

Report of Head of Housing Support

Report to Director of Resources and Housing

Date: 25 May 2017

Subject: Creation of New Posts in Housing Support Service to be funded through Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

- 1 The government has allocated Leeds a Flexible Homelessness Support Grant allocation of £1.636m in 2017/18 and £1.794m in 2018/19.
- 2 A separate report has been submitted for approval setting out the full range of proposals for grant use. This report will set out proposals for the establishment of new posts within the Housing Support service and the recruitment process that will be followed.

Recommendations

- 1 Approve the creation of new posts within the Housing Support service

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. Approve the creation of new posts within the Housing Support funded from Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. .

2. Background Information

- 2.1. The government has introduced a new grant allocation to better assist local authorities to prevent homelessness and reduce temporary accommodation placements: Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG). Leeds City Council has been allocated £1.636m in 2017/18 and £1.794m in 2018/19¹. FHSG replaces Temporary Accommodation Management Fee (TAMF) which was a payment of £60 per week per privately leased temporary accommodation placement. The government has calculated that it expected Leeds to receive £23k in TAMF in 2017/18, if the funding arrangement had been retained, on the basis of having an average of 7 privately leased temporary accommodation placements at any point in the year.
- 2.2 The purpose of the new FHSG is to give local authorities greater control on the use of resources to tackle homelessness. TAMF is only paid if a temporary accommodation placement is made and such a placement would be made because homeless prevention options have not been successful. Each authority should, in principle, be able to use FHSG to invest in prevention services/interventions that reduce the number and cost of temporary accommodation placements.
- 2.3 A homeless prevention is defined as being an intervention by a local authority that assists a person/household, who has presented stating that they are threatened with homelessness, to either 'stay put' in their existing home or to make a 'planned move' to alternative housing. There should be an expectation that the retained/new housing option will be available for a minimum of six months. Examples of private rented related homeless preventions include assisting a person to secure a private rented tenancy through a bond payment and negotiating with a private landlord to withdraw a notice for possession issued perhaps by agreeing an arrears payment plan.
- 2.4 The government has also indicated that FHSG will continue into 2019/20 and that allocations for that year will be announced in some point in 2017/18. The Council will best place itself for a favourable allocation by continuing to increase homeless prevention outcomes and reducing temporary accommodation placements.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 Separate decision reports have been submitted setting out the full proposed use of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant funding and expanded detail on the selective licensing proposal. This report will cover proposed grant use relating to new posts within the Housing Support Service.

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-03-15/HCWS538/>

3.2 Create 1 FTE SO2 Senior Housing Advisor to be based at Leeds Housing Options: Leeds Housing Options is the principal Council service offering housing advice to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service is geared towards maximising homeless prevention. Senior Housing Advisors are first tier managers and play a vital front-facing role in guiding and providing housing advice to prevent homelessness. The cost of the post is £38.9K in 2017/18 and £39.3k in 2018/19.

3.3 Create FTE 2 * PO2 Principal Housing Officer, 3 * SO2 Senior Housing Officer and 2 * C3 Housing Officers posts in the Private Sector Housing Team to carry out property inspection work. : The private rented sector is a growing housing tenure in the city and is an increasingly important housing option to address homelessness and housing need. The private rented sector has the most significant concentration of poor housing standards and it is vital that the council maximises what it can do to make the private rented sector a viable and attractive housing option. Also, it is important to raise standards in the private rented sector in order to promote tenancy sustainment and prevent new homelessness. The focus of the private sector housing team in 2017/18 will increasingly be on carrying out as many property inspections as possible to improve the housing conditions of private rented tenants. The intention is to recruit to 7 new posts within the private sector housing team to deliver more housing inspection work and to challenge, including from a legal perspective, the activity of rogue landlords. The posts will comprise of 2 x Principal Housing Offices, 3 x Senior Housing Officers and 2 x Housing Officer posts. The intention is that these posts will be recruited to on a permanent basis and there is an assumption they will continue to be funded through an FHSG in 2019/20. However, it is also intended that the posts can be part-funded in future from retained civil penalties that are applied to landlords who have been charged a penalty on the basis of their poor or illegal practice. The proposal is costed at £261k in 2017/18 and £263k in 2018/19.

3.4 Create 1 * PO2 Principal Housing Officer and 2 * SO2 Senior Housing Officer to develop a selective licencing business case. Funding of £300k (over two years) has been set aside to develop a selective licencing proposal for to be determined specific localities of concentrations of poor standard private rented housing. A selective licencing initiative will oblige landlords operating within a specific locality to secure a fee-based licence to operate. Shelter (the homelessness charity) supports the development of selective licencing initiatives as a means of raising standards of housing management /conditions and consequently promoting the prevention of homelessness². The funding will be used to develop the proposal over the next 12-18 months including staffing required to develop the proposal and more definite reports on the initiative development will be produced. The purpose of this report is to set aside the money to enable this activity. An approved selective licencing initiative will require a number of operational staff which will be funded though the licence fee income

3.5 Create FTE 1 C3 Housing Officer (support): The post-holders will deliver tenancy sustainment work to the cohort of entrenched rough sleepers who are moving in to council housing and also private rented tenants who are found to be vulnerable following a referral to the private sector housing team or through a property inspection. It is proposed to recruit to the posts on a permanent basis and it is assumed that a FHSG in 2019/20 will enable the continued funding into the third year. There may well be opportunities to fund

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http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/57779/Selective_licensing_for_local_authorities.pdf

the post through the HRA in future years. The cost of the post is £31k in 2017/18 and £31.4k in 2018/19.

3.6 Create 1 FTE PO1 Community OT and SO1 Adaptations Case Worker: the cost of adapting council housing is placing significant pressure on available funding and the Health and Housing service is working to increase the number of tenants who take up the option to move to already adapted housing as an alternative to adapting their current homes. We are looking to increase the number of moves by 100 (which is likely to generate a saving of £500k with an average adaptation scheme costed at £5k) in 2017/18 and the additional activity associated with helping people to move will be resourced through the recruitment of a PO1 Community OT and a SO1 Adaptations Case Worker. A disabled person being unable to mobilise in their own home is a form of homelessness as the accommodation is not reasonable to occupy. It is anticipated that the posts could be funded through the DFG allocation and the HRA in future years. The cost of the posts is £75k in 2017/18 and £76k in 2018/19.

3.7 The cost of the posts represents funding for a full two years from the date when the posts are recruited to.

3.8 All posts will be recruited to on existing job descriptions for Senior Housing Advisor, Principal Housing Officers, Senior Housing Officers, Housing Officers, Housing Officer (Support), Community OT and Case Worker (Adaptations). All posts have been subject to job evaluation. The job descriptions are appended to this report.

3.9 Workforce Implementation Plan: The workforce implementation plan for recruiting to the proposed new posts has been developed in line with corporate policy. The posts are additional to the existing Housing Support structure and no officer will be adversely affected by the proposal. It is proposed that the posts will be firstly matched to people who have been displaced from their previous post and then, if required, the remaining posts will be advertised on an internal basis across the Council.

3.10 The proposed workforce implementation plan has been conveyed to Trade Union representatives.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1. Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 The workforce implementation plan is set out in paragraphs 3.8 to 3.10. No existing staff will be adversely affected by the proposal. Officers within the Housing Support service have been advised of the proposals. Details of the new posts and workforce implementation plan have been conveyed to the trade unions.

4.2. Equality Diversity Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Homelessness is one of the most acute forms of social exclusion/disadvantage and disproportionately affects the most vulnerable in society. The proposed funding interventions will help to tackle this disadvantage.

4.2.2 An Equality Diversity and Cohesion Impact Assessment has been carried out.

4.3. Council Policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 Preventing homeless contributes to the Council Plan aims of tackling poverty and reducing inequalities and the vision for Leeds to be a compassionate city and the Best Council.

4.4. Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 There is sufficient budget to create the proposed posts. The posts will promote the prevention of homelessness and reduce temporary accommodation placements. The proposals therefore represent 'invest to save' interventions. Significant consideration has been given to how the posts will be funded from 2019/20 onwards.

4.5. Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The proposals set out in the report represent a significant operational decision and are subject to call in.

4.5.2 The prevention of homelessness will become a legal duty once the Homelessness Reduction Bill is enacted.

4.6. Risk Management

4.6.1 Risks are associated with using time-limited to fund the recruitment to permanent posts. However, the report sets out how such risks will be addressed.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant allocations for the next two years represent a significant windfall for Leeds City Council and is a positive reflection of the success Leeds has had in preventing homelessness and reducing temporary accommodation placements. The proposed new posts will better enable the Council to increase homeless prevention and further reduce temporary accommodation placements.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Approve the proposed new posts in Housing Support funded through the use of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.

7. Background

7.1 Job Descriptions for proposed new posts: SO2 Senior Housing Advisor/PO2 Principal Housing Advisor/SO2 Senior Housing Officer/C3 Housing Officer/C3 Housing Officer/PO1 Community OT/SO1 Adaptations Case Worker.

The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.