

Council Meeting – 11 December 2018

Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

THINK DIFFERENTLY, DO DIFFERENTLY ~ The strategic vision for Taunton Deane's more disadvantaged areas is that residents lives will improve significantly and that these priority areas will look better, feel safer and in the future place a more proportionate demand on public services. These services are already being delivered differently in our disadvantaged urban areas through co-ordinated, frontline, problem-solving, multiagency one teams providing early help working closely together in the area they serve. Rural parishes with more scattered communities are being helped to access services through community centres and local village agents who identify, signpost and support isolated residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent education and health facilities within them if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individuals, families and communities to sustain improvements and reduce the need and costs of interventions in the future.

1. Taunton Town Centre

- 1.1 Town centres get busier as Christmas draws near with late night shopping, festive markets, seasonal entertainment, carol singing, school and church carol services, Christmas lights, office parties, free parking (Saturday afternoons in Taunton), excited children and the bustle of people shopping for presents, eating out and buying special food to celebrate with their families on Christmas day.
- 1.2 Not everyone has somewhere to go to at Christmas though and some spend Christmas on their own and a few others with no home rely on the kindness of others and Open Door, Taunton's Day Centre for rough sleepers in Mount Street. Open Door provides meals, showers, laundry and support to rough sleepers and other people at risk throughout the year.
- 1.3 Earlier in the year Avon and Somerset Police and Taunton Deane Borough Council teamed up and launched a diverted giving scheme to help people who are homeless rather than giving to anyone begging on the streets. Funds go directly to Open Door either via the collection box at Taunton Visitor Centre, or by donating online at www.mydonate.bt.com and search for Taunton Open Door, or through the post (or in person) at Taunton Open Door, 1A Mount Street, Taunton, TA1 3QB. Thank you.

2. Street Wardens

- 2.1 People like to feel comfortable and safe especially on dark winter mornings and dark afternoons in the winter. Street wardens have been deployed in Taunton Town Centre to provide reassurance for shoppers and visitors following concerns over rough sleeping and some associated anti-social behaviour. They are well trained, visible and easily identifiable wearing Taunton Deane Borough Council badges.
- 2.2 The wardens are initially working for various day and night shifts in a random working pattern which will focus on key hotspots in the town. They will then operate on a regular daily basis throughout December and cover the traditional late night shopping evenings in the run-up to Christmas.

- 2.3 This complements what we are already doing with others through the coordinated multi-agency Rough Sleeper Team, outreach workers supporting the most vulnerable who find themselves without a permanent home and on the streets of Taunton.
- 2.4 Together the team is able to identify the issues which lie behind rough sleeping and with help from additional Government funding has developed a joined-up Rough Sleeping Reduction Plan to help break the cycle of homelessness, poor mental and physical health and addiction.

3. Rough Sleeping Reduction Plan Overview

3.1 The aim is to reduce the number of people sleeping rough to single figures over this autumn/ winter. This will be achieved by jointly delivering a reduction programme between the enhanced frontline multi-agency rough sleeping [outreach] team now meeting daily supported by Streetwise (the renamed Rough Sleeping One Team) meeting fortnightly. This is underpinned by a grant of £231,000 from central Government which is being used to increase accommodation with prompt enhanced support alongside for homeless people in the district.

3.2 The team are focusing on five key priorities:-

Priority 1 - Early interventions with people from out of area - *to identify and adopt an assertive approach towards people from out of area who are associating with the street community, regardless of their housing status.*

- * Providing assertive homeless prevention advice for those with no local connection;
- * Early identification of people who are not local and in housing need;
- * Early contact and assessment for those identified;
- * Reducing the movement of anyone around services prior to assessment; and
- * Single service offer of reconnection to those without a local connection.

3.3 **Priority 2** - Quick dispersal of rough sleeping sites - *have a low tolerance of the negative impact that hotspot sites and encampments have on the wider community as well as the health and wellbeing of vulnerable rough sleepers.*

- * Having a single point of contact for intelligence gathering;
- * Holding daily briefings for the Rough Sleeping Team;
- * Effectively operating the rough sleeping sites policy and procedures; and
- * Prioritising most influential members of rough sleeping cohorts for interventions.

3.4 **Priority 3** - Reduction of revolving door cases and refusal to engage - *recognise the need for personalised and sustainable offers of housing and support the wishes of our rough sleepers who prefer to wait for the right offer to become available.*

- * Operating an assertive outreach team;
- * Reducing the amount of unsustainable referrals; and
- * Increasing the number of complex cases providers can manage;

3.5 **Priority 4** - Separate services for non-entrenched and entrenched rough sleepers - *services will not inadvertently introduce newly homeless people to an entrenched lifestyle where they are subjected to substance misuse, violence and exploitation.*

- * Providing emergency bed spaces away from a hostel environment;
- * Fast track those approved into independent accommodation;
- * Help people to maximise income and maintain/access employment;
- * Increased speed of response to rough sleeping reports.

3.6 **Priority 5** - A multi-agency approach to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour linked to the rough sleeping community - *we will not tolerate the negative impact street level anti-social behaviour has on the wider community and individual people. The team are committed to working together to promote respect in the community.*

- * Prevention interventions;
- * Setting daily priorities; and
- * Targeting enforcement action on priorities.

3.7 Improvements already made include:-

- The multi-agency Rough Sleeping Team sharing an office in the town centre;
- Daily communication between the Police and Rough Sleeping Team;
- Morning briefings to update the Rough Sleeping Team;
- Increased use of flexible working hours for Rough Sleeping Team members;
- Improving the health and wellbeing of those on the streets through specialist mental health and drug and alcohol support (dual diagnosis);
- Providing personalised housing and support plans;
- Identifying exact needs regarding accommodation type and supervision;
- Considering a person's wishes if they want to wait longer for the right option;
- Making planned offers of realistic and sustainable accommodation and using the flexible budget to help with right options;
- Four long term rough sleepers into housing each with an individual support package; and
- Fortnightly oversight through Streetwise (the renamed Rough Sleepers One Team of managers to differentiate between the operational Rough Sleeping Team).

3.8 Key partners making up the frontline Rough Sleeping Team are:-

- Taunton Deane Borough Council - Rough Sleeping Coordinator; Streetwise Coordinator; Reconnections Officer; and Parks and Open Spaces Manager;
- ARC (formally Taunton Association for the Homeless) - three outreach workers;
- Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) - dual diagnosis team;
- Somerset Drugs and Alcohol Service (SDAS) - additional outreach worker;
- YMCA Coast - No First Night Out officer;
- Avon and Somerset Police - town centre team; and
- Open Door - service manager and staff team.

3.9 Preventing homelessness is also a part of this whilst finding solutions with the right support to ease those back into housing and help them to sustain this and turn their lives around.

4. Streetwise Rough Sleepers Night Cafe

- 4.1 Agencies across Taunton have come together for a week of action during the first week in December in support of the rough sleeping community in the town. There is much to celebrate with the excellent work individual agencies are doing working really closely together, but this is an opportunity for everyone to concentrate their efforts, share resources, experience and expertise at a time of year when the weather gets colder and the rough sleeping community is at increased risk.
- 4.2 Amongst other things offered during this week are health screening by primary healthcare teams, social needs assessments, additional out of hours accommodation, and a night cafe/ safe space in the town supported by many volunteers of those involved. This is an opportunity for partners to try out some initiatives to more effectively meet the needs of this community.
- 4.3 The night cafe is a week long, warm, safe space where rough sleepers are welcomed to escape the cold and its operating during the first week of December, Monday to Friday between 9 pm and 7 am in partnership with the wider church in Taunton, key agencies and RoC Taunton Deane (Redeeming our Communities).
- 4.4 We would especially like to thank Pastor Simon Billington from Taunton Vineyard Church for coordinating this week of activity, Pentecostal Canon Street Church for hosting the cafe, the rough sleeping team and all those who have volunteered to help. Last minute volunteers please visit www.tauntonvineyard.org and details are on the home page.

5. Wood to commemorate the Fallen of World War One

- 5.1 A memorial wood is being created for future generations to enjoy in memory of the Fallen from Somerset who lost their lives in the First World War.
- 5.2 Twenty-three acres will be planted with 14,000 mixed broad-leaved trees to create a community wood in commemoration of the 11,281 Somerset residents who died.
- 5.3 The 'Somerset Wood' is being established within the new Country Park which is located to the west of Monkton Heathfield and to the east of Nerrols Farm through a joint partnership of Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset County Council, Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council and West Monkton Parish Council.
- 5.4 It is intended to be a peaceful place for wildlife and people and form part of a much larger green wedge. It is hoped that residents, especially local youngsters, will get involved in planting the trees. The trees are being provided by the Woodland Trust and as many as possible will be planted this year between December 2018 and March 2019. Further information will be provided on the planting timetable for those who wish to help.
- 5.5 Councillor Norman Cavill, long standing Ward Member for West Monkton and project champion said "this is a wonderful example of partnership working to achieve something truly worthwhile. It will provide a peaceful recreational space for

everyone to enjoy, protecting our green spaces for future generations while honouring those who gave their lives in the Great War.”

6. Green Forum

- 6.1 Thank you to Helen Lawy (Somerset Wildlife Trust trustee and Friends of Longrun Meadow) and fellow friends of other park groups who make up the Green Forum for showing Councillor Patrick Berry and this Portfolio-holder around some of north-west Taunton’s green spaces.
- 6.2 We had both visited Longrun Meadow before but Frieze Hill Community Orchard and Netherclay Community Woodland were new to us. We were impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm about each area and the enormous value these green spaces provide to both local and wider communities. They are well used for general recreation and special events and are connected by dedicated footpaths.
- 6.3 The Green Forum has undertaken to provide a map of Taunton’s green spaces; how they are connected and whether they have friends’ groups operating; what tasks the Council’s Open Spaces Team currently undertake for each green space; and asks what Taunton’s vision is for green spaces as a Garden Town; and who are the Councillor and officer contacts for the Green Forum.
- 6.4 We want to ensure there is a good conduit between the Green Forum and the Council with key members (local Ward Councillors and/or Portfolio-holders) and key officer contacts in place. The new Engagement Champions ought to be best placed to familiarise themselves with their local parks, green spaces and friends groups and liaise with the Open Spaces Team who help maintain these. We envisage periodic meetings probably through the locality/ area panels to keep up with progress and help to unblock things.

Wishing you all a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Councillor Jane Warmington