

Committee:	Dated:
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee	01/12/2020
Subject: Severe Weather Emergency Protocol planning 2020-21	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1,2,3
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Andrew Carter – Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

This report sets out the City of London's updated Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) for the winter of 2020/21. Our planning for this winter considers Government, Public Health England and City and Hackney Public Health guidance on the provision of emergency accommodation and shared air spaces. As in previous years, we intend to use existing supported provision, as well as hotel rooms to provide additional flexible capacity.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London provides SWEP accommodation every winter, usually covering the months of November to March. The degree of use is determined by the severity of the weather (the number of activations) and the level of demand from the rough sleeping population at the time.
2. The Greater London Authority (GLA) publishes SWEP guidance every year, which sets out the expectations of local authorities and clarifies any changes to SWEP criteria or activation protocols. Each autumn we submit our SWEP plans, including the capacity and composition of SWEP accommodation, to the GLA.

3. Every preceding year the GLA has complemented local SWEP arrangements with a Pan-London SWEP project. Details have not been published for Pan-London SWEP at the time of writing this report.
4. As with last year, SWEP 2020/21 will be activated whenever the forecast temperature is expected to drop below zero centigrade in any London local authority area. Activation rests with GLA officers who instruct homelessness leads in each authority. Local authorities retain the right to activate SWEP unilaterally at their own discretion.

Current Position

5. COVID-19 has seen City of London resources deployed in different ways and has forced a change to the planning we would normally have in place at this time. The City Assessment Service at Carter Lane has, at the time of writing, 43 guests. We have a further 10 rough sleepers accommodated in hotels, and several more in supported accommodation and temporary accommodation – all part of our response to the pandemic.
6. Rough sleeping levels are currently lower than we have seen in recent years – largely due to the success of our COVID-19 contingency measures. Night-time street audit, or snapshot figures, indicate an approximate 50% reduction from the same period in 2019/20. On 26 October, 23 rough sleepers were recorded bedded down. Quarterly data for the number of unique individuals contacted demonstrates a similar fall – a 41% reduction between Q2 2019/20 (181) to Q2 2020/21 (105).
7. Our commissioned outreach service – Thames Reach, and other commissioned accommodation services are using a triage system designed to ensure that symptomatic and clinically vulnerable people do not inadvertently mix. All our residential settings are working to a standard operating procedure drafted in collaboration with local public health consultants.
8. This guidance and the subsequent measures applied have rendered some of the settings we have used previously as unsuitable – for example, the City Lodge, which is home to too many elderly, frail and clinically vulnerable people.

Changes due to COVID-19 restrictions

9. Shared air and communal living spaces are also difficult to deploy. Last winter saw the City mobilise the first Winter Programme at St Katharine Cree. That same provision this year is impossible to use, although no capacity has been lost due to the creation of the Carter Lane service.
10. Great Guildford Street Hostel (St Mungos), which has been used in previous winters, will operate with a reduced SWEP capacity this year due to difficulties in ensuring that the building is COVID-19 compliant.
11. Last winter saw the introduction of Tier 2 SWEP at St Mary Aldermary. This additional provision allowed us to significantly increase our SWEP capacity

should severe weather endure, and our existing offer become depleted. Use of shared air spaces with proper ventilation and access to bathrooms and toilets has become impossible. Tier 2 SWEP has been suspended for this winter.

Current plans

12. At time of writing, the City of London SWEP provision for 2020/21 is as follows:

- Crimscott St Hostel (Providence Row Housing Association) – two spaces in supported accommodation
- Carter Lane (Providence Row Housing Association) – two to five bedrooms depending on capacity at the service at the time
- Great Guildford Street Hostel – one bedroom
- Pre-booked hotel rooms – as many as required.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. There are no strategic or financial implications. All costs are covered within the local risk area.

Conclusion

14. Despite directing many of our available resources to support our COVID-19 response, the substantive City SWEP offer for 2020/21 is comparable to previous winters. Where some provision has been lost, Carter Lane provides an alternative.

15. Tier 2 SWEP is not available to us due to COVID-19 restrictions; however, hotel capacity offers us a compliant and flexible option.

16. Our SWEP offer for winter 2020/21 is comparable in capacity and diversity to previous years.

Appendices

- None

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