



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 2ND SEPTEMBER 2019
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 9
Subject	FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GRANT
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Email: lisa.spivey@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing Group Manager for Resident Services Tel: 01285 623304 Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the planned expenditure of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	<i>That Council be recommended to use its Flexible Homelessness Support Grant in accordance with the proposals set out in paragraph 1.5 of this report and with the specific expenditure detailed within the Financial Implications section.</i>
Corporate priorities	The Corporate Plan is in preparation.
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Legislation

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.
- 1.2 The Council had very minimal expenditure in this area of Housing Benefit and therefore has benefited from this additional funding; which is ring-fenced to activities that will prevent or relieve homelessness. Funding was provided for two years (2017/18 and 2018/19) with additional funding being available for 2019/20. The funding allocations are included below.

Council	2019/20 Grant Allocation	2017 – 2018 Surplus	Total Available Grant Funding
Cotswold DC	£50,559	£67,539	£118,098
Forest of Dean DC	£40,000	£67,539	£107,539
West Oxfordshire DC	£134,522	£119,246	£253,768

- 1.3 It is therefore proposed that the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant is utilised to further assist us in managing the property side of Housing; so we can maximise the options available to us in terms of emergency, temporary and longer-term accommodation. The need for this approach is illustrated by the high waiting lists; high numbers of long-term empty dwellings; and the volumes/costs associated with emergency accommodation provision.
- 1.4 This report proposes pooling funding with Forest of Dean DC (FoDDC) and West Oxfordshire DC (WODC) in order to maximise the impact of the funds available. As explained in the Financial Implications section, WODC has received a larger allocation than CDC and FoDDC. WODC will therefore contribute an equal share and utilise their excess grant in relation to a WODC specific project. However, the way in which the joint service operates means that all three Councils will benefit from all learning from all strands of activity.
- 1.5 These proposals are aimed addressing the lack of available accommodation in the three partner Districts. There are limited options and significant costs associated with the provision of emergency accommodation within the Districts, as well as a shortage of longer-term accommodation; particularly within the private rented sector. The Partner Projects are therefore to put in place two dedicated joint officers (on two year fixed term contracts) and a joint Private Sector Rental Fund. The specific objectives of each of these aspects are as follows:-

- 1.5.1 Housing Property Manager** (Joint post). This Officer's principal responsibilities will be securing and managing emergency accommodation; liaising with Registered Providers to ensure timely move-on from temporary accommodation and minimisation of void periods; reduction of the number of long-term empty properties; and management of any resultant bought/leased residential property.
- 1.5.2 Private Rented Sector Officer** (Joint post). This Officer's principal responsibilities (reporting to the above Property Manager post) will be designing and implementing a private sector placement policy that is workable for the Councils and the sector; liaison with Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords and agents; and management of the new PRS Fund (see below).
- 1.5.3 PRS Fund.** There will be a modest budget for each Council 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 PRS Officer (see above), who will be responsible for securing repayment and recycling of these 'loans' to ensure that the Councils maximise the value of this budget.
- 1.6** Any surplus would be ring-fenced to support activities that would prevent or relieve homelessness; including investigating alternative accommodation options and investing in pre-prevention activities. Your text here.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1** The level of funding allocated to each of the three Housing partner Councils (CDC, WODC & FoDDC) for 2019/20 is as follows:-
CDC: £50,559;
FoDDC: £40,000;
WODC: £134,522.
- 2.2** It is proposed that the three partner councils each provide £40,000 per annum towards a pooled budget of £120,000 per annum, to be utilised for the continuation of the following:-
- £43,500 per annum to fund the continuation of a joint Housing Property Manager.
 - £37,500 per annum to fund the extension of a joint Private Rented Sector Liaison Manager.
 - £39,000 per annum (or adjusted amount if above resource costs are adjusted) to fund the extension of a joint PRS Fund (to be fully utilised, in equal shares per Council, by 31st March 2020).
- 2.3** The total (maximum) expenditure in relation to the partner projects will therefore be £120,000 over the one year funding period; which means that the grant will be fully utilised for the prevention of homelessness and there will be no funding contribution requirement from any of the partner councils.
- 2.4** NB: As West Oxfordshire District Council's allocation significantly exceeds those of Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils, the WODC excess grant will be utilised in relation a WODC specific project. Please ensure that you send this report to the Section 151 Officer

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. None

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not effectively use this grant funding to prevent homelessness.

5. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

None

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

None

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The proposals aim to address the lack of accommodation in all three partner Districts. There are limited options and costs associated with the provision of emergency accommodation in the Districts.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None