

Committee:	Dated:
Grand Committee	24/07/2020
Subject: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Recovery Plan	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter – Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
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Summary

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, rough sleepers across all London boroughs have been housed in emergency hotel accommodation. As part of the City of London response to the crisis, a Recovery Planning Group was formed to help manage the support provided to our clients in emergency accommodation, and to prepare move-on offers for everyone, based on their needs.

A plan has been developed by the Recovery Planning Group (see Appendix 2) which aims to mitigate risks associated with rough sleepers returning to the streets as lockdown measures are lifted. The plan also includes activity to increase the provision of short-term accommodation to allow the City of London enough time to develop longer-term move-on offers for rough sleepers.

It is further noted that funds already within the service budget will be drawn on to support the Recovery Plan and, where additional funding is required, subsequent applications will be made.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Review and provide feedback on the Recovery Plan.

Main Report

Background

1. In March 2020, plans were put in place by the Government, Greater London Authority (GLA) and London boroughs to protect London’s rough sleepers from COVID-19, and limit wider transmission on the streets, in assessment centres, and in shelters. These plans involved the swift mass procurement of safe accommodation, (primarily hotels), and working with charities, the NHS and public health providers to secure wraparound and specialist support.

2. The purpose of this approach is to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on people sleeping rough and, ultimately, to prevent deaths during this public health emergency. Its basic principles are to:
 - a. focus on people with a history of rough sleeping who are on the streets or in emergency accommodation, such as shelters and assessment centres, where it is difficult to self-isolate or socially distance
 - b. make sure that these people have access to the facilities that enable them to adhere to public health guidance on hygiene or isolation – including en-suite facilities and no shared sleeping spaces – to prevent and reduce infection
 - c. utilise powers and funding in place as a result of the COVID-19 emergency to assist, where appropriate, those with no recourse to public funds who require shelter and other forms of support
 - d. provide support to those accommodated, to enable them to remain protected from COVID-19, and also meet their wider needs.
3. In May, the GLA, supported by London councils, NHS, Public Health England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), produced a next steps strategy setting out broad principles and responsibilities to support future accommodation and wellbeing plans for all those in the emergency accommodation (see Appendix 1). The delivery and oversight of the plan will be via a central Rough Sleeping Strategic Group which will report to the Government's Taskforce on the COVID-19 Response to Rough Sleeping and Next Steps led by Dame Louise Casey.

Current Position

4. Through the outreach provision delivered by St Mungo's, the City of London was able to place rough sleepers from the Square Mile into accommodation procured by both the GLA and City of London.
5. A Recovery Planning Group has been established, chaired by Assistant Director of People Services, Chris Pelham. The objective of the group is to develop and deliver the Recovery Plan in line with our partners (see Appendix 2) and monitor progress of the recovery activity to enable a safe transition into the long-term capacity building plans that were in development prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Recovery Plan

6. The scope of the Recovery Plan extends to the cohort of rough sleepers that the City of London has a responsibility for, which is determined by those individuals with a local connection and those who were present in the City of London prior to 1 March 2020. The Recovery Plan's scope will also include activity to enable the transition to the longer-term proposal set out by the City of London prior to the COVID-19 health crisis. The plan will explore options that help join up outcomes with the ongoing ambition set out in the City of London growth proposal to ensure that there is capacity to support our rough sleeping cohort in the long term.

7. The scale and type of support required for this cohort will be determined by individual clients' personal support needs, their vulnerability to COVID-19 and their longer-term accommodation requirements. To achieve this, a range of accommodation and support options will be necessary, which will include a combination of:
 - a) intensive and assertive casework
 - b) Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation
 - c) supported accommodation, such as hostels
 - d) reconnection services to locations outside the City of London where clients have a local link and entitlement to services
 - e) tenancy support for those who require it
 - f) health services to continue to care, protect and prevent with respect to COVID-19 (and those issues that are a barrier to moving on or living away from streets).
8. Activity that merges with the long-term growth proposal has been agreed and delegated (see Appendix 2 section 7.0). In the short term, the focus will be to ensure that enough emergency accommodation and wrap-around support is available to the cohort, which will reduce movement back onto the streets. Key mitigations within the recovery planning include extension of City of London procured hotel accommodation, leasing of the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) hostel, and liaising with the GLA to request that their provision be extended.
9. The Recovery Planning Group has assessed the needs of the cohort and mapped out the individual longer-term needs. Based on need, each member of the cohort will need a pathway to keep them off the streets. Increasing capacity of PRS and supported accommodation options, and reconnecting individuals to places where they have a local link will be critical.

Issues

10. With timeframes being short, developing enough capacity to prepare and deliver short-term and longer-term move-on offers will be very challenging. As a result, contingency planning is underway to extend current hotel and hostel provision.
11. Reconnections might be difficult, due to resourcing and also to travel restrictions. Therefore, additional temporary accommodation capacity is to be developed to increase the planning time available for those in need of a reconnection.
12. Though the needs assessments may indicate that a rough sleeper needs a PRS move-on offer or a supported accommodation place, nationality and lack of recourse to public funds might mean that this is not possible. In such circumstances, the City will either make sure that a safe and supported reconnections offer is made, or will work with individual rough sleepers to achieve settled status and access to public funds, dependent on whether the individual is likely to qualify.
13. Continuing to provide emergency accommodation for a second wave of COVID-19, and the predicted winter peak is likely to impact on the budget. Therefore,

additional income is to be identified early to enable appropriate contingency planning.

14. Some of our more entrenched rough sleeping community who will be housed in temporary supported accommodation such as the YHA, could reject all offers to move on from the accommodation. Every effort to ensure more sustainable offers of support will be made well in advance of March 2021, however, there is a risk that some individuals will not accept those offers, which could lead to unforeseen costs or to individuals returning to the streets.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

15. The delivery of the Recovery Plan will require the City of London to adapt its longer-term growth proposal to enable a safe transition from the COVID-19 crisis to our long-term service ambitions.

Implications

16. The uncertainty resulting from COVID-19 will impact on business-as-usual operations and the Recovery Plan going forward. There is the potential for the Department to overspend if the additional costs cannot be contained within existing budgets.

Conclusion

17. The Recovery Plan's goals are supportive of the strategic direction of the Rough Sleeping Strategic Group which seeks to provide accommodation and support to rough sleepers to prevent a return to the streets after relaxation of the COVID-19 lockdown. This will be achieved through expansion of emergency accommodation and support services in the short term, and a longer-term development of accommodation and support pathways that align with the goals set out in the City of London's growth proposals.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Rough Sleeping Strategic Group Strategy Paper
- Appendix 2 – Recovery Plan

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