

Report of Managing Director

SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL (SWEP)

1 Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an explanation of the severe weather emergency protocol.

2 Executive summary

The council operates a policy of housing rough sleepers and those who are without shelter during periods of extreme cold weather. This is the severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP). The aim of this policy is to prevent deaths on streets during the winter months. Every effort is made to engage with individuals during the extreme weather period so they can access appropriate services. This severe weather emergency protocol was approved at community committee on 18th March 2013.

3 Appendices

Appendix A: Severe weather emergency protocol

4 Proposed action:

4.1 The committee is invited to NOTE the report.

4.2 The committee is invited to discuss issues relating to the existing Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and identify any matters it recommends be reported to the relevant policy committee for their attention.

5 Background

There is a humanitarian obligation on all local authorities to do all they can to prevent deaths on the streets caused by winter weather. In order to achieve this, the council has operated a protocol for housing rough sleepers and those without shelter on a temporary basis during the winter months for many years. This scheme is referred to as SWEP. It is not a statutory requirement but is considered good practice and takes place county and nationwide.

6 Discussion

6.1 The SWEP protocol applies to everyone who will be without shelter and without the financial means or capacity to secure accommodation during the period of extreme weather. It is not restricted to those groups of people identified as being in priority need within the homeless legislation, to whom the council has a statutory duty to house. Likewise, those individuals who may

be excluded from the council's housing register due to debt are able to access SWEP provision. The principal aim is to protect individuals from harm during periods of extreme cold.

- 6.2 The definition of extreme weather for the purposes of SWEP is a temperature forecast of zero degrees or lower for three consecutive nights. Accommodation is provided on a temporary basis during this period by the council. Traditionally this has been in hotel accommodation and from 2014/15 onwards in conjunction with the Salvation Army.
- 6.3 SWEP does not apply to those who have accommodation available to them but who choose not to use it. It is for those individuals who genuinely sleep rough. Clients who sleep rough can have a number of other vulnerabilities and present higher risks to others and themselves. The council undertakes robust risk assessments to manage these risks before referral to partner agencies. On occasion an individual may be judged to be too high a risk to the public to accommodate. In such circumstances the council will refer to the most appropriate agency, for example mental health, the police.
- 6.4 The table below shows the number of people we have housed, the number of nights and cost.

| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|---------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Clients | 6 | 16 | NA* | 11 | 10 | 15 |
| Nights | 22 | 18 | 0 | 19 | 17 | 17 |
| Hotel or Temporary accommodation | Hotel | Hotel | NA | Salvation Army | Salvation Army | Salvation Army |
| Cost | £2155.00 | £2670.00 | 0 | £950.00 | £850.00 | £850.00 |

*SWEP was not activated in the period 2013/14 as there was no period of zero degree weather for 3 nights in a row.

- 6.5 People who are homeless or rough sleepers can apply to join the council's housing register.¹ All applicants must have a local connection to the borough and must be evidenced. The main local connection criteria are:
- Residency in the borough for 3 out of the last 5 years;
 - Family resident in the borough for 5 years;
 - Employment in the borough.
- 6.6 A report will be presented to Services Committee in September 2017 to consider the future SWEP policy and delivery arrangements.

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[https://test-keyways.abritas.net/Data/Pub/PublicWebsite/ImageLibrary/Borough%20Council%20of%20Wellingborough%20Keyways%20Allocation%20Policy%20\(Adopted%20Nov%202016%20Ver%205.0\).pdf](https://test-keyways.abritas.net/Data/Pub/PublicWebsite/ImageLibrary/Borough%20Council%20of%20Wellingborough%20Keyways%20Allocation%20Policy%20(Adopted%20Nov%202016%20Ver%205.0).pdf)

7 Legal powers

Part VII and VIII of the Housing Act 1985

8 Financial and value for money implications

The costs of providing SWEP are provided in para 6.4

9 Risk analysis

| Nature of risk | Consequences if realised | Likelihood of occurrence | Control measures |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Risk of harm during extreme weather conditions | Reputation risk | Medium | SWEP policy |

10 Implications for resources

Capacity to deliver the existing SWEP policy is made available from within existing service budgets. It is operational with the support of interagency co-operation and support.

11 Implications for stronger and safer communities

This policy protects individuals from harm whilst being exposed to extreme cold weather conditions overnight. It will assist with community safety by preventing those who are sleeping rough or without shelter from bedding down in inappropriate locations.

12 Implications for equalities

An equalities impact assessment will accompany any further review of the SWEP policy in due course.

13 Author and contact officer

Kay Gilbert
Housing Options Officer

14 Consultees

Liz Elliott, Director
Vicki Jessop, Principal Housing Manager
Trish McCourt, Assistant Principal Housing Officer

15 Background papers

http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/708/community_committee