

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE



| | |
|---------------|--|
| DATE | 25 th June 2013 |
| PORTFOLIO | Regeneration and Economic Development |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Wilma Waddingham |
| TEL NO | 7242 |
| EMAIL | wwaddingham@burnley.gov.uk |

Preventing Homelessness Grant 2013/14

PURPOSE

1. To seek Executive approval to allow the Council to utilise funds to prevent homelessness

RECOMMENDATION

2. That Executive approves the budget and scheme expenditure as set out in this report for Preventing Homelessness in 2013/14.

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. Due to the current financial climate, many more households are currently at risk of losing their homes than in previously years. Therefore the grant is being provided to assist the Council to prevent homelessness. The intention is that the Council work with a range of partners to develop initiatives to assist those households facing financial difficulties.
5. 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 Shelter Advice Surgery held in Contact Centre Burnley on Monday mornings. This service complements the Court Desk Surgery within Burnley Courts on the day's repossession cases are being considered to assist households attending court. 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 2013/14.

6. 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:** this 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.
- **Bond Scheme:** this allows residents who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to access the private rented sector.
- **B-With-Us Scheme:** This is a choice based lettings system, where by residents need only apply to one scheme to be re housed throughout East Lancashire. Burnley contributes towards the running of this scheme in partnership with covering 5 authorities and 21 partners throughout East Lancashire.
- **Homeless Management Database:** this in house system at Burnley allows the Housing advice staff to record and monitor the outcome on homeless assessments. This database is maintained and updated in accordance with regulatory requirements in place by central government.
- **Mediation:** this is run through Specialist Mediation in Lancashire East (smile) The mediators will work with young people and their family for as long as it takes to either ensure the young person can return home or make sure they are not actually asked to leave.
- **Prevention payments towards Mortgage Rescue and rent arrears:** this will be used to allow the housing advice team to negotiate with landlords and financial lenders 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.
- **Shelter advice surgery:** Shelter provide a housing advice and welfare benefit surgery on Monday mornings at Contact Burnley. This is an extremely important service at the moment and well attended due to the welfare reform changes..
- **Homelessness Prevention & Rehousing 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.
 - employing a mental health housing advice worker [this post is shared between 5 local authorities within east 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.

7.

The table below sets out the proposed programme for 2013/14

Many of the programs are demand lead, therefore it is anticipated monies may be moved between projects throughout the year to meet the needs of customers.

| Essential Usage for Preventing Homelessness Grant 2013/14 | |
|---|-----------|
| Homeless Prevention & Rehousing Officer | 35,065.00 |
| Sanctuary Scheme | 15,000.00 |
| Shelter Advice Surgery | 8,000.00 |
| Bond Scheme | 24,000.00 |
| Pennine Lancashire Regional Choice Based Letting Scheme (b-with-us) | 10,000.00 |
| Homelessness Database | 2,036.00 |

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Miscellaneous Prevention (includes payment towards mental health work covering Pennine Lancashire, work within schools, payments towards rent to allow tenants time to make a planned move on. | 15,000.00 |
| Essential Prevention towards Mortgage Rescue and Rent Arrears. | 15,000.00 |
| Smile (specialist mediation in Lancashire East) | 3,000.00 |
| Total | 127101.00 |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

8. 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 resource being targeted at the preventing homelessness programme these interventions would not take place. 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

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

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

10. None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

11. None

FURTHER INFORMATION

PLEASE CONTACT:

Wilma Waddingham 7242

ALSO:

Paul Gatrell 7230