

Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 02 July 2019

Subject: Essex Prisoner Protocol



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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Committee considers and recommends to the Housing Portfolio Holder that it adopts the Essex Prisoner Protocol, attached at appendix 1, in partnership with Other Essex Councils and other Key Agencies.**

Report:

Background

1. The Essex Prisoner Protocol, attached at appendix 1, was initiated by the Essex Community Rehabilitation Company, an organisation that works with people serving their sentence in the prison and the community. Their purpose is to reduce offending, the risk of harm, and to improve the quality of life of those under their supervision and care.
2. The intention of the Protocol is to reduce the number of Essex Adult Offenders who leave custody without suitable accommodation to move into and to reduce the number of offenders who have to sleep rough.
3. On average the Council's Homeless Team deal with 6 cases a year that leave custody with no accommodation. With each of these cases, attempts would be made to access accommodation that is suitable for their needs. Arrangements would also be made to reconnect offenders to areas where they have no connection with the Epping Forest District. Additionally, Senior Homeless staff Members already attend the Multi Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) where identified high risk offenders are discussed well in advance of their release date. The Council also works closely with Churches Homeless Emergency Support Scheme (CHESS) who provide outreach support for identified rough sleepers.
4. The Council's duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires the it provides an open approach to all referrals to the Homeless Service. The Council has open referral arrangements in place under the Duty to Refer provisions. Adopting this protocol will improve referrals and ensure that all identified prisoners leaving custody without accommodation can be dealt with. Additionally, offenders sleeping rough or occupying unsuitable accommodation will also receive the same level of service.
5. The Essex Housing Officer Group, as well as other partner Agencies have been consulted and equally seeking to adopt this Protocol.

Reason for decision:

The Council's duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires the it provides an open approach to all referrals to the Homeless Service.

Options considered and rejected:

Not to adopt the Essex Prisoner Protocol and therefore not to benefit from the work undertaken by the Essex Community Rehabilitation Company and the good practice by other Essex Council's and key agencies.

Consultation undertaken:

This Protocol has been consulted upon through the Essex Housing Officers Group after initial work undertaken by the Essex Community Rehabilitation Company

Resource implications:**Budget provision:**

Within existing resources

Personnel:

Within existing resources

Land:

Within existing resources.

Relevant statutory powers:

Housing Act 1996 Pt V11 as amended, Crime and Disorder Act 1988