

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	7 November 2018
Subject:	Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) 2018/2019		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods		
Wards	All		
Affected:			
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the changes that have been made to the Gloucestershire SWEP Protocol 2018/2019, including the inclusion of yellow weather warnings that will further support those who are rough sleeping during adverse weather conditions.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) Changes to the SWEP 2018/2019 definition of 'Extreme Weather' and the additional support and protection this will provide are endorsed and welcomed.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 Gloucestershire Local Authorities (LA's) have previously developed a humanitarian response to support rough sleepers (regardless of legal status or needs) during extreme cold weather by means of active outreach and provision of nightly accommodation during Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) periods.
- 3.2 The 2017/2018 protocol as in previous years defined extreme weather ('the definition') as –

'A temperature forecast of zero degrees or lower for three or more consecutive days'

3.3 The street homeless assertive outreach team (P3) is contractually obliged to provide a service to support the work carried out by and on behalf of the six district Local Authorities during SWEP. Where SWEP is triggered by a Council(s), P3 will actively seek out and engage those who are rough sleeping by using their own intelligence and that shared by partner agencies (including Councils) who have their own local knowledge. The triggering of SWEP is also communicated to key partner agencies such as the Police and the Faith & Voluntary Sector so that they may refer should they come into contact with somebody who is homeless or rough sleeping.

3.4 During 2017/2018 some councils triggered SWEP outside of the County protocol, such as for one night of extreme cold weather, a flood event or more recently when it snowed heavily.

3.5 Therefore during 2018 a review of SWEP was undertaken collaboratively by Gloucestershire LA's. The focus of the review which was to ensure that SWEP was providing support during those times when it was most needed and to ensure a consistent level of service was being provided across all council areas in the County. Following this review 'the definition' 'has been amended to –

'Temperatures forecast of 0 °C or lower for three or more consecutive nights or of -3 °C or lower for one night only. Night(s) of any Met Office weather warning (yellow, amber or red) relating to other types of severe weather which could have a detrimental effect on rough sleepers – i.e. snow, ice, high winds, flooding (but not fog).'

3.6 This change in definition which has been unanimously agreed by all council's, will ensure that those who are rough sleeping or homeless will be provided with support on a nightly basis during a wider range of extreme weather conditions and not just freezing temperatures. In addition it will provide consistency across all 6 District Council areas in the County and bring the protocol in line with that recommended by Homeless Link Best Practice.

3.7 The other key change to the protocol concerns when SWEP is triggered. As of this year SWEP will now be called the day before the definition applies and provision is implemented, providing to the Outreach team more time to find all potential service users and for support services to mobilise. SWEP will therefore be implemented on the first day that this definition applies, having been activated the day before.

3.8 Although formally SWEP is contracted to be available (if triggered) between 1st November and 31st March each year, the Council would of course consider implementing such support outside of this period if the situation warranted it.

3.9 In Gloucester SWEP accommodation providers include Newton House (Riverside Housing), George Whitefield Centre (Gloucester City Mission),

Taylor House (Elim Housing) and Park View Court (Home Group). In addition for those who are assessed by the assertive Outreach team as unlikely or unable to access 'crash-pad' accommodation because of particular issues or circumstances then pop up arrangements can be set up at the P3 Navigator Hubs in Gloucester.

- 3.10 It is important to point out that whilst saving lives in extreme temperatures is the primary objective of SWEP, the second objective is to facilitate access into the homelessness pathway and associated support services for clients. This engagement work has previously been undertaken the morning after somebody has benefited from SWEP but this year will commence during the evening of arrival to try and maximise uptake of ongoing support that seeks to break the cycle of rough sleeping.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 It would be prudent to engage our Community Builders and key community contacts during periods of adverse weather as they are likely to be able to assist with providing information on those who may be vulnerable and rough sleeping during these periods but in addition they are ideally placed to advise on what assets are available within their localities that are relevant and may assist with repatriation.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 There are no alternative options for consideration

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Through the changes made to the Gloucestershire SWEP Protocol, the Council and its partners will be able to support those who are homeless and rough sleeping, during a wider range of severe weather conditions when they most need it.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 The Council will continue to work in collaboration with its partner agencies to ensure that the SWEP Protocol remains effective including communicating the protocol during the winter months but in addition when particularly poor weather is forecast.
- 7.2 In addition it will be important that the SWEP protocol is kept under review in collaboration with not just local authority partners but support services and the charity and faith sector so that SWEP is clearly understood and communicated widely when it needs to be triggered.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 With a broadening of the definition of 'Extreme Weather' it is likely that SWEP will be called more frequently and may incur extra costs during 2018/2019. These extra costs can be met from within existing budget.
(Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.
(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 N/A

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 11.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 12.1 Rough sleepers in particular are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society and this increase in support they will be offered during adverse weather conditions will have a positive impact on their well-being in the short term, but as importantly provide them with an opportunity to receive further personal support with a view to them sustaining a life off the street.

Sustainability

- 12.2 There are no sustainability comments associated with this report.

Safeguarding

- 12.3 In addition to the day to day work being carried out by the Council's Housing Service and through collaborative projects such as the Entrenched Homelessness Social Impact Bond, the engagement element of outreach work during SWEP will allow P3 practitioners to identify and raise safeguarding alerts should they arise. There are no safeguarding comments associated with this report.

Staffing & Trade Union

- 12.4 There are no staffing or trade union comments associated with this report.

Background Documents: N/A