

REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING
Council	



Report template revised June 2008

SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
Addressing Homelessness in South Ribble – Landlord Incentive Scheme	Corporate Governance and Business Transformation	I Parker	9

SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This pilot proposal seeks to transform the service delivery of the Housing Options team in ways that will enable the team to work collaboratively with landlords with a view to securing long term accommodation for clients.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That Council approve a Pilot study to operate across 2016/17 in order to assess and review its success measures.
- (b) Funding of £80,000 is identified to support this additional Housing Options scheme.
- (c) That funding to be used flexibly to encourage and motivate private landlords to provide long-term tenancy arrangements for people in priority need and homeless and/or facing eviction.

DETAILS AND REASONING

- 1 The Housing Options team currently assists homeless people and families who are classed as being in priority need in securing permanent accommodation. However, this is done on reactive basis by identifying a particular case and liaising with potential landlords in securing accommodation for the individual(s) concerned. As a consequence of limited budgets and a reluctance on the part of some landlords to engage with the current scheme, the team finds it difficult to work proactively with landlords to secure suitable long term accommodation. Although there is some limited work undertaken to secure tenancy with private landlords, this is typically done on an ad-hoc basis and increasingly private landlords are wanting larger cash bonds to secure tenancy. This is something our existing policy does not easily allow.
- 2 It is envisaged that, with increased financial support, and subsequently an enhanced proactive approach being taken to liaising with landlords, the Council will be in a position to assist a greater number of homeless customers in securing permanent accommodation. As well as assisting those homeless customers who are classed as being in priority need, the scheme will also be extended to provide assistance to prevent homelessness among residents who would potentially have a priority need if they were to become homeless. The existing policy has been in place for some years and does not reflect the changes to the rental market. To illustrate, more and more people in work are opting to rent rather than buy; this client group is obviously more attractive to private landlords. We must compete within this environment to break the cycle of temporary accommodation, which is in itself a barrier to securing employment.
- 3 In recent weeks we have been alerted to external changes that are inevitably going to impact on the number and levels of homelessness; doing nothing is an option but this would push up the current costs for service delivery. LCC will be reducing and withdrawing altogether in 2017/18 the following support services:
 - Floating Support
 - Supported Housing Schemes

- 4 Local Housing Allowance rates are to be applied across Social Landlords – this means that people under 35 years of age will have the amount they can claim for housing costs restricted to a shared room accommodation rate. RSLs in this area do not have sufficient shared accommodation, therefore it is expected that many will not meet the affordability test. Proactively therefore, recognising the reduction in support services and changes to welfare support, this report seeks to engage with landlords in ways that motivate and encourage long-term tenancies for homeless and vulnerable residents.
- 5 The Housing Options team already liaises closely with our Benefits Service, but this liaison is to be further enhanced so the client accesses a joined-up service. Where legislation permits and it is appropriate, the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment scheme (administered by Housing Benefits) will be drawn upon to support this pilot, giving greater access to long-term tenancies. This is additional financial support over and above the £80,000. Early indications from Government suggest that DHP funding is due to increase.
- 6 Access to support will continue to be through the Council's Housing Options service. It is for the pilot to determine the success of this approach – but we have a thriving economy throughout the borough with extremely low levels of unemployment; but without a stable address access to employment is enormously difficult. Breaking down these barriers is key to providing access to work. In turn access to work breaks down the benefit dependency cycle; this alternative approach, supported by additional funding, is designed to make access to employment easier – *to address the homeless*.
- 7 In essence, the scheme proposed will allow our Housing Options team to access funding streams to protect tenants, many with complex needs, and help them to remain rather than facing eviction. The scheme will also support those new clients facing homelessness. Easier and more flexible access to funds makes negotiations with private landlords easier; but surely it makes better sense to use funding to secure long-term tenancy rather than ad-hoc funding to cover temporary accommodation costs; the latter doing very little to support access to the wider economy and workplace.
- 8 Over time, relationships with private landlords will improve and as the pilot scheme develops it is anticipated that some potential homeless situations will be prevented from occurring in the first place. It should not be underestimated the time and level of support that clients in temporary accommodation need; this support is increasingly falling to the Council's Housing Options team and the proposed service reductions already highlighted will simply make this situation worse.
- 9 It is expected that assistance will be provided to around 50 families/clients during this pilot, and that the average level of assistance provided will be in the region of £1,500 per case. However, the level of assistance that is provided will vary from case to case depending upon the needs and circumstances of the individuals involved.
- 10 It is expected that the bulk of the assistance that is provided will be in respect of cash deposits to landlords and advance payments of rent. However, assistance may also be provided in respect of Housing Benefit shortfalls, payments of rent arrears to prevent eviction, one off payments for furniture removals and house clearance and tailored incentives related to the risks posed by particular households, such as offenders.
- 11 By treating this proposal as a pilot, the measureable outcomes include:
 - N° of people accessing long term tenancy
 - Reduction in the number of days people remain in temporary accommodation
 - Cost per case (and realistic recycling rates)

These targets can be monitored, reported and considered to support (or otherwise) any proposal to make the pilot permanent.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these. The risk assessment which has been carried out forms part of the background papers to the report.

FINANCIAL	This additional Housing Options scheme is a one year pilot scheme which if approved will be funded from headroom identified in the 2016/17 budget process and will therefore have no impact on the Council's base budget. This growth proposal is also included in the budget report on this agenda.
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LEGAL	<p>This is an innovative approach to try and reduce homelessness levels in the borough.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposed expenditure is both reasonable and lawful. Various pieces of legislation are of assistance here including section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>Following completion of the pilot scheme a thorough review will be carried out as to the effectiveness of the measures carried out.</p>
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RISK	The full risk assessment forms part of the background papers to this report. The main points for consideration are summarised here:-
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THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY	
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OTHER (see below)	
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<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>
<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Risk Assessment