

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

25 May 2021

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 HOUSING FUNDING UPDATE

Summary

The report updates Members on funding for homelessness functions over 2020/21 and into 2021/22 and clarifies proposals to utilise additional Homelessness Prevention Grant funding received in 2021/22.

1.1 Funding streams and expenditure 2020/21

1.1.1 Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)

1.1.2 In total we received £125,086 in Next Steps Accommodation Funding. This funding was on the back of the Government's "Everyone In" rally at the beginning of the Covid pandemic for rough sleepers and the ongoing need to provide accommodation and support for this cohort.

1.1.3 Part of this funding (£80,086) has been used to offset the cost of accommodating rough sleepers so against the temporary accommodation budget.

1.1.4 The initial intention for the remaining £45,000 was to use for guaranteed rent/incentives however we have since had agreement to reprofile the spend to allow for a £18,000 contribution towards our temporary housing staffing arrangements as one of the roles is focussed on supporting the rough sleeper cohort, £1,000 towards the West Kent shared nurse project and £5,000 for flexible health interventions and personal budgets to support rough sleepers to register with GPs, get the Covid vaccinations etc. The remainder remains available to support rough sleepers into long term accommodation.

1.1.5 Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant (RSI)

1.1.6 TMBC received £164,520 RSI funding in 2020/21 (original amount was £278,850 however this was reduced to offset the underspend from the previous year because of a later mobilisation of the RSI projects). The purpose of the grant is to provide support to continue and/or establish Rough Sleeping Initiatives to immediately intervene in, prevent and reduce rough sleeping.

1.1.7 This funding covered the Housing First project in T&M as well as the dedicated young person navigator. It also covers the two complex needs workers and the supported lettings workers who cover the whole of West Kent.

1.1.8 Cold Weather Fund

1.1.9 TMBC would have been eligible to claim a maximum of £8,500 from MHCLG to cover the cost of any placements under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). However, given the funding we have received via NSAP we were able to cover some of the placements made and have therefore made a claim for £5,000 only.

1.1.10 Covid-19 Contingency Fund

1.1.11 We submitted a claim in May 2020 to cover the net TA costs of rough sleepers that were accommodated in April 2020 and May 2020. We received £4,500 in August 2020.

1.2 Funding streams 2021/22 (to date)

1.2.1 Rough Sleeper Accommodation Funding (RSAP)

1.2.2 We have recently considered a bid under this funding stream which replaces NSAP in 2021/22. RSAP aims to deliver up to 6,000 units of supported move-on accommodation for rough sleepers over the course of this parliament. The £433 million programme includes funding for capital and revenue based longer-term accommodation schemes as well as provision for the support people need to recover from rough sleeping.

1.2.3 We have had discussions with both Moat and Clarion Housing regarding their ability to support a bid with unused accommodation that they may have that could be repurposed to deliver under this scheme. However, neither housing provider was able to assist at this point in time and therefore when we weighed up the amount of work required to submit any bid, the limited opportunities we have with accommodation and the tight timescales both for bidding and delivery we have concluded that it is not feasible at this time.

1.2.4 Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)

1.2.5 We received KCC approval to utilise £10,000 of our COMF funding to support rough sleepers during increased rates of transmission of coronavirus & through the tier system as well as in any lockdown period. This would include advice/accommodation support/referrals/working with health partners etc. We will utilise this funding to offset the additional costs of the temporary housing staff arrangements as one of the roles is focussed on supporting the rough sleeper cohort.

1.2.6 Homelessness Prevention Grant

1.2.7 The Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) is made up of what was previously the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant. This year it has been increased nationally by £47m to give local authorities more control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness.

1.2.8 The grant is ring-fenced and is to be spent in adherence with the following principles:

- 1) To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
- 2) Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention and reduce the use of unsuitable B&Bs for families.
- 3) Ensure service financial viability of services by contributing to the costs of statutory duties, including implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act and supporting with the costs of temporary accommodation.

1.2.9 TMBC has received £382,715 for 2021/22. In the budget (homelessness reserve) we had assumed £223,201 (referred to as flexible homelessness support grant and homelessness reduction act new burdens grant) so we have an additional £159,514. We need to take off £25,535 of that to fully cover the current temporary housing posts we have in place in 2021/22 so we are left with an additional £133,979 unbudgeted for.

1.2.10 Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant (RSI)

1.2.11 TMBC has received £129,712 RSI funding for the first quarter of 2021/22. This is made up of £69,712 which is a quarter of the original Year 3 funding and a £60,000 uplift. As above the purpose of the grant is to provide support to continue and/or establish Rough Sleeping Initiatives to immediately intervene in, prevent and reduce rough sleeping. The amount for the remainder of the year is still unknown however we have bid for a total of £298,221 and it has been confirmed that we will not receive any less than the amount we received in 2020/21 (£278,850).

1.2.12 This funding will cover the continuation and extension of the very successful Housing First project in T&M. We aim to extend by a further 7 units taking it to 14 units in total and have another dedicated support worker. The young person navigator will be changed to cover both TMBC and T Wells. It also covers the two complex needs workers and the supported lettings workers who cover the whole of West Kent. Attached at **Annex 1** is a table of current external posts supporting the rough sleeper focussed work of the team.

1.2.13 The £60,000 uplift is to be viewed as an extension of NSAP funding to prevent a “cliff edge” after 31 March 2021 when the previous funding runs out, to cover those who are in temporary accommodation with no duty. The main aim is to prevent a mass return to the streets of rough sleepers. It is also likely that the Year 4 funding we have bid for may be reduced with an expectation we make up any shortfall from this uplift.

1.3 Additional Homelessness Support Grant

1.3.1 With the additional £133,979 Homelessness Support Grant that is currently unbudgeted for we propose to strengthen the prevention role within the housing team. This appears to be the main drive from MHCLG across various pots of funding and we all know that early intervention can lead to the need for less support later including temporary accommodation. The MHCLG have been clear in their liaison with local authorities that they do not expect to see this additional funding solely used to offset growing temporary accommodation costs and that they want local authorities to think creatively about prevention and having an impact at an early stage.

1.3.2 A new prevention role would be created. This role would be additional to the existing temporary Homelessness Prevention Officer post who focusses very much on the rough sleeping and “at risk of rough sleeping” cohort as the funding for that post is mainly via the COMF and the NSAP. The new post would have a focus on the remaining cohorts – families etc - thus providing an emphasis on prevention across all approaches to the team. The existing Housing Solutions Officers do of course have prevention at the heart of their work however with the increasingly complex caseload they carry they are very reactive and planned prevention work is time consuming so is difficult to manage within existing resources. This new post would provide that support and flexibility to respond early when appropriate and focus in on practical prevention measures e.g. family mediation, liaison with landlords etc.

1.3.3 We propose to establish a temporary two-year fixed term contracted post at Scale 6 (equivalent to current Housing Solutions Officers) this would be £75,342 over two years allowing for 28.5% on costs and top of scale appointment.

1.3.4 We propose to use the remaining £58,637 additional funding to offset our temporary accommodation costs.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 The Council has statutory duties under Part VI and Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 in relation to the allocation of housing and homelessness.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 The housing team have actively sought to apply for funding at every opportunity where it has been appropriate to maximise the amount of funding that we have available to utilise on housing initiatives.
- 1.5.2 TMBC has received £382,715 for 2021/22 in Homelessness Prevention Grant which replaces the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Act new burdens grant. In the budget (homelessness reserve) we had assumed £223,201 so we have an additional £159,514.
- 1.5.3 The current additional temporary housing staff arrangements and the proposed new two-year post can all be funded from the additional funding received.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The MHCLG have been clear that with the additional funding in place they do expect to see local authorities to focus on prevention work whilst recognising that increasing temporary accommodation costs are also a significant concern.
- 1.6.2 Investment in an early intervention prevention focussed role will lead to less demand for higher levels of support later or the “crisis” response of having to provide temporary accommodation which is costly. With the number of approaches into the housing team increasing and the still uncertain fallout from the Covid pandemic on households housing situations and finances it is vitally important that we increase our emphasis on prevention work.

1.7 Recommendations

- 1.7.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that Members **AGREE** the following regarding the additional Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2021/22 as follows:
- 1) The additional £133,979 will be built into the Homelessness Reserve budget; and
 - 2) That £75,342 of this will be utilised to fund a temporary two year fixed term contracted post at Scale 6, which has Management Team approval to be created, subject to Members’ decision on the budget provision; and
 - 3) The remaining £63,638 additional funding will be utilised to offset our temporary accommodation costs.

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

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