

Committee: Homeless and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee	Dated: 01/10/2020
Subject: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping – Growth Programme Update	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
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Summary

The following report provides an update regarding the capacity-building programme underway to develop additional interventions for rough sleepers. This growth programme predates COVID-19, although our COVID-19 Recovery Plan and our growth proposals converge in several areas.

This report updates Members on our progress against our growth objectives only.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. In the July report to Members, a Rough Sleeping Recovery Group within the Department of Community and Children’s Services (DCCS) had been set up to oversee implementation of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan and connected elements of the Growth Programme.
2. As referenced above, in addition to the short-term recovery objectives, there is specific activity that is being managed in parallel to develop service capacity in the long term. This is being overseen together due to the significant overlap in benefits for our homeless and rough sleeping community. Activity is aligned to the growth proposal approved by Members in March this year as part of the Rough Sleeping Options Appraisal New Intervention Proposal.

Current Position

COVID-19 Recovery

3. A full update on our progress through the COVID-19 Recovery Plan can be found in a separate report. A brief overview is included for context below.

4. A supported Hostel (Youth Hostel Association, St Paul's) was secured on a temporary basis to provide additional capacity in the short term to ensure that all those wanting to leave the streets had supported accommodation to move on from. This has been secured until the end of March 2021. Work is underway to provide all clients a long-term offer of support to a more sustainable private and supported accommodation options.
5. The YHA is currently accommodating 37 individuals, with capacity for eight more. A support contract with Providence Row Housing Association is in place to manage the hostel on our behalf.
6. The service specification was developed using input from Public Health colleagues and Department of Health guidelines. COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures for transmission avoidance, infection control and local outbreak protocols are in place.

New interventions

7. As referenced in paragraph 3, the second work stream within scope of the Rough Sleeping Recovery Group includes the longer-term interventions being developed by DCCS Commissioning and Rough Sleeping services in conjunction with City Procurement. This activity has three core components, with a focus on increasing the capacity and quality of the service:
 - a. **Assessment Centre** – This service is intended to be a venue that street outreach workers can bring rough sleepers to from the Square Mile, where they can be accommodated, assessed, have their immediate physical and health care needs attended to, and be supported to develop a route off the streets that is particular to their circumstance and needs.
 - b. **High Support Hostel** – This service is intended to be a project where rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs can be accommodated. The City currently has no such facility, and the purchasing of beds in other projects/boroughs is not meeting demand, leaving some of our most vulnerable rough sleepers without a suitable supported accommodation option. The hostel will provide accommodation for one to two years, with a staff team providing a psychologically informed support service supplemented with visiting support from mental health, primary care, domiciliary care and substance misuse services. Residents will be supported to move to longer-term accommodation that is suited to their circumstance and needs.
 - c. **Private Rented Sector (PRS) procurement framework** – This update to our existing purchasing framework would help to increase capacity and purchasing options for the service.

Assessment Centre

8. Data about rough sleeping in the Square Mile suggests that we need a facility that can accommodate 10 to 15 people at any time, is open to admissions 24/7, and

has a maximum length of stay of 28 days. The hope is that many people would be housed or safely reconnected to accommodation in their home areas much quicker than this. There is a strong desire to host the assessment centre within the Square Mile and we have prioritised finding buildings here.

9. Eight locations have been explored for a site to locate a new assessment centre within the square mile. A more detailed options appraisal of these sites can be found at Appendix 1. There are currently two front runners and, together with colleagues in City Planning and Surveyors, work is underway to provide a feasibility assessment of both sites. Both will require fitting out with pods/cubicles if we decide to use them, and both will need some work to improve bathrooms/toilet facilities.
10. St Mary-at-Hill church is potentially ready to move into with only cosmetic changes needed, whereas Snow Hill Court would require more extensive improvements, as parts of the building we would want to use are in a dilapidated state. The latter option may require a phased approach, with capacity at launch being below our desired level, with further works completed over time.
11. A service specification is well developed with final details dependent on the location. We are consulting with Public Health colleagues and await more detailed operating guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

High Support Hostel

12. Data about rough sleeping in the Square Mile suggests that we need a facility that can accommodate 30 to 35 people at any time. It is accepted that a purpose-built facility (or one that can be adapted) is not likely to be available within the Square Mile, so we have widened our search for suitable buildings to the immediate surroundings of the City.
13. Discussions with Procurement and Legal have determined that the best way of safely procuring a high support hostel is to advertise in a single process for a provider/building combination. It is accepted that there are likely to be few buildings available, and the tender process might mean that we end up negotiating with one provider rather than choosing between multiple buildings, but this is still considered the best approach. We have already undertaken a market-testing event where we invited more than 20 of London's current hostel providers to ask them to look for buildings and to be prepared to tender for the service. However, thus far, the event has only garnered a single, unsuitable offer.
14. We are currently focusing our attention on one location. We have visited and discussed the potential use of the site with the provider (they are interested). As a result, we are making plans to approach the local authority to test their willingness to have us run a support service for City rough sleepers from the site.
15. To support this approach, we have developed a package of mitigations to help answer questions regarding jurisdictions and costs associated with social care and support, mental health and substance misuse treatment. Assuming that the host

local authority is content, we could potentially move quickly with the accelerated procurement process described above. The building would require decanting before we could begin to use it, but most of the residents in occupation have low support needs and would require PRS flats rather than more complicated move-on arrangements. We could support this process to gain quicker access to the building.

16. We are looking at costs and building management arrangements that would be required for the site were we to use the building. Assuming that nothing prohibitive emerges, we would move to start the tender process as soon as the local authority is able to.

PRS Move-on Scheme

17. This work stream looks to build on the work undertaken by our homelessness prevention project; No First Night Out (NFNO). Our learning from NFNO demonstrates the value of establishing partnerships with ethical PRS providers to secure more sustainable long-term housing solutions.

18. To enable this approach to continue beyond the planned lifespan of NFNO (to 31 March 2021) we plan to operate an approved provider framework.

19. A service specification and method statement are complete, with the next steps involving a live tendering process.

Next Steps

20. The following next steps are being taken:

- Continuing to assess the viability of the Assessment Centre and Hostel sites which seem most likely to meet needs
- Continuing to look for alternative sites that may prove more suitable
- Developing detailed service specifications and related procurement documentation so that we are ready to move as soon as a building is determined suitable
- Continuing to seek expert input from colleagues, partners, providers
- Bringing back a detailed paper once sites have been chosen to seek permission to move forward with those specific sites
- Tendering process for PRS Move-on Scheme (approved provider framework).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

21. The Credible Offer Policy meets the following points in the City of London Corporate Plan:

- Contribute to a flourishing society:
 - People are safe and feel safe
 - People enjoy good health and wellbeing

- People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.

22. The Credible Offer Policy meets the following points in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019–23:

- Everyone should have a route away from rough sleeping
- The impact of homelessness is reduced
- No one needs to return to rough sleeping.

Conclusion

At this stage of the growth programme we are focusing on three principle workstreams. All three are progressing well but are moving into complicated phases. The primary concerns are to clarify which premises we will take forward for both the assessment centre and the high support hostel.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Rough Sleeping Commissioning Projects – Site Visits

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