

MINUTES OF MEETING Urgent Decisions HELD ON Tuesday, 13th July, 2021, 11:30

PRESENT:

Councillor John Bevan, Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing & Housing Services

82. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

84. EXTENSION OF THE ROUGH SLEEPING DISCRETION POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing and Housing Services considered the report which sought approval for the extension of the Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy until 19 August 2021. The Council adopted a Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy on 27 July 2020, in order to continue to provide accommodation to some of the borough's most vulnerable residents. It was agreed that the Discretion Policy would run to 30 September 2020, to allow officers to review its impact. On 29 September 2020, given the continued threat of Covid-19, especially over the winter period, the Discretion Policy was extended to 31 March 2021, and amended to add an additional category of people to whom discretion would be applied was also added. On 31 March 2021, the Discretion Policy was extended to 14 July 2021, this would have been several weeks after the expected lifting of all Covid-related restrictions in England. Given that the date for the lifting of all Covid-related restrictions in England has now moved to 19 July 2021, it is proposed to extend the Discretion Policy to 19 August 2021.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member

- i. Approves the Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy attached at Appendix 1, as agreed in September 2020.
- ii. Extends the period of application of the Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy to 19 August 2021 unless terminated earlier or extended beyond this date by Cabinet / Cabinet Member decision.
- iii. Notes that following termination of the Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy some of those placed in emergency accommodation under the policy will remain there pending placement in move-on accommodation pursuant to the Exit Strategy at Appendix 2.

- iv. Delegates authority to the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing and Housing Services, 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.

Reasons for decision

On 27 July 2020, the Council adopted the Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy, to ensure that people who were at risk of rough sleeping and were vulnerable in the context of Covid-19 would continue to be accommodated. This policy was in the first instance to run until 30 September 2020, and was then extended to 31 March 2021, and then to 14 July 2021. Given that the circumstances under which it was introduced remain, it is proposed to extend this policy.

Alternative options considered

The first alternative option is to return to the approach that was taken from 26 March 2020 to 27 July 2020, i.e. to offer accommodation to anyone in the borough rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping. The reason this option is not recommended is 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 would be an unsustainable cost to the General Fund.

The second alternative option is to return to the approach taken prior to 26 March 2020, i.e. to offer accommodation only to those to whom the Council owes a homelessness duty. The reason this option is 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; this would constitute a risk to public health.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date