

Cabinet Report

Report of Head of Development and Housing

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To: CABINET

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Use of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

Recommendation

That cabinet approve the proposed expenditure of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval from cabinet for the proposed expenditure by Officers of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) to prevent and relieve homelessness in Vale of White Horse.

Corporate Objectives

2. Developing housing and infrastructure, in particular reducing homelessness in the district.

Background

3. On 16 March 2017 the Government announced FHSG for councils with responsibility for housing. The grant replaces the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee (TAMF) from 1 April 2017. The grant is ring-fenced for two years for the defined purpose of preventing or dealing with homelessness.

4. The TAMF partly reimbursed councils for their expenditure on temporary accommodation. The success of VWHDC in preventing homelessness resulted in low numbers of households in temporary accommodation. The management fee received in previous years by VWHDC was therefore a relatively small sum that was reimbursed to the council as part of temporary accommodation subsidy.
5. The Government has however changed the funding formula and increased the grant allocations from 2017/18. The formula now recognises both the extent to which councils are preventing homelessness and the increasing homelessness pressures faced by councils across the country.
6. Vale of White Horse District Council has an impressive track record in the prevention of homelessness. The housing needs team prevented 559 households from becoming homeless in 2016/17. This is an increase of 22% compared to the previous year. In the last three years the housing needs team has reduced the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% and expenditure on temporary accommodation by 71%. This is in stark contrast with the national picture where homelessness has been increasing since 2010.
7. The FHSG allocation for Vale of White Horse District Council is £94,916.26 in 2017/18 and £109,210.37 in 2018/19. If profiled evenly across two years, the funding is £102,063.32 per annum. Under the old formula, the grant allocation for 2017/18 would have been £2,935.30.
8. The Housing Needs Manager will liaise with Communications to publicise the achievement of securing a significantly increased grant.
9. The budget to spend the grant will be spread across three years:

2017/18	£ 60,000
2018/19	£102,000
2019/20	£ 42,000

10. Officers have considered how the grant can achieve the maximum benefit for reducing homelessness in the district. The assessment criteria used was the effectiveness of the expenditure in preventing or relieving homelessness; value for money and improved outcomes for residents. The benefit to residents will be a continued downward pressure on homelessness and increased support for those threatened with homelessness.
11. The grant-funded positions will be two-year fixed term contracts.
12. The proposed expenditure is detailed in the following table:

Description	Key benefit	SODC grant expenditure	VWHDC grant expenditure	Total
Full-time Housing Needs Officer*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased capacity to casework homelessness prevention or relief cases 	£20,813	£20,813	£41,626
Full-time Lettings Officer – Allocations*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase capacity to focus upon Health & Social Assessments and banding reviews 	£17,616	£17,616	£35,232
Procurement of a Full-time Floating Support Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early intervention to prevent households from becoming homeless 	£20,000	£20,000	£40,000
Part-time Lettings Assistant – Temporary Accommodation (17.5hrs per week)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support households in temporary accommodation, including rent recovery. 	£7,527	£7,527	£15,054
Deposits and rent-in-advance loans for persons moving on from supported accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist former homeless households into more permanent accommodation 	£9,793.70	£9,793.70	£19,587.40
Full-time Research and Performance Development Officer*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve customer knowledge and inform further performance development 	£20,813	£20,813	£41,626
Incentive payments to private landlords to provide Houses in Multiple Occupation licensees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase access to housing for single persons at risk of homelessness 	£2,500	£2,500	£5,000
Procurement of a Mediation Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help prevent relationship and family breakdowns that may cause homelessness 	£3,000	£3,000	£6,000
Increased funding of deposits and tenants through White Horse Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase access to housing for households at risk of homelessness 	£53,057	£0	£53,057
Total grant expenditure per annum		£155,119.70	£102,063	£257,183

*on-costs, redundancy costs and office/IT costs included.

Options

13. **Option 1:** To spend FHSG in accordance with the conditions defined by the Department of Communities and Local Government, namely; *“The Grant is ring-fenced for an initial period of two years and during that time may be used only to prevent or deal with homelessness.”*
14. **Option 2:** To not spend FHSG. The funding would be returned to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Financial Implications

15. A revenue budget will be created in financial year 2017/18 of £60,000 in accordance with paragraph 91a of the Financial Procedure Rules. A budget will be created in 2018/19 when the budget is set in February 2018. The budget will be allocated between staffing costs, third party services and tenancy support payments. The allocation of funds between these areas may change, however the total budget will not change.

Legal Implications

16. There are no legal implications resulting from the proposed expenditure of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.

Risks

17. There is a low risk that the grant will not be effectively managed. This risk will be mitigated by Finance ensuring the appropriate financial controls are in place and that the budget will be the responsibility of the Housing Needs Manager.

Other implications

18. There is an implication on human resource that has been considered. Namely, that desk space and office equipment has been identified for the new temporary positions.

Conclusion

19. The proposed expenditure of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant will bring significant benefits to tackling homelessness across the district.

20. The alternative option would be to return the ring-fenced grant to Department of Communities and Local Government and therefore receive no benefit from the grant.

Background Papers

None