

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: REGULATORY

1. DECISION TAKEN

- 1.1 The allocation of £86k of homelessness grant funding received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (as was) for the provision of support services to rough sleepers and single homeless people in the district.

2. DECISION TAKER

- 2.1 Ian Fullstone, Service Director – Regulatory

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

- 3.1 25 January 2022

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 The Council received a funding award totalling £172k from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, DLUHC) following a successful bid to the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2021-22. Unfortunately two successive service providers, subject to previous decisions, have been unable to deliver £83k of services contained within our bid. As opposed to returning this portion of the award officers have been seeking alternative providers. Following these efforts and with the agreement of DLUHC the funding will be re-allocated to Keystage Housing (CIC) for the provision of intensive support services through their new accommodation scheme.
- 4.2 The new Keystage scheme will operate out of the former Lord Lister Hotel in Hitchin, providing accommodation and support for up to 21 single homeless people (and some couples) at any one time, many of whom will have complex support needs and/or be at risk of rough sleeping. The first clients were accommodated from December 2021, with the Council having sole access to all vacancies for the first 10 years of the scheme.
- 4.3 The remaining £3k of Homelessness Prevention Grant will be used to fund contactless donation points in the district, to both raise public awareness of rough sleeping and provide an alternative to direct cash donations to street beggars.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None. The DLUHC has agreed that there remains ongoing high demand for homelessness support and accommodation in the district, and that the new Keystage scheme will be a valuable resource for meeting this demand, particularly from those with complex support needs. If the £83k of funding is not spent by the end of 2021/22, it will have to be returned to the DLUHC.

6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)

6.1 The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Gary Grindal and the Deputy Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Sean Prendergast, have been consulted and are both supportive of this decision.

7. FORWARD PLAN

7.1 This decision is not a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council was awarded £172k of funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative 4 (RSI4) in March 2021 following a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Of this, £83k was to fund HMO (Houses of Multiple Occupation) move-on accommodation and related support for single homeless people and rough sleepers. Unfortunately, both Haven First – the original, named provider in the Council’s RSI4 bid – and subsequently, Emerging Futures, have been unable to deliver the £83k HMO scheme. Full details and background to the RSI bid and the decision to re-allocate funding to Emerging Futures are contained within delegated decisions made on [18 May 2021](#) and [28 July 2021](#).
- 8.2 Emerging Futures confirmed to the Council in September 2021 that they would not be able to deliver the HMO scheme due to market conditions that led to an unprecedented shortage of suitable properties in the district. Remaining accommodation options were considered, including those located outside of North Herts. In November 2021, the DLUHC agreed that, given the continuing high demand for single homeless support in the district, and the urgency with which the funding now needs to be spent in order to meet grant timescales, the £83k should be re-allocated to Keystage Housing to fund intensive support services in their new accommodation scheme for single homeless people in Hitchin upon commencement of its operation following acquisition.
- 8.3 The Keystage scheme will provide en-suite accommodation and support for 21 (mainly) single homeless people at any one time, operating from the former Lord Lister Hotel site in Hitchin. The first clients were accommodated December 2021 increasing in number over the following weeks. The Council will have exclusive access to all vacancies for local people for the first ten years of the scheme. Full details about this new scheme are contained within the delegated decision made on [13 August 2021](#) which approved the allocation of £200k of government funding towards the scheme.
- 8.4 Many of Keystage’s clients will have support needs, some complex, such as poor mental health and drug/alcohol misuse and will be at risk of rough sleeping. Obtaining and retaining accommodation for clients with this level of need can be extremely challenging and the RSI4 funding will be used for the provision of 24/7 onsite support (with multi-agency working as appropriate), to help clients address their support needs and work towards independent living. It is anticipated the funding will be used to support clients through to July 2022; in the meantime DLUHC will consider bids under the successor grant programme – RSI5, that runs for three years (the Council will be submitting a bid under this scheme too).
- 8.5 Additionally, a further £3k of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding will be allocated to Haven First in order to procure and install three contactless donation points in the district for an initial two-year period. The donation points will raise public awareness of rough sleeping and provide well-meaning members of the public with an alternative to giving cash handouts to individuals, which simply encourages street begging. Most recently, street begging has been particularly visible in Letchworth town centre but is intermittently problematic in other town centre locations.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Local authorities' homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed significant new duties on English local housing authorities.
- 9.2 When agreeing the Adoption of a new Housing Strategy (2019-2024) in March 2019, the Cabinet also resolved the following:

In the event the MHCLG provides homelessness funding beyond the financial year 2019/20, the Cabinet authorises the Service Director – Regulatory, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, to decide on the specific allocation of the funds in order to meet homelessness priorities, for the duration of the Strategy.

- 9.3 The interventions detailed in section 8 meet the DLUHC requirements for use of the ring-fenced RSI grant (with regard paragraphs 8.2-8.4) and are consistent with the aims and objectives of the Housing Strategy (2019-2024), that has a specific focus on actions regarding the provision of support for rough sleepers and single homeless people.
- 9.4 Following completion and approval of the necessary procurement process, a funding agreement will be produced to cover the duration of the augmented Haven First service.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. £83k of RSI4 funding awarded to the Council in March 2021 is currently undelivered. The DLUHC has agreed that the funding should be re-allocated to Keystage Housing CIC for the purposes set out in paragraphs 8.2-8.4.
- 10.2. If the Council does not spend the £83k by the end of March 2022, it will have to be returned to the DLUHC.
- 10.3. Funding for the contactless donation points - £3k - will come from the remaining Homelessness Prevention Grant.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Specialist support services form a key element of the Council's work to prevent and manage homelessness in the district and to reduce rough sleeping. Without these services, people at risk of homelessness, or those who are homeless, may not receive the appropriate level of assistance. Many of this cohort are vulnerable and often have complex needs which require specialist assistance.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 There are no equalities implications arising as a result of this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this decision.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no human resource implications.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.

17. APPENDICES

17.1 None.

NOTIFICATION DATE:

Signature of Executive Member Consulted:

Date: Cllr Grindal by telephone 21/10/21

Signature of Decision Taker:



Service Director - Regulatory

Please Note: that *unless urgency provisions apply* EXECUTIVE decisions cannot be implemented until 5 clear working days have elapsed after the decision has been taken to allow for scrutiny call-in.

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS