

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: REGULATORY

1. DECISION TAKEN

- 1.1 The allocation of £80.7k of Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities funding to permanently increase the working hours of two part-time staff in order to provide staffing stability to the Council's Housing Service.

2. DECISION TAKER

- 2.1 Ian Fullstone, Service Director – Regulatory

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

- 3.1 28 June 2022

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 The Council has received funding of just under £340k from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for 2022/23 to enable it to manage homelessness pressures and support those at risk of homelessness.
- 4.2 As the recovery from the pandemic continues, the demand for housing services remains high. The funding proposals in this report seek to introduce permanent increases to the working hours of two part-time staff that will provide more staff capacity and overall stability for the service in the immediate future.

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 Sean Prendergast, and Cllr Alistair Willoughby the Deputy Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, have both been consulted and are supportive of this decision.
- 6.2 The Council's Leadership Team considered and supported a business case for the proposals contained in this report at its meeting on 27 June 2022.

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 Throughout the course of the pandemic, there has been a high demand for housing services and there is a risk of this increasing further due to the emerging cost of

living crisis. The proposals in this report will provide more staffing resilience and stability in certain areas of activity in order to help manage many front-line areas of work, including:

- A large increase in homeless approaches from single people, many of whom have complex needs (offending behaviour, substance misuse, poor mental health etc) that need to be supported/managed, including a lengthy referral processes for specialist services and accommodation support providers
- Applications for social housing have increased by 20% with a corresponding uplift in medical applications for assessment/processing and review decisions challenging negative outcomes
- An increase in National Anti-Fraud Network checks
- Processing/checking of housing applications for new housing sites with specific planning eligibility requirements and relets with local letting conditions that require individual scrutiny
- Identifying/prioritising applicants on shortlists, awarded preference for specific properties eg those requiring ground floor accommodation that require individual assessment

A small amount of the extra staffing capacity will be directed at the production of housing strategies/policies type activity with the postholder also leading on service analysis, informing the deployment of resources, corporate bulletins and DLUHC funding bids amongst many other important functions.

8.2 The benefits of these proposals include:

- Good customer service
- More efficient case management, with less risk of the volume for individual staff members becoming unmanageable
- More focus on homelessness prevention/relief activity to maintain demand for temporary accommodation within tolerable levels
- Continued focus on minimising hotel use whenever possible
- Proactive (rather than reactive) short- and longer-term service planning

8.3 The DLUHC has awarded the Council just under £340k of Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2022/23 to help it manage homelessness pressures and support those at the risk of homelessness. The proposals contained in this report are consistent with DLUHC's funding conditions.

8.4 The proposed allocation of £80.7k for these proposals represent five years' worth of additional staff cost that will be set aside on the understanding that any future staffing costs will be found within structural changes and/or available funding streams within/at the end of this five-year period.

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.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The cost of the proposal in this report (of £80.7k) would be funded from the Council's 2022/23 allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant, which totals just under £340k.
- 10.2 There are no specific capital implications.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There is a risk that case officers are asked to manage a high volume of initial general contacts, leading to a lack of preventative casework, higher levels of homelessness and increased numbers in temporary accommodation, including hotel placements.

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 Should this proposal be agreed, the employment contracts of the two staff members will be reissued to reflect their new working hours.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1 None.

17. APPENDICES

- 17.1 None.

NOTIFICATION DATE:

Signature of Executive Member Consulted:



Date: 28 June 2022

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