

DECISION ITEM

| REPORT OF | MEETING | DATE | ITEM NO |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|---------|
| DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE | FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE | 22 JUNE 2020 | 9 |
| FULLY FUNDED INCREASE - AFFORDABLE HOUSING OFFICER POST | | | |

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

The Environment, Health and Housing Committee considered a report, at its 17 March 2020 meeting, in relation to administration of affordable housing delivery in Fylde.

The report requested that the Committee consider the redirecting of funding from the Community Grants budget, previously used to support Face 2 Face YMCA Rent Bond Guarantee, to finance a new post to be based within the Housing Service, focussed on improving the administration, monitoring and management of affordable housing delivery in Fylde. Internal discussions have taken place and it is proposed the post would be better placed within the Planning Policy Team to highlight any housing issues arising which could be addressed thorough revisions to planning policy and maximise delivery of affordable housing in line with S106 agreements. The post will include liaison with the private rented sector to provide affordable accommodation for clients who would not be able to access social rented accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee are requested to:

1. Approve a fully funded increase to the Planning Policy revenue budget in the sum of £30,000 for 2020/21 onwards, to be met from an equivalent reduction in the Community Grants budget. The additional Planning Services budget would provide for the employment of an Affordable Housing Officer post to develop affordable housing opportunities within both the social and private rented sectors.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Environment, Health and Housing Committee, November 2017

The committee RESOLVED to:

1. Note the new provisions within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 and, in particular the extended range of statutory homelessness duties the Council is obliged to perform under the new Act;
2. Note the new initiatives Fylde Council are intending to introduce with the additional financial support that has been made available by Government to support Local Housing Authorities in implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018; and
3. Recommend to Council approval of a fully-funded revenue budget increase for the total sum of £122,900. £98,862 funded by DCLG Flexible Homeless Grant and £26,038 funded by DCLG New Burdens Funding.

Environment, Health and Housing Committee, September 2019

With no further questions, it was RESOLVED to;

1. Note the contents of the report;
2. Approve the attached Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy draft for consultation with partner organisation, with a final report to come back to the Committee for final approval in November 2019.

Environment, Health and Housing Committee, January 2020

Following a brief debate, it was RESOLVED to;

1. Note the contents of the report and outcomes of the consultation with partner agencies to inform the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 and that the report was now to run for 5 years from 2020-2025;
2. Approve Fylde Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 to direct the work of the Housing and Homelessness Service at Fylde;
3. Recommend to the Finance and Democracy Committee a fully-funded revenue budget increase in the total sum of £70,921 (£7,500 in 2019/20, £18,571 in 2020/21, £22,425 in 2021/22 and £22,425 in 2022/23) funded by £53,766 Flexible Homeless Grant and £17,155 by DCLG New Burdens Grant; and
4. Recommend to the Finance and Democracy Committee a further fully-funded revenue budget increase in the total sum of £2,000 in 2020/21 funded by the DCLG Rapid Rehousing Personal Budgeting Support Grant.

Environment, Health and Housing Committee, 17 March 2020

Following a brief debate, it was therefore RESOLVED;

1. Note the contents of the report and the impact of the Homeless Reduction Act 2018 and Welfare Reform Act 2012 has had on the operation of the Rent Bond Scheme by Face to Face YMCA; and
2. Recommend to Finance and Democracy Committee approval to a fully-funded increase to the Housing Services budget in the sum of £30,000, to be met from an equivalent reduction in the Community Grants budget. The additional Housing Services budget would provide for the employment of an Affordable Housing Officer post to develop affordable housing opportunities within both the social and private rented sectors.

| CORPORATE PRIORITIES | |
|--|---|
| Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money) | √ |
| Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green) | √ |
| Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy) | |
| To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live) | |
| Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit) | |

Background

1. In September 2019 an Officer decision was made to withdraw funding from the Rent Bond Guarantee scheme operated by Face to Face YMCA on behalf of Fylde Council, giving three months notice, as required under the Homeless Partnership Agreement, for the funding to cease and the scheme to no longer be operational from December 2019.
2. Face to Face have been working closely with Fylde Council to deliver homelessness services for a number of years. Since 2009, funding has been provided to Face to Face YMCA to run a Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme funded by Community Grant funds held by Fylde Council. The funding was used to employ a Rent Bond Guarantee Officer to liaise with private landlords to accommodate tenants using a paper Rent Bond Guarantee, as opposed to a financial bond. Funding provided annually from 2009/10 was £28,700 and this was increased from 2016/17 to £29,516.
3. The Rent Bond Guarantee scheme was an essential service that assisted clients into the private rented sector by acting as a liaison between private landlords and prospective clients in sourcing and maintaining a tenancy. On average the service could be guaranteed to deliver around 25 to 30 tenancies within the private rented sector, using a paperless rent bond to assist Fylde Council to support households unable to access social rented accommodation into private sector accommodation.

4. The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) in 2018, Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the roll out of Universal Credit in December 2018 has directly impacted on the ability of Face to Face YMCA to be able to continue to deliver the paperless Rent Bond Guarantees with private landlords.
5. The Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 action plan has a commitment to consider the future of Face to Face YMCA rent bond scheme in light of the changes to local authority housing services as a result of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) 2019. The action plan notes that the number of clients sourcing accommodation through the Rent Bond Scheme has fallen since the introduction of the HRA 2018. The new prevention and relief duties placed on local authorities has resulted in clients being supported directly by the local authority into the private rented sector.

Proposal to redirect Community Grant Funding used to fund the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme

6. Fylde Council are keen to re-establish the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme and to operate it as an in-house service, along with other work required to improve affordable housing provision within the social and private rented sectors.
7. The Environment, Health and Housing Committee considered the redirecting of funding from Community Grants that was previously used to support Face 2 Face YMCA Rent Bond Guarantee into the Housing Service to create a permanent part time Affordable Housing Post focussed on improving the administration, monitoring and management of affordable housing delivery in Fylde.
8. Internal discussions have taken place and it is proposed the post would be better placed within the Planning Policy Team to highlight any housing issues arising which could be addressed thorough revisions to planning policy and maximise delivery of affordable housing in line with S106 agreements. The post will include liaison with the private rented sector to provide affordable accommodation for clients who would not be able to access social rented accommodation.

Employment of an Affordable Housing Officer

9. The Affordable Housing Officer role will be to develop affordable housing opportunities within both the social (Registered Social Landlord accommodation) and private sectors (Private Landlords and Letting Agencies) within Fylde.
10. The role will focus on:
 - a. Monitor delivery of affordable housing in line with S106 agreements and the corresponding Affordable Housing Statements
 - b. Monitor the market values and eligibility of occupants accessing low cost home ownership options,
 - c. Administer the resale of discounted market units to ensure applications for discounted market sale are accurately assessed and the discount is secured on the units with restrictive covenants for future resales
 - d. Manage and administer the paperless rent bond scheme and work with the private rented sector landlords to support the scheme
 - e. Develop community led and self-build opportunities across the borough
 - f. Ensure tenures delivered are meeting the current and future needs of households on low to middle income in Fylde using available data sources

Conclusion

11. The Environment, Health and Housing Committee recommend to Finance and Democracy Committee, the approval of a fully funded budget increase to the Planning Policy Team, in the sum of £30,000 to be met from redirecting funding provided to Face to Face YMCA, from the Community Grants budget, for the employment of an Affordable Housing Officer post to develop affordable housing opportunities within both the social and private rented sectors.

| IMPLICATIONS | |
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| Finance | This report requests that the Finance and Democracy Committee approve a fully funded increase in the Planning Policy revenue budget for 2020/21 onwards in the sum of £30,000 to be met from an equivalent reduction in the Community Grants budget. |
| Legal | None arising directly from this report |
| Community Safety | None arising directly from this report |
| Human Rights and Equalities | None arising directly from this report |
| Sustainability and Environmental Impact | None arising directly from this report |
| Health & Safety and Risk Management | None arising directly from this report |

| LEAD AUTHOR | CONTACT DETAILS | DATE |
|-----------------|------------------------------|----------|
| Kirstine Riding | Kirstine.riding@fylde.gov.uk | 9/6/2020 |

| BACKGROUND PAPERS | | |
|-------------------|------|--------------------------------|
| Name of document | Date | Where available for inspection |
| None | | |