

## Homelessness Prevention Grants to Agencies 2025-26

**To:**

Cameron Holloway, Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing, Housing Scrutiny Committee, 04/02/2025

**Report by:**

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**Wards affected:**

All

<b>1.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
1.1	<p>It is recommended that Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing:</p> <p>Approves the award of homelessness prevention grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2025-26, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Purpose and reason for the report</b>
2.1	<p>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 2025-26 awards.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Alternative options considered</b>
3.1	<p>As detailed later in the report, where, having tested services over a number of years, we see clear advantages to be achieved in contracting services under multi-year arrangements rather than awarding one-year grants, we have taken the opportunity to</p>

do so. We will continue to explore such opportunities in the future.

**4. Background and key issues**

4.1 Each year the Council invites agencies and organisations to submit bids for funding for homelessness-related services from its annual central government Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). The 2025-26 bid round opened for applications on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 and closed on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024. A communications and publicity plan was implemented to promote the grant fund.

Members may wish to note that bids received totaled £669,165 against available funding of £321,000, excluding a further sum of £50,000 set aside from our HPG as winter provision for rough sleepers, which was approved through 2022's grants bid under a 3-year contract.

Additionally, a further £70,000 has been set aside from our grant allocation to fund an employment advice service for those who are homeless, or at risk of losing their home, on a 3-year contract, following Director approval, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, once a procurement process has been completed. We have funded employment advice projects of this kind through our annual grants programme for a number of years. Having established the type of service we think works best for people, and which also provides the greatest value for money, we now feel that rather than asking partners to apply for funding anew each year to deliver this kind of service, there are clear advantages to be gained from contracting with a provider to deliver this type of service over multiple years.

When the amount set-aside for winter provision and the amount set-aside for the proposed employment advice contract are included, the total sum available to partner organisations for homelessness projects is £441,000, as set out in the table below – an increase of £83,000 on the sum that was available last year.

Recommended grants to agencies	£321,808
Winter provision contract	£50,000
Employment advice contract	£70,000

**2025/26 total**

**£441,808**

Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) applications that meet the funding priorities, outcomes and eligibility criteria are also funded by the Homelessness Prevention Grant budget. It is proposed that just over £9,500 from the available funding is used for this purpose. DRR applications for 25/26 are set out in Appendix 1. The Homelessness Prevention Grants budget makes a 40% contribution of any DRR award made under the Business Rate Retention Scheme.

Applications were initially considered by individual officers using a common assessment matrix, and then moderated by those officers meeting as a panel.

Given the significant excess of claims over available funding, not all bids could be supported in full, leading to some difficult recommendations. Nonetheless, most bids were approved for some funding, if not the amount that was requested as part of the application. Individual bids were assessed principally against the degree to which the proposed service would prevent or relieve homelessness, with services that could directly evidence the prevention of homelessness being particularly favoured. More broadly, officers considered the strategic and operational value of the proposed service, whether the proposed service duplicated or overlapped with 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 recommendations. The final recommendations are set out in Appendix 1.

**5. Corporate plan**

- 5.1 A decision to approve the recommended grant awards to partner agencies will support the City Council in its following key priorities, as set out in the Corporate plan 2022-27:
- Tackling poverty and inequality and helping people in the greatest need
  - Building a new generation of council and affordable homes and reducing homelessness

<b>6.</b>	<b>Consultation, engagement and communication</b>
6.1	Consultation has been carried out with the Executive Councillor. In addition, extensive consultation was carried out with partners on the grant application process and eligibility criteria, ahead of the annual bid round in 2022. The process and eligibility criteria have remained the same since then.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact</b>
7.1	Grants to partner agencies will benefit individuals across the city who are homeless or threatened with homelessness for a variety of different reasons. The work undertaken by partners as a result of these grants will support the City Council in its statutory responsibilities to prevent and relieve homelessness. It is a condition of the grant that agencies provide monitoring information to the City Council detailing outcomes and impact achieved from the grant award.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Implications</b>
	<b>Relevant risks</b>
<b>8.1</b>	Any slight risk of a partner agency getting into financial difficulties and being unable to deliver a project is mitigated by the financial checks that we run as part of the application process, the monitoring arrangements that we put in place once a grant is awarded, and payment by instalment to reduce our losses in the event that an organisation can't deliver on a project.
	<b>Financial Implications</b>
<b>8.2</b>	As set out in 3.2 and Appendix 1.  Members are reminded that the award of any recommended grant is subject to the receipt of the annual central government Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). On 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2024 the Council was notified of its award of HPG for 2025-26, and we can therefore be confident of funding the grant sums recommended at Appendix 1.

	<p>The three-year winter provision contract commenced in November 2023, meaning that funding is now secure for the remainder of the contract.</p> <p>Regarding funding the proposed three-year employment advice contract, the 18<sup>th</sup> December government notification ensures that funding is secure for the first year of the contract. Years 2 and 3 funding can also be confidently assumed, given that in its various iterations HPG has been made available in steadily-increasing amounts for more than two decades.</p>
	<b>Legal Implications</b>
8.3	None.
	<b>Equalities and socio-economic Implications</b>
8.4	<p>Some of the grant awards are for projects specifically targeted at groups with a protected characteristic. However, all bidding organisations must be able to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Act 2010 in delivering their services, and submit their equality and diversity policies with their applications.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and is attached to this report.</p>
	<b>Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications</b>
8.5	No positive or negative impact identified as the services recommended for grant aid are broadly similar to those supported in former years.
	<b>Procurement Implications</b>
8.6	None.
	<b>Community Safety Implications</b>

8.7	None.
9.	<p><b>Background documents</b></p> <p>Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985</p>
9.1	No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.
10.	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>
10.1	Appendix 1: Summary of award recommendations.
	<p>If you have a query on the report please contact Simon Hunt, Housing Services Manager - Housing Advice. Tel: 01223 457932. Email: <a href="mailto:simon.hunt@cambridge.gov.uk">simon.hunt@cambridge.gov.uk</a></p>