

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: REGULATORY

1. DECISION TAKEN

- 1.1 The allocation of £183,000 grant funding received from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) to enable Housing Services to provide continuing support for rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. DECISION TAKER

- 2.1 Ian Fullstone, Service Director – Regulatory

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

- 3.1 25 September 2020

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 The Council has been successful in securing an allocation of funding from the government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), which aims to assist local authorities and their partners to provide ongoing accommodation and support for rough sleepers housed during the current pandemic.
- 4.2 The funding secured through the NSAP is ringfenced and must only be used for the accommodation and support of rough sleepers and those at risk of street homelessness.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None.

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

- 6.1 The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Gary Grindal has been consulted and is 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 COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented pressure on the Council's Housing Services and we expect this to continue into the foreseeable future. In particular, in line with the government's 'Everyone In' instruction, the Council is accommodating a large number of additional households who are sleeping rough or who are at risk of street homelessness. To date, the Council has accommodated almost 150 mostly single households (with a few couples), the vast majority of these

in local hotels initially. We continue to deal with new approaches for accommodation on a daily basis.

- 8.2 Whilst some of this cohort has been found settled accommodation, or have moved on of their own accord, we continue to work with around 60 customers to assist them into more settled accommodation. Of these, 25 remain in hotel accommodation, which is mainly outside of the district due to a lack of availability more locally. Many of this client group have support needs, most commonly due to substance abuse issues or poor mental health, which pose additional challenges for their resettlement. There have been numerous incidences in the past months of hotel placements failing due to the inappropriate behaviour of individuals.
- 8.3 The Council is working closely with Haven First to resettle clients via an established resettlement 'pathway' for single homeless people. (Haven First manage the nightshelter accommodation in Hitchin and also provide the Council's specialist outreach service for rough sleepers). This pathway aims to move clients from initial contact and engagement into emergency accommodation whereby appropriate support services can be accessed. Ultimately, clients are found settled accommodation once they are ready to live independently. Haven First's current pathway capacity for dealing with the significant uplift in demand we have experienced is extremely limited, although they have temporarily increased their capacity by taking over the Templars Hotel in Baldock.
- 8.4 The NSAP was launched by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) over the summer, inviting bids from local authorities and their partners for additional funding to sustain their ongoing work with rough sleepers and also to develop longer term accommodation solutions. The Council submitted a bid in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Haven First, largely focused around supporting and expanding Haven First's resettlement pathway as described above.
- 8.5 The Council has been successful in securing £183,000 of NSAP funding which will be used to fund three strands of activity, all of which are key components of the resettlement pathway.
- (i) £90,000 for increased capacity of Haven First's accommodation-based support service which is currently hugely oversubscribed. This is a key element of the pathway and it will enable Haven First to secure a lease on the Chequers Hotel in Royston for six months.
 - (ii) £71,000 for assistance with the Council's (net) cost of hotels, emergency accommodation often being an initial first step on the pathway. Daily efforts continue to be made to resettle people, however as many have support needs this is a slow process. In addition, there remains a constant supply of new daily approaches, which may increase as winter draws in.
 - (iii) £22,000 for two 'Housing First' placements - this provides more intensive support solutions for those with particularly high and/or complex needs. This will fund Haven First's support costs (they will also secure the accommodation).

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 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 proposals in this report meet reflect the bid documentation submitted and the MHCLG requirements for use of the NSAP grant and are also consistent with the aims and objectives of the Housing Strategy (2019-2024) that has a specific focus on actions regarding the prevention and management of homelessness.
- 9.4 The Council will produce a grant agreement for the Haven First funding of £112,000 (outlined in paragraph 8.5) and performance against this will be managed in accordance with an existing HCC framework.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The use of NSAP grant as proposed in this report will provide a sizeable contribution towards reducing the cost of hotel use for the Council and should also contribute to lower levels of homelessness in the longer run.
- 10.2 The NSAP grant must be utilised in full by the end of the financial year 2020/21 and is ring-fenced for use for the accommodation and support of rough sleepers and those at risk of street homelessness
- 10.3 A previous delegated decision taken on 12th August 2020 agreed that use of £60k of remaining MHCLG Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants would be dependent on the outcome of the NSAP bid. As the bid has been successful, this £60k will be allocated to support the Haven First's pathway from April 2021 onwards, when this grant funding is exhausted, pending the availability of other funding sources.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Without additional funding to support the resettlement of the additional clients we are working with, there will be continued substantial hotel use and associated costs for the Council as well as longer term negative impacts on homelessness levels in the district.

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, however the arrangement outlined in paragraph 8.5(i) will aid the financial viability of a local business for the immediate future.

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 The MHCLG's Next Steps Accommodation Programme:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-steps-accommodation-programme-guidance-and-proposal-templates>

17. APPENDICES


17.1 None.

NOTIFICATION DATE

2 October 2020

Signature of Executive Member ConsultedCllr Gary Grindal confirmed his support via email

Date25 September 2020

Signature of Decision Taker 

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