

Committee:	Dated:
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee – For Information	04/07/2022
Subject: Annual SWEP Report 2021	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 11
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
Report author: Jack Deeprise, Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	

Summary

This report serves as an accompanying text to Appendix 1 – Thames Reach Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) Review 2021–22, the report authored by our City Outreach team on the nature and data of this year’s SWEP activations.

Paragraphs in the ‘Current Position’ section of this document will follow the same headings as in the Thames Reach report and will provide additional comment and context where useful. This report does not aim to duplicate the content of the Thames Reach SWEP report.

This report highlights the reduced number of nights in which SWEP was active during the winter of 2021/22 compared to the previous year. There were 21 individuals who accepted a SWEP offer during the season, which is the same number as the previous year. This report notes the high amount of accommodation offers and placements made during the winter months but outside of SWEP activation periods in 2021/22. Also reflected on are the challenges presented by different cohorts of rough sleepers who chose to decline SWEP offers, and the importance of health service and adult social care interventions.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. SWEP aims to prevent loss of life during periods of extreme and freezing weather in the City of London (CoL).
2. SWEP is both a local protocol, with CoL-specific guidance and procedures, and also a Greater London Authority (GLA) protocol. This is reflected in two main ways:
 - SWEP Accommodation: GLA has Pan-London SWEP provision, though local authorities will also provide their own local provision. The expectation is that, under normal circumstances, local authorities will exhaust their own accommodation before utilising the GLA Pan-London offer, though there are exceptions based on the client's needs.
 - SWEP Activation: The GLA will activate SWEP when any part of the capital is forecast to be 0 degrees or lower overnight. CoL can activate its own SWEP protocol independent of GLA activation, but the scenarios where this would occur are rare.
3. Once SWEP has been activated by the GLA and CoL officers, Thames Reach City Outreach team target all rough sleepers currently bedding down in the CoL, and make them offers of accommodation. Accommodation offers consist of extra temporary beds in CoL-commissioned supported hostels, hotel accommodation, assessment centre beds, and temporary studio unit accommodation.

Current Position

4. Provision

City Outreach were able to utilise funds granted to CoL from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) designated under the 'Winter Pressures Fund' (WPF). This extra funding was to ensure that extra accommodation provision and off-the-street offers were available to rough sleepers during the winter months. Due to this, City Outreach noted that SWEP uptake by rough sleepers may have been lower during 2021/22 due to many individuals already placed into emergency or temporary accommodation.

5. The SWEP accommodation provision available for City Outreach to utilise consisted of a mixture of different option types aimed to cater for differing levels of rough sleeper support needs. This ranged from extra spaces at the CoL's 24-hour staffed support hostels, spaces in the temporary City Assessment Service (CAS), hotel bookings, temporary accommodation (TA) units booked through our contracted TA providers, and GLA provided Pan-London SWEP accommodation.

- The 'In for Good' principle dictates that local authorities operating under the GLA SWEP protocol should aim to retain all rough sleepers placed into accommodation during SWEP periods, and accommodation placements should not end until a reasonable onwards offer of accommodation can be made to the client. CoL operate this principle during SWEP activations.

7. Activity

2020/21	
SWEP activation	Nights
23/12/20–31/12/20	8
06/01/21–12/01/21	7
13/01/21	1
15/01/21–18/01/21	4
22/01/21–24/01/21	3
29/01/21–01/02/21	4
05/02/21–15/02/21	11
02/04/21–05/04/21	4
Total Nights	42

2021/22	
SWEP activation – deactivation	Nights
26/11/2021–29/11/2021	3
21/12/2021–22/12/2021	1
05/01/2022–06/01/2022	1
13/01/2022–14/01/2022	1
17/01/2022–18/01/2022	1
20/01/2022–21/01/2022	1
17/02/2022–21/02/2022	4
01/04/2022–05/04/2022	3
Total Nights	15

The nature of SWEP activations were drastically different in 2021/22 compared the previous year. While SWEP was activated eight times each season, during 2020/21 each activation period was much longer due to persisting freezing weather. 2021/22 activations were largely single-night occurrences.

- Although there were more total nights of SWEP in 2020/21, SWEP accommodation offers were accepted on 21 occasions in both years. During 2021 the offer was made 101 times to 60 individuals. In the previous year it was offered 138 times to 49 individuals. The most recent SWEP season saw offers being made to more individuals. However, offers were also declined by more people: 34 rough sleepers declined SWEP in 2020/21, while 45 did so in 2021/22. Thames Reach's SWEP review noted the reasons for this cohort declining SWEP as including begging, non-engagement, and mental health concerns which are shared among declining clients across SWEP seasons.
- The proportion of Living on the Streets (LOS), longer-term entrenched and street attached clients who accepted SWEP offers in 2021/22 made up half of all SWEP placements, which is a large rise in uptake in this cohort from 16% the previous year. This was a great achievement for the City Outreach team, and highlights their persistent work with LOS clients, in combination with health services.

10. Length of SWEP stay

The Thames Reach SWEP review noted that the most SWEP stays were for one night due to the short nature of activations in the season. However, under the 'In for Good' principle, only five clients returned to the streets after SWEP, with all other clients going on to other forms of short-term and long-term accommodation.

11. The review noted that 100% of clients who accepted a SWEP offer were male. This is due to a combination of female rough sleepers making up a relatively small proportion of total rough sleepers (10% in Q4), but also female clients in CoL often being among the most complex and hardest-to-engage clients, many not choosing to engage with any rough sleeping services for large periods of time.

12. Support Needs

Mental health needs, as shown the table in this section of the Thames Reach report,¹ refers to clients who have may have suspected mental health needs – by informal assessment by rough sleeping teams, as well as those with formal diagnosis.

The review noted that the most prevalent support needs for those who declined SWEP offers were mental health related. All clients presenting with suspected mental health concerns, regardless of SWEP being active or not, are worked with by mental health teams to support, safeguard and diagnose. During SWEP periods focused work is carried out by City Outreach, health services, and adult social care to assess and ensure that clients who repeatedly refusal emergency accommodation have the mental capacity to make decisions under the Mental Capacity Act. However, it is often the case that, while someone may have an enduring mental health condition, they still have the capacity to choose to make unwise decisions.

13. Support Provided

The review highlights the range of health, accommodation, support, and training provisions open to clients who accessed SWEP accommodation, to ensure that they have the best chance of not returning to rough sleeping.

14. Findings

The key findings of Thames Reach review highlight that mental health needs and high support needs made refusals of accommodation in adverse weather more likely. This area of work is a key focus for our City Outreach team, mental health services, and our CoL Rough Sleeping Social Worker, both during SWEP periods and all year round. Continuous work is carried out with vulnerable clients who persistently refuse offers of accommodation, and statutory assessments are carried out to both safeguard clients, and to identify any issues with capacity to

¹ Appendix 1 – Thames Reach Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) Review 2021-22, Page 6

make decisions.

15. The review again noted that the high amount of accommodation offers available to clients during 2021/22 outside of SWEP provision potentially contributed to fewer clients being present on the streets to accept an offer. For example, during the period of November SWEP activation, CoL already had 63 clients placed in assessment accommodation prior to any SWEP offers being made.

16. Recommendations for 2022/2023

Thames Reach's recommendations for the next SWEP season focus on the challenges highlighted in the key findings. The need for clients with complex mental health needs to be placed in a supported accommodation environment is noted, and this will be eased with the opening of CoL's two capital projects – the new CAS and high support hostel – towards the end of this calendar year.

The recommendations also note the importance of the Mobile Intervention Support Team (MIST) service continuing, and the vital work they do in providing in-reach service to clients in a range of unstaffed accommodation. MIST is part of CoL Rough Sleeping Initiative funding for 2022–25, and the service contract will be going to market in the imminent future.

Options

17. There are no additional options arising from this paper.

Proposals

18. There are no proposals arising from this paper.

19. Corporate & Strategic Implications

There are no strategic implications directly related to this report

Financial implications – N/A

Resource implications – N/A

Legal implications – N/A

Risk implications – N/A

Equalities implications – N/A

Climate implications – N/A

Security implications – N/A

Conclusion

20. In conclusion, the SWEP period during winter months of 2021/22 was quieter overall than the previous year. While SWEP was activated eight times in both

years, during the most recent period, the total nights that SWEP remained active due to freezing temperatures was 27 calendar days less. A total of 21 rough sleepers accepted offers of SWEP accommodation during activation periods in 2021/22, while 45 individuals declined the offer at some point over the winter months. The accompanying Thames Reach review noted the challenges of persuading non-engaging clients, and those with complex mental health needs, to accept offers of accommodation, and the multi-agency work carried out to target these individuals. The successes of this SWEP period are highlighted in the review, with the majority of clients remaining in accommodation after SWEP was de-activated, and a high proportion of those assisted were our hard-to-engage LOS cohort.

The recommendations of the review regarding mental health investigations and supported accommodation needs have been noted by CoL officers. Work will continue this year on making good use of joint work mental health services, the Rough Sleeping Social Worker, and new accommodation projects to build on the CoL's SWEP offer and response.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Thames Reach Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) Review 2021–22

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