

25 September 2020

Dear Resident

SWT along with the YMCA Dulverton Group have been providing self-contained accommodation for rough sleepers at the Canonsgrove halls of residence in Trull since the end of March.

The accommodation was set up urgently following a Government requirement to take all rough sleepers off the streets and accommodate them, recognising this group as particularly vulnerable to Covid-19. Our approach has been to bring in other professional services such as health, social care, mental health services and addiction services to provide a joined-up response to support the rough sleepers and ultimately help get them ready to move to more independent accommodation.

The Government has urged councils to continue to provide this interim accommodation for rough sleepers rather than returning them to the streets, particularly during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. The Council has now been awarded Government funding from the MHCLG 'Next Steps Accommodation Programme' to cover the costs of keeping the multi-agency initiative going in 2020/21.

This will also allow time for SWT to undertake an options appraisal to identify a sustainable longer-term accommodation solution for rough sleepers in the district.

We do understand the concerns of Trull residents, some of whom have reported instances of anti-social behaviour and nuisance as lockdown has eased and Canonsgrove tenants have become more visible in the community.

We are taking this seriously and working quickly to address these problems and are putting additional measures in place to resolve some of the issues raised. These include:

- Bringing in more directly recruited YMCA staff to manage the site.
- Obtaining a minibus to organise daily transportation in and out of town to reduce the footfall.
- Putting in place more robust measures to address behaviours of those causing concerns (and from the information we are receiving, it is a minority).
- Improving our communications with the residents of Trull and the Parish Council. (We will be providing regular updates and information, and providing regular officer attendance at future Parish Council meetings.)

- Increasing the range of activities provided on site to encourage our tenants to stay within the grounds.
- Revisiting officer shift patterns to provide cover outside patrolling the streets during some night times to assess impact and behaviour and address any issues.
- Considering what additional capacity is required outside the grounds to improve visibility and address any continuing concerns identified.

We are working very closely with the Avon and Somerset Police who have increased their presence in the Trull area as part of positive partnership working. The intelligence from the Police is that crime has not noticeably increased in Trull, although they and we are receiving a greater number of reports of ASB and nuisance behaviour which we are following up on.

As a Council working closely with the YMCA Dulverton Group, our relationship with our vulnerable residents and the wider community is important to us.

We readily acknowledge that some of our tenants have complex needs and do not always behave in a way that complies to social norms, however, this does not always constitute criminal or antisocial behaviour. Where we can identify the tenant, we will take appropriate action against antisocial behaviour although we will consider if they have a diagnosed mental health condition that qualifies as a disability under the Equalities Act, in ensuring our actions are proportionate.

We are committed to improving our engagement with Trull residents, bringing greater understanding of our work and taking proportionate action against our tenants where appropriate.

We will provide regular updates on our work to the Parish Council, ward councillors and others, as well as on our websites at www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-information/
<https://www.ymca-dg.org/>

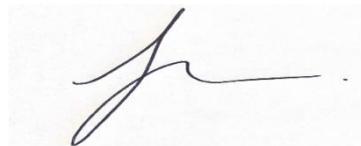
If you would like to be included in our mailing list for these updates, please contact communications@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

A list of frequently asked questions is attached, which includes how to raise concerns about our residents and we welcome any feedback or further questions on Canonsgrove@ymca-dg.org

Yours



Simon Lewis, Assistant Director,
Somerset West and Taunton Council



Jonica Walkinshaw, Director
YMCA Dulverton Group