



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	11 th October 2018
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Service Area	Housing
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	24 th October 2018

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Winter Night Shelter 2018-19

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report proposes the location of the winter night shelter (WNS) remains on the first floor of the bus station office premises, where it has been located for the past 2 years.
- 1.2 The report outlines the reasons for this proposal.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 Council endorses the officer recommendation for the WNS to remain in the first floor offices of the Bus Shelter.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has worked in partnership with local volunteers and some faith based organisations to provide a WNS in recent years.
- 3.2 Whilst there is no specific legal requirement for the Council to provide a WNS, this facility forms an integral part of the Council's Cold Weather Plan (approved in Dec 2017), whereby in extreme weather, the Council does have a legal duty to minimise risk to life, and move rough sleepers into warm and safe places, until the temperatures rise above zero again.

- 3.3 Based on the availability of local accommodation, without a WNS the Council would not have anywhere to accommodate rough sleepers in the likely event that the Cold Weather Plan is activated. This problem would be more acute if temperatures remained below zero for extended or frequent periods of time, as they did last winter.
- 3.4 The likely opening times and dates of the shelter (based on last winter's provision) are likely to be as follows:
Opening date – 3rd January 2019 until mid-March 2019
Opening Hours - 6pm doors open. 8pm doors close. 8am doors reopen to allow occupants to leave. The shelter is not occupied during the day.
- 3.5 The usual arrangements are: the Council is responsible for sourcing the premises, arranging planning and building control approval and providing some basic equipment (where required). Access to the shelter must be made via referral to the Housing Solutions Team, who will attempt to carry out some background checks on the proposed occupant – to mitigate any risks to volunteers and other residents in the shelter. Where officers deem a proposed resident as too high risk – access is denied.
- 3.6 The Volunteer Group is responsible for 'staffing' the shelter with sufficient cover for their proposed 3 shift system per session. The volunteer Group determine the opening date of the shelter, which currently stands as 3rd January 2018. The start date is largely determined by the difficulty of recruiting volunteers over the Christmas and New Year period.
- 3.7 The Volunteer Group will provide pre-cooked hot food and drinks in the evening. A hot breakfast will be available to all residents of the night shelter, often provided in the café below the night shelter. The cost of providing said breakfasts is typically funded through donations collected throughout the year by local interest groups and volunteers, such as the local Donation Station (and others).
- 3.8 It is expected that the maximum occupancy will be circa 10 persons per night – this is determined as a 'safe' number of residents which the volunteers can monitor. It is also an appropriate number for insurance purposes. The lead Church organisations are responsible for taking out the appropriate insurance cover for their volunteers and residents.

4.0 WHY THIS LOCATION?

- 4.1 Despite the best efforts of officers to find alternative locations for the WNS, the bus shelter remains the only viable option available for 2018-19 (in the author's view).
- 4.2 Many other options have been explored and discounted over a period of 6 months. These include – rotating the WNS around different churches, an OAP Hut in the north of the County, a former office block, a former shop premises and temporary facilities cited in two different car parks.
- 4.3 All of the above options have been discounted as viable, the reasons for which include: logistical problems for volunteers, clients and equipment, uncertainty around

planning permission, uncertainty around safe service provision, likely local resident concerns and anxieties, insurance issues and unknown costs.

4.4 As the bus station office has been used for the past 2 years, works have already been undertaken to ensure it meets all statutory and safety requirements including building control, planning and fire safety.

4.5 The beds, white goods and some other equipment is still present in the bus station and ready for use this winter.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

5.1 The cost to reopen the WNS at the bus station would be minimal (less than £500). The only expenditure likely to be incurred would be for planning permission and any minor repairs required if any disrepair has become apparent since March 2018 when it last closed.

5.2 Any other options for the WNS would inevitably incur significant (but unquantified) cost to the Council.

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	1 of 4	0 of 4	3 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	4 of 5	0 of 5	1 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	1 of 10	0 of 10	9 of 10
4. Biodiversity	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1

Summary:

The main positive impacts are this proposal meets 4/5 ways of working; responds to local need, empowers communities and volunteers and saves lives in extreme weather.

The main negative impacts are - none relevant to the factors outlined in this document.

**ALYN OWEN
CHIEF OFFICER – COMMUNITY
REGENERATION**

**COUNCILLOR GERAINT THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR
REGENERATION & PUBLIC
PROTECTION**

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.