

Affecting all the wards of Torbay

SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE LEONARD STOCKS CENTRE And other services

HISTORY OF PROJECT

In the 1980s there was a visible homeless crisis on the streets of Torquay with numerous rough sleepers and related deaths. The hostel in Factory Row first opened in 1991 when local churches came together to convert a former warehouse into a living space. It provided a very basic shelter, a single dormitory with 12 beds. Women could not be accommodated. Generous giving allowed the Torbay Churches Homeless Trust to purchase additional property in Factory Row to provide move-on accommodation and this created the opportunity for a total rebuild of Factory Row to create the flagship hostel we see today. It is purpose-built and cost just short of £3million, which was largely funded through the Homes and Communities Agency and their approved development programme. Since 2008, three Christian charities have run the renamed Leonard Stocks Centre – the Langley House Trust, Chapter 1 and Shekinah.

WHAT THE HOSTEL PROVIDES:

- 24 beds for men and women with local connections in single rooms. It has 99 per cent occupancy and aims at a rapid throughput, in 2013 accommodating 140 people.
- Crisis accommodation during severe weather (during the winter of 2013 up to nine people were sleeping in the lounges and corridors a night)
- A medical room staffed by GPs who provide regular clinics
- Outreach services to those living on the streets who cannot use the hostel for various reasons.
- Working with other homeless services such as ROSW and JATIS in a collaborative partnership to find specific support for mental health and addiction conditions and for move-on accommodation.
- These partner services are key in providing the flow through for Leonard Stocks which would quickly become blocked. These services are also due to lose their funding from April 2015, removing a further 95 bedspaces from the community. In the last 12 months these services have supported around 200 people.
- A continuing focus for local giving and volunteering (Christmas and Harvest Festival are especially busy)

CURRENT SITUATION

For years the hostel's primary funding has come through Torbay Council's Supporting People. Although this has been steadily reduced the current funding is £289,750 – just enough to keep the hostel safely staffed.

This ends in April and there is no identified alternative funding. Redundancy notices will have to be issued to staff in December and the hostel will close within weeks.

IMPACT OF CLOSURE (detailed in Appendix 1)

- Immediately 24 people will either have to be accommodated in council funded B&Bs or return to rough sleeping
- Highly vulnerable men and women will fall prey to violence, exploitation and be at greater risk of being drawn back into drug and alcohol abuse.
- Those with mental health problems will be at greater risk of self-harm and chaotic deterioration, unmedicated and “off the radar”
- Increase in anti-social behaviour, such as begging. There will be a visible increase in rough sleeping in public places creating conflict and distress.
- Unregulated night shelters and soup kitchens may pop up attracting rough sleepers from other areas.
- People may die on the streets. This happened in the 1980s in Torbay before the hostel opened and happened in Totnes in 2012.
- All of this need will have to be met by other services such as police custody, A&E. doctors' surgeries and adult social services all of which cost a lot more than staffing the hostel (at £14.58 /hour of support provided) as well as the additional income the providers bring into the services through educational, training and support into work provision which enables people to become contributors to their communities.
- If the hostel closes, 25 years of expertise and goodwill will be lost together with community giving and volunteering (the Friends of Factory Row raise thousands of pounds a year for the Leonard Stocks Centre).

PLAN B

THE charities involved in running the hostel and partner services understand that in the face of severe central Government-imposed cuts a different way of funding the hostel needs to be found. For the last 4 months Shekinah, Chapter 1 and Langley House Trust having been working together to try and save the hostel and partner services from closure by creating a new model.

The design of the building allows us to divide the hostel in two. We hope to continue to provide 12 beds for rough sleepers (men and women) with complex needs in one half, reducing staffing to 3 staff during the day and maybe just 1 at night. The annual

cost of this provision is estimated at £190,000. This part of the hostel would be able provide Severe Weather Emergency accommodation.

Funded by:

A charity appeal by the Friends of Factory Row: target £95,000
Matched support from Torbay Council: £95,000

THE other half of the hostel would provide a further 12 beds. There are a number of options for this space which are currently being explored. One proposal is that trained volunteers could support a core staff team of housing officers.

Funded by:

Intensive housing management (100% of this can be claimed back by Housing Benefit from Central Government for vulnerable client groups who are accommodated with a Registered Provider).
On-going charitable giving through the Friends of Factory Row and other sources

We are also exploring ways of keeping our partner services going as part of our (Plan B) strategy including grant applications as they are key to ensuring the hostel works effectively and maintains its excellent record of keeping people off the streets of Torbay.

CONCLUSION

The Leonard Stocks Centre is a flagship hostel, a centre of expertise, which saves lives and prevents wide-scale homelessness and anti-social behaviour on the streets of Torbay. It is a “cheap” option compared to the fall-out on other public services should the hostel close.

It is “home-grown”, the culmination of 25 years of giving and support by the people of Torbay, a project which the community has taken to its heart. It benefits from donations and volunteer input.

It is unlikely the hostel can continue without funding from Torbay Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

We ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to propose match funding for the Friends of Factory Row appeal.