



Tuesday, 30 May 2017

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for your email regarding the issue of homelessness. This is something I care strongly about tackling, it is not acceptable that there has been a significant rise in homelessness in the city in recent years and I want to see this situation improved.

We have created locally a four point strategy to tackle homelessness. A shorter version of the policy can be found in our 2016 local manifesto. This letter will explain the policy more closely and how we believe homelessness should be tackled in this city. I will also outline the national actions I would prioritise to reduce homelessness.

We believe there is not one single way to tackle homelessness and help those on the streets or in temporary accommodation. Instead we believe, to make a sustainable difference to the lives of those who are without homes, the problem needs to be tackled in multiple ways.

The first way to do this is to prevent individuals from becoming homeless as far as possible. Right now, the only type of support available to someone who is in danger of losing their home is debt advice from Cambridge Citizens Advice Bureau. But we want to extend this so that there is a service which provides support such as emergency mental health support and support if domestic violence is present.

The second way is to undertake targeted research on the numbers of homeless people on the streets, to find out where and how they have become homeless and to then improve the services provided by the local authority as well as working together with other parties throughout the region.

According to the Review of homelessness in Cambridge 2015 (pp.5), around 40% of rough sleepers have no local connection to Cambridge, a figure which has remained stable for the last 3 years. In 2014, a joint survey of homeless people and rough sleepers was undertaken by Jimmy's, Wintercomfort and Street Outreach. Though the sample was deemed too small to draw firm conclusions, it was found that the issues faced by the homeless included access to employment, healthcare and children, as well as the risk of homelessness amongst care and prison leavers. We will ensure that more research is undertaken to ensure we identify the big issues so that the right policies and strategies are employed.

Locally we would also like to open up alternative ways of offering housing. We would propose that the council make use of any empty privately owned property by using Empty Property Use Orders to either use the property itself or secure its use. We also believe that alternative ways of living needs to be further explored, especially as it is often the vulnerable single homeless people that are the most affected by the shortage in social housing. The city council needs to invest in alternative forms of living such as housing co-operatives and other forms of Co-Housing projects as ways of providing low cost housing.

Our final point in this local strategy is to create an umbrella service exclusively working to tackle homelessness. We don't feel that there is an effective partnership between the different homeless organisations and charities in Cambridge currently. This can lead to many homeless people falling through the net too easily.

We believe that by creating a hub for the homeless in our city, we can ensure there is a specialised service within the city council that works with the homeless to provide them with all the help and support that they need, including preventative work, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse support, as well as helping them in creating a skill set. This service will mean joined up partnerships with all the local organisations and charities that already exist to support the homeless as well as those who have experienced homelessness before.

The service will ensure that all those who need it are given the right support for their complex and differing needs. The end goal of this service will be to help these people to build more secure lives.

Our policy on homelessness has been approved by Wintercomfort and Jimmy's Night Shelter and was researched and developed by someone who herself was homeless in Cambridge.

On a national level there are also a number of changes to help those who are homeless or those who are at risk of becoming homeless, which I would take action on. The erosion of our welfare state by successive governments and the punitive sanctions regime is one major driver of the increase in homelessness. As a party we are committed to ensuring the sanctions regime is ended and benefits rise with inflation so that more people are not pushed into poverty as the cost of living increases.

Support services run by local authorities and the NHS have also been badly eroded in recent years by austerity. As someone who works for the local NHS, I am committed to ensuring we have good public services which can help those who need it in their time of need. We would restore adequate funding to local authorities so they can offer good local support services and invest significantly more in the NHS so that mental health services, often important in preventing homelessness, can be fully provided.

In the longer term we support the idea of implementing a universal basic income which would pay a basic salary to every citizen, replacing the current ineffective welfare system. This would ensure that everyone has enough to meet their basic needs.

We would also push for action to reduce the cost of housing and ensure hundreds of thousands of new, social and genuinely affordable homes are built. This would help resolve the housing crisis which badly affects places such as Cambridge and ensure there are options available for people at risk of homelessness.

If elected I would fight to keep these issues at the top of the agenda.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stuart Tuckwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stuart Tuckwood
Parliamentary candidate for Cambridge