

## Appendix 2

### Further detail on areas for new or significantly increased funding for 2011-12

#### 1) Housing Options and Homelessness Quality Assessments

The Housing Options and Homelessness section is looking to commission an external organisation to conduct some quality assurance work on our services. In particular, we will be looking at customer service, case file management, information sharing and workflow arrangements. Achieving greater levels of customer feedback on services has been identified in the Improvement Plan for the Housing Options and Homelessness section.

We also intend to use this money to do some more benchmarking on our Housing Options and Homelessness services. We have done some work on this with Housing Quality Network but more needs to be done to understand how we are doing in value for money terms.

#### 2) Homelessness prevention fund / extension of discretionary housing payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are temporary top-up payments to cover benefit shortfalls for a limited period of time. Although Cambridge has been allocated £32,347 for 2011-12 for 2011-12 (an increase of £7,023 on the current year) officers in Revenues and Benefits are concerned that the fund will be heavily oversubscribed as the impact of benefit changes kick in. The Housing Options and Homelessness section will be meeting with Revenues and Benefits to discuss combining a homelessness prevention budget with the DHP fund. DHPs are not a permanent solution but do allow the Housing Options and Advice Team to 'buy time' for those potentially threatened with homelessness and explore alternative options.

#### 3) Social Enterprise Fund

The Housing Options and Homelessness section has opened discussions with Wintercomfort and Create to look at how we can support social enterprises focusing on finding employment for homeless people in Cambridge.

Create is an organisation recommended to Cambridge by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It is an award winning Social Enterprise. As a not-for-profit company they are committed to developing innovative training and employment opportunities for people who have been homeless, marginalised or vulnerable. Working in Leeds, Doncaster, Sunderland and Liverpool Create staff and volunteers are motivated and driven to rebuild their lives: wanting a hand up, not a hand out. Running businesses as diverse as outside catering, café's and retail Create offers people a real commercial workplace to develop their skills, getting a foot back on the ladder of making a meaningful contribution to society.

Discussions are at an early stage with these organisations but the Council wants to support social enterprises that deliver employment outcomes for homeless people.

#### 4) Homelessness prevention visits

Please also refer to 4.2 in the report. The Housing Options and Homelessness section has been piloting home visits as a prevention tool for 2 years now. In homelessness prevention good practice guides home visits are cited by local authorities as one of the most effective means of preventing homelessness. This has also proved to be the case in Cambridge and the section would like to extend the home visiting service by employing a full time home visiting officer in 2011-12.

#### 5) Cambridge Women's Aid (CWA)

The City Council already funds CWA through its grants to housing agencies programme. However, the new and additional funding for 2011-12 is a performance-related bonus payment system for achieving homelessness prevention outcomes.

#### 6) Private rented landlord liaison work

Please also refer to 4.2 in the report. In recognition that easing access to the private rented sector accommodation may prove to be more challenging given the forthcoming welfare rights changes (see appendix 1) and that encouraging landlords to work with the Council to house those in housing need may also prove difficult, the Housing Options and Advice Team requires additional staffing resource to:

- 1) educate landlords and lettings agents about the changes
- 2) facilitate early warnings links with landlords and tenants to try and avert homelessness on the basis of rent arrears in particular
- 3) promote new initiatives that are afoot in terms of private rented accommodation being advertised on the Home-Link system and private sector leasing, in particular.

7) Jimmy's Cambridge – Assessment Centre

Although of great strategic significance in terms of managing rough sleeping, the Council has not, aside from Housing Benefit payments, offered grant funding to the night shelter. As we move towards the development of an Assessment Centre in 2011-12 the Council wishes to provide financial support for the development of the service where it relates to strategic goals on homelessness and where these work streams do not qualify for Housing Benefit or Supporting People funding.