

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
26TH MARCH 2009

Communities for Local Government (CLG) Homelessness Funding 2009/10

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	Improved Health and Wellbeing
CORPORATE PLAN AIM:	Enabling Community Wellbeing
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Mrs. A.T. Hingley
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Planning Health and Environment
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sally Horne, Principal Housing Strategy Officer- Ext 2561 Sally.Horne@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES	Appendix 1 – Homelessness Funding Allocation 2009/10 s.93 Local Government Act 2000

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To propose arrangements for the Council to utilise the Community for Local Government's (CLG's) Priority Need Order Funding for 2009/10.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE:

- 2.1 **The proposed spend of the Communities for Local Government's Priority Need Order Funding for 2009/10 (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 applicants 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 Since 2002 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 host families. Nightstop have developed a mediation service which is identified as an effective homeless prevention tool and are offering a buddying scheme, where volunteers can befriend young people

who are at threat of homelessness. With further funding for 2009/10 Nightstop aims to extend it's service to seven days per week.

- Funding has been made available to Women's Aid to enable outreach work to provide advice and support to women who are or who have experienced domestic abuse. This provides a vital role in the prevention of homelessness and in sustaining tenancies.
- 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, those at risk of losing their tenancy and becoming homeless and those currently homeless and staying in B&B.
- 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 during 2008.

3.3 The Council has been successful in obtaining £67,000 of ring fenced funding per annum from the CLG for the next 3 years (until 2010/11). This is 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 use of temporary accommodation within the first year.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 The Council and its agent, Wyre Forest Community Housing have been working hard to reduce the level of homelessness applications and acceptances through a focus on prevention and housing advice work. This has resulted in a reduction of homelessness acceptances of over 75% between 2002 and 2008, with the PNO schemes making a significant contribution to this.

4.2 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.

4.3 The schemes outlined (in Appendix 1) are a continuation or development of projects that have proven their worth in homelessness prevention. The Services have been reviewed during 2008/09 and in consultation with the providers have been restructured to focus upon the reduction in the use of B&B for homeless households.

4.4 Funding for the 'Spend to Save' Initiative has been increased for 2009/10, given the current financial climate, the rise in repossessions and the expectation that homeless acceptances are going to increase in 2009/10. In previous years funding under this initiative has been used to prevent use of B&B for homeless households

by either helping people to clear rent arrears or by providing money for a rent deposit for a private rented property.

- 4.5 The service provided by Citizens Advice is being amended. With the agreement of the CAB, a money advice worker will now undertake money advice sessions at the Community Housing Advice Centre, Oxford Street twice a week in addition to continuing to provide advice at the Edward Parry Centre. CAB will no longer be providing a court desk service. The Ministry of Justice have provided funding for a Court Desk at Kidderminster Court so to avoid duplication, CAB will now provide money advice to people presenting as homeless at Community Housing. As part of this service, the money advice worker will participate in the Governments mortgage rescue scheme, facilitating the assessment of households who may be eligible to apply for mortgage rescue funding.
- 4.6 A number of 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 Supported People have used, to obtain a consistent approach.
- 4.7 Funding is provided to a range of local agencies on a quarterly basis, which reports are received on progress and successes. The Council is also continuing to fund the Wyre Forest Nightstop and Mediation service from it's Homelessness budget and will provide £4000 in 2009/10.
- 4.8 Because of the nature of 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 is a significant variation in take up that the Head of Planning, Health and Environment will in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Health and Environment agree to 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. However, CLG have agreed to ring fence £67,000 per annum for the Council until 2010/11, so this is not an immediate issue.

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 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. The schemes outlined (in Appendix 1) are a continuation or development of projects that have proven their worth in homelessness prevention. The Services have been reviewed during 2008/09 and in consultation with the providers have been restructured to focus upon the reduction in the use of B&B for homeless households at a time when homeless acceptances are expected to increase.

9. CONSULTEES

9.1 Corporate Management Team

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing Strategy 2004-2007
Homeless Strategy and Action Plan
County Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan

Appendix 1WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCILHOMELESSNESS FUNDING ALLOCATION 2009/10S.93 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

£

1. Continuing funding for CAB Money Advice Service at Community Housing and work at Edward Parry centre	14,250
2. Continuing funding for a Domestic Violence Outreach worker for tenancy sustainment, with Wyre Forest Womens Aid	12,276
3. Homelessness Prevention / Spend to Save	23,600
4. WFCH Floating Support scheme for homeless households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation	9,755
5. Stonham Housing Association Floating Support scheme for homeless households in both the public and private sectors	7,057
TOTAL	66,938
PNO Funding for 2009/10	67,000

(From Homelessness Support Budget)

Continuing funding to support Nightstop and Mediation service £4,000 for vulnerable young people. A preventative and emergency accommodation scheme in partnership with statutory agencies.