

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING SERVICES TO HOMELESS PEOPLE

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Portfolio: Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods

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.

Reasons

The Council offers grants to assist with the statutory requirement to provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. The level of requests for financial support is greater than the finance available, therefore this report seeks to outline reasons as to how the grants should be awarded in order to maximise the outcomes in line with the Council's adopted Homelessness Strategy.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's budget for grants to organisations providing services to homeless people in 2012 -13 has been set with £17,500 allocated for grants to voluntary organisations providing services to homeless people. The Grants Assessment Panel will consider these grants which are under £5,000.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. This responsibility can be discharged in a variety of ways. Although the main approach is through the Newcastle Housing Advice Contract with Aspire Housing to provide homelessness, housing 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 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 to and take up from Newcastle residents.
- 2.3 Some of the organisation that have applied for grant funding this year have received funding in previous years and have been able to submit statistics; monitoring statistics from the previous year's allocations are listed below each organisation.
- 2.4 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 and have assisted the residents of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Information of their work is also listed below.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 £35,580.90 has been requested this year, which is above the amount of £17,500 allocated for these bids.
- 3.2 Eight 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 is to allocate the available funding to grant applications that have been received.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 In assessing the grant applications, it has been decided that certain applications should not be awarded any funding, as in principle these have either demonstrated a weak link with the Homelessness Strategy or the projects will duplicate an existing service.
- 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 Officers have exercised their judgement to allocate the funding. This judgement has been based on the performance of the organisation and the usefulness of the service to residents of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Arch - Elizabeth House Advice Service

Requested £ 2,507.50

Elizabeth House is based in the Borough and provides emergency and temporary accommodation to women and families experiencing homelessness. The application for funding is to support the advice and information helpline which is staffed 24 hours a day. The project is highly beneficial because it deals with enquiries out of regular office hours when no other service is available and will alleviate the pressure put on public services such as the Police.

Total enquires for Newcastle 2010 / 2011 (three quarters) = 22
Total enquires for Newcastle 2011 / 2012 (three quarters) = 33
Total enquires for Newcastle 2012 / 2013 (three quarters) = 40

Officers are therefore recommending awarding £2507.50, the full grant requested.

Gingerbread

Requested £5,000

The centre provides 24 hour supported accommodation 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 grant application explains how the grant application helps support the service provided in Newcastle under Lyme. 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.

Total enquires for Newcastle 2010 / 2011 (there quarters) = 59

Total enquires for Newcastle 2011 / 2012 (there quarters) = 69

Total enquires for Newcastle 2012 / 2013 (three quarters) = 45

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

Salvation Army – Stoke

Requested £4,000

The Salvation Army provides support and temporary accommodation to homeless men. The grant application is to develop an IT facility to deliver life skills training on line and improve numeracy and literacy, to enable residents to work alongside Job Centre+ by using the web to search for training and employment opportunities and to make fresh claims for benefits.

Officers believe that the project will be important, in light of the seismic changes to the Universal Credit. Although, the DWP have stated that they will be giving advice to customers, the types of applicants dealt with the Salvation Army have vulnerabilities requiring additional assistance / support. This project is in conformity with the Homelessness Strategy that has recognised the links between financial inclusion and homelessness.

Total enquires for Newcastle 2010 / 2011 (there quarters) = 29

Total enquires for Newcastle 2011 / 2012 (there quarters) = 30

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

Officers are therefore recommending awarding the full grant of £4,000 requested.

The Lyme Trust

Requested £4,116.22

The Lyme Trust is a voluntary charitable based in Newcastle-under-Lyme, which provides supported accommodation for adults with a diagnosed mental health need, dual diagnosis and homelessness. The project is for capital funding for the purchase and development of a large shed and to furnish it internally. This will be used to run a number of activities, including arts & craft workshop, music sessions, resident group meetings, various learning sessions e.g. budgeting skills, form/application filling, role play to learn techniques in interacting with people in the wider community.

Officers believe that although the intended project is being used for a capital project of building a shed - no additional funding has been identified for resources linked to run the

associated activity. Furthermore, the application has not explored hiring a venue as opposed to building a venue nor explained the possibility of using existing space within the buildings.

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

Brighter Futures Housing Association (Smartmoves)

Requested: £5,000

Smartmoves supports people in Newcastle under Lyme to prevent or deal with homelessness. The organisation provides floating support to people, regardless of tenure, to maintain or find a home. The project is for a spot purchase fund to provide resources to homeless people and people at risk of homelessness based on a personalised support plan.

In 2011-12, Smartmoves supported 290 individuals, couples and families from Newcastle who were homeless or at risk of eviction. Since April 2012 up to the end of December 2012 they have supported 261 people.

Officers believe that the project will assist residents who will require assistance as a last resort to prevent them from becoming homeless. Given the nature of the people that need floating support, a mechanism of this nature is important. The Council is also supportive of the personalised support plans, which encourage the concept of independent living.

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

Arch (North Staffs) Ltd – Julia House – Duty Person

Requested: £4,965.18

Julia House is based in Stoke on Trent and consists of 11 self-contained flats. It provides safe accommodation for single women, and women with children, who have escaped domestic violence. The project is for the post of Duty Officer which will support the 24 hour single point of access for referrals to the refuge by undertaking assessment (including risk), providing information, advocacy, signposting.

Officers believe and recognise that Julia House is an important facility, which benefits the residents of Newcastle under Lyme. However, the post of the Duty Person is not deemed to be essential, but an enhancement to an existing service as the service currently operates without this.

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

Arch (North Staffs) Ltd – Julia House – Contribution towards utilities

Requested: £5,000

The nature of the scheme is described as above.

The funding is requested as a contribution towards the cost of utilities. The grant will go towards ensuring that the scheme can continue to provide heating and lighting, keep the security system working 24 hours a day, cover the cost of telephone charges and costs of equipment, such as cleaning goods.

Officers believe and recognise that Julia House is an important facility, which benefits the residents of Newcastle under Lyme. However, the fund is being asked to contribute toward

running costs of the centre and this is not the purpose of the grant, the running costs should be paid and covered through the housing benefits or the rents and service charges.

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

Newcastle & Kidsgrove Citizens Advice Bureau

Requested: £4,992

Newcastle & Kidsgrove Citizens Advice Bureau provides free impartial independent and confidential advice and information. The project is for Provision of independent Specialist CAB Housing Advice; representation in County Court/ help desk with emergency advice and casework on repossession action for mortgage and or rent arrears and associated debt advice.

The CAB is currently receiving funding to provide debt advice through the 3rd Sector Commissioning and there seems that there may be some duplication. Furthermore, the specialist advice project, which is being proposed, will be available under legal aid to applicants who are able to meet the means tested criteria. This project in comparison, to other projects submitted, will not benefit as many residents, benefiting 32 applicants at a cost of £156.00.

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

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.

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 2013/14 is £17,500.
- 9.2 The recommendations total £16,507.50 leaving £992.50 in the fund for applications in year. It is recommended that officers discuss the implication of the welfare reform changes with voluntary organisation to establish if this funding could assist vulnerable people affected.

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 None

13. **Recommendations**

13.1 That Members approve the recommended allocations.

14. **List of Appendices**

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