



Policy and Resources Committee 9 January 2017

Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding

Purpose of report

This report advises members of the bids which have been received in respect of the available Homelessness Prevention Grant funding for 2017/18 and recommends that the HPG panel be reconvened to consider the allocation of the funding.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 For a number of years the council has allocated Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) funding through its budget. The amount was originally set at £50,000 in 2012/13 but has decreased by 10% per annum in line with the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant allocation from the Government.

2.0 HPG funding for 2017/18

- 2.1 The Homelessness Prevention Grant funding provided through the council's budget will be **£29,525** in 2017/18.
- 2.2 Bids from external agencies for the funding have now been received as follows:

	£
Night shelter running costs	5,000
Night shelter support work	5,000
Recovery House	5,000
Foundations Project (new project)	5,000
High St South support work	11,247
Shoemaker Court support work	11,247
Total	42,494

- 2.3 There are also internal demands on the money as follows:

	£
In house purposes e.g. research and consultancy, home ownership promotional events, adaptations on new developments	3,000
SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol)	2,000
E-learning project	1,000
Mediation work	500
Total	6,500

- 2.4 Total current 'bids' for the £29,525 allowed for in the 2017/18 budget are therefore £48,994.

3.0 Issues to consider

3.1 The Housing Policy Working Party (HPWP) at its meeting on 7 December 2016 received a report from the Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager which highlighted

- a) the bids for the available HPG funding (see above)
 - b) further duties which are likely to be placed on the council as a result of the Homelessness Prevention Bill
 - c) Proposals in the bill include increased duties to people threatened with homelessness, to those groups particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless, and to those who are not considered to be in priority need. The increased duties would have a significant impact on the work of the housing team and on the operation of the Housing Options Contract, together with likely increased contract costs. There may also be resultant increased temporary accommodation costs increasing homelessness pressures in the district
- Homelessness numbers remain relatively low in the district compared to neighbouring authorities, largely as a result of the high level of homelessness prevention work undertaken by the housing team. Nevertheless, applications and acceptances under the homelessness legislation are increasing as can be seen in the table at 3.2 below. Homelessness applications are also increasing in complexity, with increasing debts and family problems such as domestic violence and child protection issues.

3.2

Year	No. of applications	% increase	No. of acceptances	% increase	Homelessness Preventions
2014/15	114		42		242
2015/16	125	10%	48	15%	266
2016/17					
Actual to 30.9.16	70		31		140
Projected to 31.3.17	140	12%	62	30%	280

The cumulative increase in applications in the 2 years from 2014/15 to 2016/17 is therefore predicted to be 23% (from 114 to 140), with an almost 50% increase in acceptances (from 42 to 62).

3.3 HPWP agreed to recommend to this Committee that the Homelessness Prevention Grants Panel should be reconvened to analyse the various bids for the HPG funding and make recommendations to this Committee on how it should be allocated.

3.4 HPWP also noted that further consideration will have to be given to future HPG funding requirements in the light of the increasing pressures and duties outlined at 3.1 above. It is proposed that this is added to the Grants Panel's work alongside its consideration of the bids for 2017/18.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.1 The allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant funding will have a positive impact in respect of social exclusion by preventing and alleviating homelessness. An Equality Impact Assessment will be included with the recommendations of the Panel for the allocation of funding when they are brought to this Committee for approval.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The council has a statutory duty under the housing and homelessness legislation to accommodate households found to be homeless and in priority need and to prevent homelessness where this is possible. Those homeless but not in priority need are due a lesser duty but the duty still includes the provision of advice and assistance to find accommodation. The council's duties will be increased when the Homelessness Reduction Bill becomes law.
- 5.2 Whilst there is no legal duty to provide grants to any organisation in the voluntary sector, the council is statutorily obliged to provide emergency accommodation under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol when the temperature is forecast to fall below zero degrees Centigrade for 3 consecutive nights.

6.0 Risk Management

- 6.1 There is a risk that homelessness will increase in the district and that the council will have to pay the additional costs associated with the risk. The council's risk register includes RM PLN 014 – 'Increase in homelessness applications'. The risk score has recently increased to 6 in recognition of the increased pressures described above. The causes of the risk include new legislation, the impact of welfare reform and the failure of homelessness prevention measures. Its effects include:
- an increase in the need for emergency accommodation
 - increased costs of providing B&B and other temporary accommodation
 - an increase in homeless households given priority for rehousing leading to longer waiting times for others.
- 6.2 If funds to voluntary organisations are withdrawn or reduced in order to meet in-house calls on the available funding, there is a risk that they will no longer be able to operate their services, or be able to provide the current levels of support to homeless households who often need assistance with budgeting, debt management, parenting skills, addiction counselling etc.

7.0 Resource and Financial Implications

- 7.1 Bids for the available HPG funding for 2017/18 exceed the £29,525 allowed for in the council's budget. The Homelessness Prevention Grants Panel will therefore be required to decide which bids should receive financial support from the fund.
- 7.2 Future increases in homelessness in the district and changes to legislation will continue to place additional pressures on available funding and may lead to additional costs to process the increased level of applications, together with increased temporary accommodation costs.

8.0 Constitutional Implications

- 8.1 There are no constitutional implications arising from the report.

9.0 Customer Service Implications

- 9.1 Any increase in homelessness applications will have an impact on calls and visits to both the council's and the contractor's offices. The council will need to ensure that adequate services are provided to meet our statutory duties towards people who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness.

10.0 Corporate Outcomes

10.1 The Homelessness Prevention Grant Fund contributes to the following corporate outcomes:



- Good Quality of Life – the grants provide assistance and services that help reduce homelessness in the district, together with consequent health and social problems associated with homelessness
- Good Value for Money – homelessness prevention saves the council money in the longer term by limiting the costs of temporary accommodation
- Effective Partnership Working – by working in partnership with RPs and voluntary organisations, the funding can be used to best effect and deliver better outcomes for homeless people and the community.

11.0 Recommendation

11.1 The Committee is recommended to reconvene the Homelessness Prevention Grants Panel to consider:

- a) the bids for 2017/18
- b) the evidence of increasing homelessness and the implications of impending legislation in respect of future requirements for Homelessness Prevention Grant funding.

(Reason – to ensure the fair and transparent allocation of the available funding and ensure appropriate funding of statutory duties)

Legal	Power: Localism Act 2011				
	Other considerations: Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance				
Background Papers:					
Person Originating Report: Carol Conway, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager ☎ 01832 742078 ✉ cconway@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
Date: 14 th December 2016					
CFO		MO		CX	