

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MINUTES 9 SEPTEMBER, 2020

39. Motions Received under Council Procedure Rule 6

- (i) Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor P.E. Woodhead, Leader of the Chase Independents and Green Group:

“Homelessness Charter

This motion will complement the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan that was updated in October/November 2019 with regard to Rough Sleeping provision. The revised Strategy incorporates the new outreach service which is based on Housing First principles and is designed to assist entrenched rough sleepers exit homelessness permanently, ending the cycle of homelessness. It will also seek to build on the work undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic as part of the Government’s “Everyone’s In” Programme.

Council commits to adopting the following Homelessness Charter, and notes that when it refers to those who are ‘homeless’ it includes those who are without shelter of any kind - ‘rough, or street sleepers’ as well as individuals and families who have a roof over their head but no security of tenure, such as sofa surfers and those in temporary accommodation. The terms Roofless or homeless at home are also common terms used to refer to homeless people.

Cannock Chase Council believes that everyone has the right to a warm and secure home that they can afford to live in.

The Council does, and will continue, to respect and uphold the rights of anyone who is experiencing homelessness of any kind.

The Council does not and will not contribute in any way to the harsh and inhumane conditions too often experienced by people who do not have a place to call home and commits to improving the living conditions of people who are homeless and to lessen the impact of the negative effects of homelessness.

This council believes that it is essential to re-state that every person who is experiencing homelessness is entitled to the same treatment as any other resident in the District. No one should be denied rights because they are experiencing homelessness.

To this end Cannock Chase Council will make effective the following rights where it is within its legal powers to do so: -

1. Homelessness prevention

Each person has the right to access the help and support they need, including financial planning, to avoid homelessness. All individuals have the right to access any support services to which they are eligible and meet the criteria that may help them stay in their home be it due to a mental or physical health, financial or addiction issue.

2. The Right to Housing

If a person does find themselves without a home, their most important right is to exit

homelessness. Services supporting access to appropriate housing must be accessible to all homeless people who are eligible and meet the relevant criteria for assistance.

3. The Right to Shelter

Where housing cannot be immediately provided, there must be access to decent emergency accommodation for anyone finding themselves without shelter. The Council is committed to ensuring that emergency accommodation will be sourced so that no one is forced to sleep rough.

4. The Right to Use Public Space

People who find themselves without a home will have the same right to use public space. Like all other citizens these public spaces can only be accessed for the purposes for which they are intended and in accordance with any appropriate bylaws. They have the right to move freely within it, to rest in it and expect to stay safe whilst there.

This includes, but is not limited to, access to pavements, parks, public transport and public buildings.

5. The Right to Equal Treatment

All Council employees and services uphold the right to equal treatment for all including those who find themselves homeless.

6. The Right to a Postal Address

The Council shall work with other agencies and organisations to secure that homeless people who need one have an accessible address such as an electronic address e.g. e-mail address

7. The Right to Emergency Services

The right to emergency services (where the Council has influence) – social services, health services, the police and the fire service without fear of being discriminated against because of their housing situation or their physical appearance.

8. The Right to Vote

Homeless people are entitled and able to register to vote. If they do not have a correspondence address a specific registration form is available from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/711758/Register-to-vote-if-you-havent-got-a-fixed-or-permanent-address-England-and-Wales.pdf

This form can be made available in hard copy by the Council.

9. The Right to Data Protection

People who find themselves homeless have the right to data protection. Their data will only be shared by public and other services with their consent, or only for other lawful purposes allowed by law. People who find themselves homeless have the right to exercise control over their personal details.

10. The Right to Privacy

The right to privacy must be respected and protected to the fullest extent possible. The Council is committed to working to ensure that all emergency accommodation

provided can deliver on this right.

11. The Right to Survival Practices

The right to carry out practices necessary to survival within the law. While the Council strives for a District in which such practices are not necessary, The Council will proactively signpost those in need to specific services, voluntary support agencies and foodbanks etc. as circumstances dictate.

12. The Right to Respect for Personal Property

People who are homeless should have their belongings, including tents and sleeping bags, respected by everyone including public servants.

13. The Right to Life

The right to life requires public authorities to take measures to preserve life. If a person who is homeless dies, in each case there should be a public investigation in order to understand the causes of death, what might have prevented it and following this the Council will work with partners to put processes in place to effect any necessary change. The Council will make all reasonable efforts to trace family and friends in these circumstances.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor J.T. Kraujalis, Housing Portfolio Leader, which was duly seconded:

“That the motion and existing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy be referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to develop a comprehensive and local policy that will include Members from all parties and ideas.”

A vote was then taken on the amendment, which was carried. This then became the substantive motion.

An amendment to the new substantive motion was then moved by Councillor Miss O. Lyons, Leader of the Opposition, which was duly seconded:

“That the Council further resolves to commit to hold a stakeholder event to bring together local voluntary organisations, other local public authorities and partners to consider local issues and help deliver relevant elements of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.”

A vote was then taken on the amendment, which was carried.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The motion and existing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy be referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to develop a comprehensive and local policy that will include Members from all parties and ideas.
- (B) The Council further resolves to commit to hold a stakeholder event to bring together local voluntary organisations, other local public authorities and partners to consider local issues and help deliver relevant elements of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.