

Homelessness Prevention Grants to Agencies 2022-23 and proposed associated reallocation of funding.

To:

Mike Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing, Housing Scrutiny Committee, 20/01/2022

Report by:

David Greening, Head of Housing,

Tel: 01223 457997 Email: David.greening@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards: All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report details the annual bid round for grants made to organisations providing homelessness prevention services. It provides an overview of the process, the grant eligibility criteria and the budget. Appendix 1 details the applications received with recommendations for 2022-23 awards.
- 1.2 The report also recommends that in the coming year, and thereafter, an alternative source of funding is used to finance these grants.
- 1.3 The report further proposes that, subject to the alternative funding proposition being agreed, the former homelessness prevention grant budget is repurposed to enable:
 - a) secure funding for the new 'Streets-to-Home' service (covered in a separate report to this committee); and
 - b) secure funding for existing Housing Advice Service staff.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve that from 2022-23 onwards, homelessness prevention grants are funded from the annual homelessness prevention grant award the Council receives from central government.
- 2.2 Approve the award of homelessness prevention grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2022-23, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.3 Approve that from 2022-23 onwards the budget formerly used to fund homelessness prevention grants will instead be used to fund the new Streets-to-Home service and the additional staff roles that were created within the housing advice service in 2018 in response to the additional statutory duties enshrined in the Homelessness Reduction Act.

3. Background

Page: 2

Bid round process and award recommendations

- 3.1 Each year the Council invites agencies and organisations to submit bids for funding for homelessness-related services. The 2022-23 bid round opened for applications on 2 August 2021 and closed on 4 October. A communications and publicity plan was implemented including a press release, newsletter articles, workshops, emails, networking and targeted conversations to promote the grant fund. A range of activities were undertaken to support organisations to understand the funding criteria and the requirements for a successful application.
- 3.2 Bids were initially considered by individual officers using a common assessment matrix, and then moderated by those officers meeting as a panel. Bids were assessed having regard to the degree to which the proposed service will prevent or relieve homelessness. More broadly, officers considered the strategic and operational value of the proposed service, whether the proposed service duplicated an existing service, and the ability of the submitting agency to self-fund in whole or in part. The Executive Councillor attended a meeting with officers to review the process and outcomes.

- 3.3 Award recommendations are set out in Appendix 1 and notes include, where a nil grant has been recommended, the key reasons why. Members will wish to note that bids received totaled £620,578, almost twice the funding available.
- 3.4 The total sum available for individual grants in 2022-23 is £325,000 in contrast with £428,790 available for individual grants in 2021-22. This change is explained by the sum that has been set aside for the 'Streets-to-Home' service in the paragraph below.
- 3.5 As detailed in the preceding committee report, the Streets-to-Home service encompasses, and expands upon, services that were previously funded from the homelessness prevention grant budget. The amount available for individual grants and the £371,364 set aside for Streets-to-Home gives a total of £696,364. This contrasts with the smaller sum of £695,770 committed in 2021-22 to the totality of services under discussion here.

(The 2021-22 figure also included £65,000 towards the Dual Diagnosis Street Project (DDSP) which will be funded separately in 2022-23. This means that like-for-like funding in 2022-23 will be £65,594 greater than in the current year, subject to approval).

Securing funding for long-term commitments

- 3.6 The annual homelessness prevention grant bid round has previously been funded from a core budget within the general fund. By contrast, additional permanent staff roles created in 2018 to ensure an appropriate response to new duties resulting from the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have been funded from the annual homelessness prevention grant the Council receives from central government. It is anomalous that long-term commitments are funded from short-term budgets and visa-versa.
- 3.7 This same consideration applies to the new Streets-to-Home service for rough sleepers which may involve, if contract extension options are exercised, a financial commitment of up to seven years. It is important to ensure that this service is secured for the duration of the contract period.
- 3.8 It is therefore proposed that the staff commitment and the commitment to fund the streets-to-home service are together funded from the core budget. The corollary of this is that from 2022-23 onwards

homelessness prevention grants will be funded from the annual government homelessness prevention grant.

- 3.9 The risk that the annual government homelessness prevention grant may not be made (and it not be possible to continue to make annual grant to agencies) is vanishingly small. This government grant (in its various iterations) has been made available to the Council in steadily-increasing amounts for in excess of two decades, rising, for example, from £558,640 in 2020-21 to £676,841 for 2022-23 plus a supplement of £141,918 to help prevent private rented sector homelessness.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

As set out in Section 3 above.

b) Staffing Implications

As set out in Section 3 above.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

Please see the accompanying EqIA .

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

No positive or negative impact identified as the services recommended for grant aid are broadly similar to those supported in former years.

e) Procurement Implications

None

f) Community Safety Implications

None

5. Consultation and communication considerations

Consultation has been carried out with the Executive Councillor, the Head of Housing and the Assistant Head of Business and Finance Management. In addition, extensive consultation was carried out with partners, service users and others in the formulation of the new Streets to Home service.

6. Background papers

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

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of award recommendations

8. Inspection of papers

If you have a query on the report please contact James McWilliams, Housing Services Manager - Housing Advice. Tel: 01223 457813. Email: james.mcwilliams@cambridge.gov.uk.