

Item

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANTS 2021-22

To:

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 19/01/2021

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines grant funding to organisations providing homelessness prevention services. It provides an overview of the process, eligibility criteria and budget in Section 3 and Appendix 1 details the applications received with recommendations for 2021-22 awards.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Homelessness Prevention Grants to voluntary, community and statutory organisations for 2021-22, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, subject to the budget approval in February 2021 and any further satisfactory information required of applicant organisations.

3. Background

- 3.1. **Budget** - Homelessness Prevention Grants are funded from the General Fund. In 2021-22 the total prevention funding available (net of recharges and subject to approval) is £695,770. By contrast, in 2020-

21 the amount of grant available for distribution to organisations (i.e. net of recharges) was £689,510, meaning a net increase in funding of £6,258 in 2021-22. 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 community sector, the Council will consider funding statutory partners and internal departments where the funding outcomes are met.

3.2 As in previous years, not all services recommended for funding in this round have been required to submit a grant application due to the following:

- a) to achieve strong competition among suppliers and a consistent longer-term service, a multi-year arrangement has been previously approved and a contract entered into with a supplier. An example of this is the Change, Grow, Live contract (the street outreach service).
- b) where the continuation of a service is considered to be vitally important to the achievement of the stated objectives; where the supplier is effectively the only possible provider; and where it is necessary to offer some surety to the supplier at an early stage to ensure that key staff are retained. An example of this is the dual diagnosis street project (DDSP) provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT), the mental health service provider for Cambridgeshire.

The table below sets out services falling into these categories.

Organisation	Purpose	Amount (£)
Change, Grow, Live	Street Outreach Project contract to March 2022	181,980
Homelessness Link	IT software for homeless client information to be documented and securely exchanged between partners	10,000
YMCA/Riverside	Young person's emergency bed spaces	10,000
DDSP (CPFT)	Two nurses providing mental health and substance abuse services to people on the street. (Please note that the full cost of this service is £125,000 with funding split between the	65,000

	homelessness prevention grant budget and another council fund).	
Total pre-allocated to services		266,980
Total HPG budget (net of recharges)		695,770
Total for remaining grant applications		428,790

- 3.3 **Corporate Grants Gateway** – Following a review in 2018, the gateway was implemented in 2019 to achieve greater transparency, consistency and accountability of grants to voluntary and community sector organisations for the following major grant funds:
- Community Grants
 - Area Committee Community Grants
 - Homelessness Prevention Grants
 - Sustainable City Grants
- 3.4 These funds are now managed by one team using the same process and timescale. The awards are considered across the funds at the same time to ensure a consistent and accountable process by experienced officers from the different service areas. The funds remain within their appropriate portfolios for decision making and to ensure alignment to each fund’s strategic priorities.
- 3.5 **Homelessness Prevention Grants** are awarded according to consistent criteria. Successful applications are those able to show that the grant-aided service will achieve the following outcomes:
- Primary Outcome - Reduce the levels of homelessness and rough sleeping in Cambridge
- Strategic Outcomes - As well as the primary outcome activities must achieve one or more of the following strategic outcomes:
- Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in Cambridge
 - Relieve homelessness and rough sleeping in Cambridge
- 3.6 Applications for 2021-22 Homelessness Prevention Grants were invited between August - 5th October 2020. A communications and publicity plan was implemented including a press release, newsletter articles, workshops, emails, networking and targeted conversations to promote the grant fund.

- 3.7 A range of activities have been undertaken to support organisations to understand the funding criteria and requirements needed for a successful application, including:
- Attending organisation's committee meetings, individual meetings
 - Training sessions and application workshops held jointly with Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS)
 - Application Guide detailing the priorities, outcomes and eligibility criteria and giving guidance on requirements, question by question
 - Factsheets, templates and signposting to other funding providers
- 3.8 Even though organisations were encouraged to engage with us for help and support with their applications some chose not to and some applications were received which did not meet the basic criteria of the fund, requesting funds for non-targeted activity.
- 3.9 The Homelessness Prevention Grants fund continues to fund Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) for several properties supporting the funding outcomes. These are listed in Appendix 1.
- 3.10 All applications were assessed against the same assessment matrix developed around the priorities and outcome, ensuring a consistent approach. These assessments were then moderated by strategy officer meetings informing the award recommendations detailed in Appendix 1. The Executive Councillor attended a meeting with officers to review the process and outcomes.
- 3.11 **SWEP.** Attention is drawn to Application 18, concerning the provision of severe weather emergency accommodation (SWEP), where an award of £10,000 is recommended against an application for £27,930. The recommended reduction in the award is explained by the fact that in the current year it has not been possible to provide SWEP in its usual form (in which a number of people are accommodated in the same room) due to Covid-19. Instead, SWEP has been provided directly by the Council in accommodation consisting of separate rooms procured by the Council. This means that this season Jimmy's has not drawn down the SWEP grant made last year (minus some minor expenses for administration). It is anticipated that in the winter of 2021-22 similar arrangements to the current year will need to be entered into. The £10,000 recommended to be set aside for SWEP next year is therefore a contingency against needing to involve Jimmy's in some aspect of that season's provision but will not be drawn upon unless needed.

- 3.12 Where no funding is proposed it will be due to one or more of the following not being adequately met:
- Grant scheme outcomes
 - Identifying need
 - Quality or viability of the project, or
 - Proposals were the remit of another service or organisation
- 3.13 If the recommended awards are approved the budget available will be completely spent.

4. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026

- 4.1 In the previous report regarding the above it was emphasized that keeping people in their existing home or assisting a move to a new stable home without an intervening period of homelessness was to be the primary objective. As noted in the strategy, resources that would otherwise have been spent on temporary accommodation, including commercial hotels, will alternatively be spent on sustaining existing accommodation and procuring alternative homes. This homelessness prevention objective has informed the criteria for deciding between competing claims for the homelessness prevention grant fund in this round and will continue to be the focus in coming years.
- 4.2 **Streets to Home Service** - As set out in the strategy, some elements of the service currently supported by homeless prevention grants will be incorporated into the budget set aside for that innovative service. There will remain a substantial sum outside of the new service available for independent and niche services to continue to bid for. Additionally it should be noted that the size of the funding envelope remains constant and that the driving objective of streets to home is to achieve a better service to customers by encouraging providers to work with others to avoid duplication and misalignment.

5. Implications

- a) **Financial Implications** - Set out in section 3 of the report
- b) **Staffing Implications** - There are no staffing implications
- c) **Equality and Poverty Implications** - Equalities Impact Assessments were carried out as follows:
 - EQIA undertaken September 2018 on the grant fund

- EQIA undertaken on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026
- d) Environmental Implications** – Funded organisations are expected to have or develop environmental policies.
- e) Procurement Implications** - The Council’s approach to grant aid through the Homelessness Prevention Grants is via an application process rather than through the direct commissioning of services. Paragraph 4.2 explains the approach to the new Streets to Home Service.
- f) Community Safety Implications** - Some of the funded projects will have a positive impact on community safety.

6. Consultation and communication considerations

Applicants were notified when this report was published detailing recommended awards, giving an indication of proposed funding from April 2021. This adhered to the Cambridgeshire Compact framework to give three months’ notice of funding changes where possible. Officers will continue the process of award notification, signposting and support, and implementing and monitoring awards. Organisations have also been involved in discussions regarding the new Streets to Home Service development.

7. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Homelessness Prevention Grants 2021-22 Award Recommendations

9. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact James McWilliams, Housing Services Manager, tel: 01223 - 457813, email: james.mcwilliams@cambridge.gov.uk.