. There were a number of contributing factors including malicious communications and general levels of frustration increasing among young people.
- County-lines crime was a key area of concern for Sussex Police and had a significant impact on other areas. It was an area of work that the Police would continue to work on and support.
- The Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) supported the reduction of crime experienced in and around businesses, including retail businesses and residential hotels. The work of the BCRP would play a more significant role as and when Covid 19 restrictions were eased.
- Bike theft had resulted in two individuals being charged and investigations continued as result of further impact from the incidents. Scooter thefts had resulted in the seizure of scooters and the charging of juveniles.
- £420,000 had been awarded by the Government through the Safer Streets Initiative. Bids were led by the Police and Crime Commissioners office and were for specific 'outputs' of crime that applied to areas with the highest rates of acquisitive crime.

- It was noted that there was not a programme of vaccination available for police officers and other police staff working in the community. The Committee thanked Sussex Police for its continued work in difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8 Corporate performance - Quarter 3 - 2020/21

Millie McDevitt, Organisational Effectiveness and Performance Lead, presented part A of the report. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The Performance Indicators were changed with the agreement of the lead member of the Cabinet.
- The process for setting the PIs on an annual basis started with agreement by the Cabinet each April, on which PIs and associated targets would form the Performance report.
- The performance indicator for the 'percentage of household waste sent for recycling' relied on third party data being provided, which led to delays in the value being available. The data would be provided when available.
- The detail in the performance indicator measuring the 'percentage of Council Tax collected during the year' would be clarified after the meeting.

Andrew Clarke, Deputy Chief Finance Officer presented part B of the report (Financial Performance). During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The key variation of £539,000 detailed in the table in 1.2 of the report related solely to the loss of subsidy on additional emergency accommodation.
- The emergency Government grant was to provide for the initial cost of food packages and additional support to external bodies affected by Covid-19 and the distribution of the food packages, IT costs and additional costs such as housing benefit. The specific allocation of the grant would not be clear until the Council's out-turn position was known.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To note the Council's progress and performance in Quarter 3.

9 General fund budget 2021/22 and capital programme

Homira Javadi, Chief Finance Officer, presented the report. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- Members supported the offer of financial support from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to Eastbourne borough Council and considered that the Cabinet should accept the offer. The timescales for the Leader of the Council accepting the offer were noted.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To note the report; and
- 2) Request that the Cabinet accept the offer of support from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

10 Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2021/22, Capital Strategy & Investment Strategy

Ola Owolabi, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, presented the report. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The Council's cash-flow was fluid throughout the year and was reflected as part of the finance and budget reports, and governance framework required by the Authority. The separate monitoring and forecasting of cash-flow would require the production of a document at particular points throughout the year and additional resources. The Committee agreed that it was not necessary to request this.

RESOLVED to note the report.

11 Housing revenue account budget 2021/22

Andrew Clarke, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, presented the report. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The format and presentation of the Housing Revenue Account for Eastbourne Borough Council differed from the one produced for Lewes District Council in that the Eastbourne version included the net value. Future reports would be standardised in the Eastbourne Borough Council format.

RESOLVED to note the report.

12 Response to the public consultation on waste collections

Jane Goodall, Strategy and Partnership Lead (Quality and Environment) and Bryn Mabey, Customer Communications Engagement Lead, presented the report. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The increased size of recycling bins to a standard 240 litres would increase capacity. Residents would also be able to request additional recycling bins - both these measures would encourage recycling. Bulletins and campaigns

on best practice for residents to recycle were also part of the Service.

- Additional waste bin capacity would be provided where a need connected to protected characteristics was recognised. Assisted collections would continue where needed.
- The balanced response to the consultation was noted and that a number of respondents had asked for the weekly collection service to be retained and that equally, other respondents were in favour of a change to bi-weekly collection. The key element of communications once a decision had been made and the service implemented, would be to inform residents of the frequency of collections and the relevant dates.
- Members felt that the communications around the changes to the service should be put in an accessible format for access by all residents. It was confirmed that the Learning Disability and the Autism Partnership Boards across East Sussex and the Eastbourne networks would be used to share the information.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To note the report attached at Appendix 1 of the Scrutiny report; and
- 2) To note the Equality and Fairness Analysis at Appendix 2 of the Scrutiny report.

And that the following recommendation be considered by the Cabinet:

- 3) That the Council's communications, including changes to the Waste Service, be made publicly accessible and be provided in an 'easy read' format.

13 Forward Plan of Decisions

The Chair, Councillor Freebody, introduced the Forward Plan of Decisions.

There was no discussion on the item.

RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan of Decisions.

14 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Freebody, introduced the item.

- Members requested that an additional Scrutiny meeting be held in public to discuss the placing by Brighton and Hove City Council, of those experiencing homelessness, in Eastbourne hotels/accommodation.
- A request was also made for a task group to be appointed to look at how East Sussex County Council interacts with Eastbourne Borough in delivery of a transport strategy that works for Eastbourne Borough.

RESOLVED to note the Committee's work programme subject to the inclusion of the items above.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Councillor Tony Freebody (Chair)

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Report to: | Scrutiny Committee | |
| Date: | 24 March 2021 | |
| Title: | Homelessness placements into Eastbourne by Brighton and Hove City Council | |
| Report of: | Director of Service Delivery | |
| Ward(s): | All | |
| Purpose of report: | Information and background. | |
| Officer recommendation(s): | (1) That the report be noted. | |
| Reasons for recommendations: | The Scrutiny Committee resolved at its previous meeting that an additional meeting would be arranged, and a report produced detailing the issues around the placing of homeless households in Eastbourne by Brighton and Hove City Council. | |
| Contact Officer(s): | Name: Katie Dawkins Post: Housing Needs and Standards Lead Email: katie.dawkins@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk Phone No: 01323 415604 | Name: Gary Hall Post: Head of Homes First Email: gary.hall@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk Phone No: 01323 436401 |

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the concerns regarding ongoing and increasing numbers of homeless households placed into the Eastbourne area by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC).
- 1.2 The report is provided for information purposes only. It outlines the activities of another local authority (BHCC) and the impact of these placements, and as such there are no recommendations to the panel for changes to our own policy, spending or so on.

2 Overview

- 2.1 Since the 'Everyone In' initiative in March 2020, BHCC have placed huge numbers of homeless households out of area. The vast majority of the out of area placements have been made into Eastbourne and this is having a significant and unsustainable impact on local services.
- 2.2 The current number of placements by BHCC across Eastbourne now stands at 197 households (figure correct at time of publication) and to date, there has been

no strategic plan shared with us to demonstrate how this number will be reduced.

3 Background

- 3.1 In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced the 'Everyone In' directive. Local Housing Authorities across the country were required to accommodate every rough sleeper in their area, regardless of eligibility, priority need or any other issues. This unprecedented move was to support those living on the street to socially distance and ensure access to amenities as most shops, toilets etc were closed.
- 3.2 The MHCLG also announced that Hotels who had been forced to close due to lockdown, could re-open if they were supporting the local authorities to house rough sleepers. This was a move that supported both parties: the hoteliers could remain in business, and the authorities, most of whom had exhausted all of their usual emergency accommodation options, had rooms in which to place the extra individuals
- 3.3 One of the biggest concerns has been the number of placements in Eastbourne from other authorities. While out of area placements is an ongoing challenge for every authority (particularly those similar to ours who may offer cheaper alternatives than neighbouring towns and cities) it has become more prevalent during lockdown, as our numerous seafront hotels and B&Bs seek to stay in business by working with a wide range of agencies this includes East Sussex Housing Authorities, Housing Authorities from other counties, East Sussex County Council, Probation and the Home Office. However, no other authority is placing in the Eastbourne area at such a rate as BHCC.
- 3.4 The requirement to deliver 'Everyone In' was quietly drawn to a close by the MHCLG in around May 2020. However, BHCC continued with the policy, accommodating all rough sleepers in the area. In September 2020, the rate of these placements by BHCC and the wider impact on services in Eastbourne became apparent. At the time of our briefing to members in September 2020, BHCC had confirmed that it had placed a total of 134 households in Eastbourne, (some households may have more than one individual). By comparison Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) the time had roughly 150 placements in total. BHCC have stated that there simply is not accommodation available in their area, which is why they are placing elsewhere.
- 3.5 The impact of BHCC 'out of area' placements is significant. Many are single people, and with a variety of support needs. The 5x local housing authorities across East Sussex have jointly commissioned a Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) which works across the county with complex needs cases. The service includes a multi-disciplinary team who provide intensive specialist support to individuals and fast-track access into statutory support pathways (including health, mental health and substance misuse treatment). There is a county agreement to place RSI cases locally wherever possible, but due to a lack of local stock, on occasion we have needed to place clients out of area. The RSI have had exceptional

results in terms of placement sustainment and engagement with services. They have reported that to date, all out of area placements have failed.

- 3.6 When these placements from BHCC end for any given reason, the individual is under no obligation to return to BHCC, and many will simply remain in the area, rough sleeping or in other unstable arrangements. This places additional burdens on our outreach and rough sleeping teams who then must pick up these cases, again often with little background information. Some can be reconnected with support from our teams, others will continue to receive support from local services including foodbanks, floating support, health and social care services and of course enforcement from Police and Probation.
- 3.7 In addition, there has been no specific plans or commitment shared with us that promises to stop placements in our area or reduce the current numbers.

4 Current Picture

- 4.1 Since September 2020, Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) has been in regular dialogue with Brighton, from front line managers up to chief executive level, to better understand the picture, share the concerns and encourage this practice to stop. At the very least we have asked that out of area placements be made across wider geographical area, not be solely focused on Eastbourne.
- 5 In addition to meetings with MHCLG, there have been several multi-agency meetings, and key partners including the Police, Probation, Adult Social Care and the RSI as well as colleagues from Health, Housing and the private sector have expressed their concerns.

The range of concerns includes, but is not limited to:

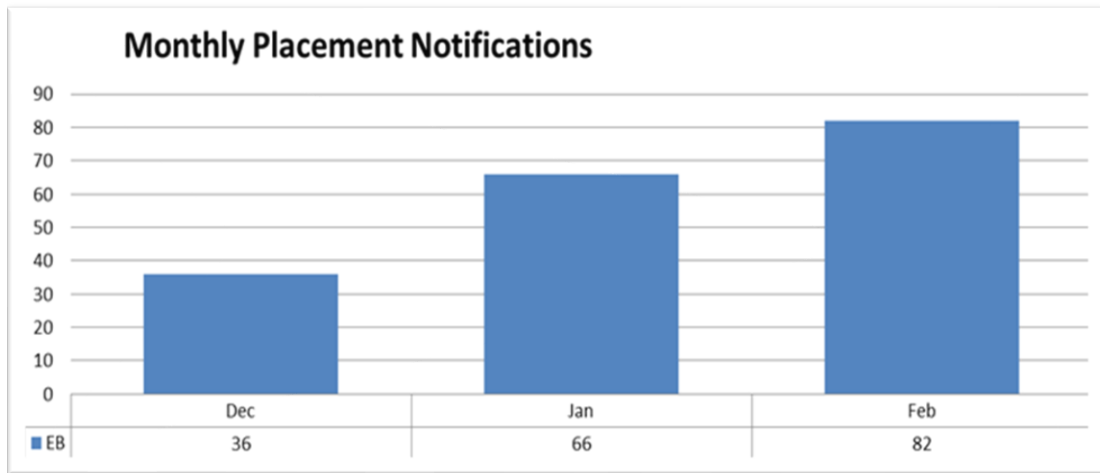
- Volume of placements and the impact of this on services
- Vulnerability of clients being placed, the lack of support or access to support provided by BHCC.
- Minimal risk assessment or risk management when placing clients with multiple complex needs.
- Impact on Probation services who must pick up clients in their area often without notification (Kendal court in particular)
- Increased demand on local charities and food providers, which also blurs the lines when assessing actual need.
- Impact on delivery of health provision through RSI
- Impact on verified rough sleeping figures.
- Increase in street activity and begging, ASB particularly as we move into warmer months.
- Risk of an increase of cuckooing and county lines as unknown offenders are placed in the area without sufficient communication to criminal justice partners.
- Lack of apparent strategic planning to reduce placements in EBC, or to seek alternative locations across a wider geographical area.

Since September, placements in EBC have steadily *increased* despite concerns raised at the very highest levels.

5 Notifications

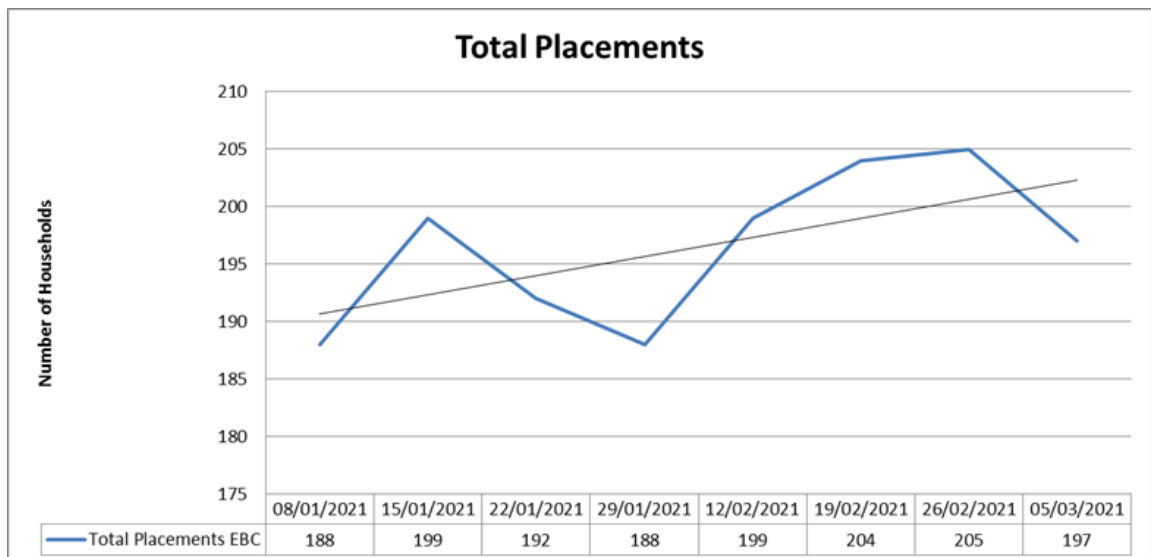
- 5.1 We have a protocol in place whereby BHCC notify named members of the EBC Housing Needs team each time they make a new placement in our area. We do not receive notification when a placement *ends*, as this is not covered by the legislation. However, we also receive weekly 'snapshot' reports that show the total number of placements in the area at that time.
- 5.2 The number of notifications of new placements has continued to increase over the last few months since this protocol was agreed, as outlined below:

| Monthly Placement Notifications | | |
|--|------------|--------------------------------|
| Month | Placements | % increase from previous month |
| Dec | 36 | |
| Jan | 66 | 83% |
| Feb | 82 | 24% |
| Total new placement notifications | 184 | |



6 Total current placements

- 6.1 The total number of current placements in EBC, taken from BHCC's weekly snapshot report, has not shown any significant reduction since reporting began in December, in fact it has *increased*, and has remained at around the 200 mark for the last four weeks, as indicated in the graph below:



6.2 The current figures represent an increase of 47% for placements in EBC since September 2020, when we first raised our concerns with colleagues in BHCC Housing Needs Team.

6.3 By way of comparison EBC currently have only 127 households in emergency accommodation in total. We have only 5 households placed out of borough by us, such as in other towns in East Sussex or in Kent, all of whom we are committed to bringing back into area within 6 weeks of placement, or whom have been placed out of area for their own safety.

Funding

6.4 The MHCLG Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) has awarded local authorities two sets of grant funding:

- Short-term funds for accommodation, support and move-on costs until March 31st, 2020.
- Capita grant over 4 years towards the acquisition of properties for sustainable long term move on options.

6.5 BHCC were awarded a combined amount of over £6 million as part of this programme. This was the largest grant outside of London. EBC's NSAP grants amount to around £2.5million, which is being utilised towards the costs of emergency accommodation, security, and longer term move-on acquisitions for those rough sleepers who have been accommodated by us since the start of the pandemic.

7 Financial appraisal

7.1 There are no significant legal/financial implications because of the report.

8 Legal implications

8.1 There are no significant legal/financial implications because of the report.

9 Risk management implications

- 9.1 STRATEGIC and DEPARTMENTAL RISKS – the significant increase in placements into Eastbourne may prevent or delay our strategic objectives to reduce rough sleeping and activity within the street community. When placements breakdown through lack of support and those clients resort to rough sleeping in our area, this affects our verification counts, and impact upon KPIs to reduce rough sleeping for the RSI. We receive significant funding for rough sleeping work, so any impact on performance is hugely concerning. Risk to key partners are outlined in this document, and these all have knock on effects in preventing homelessness. Further, our ability to maximise access to affordable accommodation in the private sector is hampered by driving up demand in the area.

10 Equality analysis

- 10.1 Not applicable – The scrutiny report for information purposes only regarding the activity of another authority. Report is not recommending any decisions.

11 Environmental sustainability implications

- 11.1 Not applicable – The scrutiny report for information purposes only regarding the activity of another authority. Report is not recommending any decisions.

12 Appendices

There are none.

13 Background papers

There are none