

Title of Report:	Recommendations from the Homelessness Scrutiny
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	11 December 2012

Purpose of Report: To propose recommendations for submission to the Executive following the review of homelessness

Recommended Action: Amend, if necessary, and accept the proposed recommendations

HSP Chairman	
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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On Monday 26 November 2012 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission held a Special Meeting to examine the local causes of and response to homelessness. This report presents the minutes of that meeting and proposes recommendations for the Executive for the Commission's consideration.

2. Formulation of recommendations

- 2.1 As agreed at the 26 November meeting, a small group of Members met on Monday 3 December 2012 to consider what recommendations might be made. The group took account of the draft minutes of the 26 November meeting (shown at Appendix A) and comprised the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Councillor Boeck, Councillor Vickers and Councillor Webb.

3. Proposed recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendations below are proposed for the Commission's consideration.
- (1) The Executive Member for Housing should work with other local agencies to agree an accepted methodology for the counting of rough sleepers. A report outlining the production process and count should be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission within 6 months of agreement.
 - (2) The Executive Member for Housing should advise the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions of the genuine concerns held locally that the impending changes to the benefits regime will have an adverse effect on homelessness in West Berkshire.
 - (3) The Executive Member for Housing should consider the production, either as part of the Homelessness Strategy or separately, of a 'reconnection' policy, to ensure that homeless people are able to sustainably relocate to those places outside of the district with which they have a link.
 - (4) The Executive Member for Strategic Support should ensure that time is made available at a District Parish Conference for Housing officers to explain to councillors the content of and rationale for the Homelessness Strategy when agreed.
 - (5) At its next revision, the Executive Member for Strategic Support should ensure that the Council's Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau contains the requirement for the Bureau to provide a dedicated housing advisor.
 - (6) The Executive Member for Strategic Support should make available to the Executive Member for Housing and his Shadow, any performance monitoring reports received from the Citizens Advice Bureau relating to homelessness.

- (7) The Executive Member for Housing should work, through the Local Government Association or directly with ministers or directly with the Valuation Office Agency, to achieve transparency of the factors and values taken into consideration when setting the Local Housing Allowance.
- (8) The Executive Member for Housing should develop and implement a plan to heighten awareness of homelessness, particularly how it might be prevented and what help is (and is not) available. Consideration might be given to the following aspects
 - Raising the awareness of all those whose work may bring them in contact with homelessness on the role of other organisations
 - The location of leaflets, including with partner organisations (for example Newbury Town Council, Thames Valley Police, libraries and detached youth workers)
 - The engagement of young people through schools
 - The content and language of leaflets. Assistance is available through Two Saints from people who have previously been homeless.
- (9) The Executive Member for Housing should ask Newbury Town Council to consider the provision of lockers to allow rough sleepers to store their possessions (for example sleeping bags) securely during the day.

4. Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that Members of the Commission

- (1) Approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of 26 November 2012
- (2) Amend, if necessary, and approve the proposed recommendations for submission to the Executive.

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2012

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: None

Officers Consulted: None

Trade Union: None