

EAST SURREY OUTREACH SERVICE

Report of the: Head of Housing & Environmental Services
Contact: Annette Snell
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:
Annexes/Appendices (attached): Annexe 1 - e.S.O.S Annual Statistics for 2015/16.
Annexe 2 – e.S.O.S Statistics Sept 2016
Other available papers (not attached):

REPORT SUMMARY

East Surrey Outreach Service (e.S.O.S) is an assertive outreach service for rough sleepers and non-priority-need homeless people.

Current funding for the project finishes on 31 March 2017 and further funding of £25,000 is required to continue the service for 2017/18. The three other partner local authorities are seeking further approval for match funding.

RECOMMENDATION (S)

(1) That the Committee requests the Strategy and Resources Committee, as part of the 2017/18 budget setting process, to consider a growth bid in relation to the 2017/18 Budget of up to £25,000 to enable the ESOS Outreach Service to continue.

Notes

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

1.1 The proposals of this report contribute to the following Key Priorities contained within the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020:

1.1.1 Managing our Resources

1.1.2 Supporting our Community

1.1.3 Keeping our Borough clean and green

2 Background

- 2.1 In August 2014 an East Surrey partnership of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Tandridge District Council successfully secured £157,000 funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)'s Help for Single Homeless Fund. This funding was used to set up East Surrey Outreach Service (e.S.O.S) which is an assertive outreach service for rough sleepers and non-priority need homeless people.
- 2.2 East Surrey Outreach Service (e.S.O.S) has been in operation since March 2015 and is managed by Stonham (Home Group Care & Support) in partnership with and procured by Mole Valley District Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Tandridge District Council. It is overseen and monitored by the partnership of the local authorities, Leatherhead Start and Homeless Link.
- 2.3 e.S.O.S is the first outreach service provided across East Surrey that makes direct contact with rough sleepers. In the first year of operation the official rough sleeping estimates in these areas have reduced by 26% in a time when across the South-East there has been a 36% rise in the same period.
- 2.4 The aim of the service is to reduce homelessness and provide support, guidance and accommodation options to entrenched rough sleepers with complex needs, as well prevention for those who might be facing homelessness for the first time. The Outreach team have an office base in Leatherhead and have hot desks at the above authorities, as well as using existing community services.
- 2.5 e.S.O.S works with a range of existing agencies to improve the clients' quality of life by reaching the hard to reach and making every contact count. Stonham is an experienced provider of social care and support services across all client groups so the team have a number of organisational resources to draw from. Much of this work is carried out in partnership with Leatherhead Start, which provides assessment beds/emergency accommodation for up to six weeks for e.S.O.S clients. These beds would not be available to Epsom & Ewell clients without e.S.O.S.
- 2.6 The service works with a significant number of clients with complex needs. In the past 12 months 74% (103) of individuals supported by the service have been homeless individuals, experiencing mental health issues, alcohol and substance misuse issues and/or are ex-offenders. They have a history of disengagement from statutory services and many have been excluded from all other support options or accommodation solutions due to their behaviour. The majority of clients to date have been male (83.6%).
- 2.7 The outreach team of 2.5 staff plus a team leader support clients to:

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- i. apply for the correct benefits and grants
- ii. engage with services such as the Probation Service, the Community Mental Health Recovery Service, alcohol and substance misuse services such as i-access and Catalyst, GP's and local health services
- iii. be referred to six week assessment beds at Leatherhead Start (formerly Leatherhead Night Hostel <http://leatherheadstart.org/>), so they gain stability whilst e.S.O.S supports them to work towards longer term accommodation
- iv. be referred to supported housing accommodation across Surrey
- v. attend important meetings including health appointments
- vi. reconnect with their home area if they do not have a local connection, so that they do not face another night of rough sleeping
- vii. manage debt and rent arrears, to improve their eligibility for social housing
- viii. improve their quality of life with a personal support plan to meet their needs.

2.8 In addition to the support work with individual clients, e.S.O.S is also instrumental in eliminating the use of unsuitable dwellings e.g illegally parked caravans, illegally pitched tents, town centre car parks, and temporary encampments behind shops, under fire escapes and on other public land.

2.9 In addition to having positive outcomes the service has significantly helped Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to meet its duty to provide advice and assistance to this client group.

2.10 Having a specialised outreach service available rather than using EEBC's own existing staff has led to cost efficiencies for Housing Services, especially as these groups have chaotic lifestyles and arrive at Housing services without appointments resulting in Housing staff having to drop other work in order to respond to a lengthy and complex emergency situation.

2.11 In addition e.S.O.S has taken over responsibility for the coordination of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to ensure rough sleepers are not on the streets and at risk of dying during periods of severe cold weather. In recent years this has been an increasing pressure on Housing Services.

- 2.12 The outcomes from the project are clear evidence of the value of e.S.O.S and of the benefits to the four district and borough councils, as to well as the wider community. The outcomes from the project are monitored monthly by the partnership board. Each of the key members analyses the statistics from e.S.O.S against its own local area statistics in order to prove the achievements of the project. Baseline data is available on the number of rough sleepers locally as well as nationally. The number of reconnections of clients with their home areas, the number of clients supported, the number registered with a GP and number accommodated are detailed by e.S.O.S and can be verified by the partnership.
- 2.13 The annual statistics for 2015/16 are attached at Annexe 1. The latest monthly monitoring report for September 2016 provides a wide range of data and is attached at Annexe 2.
- 2.14 Current demand for the service has increased with over 114 referrals from 1 July to 31 September 2016 across the East Surrey region. Future welfare reform, especially for those under 35, is likely to further increase the demand for the service during 2017/18.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The project started on 1 March 2015, and was funded by the DCLG Help for Single Homeless Fund until 30 September 2016. Further funding of £10,000 was secured from Police & Crime Commissioner Community Safety Fund and this was match funded by the four local authorities. This will fund the project until 31 March 2017.
- 3.2 This reports requests £25,000 funding to further fund the project for 2017/18. The three other partner local authorities are seeking further approval for match funding making a total of £100,000.
- 3.3 The partnership will also apply, where possible, for other funding opportunities. Single people with complex needs is a work stream within the transformation of public services in Surrey and it is hoped that this may lead to a longer term funding.
- 3.4 It not unusual for Councils to fund such projects and Guildford Borough Council has have done so for a number of years.
- 3.5 The following table shows a breakdown of the costings for running the e.S.O.S for 2017/18.

Staff costs including NI, pension and liability insurance.	£71,900
Staff travel	£5,720
Staff direct training	£2,650
Contribution to marketing material	£1,120
Contribution to client activities-group support	£1,850
Office stationery, telephones (landline & mobiles), IT equipment & licences	£5,940
20% central overheads – HR, L & D, Legal, finance, strategic	£10,820

management	
Total Expenditure for 2017/18	£100,000

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 Having a specialised outreach service available rather than using EEBC's own existing staff has led to cost efficiencies for Housing Services. On average these costs are considered to be in the region of £2000 per case.
- 4.2 e.S.O.S provides value for money and savings can be made from other public services. It is possible to work out a unit cost per client cohort and make some comparisons with costs pre – e.S.O.S involvement. There is no accurate baseline information available, but best estimates can be used and additional information to support these can be taken from the Homeless Link report 'What's it Worth?' Example of these calculations and the information the partnership submitted to the DCLG for the evaluation of the project is available.
- 4.3 The Association of Housing Advice Services (AHAS) has under taken a benchmarking exercise to estimate the financial implications for local authorities of the Homelessness Reduction Bill and the extension of homelessness prevention duties to single non vulnerable people.
- 4.4 The ASAH information represents 5 London local authorities, but it is anticipated that the additional caseloads and costs will be replicated in other areas.
- 4.5 AHAS have evaluated the potential increase in caseloads, reviews, the cost of providing emergency accommodation and additional staffing costs. Their figures indicate there is likely to be more than 250% increase in caseloads.
- 4.6 In order to evaluate the potential savings/cost avoidance the e.S.O.S could bring, the likely cost to the Council of the potential new 56 day duty to provide emergency accommodation to non-vulnerable people have been considered. This has been based on the 41 EEBC cases that were referred to and were assisted by the e.S.O.S. project during 2015/16.
- 4.7 Based on this the resulting net avoidable expenditure/savings is estimated to be £110,713 for the 41 EEBC's cases referred to e.S.O.S.
- 4.8 These costs are based on the average net cost of emergency accommodation of £2700 per case over 56 days. These costs are likely to be an underestimate due to more excessive net costs due to housing benefit (HB) restrictions for those under 35's and the inability to recover full HB or Universal Credit (UC) for short term placements. It is proposed this will be a recurring 6 monthly duty so annual costs could be doubled.
- 4.9 This estimate does not take into account the additional staff resources that would be required to undertake the additional homeless prevention casework. These are outlined in 4.1 above.

- 4.10 Whilst the financial implications outlined above are estimates, there is good reason to believe that the contribution to e.S.O.S. will reduce the costs relating to rough sleepers and non-priority-need homeless people by at least the value of the contribution £25,000.
- 4.11 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** Currently the ESOS service is funded by Grant. This funding for the ESOS Outreach Service comes to an end on the 1st April 2017. If the Council wishes to continue the service in 2017/18, this will require a contribution by the Council of £25,000 which cannot be met from within existing budgets and would represent a significant growth pressure on the 2017/18 Budget. Any requests for funding need to be considered against other competing Council priorities by Strategy and Resources Committee as part of the overall budget setting process.
- 4.12 There are early indications that there may be opportunities to make a bid for DCLG funding together with other external sources for 2017/18 to reduce the contribution required. This is being taken forward by Housing Services.

5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 **Duty to provide advice & assistance under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996** - Section 179 of the Housing Act 1996 provides that every local housing authority in England shall secure that advice and information about homelessness, and the prevention of homelessness, is available free of charge to any person in their district. Section 180 of the Act empowers a local housing authority in England to give assistance by way of grant or loan to voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness or matters relating to homelessness. e.S.O.S helps Epsom & Ewell Borough Council meet its duty to provide advice and assistance under the above legislation to this client group.
- 5.2 **Homeless Reduction Bill** - The Homelessness Reduction Bill is a private members' bill, introduced by Conservative MP Bob Blackman. It has the backing of a number of homelessness charities and has the support of the cross-party Communities & Local Government Select Committee of MPs. It is due to have its second reading in the House of Commons on 28 October 2016. If it becomes law, it will impose a significant raft of new duties on local authorities to non-priority-need client groups. Referrals to e.S.O.S assist Housing Services to meet their current duty to provide advice and assistance however e.S.O.S could also be utilised to meet any future new duties.. The Bill proposes:
- i. A new duty for local authorities to take action to prevent the homelessness of anyone eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness within 56 days, without regard to their priority need status
 - ii. A new duty for local authorities to take steps to relieve the homelessness of anyone who is currently homeless, eligible for assistance and has a local connection to the area

- iii. For households who are not in priority need but have nowhere to stay, the local authority must provide emergency interim accommodation for up to 56 days.

5.3 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 e.S.O.S is contributing to reduced demand on police resources and the resources of other statutory organisations such as health (including accident and emergency), adult social care and mental health services by working in a pro-active way and ensuring their first contact with rough sleepers is meaningful in order to gain access to accommodation.
- 6.2 **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)** - Rough sleeping and the often associated 'begging' in public places are seen as ASB. The associated behaviours of rough sleepers, the wide use of alcohol and the creation of encampments can all be reduced through the work of e.S.O.S.
- 6.3 **Offending** - e.S.O.S seeks to minimise contact with the criminal justice system and has introduced three way meetings with the Probation Service for high risk clients and participation in Community Impact Action Groups and Joint Action Groups to make sure risk is monitored and the impact of offending behaviour reduced within the community. By providing ex-offenders with support to access benefits and accommodation e.S.O.S reduces the risks of reoffending.
- 6.1 e.S.O.S has engaged with a high percentage of ex-offenders through its work with HMP Highdown, HMP Coldingley, Surrey and Redhill Probation service.
- 6.2 **Mental Health & Substance Misuse** - In the past 12 months e.S.O.S has made 174 referrals to drug services, alcohol services and to the healthcare services for physical and mental health needs.
- 6.3 A significant number of the clients supported in the past 12 months have had mental health issues. These have often gone undiagnosed or untreated due to the transient lifestyles of the clients and the barriers they encounter in engaging with statutory services. The e.S.O.S team provide 1-2-1 support to engage with services, supporting attendance at every appointment and ensuring follow-up checks are maintained
- 6.4 63% of the clients supported by e.S.O.S in the past 12 months needed support with drug misuse and 47% with alcohol misuse. Both groups also had associated physical health needs related to their lifestyle. e.S.O.S has supported these clients to engage with appropriate support services e.g Catalyst, i-access, to address their addictions.

- 6.5 All this has contributed to safer communities by ensuring that vulnerable individuals gain the right support to enable them to regain control over their lives and reduces the anti-social behaviour and petty crime associated with rough sleeping.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 e.S.O.S is an East Surrey partnership of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Tandridge District Council and Stonham (Home Group Care & Support), Leatherhead Start and Homeless Link. It is an excellent example of joint working with multiple agencies to support clients.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 If funding cannot be secured the service will have to embark on an exit strategy in order to ensure that our current clients are adequately accommodated and settled in the community. New clients will not be accepted and current (and future) responsibility for assisting these clients will revert back to Housing Services, further increasing pressures on the service.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 East Surrey Outreach Service (e.S.O.S) is a joint initiative with other East Surrey Councils which reduces homelessness and provides support, guidance and accommodation options to entrenched rough sleepers with complex needs, as well as to those who might be facing homelessness for the first time. Funding for the project ends on 31 March 2017. Given the success of e.S.O.S and the significant savings in Council officers' time, it is recommended that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council contribute £25,000 for the continuation of the service for 2017/18.

WARD(S) AFFECTED: (All Wards);