

CABINET

FINANCING FOR PORTLAND STREET AND HOME SUPPORT TEAM 31st July 2008

Report of Corporate Director (Community Services)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform members about progress towards securing Supporting People programme monies for the Portland Street project and the Home Support Team and to seek approval for continued use of Homelessness Reserve funding.

Key Decision

X

Non-Key Decision

Referral from Cabinet
Member

Date Included in Forward Plan

May 2008

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLORS John Gilbert and David Kerr

- (1) Agree to the continued draw down of the Homelessness Reserve of up to £75,000 in 2008/9, pending the Supporting People decision on funding.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2007, Cabinet agreed to provide funding of up to £59,000 in 2007/8 to the Portland Street Project (a six person hostel to be run by the YMCA in property owned by Council Housing Services). The funding agreed was to allow the scheme to open in 2007/08, with an expectation that a bid would be submitted to the Supporting People programme to cover revenue funding from 2008/09 onwards. The project was opened in January 2008.
- 1.2 Cabinet also agreed in February 2007 to provide funding of up to £20,700 to enable the work of the Home Support Team (now usually referred to as the Integrated Support Team) to continue.
- 1.3 In February 2007, Cabinet established a dedicated reserve to support the Council's housing responsibilities in connection with homelessness should Supporting People funding not be forthcoming. The revenue contributions are as follows:-

- £50,000 in 2007/08,
- £25,000 in 2008/09.
- £25,000 in 2009/10.

As part of the 2008/9 budget process, the budgeted amounts for 2008/9 and 9/10 are still included.

- 1.4 It was agreed in February 2008 that Cabinet would make £75,000 of allocated reserve available to support the Home Support Team and Portland Street Project should Supporting People finance not be made available by the beginning of the next financial year (2008/09). This option was agreed in order to provide temporary security for staff whilst Supporting People funding decisions were taken. It was agreed that there would be a further report to Cabinet in July 2008 when it was expected that the decisions would have been made, and Cabinet would then be able to consider the implications of those decisions should funding not be available and decommissioning or alternative funding be considered.

2.0 Supporting People Funding Decisions

- 2.1 In 2006, the Supporting People Commissioning Board (on which the City Council is represented) completed a service review programme. It was then in a position to commission new services in line with its strategic priorities and decided that its first priority was to look at existing services across the County that were eligible for Supporting People funding and that might be at risk of closure or service level reduction without funding from the programme. In January 2008 details were therefore provided in respect of both the Portland Street Project and the Home Support Team. Two separate bids were submitted in respect of the Home Support Team – one relating to its Vulnerable Households Project work and one relating to its Targeted Intervention Project.
- 2.2 A decision on the Portland Street project has now been taken. The decision included a start date for funding from April 2008.
- 2.3 The SP Commissioning Board in May 2008 decided in principle to commission a service in Lancaster district and other parts of Lancashire that would provide proactive outreach targeted support to vulnerable people living in the private sector. And at a meeting in June, it agreed to commission a vulnerable households project in Lancaster as well as similar projects elsewhere in Lancashire. At the time of writing this report, the Head of Supporting People is progressing a report within the County Council that would agree waiving standing orders to allow funding of the vulnerable households project in Lancaster and other districts without going out to tender. But the outcome of this is not yet known.
- 2.4 If decisions are made that all this work should go out to tender, it may be up to another six months before we will know whether or not these two projects have been successful in their bids for SP monies.

3.0 The Home Support Team

- 3.1 The objective of the team is to prevent homelessness, promote long-term sustainable lifestyles by addressing life issues and supporting clients into training and education.
- 3.2 The specific projects that SP funding is sought for are

- Targeted Intervention Project – Targeting problematic HMO’s – pro-actively seeking to work with and engage hard to reach clients who have failed into HMO’s and have a track record of unsuccessful engagement with specialist services. This offers an alternative solution to deal with anti-social behaviour and problematic tenants. By gaining the confidence and trust of the client this intensive support involves working with people to secure their commitment to change to sustain tenancies and prevent eviction and problems being moved on to another area.
- Vulnerable Households Project - Working intensively with a small number of the most vulnerable or ‘high demand’ households across the district. Sanctions and incentives are used to encourage change and support is provided over a period of months (for as long as is needed) to enable those involved to sustain this change. A key worker acts as a key point of contact and co-ordinates the services which need to engage with the household. Sustainable change is the key aim of this project.

3.3 The Home Support Team has had considerable success in changing behaviour and preventing homelessness as a result. Around 40% of the district’s homeless presentations result from failed private sector tenancies, mainly in the West End area which makes this team a very effective resource. Examples of the outcomes achieved by the Integrated Support Team during 2007/08 include:

- Supporting 61 vulnerable people
- Preventing 21 people from becoming homeless
- Resettled 40 households as part of the West End Masterplan
- Engaged 47 clients into mental health, drug/alcohol and/or health support services
- Work with vulnerable families has significantly improved attendance at school and behaviour of 5 children
- 9 clients have been encouraged and supported into training and/or education
- 3 people have gained voluntary or paid work.

3.4 In the first quarter of this year the team has again been successful in engaging with an additional 15 vulnerable, 3 of whom have gained employment. One of the clients has also received the retail student of the year award from Lancaster and Morecambe College and has now started full time employment. This is a Team achieving concrete results that enable vulnerable people to reach their full potential and ensuring that anti social behaviour that has a detrimental effect on neighbourhoods is diminished.

4.0 The Homeless Reserve

4.1 At the end of 2007/8 there was £50,000 in the Homelessness Reserve. As detailed in paragraph 1.3, there is £25,000 contribution in 2008/9 giving a balance of £75,000 in the Homelessness Reserve. £22,000 has already been spent on funding staffing in the Home Support Team.

4.2 In addition, in April 2008, Cabinet agreed a sum of £30,000 of Area Based Grant to fund a Resettlement and Support Officer in the Home Support Team.

5.0 Details of Consultation

- 5.1 The development and operation of both of these projects have been subject to detailed consultation with partners and stakeholders. The Portland Street Project has received ongoing support from the Lancaster District homelessness forum and the Home Support Team is actively supported through the social impact group, a multi agency group of statutory and voluntary partners working to address social issues within the west end of Morecambe. The details of this report have not however been specifically subject to consultation with these groups.

The details of this report have been shared with Supporting People in order to ensure factual correctness.

6.0 Options and Options Analysis (Including Risk Assessment)

- 6.1 **Option 1:** Do not agree to any further funding for the Home Support Team from the allocated reserve beyond the commitment to existing staff contracts, which run up until the end of August 2008.

- If SP have not been able to confirm funding by then, three postholders' contracts will end at 31st August 2008.
- These posts play an important part in helping those in imminent danger of homelessness to avoid it. The City Council is aiming to prevent homelessness and money spent on doing so can save money which would otherwise have to be spent on those accepted as homeless.
- If SP were to subsequently agree funding, there is a risk that the staff would no longer be in post and additional costs would be incurred in advertising and appointing staff.

- 6.2 **Option 2:** Agree to make up to £75,000 of allocated reserve available to the Home Support Team in 2008/9, pending the SP decision on funding

- This would enable the Council to extend the contracts for the three postholders concerned until 31st March 2009 and for the projects to continue with current levels of staffing, by which time a decision should have been made by SP
- If a positive decision is made by SP before 31st March 2009, less than the maximum would be spent.

- 6.3 A further report will be made to Cabinet when the outcome of SP decision making is known.

7.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 7.1 **Option 2:** Agree to make up to £75,000 of allocated reserve available to the Home Support Team in 2008/9, pending the SP decision on funding

- This would allow a skilled and experienced staff team to remain working together for as long as possible, pending the outcome of the SP bid.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The future of the successful Portland St project is assured for the immediate future. Funding for the two Home Support Team projects may be available from SP, but they could be in jeopardy and a decision is needed on how long the Council can continue to support them.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Portland St and the Home Support Team both help to meet the Council's statutory obligations towards homeless people and homelessness prevention. They support the delivery and implementation of the Council's Housing strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Winning Back Morecambe's West End Masterplan as well as LAA outcomes

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The projects both have substantial contributions to make towards community safety as well as helping people secure and maintain homes. The projects are targeted at those who are both vulnerable and socially excluded. They contribute towards ensuring social cohesion and sustainable communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The adoption of Option 2 would commit the Council to additional spending of up to £75,000. Given that this would be funded from a Reserve already established to support schemes such as this, there would be no overall impact on spending. Spend to date is £22,000 for the Home Support Team, which leaves £53,000 left in the Homelessness Reserve.

The adoption of Option 1 would result in the Team being disbanded as at the end of August 2008, with a total estimated spend as at that date of £31,000, to be funded from the reserve.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted and have no observations to make on this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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