

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING SUB COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 14 May 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 4.00 pm

Present

Members:

Mark Wheatley (Chairman)	Sophia Mooney
Deputy Helen Fentimen OBE JP	James Breed
Dawn Frampton	Patrick Fowler
Helen Ladele	Deborah Oliver

Officers:

Chief Inspector Nikki Gander	- City of London Police
Kirsty Lowe	- Community & Children's Services Department
Will Norman	- Community & Children's Services Department
Chris Pelham	- Community & Children's Services Department
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Goodman OBE and Shravan Joshi MBE.

2. MEMBERS DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no declarations of interest.

3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with Standing Order 26 (6), Deborah Oliver being the only Member indicating their willingness to serve, was elected Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

5. ROUGH SLEEPING PREVENTION AND RECOVERY GRANT 2025/26 SUMMARY

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning a draft summary of the interventions that will be delivered by the City of London, through the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant for the period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Members were reminded that this grant replaces the former Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), which had been in place for seven years, with the last three years delivered as a single three-year settlement. The RSPRG for 2025/26 will

be issued as a single Section 31 ring-fenced payment, totalling £1,373,509 for the City of London—broadly in line with the previous year's RSI allocation. Officers noted that the new funding structure provides greater flexibility in how the grant is deployed, with no co-production process required with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The draft plan, included in the report, outlines proposed interventions across prevention, outreach, accommodation, and recovery services. Members were advised that the plan remains subject to change as further operational details are confirmed.

In response to Member questions, officers clarified the following:

- The City of London continues to experience a disproportionately high level of rough sleeping due to its central location and perceived safety. While earlier RSI allocations were formula-based, recent funding has been more reliant on the quality and impact of local proposals.
- There is a possibility that future funding streams may consolidate the RSPRG with the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG), which operates under a more complex formula.
- The proposed winter crash accommodation model aims to complement the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) by smoothing service delivery across the colder months. Officers confirmed that access to such services would remain tightly gatekept to verified rough sleepers, and there is no evidence to suggest that such provision increases inward migration.
- Members discussed the potential use of church spaces for winter accommodation. Officers noted the logistical challenges in securing suitable venues but confirmed ongoing engagement with faith partners.
- On the topic of soup kitchens, officers explained that while welfare services are valuable, the City prefers to signpost individuals to structured support services to avoid inadvertently sustaining rough sleeping.

The Committee noted the report and thanked officers for their work. Members were invited to submit further questions to officers by email.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

6. STATUTORY HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING SERVICE – USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION REPORT

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning a summary of temporary accommodation (TA) usage under s.188 and s.193 of the Housing Act 1996 and on a discretionary basis as a measure for the relief of rough sleeping.

Officers noted the report outlined the use of temporary accommodation (TA) during the 2024/25 financial year, including legal frameworks, household compositions, and current operational status. A total of 164 households were placed in TA, all within Greater London. Notably, no children were

accommodated in bed and breakfast settings. Over half of the placements were made on a discretionary basis, with the remainder under statutory obligations. The total cost of providing TA amounted to £1,716,131—an increase of £686,175 compared to the previous year.

The following points were noted:

- **Early Intervention and Prevention:** A Member raised concerns about the need for alternative approaches to prevent homelessness, particularly for families with children, to avoid disruption to education and social networks. Officers responded that statutory duties include mediation and eviction prevention, while discretionary placements are used to ensure safety. TA is also employed to support rough sleeping relief, which is recognised as good practice by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- **Housing Market Challenges:** Officers highlighted the challenges posed by high private rental costs and limited availability of social housing, which contribute to extended stays in TA. Collaborative efforts are underway with other authorities to improve access to private sector housing.
- **Social Housing Allocation:** In response to a question raised by a Member about alignment between social housing allocation and homelessness services, officers confirmed that ongoing reviews and collaboration with housing colleagues are in place, particularly to support vulnerable groups such as care leavers.
- **Prison Release Coordination:** A Member raised the issue of early prison releases and the importance of coordination with probation services to prevent homelessness. Officers noted that the last wave had minimal impact but agreed on the need to prepare for future releases and enhance referral processes.
- **Veteran Support:** A Member asked about tracking veterans among the homeless population. Officers confirmed that veteran status is recorded and used to access additional support services.
- **Financial Pressures and Forecasting:** A Member questioned the long-term financial implications of TA, particularly for those under main duty. Officers acknowledged the need for improved forecasting and highlighted ongoing efforts to expand partnerships with the private rented sector, despite limitations in scale.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

7. **ANNUAL SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL (SWEP) REPORT 2024**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning narrative and analysis on the City of London's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) 2024/2025.

Officers noted that this year, there were six SWEP activations between September and April, covering a total of 27 days. During this period, 82 unique individuals accessed SWEP services, resulting in 94 placements—the highest

number recorded to date. Despite the increased outreach and activations (double that of the previous year), the uptake of services was lower. The ability to offer long-term accommodation solutions was also reduced due to limited capacity among City officers and commissioned services.

Members discussed the importance of signposting individuals to additional services, particularly during winter. Members also highlighted the role of community shelters such as Hackney Night Shelters and shared personal experiences of volunteering and supporting rough sleepers. Officers confirmed that early-stage planning is underway for winter shelter provision, potentially in partnership with local churches, drawing on successful models from neighbouring boroughs.

The Sub-Committee noted a continued rise in rough sleeping numbers, despite milder winters. Officers attributed this to broader systemic issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, housing shortages, and cuts to adult social care. Members raised concerns about individuals who are employed but still rough sleeping due to affordability and immigration-related ineligibility for housing support. The complexity of these cases was acknowledged, particularly for those with no recourse to public funds.

Members shared observations from street outreach, noting that many individuals refused shelter even during extreme cold. Questions were raised about the consistency of such refusals and the operational challenges of securing accommodation on short notice. Officers clarified that while adult social care funding is a national issue, the City of London has maintained a progressive approach, including deploying social workers alongside outreach teams to conduct Care Act assessments.

Members discussed the need for better coordination with hospitals, particularly A&E departments, to prevent discharges onto the streets. Officers confirmed that while there are no hospitals within the City, efforts are being made to include neighbouring hospitals like Homerton in SWEP notifications. Additionally, the City has implemented a “Hot SWEP” protocol to address risks during extreme heat, including providing water, sunscreen, and access to cool spaces such as libraries.

Concerns were raised about the timing of SWEP activations by the Greater London Authority (GLA), often occurring late in the week. Officers explained that while the GLA uses predictive weather data, local authorities retain the autonomy to activate SWEP independently, which the City has done when necessary. Members acknowledged the strain on outreach teams during peak periods and the need for additional capacity to maximise the impact of SWEP.

A Member raised a follow-up on a previous commitment by the Chair of Finance at a recent Court of Common Council meeting to allocate increased council tax revenue toward homelessness services. It was proposed and unanimously supported to seek clarification on a resolution and pursue this matter through the Community and Children’s Services Committee. Members agreed to draft a formal resolution to ensure this funding opportunity is not lost.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

8. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2023–2027 UPDATE REPORT

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning a summary of progress against the aims set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023–2027.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

9. CITY OF LONDON POLICE UPDATE

Members received an update of the Superintendent of the City of London Police and the following points were made:

The following points were noted:

- The Chief Inspector provided an update on Operation Luscombe, which addresses begging in the City through a traffic light escalation system. A review identified the need for more frequent welfare support, prompting a shift to a more flexible, daily model.
- The Luscombe tickets are being redesigned to improve accessibility and clarity, including multilingual support.
- A multi-agency working group has been established to address risks associated with encampments and rough sleeping. Monthly operations now remove hazardous materials while maintaining a welfare-first approach.
- The largest encampment is at Castle Baynard, and efforts are focused on removing unused tents and balancing support for rough sleepers with community safety.
- Members raised concerns about resident safety and antisocial behaviour. The Chief Inspector encouraged reporting via 101 and welcomed direct contact for broader concerns.
- A specific case at St John's Court was acknowledged as under active review.

RESOLVED - That, the update be noted.

10. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The public were not excluded.

13. CITY OF LONDON POLICE NON-PUBLIC UPDATE

There was no update.

14. QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE WHILE THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There were no non-public questions.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 5.20 pm

Chairman

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