



Policy and Resources Committee – 12 March 2012

Youth Homelessness Grant

Purpose of report

This report seeks Member approval for the release of the Youth Homelessness Grant funding for a specific project.

Attachment(s)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Communities and Local Government (CLG) have recently awarded some additional funding to local authorities, to spend on initiatives which seek to reduce youth homelessness. East Northamptonshire Council has received £7,500.
- 1.2 CLG have advised that this money should be spent on initiatives which seek to prevent or respond to youth homelessness. Failure to spend it on such initiatives may lead to a lack of further future funding.
- 1.3 Unfortunately this money has only just been received, hence why this report is being brought forward so late in the financial year.

2.0 Youth Homelessness

- 2.1 Homelessness levels across the country have increased significantly over the last few years, as a result of the economic climate.
- 2.2 East Northamptonshire has been able to resist this trend for longer than other areas; however, we have seen a steady increase over the last 12 months.
- 2.3 In 2010/11 there were 123 households / applicants who presented as homeless, and the council accepted a duty to re-house 53 of those. After the first 3 quarters of 2011/12, we have already reached these levels.
- 2.4 Youth homelessness is also increasing at a similar rate. In 2010/11 the council accepted a duty to house 20 applicants aged 16-24; and so far this year we have already exceeded this.
- 2.5 It is widely anticipated that youth homelessness will continue to increase over the next few years, due to the extension of the upper age limit on the housing benefit single room rate from 25 to 34.
- 2.6 Therefore it is important that we ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for young homeless people, to avoid increased costs through the use of temporary accommodation or bed and breakfast.

3.0 Letwise UK Project Proposal

- 3.1 Letwise UK is a 'social enterprise' company currently operating across the county. A social enterprise is typically a private company which performs charitable activities with the backing and support of commercial enterprise.
- 3.2 Their primary activity is leasing properties from private owners and turning them into

houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) for letting to homeless people. They can also provide support to residents if required.

- 3.3 Over the last 5 months, Letwise have renovated 10 properties. They do not currently operate in East Northamptonshire, however they are well established in Corby where they have re-housed over 40 single homeless people from the Borough Council's housing waiting list. Many of those properties were on Corby Borough Council's 'top 50 empty properties' list.
- 3.4 Letwise typically use a 5 year rental agreement with landlords, and a programme of works for each property is also agreed.
- 3.5 Officers have had extensive discussions with them regarding the possibility of expanding into this area, with the creation of one HMO to start with. This would then provide accommodation and support for four 19-25 year old homeless applicants.
- 3.6 In addition, Letwise have already identified an empty property and entered into discussions with the owner. Therefore this project has the added benefit of bringing an empty property back into use in the district.
- 3.7 The £7,500 funding would cover the cost of renovating the property, and also providing support to the residents.
- 3.8 As the council has not worked with Letwise UK before, we have set some funding conditions which they have agreed. These are:
 - Ensure HMO checks are carried out by our Private Sector Housing team & the Fire Service. All properties must meet the fire regulations e.g. fire doors and inter-linked smoke alarms are fitted.
 - Property to have a gas safety check; this must also be carried out annually.
 - The electrical system and any electrical appliances that are supplied by the Landlord, such as cooker, kettle, toaster etc, to be safe to use.
 - Any furniture and furnishings supplied by the Landlord to meet the fire resistance requirement.
 - Tenancy agreements that should be issued are Shorthold Tenancy Agreements or Licences depending upon the anticipated length of stay and facilities offered in the property.
 - The council's Housing Options Service to be kept informed as to who is resident in the properties.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 4.1 The project is specifically aimed at young people, and therefore has a positive impact for this particular group.
- 4.2 It could be argued that therefore this means that there is a negative impact on other age groups, due to the fact that they will not be able to apply for the accommodation.
- 4.3 Officers have carefully considered this, and are of the view that any negative impact is mitigated by the fact that a) there is other accommodation available for other age groups; and b) it is common practice to provide specialist accommodation – such as sheltered accommodation for older people.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation below.

6.0 Risk Management

6.1 There are no risks associated with the recommendation below.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 This report seeks approval to release the £7,500 Youth Homelessness Funding which has been paid to us as a grant from CLG.

7.2 Bringing an empty property back into use will result in receipt of New Homes Bonus.

8.0 Corporate Outcomes

8.1 This project would contribute to the following Corporate Outcomes:

- A Good Quality of Life: Prosperous – Regeneration and economic development
- A Good Quality of Life: Healthy – Improved housing
- Effective Partnership Working – Customer-focused services

9.0 Resource Requirements

9.1 There are no additional resource requirements associated with the recommendation below.

10.0 Recommendation

10.1 The Committee is recommended to release the £7,500 Youth Homelessness Funding for expenditure on the project set out at section 3 above.

(Reason – to enable officers to administer the grant appropriately to reduce youth homelessness.)

Legal	Power: Homelessness Act 2002				
	Other considerations: Housing Act 1996				
Background Papers:					
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Date: 16 February 2012					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)