

Homelessness Prevention Grant Panel Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of

Wednesday, 29th March 2017 at 9.30am

In the Member's Room, East Northamptonshire House

Present:

Councillors: Councillor Glenvil Greenwood Smith (Chair)
Councillor Tony Boto
Councillor Val Carter

Officers: Michelle Drewery, Finance Manager
Mike Greenway, Community Partnerships Manager
Carol Conway, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager
Louise Bagley, Housing Services Officer

1.0	Apologies
1.1	There were no apologies.
2.0	Minutes of meeting of 9th March 2017
2.1	The Minutes of the meeting of 9th March 2017 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
3.0	Recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee
3.1	Following visits to the projects, panel members had been impressed by the standard of accommodation and by the good support services offered to residents at Shoemaker Court and High Street South. It was considered these projects offered continuing good value for money. Panel members were satisfied that the bids from Midland Heart in respect of both Shoemaker Court and High Street South should be met in full.
3.2	Panel members had found the ENCS accounts confusing and had requested Michelle Drewery, Finance Manager, to look at them. Michelle had requested further information from ENCS and had studied the accounts in detail to ascertain the levels of grant requested compared with income and expenditure, together with reserves held. She explained her findings to the panel.
3.3	East Northants Community Services who had bid for both the Night Shelter and the Recovery House were noted to have moved from a position in 2015 of expenditure exceeding income, to forecasting surpluses in 2017. In addition, reserves in 2015 were minimal but a substantial reserve pot was anticipated for 2017. The Recovery House in particular was seen to be in surplus, with

	considerable payments of Housing Benefit received.
3.4	It was noted that the organisation had gone through a transitional period as a result of their partnership with Green Pastures, a Social Enterprise Company, and the acquisition of the Recovery House and several move-on properties. It was further noted that the build up of reserves was in line with Charity Commission recommendations.
3.5	Mike Greenway, Community Partnerships Manager, reported that East Northamptonshire Council had commissioned Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire to identify issues charitable organisations were facing and to look at the financial stability of them. This follows the closure of Wellingborough & East Northants Women's Aid (WENWA) and the impacts it had on East Northamptonshire residents. The council had concerns about some charities operating with extremely low reserves making them vulnerable to failure and leading to the loss of services in the district.
3.6	The panel felt there was potential to improve ENCS's accounting procedures. Michelle Drewery and Mike Greenway would be willing to help the organisation in this regard.
3.7	Concern was also raised, following a visit to the Night Shelter, about the standard of the accommodation. The panel considered that rather than concentrating on such a rapid build up of reserves, some of the surpluses should be diverted to improving or replacing the accommodation offered at the Night Shelter, potentially in partnership with a Registered Provider. The panel considered that the Night Shelter was providing good value for money but that it would need to ensure it continued to do so. If the council was providing funding to an organisation it should ensure the limited funds available were allocated appropriately to provide a good standard of service and promote best practice. It was accepted that improvements would take time to be delivered but it was anticipated that the newly appointed Operations Manager at ENCS would be able to set out a plan for moving forward.
3.8	It was agreed by the panel that they would award the grants to ENCS as requested for 2017/18 but that in future years they would expect the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved accounting procedures • Recovery House to become self-financing • Plans and a timetable to be put in place for the improvement of the accommodation at the Night Shelter.
3.9	The panel therefore considered and agreed their decision on each of the applications as follows:

3.10	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Application</th> <th>Decision</th> <th>Award Given</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Midland Heart – Shoemaker Court</td> <td>Approved</td> <td>£11,247</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Midland Heart – High St South</td> <td>Approved</td> <td>£11,247</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENCS - Night Shelter running costs, counselling and support*</td> <td>Approved</td> <td>£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENCS – Recovery House**</td> <td>Approved</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Internal Homelessness Support Services</td> <td>Approved</td> <td>£ 4,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total to be awarded</td> <td></td> <td>£42,994</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*The Panel noted their concerns about the standard of accommodation at the Night Shelter and the grant was awarded in the expectation of a plan being put in place during 2017/18 to improve the facilities, together with improved accounting procedures.</p> <p>**The Panel noted that the Recovery House was now showing substantial surpluses and would be expected to be self-financing in future years.</p>	Application	Decision	Award Given	Midland Heart – Shoemaker Court	Approved	£11,247	Midland Heart – High St South	Approved	£11,247	ENCS - Night Shelter running costs, counselling and support*	Approved	£10,000	ENCS – Recovery House**	Approved	£ 5,000	Internal Homelessness Support Services	Approved	£ 4,500	Total to be awarded		£42,994
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3.11	The Panel expressed their thanks to Michelle Drewery for her assistance.																					
4.0	Consideration of future homelessness prevention funding requirements																					
4.1	A report on the future funding requirements for homelessness prevention would be brought to a future meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.																					
5.0	Confirmation of recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee																					
5.1	The Panel Resolved to Recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 April 2017 the award of grant funding totalling £42,994 to the projects as outlined in 3.8 above.																					
6.0	Date of next meeting																					
6.1	It was agreed that a date for the next meeting of the panel would be scheduled for late April/early May to review the future funding requirements.																					
	The meeting concluded at 10.25am.																					