

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

Grants Assessment Panel

Date 23rd September 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 the unspent Homelessness funding reserved for voluntary organisations that provide homelessness related services.

Recommendations

- That Members approve the recommended allocations.

Reasons

The Council offers grants to assist with the statutory requirement to provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. A resolution was passed in February 2014 by the Grants Assessment Panel that the budget, which was unspent would be re-advertised for a further round of applications to be received from the Voluntary Organisations in mid-2014.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council's budget for grants to organisations providing services to homeless people in 2014 -15 was set at £15,000.
- 1.2 In February 2014, the Grants Assessment Panel met and awards were made to the sum of £6025.02, which left funding of £8974.98. It was resolved that the remaining budget would be re-advertised and Homelessness Voluntary Grants would be assessed and awarded during the mid-year 2014.
- 1.3 In accordance with the resolution of the Grants Assessment Panel, the remaining budget was advertised in July 2014. An email was sent to a number of voluntary organisations informing them about the availability of the Homelessness Voluntary Grants and encouraging them to submit projects by the 15th August 2014.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 In response to the advertisement, three applications have been received. These have been from:
- 1) Arch
 - 2) Staffordshire North Citizens Advice Bureau
 - 3) Gingerbread

- 2.2 All of the above organisations are either voluntary or third sector organisations, which have a proven track record of providing advice and assistance to residents of Newcastle under Lyme, who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
 - 2.3 £13,133 has been requested this year, which is above the amount of £8974.98 remaining within the original funding allocation.
 - 2.4 Three grant applications have been submitted for consideration. Each is listed below, giving the amount requested, a brief explanation and the amount recommended by officers. All the Grant Applications and the financial accounts provided are available from the Housing Strategy Team on request.
4. **Proposal**

Arch – Private Sector Rented Housing Advice Clinics

Amount Requested £3463.00

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 application form states that the funding would be used to hold weekly housing advice clinics for residents of Newcastle aged 16+ who are not considered to be priority homeless. Following clarification, it has been established that these clinics will be based in the Newcastle town centre for 3.5 hours per week for period of 12 months. The precise location will be selected following discussions with the agencies. These clinics will specifically focus on working with the applicants in ‘*exploring and accessing*’ the private rented sector. It is the view of the officers and Newcastle Housing Advice that this project would be of great benefit as a focus on the private rented sector would be an extension to the existing advice and assistance service provided by Newcastle Housing Advice,

The application estimates that the project will “benefit a minimum of 46 residents (if each customer received 3 brief interventions) and up to a maximum of 138 residents (if each customer received 1 brief intervention).

The officer’s recommendation is that this project should be funded, as it would be an extension to the current service that is being provided by Newcastle Housing Advice. Furthermore, this project could be a ‘trailblazer’ for further projects which aim to foster links with homelessness advice and the private rented sector.

Officers are therefore recommending awarding £3463.00, the full grant requested.

Gingerbread – Accommodation and Support

Requested £5,000

The centre provides 24 hour supported accommodation to homeless lone parent families, including lone fathers and pregnant single women. The grant application is to continue to provide housing and tenancy telephone advice to vulnerable lone parent families and single pregnant women in the community who may be at risk of becoming homeless. The bid

outlines how the Stoke on Trent Supporting People contract does not cover all of the support services provided to Newcastle residents. Importantly Gingerbread is the only family focussed support provider requesting financial assistance.

Although, it is based within Stoke on Trent, referrals into the service for residents with a local connection to the Borough have been made and continue to be made by Newcastle Housing Advice service. This has been confirmed with Newcastle Housing Advice, which continues to see Gingerbread as an important provider of hostel accommodation to which they make referrals.

The application states that in 2013, eight families with a connection to the Borough were accommodated within the hostel and 96 applicants were given advice by the Elizabeth House. It is expected that a similar number of people will be accommodated and assisted for the duration of the project period.

Officers are therefore recommending awarding the full grant of £5,000 requested.

Staffordshire North Citizens Advice Bureau – Housing and Homelessness Advice

Requested: £4,670

Staffordshire North Citizens Advice Bureau is involved in providing information and advice to people who are in need, to empower those who experience poverty and inequality to improve their lives. SNSCAB has long been recognised as a specialist agency providing housing advice in Newcastle-under-Lyme as well as Stoke-on-Trent and Biddulph.

The application form received states that the project intends to provide face to face advice sessions at Newcastle-under-Lyme Bureau with a specialist housing adviser to those at risk of homelessness or experiencing housing problems that could result in homelessness. It was initially felt that the project would duplicate the functions of the Newcastle Housing Advice Service and therefore, a series of clarification questions were sent. The answers received stated that the project would specifically work with those applicants that were intending to request a review of their homelessness decisions and those that would require assistance at court. Although, such a project would provide assistance, it is believed, and this is confirmed by Newcastle Housing Advice, that the level of demand for court assistance would not be great, possibly a handful of cases per month. Furthermore, such advice and assistance, where required by applicants who do not have the financial means can be funded through legal aid.

It is for this reason that the Officer's recommendation is not to fund this particular project.

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:

Arch	£3463.00
Gingerbread	£5000.00

Total Approvals: £8463.00

- 5.3 As a note, it is the case that should the Arch project be funded than they would have received three separate lots of funding from the Homelessness Voluntary Fund in 2014/2015. Although, this is significant amount of funding for any one organisation, this should not automatically prevent the present application from being considered, as the Guidance Note for the Homelessness Voluntary Grants and previous precedents set by the Grants Assessment Panel make it clear that multiple projects emanating from a single organisation **can** be funded, providing the projects are demonstrably distinct and separate.
- 5.4 This will leave an unspent balance of £511.98. It is recommended this be added to the Homelessness Voluntary Grants in 2015/2016.
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 Newcastle 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 Grant Assessment Panel – February 2014.
13. **Recommendations**
- 13.1 That Members approve the recommended allocations.
14. **List of Appendices**
- 14.1 None