



FULL COUNCIL

Wednesday 26 February 2020

ACCEPTANCE OF MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MHCLG) ROUGH SLEEPING GRANT FUNDING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 requires local authorities to develop and provide enhanced and tailored housing pathways for groups of people who are more vulnerable to homelessness than others including people with mental health issues, those experiencing domestic abuse, ex-offenders and care leavers. The Government is particularly committed to assisting rough sleepers or people who are at risk of rough sleeping with the goal of halving the numbers of people sleeping rough by 2022.
2. East Suffolk Council was successful in its applications to the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and the Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding programmes for 2019/20. Total funding for the financial year 2019/20 consists of £292,553 from the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and £202,150 from the Rough Sleeping Initiative.
3. In late 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) invited local authorities who wish to benefit from further funding to apply again. On this occasion, the previous two funding streams have been combined into one rough sleeping funding pot. Given the short timescale available for placing bids, the Housing Needs Service bid for an additional £698,448 of funding. Decisions regarding funding allocations are anticipated in January 2020.
4. This report seeks retrospective Full Council approval to accept the grant funding of £693,735 and to use it to deliver the projects and services set out within this report.

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| Is the report Open or Exempt? | Open |
| Wards Affected: | All Wards in the District |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Richard Kerry Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing |

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| Supporting Officers: | Angela Haye Housing Needs Service Manager 01502 523134 angela.haye@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Cairistine Foster-Cannan Head of Housing 01502 523334 cairistine.foster-cannan@eastsoffolk.gov.uk |
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In late 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) invited local authorities wishing to benefit from further rough sleeping funding to bid in a new round. This new funding stream, to cover the 2020/21 financial year, combines the previous Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) programmes into a single funding programme. The funding is designed to support the establishment or enhancement of co-ordinated local services, based around the Rapid Rehousing Pathway model, for rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping.
- 1.2 Central to the rough sleeping funding programmes since their launch in 2018 has been a team of expert Specialist Advisors seconded to MHCLG from across the homelessness sector who have worked together with local authorities to develop co-ordinated and responsive local rough sleeping services. This open, collaborative approach based around realistic conversations about the situation in a local area, what has worked well, and how to make critical changes and deliver high quality services has been termed co-production. This approach has been well-received by local authorities across the country and the plans that it has produced together with the tireless work of local authorities and partners, have driven a net 32% reduction in rough sleeping in those areas. All local authorities bidding for this round of funding have co-produced their bids with the relevant Specialist Advisor for their geographical area.
- 1.3 Whilst the Government's underlying approach to ending rough sleeping through the pathways established via the existing rough sleeping funding remains unchanged, they are also seeking proposals that demonstrate an ambitious approach towards:
- a) Prevention. Identifying those who are at risk of rough sleeping early and intervening before crisis stage. This work should be led by local authority housing options teams that are closely integrated, including by co-location, with rough sleeping initiative interventions.
 - b) Recovery. Ensuring that people have support in place to move into sustainable accommodation. A stable home is an essential element in a person's recovery from rough sleeping and needs to go hand in hand with flexible support that is tailored to individual needs.
 - c) Specialist roles and provision. Identifying the needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as women, victims of domestic abuse, those battling drug and alcohol misuse or mental ill-health. Areas should think about targeted workers, personalised budgets, and specific services designed to help those with the most complex needs as well as linking in with prison release and hospital discharge services to join systems up.

2 DETAILS OF EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL'S BID

- 2.1 The annual 2019 rough sleeper count identified a total of 13 Rough Sleepers in East Suffolk which represents a 41% reduction on the previous year. Although this is a positive position, we need to ensure that this number is not just sustained but further reduced. The challenge in maintaining and improving the performance is the amount of 'hidden' homeless people with at least 150 single households who are either of No Fixed Abode or who remain rough sleeping for various reasons. A further challenge is that once provided with a housing solution, the accommodation needs to be sustained to prevent repeat homelessness.
- 2.2 Council officers have engaged with the MHCLG Specialist Advisor to consider the learning from our current service provision and to co-produce the bid for the future funding, with a view to ensuring that future services provided through the grant funding will meet any identified gaps and deliver enhancements which will improve our offer to rough sleepers.

The areas for improvement and for targeting future funding which have been identified are as follows:

- a) To extend the provision of the current 'Making Every Adult Matter' outreach service with a slight change of emphasis to focus on entrenched rough sleepers and work to a Task and Target Multi-Agency Case Conferencing process. Workers will have a maximum caseload of 20 people per year with a personal budget of £500 per person.
- b) To recruit 2 x FTE Additional Assertive Outreach Workers to intercept and direct people who are sleeping rough into the service. It is intended that if our grant application is successful, we will extend provision into evenings and weekends. Outreach Workers will also be invaluable in gathering information to feed into service design further downstream.
- c) To extend the current Supported Lettings Officers provision and refocus this into upstream prevention work with social housing providers, in-reach hostel homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment for service users who have been assisted into accommodation in the private rented sector.
- d) To fund the secondment of a Senior Social Worker recruited by Suffolk County Council into the Housing Needs Team to enhance the expertise within the Housing Needs Team relating to adults with complex needs, and to assist with referrals for assessments.
- e) To work with Anglia Care Trust to accommodate 'high risk' rough sleepers by introducing a 'Risk Reduction Fund' specifically for those individuals who have previous arson convictions and/or anti-social behaviour linked to issues around substance misuse and complex needs.
- f) To work with Home Group to deliver a Home Achievement Programme for individuals as part of a resettlement package. This is an online tenancy training programme which is also recognised as a qualification. We are aware that Flagship have used this training programme with tenants who have subsequently accessed apprenticeships, so it can assist with routes into education and employment.
- g) To continue the provision of an 8 bed 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' Hub in Lowestoft for new rough sleepers and to convert the 1 bed Hub in Felixstowe into a longer-term emergency bed for more entrenched rough sleepers. It has been recognised that due to a lack of move-on accommodation in the Felixstowe, it is more appropriate and realistic to convert this bed to longer-term provision with the period of stay being increased to up to 28 days or more if required.
- h) To convert the current Cold Weather Beds (9 bed spaces in Lowestoft and Ipswich) into year-round provision for rough sleepers.

2.3 The Council has also included in the bid the required funding to continue with existing service provision as follows:

- a) An Outreach Worker based in Felixstowe
- b) A Mental Health Practitioner Post for the whole of East Suffolk
- c) A Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator Post

2.4 All partner organisations have confirmed their agreement to continue delivering existing services and the delivery of new initiatives. Those organisations are:

- Notting Hill Genesis Housing Association
- Access Community Trust
- Anglia Care Trust
- Home Group

2.5 The total additional grant funding requested for 2020/21 is £698,448 and £693,735 has now been awarded. This funding bid is the required amount to fund all of the services referred to in 2.2, 2.3 and this paragraph. The funding is to cover these services for the period 01.04.20 to 31.03.21. As the funding awarded is slightly less than requested, the provisional services will be adjusted accordingly. This amount includes funding for the following elements:

- 8 Bed 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' Hub
- 10 Self Contained supported accommodation 1 Bed Flats
- 10 Short term shared and self-contained emergency beds
- 2.8 FTE Outreach Workers
- 3 FTE Supported Lettings Officers
- 0.5 FTE Supported Lettings Admin Officer
- Risk Reduction Fund
- 3 FTE Rough Sleeper Navigators (Previously MEAM Workers)
- 0.8 FTE Senior Social Worker
- 1 FTE Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator
- 1 FTE Mental Health Practitioner
- Home Achievement Programme

3 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?

3.1 One of the Council's Business Plan's Critical Success Factors is to 'improve access to appropriate housing to meet existing and future needs, including more affordable homes for local people'. This grant funding and the services it will provide will assist some of the most vulnerable members of our community to access and sustain accommodation which is suited to their needs. Assisting people with complex needs to access affordable and appropriate housing remains a challenge and the projects and posts funded by this provision will assist the Council to find housing solutions which are in line with the person's support and care needs and aspirations to live a relatively independent and 'normal' life.

4 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The financial threshold for the Public Contract Regulations which applies to these services is £615,278 (014/24/EU-Provision of services to the Community).

4.2 Although the total grant requested is above the threshold, a significant proportion of the grant requested will be used to extend the fixed-term contracts of officers employed by East Suffolk Council and/or to recruit additional Outreach Workers who will be directly employed by Housing Needs. These employment contracts sit outside the procurement regulations. The total funding required for those posts is £299,579, leaving £398,869 available for the other elements of the bid.

4.3 MHCLG will need to be satisfied there is service continuity for our vulnerable rough sleeping population in East Suffolk. Good partnership working has been built up over the last 4 years between our internal and external colleagues. The timeframe for retendering third sector services could destabilise current service provision in terms of the

uncertainty. It is also debatable whether providers would wish to bid for services with a funding window of operation only being until March 2021.

- 4.4 If the Council receives more than £500,000 in additional funding, as per the Constitution, this report will need to go to Full Council for approval.

5 OTHER KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is available as a background paper. The work described above will have a positive impact on marginalised adults and improving health inequalities arising from rough sleeping. The average life span of a rough sleeper is significantly less than the average person. No negative impacts were identified.

6 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 ESC considered not applying for this funding, but this would limit the services that could be provided to reduce and relieve rough sleeping.
- 6.2 ESC has considered the option of going out to tender for our current and new external provider contracts however this is not practicable due to the timescale of the bid, the short period of time between the outcome of the bid being published (expected late January 2020) and the start date for delivery of 1 April 2020, and the expectation of seamless continuation of existing services. In addition, due to the one to one contact between providers and service users with special requirements, and the relationships and trust built up between the parties which are integral to the success of the services, a change of service provider was not viable.
- 6.3 The Council could also have decided not to apply for additional funding from MHCLG but, the problem of rough sleeping is ongoing with limited funding to support solutions. Failure to bid would also have resulted in our current services coming to an end during this calendar year. The opportunity to submit a bid was one which could not be overlooked.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 A final grant application meeting was held on 4 December 2019 with MHCLG and ESC Legal and Finance colleagues. All participating organisations have been contacted regarding the objectives of the bid and how they can contribute to our success.

8 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Approval of the grant funding will enable the Housing Service to build on and enhance the successful work of the Council and its partners in relation to the reduction and prevention of rough sleeping.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That delegated authority be granted to the Housing Service to receive additional rough sleeping grant funding for 2020/21 of £693,735.
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Housing Service to use the funding to extend and continue with existing services and set up new services and initiatives as set out in this report.
3. That for the reasons given in this report the services provided via this funding be exempted from the Contract Procedure Rules, and that delegated authority be given for the Head of Housing Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to negotiate, agree and enter into contracts with current and new service providers identified to deliver the initiatives referred to in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.5 of this report.

APPENDICES – None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Please note that copies of background papers have not been published on the Council's website www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk but copies of the background papers listed below are available for public inspection free of charge by contacting the relevant Council Department.

| Date | Type | Available From |
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| 08/12/2019 | Equality Impact Assessment | Angela Haye |