

To: City Executive Board
Date: 10th April 2019
Title: Board Member update on the operation of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol winter 2018/19

Appendices	
Appendix A	Graphs comparing 2017-18 and 2018-19 SWEP attendance by temperature and by calendar month
Appendix B	SWEP Survey Results

Introduction and background

1. Following a motion by the Board Member for Leisure and Housing Services, Full Council resolved on 26th November 2018, to ask officers to report to CEB in January and again in April on the operation of Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) this winter. Further to the Board Member's update for information to CEB 22nd January, this report now presents an overview of the operation of SWEP this winter.

What is SWEP?

2. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) sets out the measures that Oxford City Council and local homelessness organisations - St Mungo's (OxSPOT), Homeless Oxfordshire, Aspire and A2Dominion - will take to provide additional emergency accommodation in instances of severe weather for people who are sleeping rough.
3. SWEP opens on a forecast by the Met Office that the night temperature will fall to zero or below on 3 or more consecutive nights. SWEP then opens on the first night of this period - not after 2 or 3 nights – and remains open for so long as the temperature remains at zero degrees or below. There is also discretion to open on nights when the forecast indicates adverse weather conditions, for example, when there is snow on the ground or flooding or a period of changeable weather (say 2 nights below 0°c, then a warmer night or two, then below 0°c again).
4. When SWEP is triggered the Council works with local homelessness organisations and others including Thames Valley Police to make sure that people who may need to use the service are aware that it is open. People wishing to access SWEP are

required to present at O'Hanlon House between 9pm and 9.30pm, from where they will be directed to their allocated venue. Access to SWEP venues is between 10pm and 11pm, with admissions after this time, at the discretion of the venue coordinator.

5. SWEP emergency beds consist of roll mats and sleeping bags. Spaces are provided at a range of venues including O'Hanlon House and Simon House, and clients are allocated to the venue that is best placed to cater for their needs. Emergency beds are available for anyone who would otherwise be rough sleeping on the night, regardless of normal eligibility criteria for the Adult Homeless Pathway such as local connection. Each of the Oxfordshire District Councils is able to access one bed each within Oxford SWEP provision.
6. Oxford SPOT is responsible for SWEP coordination, allocating individuals to venues, and working with people accessing SWEP to ensure that support is provided to identify longer term solutions including reconnection or access to the Adult Homeless Pathway, where appropriate and enable them as appropriate to access longer term accommodation.
7. SWEP operates on a basic overtime model which involves experienced workers from the local network of homelessness organisations doing overtime shifts. SWEP operation therefore puts considerable pressure on core services for rough sleepers and single homeless people, particularly during periods of extended operation.
8. It is hoped that the Council will be able to move away from the current service model for SWEP from winter 2018/19 and officers are therefore developing plans for the future provision of winter-long emergency accommodation, including as part of the proposed development of Floyd's Row.

Oxford Winter Night Shelter (OWNS)

9. In addition to the core SWEP provision, Churches in Oxford have also operated a rolling Oxford Winter Night Shelter (OWNS), doubling the amount of spaces that they offered during winter 2017/18 to provide a total of 20 spaces each night between 1st January and 31st March 2019. The service is available for people with low level needs.
10. Oxford City Council has worked closely with Churches in Oxford to ensure that arrangements are in place for OWNS to operate safely, including confirming that buildings are compliant with fire safety regulations and tasking OxSPOT to coordinate referrals into the service.

Occasions when SWEP has been opened and discretionary openings

11. At the time of writing, SWEP has so far been triggered on 5 separate occasions this winter and for a total of 18 nights.

- 13th to 15th December (SWEP opened for 3 nights, on officer discretion)
- 2nd to 4th January (SWEP opened for 3 nights, in line with the Protocol)
- 17th January (SWEP opened for 1 night initially, on officer discretion, and closed the following morning)
- 22nd of January to 24th of January (SWEP opened for 3 nights, on officer discretion)
- 28th of January to the 4th of February (SWEP opened for 8 nights, in line with the Protocol)

12. On three of these occasions officers exercised discretion to open SWEP even though the normal criteria for doing so – that is, a forecast of 3 or more nights in a row with zero degrees Celsius or below - had not been met. The reasons for this were that:

- On the first period of opening (13th to 15th December) the temperature was forecast to fall to below zero degrees on two nights (13th and 14th December), rise above freezing on one night (15th December) but with an extremely low “feels like” temperature on this third night.
- On the third period of opening (17th January), SWEP opened initially for one night only. This decision was made because of the sub-zero temperature forecast for that night and a fluctuating forecast above and below zero over the weekend. The decision was made to close SWEP on the morning of Friday 18th January because there was no imminent forecast (starting within the following 48 hours) for 3 consecutive nights at zero degrees Celsius or below.
- On the fourth period of opening (22nd of January to 24th January), only for 2 nights sub-zero temperatures were predicted, but snow was forecast to fall on the 22nd January. Snow did fall on the 22nd with a small amount settling on the ground. 2 days later on the 24th January, most of this snow had melted and temperatures returned to above zero and the decision was made to close SWEP – after 3 nights of operation - on the morning of the 25th January.

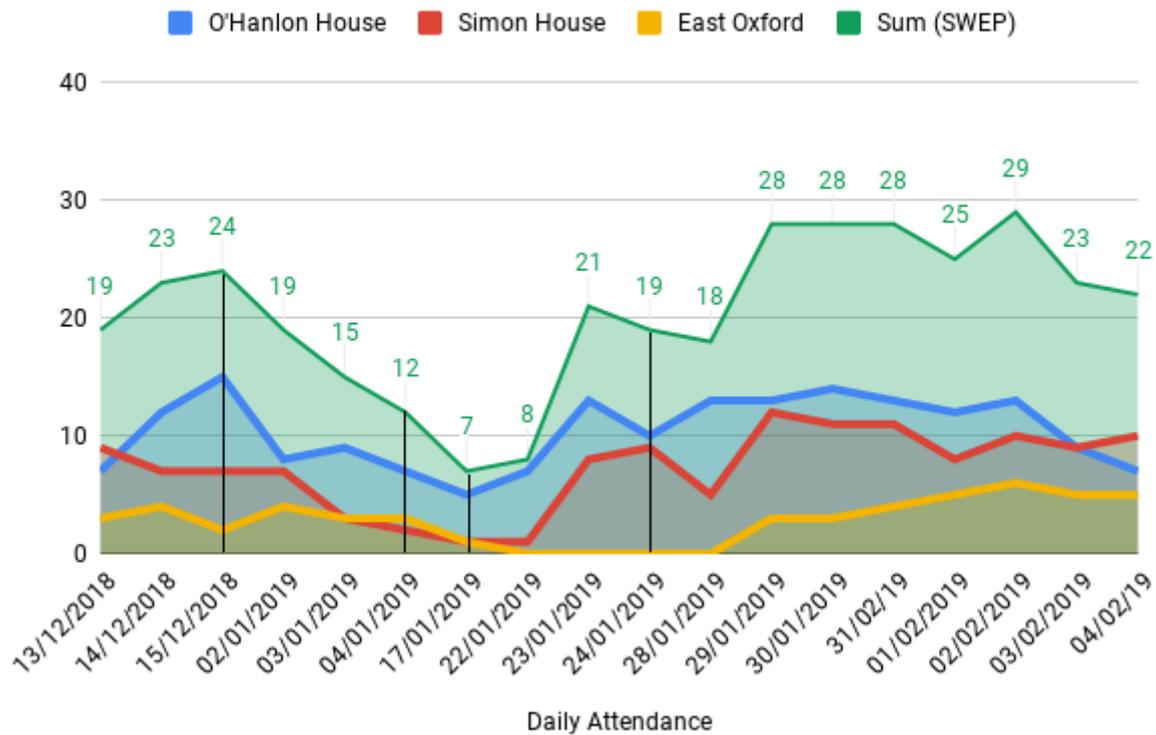
Number of people accommodated

13. During the five periods of opening so far this winter, SWEP has provided a total of 368 stays for 94 individuals with the maximum intake on a single night (2nd February) being 29 people. This is notably lower than the maximum intake of 41 people on a single night during winter 2017/18. Graphs comparing 2017-18 and 2018-19 SWEP attendance by temperature and by calendar month are shown at Appendix A.

14. The vast majority of people who have used SWEP this winter have been accommodated at O’Hanlon House and Simon House. Most SWEP users used the service on more than one occasion during periods of opening, with the average amount of stays being 4 per person and the average amount of people accommodated on a SWEP night being 20. Again, this is notably lower than the average intake of 24 people on a single night during winter 2017/18.

15. The table below summarises the intake to SWEP at individual venues and in total by night of operation over the winter 2018/19.

SWEP Attendance



16. In common with previous years, a significant proportion of SWEP users (40/94, 43%) were people who were not previously known to services. This is an important factor for the management of SWEP as people whose needs have yet to be assessed must be accommodated at the most secure venues [O’Hanlon House, Simon House].

17. Similarly, SWEP was well used by people without a known local connection to Oxfordshire (74/94, 79%) and by those without recourse to public funds (20/94, 21%). 16 of the 94 (17%) unique visitors to SWEP were women.

Availability of bed spaces in the Adult Homeless Pathway

18. During the periods when SWEP has been open this winter a total of 214 bed spaces have been commissioned in the Oxford Adult Homeless Pathway.

19. Officers work closely with accommodation providers year round to maximise bed occupancy. However, there are several reasons why from time to time a bed / room may be briefly unoccupied (void) including the need for maintenance, the temporary absence of the resident (for example due to arrest or hospital admission), and because the bed / room has been allocated to a person who has not yet arrived.

20. During the five periods of SWEP opening this winter:

- 13th to 15th December – all beds / rooms were occupied with the exception of 3 units which were awaiting the imminent arrival of the allocated occupants
- 2nd to 4th January - all beds / rooms were occupied with the exception of 8 units. Of these, 5 units were unoccupied because clients whose needs were appropriate for the service type / level had yet to be identified and 3 units where maintenance was needed before the bed / room could be re-allocated.
- 17th January – all beds/ rooms were occupied with the exception of 11 units. Of these, 7 were awaiting assessment for clients, 3 were beds which required maintenance before being free for allocation and 1 bed was waiting for a client to move in.
- 22nd of January – all beds/ rooms were occupied with the exception of 10 units – 3 were awaiting assessment of clients referred, 3 were awaiting clients to move in and 4 were maintenance voids.
- 28th of January all beds/ rooms were occupied with the exception of 5 units - 4 were awaiting assessment of clients referred and 1 was a maintenance void.

Exclusions from SWEP

21. SWEP aims to provide additional accommodation for all those who need it during extreme, adverse weather conditions. Unfortunately, during the first two periods of SWEP operation a total of 12 separate individuals were excluded from the service on one or more occasions.
22. This was because – based on the information available to them at the time – SWEP accommodation providers considered that due to their behaviour, the individuals concerned posed an unacceptable level of risk to staff, residents and other SWEP users. The identified risks included violence and threats to staff members and other service users.
23. Subsequently, officers met with the providers concerned and agreed an approach which includes personalised accommodation plans for all the high-risk individuals concerned and increased security and safety arrangements at Simon House. This plan was implemented ahead of the 3rd period of SWEP opening (17th January 2019) and ensures that all those who need to can access SWEP.
24. The personalised accommodation plans have ensured that all clients that were previously considered for exclusion could access accommodation. Furthermore, increased security at Simon House has ensured that 3 individuals who were identified as having high risk behaviours have made regular use of SWEP since 17th January, with a total of 25 stays over 11 days' of operation.
25. However, this arrangement has significantly increased the cost of SWEP provision this winter. Consequently, in January the Council submitted a bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Cold Weather Fund, which offers funding towards the cost of providing additional winter services. At the time of

writing officers are still awaiting MHCLG's decision on this bid but are optimistic that a total of £35,000 can be secured towards the cost of SWEP delivery in 2018/19.

Exit survey

26. In order to learn more about individuals' experiences of SWEP and how this might be improved a new service user questionnaire was introduced.
27. At the time of writing, we have received 31 responses from people who have used SWEP during the 5 periods of opening so far this winter. The majority of these have been from people who used the service in East Oxford (25) and at Simon House (6). So far, we have not received any responses from O'Hanlon House.
28. A brief summary of the feedback received is provided at Appendix B with key findings as follows:
- People who used the SWEP service were generally positive about their experience, rated the helpfulness of staff highly¹ and indicating that they would use the service again
 - People indicated that they heard about the service from a range of difference sources with the most common being day services (10) and outreach workers (10). Word of mouth (5), previous use of SWEP (5), and alerts via Oxford City Council's Website (3) and by text alert (1) were also mentioned
 - Suggestions for how to improve the SWEP service included not having to repeat registration details for every attendance (2), providing hot food (2), open SWEP for longer (details not specified) (2) and using alcohol tests for those coming in (1).

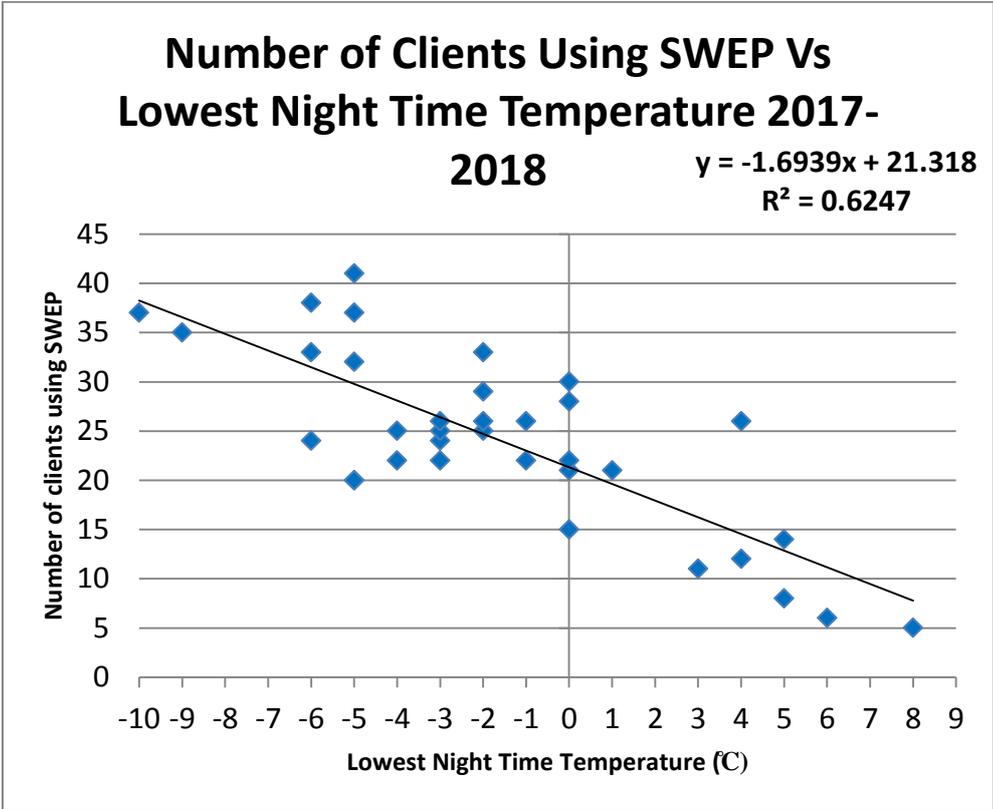
Conclusions and recommendations

29. Oxford's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol has ensured that additional emergency provision has been available to – and has been well used by – people who would otherwise have slept rough this winter.
30. The service has provided emergency accommodation to 94 individuals and made additional provision for clients identified as having high risk behaviours – ensuring that all those who need to access the service have been able to do so.
31. However, this development – providing personalised accommodation plans and additional security arrangements to ensure safety for all – demonstrates the breadth of need and behaviours that SWEP venue providers need to accommodate and manage, also bearing in mind that a significant proportion of SWEP users (43%) were people who were not previously known to services.
32. Meeting the diverse needs of all those at risk of rough sleeping and those who sleep rough is the essential purpose and challenge for the Adult Homeless Pathway and

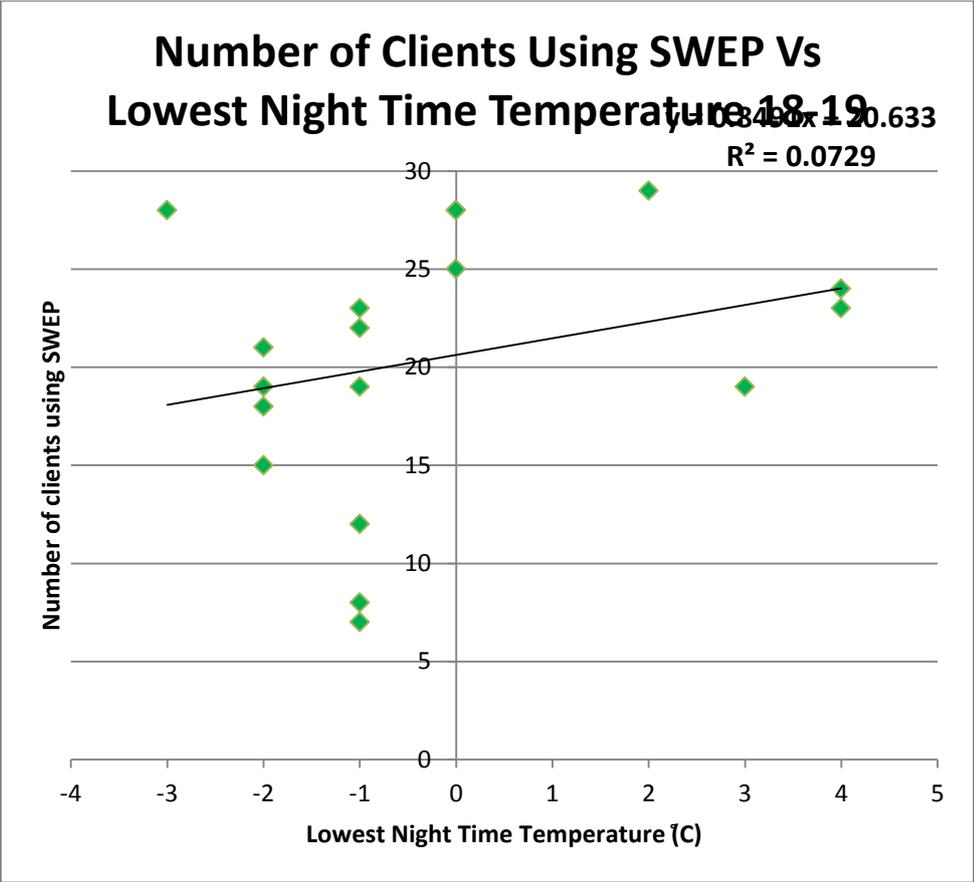
¹ On a scale of 1 ('not very helpful') to 5 ('very helpful')

additional emergency winter provision. Officers will draw on the experiences of and learning from the delivery of SWEP winter 2018/19 in developing plans for the future provision of emergency winter accommodation, including as part of the proposed development of Floyd's Row.

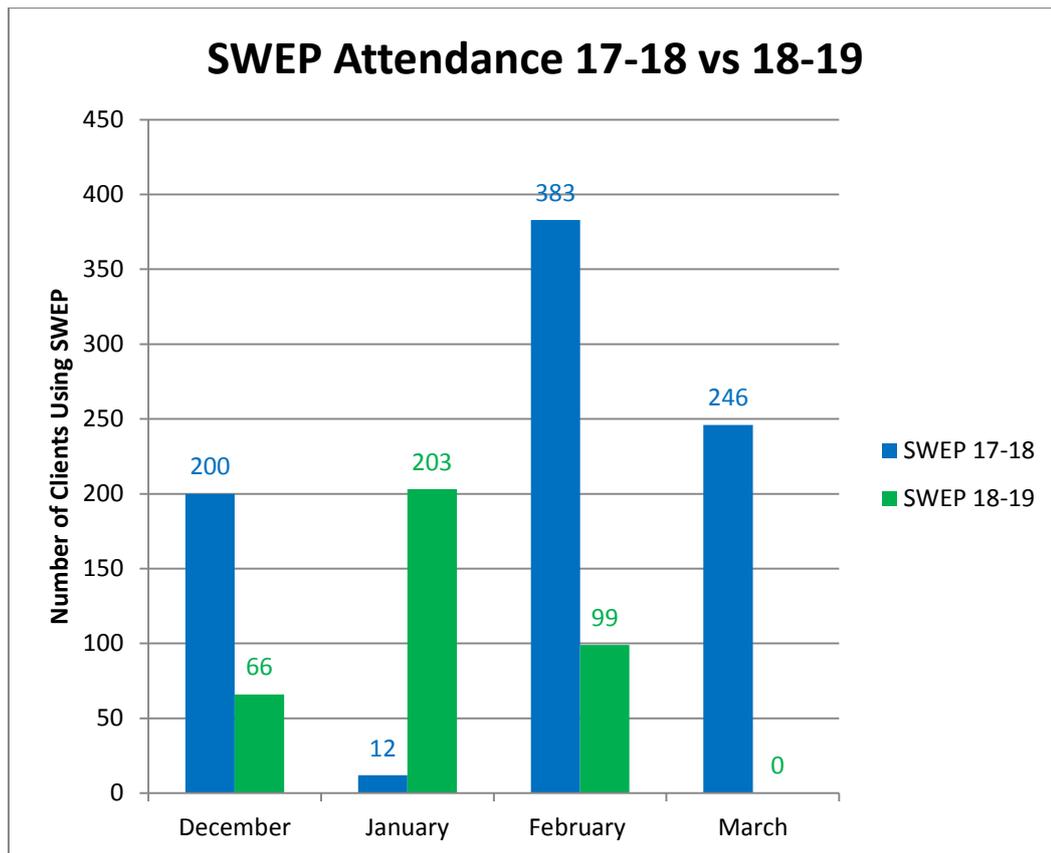
Appendix A: Weather graphs and monthly comparisons between SWEP opening 2017-18 and 2018-19



In 2017-18 temperatures were significantly lower than for winter 2018/19 and this correlated to higher rates of SWEP usage. This was a clear trend as can be seen by the high R² value and steep slope of the trend line.



For SWEP 2018/19 there is a very weak correlation between warmer temperatures and more clients attending. Temperatures in 2017-18 were in general much more severe.



This graph compares SWEP usage in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The following dates of opening in 2017/18 and 2018/19 contextualise the graph:

- **Opening periods 2017/18 (8 periods of opening; 35 nights):**

1. 8th-12th December (5 nights)
2. 24th-28th December (5 nights)
3. 31st December – 1st January (2 nights)
4. 4th – 11th January (8 nights)
5. 22nd February to 4th March (11 nights)
6. 22nd -28th February (7 nights)
7. 1st -4th March (4 nights)
8. 16th -20th March (5 nights)

- **Opening periods 18/19: (5 periods of opening; 18 nights)**

1. 13th-15th December; (3 nights)
2. 2nd-4th January; (3 nights)
3. 17th January; (1 night)
4. 22nd -24th January; (3 nights)
5. 28th January -04th February. (8 nights)

Appendix B: SWEP survey results

Summary based on 31 completed survey questionnaires of which 25 were from users of SWEP at the East Oxford venue and 6 people who used the service at Simon House. The SWEP survey was taken anonymously, so no demographics around the responses can be included.

i) Feedback score:

Feedback Score (out of 5)	East Oxford (Average, 25 respondents)	Simon House (Average, 6 respondents)
How was your SWEP experience?	4.8	3.2
Were our staff helpful?	5.0	3.8
Would you come again?	4.9	3.8

ii) How did you hear about SWEP?

	East Oxford	Simon House
Day Services (porch)	6	0
Day Services (unspecified)	3	1
Outreach Worker	10	0
Word of Mouth	3	2
The Hub	2	0
OCC Website	2	1
Used SWEP Before	4	1
Text Alert	0	1

i) Suggestions about how to improve SWEP:

Suggestions about how to improve SWEP:	Number of Respondents
Hot food	2
Alcohol test for guests	1
Not having to fill out personal details on registration every time	2
Separate space for loud snorers	1
Be open for longer!	2

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