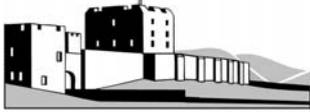


**CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL**



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COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 31st August 2006

Title: PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Report of: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Report reference: DS 71/06

Summary:

This report outlines to Members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee the partnership approach that is being developed in taking forward phase two of the Homelessness and Carlisle City Council's Hostels Service Action Plan as well as seeking approval in principle for the allocation of £400,000 capital from the Housing Investment Programme Grant for 2006/07 for the implementation of the plan.

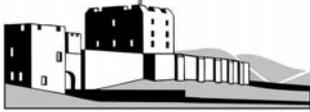
Recommendations:

That the attached report and draft strategy that went to the Executive on the 29/8/06 be considered and commented upon.

Contact Officer: Simon Taylor

Ext: 7327

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None
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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Date of Meeting: 29th August 2006

Public Yes

Key Decision: Yes Recorded in Forward Plan: Yes/No

Inside Policy Framework

Title: PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS SERVICES
Report of: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Report reference: DS. 69/06

Summary:

This report outlines the partnership approach that is being developed in taking forward phase two of the Homelessness and Carlisle City Council's Hostels Service Action Plan as well as seeking approval for the allocation of £400,000 capital from the Housing Investment Programme Grant for 2006/07 for the implementation of the plan.

Recommendations:

That in order to enable resources from other organisations to be released that the following be approved;

1. That the partnership Working Group be noted.
2. The Council be requested to release part of the housing Investment Capital Grant paid to the authority from the Regional Housing Board of £400,000.
3. The Executive receive details of each of the individual projects to approve release of capital for that particular project from the £400,000.

Catherine Elliot

Director of Development Services

Contact Officer: Simon Taylor

Ext: 7327

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None
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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

1.1 Following a review of Homelessness & Carlisle City Council's Hostel provision in 2005 an Action Plan was adopted that took forward both short and long-term solutions in two phases (Phase 1 – Aug 05 to Aug 06 and Phase 2 – Sept 06 to Feb 08). The Action Plan is a key part of priority one of the Housing Strategy 2005-10 which is based on the priorities set within the Regional Housing Strategy – 'Supporting Vulnerable People'.

1.2 A significant number of the phase one targets have already been met including;

- Reducing the use of B&B from 35 households in Aug 05 to nil and not using B&B for temporary accommodation
- Reducing the time for permanent allocations of property to homeless households through a partnership scheme with CHA to bring empty properties back into use
- Improving the management and administrative systems within the Homelessness service
- Consolidating the staffing structure within both the Homelessness and Hostels Service

1.3 Work towards phase two of the Action Plan started in January 2006 through a number of regular meetings that were held with:

- Impact Housing Association
- Carlisle Housing association
- Cumbria Association of Support Services
- Children's Services
- Supporting People Team

The meetings have looked at the support and accommodation pathways that young people and other client groups who are homeless or who require accommodation follow. There are a number of improvements that can be made through the linking up of services and a co-ordinated approach between agencies to deal with the clients within the system. Outcomes of such an approach include the equipping of young people and other clients with the skills to enable the sustaining of any permanent offer of accommodation by a Housing Association.

Through assessing the pathways for Careleavers and other homeless young people a number of working options have been looked at. Operation panel meetings have started to look at cases on an individual basis and start the process of linking up a planned approach for accommodation and support provision across the partners.

Terms of reference for the panel have been agreed with an overall pilot for the panel operating to full capacity starting in August for a 6-month period. This panel will fit into the County pattern for Young Persons panels stated within the Young Persons Housing protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds.

- 1.4 In looking at the needs of young people with partners and within the constraints of the resources available it is clear that any discussion regarding property or support provision also affects other client groups. A similar approach can be made in taking forward the work relating to these groups in terms of an individual case approach and partnership working at looking at the pathways for each group.
- 1.5 The City Council have three contracts with the Supporting People team covering the provision of support services to homeless people in hostel and 'homeshare' accommodation. Information relating to performance and occupancy rates are submitted on a quarterly basis to the team and these are looked at as part of the contract by the Supporting People Team. Currently following positive actions taken under phase one of the action plan over the last year the use of B&B has been reduced to nil since Jan 06. As a result of people spending less time within the hostels before being re-housed over the last 3 months we have had a number of vacancies within our temporary accommodation. An effect of this will be an overall reduction in the rent income received throughout the year. Expected income levels for this financial year are based on occupancy levels from last year and as stated above these are currently running at a lower level. There is an opportunity to look at reconfiguration of some units within the service as well as the overall provision of temporary accommodation with partner organisations.
- 1.6 The cost for the provision of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation during the financial year 05/06 was £59,000. This covered a period of recovery following the flooding emergency during 2005 but also B&B was not used during the last 3 months of that financial year. Most of the costs were recouped through the Bellwin scheme and Housing Benefit.

Phase one of the Action Plan started in September 2005 looking to clear blockages in the system of temporary accommodation. This included improving access to re-housing and reducing the use of B&B. Both have been achieved. The cost of the use of B&B is not just the up front rental cost. There are additional costs in terms of extra management from housing staff; extra pressures put upon clients and potential increases in support from different agencies depending upon the needs of the client.

The Homelessness Action Plan aims to reduce the waste of resources by linking the support and temporary accommodation for homeless clients as well as access to permanent housing. A streamlined system will allow resources among all involved partner agencies to be maximised for the long-term benefit of the clients. Measures of success for the implementation of phase 2 of the Action Plan will include;

- Delivery of the identified targets
- Clients able to sustain tenancies
- Reduction of homelessness and repeat homelessness

2. PROJECTED IMPROVEMENTS

2.1 Through this joint working a number of improvements have been identified to take forward. However, a number of actions are interdependent and rely upon the City Council to move forward. These improvements include the following;

- Reconfiguring the temporary accommodation that the City Council either owns or leases within the Supporting People Contracts including 'swapping' of leased units with key partners
- Enabling the reconfiguration of temporary accommodation through Housing Associations for homeless clients
- Enable the planning of accommodation and support needs for individuals through the system by placements being considered on a case basis for all accommodation
- Enabling Housing Association property to be brought up to a specified standard for homeless young people leaving care and other homeless young people as well as other client groups
- Enabling potential provision of day centre/training provision enabling special support services to be brought into the community
- Taking forward a planned approach to young people and others who may become homeless enabling the resources of statutory and other agencies to be focused for services to those in need.
- Joint funding the provision of accommodation for homeless clients with partner agencies.

3. FUNDING

3.1 Through the annual Housing Investment Programme for the financial year 06/07 the authority received a grant of £1.5 million to be spent on housing within the remit of the priorities set by the Regional Housing Strategy. This allocation was more than the programme £1.1 million anticipated. This housing grant is required to be spent

on projects that reflect the priorities given within the Regional Housing Strategy. The Carlisle Housing Strategy priorities are aligned with the Regional Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Action Plan is a key part of the Housing Strategy.

3.2 A number of the areas of work identified in section 2.1 require planning and negotiation with a number of partner agencies and funding bodies to progress. It is intended that the capital grant will act as funding that can enable projects to be taken forward and allow resources from partner agencies to be released as contributions to the projects. These projects would be aiming to produce outcomes that fulfil the targets within phase 2 of the action plan. These other resources will include;

- Capital or assets
- Staff or revenue contribution
- Housing Corporation Funding
- Supporting People Grant

3.3 The release of any of the £400,000 capital funding allocated to delivery of phase 2 of the Action plan will be subject to further reports regarding the detail of each project being approved. The timescale for implementation of phase 2 of the Action plan covers 18 months and is over 2 financial years starting in September 2006.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultation to date

The Homelessness and Carlisle City Councils Hostel Service Review which took place between December 2004 and May 2005 involved consultation with key partner organisations and included Members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a workshop in April 2005. As stated in section 1 the Action Plan for taking forward improvements within the Carlisle area came from this review.

Through the Partnership Working Group consultation has been taken forward on a regular basis since January concerning the strategic and operational work that can be taken forward.

A report was taken to the Supporting People commissioning Body on 15/6/06 asking for the approval of the potential reconfiguration of services within the scope of existing contracts with providers. This was approved by the Commissioning Body.

Internal meetings have taken place with finance and this report has been to Senior Management Team.

4.2 Consultation Proposed

Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor delivery of the Action Plan and the first report on progress was taken to a meeting of that committee on

16/2/06. The Chair of that Committee has requested that a special workshop be held to look at how phase two of the Action Plan for homelessness is being approached and this is to take place on 21/9/06. Initial discussions with finance indicated that this report is taken to the Executive in regard to the £400,000 and the principles behind its allocation.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That in order to enable resources from other organisations to be released that the following be approved;
- That the partnership Working Group be noted.
 - The Council be requested to release part of the housing Investment Capital Grant paid to the authority from the Regional Housing Board of £400,000.
 - The Executive receive details of each of the individual projects to approve release of capital for that particular project from the £400,000.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 To enable work to be progressed towards completing the targets in phase two within the Homelessness and Carlisle City Council Hostels Service Action Plan through the work of the Partnership Working Group.

7. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – Staff are a key part to any reconfiguration of support services and will be engaged in the development of projects.
- Financial – The City Council has been awarded a capital grant of £1,503,000 in 2006/07 to be spent on housing related projects. This sum includes some £400,000 as a special allocation to help cope with the aftermath of the flooding last year although exactly how this sum is to be spent will be a matter for the authority to determine. As the £1.503m is a capital grant however, care needs to be taken to ensure that all the projects are of a capital nature.
- Legal – The authority has statutory obligations to homeless people as well as obligations under the contracts held with the Supporting people team.
- Corporate – The Homelessness and Carlisle City Council Hostels services Action plan is part of the Housing Strategy which is a corporate focus.

- Risk Management – There are significant risks in not tackling the issues that have been identified through the Homelessness Review and as in this report. These risks include;
 - correct support and accommodation not being provided to those in need
 - a proactive service between agencies to deal with homeless people not developing
 - potential reduction in Supporting People Grant
 - negative impact upon the reputation of the authority

- Equality Issues – In roads not being met into the reduction of inequalities in treatment for vulnerable people if services are not improved across agencies.

- Environmental – Taking the work forward will have an improved affect upon the physical structures where homeless people stay and receive support.

- Crime and Disorder – Improvements to the provision of temporary accommodation and support for vulnerable people who are homeless should have a positive affect upon crime and disorder throughout the area. Client groups such as ex-offenders, those released from prison and persistent offenders will benefit from a planned approach to accommodation and support provision.

- Impact on Customers – The impact on customers will be significant. Homelessness is a stressful occurrence for those unfortunate enough to be going through the process. This can be made more stressful if the right accommodation or support is not available or linked. It is envisaged that work identified on improving these elements will benefit our customers.