



Item

WINTERCOMFORT - GRANT AWARD

To:

Councillor Kevin Price, Executive Councillor for Housing

Housing Scrutiny Committee 19/06/2018

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Wintercomfort is a registered charity in Cambridge, providing a range of services to people who are homeless, formerly homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service has three constituent parts; welfare services, which are primarily designed for those sleeping rough in the city, a learning and development service and the management of two social enterprises, which aim to employ those using Wintercomfort's services.
- 1.2 The service is strategically important to both the City and County Councils and both authorities provide grant funding to Wintercomfort to deliver the welfare and learning and development services element of the operation. The current grant funding agreement is due to expire on 30th September 2018 and Members are, therefore, asked to consider proposals, contained within this report, on future grant funding arrangements.

- 1.3 A wider report on the anticipated impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act (later enacted in April 2018) went to committee in September 2017 and included recommendations on the Homelessness Prevention Grant Programme. This included a commitment to grant fund Wintercomfort until 31.3.2019. However, this runs beyond the current grant period and the Council now wants to bring both the grant period and awards process for this grant in line with financial years.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 To agree, subject to any changes that may be made as part of the budget setting process and the formal adoption of the 2019/20 budget by Council, to award a new grant agreement to Wintercomfort, initially spanning a two and a half year period from 1st October 2018 to 31st March 2021
- 2.2 To allow delegated authority for the Head of Housing to determine, in consultation with Legal Services, whether to enter into a joint grant agreement with the County Council to fund the Wintercomfort service or whether to enter into separate agreements.
- 2.3 To agree the principle that from 2021/22 grant applications from Wintercomfort will not be considered in isolation, but will align with the Homelessness Prevention Fund Grant application process.

3. Background

- 3.1. In forming the recommendations for this committee to consider, officers have taken into account procurement, financial and legal advice, along with the views expressed by officers at the County Council, who are considering its own grant commitment concurrently.
- 3.2 The Learning and Development Service is an integral part of Wintercomfort day centre. The service runs alongside the welfare service by assisting service users to find a route out of homelessness by building self-esteem and confidence and offering a range of learning and personal development opportunities that enhance their quality of life and prospects of reintegrating with mainstream society and employment.

- 3.2 The service supports adult single homeless or formerly homeless people in the City of Cambridge. This includes all current service users of homelessness services and anyone who has been affected by homelessness. The service is open to all adults who fit this description including adults with mental health needs and substance misuse problems.
- 3.3 The service provides a wide range of activities, courses, support and placements that help to develop basic skills and motivation for individuals to make positive changes in their lifestyle. The service achieves this by providing activities including art, access to culture, formal education and training, gardening, information technology, literacy & numeracy, sport, employability support, life skills, volunteering opportunities, work placements, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.
- 3.4 Wintercomfort also provides a welfare service that enables access to facilities that allow homeless people to maintain dignity while working towards obtaining accommodation; this includes washing/showering/laundry facilities, signposting/advice to find accommodation, food, foot care, counselling and emotional support, budgeting and financial support. The Welfare Service also provides access to specialist advice and support services around accommodation, substance misuse, mental and physical health, animal welfare and legal advice.
- 3.5 The Council does not financially support Wintercomfort's two social enterprises, but they form part of a coherent pathway, which helps to provide a route out of homelessness for many service users and they add value to the financial contribution the City and County Councils make. The social enterprises are a cleaning and gardening business ('Overstream Clean') and a catering business ('Food 4 Food'). Both social enterprises support the wider objectives of the service by providing training, volunteering, work placements and employment to the service users of Wintercomfort.
- 3.6 The current grant agreement with Wintercomfort pre-dates the Council's review of the Homelessness Prevention Grant Programme, which concluded nearly three years ago and was reported to this committee in September 2015. This report sets out the conditions for the application and assessment process, monitoring arrangements. It also sets out the principle that applications should be considered simultaneously and adhere to the same approvals timeline.

- 3.7 The proposal to award a two and a half year grant, in the first instance, allows Wintercomfort sufficient time to adjust to the new process, whilst aligning its grant with financial years and the established approvals process.
- 3.8 Leading up to 31st March 2021 Wintercomfort will be invited to submit an application for grant funding again.
- 3.9 The Strategic Director has launched a Council-wide grant review process. The principles of this review are to achieve consistency of practice across the Council. Whilst this review is yet to conclude, the proposals in this report clearly support these principles.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

- 4.1 The grant funding amount for the two and a half year period proposed in this report totals £229,075 and equates to £91,630 per annum. The County Council currently contributes £36,175 per annum and is considering the grant application through its own approval processes. Funding to 31.3.2019 has already been approved by this committee as set out in paragraph 1.3.

(b) Staffing Implications

None

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be produced and published for this grant award ahead of the grant commencement in October of this year. The Council will also produce a collective EqIA for all grants awarded beyond April 2019. This EqIA will be produced and published for the autumn cycle when the wider Homelessness Prevention Grants programme will be considered by Housing Scrutiny Committee.

(d) Environmental Implications

None

(e) Procurement Implications

City Council Procurement, Finance and Legal Teams have been consulted and are satisfied that a grant agreement is appropriate.

(f) Community Safety Implications

The work that Wintercomfort does supports positive engagement in a range of activities, which contributes to reduced street presence and risk of anti-social behavior sometimes associated with those dependent on drugs and alcohol.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

This report represents the final implementation phase of a revised grant programme process as outlined in the previous committee report at appendix 1 and, as such, the consultations were completed in 2015. Further consultation will be taking place regarding the Council's wider review of grants as outlined in 3.9 above.

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

(a) Homelessness Prevention Grant Programme 2016-17 report to Housing Scrutiny Committee – September 2015

7. Appendices

None

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact David Greening, Head of Housing Services, tel: 01223 - 457997, email: david.greening@cambridge.gov.uk.

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