



# Kensington & Chelsea Advice Forum

Tuesday 13 February 2020, 10.00am – 12.30pm  
 Committee Room 1, Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8 7NX

Chair: Joe Batty (JB) KCSC  
 Minutes taken by: Zina Serageldin (ZS), KCSC

Item	Notes	Action
1	<b>Forum meeting commences – minutes of the last meeting &amp; matters arising</b>	
	<p>Joe Batty (JB) welcomed everybody to the meeting.</p> <p>Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed – outstanding actions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>E-mail address for <a href="#">Dee Solanki</a> to be recirculated as previous address was incorrect.</li> </ul>	ZS
2	<b>Presentation and Discussion on the development of RBKC’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – Robert Shaw, RBKC</b>	
	<p>Presentation: <a href="#">RBKC’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy</a>.</p> <p>Rob Shaw (RS) Housing and Strategy Manager with the Strategy and Policy Team presented the draft consultation on RBKC’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.</p> <p>The strategy launch was originally due to be published ahead of the forum but the date coincided with phase two of the Grenfell inquiry so a decision was made to postpone the release. The new date is expected to be in the week commencing 24 February 2020.</p> <p>The consultation will last 6 weeks with a final version of the strategy expected at the end of April 2020. Those present at the forum will be seeing this ahead of the public release and are asked to hold off going public until then. A copy of the report will be sent with the minutes.</p> <p>The Borough operates within Statutory requirements in the context of eligibility, access to public funds and housing duty of care for those homelessness and rough sleeping. The key issues that have to be in the strategy are laid out in the Homelessness Act 2002. New duties from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 include earlier relief and prevention and provision of services and information.</p> <p>RBKC commissioned an independent consultant Neil Morland &amp; Co. to look at cases and underlying factors in the Borough. The report pointed out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a need to improve records and monitoring of levels and trends. New reporting mechanisms do help but the current technology unfortunately doesn’t match the need.</li> <li>a need to strengthen partnerships.</li> <li>a need to improve access to and use of high quality accommodation which includes accessing private accommodation.</li> </ul>	

RB noted that people approach or are presented to the department through referrals very late on or at the point of homelessness. Referrals are often presented with no background information. Many are referred after being discharged from hospital again with little information available. This means there is less opportunity for prevention. Part of the challenge faced is getting information out to people, this is something the department need to work on. Not enough is done to share information to help people make informed choices. If they can get people to contact them earlier then work can be done on prevention. There is a need to look at causes in different areas and in different settings.

RS discussed the challenges of affordability in the Borough, this is more than in other boroughs. There is a large gap between rental charges and income/benefits received. Social housing demand is higher than supply, the pinch point being two bed accommodation.

The overall picture shows a rise in temporary accommodation requirements. The team are trained to use housing and health and safety rating systems and endeavour to check accommodation. More is being done but more is needed. The priority is to improve the quality of temporary accommodation. Taking direct control of temporary accommodation stock is being considered.

More accessible properties need to be located, the only alternative presently is in hotels.

Change is needed as supported housing is relied on for single residents, this is not a solution, there is a need to look at prevention. A number of hostels have closed and there is no longer a supporting people budget.

The priorities for preventing residents from becoming homeless and assisting when they have become homeless was detailed.

Discussion points which arose included:

- Need for information and support to be provided to residents to empower them to make decisions.
- Need to improve the departments own skills and knowledge. This included housing assessments and finding better ways of engaging and sharing. Sharing best practice with voluntary and community sector organisations. Looking at innovation such as modular homes and making use of meanwhile sites for temporary housing.
- Aim to look at private rented sector not in Kensington & Chelsea.
- Need to hold challenging conversations with Housing Association especially with regard the age and conditions of properties to get them up to standard and to comply with regulations. This could potentially be an opportunity to reconfigure current stock, as they have trouble selling studios, and mix up the dynamics to get families in.
- Challenge of how to make best use of limited stocks.
- Look at tailoring options for vulnerable groups, women rough sleeping and for the LGBT+ community.
- Look at Housing First scheme again.
- Work with community agencies to be better placed to provide outreach housing advice or provide information.

SB noted that available information is not pooled very well. They are looking at building a map sharing information with Public Health England and Children's Services.

If residents understood better there might be earlier intervention. The message is if you want to stay in Kensington and Chelsea keep hold of your house. There is an advice centre at The Curve.

**Please find here the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy 2020-2025](#) consultation document published after the forum.**

Following the launch of the consultation a final version of the strategy will be published alongside an action plan setting out what will be done against each of the priorities.

Andrew Wilson (AW); RBKC, requested a few minutes to update the forum on a change proposed by the Hosing Benefits team.

The Council Tax reduction scheme for housing benefits is not working efficiently for those on Universal Credit. This is due to several calculations having to be made to allow for fluctuations in income received by individuals.

Charges are made monthly and an individual can receive up to 12 bills for that period meaning they have no ability to budget.

Staff would like to propose a change for those on Universal Credit.

- They propose a banded income scheme. New bills would only be sent if there was a change in overall income over the month that would move the recipient into another income band. There are no figures for bands at this time, the narrower the bands the fairer the scheme.
- The process would need to be cost neutral overall to make it run more efficiently.
- The department aim to pitch the scheme to RBKC Leadership in mid March, if agreed a paper would be issued and then the proposed change launched. The team are envisioning the launch date to be April 2021 if agreed.

More feedback on the proposals is being sought.

AW and the team would like to understand any concerns about the proposed plan. They are seeking increased engagement with residents and community organisations and would like to participate at community events.

When asked if users should continue to report all changes in income, AW confirmed that the data will come to the benefits team automatically but the individual could continue to report any changes in income as they currently do.

Please contact [Andrew Wilson](#) with any comments or for further information.

Consultation document to be added to minutes when published.

3	<p><b>Presentation and Discussion on Community Safety</b> – Elizabeth Lambrou; RBKC &amp; Sofia Abdullah, RBKC</p>	
	<p>Presentation: <a href="#">Community Safety</a></p> <p>Sofia Abdullah (SA) and Elizabeth Lambrou (EL) presented an over view of the Community Safety team’s programme. They are keen to engage with residents and find ways of supporting community events and activities.</p> <p>An outline of the strategic priorities was given. Details of the purpose and commissioned services for each of the following areas was highlighted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anti-Social Behaviour</li> <li>- Hate Crime</li> <li>- Burglary</li> <li>- Serious Youth Violence</li> <li>- Violence Against Women and Girls</li> <li>- Modern Slavery and Exploitation</li> </ul> <p>Emerging priorities are in youth violence, modern slavery and scams on the phone and online.</p> <p>SA explained that the team wish to carry out more forward facing work and have a good understanding of residents’ community safety concerns as well as ensure that communities are well informed. They are doing this through awareness campaigns, events and holding an advice desk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An advice desk is held every Wednesday from 10am to 12 noon at the Curve. This will be running until June. This is an opportunity for the Community Safety team to hear from residents and signpost them to the services that are provided. This can be branched out or offered in a different format to suit different groups/events.</li> <li>• New opportunities to meet officers in the ward.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Warden Service</a> is designed to deal with low level anti-social behaviour. A local campaign aimed to recruit 12 wardens and 2 supervisors (closing date for applications 23 February).</li> <li>• The team can run events and provide training on varied subjects such as security in the home, fire safety, spotting signs of slavery and how to refer people. The Community Safety team would be happy to run stalls at event or provide resources such as leaflets or online material for signposting.</li> </ul> <p>SA mentioned that a CCTV review is in progress in the Borough. There are currently 58 cameras in the public realm, with about 500 on housing estates. An advisory group has been set up looking at where to locate additional cameras.</p> <p>The team can be contacted on <a href="mailto:commsafe@rbkc.gov.uk">commsafe@rbkc.gov.uk</a>.</p>	
5	<p><b>Closed session</b></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Simms from Crosslight Advice offered to speak at the next forum.</li> </ul>	
6	<p><b>Any other business</b></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date of next meeting <b>Tuesday 8 September 2020, 10am – 12.30pm</b> at Kensington Town Hall, London W8 7NX.</li> </ul>	

# ATTENDANCE LIST

	Organisation
1	Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea
2	Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre
3	Citizens Advice Kensington and Chelsea
4	Crosslight Advice
5	Department for Work and Pensions
6	Edith Durham Community
7	Healthwatch
8	Hodan Somali Community
9	Kensington and Chelsea Over 50s Forum
10	Kensington and Chelsea Social Council
11	Nucleus
12	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
13	The Clement James Centre
14	The Dalgarno Trust