



To: Executive Councillor for Housing: Councillor Kevin Price

Report by: Tom Bremner, Interim Head of Housing

Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee 22/9/2016

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

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANTS PROGRAMME 2017-18

Key Decision

1. Executive summary

This report outlines a programme of grant funding to organisations providing homelessness prevention services. All grant awards are for 2017-18 only and applications for funding are submitted on an annual basis with two exceptions – please refer to paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4. Given the dual financial and homelessness pressures the Council is facing, it is important that the grants programme is both transparent and exposed to scrutiny.

All grants over £5000 are reviewed annually by this committee and decisions on approval or discontinuation are founded on a composite assessment of the following:

- Strategic relevance against four headline areas listed in the Housing Strategy (preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, minimising the use of temporary accommodation and maximising use of longer term housing solutions, enabling people to make informed choices about their housing, promoting sustained and settled lifestyles and minimising social exclusion)
- Financial viability
- Performance against measureable outcomes
- The organisation's need for financial support from the Council

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

1. To agree, subject to any changes that may be made as part of the budget setting process and the formal adoption of the 2017/18 budget by Council, the proposed grant funding allocations as outlined in appendix 1 of this report.
2. To agree delegated authority for the Head or Interim Head of Housing, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing, to agree ad hoc, in year, funding awards as outlined in paragraph 4.6 of this report

3. Background

- 3.1 The homelessness prevention grant programme is entirely funded from the General Fund. The programme is specifically designed to relieve pressure on the Council's statutory and non-statutory homelessness services and, while most recipients are from the voluntary and charitable sectors, the Council will consider funding statutory partners and internal departments where there are demonstrable homelessness prevention or alleviation outcomes.
- 3.2 Grant applications were invited in May and officer assessments were concluded in August. The table at appendix 1 lists the proposed allocations for 2017-18 along with details of grants funded in this current year but recommended for discontinuation from 1st April 2017.
- 3.3 The table at appendix 1 includes two funded projects which are not one year grants but are included in this report because they are funded from this budget and constitute homelessness prevention and alleviation activity. One is for a learning and development service run by Wintercomfort; this is a five year grant, jointly commissioned with the County Council. The service was originally put out to tender but Wintercomfort was the sole bidder when the service was last tendered. In addition the service offers much in terms of added value and, for these reasons a long term grant was agreed.
- 3.4 The other exception is the funding for Change, Grow, Live (Street and Mental Health Outreach Service). This is a contract and not a grant. The service was re-tendered earlier this year.

4. New awards and discontinuation of existing grants

- 4.1 This report proposes that the Council takes the street based anti-social behaviour role in house and uses its own Public Realm Enforcement to perform this function from April 2017. This role is

currently performed by the police and the numbers are continuing to rise, as are rough sleeping figures. The existing funding for a street life police officer post does not cover the entire cost of this officer and consequently the resource is not employed on a full time basis to tackle street based anti-social behaviour issues. From 2017-18 a new support resource is being introduced to support people begging on the streets to access services, tackle the root causes of their need to beg (most commonly alcohol or drug dependencies) and move away from begging activity altogether. This service will be funded and supported by the Safer Communities section. The Public Realm Enforcement service would work alongside this service to encourage engagement and facilitate enforcement action where individuals are not engaging with the support or where behaviours are problematic for the wider community. The advantage of bringing this work in house is that the work can form dedicated service and more easily directed and monitored.

- 4.2 A grant to Riverside English Churches Housing Group to assist with resettling service users from its hostels and shared housing in Cambridge is recommended for discontinuation because the organisation has significant funds in reserve and is adjudged not to require City Council funding to continue the service.
- 4.3 Discontinuation of funding is recommended for the Cambridge Eastern Europeans Homelessness Project. This project has been running for a number of years in Cambridge. Initially it was supported by external funding, but in recent years has been supported by Cambridge City and Fenland District Councils. During this period Change, Grow, Live has incorporated the learning gained from this project into its wider street outreach operation and this, allied with the fact that welfare reforms have made it increasingly difficult to deliver outcomes for this group, has led to the Council agreeing with the provider that a grant application would not be submitted for 17-18. Change, Grow Live will continue to support rough sleepers of Eastern European origin through its wider street outreach and mental health contract with the City and County Councils.
- 4.4 Funding for Cambridge Link Up is not being continued into 2017-18 as the organisation did not apply for a grant this year.
- 4.5 Aside from the proposal to fund the Council's Public Realm Enforcement service, the only other new grant award is for severe weather emergency provision (SWEP). Although SWEP has been coordinated by the Council for a number of years, it has been delivered by several different agencies. For 2017-18 the proposal is for Jimmy's Cambridge to offer all the accommodation provision on

one single site and receive an annual grant from the Council to provide this service. The service would, therefore, be managed by a grant agreement and be funded from the homelessness prevention grants budget. A request will be submitted through the budget setting process to move existing SWEP funds into this budget.

- 4.6 There is £16,064 in unallocated funds detailed in the table at appendix 1. These funds will be reserved for in year spending to be approved by the Interim Head of Housing in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing. Any initiatives to tackle rough sleeping will be prioritised for consideration under this fund given the acute difficulties the Council is facing in this area.

5. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The financial implications of the homelessness prevention grant programme are outlined at appendix 1. The figures provided assume a 1.9% inflationary uplift on last year's grant programme – this is to be confirmed through the budget setting process.

Existing SWEP funds are to be transferred into the homeless prevention grant funding programme budget (please refer to paragraph 4.5 above)

(b) Staffing Implications (if not covered in Consultations Section)

There are TUPE implications for the Council in relation to the member of staff, currently employed by the County Council to provide a rapid response service as part of the single homelessness scheme.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The services outlined in this report are targeted at vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups or those suffering financial disadvantage.

An EqIA is available as a background paper.

(d) Environmental Implications

+L - funding of furniture recycling by Cambridge Reuse helps to prevent landfill. There are no known adverse implications arising from the award of funding to any of the organisations contained within this report.

(e) Procurement

The Street and Mental Health Outreach Service contract exceeds the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) thresholds for service contracts and was subject to an OJEU compliant tender process when the service was re-tendered earlier this year. A separate report was brought to this committee last September and permission was given to re-tender the service.

(f) Consultation and communication

As part of the full grants value-for money review process conducted during 2015 and the Housing Strategy review, partners have been consulted on strategic direction for homelessness prevention services via the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Partnership in alignment with the Housing Strategy consultation.

(g) Community Safety

The contract for Street and Mental Health Outreach Services is specifically shaped to improve community safety by supporting efforts to tackle street-based anti-social behaviour, as is the grant funding for the Public Realm Enforcement service. Cambridge Women's Aid provides refuge and support for victims of domestic violence and makes a significant contribution to community safety in so doing. Evaluations of the Chronically Excluded Adults Service have shown significant reductions in costs to the Criminal Justice System.

5. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Equality Impact Assessment

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Homelessness Prevention Grant and contract awards 2017-18

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

Author's Name: David Greening
Author's Phone Number: 01223 - 457997
Author's Email: david.greening@cambridge.gov.uk