

COVID 19 TACTICAL CO-ORDINATING GROUP**DATE: 31 MARCH 2020**

DECISION REQUEST / PROPOSAL	Proposal for Budget Provision to be made available to support Emergency placements for Homeless and Rough Sleeper households
DECISION PROPOSED BY	Mark Camborne and Lisa Newman
SERVICE AREA AFFECTED	Regeneration and Place - Housing Services
IDENTIFIED CRITICAL SERVICE Y/N	Yes

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A COMMITTEE REPORT AND SHOULD OUTLINE ISSUES IN BRIEF FOCUSING ON KEY INFORMATION

1. DECISION SUMMARY

This decision will support the priority to (delete as appropriate): -

Protect the vulnerable people in our communities

2. INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

The Council has a statutory duty under the Homeless Reduction Act to place individuals and households into temporary accommodation whilst investigations are undertaken to see if further statutory duties for more permanent priority housing is owed. This already happens and provision is sought through bed and breakfast accommodation, hostel accommodation and night shelter provision as well as placements direct into rented property.

The Government recently wrote to the Local authority to advise that Night Shelters must cease to operate from Friday 3rd April. This means that provision to place rough sleepers and those who have be made homeless that day or night can no longer access this accommodation. Also due to COVID 19 most lettings agents/landlords have closed, people are not moving or have suspended moving house as per Government advice and this is resulting in pressure on the Housing team to look at alternative temporary accommodation which may be available. This in turn is meaning the Housing Team has to consider placing in accommodation which could be more expensive than the

accommodation normally used due to the nature of accommodation that is available at this time i.e. supported or student accommodation.

The service is experiencing much higher demand than usual and is under additional pressures from Government including the closure of night shelters, prison releases and early prison releases which the government has announced it will be setting out as part of a National early release programme. There is also pressure to negotiate with landlords and provide essential items to homeless people when placing in accommodation. The basis of this request is for the provision of emergency funds to respond to this increased demand to provide accommodation and support services.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT / H&S AND STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTING DECISION

This decision will enable the council to both meet the national ask of Government to respond to the closure of night shelters and also those risks identified with not being able to accommodate individuals resulting in more people sleeping on the streets and being at significant threats and harm. Risks and response to provision of support will be considered and assessed as property becomes available and how this is best aligned with existing services, a triage and risk-based assessment will also be considered when placing residents. Those with more complex and chaotic behaviour will be offered greater support than others who have minimal support needs.

4. WHAT POWERS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED

Our responsibilities are already set out in existing Homeless Legislation on our duty and what legal responsibility we place residents. Also, we have been issued with a directive from Government on the closure of night shelters and the anticipated response to homeless clients as part of the national COVID19 response plan. The Chief Executive's/WBC COVID19 Tactical Group procedures and priorities, including changes to services and functions to protect service users, the public and staff from risk of being exposed to, or transferring COVID19 to vulnerable groups or other people have been considered.

5. IDENTIFICATION OF CONTINGENCIES OR OTHER OPTIONS

We are currently working with other landlords in both the private and social sectors on a list of void properties that could be suitable and would be available for meeting the current emergency placements, we are also looking at longer term and contingency planning as it is anticipated further homeless people will present, this along with those Probation cases will place additional pressures for accommodation. The Provision of council accommodation which could be converted to residential use in an emergency basis to house individuals if required is also being considered.

Staff across the Housing Division have been deployed to provide additional support to the existing homeless service to work on identifying opportunities. Those key workers under 'Housing' will be required to continue to offer a service for homeless people which has been identified by SCG as critical a service and required to continue to operate during the COVID-19 response. Some of these 'key workers will have to work and engage with homeless people and other support agencies to carry out essential duties however this is being kept to a minimum wherever possible and the remaining staff whilst identified as key workers will be operating from home.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (APPROXIMATE / PROJECTED)

Budget provisions is currently asked for £407k this is to secure appropriate accommodation for homeless people and prisoners being released from prison. Costs include: -

- additional costs of 24 weeks rent required when usual accommodation cannot be secured (i.e. housing someone in a 3-bed house when they would normally have to wait to get in 1 bed accommodation)
- paying higher amounts for supported scheme for complex cases.
- One off basic needs / transport costs per individuals and additional staffing
- sundry expense support for the hostels (who deliver the service)

Request is also made for the budget to be used for any other emergency matters which are required to be put in place to both secure and support homeless people.

Name of Finance Officer involved in decision: Vicki Gregorich

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Failure to provide and access accommodation is a legal requirement of the local authority under statute.

Any decisions which require legal advice on use of alternative accommodation will continue to be sought if required.

DECISION PRESENTED TO TSG ON	Date 31/03/20
DECISION OF TSG	APPROVED REJECTED MORE INFO REQUIRED