

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

Grants Assessment Panel

Date 18th February 2014

1. **HEADING** Grants to organisations providing services to homeless people
- Submitted by:** Abid Razaq
- Portfolio:** Regeneration and Development
- Ward(s) affected:** All Wards

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval for the allocation of funding reserved for voluntary organisations that provide homelessness related services.

Recommendations

- That Members approve the recommended allocations.
- That a further round of applications be re-invited from the Voluntary Organisations and reported to a future meeting of this Panel.

Reasons

The Council offers grants to assist with the statutory requirement to provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. A requirement is that each grant must align with the Council's adopted Homelessness Strategy. Therefore this report seeks to assess viability of each project, its impact and value for money.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council's has allocated a budget of £15,000 for grants to organisations providing services to homeless people in 2014 -15. This assessment panel is requested to consider applications for grant assistance.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. These responsibilities can be discharged in a variety of ways. The main approach is through the Newcastle Housing Advice Contract (which is provided with Aspire Housing until April 2014) to provide homelessness advice and the maintenance of the housing register, it is acknowledged that many agencies provide invaluable support to those who have or may become homeless.
- 1.3 The organisations who have applied for grant aid provide very valuable, complementary services and should be seen as a vital part of the Council's overall strategy for dealing with homelessness and housing advice. The Housing Act 1996 refers specifically to the practice of giving grants in section 180, "Assistance for voluntary organisations", which allows a local authority to help voluntary (i.e. not for profit) organisations concerned with homelessness by providing grants.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The 2010 Homelessness Strategy sets out how the Council plans to address homelessness issues within the Borough. As part of the grant application each organisation has been asked to state how their service will meet the aims and priorities set out within the Homelessness Strategy.
- 2.2 Following on from previous years' grant allocations all organisations are required to sign a service level agreement and submit monitoring statistics, which enables the Council to monitor the service availability and take up from residents In the Borough.
- 2.3 Some of the organisation that have applied for funding this year have received funding in previous years and have been able to submit; monitoring information from the previous year's allocations There are organisations that have applied, which have not received funding in previous years and therefore, they have not been able to provide monitoring statistics. However, these organisations have been established for many years, have assisted the residents of the Borough and have a proven track record in the homelessness sector. Information of their work is also listed below.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 £21,025.02 has been requested this year, which is above the amount of £15,000 allocated for these bids.
- 3.2 Six grant applications have been submitted for consideration. Each is listed below, giving the amount requested, the amount recommended by officers and a brief explanation.
- 3.3 The option considered is to allocate the available funding to grant applicants based upon viability, positive impact and value for money considerations.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 In assessing the grant applications, it has been decided that certain applications should not be awarded any funding.
- 4.2 There are other grant applications, which in principle have demonstrated that they will provide a service that will directly link in with homelessness prevention and the recommendation has been to approve these applications.
- 4.3 The applications received are as follows;

A) Arch - Elizabeth House Advice Service

Requested £ 2,525.02

Elizabeth House is based in the Borough and provides emergency and temporary accommodation to women and families experiencing homelessness. The application is to support the advice and information and signposting work which is carried out by the service. This service is particularly beneficial because it deals with enquiries out of regular office hours.

Total enquires for the Borough 2010 / 2011 (there quarters) = 22

Total enquires for the Borough 2011 / 2012 (there quarters) = 33

Total enquires for The Borough 2012 / 2013 (three quarters) = 33

Officers are therefore recommending awarding £2,525.02, the full grant requested.

A grant of £2507.50 was awarded last year to this organisation for this project.

B) Arch – Move-on & Stay Put Fund

Requested: £2,000

Arch is a registered charity that provides support, accommodation and advice services for a range of customers, all of whom are vulnerable or socially excluded, and have been affected by homelessness. Their customer group is diverse, and consists of customers of all ages including children and young people, who are living across North Staffordshire and Cheshire East.

The funding will be used for a 'Move-on & Stay Put Fund' which will give single homeless people who are moving out of supported accommodation, or are receiving floating support, basic items to sustain and maintain their tenancies. The fund has identified an itinerary of items such as toaster, microwave, kettle, single bedding set (including duvet), bath towels etc, which may be given to individuals, if they require such items to maintain their tenancies and do not have the financial means to purchase these items.

The application form states that *“previously, our customers were able to access a Crisis/Budgeting Loan, with which to buy the things they needed for a new home. However, since the implementation of the Staffordshire Local Crisis Support Scheme, local guidelines have shifted to focus on those in immediate hardship; with a high rate of recent applications refused, we realise the scheme is likely to only be able to provide emergency food packages and clothing.”*

Officers have gained clarification whether the fund will have a maximum limit on the level of monies that can be given to any one applicant. The organisation has stated that they will set a maximum threshold grant of 150.00 per applicant. This does not mean that each applicant will be given a limit of 150.00, as the award of the grant is needs assessed, but where particular customers with high needs require a number of items, which exceed £150.00, a selection of items will be made to the maximum sum of £150.00.

Officers are therefore recommending awarding £2,000, the full grant requested.

C) Restart – Saltbox

Requested £1,500

Restart – Saltbox seeks to address re-offending and prevent homelessness in North Staffordshire. The organisation states that it has 41 houses across the area, all of which are owned by local landlords who have entered into a contractual arrangement. Of these houses, 11 are within the Borough, which provide accommodation to four men and one woman. The organisation also works with a number of people who are vulnerably housed, to access a debt management service (Money Matters). Statistics for Money Matters show that over 85 people from the Borough in the past year have accessed this service.

Restart – Saltbox will use the voluntary grant to fund a trainer, who is specifically trained to provide debt advice and budgetary support in the Borough for clients and other people who are potentially homeless. This would be through regular training and where necessary, one-

to-one support to address specific debt problems. The service will run six group sessions in the Newcastle area throughout the year.

It is envisaged that a minimum of 28 people from the Borough will be assisted from this project.

Officers are recommending awarding the full grant of £1,500 requested.

D The Lyme Trust

Requested £5,000

The Lyme Trust is a voluntary charity based in Newcastle-under-Lyme, which provides supported accommodation for adults with a diagnosed mental health need, dual diagnosis and homelessness.

The grant application is for converting an unused space within 33 London Road into an additional bedroom, which will be used for emergency accommodation. It is intended that this will house homelessness applicants whom are owed a statutory duty for accommodation.

Officers believe that although, the intended project may be beneficial to residents, there were two issues:

- 1) The application form did not fully explain the proposals i.e. as to what space would be converted and how this will be done. It also did not include project plans / drawings. Given that the project is a proposal for significant refurbishment this information is important and in the absence of such information, judgements about viability and compliance with building and environmental regulations cannot be made. Clarification was sought from the applicant and they were asked to submit this information by the 14th February 2013, but were unable to do so.
- 2) The application form does not explain if the grant will be used to subsidise accommodation for homeless applicants. Emergency accommodation is usually provided by private institutions, which do so on a daily rental rate that is paid by housing benefit or by the applicant themselves if they have the financial resources to do so. It would be expected that where an organisation is seeking public subsidy for emergency accommodation, proposals should explain how this will lead to subsidised rents or some other form of additional value.

Therefore, the recommendation is not to approve this project under this particular grant at this time.

E) YMCA

Requested £5,000

YMCA North Staffordshire is a large provider of housing and accommodation services across North Staffordshire and provide floating support services across North Staffordshire and the Staffordshire Moorlands. The main focus of the organisation is young people with engage group ranging from 16 – 25.

The funding has been requested for a project whereby homeless prevention workshops would be delivered in 6 high schools across the Borough.

Officers believe that although the intended project will benefit residents – the project is seeking to provide a service that is commissioned under the 3rd Sector Commissioning framework. Homelessness Prevention for Young People aged 16 years and under & 16 years and over Service - a project that raises awareness about the realities of homelessness amongst young people. Therefore, the recommendation is not to approve this project under this particular grant. However, correspondence will be sent to the YMCA to make them aware of this current project under the 3rd Sector Commissioning framework.

Therefore, the recommendation is not to approve this project under this particular grant at this time.

F) ADS – Addiction Dependency Services – One Stop Service

Requested £5,000

ADS are a charity, which has been established for 40 years. ADS runs a number of drug, alcohol and prescription drug addiction services across the UK including Derby, City of Manchester, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Leeds and Staffordshire. The services are open and held in community hubs that are free for people in the area to engage with.

The project is for funding to have a ‘one stop service’, for vulnerable people. ADS have a weekly surgery at the Salvation Army Offices in Newcastle under Lyme for individuals with complex needs. The proposal is to extend this by having a range of agencies present, thereby allowing individuals to approach and receive assistance on a range of issues.

Officers believe that although, the intended project may be beneficial, the application form did not contain any details about whether consultation had been undertaken with the agencies that were to attend the one stop service. This was a serious omission, as the success of the project is dependent on the attendance and the commitment of these agencies.

Following discussions with the applicant, an email was circulated by the applicant to these agencies informing them about the proposal and asking them to confirm interest. The applicant has subsequently stated that six agencies did so.

It is felt that the proposal have yet to decisively establish interest, to gauge whether the agencies have the resources to commit to a weekly session and thereafter to develop an appropriate project proposal based upon the responses received.

Therefore, the recommendation is not to approve this project under this particular grant at this time.

5. Reasons for Preferred Solution

5.1 The organisations who have applied and have been recommended for grant aid provide very valuable, complementary services and should be seen as a vital part of the Council’s overall strategy for dealing with homelessness and housing advice.

5.2 If the recommendations are accepted, the following grants will be approved:

Salt Box –	£1,500.00
Elizabeth House	£2,525.02
Arch – Stay Put Fund	£2,000.00

Total Approvals: £6025.02

5.3 This will leave an unspent balance of £8974.98. It is recommended that further round of applications to be sought and considered from the Voluntary Organisations in mid 2014.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

6.1 Addressing homelessness fits within all the Corporate Priorities especially that of 'creating a Borough of opportunity'.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 The Housing Act 1996 refers specifically to the practice of giving grants in section 180, 'Assistance for Voluntary Organisations', which allows a local authority to help voluntary (i.e. not for profit) organisations concerned with homelessness by providing grants.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on the Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 The amount allocated for 2014/15 is £15,000.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 Provision of these services for Borough residents may not be available if funding is not granted.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 Services are available to residents from all wards within the Borough.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 None

13. **Recommendations**

13.1 That Members approve the recommended allocations to the following:-

Salt Box –	£1,500.00
Elizabeth House	£2,525.02
Arch – Stay Put Fund	£2,000.00

13.2 That a further round of applications be invited from the Voluntary Organisations and reported to a future meeting of this Panel.

14. **Background Documents**

14.1 All the Grant Applications and the financial accounts provided are available from the Housing Strategy Team on request.