

Subject:	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy-Next Steps Following Covid-19 Response		
Date of Meeting:	16th September 2020		
Report of:	Interim Director Housing Neighbourhoods and Communities		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Justine Harris/Sylvia Peckham	Tel:
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 in the context of the response to the Covid-19 emergency.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note the report.
- 2.2 That Housing Committee note the work that has gone into the response to the Covid-19 emergency.
- 2.3 In the light of the pandemic and the motion responding to it (30th April), that the Homeless Reduction board along with the Homeless Operational Board give priority to:
- a) Monitoring progress and developing actions needed to achieve the aim of providing long term sustainable housing or safe reconnection for all rough sleepers housed under the “everyone in” response
 - b) Ensuring the priorities and actions of the Homelessness Strategy respond to the changed circumstances
 - c) Explore ways of sustaining the current offer of shelter for all who find themselves without a roof

and report back to Housing Committee any recommendations

- 2.4 That Housing Committee notes the temporary adjustments made within the Allocations Plan in response to the pandemic whilst aiming to achieve the overall agreed percentages in the Allocation Plan.
- 2.5 That Housing Committee recognises that the review of the Allocation Plan has been delayed due to the pandemic and subsequent pressures on the department but that this will be considered at the November Housing Committee.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Much of the work to date has been focused on accommodating rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping following the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. At the start of the pandemic the Government issued guidance to local authorities to provide accommodation for all rough sleepers; those at risk of rough sleeping and those in congregate (shared sleeping spaces) accommodation. The Communities Secretary announced emergency funding for councils to provide such accommodation of £3.2m nationally to enable rough sleepers to self-isolate. The council has claimed back the maximum £0.066m to which it was entitled.

3.2 The following sets out the chronology of subsequent events in response: -

3.2.1 29th April 2020, Housing Committee passed the notice of motion “Homelessness and the Coronavirus” stating a commitment subject to funding to:-
Declare its intention to consider how to provide appropriate move-on accommodation and support for all rough sleepers currently housed and supported in hotels/other accommodation in time to avoid them returning to rough-sleeping. Also to consider how the current unconditional offer of accommodation to rough sleepers can continue once the hotel/other accommodation provided during the coronavirus outbreak is no longer available.

3.2.2 17th June 2020, Housing Committee agreed to adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.

3.2.3 9th July 2020, Policy & Resources Committee agreed to the establishment of a member led Homelessness Reduction Board (HRB) to oversee the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The first meeting of the HRB was held on 29th July 2020.

3.2.4 14th August 2020, Policy and Resources Committee agreed to secure the continuation of existing and acquisition of additional interim accommodation to up to the end of December 2020 that was required to maintain the accommodation offer to all those rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping accommodated until they were able to move on to more sustainable housing.

3.2.5 20th August 2020, the council submitted a bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) setting out proposals for future funding in response to the Government’s Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), this includes funding for shorter-term/interim accommodation and immediate support.

3.2.6 21st August 2020, the Government announced an extension to the moratorium on private rented sector evictions for a further four weeks, and requiring landlords to provide tenants with 6 months’ notice in all bar those cases raising other serious issues until at least the end of March 2021.

3.3 We are expecting to receive the outcome of the bid noted in 3.2.5 by mid-September. This will enable further planning to extend emergency short term

provision for those accommodated under Covid 19 emergency provisions and to develop further move on options to avoid people returning to the street.

3.4 Adult Social Care Commissioning are reviewing the model of provision for people who need supported accommodation in the light of all of the above. This will be reflected in the commissioning of services and accommodation going forwards.

3.5 We are commencing a broader review of our approach to homelessness and in particular how we can achieve better outcomes in prevention and identifying effective interventions where possible.

3.6 In an emergency response to the pandemic to try and move on some people from temporary accommodation, the priorities under the Allocation Plan have been revised temporarily to create some movement and free up temporary accommodation. Numbers in temporary accommodation have swollen from just over 1700 pre Covid to just over 2000 at the beginning of September, due to a combination of:

- a) Lettings being paused during lockdown and
- b) more people approaching as homeless.

We have only recently re-commenced lettings and so have temporarily revised the percentage of properties advertised as priority to accepted homeless to 80% to enable the housing pressure and associated budget pressure to be released. Overall we are aiming to retain the agreed priorities as per the Allocation Plan and this will be achieved by reducing percentages later in the year.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not change our response to homelessness by seeking to maintain the current Covid-19 emergency accommodation offer to those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. This would mean that we would not be accommodating those we did not have a statutory Housing duty towards and we would risk more people returning to or being at risk of rough sleeping.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

None

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 As at 01/07.2020 we accommodated 393 people under Covid-19 emergency provisions. This required mobilisation of resources in a very short time in response the pandemic and in line with Public Health advice. Some of the accommodation initially sourced was very short term and so we had no option but to move large quantities of people to other short term accommodation as it became available. This was unavoidable in the circumstances as we had to react quickly. During this time we have been able to move some people on and more people have become homeless since March 2020 and so we have managed to maintain figures rather than seeing an increase over time.

Move on for the majority of people accommodated under Covid-19 provision will require additional resources. The outcome of the MHCLG NSAP grant funding bid will not be known until mid September. There are risks attached to this if

MHCLG do not provide the level of funding requested. This is also an opportune time to reflect on the use of our resources and consider how we might deliver a more effective approach to prevention, early intervention and appropriate pathways for move on in a timely manner.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 On 30th April, Policy & Resources (P&R) committee noted the estimated costs of housing rough sleepers to be £2.400m for three months to end of June 2020. A subsequent report on 14th May estimated costs to be £3.901m to 4th September 2020. A more recent report to P&R on 14th August stated the costs of accommodating rough sleepers up to 31/12/2020 would cost a further £1.561m so an estimated £5.463m in total to December 2020.
- 7.2 As outlined in this report, the council have bid for funding from the MHCLG to continue to house rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping in more permanent housing... The council is due to be notified of the sum allocated to it in mid-September. Any shortfall in funding will result in a pressure on the council's budget and a further report to Committee will be necessary to consider the financial implications of housing rough sleepers going forward.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 08/09/20

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 3.6 of the report advises that in an emergency response to the pandemic to try and move on some people from temporary accommodation, the priorities under the Allocation Plan were revised temporarily to create some movement and free up temporary accommodation. Members should be aware that there is a risk of challenge by any person adversely affected by the decision to allocate accommodation otherwise than in accordance with the published allocation policy.

Lawyer Consulted:

Liz Woodley

Date: 07/09/20

Equalities Implications:

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of developing the move on accommodation plan.

7.2 Brexit Implications:

There are a number of EU nationals who have become homeless during covid and we are working with them to apply for settled status and to get back into employment.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.3 There are crimes associated with rough sleeping and so if we are able to ensure adequate provision, there should be a positive impact on crime and disorder

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.4 There is an opportunity to change our response to homelessness. Move on provision for accommodated under Covid-19 provision will require additional resources. The outcome of the MHCLG grant funding bid is not yet known. There are risks attached to this if MHCLG do not provide the level of funding requested.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.5 People sleeping rough are amongst the most vulnerable in the city. Many have compound and complex health needs and in addition are more vulnerable if exposed to Covid. Having suitable accommodation reduces the risks to the individuals and also reduces the public health risks in the event of localised outbreaks or a wider second wave.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.6 Corporate Priority- Reduce Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy-Next Steps Following Covid-19 Response

