



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Cabinet: Wednesday 24 March 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 11
Subject	Planned Expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2021/22 & the Emergency Accommodation Allocation April to June 2021
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Merilyn Davies, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Email: merilyn.davies@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing – Group Manager for Resident Services Tel: 01993 861221 Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Author	Caroline Clissold – Housing Manager Tel: 01594 812309 Email: caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22 and the Emergency Accommodation Allocation April to June 2021
Annex	Annex A - MHCLG letter to Local Authority Chief Executives Annex B – Email from Rough Sleeping Initiative
Recommendations	(a) That the expenditure detailed within paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of this report be approved; (b) That, subject to a successful bid for RS14 funding, the allocation of spending as set out in 2.15 be approved; and (c) That the Housing Manager be authorised, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, to approve any amendments to these allocations, subject to compliance with ring-fenced grant conditions.
Corporate priorities	Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance: Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council
Key Decision	Yes

Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The Leader of the Council. The Deputy Leader of the Council The Portfolio Holder SI51 Chief Finance Officer The Chief Executive. The Monitoring Officer.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. From 1st April 2017 the Government removed the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee from the Housing Benefit system. This was in line with the government announcement in the 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement, that the subsidy for the temporary management fee paid from the Department of Work and Pensions to Local Authorities on a household basis would end from 2017/18. This was replaced by ring fenced funding streams.
- 1.2. The Council had very minimal expenditure in this area of Housing Benefit and therefore has benefited from this additional funding; which, as mentioned above, is ring-fenced to activities that will prevent or relieve homelessness. Funding has been provided for 4 years (2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21) and titled Flexible Homelessness Grant. Further grants were also provided via the Homelessness Reduction Grant.
- 1.3. For 2021/22 the Flexible Homelessness Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant has been combined and replaced with the Homelessness Prevention Grant.
- 1.4. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have set out their expectations on how this fund is to be spent in the letter to Chief Executives dated 21st December 2020 .This is detailed within [Annex A](#).
- 1.5. In addition the MHCLG have awarded an uplift payment in the form of an Emergency Accommodation Allocation to be spent between April and June 2021 to contribute to the continuing burden of providing additional emergency accommodation, support and move on costs in addition to preventing rough sleeping during the continuing pandemic attached at [Annex B](#).

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have set out the following delivery expectations from the Homelessness Prevention Grant:
 - To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness
 - Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention,
 - Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six week limit.
- 2.2. The Homelessness Prevention Grant allocation for West Oxfordshire District Council for 2021/22 is £253,329.
- 2.3. The Emergency Accommodation Allocation to be spent between April and June 2021 is £100,000. However should this allocation not be spent in full the remainder will be redirected by the MHCLG into the Countywide Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI4) allocation for July 2021 to March 2022 to fund further rough sleeper projects. See point 2.15
- 2.4. It is therefore proposed that in order for the Council to meet the expectation set by the MHCLG, the Homelessness Prevention Grant is allocated as following:

Prevention Officer – New Post 1 year fixed term	£30,000
Flexible Prevention Fund	£60,000
Private Rented Deposit Fund	£20,000
Shared Temporary Accommodation Move On Officer – 2 New	£22,000

Posts 1 year fixed term (to begin June 2021)	
Families First Officer 1 year contract extension subject to a successful project review	£33,000
Personalisation Budgets for Families First / Complex singles/ B&B Move On / Cold Weather funding	£20,000
Joint Social Care project working with intentionally homeless families	£10,000
Contingency Fund to be used flexibly for the Prevention of Homelessness	£58,329
Total:	£253,329

2.5. It is further proposed the Emergency Accommodation Allocation be allocated as follows:

Direct Access Support for Old Court House (pending successful completion in April 2021) – Move on / Step Down Support Officers	£24,500
Additional 3 month extension to the Temporary Accommodation Officer post (as detailed above)	£5,500
Extension to our current Outreach Contract	£10,000
Additional Personalisation Budgets/ Move on Fund (as outlined above)	£20,000
Estimated cost burden of providing Emergency Accommodation for 3 months	£40,000
Total:	£100,000

2.6. **The Prevention Officer** will provide an intensive, early intervention approach for clients threatened with homelessness. The aim will be to prevent homelessness from occurring with the provision of mediation, intervention or financial support and signposting. This role will assist the team in meeting expected rise in demands on the service following the end of government schemes such as the current ban on evictions and the end of the furlough scheme. The post will initially be for 1 year on a fixed term contract, to be reviewed after 9 months.

2.7. **The Flexible Prevention Fund** will allow the Housing Team to assist clients with bespoke solutions (such as addressing arrears, moving costs and providing mediation) to prevent homelessness from occurring at the earliest possible stage, reducing the need for expensive and unsuitable B&B use and provide our clients with the best possible outcomes. This fund will work alongside Discretionary Housing Benefits, benefit signposting, and financial management assistance from in house Client Support and 3rd party agencies. The Flexible Prevention Fund will assist with and bespoke interventions depending on the specific client's needs.

2.8. **Private Rented Sector Fund.** There will be a modest budget to fund provision (loan) of cash deposits, fees and payments of rent in advance; as well as payments to help households make their new accommodation liveable. This Fund will be managed by the Homelessness

Lead officer, who will be responsible for securing repayment and recycling of these 'loans' to ensure that the Councils maximise the value of this budget.

- 2.9. **Temporary Accommodation Move On Officers.** It is also proposed that a proportion of the fund is pooled with Forest of Dean (FoDDC) and Cotswold (CDC) to create two shared Temporary Accommodation Move On Officers. These new roles will be dedicated to ensuring that the client is moved on from any form of temporary accommodation swiftly and into permanent accommodation that is right for the client. The Temporary Accommodation Move On officers will maximise the options available to us in terms of emergency, temporary and longer-term private rented or social rented accommodation. The need for this approach is illustrated by the increasing length of time clients are spending in emergency accommodation during the current pandemic. Both posts will initially be for 1 year on a fixed term contract, to be reviewed after 9 months.
- 2.10. **Families First.** The Families First Officer post has proved to be a success over the past 18 months with a decrease in families presenting as homeless. The Families First Officer also manages a Domestic Abuse Sanctuary Scheme whereby properties are made secure or sanctuary rooms are created avoiding the need for victims to move away from their home and support network. Initial funding for the post was agreed for 2 years from the 2018/19 Flexible Homelessness Grant fund. The fixed term for the post is due to end in October 2021 therefore it is proposed to review the outcomes and achievements in June 2021 with a view to making a separate recommendation as to whether project should be extended. It is therefore requested that funding is set aside to extend this term for a further year, subject to a successful project review.
- 2.11. **Personalisation Budgets.** Personalisation budgets will allow the Project Officer (Families First and Complex Needs) to provide fully flexible solutions to suit the individual situation or need. This can include addressing fuel poverty, minor adaptations to properties (for example providing temporary bedroom divides for older children who need to share).
- 2.12. **B&B Move On Fund.** This fund will be managed by the Temporary Accommodation Move On Officer and will ensure the clients who are in B&B have access to items such as furniture, bedding, and white goods
- 2.13. **Joint Social Care project.** The Housing Team have been working closely with Oxfordshire Social Care on creating a project whereby any family that may be facing homelessness intentionally are offered temporary accommodation and targeted support from a social worker working in partnership with a Housing Officer. It is unlikely that there will be more than a few households needing this service however for those that do, providing bespoke solutions for the level of complexity is likely to be high. Therefore it is proposed that £10,000 be set aside, to be reviewed in December 2021. If it has not been necessary to spend this fund, it can then be used for wider flexible prevention solutions.
- 2.14. **Enhanced Outreach.** West Oxfordshire currently commissions a rough sleeper outreach service from Connection. This costs around £9,000 p.a. and buys the Council 0.6 FTE officer hours. Although numbers of rough sleepers remain low, during the pandemic the level of service has proved to be insufficient to meet changing demands placed on the service. The Council was successful in securing additional Cold Weather Protect funds to increase the Outreach service until June 2021 to meet the government's December 2020 request to ensure that all rough sleepers are offered bespoke solutions and are vaccinated. In order to provide a sustained level of service it is therefore proposed that the increase in the service commissioned extend throughout 2021/22. In 2022 it is anticipated that Oxfordshire will merge its separate Outreach contracts into a countywide scheme therefore the contract will be reviewed as a whole at this point.
- 2.15. **RS14 and Potential underspend of the Emergency Accommodation Allocation.** West Oxfordshire DC have requested £118,000 to be included in the bid for RS14 funds.

The RS14 bid is currently being considered by the MHCLG and is subject to a moderation process. If approval is given, the £118,000 is allocated as follows:

- Continuation of existing Housing First Project - £60,000
- Move on / Step Down support for Old Court House £48,750
- Extension of the contracted fixed term Complex Needs officer £9,250

Should there be any underspend of the Emergency Accommodation Allocation, this will be redirected into the RS14 allocation for West Oxfordshire and reduce the amount allocated to the above projects.

- 2.16. **Housing First Project Extension** West Oxfordshire has been working in partnership with Aspire and 2 housing associations to provide a local Housing First Scheme. Aspire were successfully awarded £37,000 funding in 2020 which allowed the partnership to secure 6 properties to offer to our most complex homeless cohort. West Oxfordshire was awarded a further £14,000 from the Next Steps fund to increase this to 8 properties. If the RS14 bid is successful, a further 8 properties will be secured for our most complex cohort.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are multiple complex funding streams supporting the work of the housing team particularly with regard to homeless prevention. Some of these funding streams are subject to bids and some are allocations. Often these come through at short notice and require officers to investigate options and put together work packages in short time frames.
- 3.2. The proposals set out in section 2 are aimed at addressing the expectations set out by the MHCLG and available accommodation in the West Oxfordshire district. There are limited options and significant costs associated with the provision of emergency accommodation within the District, as well as a shortage of longer-term accommodation.
- 3.3. The proposal is therefore aimed at reducing the use and time spent in expensive short term, emergency accommodation benefiting both the Council and the client.
- 3.4. A contingency fund for prevention of homeless activities is also proposed to be set aside.
- 3.5. All these spending plans are supported by ring fenced government grant so will have no impact upon the Councils net approved budget or financial strategy.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Spending allocations need to follow the ring fenced grant schemes.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not effectively use this grant funding for the specific purposes set out in the MHCLG's letter to Chief Executive's on the 21st December 2020.
- 5.2. There is also a risk that rising demands on the service from ongoing financial and housing challenges facing residents of the West Oxfordshire DC area during the ongoing pandemic could impact on the Council's ability to deliver a full statutory Housing service if staffing levels are not increased.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1. None

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

7.1. None considered however members may want to consider other options that have not been referred to within the report

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1. None



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

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Fry Building
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SW1P 4DF

To Local Authority Chief Executives

21 December 2020

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Funding for 2021/2022

Thank you for your continuing work to support rough sleepers and the homeless throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I know this is a particularly challenging time and that you and your staff are going above and beyond to help vulnerable people. I am writing today to inform you of allocations for the £310m Homelessness Prevention Fund next year, as well as confirming plans for the Rough Sleeping Initiative, as I know you need certainty to plan services and support your staff and service users.

Allocations of Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22

The Government has committed to ending rough sleeping in this parliament and to fully enforcing the Homelessness Reduction Act. That is why we will be spending more than £750 million next year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. Today we have announced the allocation of a key element of this overall investment: £310 million in funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant that will be made available local authorities in 2021/22 to support you to deliver services to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The details of allocations to local authorities are attached at Annex A. This is an increase in grant funding for local authorities' homelessness services of £47 million on the current financial year. All local authorities will receive an increase in funding compared to the grant funding for their homelessness services last year.

We have listened to your feedback on the value of having fewer, simpler funding streams. That is why we are announcing the Homelessness Prevention Grant which combines and replaces two existing funding streams: the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Grant.

This grant will be ringfenced to ensure local authorities are resourced to take action to prevent homelessness from occurring and provides the funding to continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act. When publishing our review of the Homelessness Reduction Act we committed to reviewing the new burdens funding associated with the Act. This review has been completed and we have assessed the

average annual new burdens as £77m per year. This is reflected in the £310m announced today.

The purpose of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is to give local authorities control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness. We expect local authorities to use it to deliver the following priorities:

- To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness
- Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention,
- Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six week limit.

This funding will be provided upfront in April and can be used flexibly as part of councils' resourcing to contribute to the costs of statutory duties, including implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act and supporting with the costs of temporary accommodation.

MHCLG will continue to provide support to local authorities through our Homelessness Advice and Support Team. Advisers will be in contact with local authorities to discuss how you plan to use this funding, including how you plan to use it to support single homelessness prevention and align with your rough sleeping delivery plans.

The majority of the funding has been allocated on a similar basis to funding allocated in 2020/21 using a formula which reflects relative homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures. We have allocated the additional £47m uplift with a new formula which focuses on homelessness pressures and to support the above priorities, the methodology for which can be found on the gov.uk announcement page:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-grant-2021-to-2022>

On 17th of December Government launched a consultation on the 2021-22 Local Government Finance Settlement. As part of that consultation, the Government is considering removal of visible lines in the settlement, including the Homelessness Prevention named line. I would like to make clear that this named line in the Settlement is separate from the £310 million Homelessness Prevention Grant announced today, and relates to the grant rolled into the settlement pre-2016. The proposal to remove visible lines is presentational only, and the Government is not proposing any changes to actual payments or the settlement distribution. The Homelessness Prevention Grant announced today is additional to the funding local authorities draw from the Settlement to deliver their homelessness and rough sleeping services.

Rough Sleeping Initiative 2021/22

I recognise that you will also want clarity with regards to funding provided to support rough sleepers, particularly the Rough Sleeping Initiative. I can confirm that the Rough Sleeping Initiative will continue to run in 2021/22, commencing its fourth year of funding in April 2021. It will also be ringfenced in 2021/22 to ensure this fund is dedicated to helping achieve our shared ambition of ending rough sleeping.

I can confirm that all local authorities will receive at least the same level of funding as they received under the Rough Sleeping Initiative 3 (2020/21).

In the new year, we will launch a process to enable all local authorities to bid for funding under the Rough Sleeping Initiative. We intend to use a combination of methods to assess need to enable a tailored approach depending on the situation of each area. We do not expect all areas to undergo co-production. We will set out further detail on the approach in the new year, ensuring that all local authorities have the same opportunities as part of the process and that we are able to provide more certainty as soon as possible.

These two grants are part of a 60% increase in resource funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in 2021-22, compared to Spending Review 2019. Together with continued capital funding to deliver long-term accommodation for rough sleepers, the Government will be spending over £750 million next year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Spending Review also confirmed 2021/22 funding for the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and we will be working with local authorities to ensure these two funding programmes align in a way that supports local plans to end rough sleeping as effectively as possible. We will continue to work closely with you to understand your needs and update your RSI delivery approaches to support rough sleepers. Please contact rsi-y3@communities.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Taken together, this investment builds on the more than £700 million that the Government is spending on rough sleeping and homelessness this year, with the ongoing 'Everyone In' campaign helping to protect thousands of lives during the pandemic by housing rough sleepers in safe accommodation. This underlines the Government's commitment to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping and helps to ensure you are given the resources you need to make this a reality in your local area.



Penny Hobman

Director of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Annex A cont: Allocations

Local Authority	Homelessness Prevention Grant allocation for 2021-22
Cherwell	£ 489,933
Oxford	£ 1,067,016
South Oxfordshire	£ 352,124
Vale of White Horse	£ 254,100
West Oxfordshire	£ 253,329

(Note: Rather than circulate all the allocations those within Oxfordshire have been included)

Annex B

From: Rough Sleeping Initiative [<mailto:RSI@communities.gov.uk>]
Sent: 26 February 2021 16:18
To: Rough Sleeping Initiative
Subject: Emergency Accommodation Allocation April - June

Dear colleague,

Thank you for all that you have delivered to date through our programmes and working in partnership with our expert Advisers. Through Everyone In, in November we supported nearly 33,000 people, with nearly 10,000 remaining in emergency accommodation and 23,000 having moved on into settled accommodation. This would not have been possible without the continued hard work and dedication of local authorities and partners, and the significant impact you are making.

In addition to funds supporting local authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as Everyone In, Protect and Protect Plus, the RSI supported 291 local authorities in its third year, with £112m of funding allocated. As you know, there will be no reduction in your overall RSI 2021/22 budget. When we launched the 2021/22 RSI, we told you that you would automatically be given continuation funding for the period 1st April to 30th June 2021, giving you the assurance you need to continue delivering RSI interventions. This continuation funding is equal to three months of your total RSI 3 allocation, which includes your RSI 2 underspend, as listed in your RSI 3 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This RSI 3 continuation funding will be automatically paid in April. For areas with joint RSI 3 bids, it will go to the lead authority.

For the remaining 2021/22 period you are submitting proposals for funding. We would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that you will be allocated at least as much as you did for RSI 3. This equates to nine months RSI 3 funding, as stated in your MoU, as a minimum. The only exception is where local authorities request funding below this amount.

We also informed you that you would receive a one-off uplift payment to contribute to additional emergency accommodation, support and move on costs which have been funded through other MHCLG rough sleeping delivery programmes, including the Next Steps Accommodation Programme. We are writing now to inform you of your allocation of **£100,000** which will be paid automatically in April.

In the RSI 2021/22 toolkit we explained that, while longer-term plans should account for some prevalence of COVID-19 in the future, we need to look at longer term solutions to prevent rough sleeping and support those who have experienced rough sleeping in their recovery. Moving on to settled accommodation is key to this approach, and your RSI applications should demonstrate a sustainable pathway of move on from first stage accommodation. This

means specific housing support and housing led solutions, in support of the RSI objective number two, and evidence of significant tapering emergency accommodation provision while considering winter provision and the ongoing risk of COVID-19. **If you have already submitted your RSI form (standard route areas), and you wish to amend your RSI proposal following confirmation of your Q1 uplift**, please let us know. We can accept revised applications with a deadline of 12 midday Friday 5th March.

Kind Regards,

Rough Sleeping Initiative Team | Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Directorate

 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government