

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: REGULATORY

1. DECISION TAKEN

- 1.1 The allocation of £172k homelessness grant funding, received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to fund additional support for the existing Haven First rough sleeper outreach and resettlement service in the district.

2. DECISION TAKER

- 2.1 Ian Fullstone, Service Director – Regulatory

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

- 3.1 18 May 2021

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 The Council has received funding of £116k from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) following a successful bid to the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2021-22. A further £56k has been provided via the MHCLG's Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants.
- 4.2 The majority of the total funding of £172k has been awarded for specific measures identified within the grant bid to supplement the existing Haven First rough sleeper outreach and resettlement service.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None as follows a grant bid to MHCLG bid for specific interventions.

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 Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) was established by the Government to support local authorities in England to immediately intervene in, prevent and reduce rough sleeping. The government has pledged to end rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament (2024).

- 8.2 A rough sleeper outreach and resettlement service for the district is provided by Haven First (formerly Stevenage Haven), and has been funded by the Council since April 2018. Approval to continue to fund the service for a further three years, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024 was most recently made via a delegated decision authorised on 10 March 2021.
- 8.3 The Haven First service provides outreach, accommodation and resettlement support for rough sleepers locally. Rough sleepers are helped to access accommodation as a first priority, as well as appropriate local specialist support such as physical and mental health services. The ultimate goal is to support service users in moves into settled independent living. Accommodation is provided at its two hostels, the Haven in Stevenage and the Sanctuary in Hitchin (a small number of units of move-on accommodation are also available). During the current COVID-19 pandemic, Haven First have also acquired The Chequers in Royston and Templars Hotel in Baldock on short term leases to help manage the surge in demand for its services (the arrangement at The Chequers ended recently).
- 8.4 The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant uplift in single people requiring the Haven First service, as the government-issued 'Everyone In' instruction has required local authorities to provide emergency accommodation for all those sleeping rough in their areas (including those at risk of sleeping rough). The Council has also faced soaring hotel costs as the Haven First service has been consistently oversubscribed. Over the past six months alone, the service has supported clients from almost 50 referrals via the Council's housing team (most recently, annual referrals have been in the region of 70 cases). The Council is currently accommodating 41 people (mostly singles) in local hotels.
- 8.5 The pandemic has highlighted the unmet needs of this previously largely hidden cohort, many of whom are living unstable, often chaotic lives, and have complex support needs such as poor mental health, drug/alcohol dependency and offending history. Whilst hotel accommodation is far from the ideal solution for them, it remains the only viable option in the absence of purpose-built accommodation for emergency accommodation. Looking beyond this current pandemic stage, a robust Haven First service will provide a valuable resource for this group of people, and other non-priority need individuals facing homelessness.
- 8.6 The Council submitted a bid to the latest RSI round, for funding in 2021/22, and was awarded £116k to fund additional support for the existing Haven First rough sleeper service. Specifically, and as set out in the Council's accepted bid, funding will be passported to Haven First for:
- a 12-month extension to the lease of the Templars hotel in Baldock, to maintain the existing capacity of emergency accommodation (specifically self-contained accommodation) in the face of continued and prolonged demand resulting from the pandemic;
 - procurement of six 3 bed HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) for use as move-on units from the Haven First hostel, which will enable new clients to be admitted into the service; and
 - two floating support staff to help clients sustain tenancies in the HMO move-on accommodation (eg limit potential impact on neighbours) and ensure successful transition to independent living, thereby reducing the risk of returning to rough sleeping.
- Officers will seek to bid for further grant funding should these services need to be extended.
- 8.7 A further £56k has been provided from MHCLG's allocation of Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants (a previous delegated

decision taken on 12 August 2020 agreed that this would be used to support the Haven First's resettlement pathway from April 2021 onwards). The addition of this amount means the interventions highlighted in paragraph 8.6 are fully funded and results in a total commitment of £172k.

- 8.8 The Council was informed of its successful RSI bid on 25 March 2021, but this information was under embargo until after the recent election period. There is now an urgent need to transfer the funding to Haven First so that they can begin establishing the services that the MHCLG has agreed to fund.

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 at paragraph 8.6 meet the MHCLG requirements for use of the ring-fenced RSI 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 provision of support for rough sleepers.
- 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. The RSI funding of £116k has been provided as ring-fenced funding, for use as detailed in the Council's bid to the MHCLG of 4 March 2021, summarised in paragraph 8.6 above. The first tranche of payment has already been made to the Council with payment of the second tranche dependent on confirmation of total spend to date.
- 10.2 A further £56k has been provided from Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants (a previous delegated decision taken on 12 August 2020 agreed that this would be used to support the Haven First's resettlement pathway from April 2021 onwards).

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Specialist services including the rough sleeper outreach and resettlement service 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 Haven First’s website: <https://www.havenfirst.org.uk/>

17. APPENDICES

17.1 None.

NOTIFICATION DATE:

Signature of Executive Member Consulted: Cllr Gary Grindal confirmed his support via email

Date: 17 May 2021

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