

Street Culture Scrutiny Task Group

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and
Policy Development Committee – March 2018

Findings and recommendations of the task group of members from Safer and Stronger
Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

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Street Culture Scrutiny Task Group

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee – March 2018

OVERVIEW

The Scrutiny Task Group of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee was set up by the Committee after hearing from a range of partners, and service providers at a meeting to better understand Street Culture in Sheffield.¹ Full Council had on a previous occasion heard a petition, which the Committee considered in its evidence gathering on 9th November and is referenced later in this report.

This report has been drafted following the task group's further evidence and information gathering, for consideration by the full Scrutiny Committee to then present findings and recommendations to Sheffield City Council.

The report includes information about the Scrutiny Task Group, its approach and findings. The report sets out a series of recommendations on three main themes:

- Joined up provision
- Making more of a difference in Sheffield
- Local leadership

¹ see Appendix 1 for link to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 9th November 2017

...

What do we mean by 'Street Culture'?

- rough sleepers
- street beggars
- street drinking
- substance misusers

HELP US HELP

[Help Us Help encourages more people to get involved helping rough sleepers and people who beg in Sheffield]

Members

The Scrutiny Task Group, set up in November 2017 comprises eight members from Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 2017/18.

Task Group Members: Councillors Chris Peace (task group Chair), Penny Baker, Michelle Cook, Dawn Dale, Terry Fox, George Lindars-Hammond, Zahira Naz, Joe Otten.

Purpose

The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee set up a task and finish group to determine how joined up the street culture provision in the city is; to seek further evidence of what services are out there and how they knit together; to determine whether more is needed to make a difference in Sheffield; to describe where leadership and responsibility for the agenda currently lies; and to benchmark with other Core Cities.

Timeline of activity

- Agreement to a task group of Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee – **9th November 2017**
- Meetings of the Scrutiny Task Group 2017/18
 - **Wednesday 22nd November** - *purpose, project plan, evidence*
 - **Wednesday 10th January** – *consider information gathered to date*
 - **Thursday 15th February** – *Housing Options and Advice Service Manager*
 - **Wednesday 21st February** - *South Yorkshire Police, Sheffield City Centre/Central Neighbourhood Policing Team Officers*
- Small group evidence sessions **December 2017 to January 2018**
 - During December and January members of the task group shadowed City Centre Ambassadors and volunteered on the rough sleeper night count
- Share draft recommendations with Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee – **Thursday 8th March**
- Committee activity
 - Visit to Safer Neighbourhoods Team (Sheffield City Council & South Yorkshire Police) – **January 2018**

APPROACH

Context

At a meeting in November 2017 Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee sought to find out what Street Culture is and what services

are available in Sheffield. The evidence heard that day suggested there was more still to find out to see if the best is being done in Sheffield to make a difference to the people and place, and therefore the Committee agreed to set up this task and finish group.

Full Council petition

Additionally, Full Council received a petition on 6 September 2017 requesting the provision of a Night Café for the Homeless and Vulnerable. The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee was asked to consider the petition as part of its discussions on rough sleeping. It did so at its meeting on 9th November 2017 and heard from a range of experts. The minutes from that discussion are given below:²

In considering the provision of a Night Café for the homeless and vulnerable, it should be borne in mind that one single place might not be effective due to the considerable mental health issues and complex relationships of those living on the streets. Those attending the meeting acknowledged that a Night Café might be a solution, but it was important for people to be able to access services in a safe place. That it should also be noted that other cities had found such facilities difficult to manage and it was felt that the provision of a Night Café would not address the fundamental issues involved. There was also a need to take action to protect the night-time economy to ensure that people were protected in the City Centre.

The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee resolved that having heard testimony from a range of experts in the field of homelessness, it recommends that the excellent work by different agencies, including Help Us Help, be given the opportunity to develop further before the idea of a Night Café be considered and, whilst commending the intentions behind this idea, notes the concerns about its safety expressed by some contributors.

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 9th November 2017

² See appendix 1 for link to list of attendees on 9th November

Our approach

The purpose of scrutiny is to hold decision makers to account, examine services provided by the Council and its partners, as well as to carry out in-depth reviews into specific service areas. The aim of these different approaches is to continuously improve the delivery of local public services to residents.

The Committee agreed to gather more evidence as a task group, and set out to collect information both as a whole task group and in smaller group visits, to determine whether as much as possible is being done in Sheffield to make a difference.

Over a period of 14 weeks the group invited comment from, accompanied, and met further with those who provide services directly for rough sleepers, as well as agencies who interact with rough sleepers regularly and day to day and the local community:

- Sheffield Street Outreach team – night counts
- City Centre Ambassadors – out on patrol
- SCCRAG (Sheffield City Centre Residents Action Group)
- Sheffield Business Crime Reduction and City Centre CCTV control room
- Sheffield City Council, Housing Options and Advice Service Manager – Zoe Young
- South Yorkshire Police City Centre Neighborhood Policing Team – Inspector John Mallows and T/PS Scott Szymczack

Alongside the above, members of Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, including task group members met with the combined Safer Neighborhoods Team (Sheffield City Council and South Yorkshire Police).

FINDINGS

We have found ourselves focusing on help and services for Rough Sleepers. We are aware begging may be more noticeable than rough sleepers and we have heard from some agencies that not all those begging also rough sleep. We know there has been a rise nationally in the number of rough sleepers, but Sheffield is not identified as a hotspot where big increases have been reported.³

Core findings

Council Priority

At the meeting of the committee on 9th November we heard Sheffield Council Cabinet Adviser (Tony Downing) emphasise that ending rough sleeping was a priority for the Council and that it was working with partners to provide a robust and holistic response to the issue of homelessness. Further that the Council is committed to ending rough sleeping in the city by means of support in crises situations and prevention of rough sleeping. He also explained that in relation to homelessness the Council assess each individual's situation in regard definition of statutory homelessness, they provide an out of hours service available for those finding themselves homes at short notice.

Partnership Working

South Yorkshire Police as a key partner in the multi-agency approach emphasised the importance of, and their commitment to, partnership working. Framework who have experience of working in other cities and are commissioned to deliver Sheffield Street Outreach Team commented that there is good partnership working in Sheffield.

The Issue

Those attending the meeting also highlighted specific issues to Sheffield, for example, that there is organised begging in the city and it was thought this could have organised crime behind it. Begging is a particularly important issue, as it has a bearing on people's perception of homelessness and can result in homelessness as individuals disengaged from support as they had access to money. The City Centre residents group felt that people were falling between the cracks in the support services provided and that the problem was growing. We also heard that Spice users had become a problem in the city and that service providers, such as Archer Project were working with the local policing teams to address this issue.

³ See Appendix 1, bullet 3, for links to articles in The Guardian and BBC News webpages

Current Activity

At the same meeting, 9th November 2017, we heard in regard to action and operations that the City Centre Ambassadors record interactions with street beggars and rough sleepers, and they signpost those they come across to services and pass on intelligence to relevant support agencies. We heard that the Soup Kitchen started 30 years ago and worked out of a base given by the Council, approximately 30-40 people used it, and it is a good opportunity of getting to know people, signposting them to the appropriate services. We heard the Cathedral Archer Project is a day facility engaged in collaborative work, ensuring that people had access to good advice, with an emphasis on those who were viewed as being outside the system and developing an understanding of what it was like to be on the street. The Cathedral Archer Project seeks to build relationships through recovery, learning and participation, with the intention that some individuals might become volunteers or gain employment. The project are also developing links outside of usual agencies with the private and creative sectors.

Task Group

We heard more of the same when we delved deeper as a task group, which has led us to strongly believe that there is joined up provision that shouldn't be lost and should be encouraged to be as robust as possible, hence our recommendations 1 to 3 under the theme of Joined Up Provision. The recommendations are pointers for improvement of an already good system through more education on the message of Help us Help and having the right collaborative system for frontline workers to be able to support their interactions with rough sleepers, street beggars, substance misusers, and access into the system.

However, we did hear evidence of chinks in operation of the whole system and collaboration, this has informed our recommendation 5 under the theme of making more of a difference in Sheffield.

The Evidence

In reaching recommendations the task group relied on not only the evidence heard at the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 9th November, referred above, but also the further in-depth evidence gathered as part of the task group's work. The core findings from this phase of work are summarised below. However, please be aware that not everything heard has been reflected in a recommendation.

Information that helped us understand the picture – the size or nature of the issues

- We heard from City Centre Ambassadors that in one year on their patrols there had been approximately 5,000 interventions with beggars on the streets of Sheffield.
- Shadowing the City Centre Ambassadors for a short period in the run up to Christmas we observed 4 beggars in a two hour period, and all were known to have accommodation – and were told an average of 12 beggars in a day moved on by the Ambassadors, mostly without incident;
- Volunteering on Night Counts revealed on one occasion 12 rough sleepers, 11 of whom were known to the street outreach team, along with a few more walking around but not sleeping, on a second occasion there were 10 rough sleeping and 2 walking, all of whom were known - this is evidence that there are rough sleepers but that the size of the problem did not always tally with the public's perception;
- There seemed to be a gap in the communication flow around Weather Watch when it is operational;
- South Yorkshire Police reported a number of begging/vagrancy and a street drinking incident in city centre, they use monthly recorded data to identify hotspots of begging and rough sleeping; high risk days and key risk times.

How joined up does the provision feel – what we found out

- Rough sleepers information sharing group/meeting – the meeting is attended by housing solutions and mainly voluntary sector working in the city around homelessness, the meeting purely focuses on homelessness, rough sleeping and getting the rough sleepers in to accommodation;
- Observed the City Centre Ambassadors and South Yorkshire Police are very joined up in their daily interactions;
- Noted there is good data sharing through technical systems (for example Sheffield Business Crime Portal and CCTV);
- Listening to provider experiences we got a sense of a gap across some provisions and systems;
- We heard and observed on more than one occasion concerns relating to appropriate communications in regard the Weather Watch facility being in operation.

Link/connect/work/knit between services or organisations

- We got a strong message that all providers from commissioners, to commissioned and voluntary provisions all know of each other's existence and services. How individuals might move from one to another, how nearly all rough sleepers are known – evidenced on night count. Also that most beggars are known by City Centre

ambassadors;

- Information on business crime system supports police convictions, flags up repeat offender;
- Triangulation of police data with local authority and third sector.

What more to make a difference in Sheffield – what we heard

- One message we heard was more direct access to beds, as well as making it easier to get back into the system once dropped out or burnt bridges. Paperwork associated with moving rough sleepers into accommodation poses a time lag and sometimes means places are lost;
- A praise for local addiction services, although these could be improved significantly with outreach services, not just location based drop-in;
- In support of the above we heard of life stories where tailored support and intervention packages are crucial and lead to results to move individuals inside and on from rough sleeping;
- In regard to access to universal health services, St Luke's Hospice shared with us the start of some research with a future service outcome to improve interface/interaction with terminally ill homeless (both no fixed abode and hostel) for palliative and end of life care;
- Sheffield business crime portal system would be even more effective if more city centre business were to participate.
- There are discussions on a collaboration with other services to provide at night for Rough Sleepers

Local leadership and responsibility – what we found

- We found that leadership in the city with regard to 'street culture' issues is provided now through new multi-agency working, and we believe this to be step in the right direction. We heard this multi-agency working includes a City Centre Task Group that reports to the Safer Communities Partnership, partnership and collaborative sub groups that respond to the issues of ASB, where proportionate and appropriate change, legislation and enforcement routes are shared, and helping those on the street, such as Rough Sleepers meeting – where data is shared and focuses on homelessness, rough sleeping and getting rough sleepers into accommodation.
- We didn't get a sense or suggestion from the evidence of a significant gap in local leadership and heard praise for the future through the multi-agency working now in place. We found there is good communication and knowledge of services.
- We make no recommendations for improved leadership at this point, but would welcome hearing more about mental health provision and linkages in the system, as

mental health was suggested as a very common underlying issue. Based on this we would encourage our recommendations to be shared with mental health services and through the multi-agency working arrangements.

- We were made aware of legislation (Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) that allows a Local Authority to make a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in appropriate circumstances. We would advocate caution if Sheffield City Council, as the Local Authority, are to consider using this legislation, that it be proportionate and only be sought to prevent behaviour that is proven to be persistent and aggressive.

Benchmark with Core Cities

- We heard from South Yorkshire Police that the severities of the issues, especially by volume, are far less in Sheffield than that experienced for example in Manchester.
- Figures in Sheffield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2022 show that numbers of rough sleepers in Sheffield is low compared with our Core Cities – 15 recorded 2016 compared with core cities average of 38.⁴

We have reached a suitable point as a task group in our evidence gathering to draw a line and present our recommendations. We know there is more beyond our focus at this point, however we especially recognise that new collaborative ways of working need time to establish to evaluate success or improvement and we feel this is a natural pause to see how these play out.

We know some of the data around the extent and nature of the issue does not chime with public perception, nonetheless street culture and its impact is an issue of safety for all using the city, the vulnerable who are part of street culture and those working in, living in, visiting and passing through the centre. In our view this makes having a system that works on the basis of collaboration and partnership working is critical.

⁴ See Appendix 1 for link to report

RECOMMENDATIONS

With our findings in mind we have framed our recommendations around three themes:

- Joined up provision – Education and having the right system for frontline workers
- Making more of a difference in Sheffield – Potential improvements to services and support
- Local leadership - Sharing scrutiny recommendations

JOINED UP PROVISION	
Education and having the right system for frontline workers	
1	RECOMMENDATION: Support what is done now across the system. We recommend areas for improvement in education of others to improve our message about rough sleepers, and for example the relationship with begging, and particularly raising profile and awareness of “Help Us Help” through media.
2	RECOMMENDATION: Ensure the system is effective for all those involved in working at the frontline on the street and that they know how/where to get the right support for an individual, enhanced through common training & culture in frontline organisations of handling individuals.
3	RECOMMENDATION: Encourage the sharing of information and systems that support joined up provision and collaboration – both technical and relationship – and that the current good communications and relationships across agencies continue to be formalised so that they are not dependent on individuals or impacted negatively by changes in personnel.
MAKING MORE OF A DIFFERENCE IN SHEFFIELD	
Potential improvements to services and support	
4	RECOMMENDATION: We support and reinforce our previous recommendation that having heard testimony from a range of experts in the field of homelessness, that the excellent work by different agencies, including Help Us Help, is given the opportunity to develop further before the idea of a Night Café be considered. Further, whilst commending the intentions behind this idea, note the concerns about its safety expressed by some contributors at the committee meeting on 9th November and subsequently to the task group.
5	RECOMMENDATION: We do have some concerns about current provision, for example what are the alternatives when some provision is not there e.g. Ben’s Centre on Wednesdays, and the suggestion that addiction services be offered outreach as well as drop-in, and we ask Cabinet to lead on a response to this.

6	RECOMMENDATION: <i>We have a concern with the robustness of communication on Weather Watch, and ask that the channels of communication for informing Weather Watch is in operation be reviewed and/or monitored.</i>
LOCAL LEADERSHIP	
Sharing scrutiny recommendations	
7	RECOMMENDATION: <i>We want to feed our recommendations into multi agency working for further response. For example to the City Centre task groups and into the action plan of the workshop held on 11 October 2017</i>
8	RECOMMENDATION: <i>We would recommend that committee findings be shared with health providers for a response. We would like to see that access to universal health services is not disadvantaged by being of no fixed abode or in a hostel, especially mental health services, as we believe these are essential to tackle predominant underlying issues for rough sleepers, street beggars, substance misusers.</i>
9	RECOMMENDATION: <i>We seek reassurance that should the authority take the legislative route of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) where appropriate, it would be implemented proportionately. We would welcome early engagement in development of any Sheffield PSPO and ask Cabinet Member to include the Committee, or its task group, in the development process.</i>
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	
10	RECOMMENDATION: <i>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 should be included in the scrutiny work programme 2018/19 – review of impact and actions in Sheffield</i>
11	We ask that the Committee a) consider and approve the recommendations above b) request that Cabinet provide an initial response to recommendations by July 2018 c) request that Cabinet lead on behalf of partners to provide a multi-agency response for October 2018

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

As a task group we have heard and considered the evidence, and found there may be further areas of importance to understand a fuller picture of interdependencies of issues in regard Street Culture in Sheffield and courses of action available in regard to balancing concerns, we note in particular future consideration could be:

1. Begging – Impact on the Economy, perception, image, safety, vibrancy of the City Centre and shopping districts
2. Homelessness – impact of Homelessness Reduction Act
3. Universal Credit – Lobby for alteration and for rent paid direct to landlord
4. Learning from others before marked increase in rough sleepers in Sheffield

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Having heard a considerable amount of evidence from a number of contributors, our overriding conclusion is that there is a lot of joined up provision out there, a range of agencies, organisations, volunteers working collaboratively, and whilst there will always be room for improvement, our recommendations are intended to be helpful pointers.

We also recognise there are further issues of importance to understand and respond to street culture and courses of action available in regard to balancing concerns, these we have listed under future considerations. We would support and applaud an aim that rough sleeping or people begging should be non-existent in Sheffield.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who provided information, shared their experience, answered our questions, and especially we would like to thank those who tirelessly work to improve life for rough sleepers in Sheffield on a daily basis and supporting individuals into accommodation.

APPENDIX 1 - Evidence

1. Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 9th November – link to agenda and minutes
 - a. <https://imgmeetings.sheffield.gov.uk/jelListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=6749&Ver=4>
 - b. Attendees of above listed in 6.2 of Minutes of 9th November meeting
<https://imgmeetings.sheffield.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=15929>
2. Sheffield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2022
 - o <http://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=24116>
3. Press articles of interest
 - a. Rise nationally in number of rough sleepers
 - i. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jan/25/rough-sleeper-numbers-in-england-rise-for-seventh-year-running?CMP=share_btn_link – Guardian 25th January 2018
 - ii. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-42781377> - BBC News 25th January 2018

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