

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> July 2012</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>Housing and Environment</b>
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**Preventing Homelessness Grant 2012/13****PURPOSE**

1. To seek Executive approval to increase the Housing and Development Control's Revenue Budget to incorporate the additional Homelessness grant income received from Communities and Local Government and to allow the Council to utilise these funds during 2012/2013 in preventing homelessness.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. That THE Executive approves the increase in the homelessness budget from £127,470 to £175,470, and approves the detail of the programme as set out in paragraph 10 of this report.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

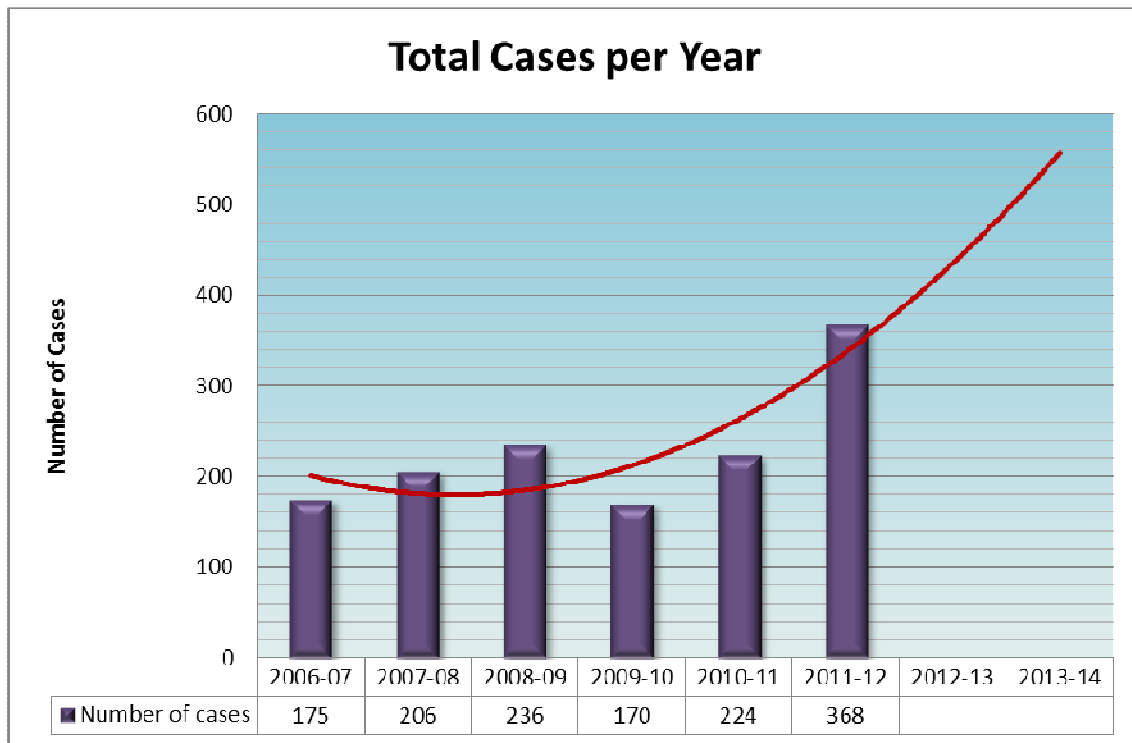
3. To allow the continued and improved delivery of the Burnley Prevention of Homelessness Strategy.

**SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS****PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS**

4. The Council has received confirmation from Communities and Local Government of the 2012/13 homelessness grant allocation totalling £127,470.
5. Further to this the Council has also recently received confirmation from Communities and Local Government of an additional £48k to assist towards the prevention of homelessness and provide the services of a County Court Desk.
6. Due to the current financial climate, many more households are currently at risk of losing their homes than in previously years. Figures show there has been a 64% increase in homeless approaches to this local authority between the financial years 2010/11 and 2011/12. This grant is being provided to assist the Council to prevent homelessness and it is intended that the Council work together with a range of partners to develop initiatives to

assist those households who are facing financial difficulties and at risk of losing their homes.

The chart below presents the rise in cases over the last 6 years which overall show a steady rise in the number of homeless cases. The graph also predicts the rise over the next two years that could be expected based on the previous years increases. This trend line predicted that in 2011/12 we would see approximately 340 cases, the actual figure was 368. The approximate prediction for 2012/13 is 420 cases and for the following year over 500 cases.



7. The government have introduced, or are in the process of introducing measures to cut the national deficit. Many of these changes affect local housing allowance (LHA) / housing benefit (HB) which have the potential to cause more homelessness and / or reduce options to help rehouse people.
8. The Council are working closely with our partners to allow us to engage, at the earliest opportunity, with residents who may be experiencing financial difficulty and where the landlord/mortgagee is considering court action. Specific funding provided by Central Government will allow the continuation of a Court Desk Surgery within the Burnley Courts to assist households attending court. This service is provided by Shelter on the days that repossession cases are being considered and in addition a daily advice surgery is also held in the Citizen Advice Bureau to compliment this service. The Council also run a variety of schemes to assist people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and it is intended that this funding will allow the continuation of these services during 2012/13.
9. The Council's homelessness team has a range of statutory functions associated with the prevention of homelessness and the funding identified in this report will assist the Council to provide a comprehensive range of services to prevent homelessness. The list below

provides members with a brief outline of the major initiatives available to residents through the homelessness programme;

- **Sanctuary Scheme**, is delivered in partnership with East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association and allows women who are at threat of violence to remain in their own home by providing additional security such as window and door locks, grilles, anti-arson measures and security lighting camera's etc.
- **Bond Scheme**, allows residents who are homeless or threatened with homelessness access the private rented sector by providing a loan to the applicant to cover the bond on a private rented property.
- **Shelter Court Desk**, through this programme the Council fund Shelter to run a court desk service at Burnley County Courts. The court desk service provides help and advice to households facing repossession across all tenures. The service provides legal representation at the court together with a range of advice to try to resolve any housing difficulties.
- **B-With-Us Scheme**, is the Pennine Lancashire Choice Based Lettings Scheme that allows residents the opportunity through this one scheme to apply for re-housed throughout Pennine Lancashire. Burnley contributes towards the running of this scheme in partnership with 4 other local authorities and in total 21 partners throughout Pennine Lancashire.
- **Homeless Management Database**, is the in house system that allows the Council's Housing Advice Team to record and monitor the outcome on homeless assessments. This database is maintained and updated in accordance with regulatory requirements set by central government.
- **Mediation Service**, is delivered by Specialist Mediation in Lancashire East (SMILE). The mediators work with young people and their family for as long as necessary to either ensure the young person can remain living in the family home or as able to return to the family home.
- **Prevention payments towards mortgage rescue and rent arrears**: some funding will be used to allow the housing advice team to negotiate with landlords and mortgage companies to allow the client to remain in their home and remove the threat of eviction. The team will work with landlord/mortgagee and tenant/owner occupier to provide an amount of money to reduce the arrears down to a level that will prevent eviction and allow the Council, together with the landlord/mortgagee and the tenant/owner occupier, to devise an acceptable repayment plan to lift the threat of eviction. This scheme has been developed following advice and best practice guidance from Communities and Local Government. We will also ensure that the tenant/owner occupier can afford the continued rent/mortgage payments, which will be done through debt advice to prioritise debts and ensure that the household is maximising their income and benefits entitlement. Where there is negative equity on the governments Mortgage Rescue Scheme the fund will be used to negotiate with the lender a payment that will allow the rescue to complete.

- **Homelessness Prevention and Resettlement Officer**, is a full time position within the Housing Advice Team reporting directly to the Housing Advice Manager. This post is funded entirely from the homelessness grant allocation. The purpose of the post is to maximise housing options for those at risk of homelessness and therefore preventing homelessness wherever possible. The post also works with clients the Council are providing with temporary accommodation to assist them to move on into permanent secure accommodation as quickly as possible and minimise the cost to the Council of providing temporary accommodation.
  
- The funding will also make some contribution towards other schemes being delivered to prevent homelessness;
  - language line, a translation service that has a subscription fee and then additional charges based on usage.
  
  - employing a mental health housing advice worker [ this post is shared between 5 local authorities within Pennine Lancashire]
  
  - Contribution towards the awareness training programmes on homelessness within schools. This training is aimed at 15 to 17 year olds. This group would be an automatic priority for housing if they were to approach the authority as homeless.
  
  - Contribution towards weekly/monthly rent top up for a short period of time to allow the Housing Advice Team to assist the tenant to move to more affordable housing. This scheme will help the people age between 25 and 34 who will be effected by the increase in the age threshold for shared room rate.
  
  - Contribution towards awareness training programmes on Domestic Abuse within schools. This training is aimed at staff to give them the ability to recognise pupils who may potentially be living in a domestic abuse environment. This will allow partner agencies to work with the pupils and help to prevent a potential homeless situation when they leave school.

10. The table below sets out the proposed programme for 2012/13.

Many of the programmes are demand led, therefore it is anticipated monies may be moved between projects throughout the year to meet the needs of the customer.

<b>Essential Usage for Homeless Grant 2012/13</b>	
Homeless prevention & Resettlement officer	34,758.00
Sanctuary Scheme	15,000.00
Shelter Court Desk Scheme	18,000.00
Bond Scheme	30,000.00
East Lancs Choice Based letting Scheme (B_with_us)	15,000.00

Homelessness Database	4,000.00
Miscellaneous Prevention (includes payment towards mental health work covering East Lancs, work within schools, language line, payments towards rent to allow tenants time to move on.	22,712.00
Essential Prevention towards Mortgage Rescue and Rent Arrears	33,000.00
Smile (specialist Mediation in Lancashire East)	3,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>175,470.00</b>

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION**

11. There are no direct financial implications associated with the Housing and Development Unit Revenue Budget, as the grant allocation will cover all identified costs associated with delivering the Homelessness Programme.

Without this grant allocation the activity detailed in this report would not be delivered. This would reduce the Councils ability to prevent homelessness which could see a corresponding increase in the number of homelessness approaches and people in housing crisis.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

12. There are no direct policy implications. This scheme will be delivered within the Councils existing policy framework and Prevention of Homelessness Strategy.

### **DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

13. None.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14. None

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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