

MINUTES OF MEETING URGENT DECISIONS HELD ON MONDAY, 27TH JULY, 2020, 10:00 AM.

PRESENT:

Councillor Emine Ibrahim, Cabinet Member for Housing & Estate Renewal

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

38. ROUGH SLEEPING DISCRETION POLICY

The Cabinet Member considered a report which sought approval to adopt a discretionary policy for ongoing provision of accommodation for people who are rough sleeping. This followed the Council's provision of emergency accommodation for rough sleepers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the continued support being offered to rough sleepers in the borough and acknowledged the need for a policy to be in place to ensure those people had continued access to accommodation. The Cabinet Member highlighted the fact that all of the people who had been accommodated up until now, including those with No Recourse to Public Funds, would continue to be accommodated through the Discretion Policy until they were in more secure accommodation. The Cabinet Member set out that nobody would be asked to return to the streets and that anyone who approached the Council in future that was vulnerable to COVID-19 would be provided with emergency accommodation, irrespective of their immigration status.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member:

- I. Agreed to the adoption of the Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy attached at Appendix one of the report.
- II. Delegated authority to the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Estate Renewal, to amend this policy to give effect to changes in legislation or statutory guidance, or directives or requests of a similar character issued by Government.
- III. Agreed that this policy would terminate on 30 September 2020, unless terminated earlier or extended beyond this date by Cabinet/Cabinet Member decision.

Reasons for decision

From 26 March 2020, in the context of the spread of Covid-19, the risks of contracting it and the government imposed lockdown, the Council has provided accommodation to a number of people whom it does not owe a duty to accommodate, exercising discretionary powers. As external factors and conditions change, and as directed by MHCLG, the Council is amending its approach to accommodating people who are rough sleeping to ensure that the most vulnerable continue to be accommodated.

Alternative options considered

The first alternative option was to continue with the approach that has been taken since 26 March 2020, i.e. to offer accommodation to anyone in the borough rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping. The reason this option was not recommended was that local authorities have been directed by MHCLG to adopt locally appropriate policies, and the cost of continuing to provide emergency accommodation and welfare support to everyone rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping is projected to cost over £6.8m for a single year, an unplanned and unsustainable cost to the General Fund without additional dedicated funding. Although new funding has been announced by MHCLG it has not been sufficiently detailed to allow the Council to continue with the current approach and given the overall size of the funding pot is £105m to meet the national cost, Haringey's allocation is likely to be insufficient to cover the full cost.

The second alternative option was to return to the approach taken prior to 26 March 2020, i.e. to offer accommodation only to those to whom the Council owed a homelessness duty. The reason this option was not recommended is that this would mean that a number of at-risk people would not be provided with accommodation, and it is likely that they would be disproportionately negatively affected by sleeping rough in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic; additionally it is not in line with the changes to the Homelessness Code of Guidance.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date