

Proposal to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Beam

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

2.1 That Cabinet approves expenditure of £47,500 from the Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG) reserves to trial a 12-month pilot with Beam.

3. Background

3.1. The Council has a statutory duty to prevent and relieve homelessness within the district. In the main we fulfil this duty through the provision of housing advice, temporary accommodation and nomination to vacant social rented homes owned by Registered Providers.

3.2. For some households this conventional approach is unlikely to be successful or sustainable without additional intervention and support. For such households the provision of a social housing tenancy may not be a realistic option, nor may it enable them to overcome longer term challenges which might undermine their ability to sustain a successful tenancy.

3.3. The rationale for exploring the potential for a partnership with Beam reflects the need to develop a more holistic approach to meet the needs of some households for whom conventional solutions may not be appropriate or overly successful. This includes strengthening links with employment and access to private rented accommodation.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

4.1. The underpinning strategic objective of this initiative is to prevent and reduce homelessness. The aim is to achieve this by widening opportunities for households who are insecurely accommodated or already living in temporary accommodation. This is likely to include households accommodated by the Council at Westward

House, Freeland Close and single homeless adults in Stone Pillow's accommodation pathway.

- 4.2. Interventions to improve move-on from this accommodation will improve our capacity to meet the needs of other homeless households (and reduce the costs of private nightly paid accommodation). The service will be designed to deliver two specific outputs: access to privately rented accommodation and access to employment.
- 4.3. Finding affordable privately rented accommodation in Chichester is extremely difficult for households who are homeless or on low incomes. For some households this may, however, prove more realistic and sustainable with support in place whilst helping to avoid a prolonged stay in temporary accommodation.
- 4.4. Despite skill shortages in the local labour market unemployment remains an issue for many homeless households. The benefits of helping to overcome obstacles to employment are clear and may result in better long term housing outcomes as residents are better placed to manage tenancies successfully with sustained employment.

5. Proposal

- 5.1. The proposal is to enter into a 12-month Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Beam to pilot this new initiative supporting up to 20 clients.
- 5.2. The pilot relies on clients that are willing to engage and as such it is possible that some clients will drop out. Given this we will refer up to 25 clients to Beam to account for any dropout rate.
- 5.3. As this is a new way of working it is recommended that a pilot is carried out to inform any future service model and to provide detailed analysis of outcomes for full evaluation.
- 5.4. Beam's *modus operandi* is set out in the 'Frequently Asked Questions' document which is attached as Appendix 1. The service relies on intensive, personalised support to households who are referred by the Council. A unique aspect of this is the use of social media to provide both informal and material support to service users through 'crowd funding'.
- 5.5. This involves the use of an online 'hub' which service users can use to connect with their case worker and with a wider community of peers and supporters. Funds raised through this process are used to directly support service users to reach objectives in relation to training, work and future housing. Recent experience though initiatives such as Diverted Giving, and Homes for Ukraine suggests that the support in the Chichester district to limit homelessness and support others is strong. As such this initiative is anticipated to be effective although will be subject to full analysis and evaluation.
- 5.6. One of Beam's key unique selling points is their intense work with customers to support them into employment. Beam not only work with clients to support them secure employment and prepare them for interviews they also have well established links with employers. This is extremely beneficial as a pathway into employment for clients through this new initiative.

- 5.7. The partnership with Beam will form part of a wider approach to education training and employment which aims to enhance opportunities for households who have experienced homelessness or are living in temporary accommodation. Whilst complimenting other services, Beam has the potential to plug a gap which is not being met by any other service.
- 5.8. This approach has been adopted by several councils across the Country. Two councils have been approached and both have been extremely positive about their workings with Beam and the positive customer outcomes.
- 5.9. Subject to approval Beam will work with referred customers through the Council's Housing teams for up to 6 months on average.
- 5.10. Subject to approval the pilot with Beam would commence early into 2023.
- 5.11. The service will be subject to performance monitoring which will measure outcomes in relation to a range of outputs and outcomes. These will typically include:
- Service users commencing work
 - Service users sustaining paid work beyond 6 months
 - Service users moving into privately rented housing
 - Money raised through fund raising for service users to support them getting into work
- 5.12 The pilot will be managed by the Housing Partnerships Co-ordinator and overseen by the Divisional Manager for Housing, Revenues and Benefits. As with any operating model it is critical to ensure that effective management arrangements are in place to monitor how this works. Should issues arise actions will be quickly taken appropriate. Progress of the pilot will be reported to the Housing and Communities panel.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1. This is a new initiative. The service will be piloted over 12 months as part of a wider approach to homelessness. This approach supplements the actions the Council is already taking as part of its 'Supporting You' campaign and has links into other services such as Choose Work.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1. The funding required to deliver this initiative is available through ringfenced grants for homelessness prevention. Going forward it may be possible to support some or part of this initiative through the Council's Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding.
- 7.2. Evidence based on the use of Beam in other local areas suggests that this approach can deliver net savings and thus be seen as a 'spend to save' initiative. The assumptions underlying any savings involved may not necessarily apply in Chichester's case (and are subject to analysis and full evaluation) although the wider benefits to the public purse are clear.
- 7.3. The SLA will incorporate an information sharing protocol which will be subject to appropriate scrutiny as will other GDPR considerations in relation to the use of social media by Beam.

7.4. As the service will be delivered directly by Beam there are no other HR, resource or IT requirements other than already stated in section 5.12.

8. Consultation

8.1. The Beam 'offer' is already operating in several other local housing authorities, several have been consulted as part of due diligence and favourable comments have been received. Primarily Beam have been working with London authorities where access to private rented accommodation is also a serious barrier. More recently they have entered into agreements with several Local Authorities in Sussex including Mid Sussex and Adur and Worthing.

8.2. The Council's Housing Advisor from the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has spoken highly of the success of Beam with the authorities she has worked with seeing success in employment and long-term housing.

8.3. Choose Work, an initiative run through the Communities team, have identified working with Beam as an opportunity to further enhance relationships with employers in the district. Although this will be aimed at a different target client group there is an opportunity for shared best practice.

8.4. It is envisaged that Stone Pillow will also wish to refer service users to this service and as such they have been consulted and are supportive of this initiative.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

9.1. A key risk is that the service does not deliver. In this event the SLA with Beam will be terminated after the initial 12-month period. To mitigate this the service will be effectively managed as outlined in section 5.12.

9.2. Enabling economically inactive households to access employment will bring a range of benefits to both individuals and the wider community which go well beyond the Council's specific housing objectives.

10. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		X
Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation - Further resources will ensure proper consideration of these matters as part of the application determination process		X
Human Rights and Equality Impact		X
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) - see 7.3 above	X	
Health and Wellbeing - a positive impact on clients of the service is anticipated	X	

11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions about Beam