



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Policy and Resources Committee – 23 March 2015

Homelessness Prevention Grants 2015/16 & 2016/17

Purpose of report

To advise Members of progress on the application process for the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and to consider and approve the recommendations of the Voluntary Sector (Homelessness Prevention) Grants Member Panel on the award of the grants..

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 – Homelessness Prevention Grant bids

Appendix 3 – Homelessness Prevention Grants application scoring criteria.

To follow

Appendix 4 – Minutes of the meeting of the Homelessness Prevention Grants Panel on 23 March 2015.

Appendix 5 – Panel recommendations on the award of the Homelessness Prevention Grants for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The council has for a number of years received an annual Homelessness Prevention Grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for use in the prevention and reduction of homelessness.
- 1.2 Members agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting, on 13 October 2014, that the process for allocating the grant should change and a bid round was introduced to bring it in line with the process for Voluntary Sector Grants.
- 1.3 Policy and Resources Committee agreed that a panel of members should consider applications for funding from the Homelessness Prevention Budget and submit recommendations to the committee for grants to be made in 2014/15 and the level of funding for future years.
- 1.4 Funding bids for 2015/16 and 2016/17 would later be considered together using the same process as for Voluntary Sector Grants, and thereafter be brought in line with that application and evaluation process on a 3 year funding cycle.
- 1.5 The existing Voluntary Sector Grants Member Panel (the panel) was appointed to evaluate the applications received and make recommendations to committee on the awards of the grants. The panel comprised Councillors Glenvil Greenwood-Smith, Richard Lewis and Wendy Brackenbury.
- 1.6 Funding bids for 2014/15 were considered by the Homelessness Prevention Grants Panel and the panel's recommendations for the allocation of the grant were agreed by Policy and Resources Committee on 8 December 2014.
- 1.7 The panel did not however, feel able to make a recommendation in respect of funding requirements for future years as there would be a new council which would need to make that decision. Also, the likely level of bids was unknown, particularly in light of uncertainties about how the new non-accommodation based support arrangements

would work. The panel therefore wished to defer the decision on the level of funding for subsequent years as it was as yet unknown how much would be required and what priority it would be given.

- 1.8 Funding bids for 2015/16 and 2016/17 have now been invited and the deadline for return of the applications was 9 March 2015. Due to the need to provide certainty around funding available to the voluntary organisations it was felt that decisions should be made before the end of the financial year. It has not been possible to arrange a meeting of the panel until Monday, 23rd March. The minutes of that meeting (Appendix 4) and the panel's recommendations (Appendix 5) will therefore be tabled at this meeting for consideration by the committee.

2.0 Outline of the evaluation process

- 2.1 The Homelessness Prevention Grant is paid to the council by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for use in the prevention and reduction of homelessness. The HPG budget was originally £50,000 in 2012/13 but has been reduced by 10% per annum, in line with the anticipated reduction in the council's Revenue Support Grant. Without further recommendation from Councillors, the 10% reduction has been assumed in the MTFs. Therefore, the grant available for 2015/16 is £36,450 and for 2016/17 is £32,805, a total for the 2 years of **£69,255**. There is, however, a further **£5,465** which this committee agreed could be carried forward as underspend from the 2014/15 budget. The total fund available for allocation is therefore **£74,720**.

- 2.2 East Northamptonshire Council has chosen to allocate this fund partly for in-house purposes and partly as grants to voluntary organisations. There are therefore several internal demands on the fund, amounting to **£11,000**, which have to be met over the 2 years before the remainder can be allocated.

- 2.3 These are as follows:

- a) **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) - £4,000 over 2 years.**
The council is statutorily obligated to operate this service in bad weather (when the temperature is forecast to drop below zero for 3 consecutive nights) and East Northamptonshire Community Service operate the SWEP on our behalf at the Night Shelter.
- b) **Housing research and consultancy work – £6,000 over 2 years.** Some funding may be required to enable us to update our Strategic Housing Needs Assessment and other needs and consultancy work. Whilst fairly long term in nature, this work is important to ensure that our housing needs information is up to date and accurate so that we can plan affordable housing provision for future needs and prevent and reduce homelessness by ensuring the right housing is provided. Should any of this funding not be required, it will be carried over to future years.
- c) **Mediation work – approximately £1000 over 2 years.** Several teams within the council contribute to the work of the mediation service which assists with family and neighbour disputes and may prevent homelessness occurring where there is a potential threat of violence from or between relatives or neighbours.

- 2.4 Given the funding requirements at 2.3, the remaining funds for allocation amount to **£63,720**. Applicants have also been asked to indicate if a lesser amount would be acceptable and, if so, what could be delivered for the lower amount.

- 2.5 The evaluation process involves a detailed discussion of each application followed by each panel member independently scoring the applications. For this the criteria set out in Appendix 3 are used. Panel members' individual scores are aggregated and the average taken to form the overall score. These, together with the panel's discussions, form the recommendations to committee on the grant awards for each application.

3.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

3.1 The services supported by all the grants are available to all residents of East Northamptonshire including individuals with protected characteristics. A full analysis of the implications is attached at Appendix 1.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 The Council is not under any obligation nor has any legal duty to provide grants to any organisation in the voluntary sector. However, the council is statutorily obliged to provide emergency accommodation under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol when the temperature is forecast to drop below zero for 3 consecutive nights.

5.0 Risk Management

5.1 There are no significant risks to the Council in relation to the recommendations of this report. However, failure to award grants promptly could have financial implications for those organisations who have applied. This could in turn impact negatively on the Council's reputation.

6.0 Resource and Financial Implications

6.1 Provision has been included in the 2015/16 revenue budget of £36,450 which is set to reduce by 10% to £32,805 in 2016/17. Without further recommendation from Councillors this assumption has been included in the MTFS.

6.2 The grants for 2015/16 and 2016/17 will be paid quarterly in line with quarterly monitoring meetings with each provider which will ensure all of the targets set out in each Grant Agreement are being met.

7.0 Constitutional Implications

7.1 There are no constitutional implications.

8.0 Corporate Outcomes

8.1 The voluntary sector grants contribute to our corporate outcomes as follows:-

- **Good quality of life** – the grants provide specialist services that help prevent and reduce homelessness in East Northamptonshire, together with consequent health and social problems associated with homelessness
- **Good value for money** – the Grant Agreements will focus on the achievement of specific outcomes which together with regular monitoring will ensure that the performance expected by the providers is achieved
- **Effective partnership working** – by working in partnership with voluntary organisations the available funding can be used to best effect and deliver better outcomes for potentially homeless people and the community.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1 The Committee is recommended to

1. Endorse the evaluation process undertaken by the Member Panel.
2. Approve the awards of the Homelessness Prevention Grants 2015/16 and 2016/17 as tabled.
3. Approve that any underspend in each year is carried over to the following year

(Reason – to enable the efficient and effective administration of the council's budget to prevent and reduce homelessness).

Legal	Power: Localism Act 2011				
	Other considerations: None				
Background Papers: Policy and Resources Committee – 13 October 2014 – Agenda Item 7 – Homelessness Prevention Budget Policy and Resources Committee – 8 December 2014 – Agenda Item 7 – Homelessness Prevention Budget					
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Date: 4 March 2015					
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