

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	11 February 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Business Operations
Subject	-	Flexible Homelessness Support Grant 2019/20

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 January 2019, considered a report on the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant 2019/20. The recommendation and minute arising is reproduced below.

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That the following measures, funded through the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant during 2019/20 be approved, to enable the programme of prevention activity to be delivered:

1. Rent in Advance & Deposit Loans
 2. Social Lettings Agency
 3. Guaranteed Rent Pilot
 4. Work, Live, Thrive (CHART)
 5. Rough Sleeper Outreach
 6. Private Rented Procurement Officer
 7. Private Rented Support Officer
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OSC18/41. **FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GRANT 2019/20**

Members considered the report of the Executive Director which recommended a series of measures which would improve rates of homelessness prevention by utilising ring-fenced central government funding in the form of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG).

The FHSG was awarded to local authorities by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Council had been awarded £275,000 of ring fenced grant for a period of one year covering 2019/20.

The homelessness prevention measures proposed in the report had been developed following a series of recommendations from the Housing Task and Finish Group, agreed by Cabinet, and were designed to:

- prevent homelessness through improving access to the private rented sector in order to minimise the negative effects of homelessness on households; and
- reduce the rate at which the cost to the Council of accommodating homeless households in B&B was increasing. There was a risk that if the Council continued to use its FHSG funding simply to help meet the growing cost of B&B provision, that opportunities to use this resource to prevent homelessness and reduce demand for B&B would be lost.

The proposals detailed in the report were all designed to improve access to the private rented sector and formed a 'toolkit' of homelessness prevention measures which offered different packages of support to enable the Council to be more reactive to the different degrees of need experienced by households. The proposals were each supported by two new staff posts that would mobilise and implement the delivery of the new proposals.

The performance of each proposal was to be measured against a target number of homelessness preventions to indicate the value for money of each intervention to the Council and ensure continued investment was directed at the most effective interventions in the future.

The five proposals detailed in the report were:

- Rent in Advance and Deposit Loans - the Council would continue to issue loans to households and enable low income households to afford the fees associated with accessing private sector accommodation.
- Social Lettings Agency (SLA) - designed to appeal to landlords who did not wish to manage their property directly and who wished to secure a guaranteed income, typically below the average market rate.
- Guaranteed Rent Pilot - provide landlords with guaranteed rent for a fixed six month period but excluded the property management function of a SLA.
- Work, Live, Thrive (CHART) - a multi-agency bid currently before the Connecting Hastings and Rother Together (CHART) Programme. The programme offered match funding and would provide dedicated employment mentors locally to work with households to improve routes to employment. Through access to employment, households could improve the level of their income and be better placed to access private rented accommodation.
- Rough Sleeper Outreach - Rother District Council had funded, for a trial period of six months during 2018/19, an initiative to deliver its Housing Needs Service proactively to rough sleepers via outreach in the community, which was proposed to extend into 2019/20.

Overall it was estimated that the £275,000 FHSG the Council would receive in 2019/20, would avoid B&B costs to the Council of £440,000.

Members were in support of the proposals detailed in the report and were pleased to note that the proposals would also seek to address the social costs associated with homelessness.

(Councillors S.D. Elford, P.N. Osborne and Mrs S.M. Prochak each declared a personal interest as landlords and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda Item 5.3).