



Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>CABINET - 1 MARCH 2021</b>
Report Number	<b>AGENDA ITEM 12</b>
Subject	<b>PLANNED EXPENDITURE OF THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT 2021/22</b>
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Councillor Lisa Spivey - Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Email: <a href="mailto:lisa.spivey@cotswold.gov.uk">lisa.spivey@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
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Summary/Purpose	To consider the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22.
Annexes	Annex A - MHCLG letter to Local Authority Chief Executives
Recommendation/s	<i>That Cabinet recommends to the Council that the expenditure detailed within paragraph 2.2 of this report be approved.</i>
Corporate priorities	Delivering our services to the highest standards Providing good quality social rented homes Helping residents and communities access the support they need for good health and wellbeing
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The Leader of the Council / The Deputy Leader of the Council The Portfolio Holder S151 Chief Finance Officer/ The Chief Executive /The Monitoring Officer.

## **I. 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 has been provided for 3 years (2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20) 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 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; attached

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have set out the following delivery expectations from the fund:
  - 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.

The funding allocation for Cotswold District Council for 2021/22 is £133, 271, which is an increase of £45,183 from the previous year's allocation of £88,088.

- 2.2. 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 follows:

Complex Case Prevention Officer - New post 1 year fixed term	£33,000
Flexible Prevention Fund	£48,271
Private Rented Deposit Fund	£20,000
B&B Move on Fund	£10,000
Shared Temporary Accommodation Move on Officer - Two New One year fixed term Posts	£22,000
Total:	£133,271

- 2.3. **The Complex Case Prevention Officer** will provide an intensive, early intervention approach to families or singles with complex needs. The aim will be to prevent homelessness from occurring with the provision of mediation, intervention or financial support / signposting. This new 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.
- 2.4. **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 3<sup>rd</sup> party agencies. The Flexible Prevention Fund will assist with and bespoke interventions depending on the specific client's needs.
- 2.5. **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 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.
- 2.6. **Temporary Accommodation Move On Officers.** It is also proposed that a proportion of the fund is pooled with Forest of Dean (FoDDC) and West Oxfordshire (WODC) 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 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.
- 2.7. **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.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. These proposals are aimed at addressing the expectations set out by the MHCLG and available accommodation in the Cotswold 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.
- 3.2. 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.]
- 3.3. The cost of the items listed in 2.2 will be funded from the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22 of £133,271.

### 4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None

## **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 Cotswold 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. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1. None considered however, Members may want to consider other options that have not been referred to within the report.

(END)