

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date **25 March 2021**

Report of: **Head of Housing & Benefits**

Subject: **UPDATE ON BIDS FOR HOMELESSNESS FUNDING**

SUMMARY

Following the government's announcement that additional funding would be made available to help with homelessness services during the pandemic, at the Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting on 5 November 2020, Members requested a report be brought to a future meeting on how any further, successful bids for funding will be utilised. This report provides the Panel with information about the Housing Team's bids for homelessness funding.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel consider the contents of this report and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.

INTRODUCTION

1. In November 2020, the Housing Scrutiny panel received a report from the Head of Housing & Benefits which detailed the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's Housing and Homelessness Services.
2. Contained within that report were details of the additional funding allocated by the government to assist with the expenditure incurred as a result of the 'Everyone In' campaign. The report also set out the government's proposals for further funding opportunities becoming available to local authorities.
3. A number of applications for funds have since been made and this report provides Members with details of these. A summary of which can be seen in the table below:

	2020/21	2021/22
Rough Sleeping Initiative	£99,650	£180,218 *
Protect Plus Funding	-	£4982
Next Steps Programme (short term)	£24,900	-
Next Steps Programme (long term)	-	£129,575
COVID-19 Contingency Fund	£7,500	-
COVID-19 Emergency Accommodation Payment	-	£60,000
Cold Weather Payment	£10,000	£15,000 *
TOTAL	£142,050	£389,775

* Amount applied for but yet to be determined by MHCLG

ROUGH SLEEPING INITIATIVE

4. The government's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) was first announced in March 2018 to fund local authorities' provision of specialist services to get rough sleepers off the streets and into secure accommodation.

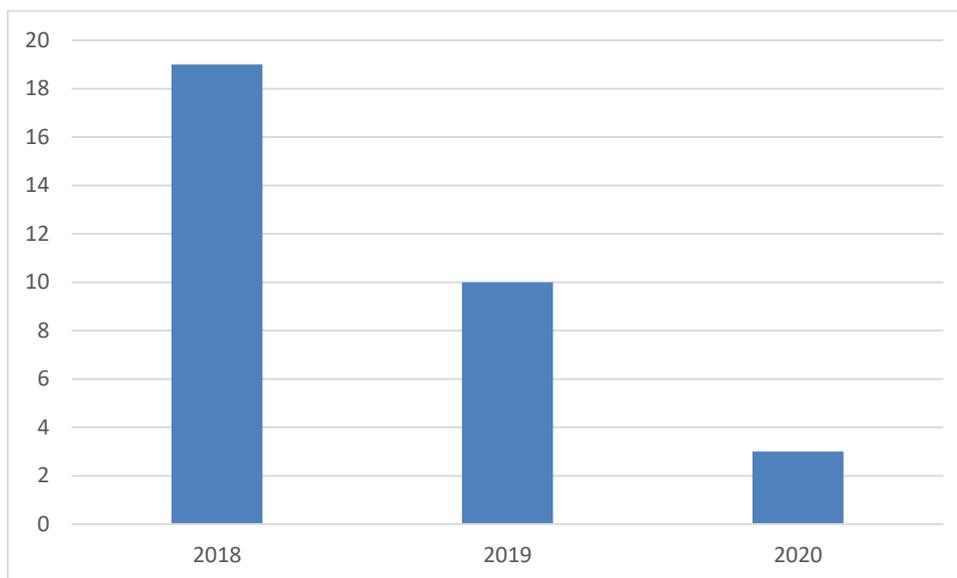
2019/20

5. Following the cut in Hampshire County Council funding for homelessness services in 2018, we successfully bid for funding from the RSI to provide additional Outreach services in Fareham.

2020/21

6. The successful bid to the RSI for 2020/21 included funding for continuing the Outreach service together with two new posts (Complex Needs Navigator and Accommodation Procurement Officer). Updates on these posts have been brought to the Panel at previous meetings.
7. These additional resources and specialist support have undoubtedly improved the options available to rough sleepers in the Borough. The annual 'rough sleeper snapshot' statistics show the number of people sleeping rough in Fareham has fallen for the third year in a row. On 23 March 2020 the government launched the 'Everyone In' campaign, whereby local authorities were asked to immediately house rough

sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to protect their health and stop wider transmission of COVID-19. Therefore, this should be noted when comparing this year's annual snapshot figures with previous years.



Source: MHCLG Statistical release about the annual single night snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough in local authorities

2021/22

8. We have submitted a further bid with Gosport Borough Council to the RSI for the coming financial year. This includes funding for the existing interventions detailed above but also includes additional funds to provide an additional Complex Needs Navigator, funds to develop up to 5 Housing First schemes, a new post of Homelessness Prevention & Mediation Officer plus funding for specialised support in accommodation for former rough sleepers. We are advised that funding decisions will be made before the end of March 2021.
9. We are confident that these additional measures will provide appropriate move-on opportunities for those still in emergency accommodation, build on the successes of previous progress, continue the work to reduce the number of people sleeping rough and enhance services for them and those at risk of sleeping rough over the next 12 months.

PROTECT PLUS FUND

10. Following the emergence of the new variant of COVID-19 and the Prime Minister's announcement of a new national lockdown in December 2020, all local authorities were asked to redouble their efforts to help those still sleeping rough to be accommodated. This included people who had previously been offered accommodation but rejected it or left accommodation, and individuals new to rough sleeping who required help to move on from rough sleeping.
11. Therefore, in January 2021, the government announced a £10m Protect Plus Fund for local areas to bring forward additional support to help those still rough sleeping. Each local authority was given a spending allowance determined by the November monthly data return of the number of people currently sleeping rough in their local area. We were able to claim up to £5000.

12. Our application was submitted, and we received funding totalling £4982 to enable additional resource to be put into our Outreach Service and also subsidise our expenditure on emergency accommodation.

NEXT STEPS ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

13. In July 2020, the government launched the Next Steps Accommodation Programme which provides further financial resources to local authorities and their partners to prevent those accommodated during the pandemic from returning to the streets.
14. There are two different aspects to this fund. One aspect is for long-term accommodation and support for rough sleepers and the remainder is for interim accommodation and support for the vulnerable people accommodated during the pandemic
- (a) Shorter-term/interim accommodation and immediate support – as previously reported to the Panel, at the end of March 2020 we rapidly converted a former young-persons supported housing scheme in Fareham to accommodation for rough sleepers as part of the ‘Everyone In’ campaign. This has now become a valuable addition to our existing move-on pathway, and we secured funding from the Next Steps Programme to provide specialist support to the occupants. This funding ensures support continues until October 2021 and we have requested funding from November 2021 in the RSI bid detailed above.
 - (b) Longer-term Move-on Accommodation – funding was approved to convert an existing council-owned large family home into 5 self-contained units for former rough sleepers. In addition to the capital funding of £45,000, we will also receive revenue funding to provide tailored support until March 2023 to ensure occupants maintain their tenancies and learn the skills necessary for their eventual move to independent living.

COVID-19 CONTINGENCY FUND

15. In May 2020, all local authorities were invited to make a retrospective claim for the financial year 2019-20 from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping COVID-19 Contingency Fund which had been set up to support vulnerable rough sleepers during the pandemic.
16. We applied for and received £7,500, this being the maximum grant we were permitted to claim based on the number of rough sleepers recorded in our 2019 annual rough sleeper snapshot. Just over £6,000 of this sum was used to cover the cost of the security patrols at the supported housing scheme set up in March 2020 as part of our response to the ‘Everyone In’ campaign and the remainder was used to help subsidise our on-going expenditure on emergency accommodation.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION PAYMENT

17. In February 2021, the government announced local authorities would receive a one-off uplift payment to contribute to additional emergency accommodation, support and move-on costs. We have been awarded £60,000, to be paid in April 2021.

COLD WEATHER FUND

18. The Cold Weather Fund was first launched in 2018. The fund was used to enhance

accommodation provision during the periods of extreme weather to support vulnerable people off the streets. Prior to 2020, we received funding to provide additional emergency beds at 101 Gosport Road throughout the winter months (November to March) by way of dormitory style accommodation in converted office spaces.

19. Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to repeat this provision this winter as the shared nature of the accommodation was inappropriate. In recognition of this issue across the country, in October 2020 the government announced a new Cold Weather Fund available to local authorities to provide COVID-secure accommodation for rough sleepers during extreme weather. The allocations were fixed and based upon current rough sleeper numbers. We will be paid our allocation of £10,000 retrospectively in April 2021 and this will help to subsidise our expenditure on the emergency accommodation provided.
20. For winter 2021/22, we have been asked to apply for Cold Weather funding within the Rough Sleeping Initiative bid submitted last month. An application for £15,000 has been made which will subsidise expenditure on emergency accommodation.

CONCLUSION

21. Whilst we welcome the additional emergency funding to help respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, the fragmented, short-term and resource-intensive competitive nature of this funding makes long-term and sustainable homelessness provision difficult. Furthermore, we are concerned that homelessness levels may surge once the government's temporary coronavirus housing, welfare and employment support measures come to an end and the full economic impact of the pandemic starts to take effect
22. The shortage of suitable move-on accommodation remains a significant problem and we are therefore hopeful that our bid for funds which will enable us to increase the options available in the Borough is successful.

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: <http://modern.gov.fareham.gov.uk/documents/s24881/Covid-19%20Impact%20on%20Housing%20Homelessness%20Services.pdf>

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Caroline Newman. (Ext. 4645)