

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup> 2008**

**OUTURN EXPENDITURE OF CLG (Formerly ODPM) HOMELESSNESS GRANT FUNDING FOR 2007/08, UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND PROPOSEDED USE OF GRANT FOR HOMELESSNESS PREVENTATIVE SCHEMES FOR 2008/09 – 2010/11.**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor P. Whittaker
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Environment

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Since the Homelessness Act 2002, the Government has allocated grant funding to local authorities to prevent and tackle homelessness and to help achieve the Government target set for each LA of halving the number of homeless people living in temporary accommodation by 2010.
- 1.2 The annual grant to BDC, allocated through Communities and Local Government (CLG) has been used to fund a range of homelessness support services and schemes that focus upon the prevention of homelessness and repeat homelessness in the District.
- 1.3 This report provides members with information relating to:
- The schemes in place in this District funded by CLG Grant during 07/08 which provide support to the homeless or help to prevent homelessness.
  - The impact the preventative services have had on reducing homeless presentations and acceptances and the authorities performance against the Government target of reducing the use of temporary accommodation by 2010.
  - The successful bid made by us for additional CLG homelessness grant and the funding that has been allocated for 2008/09.
  - Details of the schemes recommended by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group to receive grant funding for 2008/09.

- Proposals to utilise additional grant funding to address under occupation and to make better use of existing housing stock in the District.
- 1.3 This source of homelessness funding has been received for the past 5 years and has been approved by members for allocation to schemes in accordance with the recommendations made by the multi agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the update on the homelessness preventative and support schemes funded through CLG Homelessness Grant during 2007/08 be noted.
- 2.2 That the increased level of CLG Homelessness Grant funding and three year allocation process for the period 2008/09 – 2010/11 be noted.
- 2.3 That the Council's performance in halving the use of temporary accommodation two years in advance of the Government's target date be noted.
- 2.4 That the submissions for the funding of schemes recommended by the Bromsgrove Homelessness Steering Group set out at Sect 7 of the report be approved to receive funding from the 2008/09 – 2010/11 allocation of homelessness grant .
- 2.5 That the additional bids for funding of schemes submitted since the announcement of additional grant funding (set out at Sect 7.3 of the report) be refused.
- 2.6 That the surplus additional grant funding be allocated to the temporary employment of an Under Occupation Officer to identify and develop opportunities to make better use of existing housing stock in the District.
- 2.7 That the Head of Planning & Environment Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing be granted delegated authority to re-allocate any under spend or make further adjustments necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grant allocation for 2008/09 in support of existing or new schemes.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Since the Homelessness Act 2002, the Government has allocated grant funding to local authorities to prevent and tackle homelessness

and repeat homelessness and to help achieve the Government target set for all local housing authorities to halve the number of homeless people living in temporary accommodation by 2010. Since its inception, the annual grant to BDC, allocated through Communities and Local Government (CLG) has been used to fund a range of homelessness support services provided in the District by a range of partner organisations.

3.2 The Government requires the following outcomes to be delivered by the grant:

- Reduced and sustained reduction in the level of rough sleeping by at least two thirds below the level in 1998.
- Avoidance of long-term use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families with households with children or a pregnant woman.
- By 2010 end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people between 16 and 17 years of age.
- Reduction in the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.

3.3 As the Council experiences minimal or no rough sleeping and has low usage of B&B (having used hostel accommodation or self contained dispersed units to house homeless families), the first two requirements (above) are currently being controlled.

Using capital funding, the Council has made more self contained dispersed temporary accommodation available to homeless families through purchase and repair (Buy Backs) schemes thus improving the standard of temporary accommodation offered. However, in terms of the final outcome, this does not actually reduce the use of temporary accommodation and this is where sound preventative services come into play to achieve:

- The Council's strategic aim of reducing the overall use of temporary accommodation, and
- The Council's strategy to phase out the use of hostel type temporary accommodation.

Reducing homelessness through Homelessness Prevention and Support Services provided through the CLG Homelessness Grant are fundamental to the ability of the Council to make progress, and maintain minimal use of temporary accommodation (in accordance with government targets) and phase out the use of Hostel accommodation without impacting on the Council's consistently low use of B&B.

4. **Schemes funded by CLG Grant during 2007/08 which provide support to the homeless and/or help to prevent homelessness.**

- 4.1 Up until now, the grant has been allocated on an annual basis for one year at a time. For 2007/08, the Council received CLG homelessness grant funding of £60,000 which together with some carry forward funding from 2006/07 provided a total grant availability of £79,000
- 4.2 Members may recall that as the Strategic Housing Authority, BDC coordinates and leads the Bromsgrove Homelessness Strategy Steering Group which in partnership with a range of organisations has developed a strategy and action plan to address the support and needs of the homeless and developed schemes aimed at the prevention of homelessness. This action plan is imbedded in the Council's own Housing Strategy (2006 – 2011) which gained 'Fit For Purpose' accreditation by the Government Office of the West Midlands in 2006.
- 4.2 This time last year, the Executive Cabinet gave approval to the grant funding for 2007/08 being used in accordance with the recommendations made by the Bromsgrove Homelessness Steering Group. The Executive Cabinet also gave delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder to re-allocate any under spend.

The grant funding for 2007/08 has therefore been allocated and utilised as follows:

Original Allocation of CLG Homeless Grant 2007/08		
	Bids Accepted	Actual Exp
	£	£
Amount Carried Forward from 06/07	19,000	
Step Up Private Tenancy Scheme	2,000	2,000
CAB Debt Advice	12,000	6,000
Baseline Rent Deposit Scheme	9,000	9,000
Centrepont	1,000	1,000
Sanctuary Scheme	1,000	1,000
Floating Homelessness Prevention Officers	24,000	24,000
BDHT Home Visiting Service	30,000	15,000
Total	79,000	58,000

Grant	60,000	
Total Grant Available	79,000	
Underspend	0	21,000

An under spend £21,000 for 2007/08 will occur. £15,000 of which is due to the delay in the implementation of a home visiting service at BDHT. However, the £15,000 has been approved for this additional work and will be used to continue to fund the service for 2008/09. The remaining under spend is due to the restructuring of the CAB housing

advice service, through which a saving was made of £6,000 which has been carried forward for allocation under the 2008/09 grant allocation.

A additional award of homelessness grant (see table below) was made in September 2007 to fund specific schemes to help achieve the Governments target to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. This funding has contributed towards the Council achieving this target at the end of Dec 2007, two years early.

<b>Additional 20,000 Homelessness Grant Award for 2007/08</b>		
Baseline Rent Deposit Scheme	9,000	9,000
Temporary Accommodation Reduction	3,000	3000
Nighstop Pilot	3,000	
Homelessness Module - Abritas	5,000	
	<b>20,000</b>	

4.2 The **2007/08 funded schemes** are progressing as follows:

#### **CAB Specialist Debt Advice Service**

This specialist service has now been amalgamated into the General Housing Advice Service which is provided for the Council by CAB. It offers assistance and representation for potentially homeless clients. The work has shown to be highly successful in achieving positive results in the prevention of homelessness. The majority of their work has been concentrated on money advice/repossession cases.

#### **Baseline Rent Deposit Scheme (Private Tenancy Scheme) for under 25's**

BYHF have developed a 'Private Tenancy Scheme' which can provide three alternative incentives to encourage Private Landlords to let their accommodation to young people. These are Rent Deposits, Rent guarantees and rent in advance. During 2007 it was identified that the scheme required additional officer hours to meet demand and a bid for additional funding was submitted to CLG to increase the current post from part time to full time so that more time can be spent recruiting landlords to the scheme.

#### **Centrepoint**

Centrepoint's progress in raising awareness of homelessness issues with health professionals has been slow due to staff changes and a difficulty in establishing a contact within the PCT. Both of these issues have now been resolved.

#### **Sanctuary Scheme – Bromsgrove District Council**

There have been no calls for the provision of Sanctuary Schemes during 2007/08; therefore, funding available will be carried forward to 2008/09 in readiness for any cases of DV requiring assistance.

### **Floating Support – Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT)**

This scheme provides non tenure specific floating support to customers who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service was set up during January 2007 therefore there is no evidence of outcomes at this early stage. There was a delay in setting up the service which resulted in an under spend of homelessness grant of £4k which was re-allocated to pilot the following two schemes:

**1. Step Up Private Tenancy Scheme (Rent Deposit / Bond) for over 25's – Bromsgrove District Council**  
Utilising the under spend of CLG grant the Council was able to pilot the 'Step Up' private tenancy scheme for over 25's. At the end of March the scheme had helped two households access private rented accommodation.

**2. Spend to Save Scheme – Bromsgrove District Council**  
Part of the under spend of CLG grant was also earmarked for opportunities to prevent homelessness through a 'Spend to Save' scheme. Whilst BDHT have been encouraged to consider innovative use of these monies, no applications have been forthcoming at present. It is hoped that now BDHT has agreed to re-structure its service towards more prevention work, that this fund will be better utilised during 2007/08.

### **Prevention of Homelessness through Home Visits – Bromsgrove District Housing Trust**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006 the Strategic Housing Team met with Sarah Cumberland, Homelessness Expert from CLG and reviewed the Council's performance in respect of homelessness and the use of Temporary Accommodation. A number of recommendations were identified to deliver improvement in performance and following the meeting a further £15k CLG Homelessness Grant was awarded for the Council to develop a home visiting service through BDHT.

Due to some staffing difficulties at BDHT, commencement of the service was delayed; however we have committed these monies to BDHT for a two year period and accordingly need to carry the £15k forward to be drawn during 2007/08.

**5.0 The impact that preventative services have had on reducing homeless presentations and acceptances and the authorities performance against the Government target of reducing the use of temporary accommodation by 2010.**

5.1 The number of people presenting as homeless, those accepted and the outcome of homelessness prevention services are monitored by the Strategic Housing Team on a quarterly basis. The table below indicates a trend of reducing homeless presentations and acceptances and a growing number of cases that are being prevented from becoming homeless.

5.2 In 2004, the Government set all housing authorities a target of reducing the number of homeless clients living in temporary accommodation by 2010. For Bromsgrove, this meant reducing our numbers from 68 to 34, which whilst aiming to phase out the use of hostels and retain minimal use of B&B would be a difficult task to achieve without sound preventative services.

5.3 At the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007, we achieved the target figure of 34 when we recorded only 33 clients occupying temporary accommodation. This means that the Council, with the support of BDHT, CAB, Baseline and partner support services achieved the governments target two years ahead of the deadline. It must be recognised that changing circumstances such as any increase in mortgage repossessions may alter our performance in the future, but it proves that the prevention services employed have assisted in meeting the target (2years early) within the climate that it was set.

	<b>2004/5</b>	<b>2005/6</b>	<b>2006/7</b>	<b>Up to Sept 07</b>	<b>Up to Dec 07</b>
<b>Homeless Presentations</b>	320	341	249	89	
<b>Homeless Acceptances</b>	141	175	122	55	
<b>Cases prevented from being homeless</b>	Not recorded	52	76	87	109
<b>Numbers in temp accom</b>	75	97	63	50	33

**6.0 The CLG Homelessness Grant funding that has been allocated for 2007/08.**

- 6.1 The CLG have allocated Homelessness Grant of £80,000pa for the next three financial years, 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11.
- 6.2 For the first time since its introduction, the grant has been allocated for a three year period thus enabling for security and forward planning of services.

**7.0 Details of the schemes recommended by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group to receive grant funding for 2008/09.**

- 7.1 At the last meeting of the Homelessness Steering Group on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2007, bids for 2008/09 were considered. At the time of the meeting, the allocation for 08/09 had not been announced and accordingly the Steering Group considered bids against an anticipated allocation of £60,000. The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group recommended the following schemes for approval.

Name of Project	Priority of scheme	Initial Bid £	Grant Recommended £	Period of grant	Outcomes  Other Considerations
BYHF – Private Tenancy Scheme for under 25's	1		18,000	3 years	Continuation of scheme offering rent deposit, rent in advance and support to assist under 25's to access private rented accommodation
BDHT – Floating Support Service	2	24,600	24,000	3 years	Continuation of the floating support service for homeless or potentially homeless. This scheme is jointly



					funded by Supporting People and BDHT.
New Start Re-use and Resettlement Project	3	5,000	5,000	3 years	
Spend to Save	4		3,000		Additional funding to resolve homeless and potentially homeless situations and avert use of temporary accommodation.
Nightstop	5	8,000	8,000		A pilot fund to enable us to purchase places of temp accom with trained families for single, non priority homeless people in the Redditch Nightstop Scheme.
Centrepoint	6	3,500	3,500		Subject to discussion regarding Centrepoint's local and countywide role in educational awareness of homelessness for younger people.
BDHT Homelessness Focus	7		500		To carry out consultation in the form of

Groups					focus groups with homeless applicants which, if approved, would be match funded by BDHT.
BDC Consultation Fund	8	1,000	1,000		To enable the council to consult with younger and homeless people upon services provided, reasons for homelessness and to investigate solutions.
			£63,000		

7.2 Therefore, the recommended bids amount to £63,000. The Government's confirmation of grant allocation announced in December was confirmed as £80,000 and the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group were given a further opportunity to submit bids for the remaining £17k plus £6k under spend from 07/08.

7.3 The following additional bids were received:

£1,000 to deliver an education initiative to schools,  
£5,000 for BYHF to train 5 staff to become mediators  
£7,000 for BYHF to provide a Life Skills Coach  
£1,000 for New Song to provide an Office Administrator  
£1,000 for New Song to provide a New Starts Resettlement project

7.4 Having reviewed the Council's priorities, good practice on prevention of homelessness and the Audit Commission Key Lines Of Enquiry, it is recommended that these bids are rejected in favour of a new initiative to make best use of existing housing stock by tackling under occupation as outlined in Sect 8 below.

**8.0 Proposals to utilise additional grant funding to address under occupation and to make better use of existing housing stock in the District.**

- 8.1 The continuing shortage of affordable housing in the District makes it ever more important to make best use of existing housing stock in the District and it is proposed that the remaining grant of £23k be directed towards the temporary recruitment of a Under occupation Officer.
- 8.2 It is proposed that the temporary post within the Strategic Housing Team could identify those under occupying social and lower quartile market housing to offer help and support to move to more appropriate accommodation. It is acknowledged that many tenants owners make a personal decision to under occupy a home and this will be respected, however where residents are prevented from moving, by being unable to coordinate a move or being unable to identify alternative accommodation the assistance from an Under Occupation Officer could help enable a more sizeable home to become available for occupation by larger families.
- 8.3 With the implementation of Choice Based Lettings anticipated for June 08, those under occupying their properties will be placed in the highest band to encourage them to down size and make their property available for families in housing need. To maximise the effect of this, an Under occupation Officer would be able to identify those currently under occupying social housing, ascertain the type of property that would attract them to consider a move, help identify appropriate properties and offer support with planning and arranging a house move.

## **9.0 Concluding Comments**

- 9.1 Members are asked to approve the recommendations (set out in the table at 7.1 of the report) put forward by the Bromsgrove Homelessness Steering Group for funding of £63,000. Three of the schemes (amounting to £ 47,000 require approval for the three year period of the present allocation to enable sustainability of the schemes). The remaining schemes will run for one year only with the opportunity of being re considered for funding this time next year against other competing bids at the time.
- 9.2 Members are asked to approve that the remaining £23,000pa be allocated for the three year period to the appointment of a temporary Under Occupation Officer, a position that would be annually reviewed against outcomes.
- 9.3 As in previous years, Members are asked to grant the Head of Planning & Environment Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder For Strategic Housing delegated authority to approve re-allocation of any under spend or make further adjustments necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grant allocation for 2008/09 in support of existing or new schemes.

## **10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Grant funding under the Homelessness (In Need of Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 is allocated by the CLG to local authorities in accordance with their expenditure upon schemes up to the allocation limit. Accordingly the expenditure incurred in supporting the schemes does not fall upon this authority.

## **11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Prevention of homelessness through the schemes developed and funded through CLG Grant assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties to homeless applicants under the Homeless provisions of the Housing Act 1996 and the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 that prevents local authorities from placing homeless families or expectant mothers in B&B type accommodation.

## **8.0 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

### **8.1 Objective 1 – Regeneration (Town Centre and Housing)**

Improved standard of support and preventative service for homeless people.

### **8.2 Objective 2 – Improvement (Customer Service)**

Improved service to customers by the ability to provide a higher standard of prevention and support service together with more choice in solutions available.

### **8.3 Objective 3 – (Sense of Community and Wellbeing)**

Homelessness prevention, reduction and support influences health and wellbeing.

### **8.4 Priority 4 – Environment – (Clean Streets)**

Reduction of homelessness helps a more planned allocation of housing thus supporting better neighbourhood integration and therefore reduces any negative impact upon the environment.

## **9.0 RISK MANAGEMENT**

9.1 If the recommended schemes are not approved there is a risk that more households who are threatened with homelessness or who are in housing need will have limited alternative options. There is the risk that they may have to make a homeless approach and this could consequently lead to the following risks:

- Inability by the Council to meet the statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation in the District thus necessitating placement in B&B accommodation outside of the District.
- Increased B&B costs.

- Weakened performance against BV 183a (number of families placed in B&B) which is currently zero.
- Inability to maintain the DCLG target of reducing temporary accommodation by 50% by the year 2010

## 10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This scheme will benefit the Council's customer, by offering household's more options to prevent their homelessness. Where possible to enable them to remain in their own homes, the Council will be encouraging them to be more independent and take responsibility for their housing situation.

The scheme will also benefit the larger community as there will be fewer households making homeless approaches, and in turn less homeless households in the district.

## 11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues
None
Personnel Implications
The potential ability to employ a person on a temporary basis would be referred to the Head of HR for consideration in respect of any re-deployment requirements.
Governance/Performance Management
Ability to improve and maintain performance against BVPI's as detailed in the report.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998
None
Policy
None
Environmental
None
Equalities and Diversity

Two of the recommended schemes are to provide Focus Group and consultation opportunities. These will assist the Council and BDHT in identifying E&D issues relevant to homeless and potentially homeless persons and provide an opportunity to review services provided.

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	YES and he supports the recommendations.
Acting Chief Executive	Yes
Corporate Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

13.1 The homeless prevention services and issues covered in the report are District wide and are not specific to any particular ward.

**14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14.1 None

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