



## Executive Director/Director Non-Key Executive Decision Report

**Author/Lead Officer of Report:** Zoe Young –  
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**Report of :** Executive Director Place

**Report to:** Individual cabinet member for Neighbourhoods  
and Community Safety Jim Steinke

**Date of Decision:** 2/8/18

**Subject:** *New Burdens Funding for Homelessness  
Reduction Act*

Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? *Neighbourhoods and Community safety*

Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? *Safer Stronger Communities*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken? Yes ☒ No ☐

If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? *(Insert reference number)*

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes ☐ No ☒

If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-

*"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."*

### **Purpose of Report:**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018. The government is providing funding to local authorities to meet the new burdens costs associated with the additional duties within the act. Sheffield's allocation of this funding is: £140,352 in 2017/2018, £128,562 in 2018/2019, and £158,738 in 2019/2020. The funding is not ring-fenced.

This report explains the purpose of the grant and sets out a proposal to use the funding. The entire grant will be used internally and has been carried forward to

2019/2020

**Recommendations:**

*It is recommended that the new burdens funding is accepted*

**Background Papers:**

*(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)*

n/a

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted)</i> <b>Sarah Uttley</b>
		Legal: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted)</i> <b>Sarah Bennett</b>
		Equalities: Louise Nunn
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Zoe Young	<b>Job Title:</b> Housing Options and Advice Service Manager
	<b>Date:</b> <i>(Insert date)</i>	

## **1. PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 The New Burdens funding has been made available to councils to support the introduction of The Homelessness Reduction Act. The Act makes significant changes to the current homelessness legislation contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act"), by placing duties on local housing authorities to intervene earlier and prevent a homelessness crisis for all households.
- 1.2 In order to carry out the extensive additional duties, more staff resources are required. Southwark council are a trailblazer authority with the homelessness reduction Act, and have shared some of their findings with other authorities. Notable amongst these are: customer numbers have increased by about 30%; caseloads have increased to about 60-70 cases per officer; average interview times have increased to 2 hours; bureaucracy has increased enormously. In comparison, current caseloads in Sheffield are around 15-20 cases, interview times are around one hour, and bureaucracy has been reduced since the introduction of the Housing Support Pathway.
- 1.3 There will also be an increase in the financial resources required for temporary accommodation, as some customers will be in temporary accommodation for longer. This is because a decision on whether the main housing duty is owed cannot be made until the 56 day relief duty has ended. Also, where an applicant who has (or may have) a priority need requests a review of the suitability of the accommodation they have been offered at the relief stage there are circumstances where the authority would be required to offer further accommodation
- 1.4 Although in Sheffield we do relatively well on preventions achieved through the Sanctuary scheme, arranging supported accommodation placements and making offers on social housing, we do less well on other prevention activities such as using the homeless prevention fund, resolving benefit problems, debt advice, legal advocacy and negotiation to retain a private tenancy or arranging private tenancies and conciliation via home visits. We need to improve on our prevention and relief activity by being more creative with strategies for helping customers retain their current accommodation also in our range of alternative accommodation options. To enable us to develop this part of the service in order to meet the new duties, we need additional staff resources and training.
- 1.5 The proposal is that the new burdens funding be fully allocated to Housing Advice and Options in order for Sheffield City Council to be able to meet the new and amended duties placed upon it by the introduction of the Homelessness reduction Act 2107. It is proposed that this be the case for the full three years (£140,352 in 2017/2018, £128,562 in 2018/2019, and £158,738 in 2019/2020) because the same duties and related pressures will apply. An Achieving Change is being launched which will contain the full details of the increased staffing which will all be

employed to increase homeless prevention activity and meet the new duties.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?**

The proposal supports the vision set out in the Council's Housing Strategy 2013-2023 to help vulnerable people to live independently. It supports the corporate plan 2015-2018 priorities of better health and well-being, tackling inequalities and having thriving neighbourhoods and communities. Poor health can be a consequence and cause of homelessness. Being homeless can make it more difficult to access health services and live a healthy life. The new burdens funding supports early prevention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way. This involves looking at locality working to support people to stay in their community with support and affordable housing so people sustain tenancies in areas they want to live in. The proposal also supports the tackling inequality ambition. Some groups are at greater risk of homelessness and the proposal supports improving our partnership work and targeted intervention to meet needs.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 There hasn't been any consultation about this grant directly but we have recently consulted on a new homeless prevention strategy agreed by cabinet in December 2017. Customers told us they would like to get help earlier with their problems in order to prevent homelessness. They wanted better housing choices and felt that hostels were not always an appropriate solution for everyone.

## **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications**

- 4.1.1 Reducing the level of homelessness in the city will have a positive impact on all residents. It will contribute to prevention of homelessness within the city which will put those people vulnerable to homelessness in a better position.

### **4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

- 4.2.1 The DCLG's new burdens funding allocation is as follows: £140,352 in

2017/2018, £128,562 in 2018/2019, and £158,738 in 2019/2020. The money will be distributed to local authorities annually over the three years, and the proposal is that agreement is achieved through this report for all three years' allocations to be provided solely to Housing Options and Advice.

#### 4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was implemented on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018. This will make substantial amendments to the existing legislation regarding homelessness (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). Local authorities will have significantly increased duties to prevent and relieve homelessness, as outlined earlier in this report.

#### 4.4 Other Implications

- 4.4.1 An Achieving Change will be tabled to take into consideration increase in staffing

### 5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 No other options have been considered as Housing Advice and options are the only team whose primary role it is to work within the legislation concerning homelessness. It is this team which will be delivering the service which implements the Homelessness Reduction Act, so it seems logical that this would be the team which receives the new burdens funding.

### 6. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The new burdens funding is made available to councils to allow them to provide adequate resources to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and therefore to comply with their statutory duties. The required increase in staff resources, temporary accommodation, IT and administration needs to be funded to allow Housing Advice and Options to do this.

Allocating the new burdens funding to Housing Advice and Options will, in addition to allowing the council to comply with its legal obligations, allow Housing Advice and options to deliver a much more personalised service, with evolving personal housing plans a key component. It will also allow us to provide much improved homeless prevention and relief services to the public to retain current accommodation and find good, appropriate alternative accommodation where appropriate. As these principles are embedded into the heart of the service, it is intended that there will be a reduction in the revolving door of homelessness, and a consequent improvement in people's lives.

