

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: REGULATORY

1. DECISION TAKEN

- 1.1 To enter into a contract with Haven First for the provision of an outreach and resettlement service for rough sleepers in the district.

2. DECISION TAKER

- 2.1 Ian Fullstone, Service Director – Regulatory

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

- 3.1 20 April 2021

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 Haven First (formerly known as Stevenage Haven) have been funded by the Council to provide an outreach and resettlement service for rough sleepers since April 2018. The existing contract ended March 2021, however there is an ongoing need for this service, notwithstanding the additional pressures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.2 Haven First is the only local provider of specialist support services and accommodation for single homeless people and is therefore best placed to provide a responsive and fully joined-up rough sleeper outreach and resettlement service for the district.
- 4.3 The majority of the service will be funded by Homelessness Prevention Grant funding received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Approval for the allocation of this funding was agreed under delegated authority by the Service Director for Regulatory Services in conjunction with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health on 10 March 2021.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None. There is no alternative local service provider who is also able to provide supported accommodation as part of their solution, a key ingredient of a successful integrated pathway from homelessness to settled living.

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 both been consulted and are 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 Historically, the number of people sleeping rough in the district has been very low. The most recent pre-pandemic official count of rough sleepers, undertaken for the MHCLG in Autumn 2019, found seven people sleeping rough in the North Herts area. (The most recent count in Autumn 2020 found only two rough sleepers as the government's 'Everyone In' instruction has meant the Council has been offering hotel accommodation to all rough sleepers and those at risk of sleeping rough since March 2020).
- 8.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus the much larger group of people in the district who are *at risk* of rough sleeping. Currently, 39 people are being accommodated in hotels by the Council because they were rough sleeping or are at risk of rough sleeping, in line with the 'Everyone In' instruction. This cohort are typically single people living unstable, often chaotic lives, moving in and out of employment - and in some cases, prison – and enduring numerous spells of 'sofa surfing' with friends or relatives interspersed with periods of sleeping rough.
- 8.3 The Council has procured a rough sleeper outreach and resettlement service from Haven First since April 2018. This provides outreach, and crucially emergency accommodation and resettlement support for rough sleepers locally, many of whom have complex support needs. By building one-on-one relationships, rough sleepers can be 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. Ongoing support continues even once a client has been found settled accommodation, reducing the risk of tenancies failing and the cycle of homelessness being repeated.
- 8.4 Accommodation is provided at its hostel at the Sanctuary in Hitchin (additional temporary sites have also been sourced during the pandemic to help manage the surge in demand for its services). Over the past six months alone, the Haven First 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). As the pandemic has caused a huge uplift in single people requiring their service, the Haven First resettlement pathway has become oversubscribed. To date, they have managed to accommodate over a third of this cohort in move-on or more settled accommodation, including supported housing and private rented accommodation.
- 8.5 Haven First is the only local provider of both support services and accommodation for single homeless men and women, making them uniquely placed to provide an effective and fully joined-up rough sleeper outreach and resettlement service for the district. The Hitchin site provides shared accommodation and it is planned to replace this with a new purpose-built hostel in Letchworth in 2022 (conditional planning permission was granted in February 2021). Otherwise, accommodation options for single homeless people, especially those with support needs, are extremely limited locally.
- 8.6 This decision is for the award of a three-year contract to Haven First to continue the existing outreach and resettlement service in the district until 31 March 2024. This will enable the Council to continue to meet the 'Everyone In' requirement during the current situation as well as the Government expectation that support continues post pandemic.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Under delegated authority, the Service Director for Regulatory Services, in conjunction with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, agreed on 10 March 2021 that £105k of MHCLG homelessness grant could be

allocated to Haven First in order to provide the majority of the funding required to extend their service for three years. This was publicised in the Members Information Service on 12 March 2021.

9.2 The new three-year contact with Haven First commenced on 1 April 2021. The required contractual considerations have been delayed due to ongoing workload pressures directly caused by the pandemic. Following an application for retrospective approval completed by the commissioning officer, a single tender procurement was agreed on 19 April 2021 by the Service Director: Resources and Service Director: Legal and Community in accordance with Section 14.3 of the Contract Procurement Rules.

9.3 Paragraph 14.3 of the Contract Procurement Rules states:

14.3 In the event that approval has not been obtained for a single tender in accordance with section 14.2, and a contract has been awarded, the Service Director: Resources and the Service Director: Legal and Community may grant retrospective approval provided the following conditions are met: (i) Expenditure is within approved budgets or overspend has been reported (ii) Contract award was approved under Section 14 of the Council's Constitution (Responsibility for Functions) (iii) The Service Director: Resources and the Service Director: Legal and Community are satisfied that an application for a single tender would have been approved under section 14.2. (iv) The commissioning officer completes an application for retrospective approval to the Service Director: Resources and the Service Director: Legal and Community.

9.4 The total value of the proposed contract for three years does not equal or exceed the applicable threshold under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 therefore the contract does not need to be competitively tendered.

9.5 The decision in this report meets the MHCLG requirements for use of the ring-fenced grant and is 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 and rough sleeping.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The total cost for the three-year outreach and resettlement service is £129k. The majority of the funding (£105k) has already been provided by the MHCLG and is ringfenced for use in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. Its use was agreed under delegated authority by the Service Director for Regulatory Services in conjunction with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health on 10 March 2021.

10.2 Outside of MHCLG funding, the Council also provides £7.9k per annum directly to support Haven First's service; this funding will be included in the same three-year contract to help resource Haven First and enable them to plan over a longer period to continue to support people off the street and to resettle them and the large increase in those threatened with rough sleeping.

10.3 There are no specific capital implications.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There is a risk that unless the current situation is managed, numbers of people sleeping rough or enduring unstable housing situations will continue to grow, with negative outcomes for individuals and the community.

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 This initiative is specifically designed to assist a select group of people, those sleeping rough in the district. Rough sleepers are arguably some of the most marginalised in society and many are vulnerable through age or ill health.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this decision.
- 13.2 The contract will help achieve housing for long term homeless or give employment opportunities for the unemployed which is a positive social value element.
- 13.3 Although the contract value is above the Go Local policy scope, the supplier engaged is based within the NHDC district and this brings the positive association of local employment to the district.

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 Homelessness Prevention Grant:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-pledges-further-310-million-to-tackle-homelessness>
- 16.2 Haven First’s website: <https://www.havenfirst.org.uk/>

17. APPENDICES

- 17.1 None.

NOTIFICATION DATE: 6 May 2021

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