

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET**
23RD MARCH 2010**Communities for Local Government (CLG) Homelessness Funding 2010-11**

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	Improved Health and Wellbeing
CORPORATE PLAN AIM:	Enabling Community Wellbeing
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor T. Onslow
DIRECTOR:	Mike Parker, Director of Planning & Regulatory Services
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sally Horne, Principal Strategic Housing Officer – Ext 2561 Email: sally.horne@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 – Homelessness Funding Allocation 2010/11 s.93 Local Government Act 2000

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree the use of the Community and Local Government's Priority Need Order Funding 2010/11.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE** that:

- 2.1 The proposed spend of £67,000 Communities and Local Government's Priority Needs Order Funding for 2010/11 (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 since 2002/3 for work with homeless applicants including prevention work.
- 3.2 For three years since 2008/09 the Council has been successful in obtaining Communities for Local Government (LCG) funding of £67,000 per annum, which is ring fenced. 2010/2011 is the final year for this agreed settlement.
- 3.3 Funding in respect of 2009/2010 was used for a range of prevention services including:
- The provision of floating support to homeless households in Bed and Breakfast and other forms of temporary accommodation. Since April 2009 Wyre Forest Community Housing has supported 91 households ensuring access to benefit

entitlement and referral to services that help support them back into permanent accommodation.

- The provision of floating support to young people who are at risk of homelessness. Stonham has supported 27 young people since April 2009.
- The provision of floating support for women at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence. West Mercia Women's Aid has supported 45 women in the community and 15 women in the refuge since April 2009.
- The delivery of debt and welfare advice to people attending the Edward Parry Centre and the Wyre Forest Community Housing Advice Centre. To date Citizens Advice have provided advice and support to 93 people and helped to prevent 24 households becoming homeless as a result of mortgage and landlord repossession.
- The provision of funding for the homeless prevention loan pot (formerly known as the 'spend to save' initiative), which is used to provide interest free loans for people at risk of homelessness to pay off rent arrears or secure accommodation in the private rented sector. This has been used to assist 38 households to date this year and is one of the main prevention tools that the council has in preventing use of temporary accommodation.

3.4 The Council and its agent, Wyre Forest Community Housing Group, are continuing to work 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 by 83% between 2002 and 2009.

3.5 In line with this, the number of households placed into temporary accommodation continues to decline. Since 2007/08 there has been a 15% reduction in the number of households placed into Bed and Breakfast. This reduction has meant that the Council made savings of £18,640 in 2008/09. This reduction is in part, due to the prevention services interventions funded through the PNO funding.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The projects outlined (in Appendix 1) have been selected following a bidding round exercise, which asked organisations to bid on the following criteria:
- The proposed scheme will provide services for people who require debt or welfare advice, are at risk of homelessness, and/or are at risk of homelessness due to social isolation.
 - Organisations bidding were also asked to highlight how they would contribute to Wyre Forest meeting its obligations within the County Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.
 - The services also had to present value for money.
- 4.2 It is suggested that funding be allocated to the following Services:
- CAB for the continuation of debt and welfare advice at the Housing Options Centre, Oxford Street and the Edward Parry Centre.
 - Nightstop for continuation of the temporary accommodation and mediation service.

- New starts furniture project for the provision of furniture to households moving into settled accommodation following a homeless application, which will help to ensure a reduction in repeat homelessness.
 - Wyre Forest Community Housing Group for the provision of a debt advice and life skills training service targeted at households facing eviction due to rent arrears.
 - Increased provision for the Homeless Prevention Loan.
 - Funding towards the County Homeless Strategy Coordinator post. The post is helping to deliver the actions identified in the County Homelessness Strategy, which will help in the prevention of homelessness in this district.
- 4.3 All services, with the exception of West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA) and Stonham will continue to be funded, subject to Cabinet approval, from the PNO funding pot. The reason for discontinuation in funding Stonham is that they are already providing a floating support service to Wyre Forest residents under a County Supporting People contract. WMWA declined to bid for further funding but are also already being funded under a Supporting People contract. Wyre Forest District Council officers were satisfied with the previous provision of these services and would like to thank those organisations.
- 4.4 Funding will be paid to the successful agencies on a quarterly basis, following completion of quarterly monitoring returns. This allows officers to monitor the service outcomes and provide regular reports on progress.
- 4.5 Due to 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 Director of Planning and Regulatory Services will in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services agree to vire funding between projects as necessary.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This is the final year of the CLG funding allocation of £67,000. It is uncertain if funding will be allocated in 2011/12. This funding is for the direct support for homeless prevention purposes. Therefore, service level agreements will only be offered to services for one year, commencing 1st April 2010.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 All services will be expected to undertake an equality impact assessment as part of their service level agreement with the Council.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 There are potential risks to the temporary accommodation budget if the funding is not allocated to services that are able to prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 To date, the expenditure of the Priority Need Order funding has assisted the authority in reducing the number of homeless acceptances and the number of households in temporary accommodation. The suggested expenditure will continue to provide services that will prevent homelessness and assist in meeting Wyre Forest District Council's obligations in the County Homelessness Action Plan.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Corporate Management Team

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Worcestershire County Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2007-11
Temporary Accommodation Reduction Action Plan

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCILHOMELESSNESS FUNDING ALLOCATION 2010/11S.93 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

£

1.	Continuing funding for CAB Money Advice Service at Community Housing and work at Edward Parry centre	13,750
2.	New Starts Furniture Project	5,000
3.	Homelessness Prevention / Spend to Save	30,000
4.	WFCH Floating Support scheme For Households facing eviction due to rent arrears and provision of a life skills training course	12,250
5.	Wyre Forest Nightstop and Mediation Service	4,000
6.	Funding for the County Homeless Coordinator	2,000
TOTAL		£67,000
PNO Funding for 2010/11		£67,000