

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEETING**  
**26<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2007**

**Communities for Local Government (CLG) Homelessness Funding 2007/08**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME</b>	Improved Health and Wellbeing
<b>CORPORATE PLAN THEME:</b>	Enabling Community Wellbeing
<b>KEY PRIORITY:</b>	Housing and Independent Living
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Anne Hingley
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Tim Rice - Ext 2560 Tim.Rice@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES</b>	Appendix 1 - Homelessness Funding Allocation 2007/08 S.93 Local Government Act 2000

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To propose arrangements for the Council to utilise the CLG's Priority Need Order Funding for 2007/08.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE:**

- 2.1 **The proposed spend of the Communities for Local Government's (formerly Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) Priority Need Order Funding for 2007/08 (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 five 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. Since March 2005, over one hundred nights of emergency accommodation have been provided via 6 host families. The mediation service is fully operational and with further funding for 2007/08 the Nighstop service hope to expand the service to include support 7 days a week..
- 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. 16 homelessness cases have so far been prevented since 2003.
- 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 made over 100 appointments through these two schemes for clients facing possible homelessness 2006.

3.3 The Council has been successful in obtaining £67,000 of ring fenced funding from the CLG, based upon its success in increasing the level of homelessness prevention, meeting Government requirements on the reduced use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families and successfully halving the Government's target of use of temporary accommodation by 2010 within the first year. In addition there is some funding being rolled over from 2006/07 which was not fully allocated and will be used to boost the funding of schemes prioritised for 2007/08.

3.4 The CLG has confirmed funding for 2007/08 but to date no further confirmation has been received for future years funding to enable better long term planning of services. It is hoped that the CLG will continue to fund what have been very successful services, but all Local Authorities will need to consider their position should this not materialise.

3.5 The CLG has also just announced an award of £60,000 funding between 2007-2009 to the six Worcestershire Housing Authorities, to further support the work of

an existing mediation scheme operated by Relate. This is designed to assist homelessness prevention by trying to reconcile families, working in partnership with a range of agencies as required. The details of the scheme have to be finalised but the Council should have an additional £10,000 for this scheme.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES - PROPOSALS FOR 2007/08**

- 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. The Council is also continuing to fund the Wyre Forest Nightstop and Mediation service from its homelessness budget and will provide £5,000 in 2007-08.
- 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 Planning Health and Environment vire funding between projects as necessary.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The main issue for the Council would be if the CLG was to stop providing this funding to Local Authorities as it would need to consider funding these initiatives from its own resources.

#### **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 over 60% between 2002 and 2006, with the PNO schemes making a significant contribution to this.
- 8.2 The proposals in *Appendix 1* are targeted 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.

## **9. CONSULTEES**

- 9.1 Corporate Management Team

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 Housing Strategy 2004 – 2007
- 10.2 Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.

5<sup>th</sup> April 2007

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOMELESSNESS FUNDING ALLOCATION 2007/08

S.93 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

	£
1. Continuing funding for CAB Court based Homelessness Advice Desk and work at Edward Parry centre	14,250
2. Continuing funding for a Domestic Violence Outreach worker for tenancy sustainment, with Wyre Forest Women's Aid	16,369
3. Continuation of a Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic violence	4,205
4. Homelessness Prevention / Spend to Save	15,536.10
5. Rent Deposit Schemes for non – priority cases	5,000
6. WFCH Floating Support scheme for homeless households in both the public and private sectors	11,706.24
7. Stonham Housing Association Floating Support scheme for homeless households in both the public and private sectors	14,115.92
	_____
	81,182.26
PNO Funding for 2007/08	67,000
PNO balance carried forward	14,182.26
	_____
	81,182.26
	_____
Additional CLG funding for Worcestershire Relate scheme 2007-2009	£10,000