



DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES	ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING	5 JANUARY 2021	4
UPDATE FYLDE COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2020-2025			

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY

Environmental Health and Housing Committee on the 7th January 2020 approved Fylde Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025. The Strategy covers; an overview of homelessness legislation since 1977 to present day, a picture of homelessness in the borough and achievements under the 2013-18 Homeless Strategy.

This report provides an update on the operation of the homelessness and housing advice service at Fylde, progress towards meeting priorities in Fylde's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 and recommends proposals for re-allocated of funding detailed within this report from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) and Homeless Reduction Act; new burdens funding (HRA) to meet service priorities.

Grants to support homelessness and housing advice service provision by local authorities are received direct from Government and new grants are announced to tackle national pressures.

The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) is a new source of funding announced by Government in 2017. The grant is paid direct to local authorities and is designed to transform the way councils fund homelessness services to give them greater flexibility to prioritise the prevention of homelessness.

Homelessness Reduction Act: new burdens funding (HRA) was announced by Government on the October 2017 and is paid direct to local authorities. The funding is an additional national funding to support all housing authorities in implementing and managing the new processes and systems required to meet data requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

In December 2018 Fylde Council, working jointly with Lancaster and Wyre councils applied for and was awarded **Rapid Re-housing** funding to support the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2027. This funding has enabled a Rapid Rehousing Officer to be employed to undertake support for clients presenting with multiple complex support needs who are at risk of and rough sleeping. This post is funded till March 2022.

In October 2020 Fylde Council, working jointly with Wyre council applied for and was awarded **Next Steps** grant funding to help vulnerable accommodated as part of the Covid 19 emergency response. This funding secures financial assistance for additional temporary accommodation provision, financial support to secure and establish move on accommodation for clients and funds a Customer Services Housing Specialist role to deal with lower level housing enquiries immediately and expand on information provided by clients, to support Housing Officers. This post is currently funded to March 2021.

This report recommends the FHSG and HRA funding for 2019/20 be re-allocated and funding for 2020/21 be

allocated to; continue the funding of the Rapid Rehousing Officer post from 2022 to 2026 in line with MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2027; be used to fund the Customer Services Housing Specialist Role for 12 months from the 1st April 2021; with the remainder to be used to continue to support clients facing homelessness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee are requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report that provides an update on the operation of the homelessness and housing advice service at Fylde and progress towards meeting Fylde's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025. The report also recommends proposals for re-allocated of funding to projects from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) and Homeless Reduction Act; new burdens funding (HRA).
2. Approve fully funded revenue budget increases in the sums of £26,274 in 2022/23, £27,524 in 2023/24, £28,058 in 2024/25 and £28,604 in 2025/26 to continue the Rapid Rehousing Officer project to be met from a revision to the FHSG and HRA funding received in 2019/20, (approved by this Committee in February 2020 totalling £70,921) and in addition to this, funding received for 2020/21 of £69,421 under the FHSG and HRA. Totalling £140,343;
3. Approve a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £13,201 in 2021/22 to continue the Customer Services Housing Specialist role within Customer Services for a further 12 months from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 to be met from the remaining FHSG and HRA funding for 2020/21; and
4. Approve a fully funded budget increase for 2021/22 for the housing services team such that the remainder of the funding in the sum of £16,682 from the FHSG and HRA funding may be used to support the work of the housing service to provide continued support for clients facing homelessness in 2021/22.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

[Policies on the Procurement and Allocation of Temporary Accommodation 23/02/2016](#)

[Lancashire Single Homelessness Initiative evaluation 06/09/2016](#)

[Fylde Coast Homeless Prevention Trailblazer 14/03/17](#)

[Homeless Reduction Act 2018](#)

[Fylde Coast Homelessness Trailblazer Evaluation 05/06/18](#)

[Final update on Fylde Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 06/11/2018](#)

[Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2015 draft for consultation 03/09/2019](#)

[Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 07/01/2020](#)

[Final Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 07/01/2020](#)

[MHCLG Next Steps Funding to support homeless households 19/10/2020](#)

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	√
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	

Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2020-2025

1. Environmental Health and Housing Committee on the 7th January 2020 approved Fylde Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025. The Strategy covers; an overview of homelessness legislation since 1977 to present day, a picture of homelessness in the borough and achievements under the 2013-18 Homeless Strategy.
2. Our vision is to work to prevent and relieve homelessness in Fylde and provide homelessness services with our partners that are accessible, professional and make a difference. We will work to ensure all our clients facing homelessness have:
 - a. Access to expertise needed to enable clients to engage with a range services that will support them to resolve their housing situation and improve their health and well-being.
 - b. The confidence to access and maintain a tenancy with the skills required to ensure their home is affordable, settled and if they are facing difficulties know who to approach for help.
3. The Strategy has three strategic aims for Fylde Housing Services in order to achieve this vision and Appendix 2 contains an action plan that comments on how we will deliver these aims. Then action plan has been developed in partnership with Fylde Homeless Partnership group.
 - a. Priority One – Developing a service that is focussed on preventing homelessness
 - b. Priority two – Developing a service that is focussed on relieving homelessness
 - c. Priority three – Partnership working to achieve our vision and values
4. **The Homeless Reduction Act 2018** fundamentally changed the way local authorities support homeless people in their areas. The Act was enacted from April 2019 and **prevention and relief statutory duties** are available to any household vulnerable to homelessness in 56 rather than 28 days. This broader definition of homelessness beyond priority need groups means that local authorities are able to support households that are currently considered the hidden homeless and will provide greater assistance to single person households not in a priority need category.
5. Table 1 below details the statutory homeless duties placed on local authorities.

Table 1: Statutory Homeless Duties placed on local authorities

Duty to prevent homelessness	The PREVENTION DUTY applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance. There is a duty to assess and prepare a Personalised Housing Plan that informs all actions to be undertaken by the applicant and the local authority to prevent homelessness. This duty last for 56 days.
Duty to relieve homelessness	The RELIEF DUTY applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance. There is a duty to assess and prepare a Personalised Housing Plan that informs all actions to be undertaken by the applicant and the local authority to prevent homelessness. Where there is reason to believe that an applicant is homeless, eligible and in priority need, the local authority will have an interim accommodation duty to ensure the applicant has somewhere to live pending enquiries. This duty lasts for 56 days and if an applicant has not been assisted into accommodation during this period, the Main Housing Duty is provided.
Main housing duty	Where the duty to relieve homelessness has ended, the local authority is subject to an ongoing MAIN HOUSING DUTY to secure that accommodation is available to an applicant who is; eligible for assistance, in priority need, and, intentionally homeless.

Overview of the Homeless Service

6. Appendix 1 provides a diagrammatic overview of the operation of Homelessness and Housing Advice Services within Fylde since the introduction of the HRA in 2019.
7. During 20/21 the service expects to see by the end of the year, similar number of enquiries for homelessness and housing advice as in previous years at around 800 enquiries. The service also receives 'Duty to refer' referrals from Statutory Agencies, such as the Police, Social Services and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). In 2019/20 we received 93 referrals, however at the end of quarter 2 2020/21 this figure has fallen to 29. This drop could be as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic where formal duty to refers were not made, but contact was made direct via email or telephone due to the immediate nature of support required.
8. The number of households to whom a **PREVENTION DUTY** is owed has decreased significantly to 24 at the end of Quarter 2 2020/21. During 2019/20 the service accepted a prevention duty towards 98 households. This drop is directly due to measures introduced by MHCLG for renters affected by coronavirus to prevent tenants being evicted from private sector and social rented accommodation. The Law was changed initially during the first lock down to ensure Section 21 notice periods were extended from 2 months to 4 months and in September 2020 the notice period was extended to six months. Exceptions still apply where tenants have demonstrated anti-social behaviour.
9. The service is still operating as normal regarding, households to whom we owe a **RELIEF DUTY**, which at the end of quarter 2 2020/21 was at 50 households, however of those, 24 have been assisted into new accommodation. During 2019/20 the service accepted a relief duty towards 127 households.
10. **MAIN DUTY** acceptances have increased during 2020/21 to 10 at the end of Quarter 2. The ability of the service to secure accommodation for households during the prevention and relief stages has been hindered due to the lack of available move on accommodation during the Coronavirus pandemic both within the social and private sectors. In 2018/19 main duty acceptances was 30 and this fell to 9 in 2019/20 following the introduction of the HRA.
11. Clients support needs are identified during the homeless assessment and support is put in place throughout the prevention and relief stages via a personal housing plan. Approximately 75% of clients who are approaching the service with identified support needs present with multiple support needs. This includes clients: aged between 18-25; classed as old age; served in armed forces; learning disability; at risk of or experienced sexual and domestic abuse; history of rough sleeping and repeat homelessness; alcohol and drug dependency; offending history; physical ill health or disability; and a history of mental health.
12. Since the autumn of 2010, all local authorities have been required to submit an annual snapshot figure to MHCLG to indicate the number of **PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH** in their area on a typical night between 1st October and 30th November. In Fylde the 2020 count was conducted on the 19th November and was an evidence-based estimate using evidence from different partner agencies. The last two years the service has seen the highest numbers of rough sleepers dating back to 2014, in 2019 we reported 7 and in 2020 we have reported 6.
13. At the beginning of the Covid 19 lockdown period homeless households were identified as a specific category by Government and there was a requirement for statutory services to work together to identify households at risk of homelessness, current homeless households and rough sleepers to provide additional support across all services to work together to manage Covid 19 cases. Services included the NHS, local authorities, Police, adult social care, probation, mental health, family support and drug/alcohol services.

14. Initially there was a requirement to get all rough sleepers off the streets by the weekend of 28/29 March. In Fylde we have done this for 7 clients at risk of or rough sleeping by providing B&B accommodation and sourcing supported accommodation.
15. Of the 6 rough sleepers reported in November 2020/21, 5 have a local connection to neighboring boroughs. The Housing Service has been working with the authorities to ensure support and accommodation has been offered. Two rough sleepers have been identified as having accommodation in Blackpool and are therefore not homeless.

Covid 19 – Fylde Homeless Response Cell

16. On the 26 March 2020 the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) wrote to local authorities outlining a joint responsibility to safeguard as many homeless people as possible from COVID-19. MHCLG outlined a strategy based on NHS medical guidance and support which aims to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and ultimately prevent deaths during this public health emergency.
17. The guidance also suggested that all partners need to be involved in a coordinated and planned way including; Local Authority – for leading on securing and funding accommodation, Local Authority public health including commissioned drug and alcohol treatment services, social care and support; NHS –for commissioning and provision of primary care, community services, urgent and emergency care, hospital discharge and mental health; Voluntary Sector for providing shelters, hostels, outreach support and food banks. It stated that this multi-agency response should be organised and coordinated through local response cell and via emergency response arrangements, specifically with Local Resilience Forums (LRF).
18. Within the Fylde Coast a Homeless Response Cell was set up in March 2020. During the first lockdown daily Fylde Coast Homeless Response Cell strategic meetings were held to discuss homeless clients within the service across Fylde, Blackpool and Wyre local authorities, develop an action plan the Covid care and protect accommodation, develop referral pathways in and out from homeless accommodation, hospital and prison discharges.
19. This group continues to meet weekly to discuss strategic issues across statutory and voluntary agencies to manage support for clients who have approached the local authorities as homeless, during the current Covid 19 pandemic. Progress of the local Homeless Response Cells report regularly to a Lancashire wide Homeless Response Cell Sub Group meeting chaired by Public Health. The purpose is to identify emerging strategic issues or barriers in relation to the support for homeless households at a local level, if these are duplicated within other local authorities and need to be tackled at a Lancashire wide level.

Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 Action Plan update

20. Appendix 2 contains an update of progress towards the action plan in place to take forward Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy as of December 2020. The service is making good progress towards the actions identified around priorities one and two of the Strategy, focused on actions the service has in place to prevent and relieve homelessness.
21. As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic progress towards priority three, partnership working to achieve our vision and values, has been superseded by a change in working practices as a result of Covid 19. An action to regularly run the Fylde Homeless Forum and Fylde Homeless Partnership meetings that brings all partners together to work across Fylde to support clients experiencing homelessness, has been replaced by the Covid 19 Fylde Coast Homeless Cell. It is expected when working arrangements return to normality the service can focus attention on taking forward the actions identified in priority 3.
22. Duty to refer from Statutory Agencies and Commitment to refer from voluntary agencies and Registered Providers arrangements are in place, where they working with clients facing homelessness.

23. All clients when they approach the service are supported to develop a personal housing plan to identify actions that both the client and the housing service need to undertake to secure suitable accommodation and maintain that tenancy. This support will include identifying support needs and making arrangements to have this support in place, tenancy training on managing and maintaining a tenancy, support to register with and bid for accommodation with MyHomeChoice, referrals into supported accommodation where this is appropriate, support to access funding to establish the tenancy with rent bond and rent in advance, funding for essential items, such as furniture, carpets, white good and small electrical items.
24. Fylde Housing Services have a Tenancy Support Policy that provides 3 levels of tenancy support determined by presenting needs, for example history of failed tenancy, drug/alcohol addiction, mental health and family breakdown. Appendix 3 provides an overview diagram of the Tenancy Support Service.
25. Clients who present with less than 6 support needs remain with the homelessness and housing advice service until the tenancy has been established. If these clients have been assisted into private sector accommodation with funding for rent in advance or rent bond, both the landlord and tenant are contacted at 1 month, 3 months and 6 months to establish any concerns with the tenancy.
26. Clients who present with 6-8 support needs are provided with 12 weeks tenancy support to ensure the tenancy is set up, all bills are in payment and benefits are in place.
27. Clients who present with 8-10 support needs are referred into the Rapid Rehousing Support service that works with clients throughout their journey within the service – prevention, relief and main housing duty – and then 12 weeks of tenancy support once accommodation has been sourced.

Revision of MHCLG funding arrangements within the housing service

28. Grants to support homelessness and housing advice service provision by local authorities are received direct from Government and new grants are announced to tackle national pressures.
29. **The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG)** is a new source of funding announced by Government in 2017. The grant is paid direct to local authorities and is designed to transform the way councils fund homelessness services to give them greater flexibility to prioritise the prevention of homelessness. **Homelessness Reduction Act: new burdens funding (HRA)** was announced by Government on the 16th October 2017. The funding is an additional national funding to support all housing authorities in implementing and managing the new processes and systems required to meet data requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
30. This report recommends a revision to the FHSG and HRA funding received in 2019/20, (approved by this Committee in February 2020 totalling £70,921) and in addition to this, funding received for 2020/21 of £69,421 under the FHSG and HRA. Totalling £140,343.
31. It is requested the funding be used to continue the Rapid Rehousing Officer post for from 2022 to 2026, in line with MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2027 and be used to fund the Customer Services Housing Specialist Role for 12 months from the 1st April 2021. The remaining funds to be used to support the work of the housing service to provide continued support for clients facing homelessness in 2021/22.
32. In December 2018 Fylde Council, working jointly with Lancaster City and Wyre councils bid for and was awarded **Rapid Re-housing funding from MHCLG**. The funding was launched as part of MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018 and the commitment under the Rough Sleeping Strategy August 2018, to half rough sleeping in the UK by 2022 and to end it by 2027. The pathway brings together 4 policy elements – somewhere safe to stay, supported lettings, navigators and local lettings agencies.
33. This funding has enabled a Rapid Rehousing Officer to be employed to undertake support for clients presenting with multiple complex support needs. The role support rough sleepers and those at risk of

rough sleeping, for example clients with a history of failed tenancies and leaving institutional care, throughout the process of locating and obtaining accommodation, support them in the transition from being susceptible of rough sleeping into managing and/or maintaining a tenancy. This post is funded till March 2022.

34. In October 2020 Fylde Council, working jointly with Wyre Council, bid for and was awarded **Next Steps** grant funding to help vulnerable accommodated as part of the Covid 19 emergency response. This funding secures financial assistance for additional temporary accommodation provision, financial support to secure and establish move on accommodation for clients and funds a Customer Services Housing Specialist role to deal with lower level housing enquiries immediately and expand on information provided by clients, to support the Homeless Service. This post is currently funded to March 2021.

Conclusion

35. Committee are requested to note the contents of the report that provides an update on the operation of the homelessness and housing advice service at Fylde and progress towards meeting Fylde's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025. The report also recommends proposals for re-allocated of funding to projects from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) and Homeless Reduction Act; new burdens funding (HRA).
36. Approve fully funded revenue budget increases in the sums of £26,274 in 2022/23, £27,524 in 2023/24, £28,058 in 2024/25 and £28,604 in 2025/26 to continue the Rapid Rehousing Officer project to be met from a revision to the FHSG and HRA funding received in 2019/20, (approved by this Committee in February 2020 totalling £70,921) and in addition to this, funding received for 2020/21 of £69,421 under the FHSG and HRA. Totalling £140,343;
37. Approve a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £13,201 in 2021/22 to continue the Customer Services Housing Specialist role within Customer Services for a further 12 months from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 to be met from the remaining FHSG and HRA funding for 2020/21; and
38. Approve a fully funded budget increase for 2021/22 for the housing services team such that the remainder of the funding in the sum of £16,682 from the FHSG and HRA funding may be used to support the work of the housing service to provide continued support for clients facing homelessness in 2021/22.
39. Table 2 below provides the proposed breakdown of the funding for posts and support from 2021/22 to 2025/26.

Table 2: Breakdown of funding for posts

	2021 / 22	2022 / 23	2023 / 24	2024 / 25	2025 / 26	2026 / 27	
Rapid Re-housing (scale 5 - 30 Hrs)	0	24,274	25,524	26,058	26,604	0	
Rapid Re-housing Support Budger		2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	
Housing Options (Scale 4 - 50%)	13,201	0	0	0	0	0	
Balance to support housing services	16,682						
	29,883	26,274	27,524	28,058	28,604	0	
							140,342
Funding :							
Committee Approval Feb 2020	70,921						
20.21 FHSG & HRA	69,421						
	140,342						

IMPLICATIONS

Finance	This report requests a number of fully-funded revenue budget increases in the total sum of £140,343 as detailed within the report, to support the work of the housing service, all funded budget increases to be met from the FHSG and HRA funding received in 2019/20, (approved by this Committee in February 2020 totalling £70,921) and the funding in the sum of £69,421 also received from the FHSG and HRA.
Legal	None
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR

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DATE

18/12/2020

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2015	January 2020	Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2015
Fylde Council Tenancy Support Policy	January 2020	Fylde Council Tenancy Support Policy
MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy	August 2018	MHCLG The Rough Sleeping Strategy

Attached documents

Appendix 1 – Overview of Homelessness and Housing Advice Service at Fylde Council December 2020

Appendix 2 – Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy update December 2020

Appendix 3 – Overview diagram of support needs Fylde Council's Tenancy Support Service