

<b>To:</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>From:</b>	Linda Hibbs Head of Housing & Health
<b>Director:</b>	Eleanor Hoyle Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

## **BRIEFING NOTE: EXECUTIVE - NON-KEY DECISION**

### **HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT – ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

#### **Summary of Issue:**

**In 2022/23 TMBC were allocated an additional £61,728 top up payment for the Homelessness Prevention Grant programme. This report provides recommendations to formally accept the funding and on how the additional funding can support required staffing resources within the Housing team.**

#### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 On 30 December 2022 DLUHC informed local authorities of a grant determination for a Winter Top Up payment for the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) programme ring-fenced for 2022/2023.

1.1.2 As with the main HPG the purpose of the additional grant is to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in supporting local authorities to discharge their homelessness duties under homelessness legislation. The grant was ring-fenced for 2022-2023 and was 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.

1.1.3 Given the overall spend in 2022/23 on homelessness including on temporary accommodation, the original HPG allocation plus the top up allocation is fully spent within the 2022/23 year as required by the grant conditions. However, the additional funding does allow some flexibility to use previously allocated funding to meet service needs.

## **1.2 Proposed use of funding**

1.2.1 It is proposed to use the previously allocated funding for extensions to key staffing posts within the housing team and to create a new fixed term post.

1.2.2 Firstly, we propose an extension to the post of the Temporary Accommodation Welfare Officer. This role was established following the external consultancy review of temporary accommodation for a one-year fixed term period ending mid July 2023. This post has proved invaluable in improving contact with residents in temporary accommodation so we know about issues, can address non-occupancy quicker, ensuring benefits are claimed and providing encouragement on rental/bill payments, liaising regarding personal housing plans including move on etc. The role has without a doubt contributed towards the significant reduction in numbers within temporary accommodation. It is proposed to extend this role to 31 March 2024 in line with several other fixed term posts that were established following the external consultancy review of temporary accommodation.

1.2.3 Secondly, we propose an extension to the existing fixed term post of Housing Allocations Assistant. This recently came to MT for an extension to 30 September 2023, however given the forthcoming implementation of the new Huume IT system from July 2023 and the new allocations policy including a need to all applicants to reapply and be reassessed there is a need to provide additional support until 31 March 2024. In addition, the numbers of applications to the housing register continue to increase with nearly 300 more applications in 2022/23 than the previous year. In some months the number of applications is now reaching 200. The permanent resource for this area of work will need to be reconsidered once the new policy is embedded and the upward trend in demand is fully assessed.

1.2.4 Finally, we propose an additional new post of Housing Allocations Assistant for a fixed term six-month period from June/July 2023. This is primarily to assist with reassessment of applications given the changes to the policy and new IT system as above. We will face an influx of applications to be assessed within a very short timeframe (likely to be 21-28 days) in order that applicants can retain their existing priority dates and it is important we are able to get on top of this process quickly so we can get back to some “normality” with social housing lettings and ensuring we are meeting housing need.

### **1.3 Financial implications**

- 1.3.1 The cost of the above recommendations for additional staffing resources is estimated at £61,000 which is within the additional HPG allocation which allows flexibility for previously allocated funding.

### **1.4 Recommendations**

- 1) **APPROVE** the acceptance of the additional Homelessness Prevention Grant funding of £61,728;
- 2) **AGREE** the extension to the existing fixed term posts of Temporary Accommodation Welfare Officer and Housing Allocations Assistant to 31 March 2024; and
- 3) **AGREE** the establishment of a new six-month fixed term post of Housing Allocations Assistant.