

Report to Cabinet
9 October 2013
Report of Head of housing
Subject Alternative giving scheme

Item

8

Purpose

To inform and seek approval for an 'alternative giving' campaign to discourage begging in Norwich.

Recommendation

To approve an 'alternative giving' campaign in Norwich, which would:

- a) discourage people from giving directly to beggars – using posters, publicity, and the support of the media;
- b) encourage people to give to or support a group of charities – by providing links to link to websites and quick response (QR) codes; and
- c) highlight what we and other agencies already do to support people who are homeless and struggle with drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority "A safe and clean city".

Financial implications

This campaign will be externally funded through the single homeless and rough sleeper grant for Norfolk, provided by DCLG.

Ward/s: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Bremner – Housing

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Background information

1. Street begging is becoming increasingly visible in Norwich; previously it was almost exclusively associated with the nighttime economy although, more recently it has become a daytime issue. Popular perceptions link begging to homelessness however contrary to these perceptions most people who beg are not homeless, and are using the money they receive to support a drug or alcohol addiction.
2. Local knowledge and evidence (supported by national research) strongly indicates that there is no link between begging and rough sleeping however there is a strong link between begging and drugs or alcohol. Research and analysis of the information received by Streetlink (The national organisation through which people can report rough sleeping) shows that 70% of the referrals from members of public relate to people who are begging but those people are found not to be homeless. At the last evaluation of rough sleepers in Norwich there are six verified rough sleepers. Rough sleepers and homeless people are offered support and practical help by the council and other agencies.
3. All of those begging in Norwich are known to the council and other agencies. Most of them are housed in some way, by the city council, housing associations or supported accommodation providers. There are also day centres where people can get food, clothing and support. The street outreach team goes out regularly at night in search of isolated rough sleepers, helping them with accommodation and to try and find a way out of homelessness.
4. It is now becoming apparent that Norwich is seen as such a good place to beg, that some people are actually travelling from outside the city on a daily basis to do just that. This is because the returns are greater than where they live. People begging in Norwich can make £50 per day because of the generosity of residents and visitors.
5. Unfortunately most people who beg use the proceeds to buy alcohol and drugs. By begging, they make themselves vulnerable and put themselves in dangerous situations. Begging attracts anti social behaviour, violence, crime drug dealing and exploitation.
6. Begging can actually cause homelessness. There are examples of individuals who have lost their accommodation and have become entrenched in a street lifestyle through their reliance on late night begging to fund their substance misuse. The individuals concerned would rather maximize begging opportunities than be accommodated.

Alternative giving campaign

7. Whilst street begging is against the law, enforcement action has not been a deterrent. Instead, we propose to take a different approach to deal with the problem. This is a partnership approach (involving police, health agencies, and charities) which aims to reduce begging by making it less profitable and redirecting donations to charitable organisations in the field of homelessness.

8. This approach has the backing and support of voluntary agencies and faith groups including: St Martins Housing Trust, Salvation Army (Pottergate Arc), Norwich Foodbank, Kings Community Initiative, The Mathew Project and Big Issue. Additionally, the members of Multi Agency Rough Sleepers (MARS¹) group have undertaken to support the campaign by promoting the key messages and benefits.
9. A number of cities have already embarked on what they call 'alternative giving campaigns' including Oxford, Leeds and Cambridge. These are designed to discourage people from begging by asking those who give to do so to recognised charities not to individuals.
10. We have the support of the police, health and other agencies in this. We would also look to engage the business community.
11. The campaign would;
 - a) discourage people from giving directly to beggars – using posters, publicity, and the support of the media;
 - b) encourage people to give to a group of charities – by providing links to link to websites, through QR codes; and
 - c) highlight what we and other agencies already do to support people who are homeless and struggle with drug and alcohol rehabilitation
12. The information and messages we want the public to know and reflect upon are:
 - a) Most people who beg already have accommodation.
 - b) Giving to people who beg is not a benign act. It can have fatal consequences.
 - c) There are many services seeking to help rough sleepers in Norwich. Please work with them, not against them.
 - d) The overwhelming majority of people begging in Norwich spend their begging money on crack cocaine, heroin, and alcohol.
 - e) By not giving to beggars, you can stimulate people to address their real needs, instead of providing the means to avoid them.
 - f) The real link is between begging and substance misuse, not homelessness and begging, or homelessness and drugs.
 - g) Donating to a local charity is a better way to ensure that your money is spent on finding real and long lasting solutions to homelessness and substance addiction.
13. The generosity and kindness of Norwich residents and visitors is an asset worth nurturing and could be constructively directed to local charities. Norwich boasts a

¹ MARS is a group facilitated by Norwich City Council and chaired by City Reach Health Service (NHS). It brings together statutory and voluntary agencies working with homeless and vulnerable people.

number of agencies² and charities that do excellent work in assisting the homeless and those threatened with homelessness in areas such as accommodation, education and employment and drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

14. The campaign will enable the agencies to showcase local initiatives that offer practical support to homeless individuals and those that struggle with alcohol and drugs. It will also dispel some of the myths and misunderstanding about homelessness, entitlements to welfare and access to treatment.

² Norwich Homeless Services:
<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/Housing/FindingAHome/Documents/MapOfHomelessServices.pdf>

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report

Detailed guidance to help with completing the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	10.07.13
Head of service:	Tracy John
Report subject:	Alternative Giving campaign.
Date assessed:	01.07.13
Description:	To inform and seek approval for an alternative giving campaign to discourage begging in Norwich.

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal will generate donations for charities dealing with homelessness in Norwich.
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The communications team and rough sleeper co-ordinator will need to dedicate time to the campaign, which is offset against reactive work generated complaints about begging.
ICT services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal seeks to reduce begging and make Norwich more attractive to visitors.
Financial inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal encourages vulnerable, often substance dependent individuals to engage with services.
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal seeks to reduce street begging and associated anti-social behaviour.
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal encourages vulnerable, often substance dependent individuals to engage with services.
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal seeks to reduce street begging and make Norwich a more attractive city to visit.
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal streets to reduce waste and debris assocaiated with street begging.
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There is a reputational risk to the council and its partners should the aims of the scheme not be communicated effectively.

Recommendations from impact assessment

Positive

Significant benefits suggest that the campaign should proceed.

Negative

Neutral

Issues

Proposals assume that, as already with partners, the council manages communications relating to the campaign.