

**Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017**  
**Public Questions**

**Question from Mr Webb to Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism & the Economy: Cllr Ann Holland**

**Question 1**

*“In the past years the number of police have fallen in Southend.  
Question: What is the formula for funding the police in Southend and is this influence by the increasing population of Southend?”*

**Answer**

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has no direct control of police funding or police numbers in Southend. Such decisions and responsibility sit with the Essex Police Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Essex PCC can influence county wide council rates to increase finances for more police. Such decisions would require support from the Police, Fire and Crime Panel – which has a scrutiny role with regard to PCC policy and activity. The Panel has Council member representation from every Local Authority across Essex including Southend.

That said, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is in discussion with Essex Police Chief Constable (Steven Kavanagh) about possible police manpower increases in Southend to tackle some of the town’s current challenges.

**Question from Mr Webb to Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning & Sustainability: Cllr Mark Flewitt**

**Question 2**

*“(Homeliness) Homeless community of rough sleepers in Southend have increased by 20 people. Question what strategy is the Conservative Council putting into action to address this big issue and what external organisations are assisting the council?”*

**Answer**

SBC directly and indirectly provide a range of services to support the local homeless population, including via the Councils’ **Housing Solutions** team, through partnership with **South Essex Homes**, and working closely with other services we fund, part-fund or work alongside. We continue to work with partners across public services, and the voluntary, community and faith sectors and with concerned individuals to

lead a coordinated response to the provision of advice, information and support to people facing and experiencing homelessness.

With specific reference to the rough sleeper population we commission regular outreach to try and engage people and ensure they receive the support they need. The Council also funds a range of services offering advice and information, pathways into other services such as health or substance misuse treatment, or accommodation. The following are relevant examples of the financial support provided:

- **HARP's** night shelter and day centre provision;
- **Southend Vineyard's** Storehouse service;
- **Family Mosaic**, including the complex needs work-stream they deliver, including the dedicated hostel;
- Supported housing offers including **Southend YMCA, Home Group, Richmond Fellowship** and more which cater for the housing needs of specific groups within the local population;
- **Southend Treatment and Recovery Service (STARS)** for drug and alcohol users
- **South Essex Homes (S.E.H.)** are funded by the Council to manage over 6000 units of Council housing stock, including 120 council owned hostel units, the majority of which is used to provide temporary accommodation to those the council has a statutory duty to assist under homelessness legislation. S.E.H. also support work with rough sleepers through work with complex needs and through their anti-social behaviour project.

The Council works closely with local churches in the delivery of the Church Winter Night Shelter which takes place each year, providing an additional 20 bed spaces per night (this year from 29<sup>th</sup> November until 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018). This scheme is largely volunteer run by member of the church congregations and other volunteers, but additionally receives a small financial contribution from the Council towards costs.

We are working with our partners to identify people at risk of homelessness sooner, so we can help this to be avoided. The Council's **Housing Solutions** service has a major role in preventing homelessness, with over 250 prevention approaches to the team in the year to date. Of these, 178 cases have been concluded, and in 58% of these matters were resolved successfully. Current tools used to prevent and relieve homelessness by the Solutions Officers include negotiation with parents & landlords, ensuring people are in receipt of any benefit entitlements including those administered locally i.e. the Essential Living fund, issuing interest free rent deposit loans to help access the private

rented sector, referrals to supported housing, signposting to HARP, referrals to children's services and allocating social housing (in accordance with the SBC Allocations Policy). Without these interventions more people may face rough sleeping.

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council's responsibilities will soon be extended which will further support the above activities.

The Council has a Homelessness Prevention Strategy which it is refreshing as part of the broader developments of a Housing Strategy for Southend. This work will progress in early 2018 and there will be consultation relating to its proposals. It is a key requirement of this work that we embrace community capacity in helping to resolve the rough sleeping and broader homelessness problems facing Southend.