

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 25th February 2021
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People
PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment
SUBJECT: Homelessness Funding Grant Allocations
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This Report describes the various grants that have been issued by Central Government to support rough sleepers and people who are, or are likely to become, homeless. It makes proposals for the allocation of these grants.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) Executive Board note and consider the contents of this Report; and
- ii) Approve the recommendations for expenditure against the grants, as described in Appendices 1 and 2.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 **Context:**

3.1.1 For some time, the plight of rough sleepers and people who are, or are likely to become homeless, has been a key political priority for Central Government. New legislation has been enacted (The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) which laid more rigorous duties on councils to assess and support people who might become homeless, and national guidance was issued to promote these duties.

3.1.2 The coronavirus pandemic has made the need to support rough sleepers and potentially homeless people more urgent, and further guidance has been issued to councils as a result. A report was brought to Executive Board in November 2020, detailing the temporary changes to the statutory eligibility criteria for help and support that had been adopted by Halton Borough Council. This has resulted in considerable extra expenditure being committed by the council to support these groups of people.

3.1.3 The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, followed in

2020 by the coronavirus pandemic, have both placed considerable pressures on the delivery of services for homeless people and rough sleepers. The numbers of people presenting as homeless rose from 97 in 2018/19 to 1987 from April – December 2020. The numbers of people placed in bed and breakfast accommodation as a result rose from 15 in 2018/19 to 298 in 2020/21. New resources had to be very rapidly developed during the pandemic, including the re-opening of mothballed units at Grangeway Court, and the development of a new short-term unit at Columba House in Widnes. Much of this has been able to be reclaimed from the funding received by the council to manage the pandemic, but there has still been a considerable impact on finances and on the use of staff time.

- 3.1.4 Two key government grants have been issued to support the legislative change and to manage the additional financial burden on local authorities arising from supporting people who are at risk of, or actually, homeless or rough sleeping. This Report details those grants and identifies proposals for their use.

3.2 Homelessness Prevention Grant

- 3.2.1 The purpose of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is to give local authorities control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness, and to deliver the following priorities:

- To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness
- Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention,
- Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six week limit

- 3.2.2 Halton has been allocated grant funding for 2021/22 of £344.828, which is an increase of £92,077 from 2020/21. The proposals for allocation of these monies are in **Appendix 1**. The funding is specifically ring-fenced to providing services which meet the purposes described in paragraph 3.2.1 above.

3.3 Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding:

- 3.3.1 This funding is described as being made available for local authorities to support people living on the streets. Halton received an allocation of £109,000 for 2020/ 21, with the commitment that the allocation for 2021/ 22 will be at least the same amount of money. Again, it is ring-fenced to ensure that the funding is used for this purpose. The proposals for use of this grant are in **Appendix 2**.

3.3.2 The above service delivery is a continuation of the service presently being delivered, which has proven successful. The additional request for outreach support is to provide additional support to clients placed within the four temporary accommodation unit.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this Report.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The financial implications are as described in this report. The increased demand in homelessness presentations has placed additional pressure upon the team. The funding grant will provide additional staffing to deliver homelessness services and reduce/prevent homelessness and will complement the ongoing delivery of services for homelessness clients, with additional financial assistance to promote lifestyle change and sustainability.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton:** the services and supports provided by the Housing Solutions Team apply to young people, families and care leavers, as well as to individuals who find themselves homeless. These can be some of the most vulnerable groups in our communities, and many rely on accessing suitable social housing to meet their needs.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton:** there are no direct implications for Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton:** key elements of the services for rough sleepers include the provision of an outreach nurse practitioner, and an outreach team to help entrenched rough sleepers to engage with services, move off the streets and address housing and health needs. The nurse practitioner can prescribe and can provide direct health advice and support, thereby reducing pressures on hard-pressed GP and secondary care services.

6.4 **A Safer Halton:** although the number of rough sleepers in Halton is small, they can be perceived as being a public nuisance, particularly when associated with begging. The services and supports funded by the grant allocations help to reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough and to manage their situations more effectively.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal:** there are no implications for Halton's urban renewal arising from this Report.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 On an individual basis, the provision of help and support from the housing and homelessness service is addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our area.

7.2 The provision of services to support rough sleepers and potentially homeless people is a statutory requirement. Without the services and support described in this Report and funded by grant allocation, the council would be at risk of legal challenge.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality implications arising from the contents of this Report.

Appendix 1

Proposals for allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant

Funding	Service Delivery	Purpose
£64.000	2 x Housing Solutions Advisers	Increased levels of homelessness put additional pressure upon Housing Solutions Team. Additional officers to meet demand and ensure LA is fully compliant with statutory requirement
£40.000	CGL Homelessness Nurse Practitioner	Continuation of provision to deliver outreach health advice and prescribing to homelessness clients.
£55.000	Prevention Fund	Offer financial funding to prevent homelessness. E.g., rent arrears, safety certificates, deposits etc. Assist migrant Families (including those experiencing domestic abuse) who have NRPF, whilst applying for immigration status.
£18.000	No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) – Families	Homelessness data reporting IT system (Jigsaw) Accommodation and support referral IT system across LCR Mainstay
£25.000	Mainstay & Jigsaw	
£50.000	Bond Guarantee Service	Financial uplift for private landlords to encourage engagement and assist with accommodation provision
£30.000	Mortgage Rescue	Financial assistance to homeowners to prevent homelessness
£30.000	GIFT Initiative	Furniture package for homelessness clients to assist when undertaking new tenancy.
£32,000	Support Officer Columba	Officer based at Columba to provide additional support for clients placed there during COVID.
£828.00	Staff Training	Additional training for staff to ensure they are compliant with Homelessness legal requirements

Appendix 2

Proposals for the allocation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant

Funding	Delivery	Purpose
£17.000	Changing Lives Sit up service	Provide 3 crisis spaces for rough sleepers for upto 3 nights.
£64.000	Whitechapel 1 x Intensive Support Officer 1 x Move On Officer	Outreach support provision for rough sleepers.
£15.000	Prevention Fund	Financial assistance for rough sleepers. E.g. enhanced deposits, rent in advance etc.
£10.000	No Recourse to Public Funds	Assist migrants who have NRPF, whilst applying for immigration status.
£32.000	Outreach support	Provide intensive support to rough sleepers placed at Lacy St/Market Street accommodation.
£20.000	Co-ordinator (joint service covering Halton & Knowsley	Coordinator role to work alongside team. Strategic approach, identify trends, demands, gaps in services.