

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HOUSING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING
CABINET MEMBER**

PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS GRANT 2011/12 – 2015/16

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on likely future levels of the Prevention of Homelessness Grant.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 For a number of years, the council has received grant from central government to assist in its work to prevent homelessness. Initially the annual grant was £30,000 but this rose to £61,050 in the current year. That funding has never been ring-fenced for this purpose, but it has always been spent on the prevention of homelessness.
- 2.2 As part of its Spending Review the government announced that, despite cuts elsewhere, the Prevention of Homelessness Grant has been protected at its 2010/11 level with an investment of £400 million over four years.
- 2.3 Detailed allocations will not be announced until during December 2010, but it is anticipated that the council's level of funding will be at least at the 2010/11 level. The Department for Communities and Local Government has also announced its intention to withhold significantly less of the amount to support work with the voluntary sector, so a higher amount will be available for allocation to local housing authorities.
- 2.4 From April 2011, the Prevention of Homelessness Grant will be paid as Area Based Grant. It will therefore not be ring-fenced but the government has clearly recognised the importance of the prevention of homelessness and in particular the need to provide specific funding to enable this work to continue.
- 2.5 The council has been very successful in preventing homelessness. The number of households assisted has increased from 226 in 2006/07 to 689 last year and a projected figure of 880 during the current year. This success has been achieved by a variety of means including negotiation, mediation and the private sector bond scheme. Success in

preventing homelessness has been the major factor in reducing the number of homelessness acceptances from 601 in 2004/05 to 78 in 2009/10, with resultant increased housing prospects for others on the waiting list.

2.6 The number of requests for service from the council's Housing Advice Team has increased steadily from 2261 in 2005 to a projected total of 6,700 this year. Future demand is likely to increase further as a result of the proposed major reforms to the welfare benefits system and wider austerity measures.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 That the Cabinet Member notes the content of the report for information.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 This report is for information only.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 There are no financial, staffing, property or IT implications arising directly from this report, but the following implications may arise depending upon future budgeting decisions about the use of the Prevention of Homelessness Grant.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 If, as a consequence of future budgeting decisions, the Prevention of Homelessness Grant is not used for the purpose for which it is intended, this will have a negative effect on the number of cases where homelessness can be prevented.

6.2 People with housing problems include a high number of vulnerable people who will be disadvantaged by any reduction in our ability to assist them. It will also be much more difficult to assist people not covered by the homelessness legislation, including some with chaotic backgrounds, risking an increase in rough sleeping, crime and anti-social behaviour.

6.3 A reduction in the number of situations where homelessness can be prevented will inevitably result in an increase in homelessness acceptances, to the detriment of other home-seekers. This is particularly undesirable given the recent launch of the new choice-based lettings scheme.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 There has been no consultation in relation to this report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Cabinet Member notes the information provided.

SERVICE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

The Angel
Market Place
BRIGG
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8LD
Author: Geoff Emberlin
Date: 22/11/10

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – N/a