

CABINET

2 March 2016

HOMELESSNESS GRANT FUNDING APPROVAL FOR HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND TO SUPPORT HOMELESS FAMILIES FOR 2016/17

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis – Head of Community Services
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Since the Homelessness Act 2002, the Government has allocated homelessness grant funding to local authorities to prevent and tackle homelessness.
- 1.2 The annual homelessness grant to BDC, allocated through Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has been used each year since 2002 to fund a range of homelessness support services and schemes that focus upon the prevention of homelessness and repeat homelessness. These schemes play a role in meeting the Council's Strategic Purposes:
- Help me live my life independently
 - Help me find somewhere to live in my locality
 - Help me to be financially independent
- 1.3 BDC has made £112k homelessness grant available for the 2016/17 financial year. However, the funding reductions made by the County Council to housing-related support are now being felt in the current financial position of local service providers. As a result, there is a need to adjust funding arrangements accordingly for this financial year and to begin to plan ahead for future demand coming out of the local housing market.
- 1.4 In order to do this we propose to reduce the amount of grant provided to the majority of the agencies delivering homeless services in Bromsgrove, and to increase funding allocated to the remainder listed in para 3.5. Individual partners have been consulted about these proposed changes and they have confirmed they can continue to provide a service after the proposed reduction in grant. It is further proposed to earmark the remaining grant with a view to potentially creating a new tenancy sustainment approach in Bromsgrove, pending the outcome of any recommendations following analysis of the current position by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board 'Homelessness in Bromsgrove Task Group'.

- 1.5 This report seeks Members approval to award Homelessness Grant to specific schemes recommended by the Strategic Housing Manager and delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder and Head of Service to allocate any underspend of Homelessness Grant during 2016/17.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the grant funded initiatives of £108,742 in Table 1 para. 3.5 recommended by the Strategic Housing Manager be approved to receive funding from the Homelessness Grant for 2016/17.
- 2.2 That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to use £16,258 unallocated Homelessness Grant during the year or make further adjustments as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the homelessness Grant for 2016/17 in support of existing or new schemes.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Council has agreed a budget of £112k for the 2016/17 Homelessness Grant allocation.
- 3.2 Worcestershire County Council has confirmed an allocation of £11,200 to the Council to part fund the Young Persons Pathway Worker post and £1,800 for homelessness prevention from the Housing Related Support service budget administered by Worcester City Council.
- 3.3 The Council therefore has a total £125k for Homelessness Prevention Services in 2016/17. We have also received confirmation of homelessness grant for the following three years:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
£111,132	£111,347	£111,720

Legal Implications

- 3.4 Prevention of homelessness through the initiatives and schemes developed and funded through DCLG Grant assists the Council in meeting its statutory duties to those threatened with homelessness and homeless applicants under the Homeless provisions of the Housing Act 1996, and the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.5 Having reviewed services provided in 2015/16 officers propose that all the services continue to receive funding in 2016/17 except CAB Money Confidence - following discussion with CAB it has been agreed between both organisations to discontinue this funding and to provide the service in a different way.

Table 1- Current services and Service Continuation Funding for 2016/17

Homelessness Grant	2015/16 £	2016/17 £
BDHT Housing Options Service – home visits	15,000	12,000
Worcs Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator (Previously Homelessness Co-ordinator)	3,500	6,300
Night Assessment Centre	3,000	1,500
Step Up BDC Private Sector Scheme	14,074	15,798
CAB Money Confidence	17,600	0
Basement Drop In service	25,000	20,000
NewStarts Furniture Project	10,000	8,000
Fry Housing Related Support	25,000	20,000
St Basils Emergency Young Person's 'crash pad' specifically for Bromsgrove residents	6,800	7,900
St Basils Young Persons Pathway Worker (previous match-funding provided by St Basils no longer available)	4,000	17,244
Unallocated funds	0	16,258
Total committed expenditure	123,974	125,000

- 3.6 Although this year the focus is on reducing and realigning the funding available via the Homelessness Grant, data also shows there has been an increase in Housing Options interviews undertaken by BDHT over the last twelve months.

Year	Housing Options Interview
2015	742
2014	623
2013	818
2012	624
2011	806

- 3.7 Officers have concerns that continued welfare reforms, combined with the reduction in housing-related support available to tenants across all tenure types could mean that the number of customers requiring help to sustain their accommodation and avoid becoming homeless may well continue to increase over time. It should also be noted that county funding for emergency assistance via the Essential Living Fund will also cease at the end of March 2016 and the £30k of District allocation will be the only financial support available for emergency funding which may limit the opportunities available. As a result, pending further detailed analysis of any newly emerging trends, there may be a need to provide additional resources or services to enable customers of all tenures to avoid homelessness.
- 3.8 It is also noted that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board recently created a 'Homelessness in Bromsgrove Task Group'. Retaining the unallocated funds of £16,258 in the Homelessness Grant at this stage will therefore also enable the Council to have some financial capacity to respond to any homelessness-related recommendations that may come out of this Task Group.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.9 This grant will benefit the Council's customers, by offering household's more options to prevent their homelessness and where possible to enable them to remain in their own homes. These schemes play a role in meeting the Council's Strategic Purposes:
- Help me live my life independently
 - Help me find somewhere to live in my locality
 - Help me to be financially independent
- 3.10 The grant will also benefit the larger community as opportunities to prevent homelessness will be maximised.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 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 also therefore the risk that they may have to make a homeless approach and this could consequently lead to the following negative outcomes:
- Increased B&B costs
 - Increased rough sleeping in the District
 - Impacts on physical and mental health, educational achievement, ability to work and similar through increased homelessness

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- 4.2 All recipients of Homelessness Grant will enter into a grant agreement and have regular monitoring with officers on the delivery of the service

5. APPENDICES

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

7. KEY

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