



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

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| REPORT OF: | Executive Member for Public Health, Prevention & Wellbeing |
| LEAD OFFICERS: | Strategic Director of Adults and Health |
| DATE: | Thursday, 8 December 2022 |

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Adults Social Care & Health

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT: Additional Funding for work with Rough Sleepers

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government published on the 3rd September 2022 their new 'Cross-Government Strategy to End Rough Sleeping'. Alongside a range of government measures, it recognises that Local Authorities play a vital role in delivering the services that both prevent individuals sleeping rough and support off the streets those that do.

To complement the strategy the government announced details of successful bidders for local authorities applying for grants under two schemes: The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP).

The council has been successful with both applications, and has been awarded £802,400 under the RSI scheme and £881,770 under the RSAP scheme which run to March 2025, and March 2024 respectively.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

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- Notes the funding being made available to Blackburn with Darwen
- Gives approval to supplementary revenues estimates for both the Rough Sleeping Initiative and the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme as set out in the financial implications over the next 3 years
- Gives approval to a supplementary capital estimate of £408,000 to be added to the Council's Capital Programme in 2022/23;
- Approves expenditure against this budget in discharging the requirements of the grant conditions.

3. BACKGROUND

In Blackburn with Darwen, we have a strong track record of preventing and supporting people away from rough sleeping. From 2018 to now, rough sleeping has reduced from an average of 26 individuals to 13 this summer, and with our Severe Winter Emergency Provision (SWEP) offer up and running as of the 24th November we are at 0, although the number changes daily.

This is a significant achievement set against a challenging backdrop, not only in terms of the cost of living and long term impact of austerity on our communities, but also with the over-supply of hostel and supported accommodation within the borough, which brings with it unique further challenges. Such properties have a high rate of eviction we have to respond to on a daily basis, as this type of accommodation is the lower end of the housing market for individuals that, for a range of reasons, struggle to maintain a tenancy. The risk of rough sleeping therefore is higher.

In responding to what is an ongoing challenge, this funding will be used to further our efforts to reduce and maintain low rough sleeper numbers in the borough by:

- Funding our dedicated outreach team known as “Navigators” using the RSI allocation. As a team they proactively engage with anyone rough sleeping or at imminent risk of doing so. They also operate as part of our integrated support offer, delivered currently through “changing futures” to address the immediate challenges that have led to someone rough sleeping or at risk of imminently being so. For those ready and willing to accept support, the co-produced plan, which has dedicated wrap-around provision, can influence eviction decisions by private landlords. It does this by providing reassurance that, for example; behaviour will improve, risk of arrears reduce and, or the property will be kept in good order. Similarly we can carry greater influence on tenancies being offered for a person they may have previously not considered, advocating for and providing limited guarantees for private and social landlords willing to help.
- We also have our own offer known as a Stepping Stones, a housing first model considered best practice nationally. The council has access to 30 properties funded through RSAP that are furnished and let on assured short-hold tenancies. We use these properties to support those with a long history of rough sleeping and who are from Blackburn with Darwen. Their risk of eviction and homelessness is often driven by complex and multiple need and where the private and social landlord sector as a result refuse to house them, even with assurances. Over the medium term, through tailored and intensive support, away from chaotic hostel environments, we help people to gradually be able to manage their own tenancy. Through this model we have been able to achieve real successes with individuals with a long history of rough sleeping. This is particularly the case for those individuals who have been initially helped through our SWEP provision in our Homeless Pods available through the winter months.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

While the additional funding is welcome, this is a long term systemic issue that requires a sustained response as part of our broader homelessness strategy. As the funding is for 2 years there is a risk, should government not provide similar funding beyond 2025 there would be a significant drop off in our support capabilities.

There are greater risks of costs being incurred to those properties funded through the RSAP as part of our housing first model, in particular for damage or arrears to properties where a person relapses into previous circumstance or behaviour. This is expected when working with people suffering often extensive past and current trauma. The budget takes account of this and the bespoke plan with each individual includes a thorough risk assessment dictating the regularity of visits.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There is no change or impact on current BwD policy. This is a continuation of now established support for rough sleepers, scaling up current practice we have piloted to a level that can achieve positive outcomes for more people as we aim to meet and sustain the government's target in ending rough sleeping.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Rough Sleeper initiative (RSI) funding is over 3 years with a grant of £802,400. This is claimed quarterly in arrears from DLUHC in line with grant conditions up to March 2025.

The RSAP funding is over 2 years with a grant of £881,770. This has a £408,000 capital allocation, which we expect to receive in November. This will be added to the councils capital programme. The remaining revenue allocation of £473,770 will be claimed quarterly in arrears in line with grant conditions up to March 2024.

Any underspend on the programme will be retained by DLUHC.

The grant claim is managed by the Housing Needs Manager supported by the programme staff funded by the project. Regular updates on the programmes role out will be provided to the monthly executive member briefings and via the departments SLT processes.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Government Ministers are empowered to give grants to local authorities under s31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and such grants are paid on such conditions as the person paying it may determine. This authority must therefore ensure it complies fully with any applicable conditions in this instance.

Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 recently amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 gives to local authorities a duty to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. Local authorities, since 2017, have had a duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness; and a duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants. In addition there is also a duty to provide or secure the provision of advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, free of charge. This advice and assistance must be made available to any person in the authority's area "including people who are not eligible for further homelessness services as a result of their immigration status."

The programme of initiatives set out in this report is being undertaken in accordance with these powers and duties.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resources required of the programme will be funded through the programme. Planning for the

deployment of the grant funding is underway with much of the infrastructure and staffing in place. Any amendments to the programme will be approved through the executive member for public health and prevention, and agreed by our DLUHC prior to being implemented. The programme will be entirely funded through the grant with no requirement for additional council resource.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

Consultation was undertaken through the bidding process, to include with members, the councils housing needs team, team alongside wider departments, the home office, local community and 3rd sector organisations directly. Regular consultation with beneficiaries of the programme will be undertaken throughout delivery.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

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| CONTACT OFFICER: | Mark Aspin |
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| DATE: | 14/11/2022 |
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| BACKGROUND PAPER: | |
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