



DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	24 JANUARY 2022	12
FULLY FUNDED REVENUE BUDGET INCREASE - FYLDE COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2020-2025			

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY

The report details a request from the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, held on the 4th January 2022, for an approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase to the Repossession Prevention Budget within Housing Services 5270/47106 in 2021/22 in the sum of £22,531 to be met from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG) top up grant funding for 21/22. The funding will be used to support clients within the private rented sector facing repossession due to rent arrears as a result of Covid 19.

Fylde Council received notification from DLUHC on the 21/12/21 advising of an additional £22,531 to be used:

As a top-up to the existing Homelessness Prevention Grant 21/22, this grant is ringfenced for homelessness to target those most in need and to ensure local authorities are resourced to take action to prevent homelessness and continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It must be spent or committed by 31st March 2022. Homelessness Prevention Grant funding must be used in adherence with the principles set out in Annex B. For this additional funding we expect it to be specifically used to maximise upstream homelessness prevention for low-income private renters in COVID-19 related rent arrears. We do not expect it to be spent on temporary accommodation.

The report provided an annual update to Committee on progress on meeting the priorities within the action plan of the Strategy in December 2021 and to provide an update on the operation of the homelessness and housing advice service at Fylde. The scheme was supported by the EHH committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee are requested to:

Approve a fully funded revenue budget increase to the Repossession Prevention Budget within Housing Services 5270/4715 in 2021/22 in the sum of £22,531 to be met from DLUHC HPG top up grant funding 2021/22.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

gsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1244/Committee/19/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx" [Environment, Health and Housing Committee – 4th January 2022](#)

It was RESOLVED:

1. To note the contents of the report that provides an update on the operation of the homelessness and housing advice service in December 2021 and progress towards meeting Fylde's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.
2. To recommend to Finance and Democracy approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase to the Repossession Prevention Budget within Housing Services 5270/4715 in 2021/22 in the sum of £22,531 to be met from DLUHC Covid 19 rent arrears financial support funding for 2021/22.

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	

Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), Winter 2021 Covid 19 rent arrears financial support

1. Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has recently announced the Winter 2021 Covid 19 rent arrears financial support. The purpose of the funding is to support low-income private renters with Covid 19 related rent arrears to avoid eviction or find a new home where necessary to prevent homelessness. Fylde Council have been awarded £22,531.
2. This funding will be focussed on clients in private sector accommodation, if the accommodation is affordable moving forward and the Landlord agrees to creating a new tenancy that will last for at least 6 months.

Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2020-2025

3. During 2020/21 the service dealt with 650 enquiries for homelessness and housing advice. This is a steady reduction year on year since 2018/19 which saw the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2018. The service expects to receive similar level of enquiries in 2021/22. This reduction is directly due to work of the service following the introduction of the Act, in preventing and relieving homelessness with an element of tenancy support and landlord engagement to prevent tenancy failure, when clients have already been supported.
4. During the Covid 19 pandemic the MHCLG introduced new measures 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 applied where tenants had demonstrated anti-social behaviour.
5. The effect on the housing service in 2020/21 was a decrease in households to whom a Prevention Duty was owed from 93 to 58. The impact in 2021/22 was a marked increase in Prevention Duties owed with the figure being the same at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22, as it was for the whole of 2020/21 as Landlords have been able to proceed with possession proceedings. This is further evidenced by a drop since 2019/20 by over 50% for the number of households to whom we can support to remain in their own home via negotiations with Landlords around rent arrears and tenancy management issues.

6. Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic the number of households to whom a Relief Housing Duty is owed as they are already homeless or, moving from Prevention into Relief Duty as accommodation has not been sourced, has remained high since 2020/21 (105) and throughout 2021/22 (66 at end of Qtr 2). These presentations are from households who are already homeless and if in priority need are provided with temporary accommodation.
7. The number of households to whom a Main Housing Duty has been accepted by the local authority fell between 2019/20 to 2020/21 from 19 to 16. In 2021/22 this downward trend appears to have stopped and figures are increasing in 20/21. At the end of Quarter 2 in 20/21 the local authority has accepted a Main Housing Duty towards 13 households, and it is expected by the end of the financial year the number of acceptances will be above 2020/21 figures.
8. For both clients owed a Prevention and Relief Duty the ability to move clients into new accommodation has been affected by the lack of available and affordable accommodation within both the private and social rented sectors and this is impacting on the length of time households are remaining in temporary homeless accommodation. This is then having an impact on the number of households the Local Authority owe a Main Housing Duty towards.
9. The service is seeing a reduction in single persons approaching the service overall and an increase in families with children. In 2020/21 78% of clients were single person households, this has fallen in 2021/22 to 63% at the end of quarter 2. The numbers of households with two or three children, has increased from 8% during 2020/21 to 22% at the end of quarter 2, 2021/22. This is most likely as a result of the easing of restrictions for Landlords to be able to proceed with possession proceedings and families approaching as homeless, either due to rent arrears or the Landlord wishing to sell the property. In the majority of these cases negotiation with the Landlord to prevent homelessness has not been successful.
10. The service overall is seeing an increase in clients with multiple disadvantage support needs. Since Quarter 3 2020/21 approximately 90% of clients approaching the service under homelessness legislation have multiple disadvantaged support needs. Only 8% of clients who have presented to the service since the first quarter of 2020 have no support needs.
11. Multiple Disadvantage is when a person experiences a combination of homelessness, addiction, re-offending behaviour and/or mental ill health at the same time. People facing this complex mix of challenges are also sometimes victims of domestic abuse, are likely to have poor physical health, may be sex-working and may be in debt.
12. There has been a marked increase in clients presenting with mental health and physical ill health and disability, with clients needing mental health support seeing a 50% increase. The service experienced an increase at the beginning of 2021 of clients presenting with a history of rough sleeping and repeat homelessness, however in Quarter 2 2021/22 these figures appear to be returning to more manageable levels.
13. 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 2021 count was conducted on night of the 18th to 19th November and was an evidence-based estimate using evidence from different partner agencies. In 2019/20 and 2020/21 the service has seen the highest numbers of rough sleepers dating back to 2014. This figure has now returned to previous year's figures at 2.
14. Domestic and non domestic abuse has remained high since the beginning of 2020 with drops in intervening quarters, however the service during quarter 1, 21/22 saw the highest recorded figure of clients presenting due to either domestic or non domestic abuse.
15. Young persons aged between 18-25 with multiple disadvantage support needs has increased. This could be due to the lack of affordable accommodation within both the social and private rented sector for this age group coupled with Local Housing Allowance rates fixed at the shared room rate of £61.50 for private rented sector, making this tenure not an alternative to social rented accommodation for this age group.
16. Noticeably there has been a drop in clients requiring support to access education or employment. This could either be due to the fact the support is being provided elsewhere or that their current support needs are so high

it is unlikely that support into education or employment is relevant, at the time of presentation under homelessness legislation.

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

17. Duty to Refer arrangements are in place with all Statutory Agencies if they are supporting clients at risk of homelessness. This is enhanced by continuation of the Covid Homeless Response Cell that brings all statutory and third sector agencies together to discuss recognised barriers to support for vulnerable clients. As the Changing Futures Programme develops this will bring such partnerships together as part of this programme.
18. The service continues to offer and see the value of pre-Tenancy Training and have two programmes on offer. Human-Kind provide a more tenancy management related on-line course for 18+ year olds and the YMCA run a course accessible via an app for younger persons, more focussed on housing options available, cost of running a home and trying to prevent the young person from leaving the parental home in the first instance.
19. All clients have in place a Personal Housing Plan that details the actions the Client is able to take to resolve their housing situation, for example list of private landlords, registering with MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast, and actions the Housing Services Officer will undertake on the clients behalf, for example referrals into Tenancy Training, Debt Advice Service, Social Services and Domestic Advice Housing Outreach Worker or Rapid Rehousing Officer for more focussed support.
20. The Service also has access to a number of funding streams to support clients into accommodation that can be used for: rent bond, rent in advance, financial assistance with household items including white goods and carpets, assistance with rent arrears, court costs and No Second Night Out accommodation in B&B, (for clients who are not in a priority need category) for up to 5 nights to give some breathing space to consider their housing options.
21. The Debt Advice Service is run on our behalf by Blackpool Council Debt Advice Service. Referrals are made into this service as and when required. Appointments are by telephone and the service will assist the client to identify priority and non-priority debts and budgeting skills.
22. The service still needs to improve the self-help offer and information available on the web site. This offer is aimed at clients who are not within 56 days of homelessness and will provide advice on resolving their housing situation, prior to the need to approach the housing service.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	Fully funded revenue budget increase to the repossession prevention budget 5270/47105 in 21/22 for £22,531.
Legal	None
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2015	January 2020	HYPERLINK "https://new.fylde.gov.uk/resident/housing/homelessness-our-legal-duties/" Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2015
Fylde Council Tenancy Support Policy	January 2020	HYPERLINK "https://new.fylde.gov.uk/resident/housing/homelessness-our-legal-duties/" Fylde Council Tenancy Support Policy
MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy	August 2018	ps://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy" MHCLG The Rough Sleeping Strategy
DLUHC Winter 2021 Covid 19 Funding	September 2021	DLUHC Winter Covid 19 Funding