

Committee: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee – For Information	Dated: 14/02/2022
Subject: Annual Street Count Report	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
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
Report author: Kirsty Lowe, Rough Sleeping Services Manager, Department of Community and Children’s Services	

Summary

This report provides an overview of the approach to previous and the most recent City of London (CoL) annual street count. An evidence-based estimate, including a spotlight count method, was applied this year, which resulted in a total annual street count of 20. This is the CoL’s lowest annual street count figure achieved to date. This was achieved at a time where rough sleeping figures were on the rise in the CoL and across Greater London.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. Department of Levelling Up Housing Communities (DLUHC) requires all local authorities to submit an annual street count figure indicating the numbers of people sleeping rough in their area. DLUHC require all local authorities to carry out street counts between 1 October - 30 November.
2. Homeless Link is the invigilating body that provides guidance and support to all local authorities to ensure that the most suitable approach is undertaken and the final count figure is a true reflection of the local authority's rough sleeping population on a typical night. Each local authority is allocated an invigilator who, in some cases, will attend the count, collate the data and score the authority on its overall delivery.

3. All local authorities have provided an annual street count figure since 2010, resulting in a national longitudinal mapping of those who rough sleep.
4. This information goes some way to provide evidence of whether central or local policy and responses to rough sleeping are working, and how funds should be proportioned to authority areas to maintain low returns or support a further reduction.
5. CoL routinely carry out the annual street count on the last Thursday of November. This is co-ordinated with neighbouring boroughs to ensure that numbers are as robust as possible, and to avoid double counting.
6. There are three different approaches to consider when planning an annual street count:
 - Evidence-based estimate: an estimate meeting takes place after the 'typical' night chosen with partner agencies
 - Count-based estimate: full physical count of the area after midnight
 - Evidence-based estimate including a spotlight: a smaller physical count of hotspot areas after midnight. After the 'typical' night chosen, an estimate meeting is held to discuss those not seen during the hotspot count.
7. Last year's approach was an evidence-based estimate including a spotlight. However, prior to 2020/21, CoL only carried out count-based estimates. A decision to carry out an evidence-based estimate including a spotlight count last year was due to COVID-19 restrictions and the need to safeguard staff and volunteers.
8. The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) grant is evaluated by the DLUHC each year according to the change in the number of people sleeping rough on a single night compared to the previous year.
9. The CoL's RSI grant allocation, annual street count figures and annual total number of those seen sleeping rough and recorded on the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) from 2018 to the present are shown in the table below:

Year	Annual RSI grant amount	Annual street count number	Annual total CoL rough sleepers
2018/19	£215,348	67	441
2019/20	£345,234	41	434
2020/21	£590,000	23	350
2021/22	£1,070,244	20	Not currently known

10. In the table above, data leads us to assume that, for the past four years as funding from DLUHC has increased, the CoL have funded more services and

provision, which has assisted more individuals to move away from the streets. It seems there is less correlation between funding and the annual total of those seen sleeping rough in the CoL. Quarterly data for 2021/22 so far presents as higher than last year's quarterly data, and so we expect to see the overall numbers of individuals who slept rough in the CoL in 2021/22 to be higher than last year.

2021 Annual Street Count

11. The lead-up and preparatory work by the CoL Rough Sleeping and Pathways team, the City Outreach team and accommodation providers was extensive.
12. The CoL Outreach team carry out monthly street audit shifts, visiting all hotspot sites and known individuals across the CoL to capture an accurate 'on the night' figure of rough sleeping activity.
13. From August 2021 the CoL Outreach team increased the number of personnel attending the audit shift and began shifts from midnight, mimicking characteristics of an official street count.
14. CoL officers and the CoL Outreach manager meet weekly to review and discuss data from CHAIN, showing those met sleeping rough in the CoL in the last week, the last month and the Living on the Streets (LOS) cohort. Each individual had an allocated worker, a personalised support plan and an offer off the streets. This information was revised each week and communicated to the Outreach team. Accommodation providers were notified and, in some cases, emergency accommodation was pre-booked in anticipation of individuals taking up the offer of support.
15. The table below shows the number of individuals met bedded down on each monthly audit shift, and the number of individuals seen bedded down by the Outreach team that month, with the exception of November which was the annual count figure.

Month	Total number counted on audit shift	Total number counted that month
April 2021	19	38
May 2021	21	45
June 2021	14	51
July 2021	19	61
August 2021	22	63
September 2021	25	73
October 2021	31	108
November 2021	20	74
December 2021	20	71

16. The table above shows that, except in June 2021, the number of individuals on the audit shift and the total number of individuals seen sleeping rough that

month increased from April to October. From November we see both figures start to decrease. In October 2021 the government requested for all local authorities and partners to redouble their efforts to accommodate individuals over the winter period, funded by the Winter Pressures Fund and the Protect and Vaccinate grant.

17. The CoL's initial plan for the 2021 annual street count was to carry out a count-based estimate, involving a large group of volunteers and professionals to carry out a full physical count on the evening of 25 November 2021. The Golden Lanes community space was reserved for all attendees to meet and for the count team to work from on the night.
18. On 22 November 2021, the Greater London Authority sent a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) alert of potential 0-degree temperatures on 25 November 2021. If temperatures were to reach freezing as predicted, SWEP would be called the same day as the annual street count. Homeless Link guidelines stated that if SWEP was called then this would take precedent and the full street count would no longer be valid or deemed a 'typical' night. Alternatively, Homeless Link advised CoL to change our approach to an evidence-based estimate including a spotlight. A physical count could still go ahead on 25 November but would need to have a follow-up estimate meeting.
19. The original plans for the count were pared back, partners and volunteers were notified on 23 November, and the overall group numbers reduced.
20. A spotlight count took place from midnight on 25 November 2021. SWEP was not activated until after Thursday 25 November 2021.
21. CoL Outreach team, Parkguard and a CoL officer carried out the spotlight count from midnight till approximately 3am the following morning. On the night six teams were issued with a comprehensive intelligence pack, including a map and the locations of all those who were likely to be seen bedded down.
22. In total, 19 individuals were met bedded down on the spotlight count. The majority of individuals were identified and had previously been met by the Outreach team. There were, however, five 'unknowns' recorded.
23. The CoL Outreach team carried out an early shift on 26 November 2021 and met one additional person bedded down who wasn't seen on the spotlight count.
24. On 1 December 2021 the estimate meeting took place, attended by the CoL Outreach team, the CoL & Tower Hamlets Navigator team, CoL Rough Sleeping Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant team, Parkguard, a faith and community representative and the Homeless Link invigilator. The aim of the meeting was to consider other partners' opinions and knowledge of additional individuals who slept rough on the typical night. Partners were encouraged to put forward any additional names with supporting evidence.

25. One additional name was suggested and added to the total count figure – the individual bedded down seen by CoL Outreach team on the morning of 26 November.

26. The following week, the Homeless Link invigilator confirmed the CoL 2021 annual street count figure to be 20 and shared the following feedback, '*A well organised and supported snapshot estimate. No issues caused by the change of approach from full count to evidence-based estimate including a spotlight count. Happy to rate green this year.*'

Corporate & Strategic Implications

27. There are no corporate and strategic implications:

- Strategic implications – none
- Financial implications – none
- Resource implications – none
- Legal implications – none
- Risk implications – none
- Equalities implications – none
- Climate implications – none
- Security implications – none

Conclusion

28. For the fourth consecutive year, the CoL has seen its annual street count number go down, achieving the lowest figure to date. CoL officers and commissioned services began plans around the street count early in the summer, ensuring that plans were thorough and based on strong intelligence reporting. Though rough sleeping numbers continued to rise at this time, the response from CoL services was robust. This work and attributed success, in part, to the ongoing grant funding from central government through the RSI and more recently Winter Pressures Fund and Protect and Vaccinate grant.

Appendices

- None

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