

# Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	7 November 2016
<b>Classification:</b>	General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Draft Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017 -20
<b>Report of:</b>	Julia Corkey, Director of Policy, Performance and Communications Ed Watson, Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing
<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	Cabinet Member for Public Protection Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration, Business and Economic Development
<b>Wards Involved:</b>	All
<b>Policy Context:</b>	City for All – This report is genuinely cross cutting as the draft strategy seek to promote aspiration, choice and heritage
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## 1 Executive Summary

This report outlines the proposed priorities for the draft Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-20 (enclosed) and headline findings from the public consultation, which closes on 4 November 2016.

As public consultation closes one working day before the meeting of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee, and after the deadline for publication of papers, this report contains information gathered up to the 26 October 2016. A presentation will be given at the Committee meeting containing any substantial information received after this date.

## 2 Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

The Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- Reflect on the consultation and the views provided by residents, businesses, voluntary sector organisations and others engaged with.

- Comment on the draft strategy in light of consultation feedback gathered, and identify areas for further development ahead of final publication of the revised strategy early in 2017.

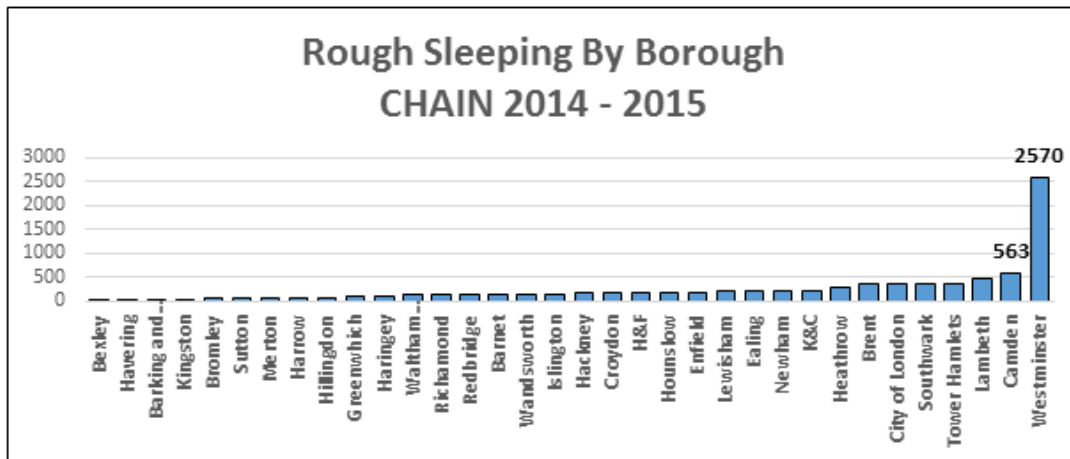
### 3 Background

3.1 The current Rough Sleeping Strategy is due to expire this year and a new draft strategy has been developed for the next three years. Although there is no statutory requirement to have a strategy, the issue is particularly acute in Westminster given that we have more rough sleepers here than anywhere else in the country. A strategy helps demonstrate Westminster’s commitment to tackling rough sleeping but also to inform and educate the public and partners about this complex issue.

3.2 The draft strategy has been developed over the past year in conjunction with the Cabinet Members for Public Protection and Housing, Regeneration, Business and Economic Development. It has also been reviewed by the Health and Wellbeing Board, EMT and other stakeholders. The draft is a product of cross-departmental working, with involvement from colleagues across a number of directorates as well as engagement with key partners such as the Police, the Home Office and the Central London CCG.

3.3 The draft strategy is based on a robust evidence base, which was developed in early 2016 and is attached in full at Appendix 3<sup>1</sup>. This shows us that Westminster has, by far and away, the greatest number of rough sleepers in London (figure 1).

Figure 1



<sup>1</sup> The statistics in the evidence base may differ slightly from those used in the draft strategy because the data picture change rapidly and these documents were produced at different times. The overall trends and lessons from the data have not changed however.

3.4 The evidence also shows us that, whilst the most entrenched rough sleepers tend to be UK or Irish nationals, there are more people on Westminster’s streets from Central and Eastern Europe than anywhere else (figure 2). This is further illustrated by the fact that foreign national rough sleepers are increasing, whilst the number of UK and Irish nationals remains broadly stable (figure 3).

Figure 2

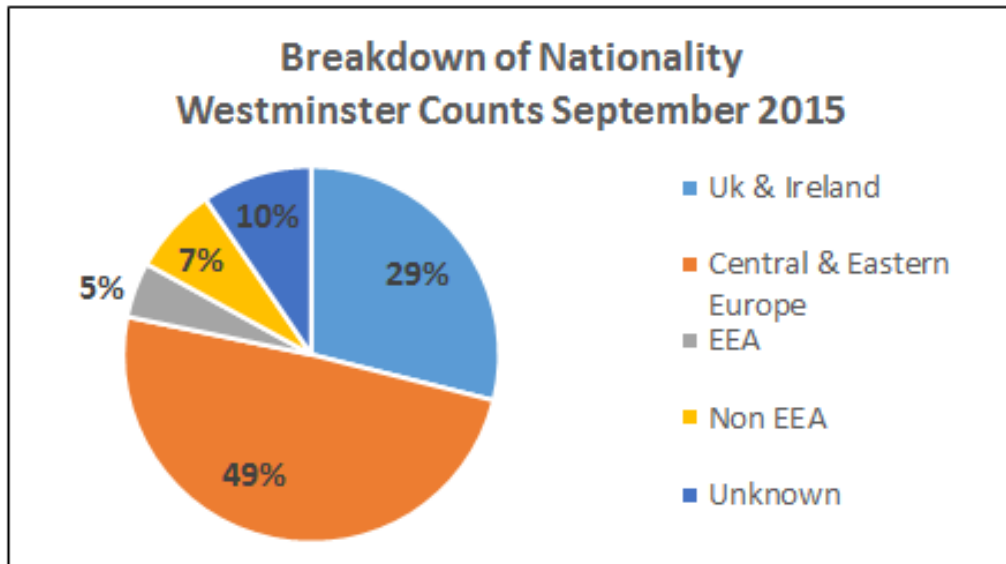
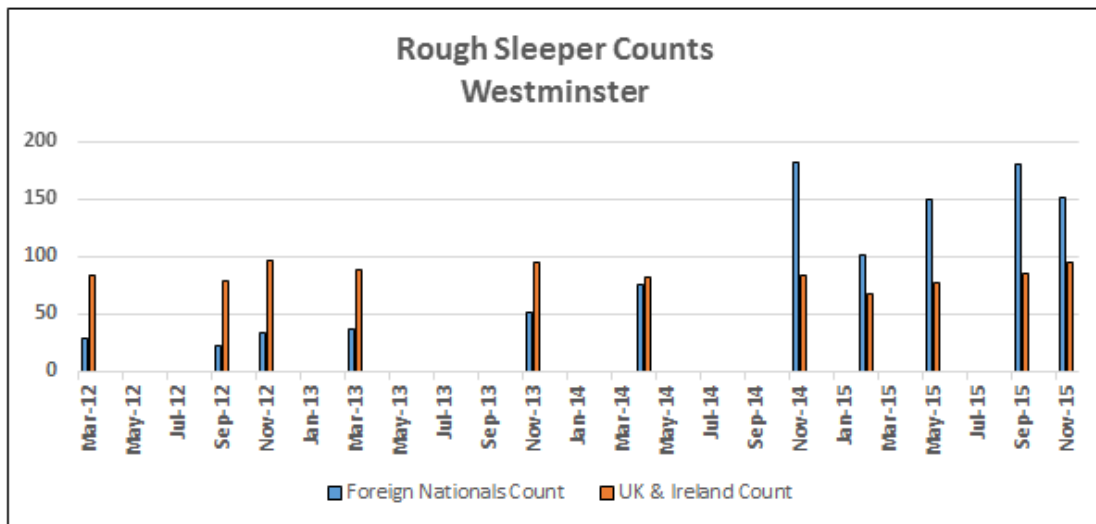
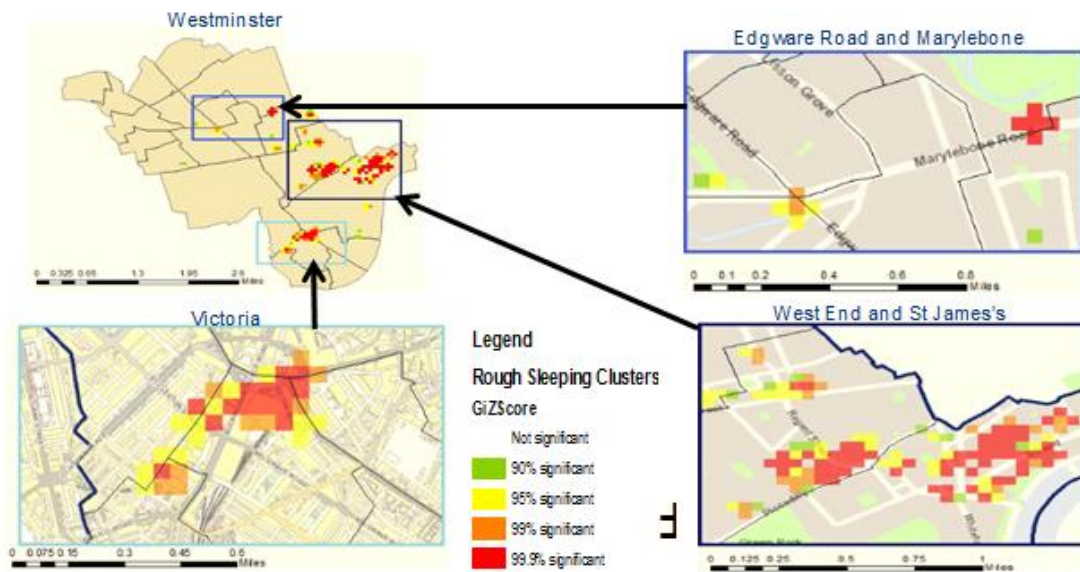


Figure 3



3.5 Perhaps unsurprisingly, the hotspots for rough sleeping tend to be in heart of Westminster. This mirrors the London-wide dynamic that causes Westminster to have the highest numbers in London (see figure 4).

Figure 4



3.6 The strategy builds on the achievements and best practice that are already in place. At its centre is recognition that rough sleeping is dangerous and damaging to those concerned, and that it has wider impacts on community wellbeing. It therefore focuses on further reducing rough sleeping by prioritising action to prevent even more people from ending up on the streets, but also doing all we can to help those who do arrive there off the streets as quickly as possible, helping them to turn their lives around.

3.7 The overarching ambition in the strategy is to deliver a significant reduction in rough sleeping and address the harm it brings to individuals and communities in Westminster. The overall approach is characterised by innovation and partnership working, with a focus on the council taking a strategic leadership role across the city to focus efforts on supporting our objectives. We also want to continue to develop our services to be even more focused on outcomes and added value for rough sleepers and will look at models such as payment by results (where this is appropriate) to stimulate innovation and to encourage efficiency and value for money.

#### 4 Draft Strategy and Priorities

4.1 The strategy identifies three key priorities to reduce rough sleeping:

1. Where it is possible for us to do so, taking more action to prevent people from rough sleeping in the first place and providing a rapid response when people do end up on the streets.
2. Supporting people who are sleeping rough to rebuild their lives – and to stay off the street.
3. Tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping the city safe.

- 4.2 These priorities are supported by specific objectives, concrete commitments and measurable targets that we believe will build on our current practice and help to realise our vision.
- 4.3 With the consultation just completed, the Committee are invited to consider the main priorities and proposals put forward in the draft strategy and give views on what is being suggested and any areas where we could do more or are not included. Any comments will be taken into account as the strategy is refined over the next few months, before a final strategy is submitted.
- 4.4 The full draft strategy is attached as Appendix 1 to this document and a 2 page summary is included at appendix 2.
- 4.5 Although it is proposed that the council's general approach to tackling rough sleeping remains the broadly same, there are a number of important changes proposed that the Committee may want to consider, for example:
- The introduction of a more personalised approach that flows from the first point of contact through to support/treatment and, where necessary, enforcement action. This will ensure that public services always put support first and are aware of an individual's situation whenever they engage.
  - Taking more action to address the health needs of rough sleepers, with a particular focus on mental health issues and substance misuse. We will look at new ways to help people engage with services and raise awareness of the devastating impact of new drugs such as 'spice' on users and those trying to help amongst partners and the wider public.
  - Engaging more directly with charitable organisations that offer support to those on the streets, but are not commissioned by the council, to ensure that support offered is responsibly meeting the needs of individuals, linked in with wider support services and limits the impact on the surrounding communities.

## **5 Consultation**

- 5.1 The consultation period ran from 26 October until 4 November. During the consultation period, officers attended a number of events such as Open Forum Public Meeting on 6 October, promoted the consultation through existing partnership meetings such as the West End Partnership and spent time talking to businesses in hotspot areas such as Victoria and the Strand.
- 5.2 Links to the draft strategy and the summary document on the Open Forum page were sent directly to a range of stakeholders including: Councillors, council staff, CCGs, local MPs, BIDs, business representatives, commissioned and non-commissioned voluntary sector organisations, the GLA, DCLG, the Home Office, the Police, City West Homes and resident and neighbourhood groups. Hard copies were also sent to all libraries in the city.
- 5.3 All stakeholders were directed to the dedicated questionnaire on the Open Forum website<sup>2</sup> to respond, but were also able to respond to the consultation

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<sup>2</sup> <https://openforum.westminster.gov.uk/draft-rough-sleeping-strategy1>

face to face by way of the above meetings, by post or electronically via a dedicated email address. The Open Forum questionnaire asked a number of specific questions about the proposals and consultees were invited to answer these or comment on any other aspects of the strategy or on areas they think should also be included. All consultation documentation was available online via the council website and Open Forum, and in hard copy as appropriate and required. We also made use of social media to promote the consultation.

- 5.4 Officers also took a tailored approach to consulting with service users and worked with support workers to ask specific questions in an appropriate format.

## **6 Consultation Responses**

- 6.1 As the consultation closed just one working day before the meeting of the Committee, this report provides analysis of the headline responses up until 26 October 2016. A presentation on the overall headline findings will be made to the Committee on the day of the meeting and a written analysis of responses will be circulated to Members after the meeting.

### *Headline findings*

- 6.2 As of 26 October 2016, there were 86 responses to the online consultation questionnaire, one written response and a further 11 responses from service users who are being supported through our rough sleeping pathway. Although not receiving comprehensive support from all respondents, there was general support for the priorities and supporting objectives set out in the draft Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 6.3 Of those who responded on Open Forum, 71% of respondents were residents and 25% were workers in the area. At this stage, we had not received large numbers of responses from voluntary sector partners or businesses due to fact that these organisations tend to respond in the latter part of the consultation process. An update will be provided at the meeting.
- 6.4 93% of respondents either strongly agreed or tended to agree that the three priorities were the right ones. 6% of respondents either strongly disagreed or tended to disagree. So far, overall, there are clear differences in respondents' attitudes towards the proposed approach, with some respondents focussing on the negative impacts of rough sleeping in their areas and ideas to take a more robust approach to incentivise people to rebuild their lives. Other respondents thought that more emphasis should be put on meeting people's immediate needs with a view to allowing them to change their lives if they wish to.

- 6.5 Other consistent themes from the responses so far include: some respondents thought that the strategy should include and engage with the causes of rough sleeping, although it was also recognised that many of these causes were not in the direct control of the council. There was also recognition that responses needed to ensure that the problem was not shifted elsewhere and the need for a joined-up response across the country. Some respondents thought the strategy should directly address wider issues such as anti-social behaviour and housing provision.
- 6.6 On the first priority to prevent rough sleeping, 90% of respondents agreed the draft objectives were the right ones. A key theme from the responses to this question was that although prevention was a good aim, in some cases it would be difficult to deliver and ultimately, responses needed to focus on what happens when people do end up on the streets.
- 6.7 On the second priority to help people rebuild their lives, 95% of respondents agreed that the draft objectives were the right ones. Some responses queried how this was achievable given the range of different outcomes that are possible for different individuals and the need to be clear about the difference in outcomes for non-UK nationals. Whilst some respondents supported the ambition, they queried whether there were consequences for the individual where support is refused. Responses also highlighted the need for better co-ordination across the whole range of support services in the city.
- 6.8 On the third priority to tackle anti-social behaviour and keep the city safe, 87% of respondents agreed with the draft objectives. A key theme from responses to this priority was concerns around begging and the need to have a co-ordinated response across the city towards it. This was a recurrent theme in many responses. A small number of respondents expressed strong concerns about enforcement.
- 6.9 There was a mixed response towards the proposed targets, with the majority (77%) of respondents stating they thought they were achievable. Fewer people however, thought the targets were ambitious enough – 60% of respondents either strongly agreed or tended to agree they were ambitious enough, whereas 21% of people did not think they were ambitious enough. The views of the sector will be particularly important to shed further light on the relevance of these targets.
- 6.10 When asked about what others in the city could do to support the strategy (focussing on working with businesses, charities and other public sector agencies), most respondents agreed that working together was important in delivering the strategy. Some agreed with the proposed approach that rough sleeping should be a priority when asking businesses, voluntarily, to make positive impacts in Westminster, where they provide us with services and suggested different ways in which this could happen. Others said it was up to businesses to decide whether they get involved and the council should not encourage businesses to support various charities or causes. There were many positive comments about the work charities are already carrying out. Many respondents highlighted that it was important for the council to inform

organisations about how to practically deal with the issues arising from rough sleeping and where they could get more information when issues arise.

6.11 Overall, the feedback from the consultation raised the issue about communicating with and educating the public about these issues. It has been a consistent theme in the consultation responses that many people are not aware of the extent of the support available for rough sleepers. Many respondents highlighted that there should be more accessible and responsive ways to report rough sleepers and that the council should provide more information and support about our services to businesses and organisations affected by rough sleeping in the city.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact Sarah Monaghan x2286 [smonaghan@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:smonaghan@westminster.gov.uk) or Richard Cressey [rcressey@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:rcressey@westminster.gov.uk) x3403**

**APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1 – Draft rough sleeping strategy

Appendix 2 – 2 page draft strategy summary

Appendix 3 – Evidence base – February 2016

Appendix 4 – WHAT (Westminster Homeless Action Together) week: learning, findings and next steps: executive summary.