

Chichester District Council

THE CABINET

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Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That authority be delegated to the Head of Housing and Environment Services to spend the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant in accordance with the proposals in section 5 below.**

3. Background

- 3.1. In previous financial years a Temporary Accommodation Management Fee (TAMF) was payable to Local Authorities by the DWP in respect of certain temporary accommodation. This has been replaced from 1 April 2017 by the new Flexible Housing Support Grant (FHSG).
- 3.2. As the Council has its own temporary accommodation provision (Westward House), which did not attract TAMF, the loss of the fee will not have much impact. The DWP has estimated that, but for this change, the Council would have received less than £1,000 in TAMF for the 2017/18 financial year.
- 3.3. The new grant, which replaces TAMF, gives councils flexibility to spend the funds to support the full range of homelessness services. The FHSG nationally totals £402m over two years and is allocated to reflect relative homelessness pressures (number of homeless acceptances and cases prevented) with adjustments for differing private sector rental costs. There is a minimum allocation of £40,000 to individual local authorities.
- 3.4. The FHSG allocated to the Council for 2017/18 is £128,047, and for 2018/19 is £147,330. Allocations for 2019/20 will be announced during 2017/18. These funds are ring-fenced for two years to ensure it is spent on homelessness services. There is no new monitoring or reporting requirements (homeless acceptance and prevention statistics are already gathered).
- 3.5. It is worth noting that in April 2018 Universal Credit is due be rolled out across Chichester district and officers anticipate an increase in the number of residents

seeking advice and assistance as a result of rent arrears. Also the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is likely to be implemented in early 2018 which will require more proactive work with potentially homeless people at an earlier stage. This will place further significant demands upon the resources of the existing Housing Options Team and for which new burdens funding is anticipated. Experience of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has demonstrated the benefits and effectiveness of introducing a statutory prevention framework to tackle homelessness at an early stage.

- 3.6. Also Brighton and Hove Council is procuring an IT system on behalf of the Sussex Homemove Partnership to replace the Locata system, which has been in use for over 10 years. The Council has been a member of the Partnership since 2007. The new system will have increased functionality including a homelessness module and a housing options module, which will assist the Council to meet its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The new system will be web based and hosted externally.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 4.1. The grant is intended to allow flexible support for homelessness and is ring-fenced for this purpose. It is intended that the outcomes of the grant will be to prevent homelessness by offering housing options advice at an early stage and also ensuring residents are accessing all the benefits to which they are entitled.

5. Proposal

- 5.1. The proposal is to create two new posts in the Housing Service; a Housing Welfare Officer and an additional Housing Interventions Officer.
- 5.2. The Housing Welfare Officer will be based at Westward House and will work with residents to ensure they claim at the earliest opportunity all the benefits to which they are entitled. This will reduce delay and prevent households accumulating debt which will affect their future housing options. The appointment will also assist the Homefinder Team to develop our internal lettings agency and increase the number of managed properties for the use of homeless households.
- 5.3. The appointment of an additional Housing Interventions Officer will equip the team to meet the anticipated increase in demand for the homelessness service outlined in 3.5 above.
- 5.4. Any underspend would also be used to prevent homelessness including supporting the introduction of a new and improved IT system.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1. Consideration was given to appointing the two new posts on a two or three year fixed term contract. However the demand in service is not expected to decrease and permanent posts are recommended.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1. The FHSG would adequately cover the employment costs for the proposed posts and to cover the costs of implementing the new IT system.
- 7.2. The IT Manager has confirmed that the implementation of the new IT system to replace Locata is in the IT work plan for 2017/18. The implementation process will increase the demands placed on the team during the current financial year however there should be a small reduction in its workload in future years as there will be no need to provide support for the current homelessness database.

8. Consultation

- 8.1. CMT was consulted at their meeting on 15 May 2017 and were supportive of the recruitment of the two posts on a permanent basis.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1. The impact of the proposal will benefit the residents of the district. Additional resources will enable us to provide an effective response to the additional statutory responsibilities of the Council and will permit us to deliver an efficient service.

10. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		X
Climate Change		X
Human Rights and Equality Impact A proportion of customers have 'protected characteristics' and therefore owed a duty under the Equalities Act 2010. The proposal will aid the Council to provide adequate services for those protected under the Act.	X	
Safeguarding and Early Help A proportion of customers has multiple needs and will therefore be referred for Early Help and/or safeguarding. Additional resources will enable the Council to respond to an increase in demand without compromising the level of care provided to vulnerable households	X	
Other (please specify)p: eg biodiversity		X

11. Appendices

None

12. Background Papers

None