



Executive Director/Director Non-Key Executive Decision Report

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Owen Roe -
Project Officer, Neighbourhood Int & Tenant
Support

Tel: 0114 2735353

Report to: *Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods Service*

Date of Decision: *8th August 2019*

Subject: *Approval of Acceptance of 2nd Grant from Gov't's
Controlling Migration Fund for Work by Private
Housing Standards Team*

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

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

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been
undertaken?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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*"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under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:

This Report seeks approval to accept a grant of £385,120 from the Ministry of
Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG). This funding has been
granted by MCHLG to fund additional staff recruitment to the Private Housing
Standards (PHS) team, primarily to focus on intelligence-led work in the East of the
city where poor housing conditions are believed to be linked to recent migration in to
the area.

This is the second such grant from MHCLG, with £192,560 having been accepted
previously in a decision taken on 11th March 2019.

Recommendations:**It is recommended that;**

The Council accepts £385,120 grant funding from the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government's Controlling Migration Fund to be utilised in line with this report.

Background Papers:

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>Sonya Oates</i>
		Legal: <i>Janusz Siodmiak</i>
		Equalities: <i>Louise Nunn</i>
	<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	Lead Officer Name: <i>Owen Roe</i>	Job Title: <i>Project Officer</i>
	Date: 8 th August 2019	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This report proposes that the Council accepts a grant of £385,120, to be used by the PHS team to employ additional staff to undertake work to tackle issues with poor condition of private rented property linked to recent migration into the city.
- 1.2 The grant has been awarded to Sheffield City Council by MHCLG, following a successful bid to the Gov't's *Controlling Migration Fund* in October 2018. This bid paper, entitled *Addressing Impacts of Migration Linked to Private Rented Housing in Sheffield*.
- 1.3 In summary, the bid proposed that migrants rely heavily upon private rented accommodation, which is often extremely poor in terms of property condition and management practices. Such properties and poorly managed tenancies have negative consequences for the wider community, as well as for the tenants themselves.
- 1.4 The bid requested funding to allow information gathering through proactive property inspections and data analysis regarding private rented properties in the East of the city, and to enable an enhanced approach citywide to disrupting organised crime such as human trafficking and labour abuse which is often found within and with links to the private rented market.
- 1.5 It is proposed that the Council will recruit additional staff to the Private Housing Standards (PHS) team:
 - 1 x Lead Environmental Housing Practitioner
 - 1 x Intelligence Officer (Crime)
 - 1 x Intelligence Officer (Fraud)
 - 1 x Tenancy Sustainment Officer
 - 1 x Tenancy Relations Officer
 - 3 x Environmental Housing Practitioner
 - 2 x Environmental Support Officer
- 1.6 The additional funding would also allow for more coordinated work between PHS officers and partner agencies to address wider issues in the neighbourhoods, with improved information sharing and joint working protocols established.
- 1.7 The Council's bid was for a total of £731,409, split into £243,803 for 2018/19 and £487,606 for 2019/20. MHCLG awarded funding of £192,560 for 2018/19, which has already been accepted, and has now confirmed a further award of £385,120 for 2019/20.
- 1.8 The shortfall in funding between the bid and the award is due to two posts in the Council's bid not being granted funding by MHCLG. These posts are:

1 x *Property Management Officer*
1 x *Tenancy Sustainment Officer (Citywide)*

- 1.9 The reasoning given by MCHLG for this decision not to fund these two posts is as follows:
“Ministers decided that there was not strong evidence of the need for these roles in this context, compared to the roles focused on East Patch and the strategic city-wide roles.”

HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

2.

- 2.1 Sheffield City Council’s vision is for housing to be at the heart of high quality, safe and distinctive places to live, enabling Sheffield’s communities to thrive and be successful.
- 2.2 The proposed funding, if accepted, is primarily aimed at gaining a better understanding of and ultimately improving standards within the private rented sector with particular reference to recent migration. The Council believes that the positive impacts of this work would contribute to the wider objectives of the Corporate Plan, and outcomes in the following way;
- 2.3 ***An In-Touch Organisation***
The work this funding will support will enable the Council to better understand the diverse needs of the population in the East of the city in relation to their housing choices, and empower private rented tenants to be able to sustain their tenancies successfully.
- 2.4 ***Economic Success of the City***
It is anticipated that the combination of investigation and enforcement work this funding will enable will bring about an investment in housing in the area in order to improve conditions, which will support and compliment the city’s ambition to be a growing city economically. Improving the condition and safety of homes is vital to the overall attractiveness of the area and is a key component to why people choose to live and work in the area.
- 2.5 ***Thriving Neighbourhoods and Communities***
The funding, if accepted, will lead to investment and support to improve housing conditions, which will help increase the confidence in the area and encourage empty properties to be brought back into use.
- 2.6 ***Better Health and Wellbeing***
This funding will allow work to gain a better understanding of and then address hazards in the home, poor property conditions and poor management practices in privately rented accommodation, which will help create safer home environments contributing to an overall improvement in physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.
- 2.7 ***Tackling Inequalities***

By enabling work to identify and private rented accommodation where landlords let high risk dangerous properties, this funding will improve the living conditions of residents who live in substandard accommodation, improving the safety and wellbeing for some of the most vulnerable occupiers.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 The Council is not required to consult on this proposal.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

- 4.1.1 Accepting the grant will not directly impact on anyone or anything that supports the services that are accessed by our customers/tenants etc, therefore at this stage there is no need to complete an EIA.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 This Section 31 grant allocation of £385,120 must be spent by 31st March 2020; however projects are permitted to continue beyond this date to account for staff recruitment and programme delivery. This is the second year of funding; £192,560 was awarded in 2018/19. No further funding is expected.

The grant is intended to fund the activities identified for the 'Addressing Impacts of Migration Linked to Private Rented Housing in Sheffield' project in the Council's bid submission and agreed by MHCLG.

The project must not be funded by grant monies other than the MHCLG funding awarded in the offer letter (no duplicate funding).

From a risk management point of view a project exit strategy should be developed by the Project Manager in case there is any change in MHCLG funding levels and also as there are no alternative sources of funding identified should there be any ongoing costs after the grant funding has ended.

An Impact Summary must be completed and submitted to the MHCLG by 31st October 2020. Sheffield City Council is expected to share the impact summary and other learning with Government colleagues to inform best practice.

All public sector procurement is governed by both European Legislation and UK National Law. In addition, all procurement in Sheffield City Council must comply with its own Procurement Policy, and internal regulations known as 'Contracts Standing Orders' (CSOs).

Contracts Standing Orders requirements will apply in full to the procurement

of services, goods or works utilising grants. All grant monies must be treated in the same way as any other Council monies and any requirement to purchase/acquire services, goods or works must go via a competitive process.

The Project Manager will need to read, understand and comply with all of the grant terms and conditions and the Code of Conduct for Grant Recipients.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771152/2019-01-15_Code_of_Conduct_for_Grant_Recipients_v.1.01.pdf

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 The grant of £385,120 is being paid to Sheffield City Council under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, from MHCLG which gives a Minister of the Crown the power to pay a grant to support local authorities towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred.

4.3.2 There is no specific power that enables the Council to implement this particular project / work in the City. Under the General Power of Competence within the Localism Act 2011, the Council are permitted to do anything that individuals of full legal capacity may do giving the Council the power to take reasonable action it needs 'for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area'. This includes accepting the grant and delivering the project as detailed in the report.

4.3.3 The outcomes have been set out in the bid and confirmed by MHCLG. Any issues risking delivery must be communicated to the MHCLG CMF lead. The Council is also required to produce an impact summary that together with any learning generated by the project could be shared with other Government agencies and local authorities.

4.3.4 Of particular note are implications arising from Data Protection Legislation, the Council must ensure that any statutory obligations are addressed.

4.4 Other Implications

4.4.1 HR Implications

4.4.2 The grant, if accepted, will be used to fund recruitment of new staff, which will be done in accordance with SCC HR policies.

5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 Without the additional funding, the PHS team could seek to operate on a 'business as usual' basis in the East of the city, fulfilling its statutory requirements with a reactive approach to reports of property disrepair and poor management. This option relies on tenants reporting issues, which is recognized as less likely to occur with recently arrived migrants, and does not address poor standards in a strategic way. Nor does it allow for the

enhanced work with partner organisations to tackle wider issues such as serious and organised crime and benefit fraud.

- 5.2 The PHS team could seek additional funding elsewhere, either from within Council budgets or by bidding to other external sources. Existing Council budgets are already strictly controlled, and bidding for alternative external funding would delay any work commencing, even if alternative external funding was available and any bid for it proved successful.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Accepting the £385,120 of MHCLG funding would allow staff to be recruited and retained and continue work that could not otherwise be carried out within the Council's current budgets.
- 6.2 The primary outcome of the acceptance of the funding will be the recruitment of staff, adjusted as per Section 1.8 above, who will work to develop and then enact a plan of proactive inspections of private rented property in the East of the City, compile an ownership database, and offer enhanced tenancy support, more effective referral pathways, and better joint working practices with other agencies.
- 6.3 Acceptance of the grant will bind the Council to the conditions, and officers will therefore produce an Impact Summary document for MHCLG, as well as sharing learning acquired through work on the project.
- 6.4 A full project plan for the work described in 6.2 will be produced, and submitted for approval through the appropriate route as part of the Executive Decision making process.
- 6.5 As part of the project plan described above, full regard will be given to the implications of the Council collecting, holding and potentially sharing large amounts of personal data in the form of an ownership database, and ongoing work with the Information Management team will continue, including the production of a full Data Protection Impact Assessment to be updated throughout the life of the project.

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