

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING
27TH APRIL 2006

ODPM Homelessness Funding 2006/7

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	Improved Health and Wellbeing
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Enabling Community Wellbeing
KEY PRIORITY:	Housing and Independent Living
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Anne Hingley
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Mike Parker
CONTACT OFFICER:	Tim Rice, Housing Services Manager Ext 2560 Tim.Rice@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES	Homelessness Funding Allocation 2006/7 S.93 Local Government Act 2000 (Appendix 1)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To propose arrangements for the Council to utilise the ODPM's Priority Need Order Funding for 2006/7.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE:

- 2.1 The proposed spend of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Priority Need Order Funding for 2006/7 (as set out in Appendix 1) be approved.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 extended the categories of homeless applicant who have a priority need for accommodation. Additional monies have been made available to Local Authorities throughout from 2002/3 for work with homeless applicants including prevention work.

- 3.2 Over the past four years funding has been made available to a number of local agencies for homelessness related work, and some of the successes are noted below –

- The Nightstop Scheme, to provide short term accommodation for young people in the homes of trained volunteers and to provide family mediation, was initially

funded from these monies and has come into operation this year. Since March 2005, seventy four nights of emergency accommodation have been provided via 6 host families. The mediation service is fully operational.

- Funding has been made available to Women's Aid to enable outreach work to be offered to women and children who may not need to go to the Refuge.
- The Council's Rent Deposit Scheme has been extended to non-priority homeless people to enable them to access the private rented Sector, should they wish to do so. 15 homelessness cases have so far been prevented in 2005.
- A number of visiting floating support workers have been funded to support both vulnerable people who need assistance in managing the day to day issues of a new tenancy, and also those at risk of losing their tenancy and becoming homeless.
- Citizens Advice Bureau have run various homelessness advice sessions. County Court Advice work has been particularly successful in avoiding homelessness where people have not sought previous advice about their situation. Attendance on possession hearing days enables support to be given through the Court process, and a number of evictions have been avoided. Extension of debt advice to people with mental health problems, based at the Edward Parry Centre in Kidderminster. CAB have dealt with 90 cases faced with possible homelessness in 2005.

3.3 The Council has been successful in obtaining £67,000 of ring fenced funding from the ODPM, based upon its success in increasing the level of homelessness prevention and meeting Government requirements on the reduced use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families. In addition there is some funding being rolled over from 2005/06 which was not fully allocated and will be used to boost the funding of schemes prioritised for 2006/07.

3.4 The ODPM had indicated that this funding would also be allocated on a two year basis upto 2007/08 to enable better long term planning of services, but to date we have only received confirmation for 2006/07. In the longer term it is hoped that the ODPM will continue to fund what have been very successful services, but all Local Authorities will need to consider their position should this not materialise.

4. KEY ISSUES - PROPOSALS FOR 2006/7

4.1 The schemes outlined (in Appendix 1) are a continuation or further development of projects that have proven their worth in homelessness prevention and supporting homeless applicants to maintain their accommodation and avoid future homelessness situations.

4.2 The 'Spend to Save' Initiatives which are now employed by most Local Authorities, are helpful in preventing homelessness but also saving the Local Authority from the high cost of temporary or Bed and Breakfast accommodation. These initiatives can include the provision of rent deposits for people to access the private rented sector.

4.3 A number of the projects, namely Wyre Forest Community Housing and Stonham Housing Association Floating Support schemes and the Women's Aid scheme are

partly funded by Supporting People. These services have been rigorously inspected and reviewed by Supporting People and are seen as valuable and high quality services. Officers have considered these inspections as part of the assessment of these schemes and have also required the same value for money criteria as Supporting People have used, to obtain a consistent approach.

- 4.4 Funding is provided to a range of local agencies on a quarterly basis, when reports are received on progress and successes.
- 4.5 Because of the nature of the some of the schemes, particularly those based on referrals of clients, funding is not always utilised as planned. As in previous years it is proposed that where there are significant variations in take up that the Head of Planning, Health and Environment will in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs vire funding between projects as necessary.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications. Priority Need Order monies are made available by the ODPM.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal or policy implications arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Council and its agent, Wyre Forest Community Housing have been working hard to reduce the level of homeless applications and acceptances through a focus on prevention and housing advice work. This has resulted in a reduction of homelessness acceptances of 40% between 2002 and 2005, with the PNO schemes making a significant contribution to this.
- 9.2 The proposals in Appendix 1 are targetted to meet Government homelessness objectives, the Council's Homelessness Strategy and the three main reasons for homelessness which include people being asked to leave accommodation, the end of a tenancy in the private sector and domestic violence.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Corporate Management Team

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Housing Strategy 2004 – 2007

- 11.2 Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.

28.3.06

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOMELESSNESS FUNDING ALLOCATION 2006/7

S.93 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

	£
1. Continuing funding to support Nightstop and Mediation service for vulnerable young people. A preventative and emergency accommodation scheme in partnership with statutory agencies and Centrepont	10,000
2. Continuing funding for CAB Court based Homelessness Advice Desk and work at Edward Parry centre	13,160
3. CAB Mortgage Advice worker	3,800
4. Continuing funding for a Domestic Violence Outreach worker for tenancy sustainment, with Wyre Forest Womens Aid	11,885
5. Pilot a sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic violence.	5,000
6. Homelessness Prevention / Spend to Save	17,607
7. Wyre Forest Community Housing and Stonham Housing Association Floating Support schemes for homeless households in both the public and private sectors	29,948
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	91,400
PNO Funding for 2006/07	67,000
PNO carried forward	24,000
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	91,400
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