

COVID-19 UPDATES

Housing management

Staff numbers

- Number of staff working remains high (no COVID-related absences at present), morale is good.

Cleaning and Caretaking Service

- Still operating a reduced service (50%) focusing on critical tasks but, we are planning to phase in longer working hours and extra tasks from Tuesday 26 May, such as cleaning staircases and landings.
- Gardening and grounds maintenance services are going to be reintroduced gradually across all sites from next week.

Estate Management/Customer Service

- Operating a reduced service (80%), staff working from home;
- No home visits;
- Parking enforcement suspended until 30 May (except Avondale where it is back in force due to unauthorised parking by non-residents).

Housing Needs

- Operating a reduced service (50%);
- Biddings and viewings still suspended;
- Change in official guidance means that we are planning to phase in some allocations and lettings tasks from 1 June, with appropriate safety measures (including viewings);
- Looking at ways of doing tenancy sign-ups remotely (e.g. electronic signing of documents);
- Urgent moves being facilitated – one DV victim has been moved to another estate despite lockdown.

Rents

- Service running almost as normal, staff can take telephone payments via Teams;
- Very big increase in the number of online payments;
- Significant increase in arrears but, pending Universal Credit claims will reduce the arrears;
- Monitoring arrears carefully and, contacting residents in arrears to offer support and advice.

Income Recovery

- Operating a reduced service (80%);
- Helping with increased Universal Credit claims (150+ applications since lockdown);
- 192 households been in contact to advise of the adverse impact of COVID-19 on income or, employment;
- Extended suspended arrears action sheds, garages and parking until 31 May (unofficially).

Sheltered Housing

- Operating a reduced service (80%);
- Staff supporting residents by telephone and Careline system;
- Liaising with care agencies and social services as normal;
- Communal lounges still closed;
- Still no known cases of COVID-19 in our schemes.

Repairs and Maintenance

- Number of CoL staff working is high;
- Call Centre operating fully as normal;
- Repairs and maintenance contractor still has many staff on 'furlough' leave;
- Have been operating an emergency repairs service only (P0, P1 and P2);
- Started to do some P3 works and P4 works (communal);
- All statutory inspections being carried out in full – gas, electric, asbestos, legionella, lifts etc;
- Looking at how we may start doing more less urgent repairs going forward without endangering staff, contractors and residents.

Major Works and Improvements Programme

- All live projects are being reassessed in terms of start-up and continued delivery;
- Some projects have recommenced but only, for now, in communal areas. This has been agreed following a review of Risk and Method Statements and safe working practices.

HRA Commercial Premises

- Many of our commercial tenants on our social housing estates remain closed either, directly as a result of government instructions for the lockdown or, indirectly as a result of a drop in trade, difficulty in obtaining supplies and staffing issues etc.
- In line with the agreed Corporate approach to assisting our commercial tenants during these difficult times, we have offered the following concessions to those who fall within the relevant categories:
 - Switch to monthly rent rather than quarterly (Phase 1);
 - 3-month rent deferral period (Phase 2).
- Several commercial tenants have subsequently indicated that they need further assistance from the Corporation to help them through the crisis.
- There is a report before Committee today to consider what further assistance can be given to our commercial tenants.

Shielding and Community

The City has now been notified of a total of 177 residents who are described as shielded as they are clinically extremely vulnerable and have been told to isolate. Additions to this list have slowed – with only five new names in the last week.

The City is contacting all on the list – and has made contact with 169 shielded residents to date. We continue to offer support with food supplies, medicines and social contact. Of those we have contacted 19 have asked for help with one or more of those issues.

We have contacted 252 non-shielded residents known to services or housing management teams who may be vulnerable. As with the shielded residents, contact has been appreciated, but requests for support have been relatively low.

The volunteer and voluntary sector base in the city continues to be very active in its support of residents. We have provided further practical support to those distributing food with supply of some equipment and provision of some gloves and masks.

We continue to provide additional capacity in our home care services to support those with needs.

Age UK, who we commission to provide support to carers (among other services) have been running virtual carer groups and conducting welfare calls to provide support and signpost people to other services and activities.

Adult and Children Social Care

Adult Social Care

- ASC capacity remains good with no staff sickness issues and the service continuing to meet all statutory requirements.
- We retain the additional Covid 19 Discharge arrangements set up at the start of the crisis as previously reported to Committee.
- We have seen a small increase in discharges compared to last month when we updated committee however, the increase remains on a par with normal levels.
- We continue to monitor the welfare and wellbeing of all clients allocated an Adult Social Care Social Worker and are carrying out welfare checks of residents on the shielded list , as required – these checks remain mostly virtual.
- There have been no system wide capacity issues regarding care providers who continue to deliver domiciliary care as required.
- Since last month's report to Committee there has been a very small increase of City residents placed in residential care and / or supported living although the actual number is less than 5 - this group includes people who were sleeping rough and are now in an accommodation pathway with additional social care support

Children Social Care

- CSC capacity remains good- no staff sickness issues, and the service continues to meet all statutory requirements.
- We continue to stay in contact with all children who have an allocated social worker- this is carried out via a mixture of actual Face to Face visits and virtual visits using various means of social media.
- We are monitoring ongoing learning arrangements for our Children in Care through our virtual school.
- We have provided additional learning resources for a number of our vulnerable young people, both in care and in the community , and we will be receiving additional laptops from the DfE in the coming week for identified vulnerable children to support their learning.
- The volume of referrals into the service, whilst it has increased since last committee , remains at relatively low levels.
- The Safeguarding Sub Committee has been reinstated and additional information on performance across the service will be presented to the Sub Committee in June.

Recovery

- Children and Adult Social Care staff have continued to work from home and for 3 days a week a small number of staff work from the Guildhall. These arrangements will continue in the short term as risk assessments are completed to support staff being able to return to the Guildhall site. However, the principle of working from home, where possible, will remain as the current arrangements have demonstrated that there has been no adverse impact on the delivery of services via the current model.
- We will anticipate more Face to Face meetings through the recovery phase but, as they are now, Face to Face visits will take place if required and following a risk assessment.

Covid-19 Rough sleeping update

1. Current level of rough sleeping

In order to accurately track rough sleeping levels, we are carrying out bi-weekly street audits following a similar methodology to that used on a monthly basis throughout the year. The most recent audit was carried out last night 13 rough sleepers were counted. This compares with the 14 found on the previous audit on the 7th May and 30-40 found on a typical night at any other time.

Our commissioned outreach service continues to deliver shifts across 6 days and a typical week involves no fewer than 8 outreach shifts. Shifts are undertaken at dawn, during the day and late-night shifts have now been reinstated. Parkguard, Doctors of the World and a mental health nurse also join Outreach shifts.

2. Accommodation update

Since the beginning of March, 92 individuals have received support to access new or existing accommodation. Currently, 48 people referred by the City's outreach team are being accommodated in government funded provision procured by the GLA and a further 44 have been housed from the streets by the City of London Corporation. They are accommodated in bed spaces we have procured in hotels, specialist hostels and the Youth Hostel at St Pauls

Regarding the Youth Hostel, we have agreed a temporary licence with the Youth Hostel Association premises on Carter Lane until the end of July 2020 and are currently in negotiations with them to explore the option to extend this agreement. This site can accommodate up to 20 individuals safely within the Covid 19 Public Health England guidelines. The outreach team continues to target entrenched City Rough Sleepers as a priority, and we have seen the number of people placed in the Youth Hostel steadily grow to current level of 15. Staff support for the guests in the Hostel and hotel accommodation is being provided by Providence Row Housing Association.

3. Health and wellbeing support

East London Foundation Trust is now leading on the provision of basic clinical care to residents placed in accommodation, secured through Councils, in North and East London. The City has access to the clinical team at the Greenhouse practice in Hackney who are visiting our guests in hotels and the YHA. A specialist infectious disease service – Find & Treat, has visited the YHA and screened all guests for infection. Food is being provided via a combination of food vouchers, packed lunch deliveries, food banks and supermarket deliveries.

4. Exit planning

As part of the recovery phase; London Councils and the GLA have drafted an exit planning strategy document to support the next steps for all those placed in GLA and Local Authority procured hotel/ hostel accommodation

We are in the process of drafting our own City of London strategy which will align with the London wide plan and be framed within the context of the following overarching principles;

- No-one who has been placed in emergency accommodation by the City of London in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis is asked to leave that emergency accommodation without an offer of support to end their rough sleeping
- there is capacity and capability to deliver and implement 'In For Good offers' of support for all City of London rough sleepers
- the City of London supports the London-wide approach which will complement the efforts of individual boroughs and providers, and vice versa
- the roll out is gradual, to avoid a 'cliff edge' and overloading of services as lockdown is lifted.

The CoL Next Steps Strategy will be presented to the Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Sub Committee which will be taking place in June.

Barbican & Community Libraries

1. Last month, I told you about our library without walls which is continuing to grow with a programme of virtual activities for all the family.
2. New experiences include:
 - a. a weekly knitting and nattering club
 - b. Filmed Librarian recommendations for our eBooks/eAudiobook collections
 - c. STEAM and craft activities for children
 - d. Library Spotify playlists
 - e. Virtual reading groups for children
 - f. Barbican Library's Philosophy Club and Graphic novels forum are now taking place online.
3. We are now working to restart our home delivery service, but we are also extending it to resident library members who are shielding. To this end, we have called every resident library member aged 70+ - around 180 of them – to scope the demand and also, offer help with accessing our eCollections so they can do their own downloading. This has been very positively received. We are encouraging those who want deliveries to go online, check our catalogue and tell us exactly what they want so we can provide a fully tailored service. For customers who cannot do this, staff are asking about likes and dislikes so they can tailor deliveries as much as possible. We have a rewritten procedure for contactless delivery to ensure the safety of our residents and our staff. We have also identified a group of staff who can walk or cycle to the City and who are really keen to assist with selecting the items and carrying out the deliveries. We expect this service to start in the next fortnight.
4. The detailed recovery plan I mentioned last month is still being worked on, it is very detailed indeed and a number of risk assessments that sit beneath the plans have been written.

5. Libraries are due to reopen in phase 3 – July - but (certainly initially) with much reduced services and things happening in a different way so that we can respect social distancing. This will include a click and collect service. There are things that we will not be able to do for a while such as group activities. We will continue to provide and grow the virtual offering and not just because of COVID-19 but because in many cases, it really enhances our space-based service. Staff have very quickly developed some incredible skills and as I said to them this week, the genie is out of the bottle now and it is not going back any time soon!