

**Housing Support Services Tender – Report to Cabinet**

|  |                                      |   |   |                                    |                                    |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Open</b>  |                                      | Would any decisions proposed :  |   |                                    |                                    |
| <b>Any especially affected Wards</b>   | Mandatory/                           | Be entirely within Cabinet’s powers to decide   |   | YES                                |                                    |
|  | Discretionary /                      | Need to be recommendations to Council   |   | NO                                 |                                    |
|  | Operational                          | Is it a Key Decision  |   | NO                                 |                                    |
| Lead Member: Cllr Jo Rust<br>E-mail:   |                                      | Other Cabinet Members consulted:  |   |                                    |                                    |
|  |                                      | Other Members consulted:  |   |                                    |                                    |
| Lead Officer: Andy King – Senior Housing Manager<br>E-mail: andy.king@west-norfolk.gov.uk<br>Direct Dial: 01553 616422                     |                                      | Other Officers consulted:<br>Nikki Patton – Housing Services Manager<br>Ross Hefford – Housing Strategy Delivery Officer<br>Duncan Hall – Assistant Director, Regeneration, Housing and Place |   |                                    |                                    |
| Financial Implications<br>NO – see notes   | Policy/ Personnel Implications<br>NO | Statutory Implications<br>YES   | Equal Impact Assessment<br>YES<br>If YES: Pre-screening | Risk Management Implications<br>NO | Environmental Considerations<br>NO |
| If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s) |                                      |   |   |                                    |                                    |

Date of meeting: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025 (E&C); 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 (Cabinet)

**HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES**

|  |          |          |         |          |
|--|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| <p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>The Council has recently adopted its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, “Ending Homelessness, Person by Person” for 2024-2029. To help towards the delivery of this strategy, we are procuring two services for a minimum three-year period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Intensive Support Service to meet the needs of people whose housing needs have not yet been sustainably met (including people sleeping rough, ‘sofa surfing’ or otherwise vulnerably housed)</li> <li>• An Early Intervention Service to provide targeted support to people at risk of losing their homes (including families within the Private Rented Sector, and people at risk of being evicted by family members)</li> </ul> <p>The first of these services is currently funding by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) under its Rough Sleeping Initiative programme. The council will receive a central government grant for rough sleeping prevention and recovery for 2025/26 but has received no confirmation beyond this date. In the event that there is no further funding extension, we intend to use reserve funds, which have previously been ringfenced for homelessness services, to commission and deliver this service.</p> <p>The total value is as follows:</p> <table> <tr> <td>2025/26</td> <td>£240,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2026/27</td> <td>£252,000</td> </tr> </table> | 2025/26  | £240,000 | 2026/27 | £252,000 |
| 2025/26  | £240,000 |          |         |          |
| 2026/27  | £252,000 |          |         |          |

2027/28      £264,600

Due to the size of the contract, we are required under Contract Standing Orders to present our recommendation to Cabinet.

### **Recommendation**

#### Cabinet Resolves:

1. to agree that £756,600 of funding, ringfenced for homelessness services, should be spent on the procurement of an Intensive Support Service and an Early Intervention Service.
2. to agree that the spending on this service should be derived from ringfenced government grants in the first instance and ringfenced reserves to make up any shortfall.

### **Reason for Decision**

To support the implementation of the council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1. The council has recently adopted, and launched, its 2024-2029 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, "Ending Homelessness, Person by Person"<sup>1</sup>. This followed a Homelessness Review<sup>2</sup>, evaluating the provision of accommodation and support for people who are homeless or at risk. Based on the evidence gathered during the Homelessness Review, the Strategy proposes that two services are commissioned, targeted towards areas of greatest need.

### **Intensive Support Service**

- 1.2. The strategy identified a need to provide targeted support to people who have already experienced homelessness and may be struggling to find and sustain permanent accommodation due to past traumas, substance use, poor mental health and so on. "*The Homelessness Review identified a cohort of people who are the furthest away from having their accommodation needs met permanently and sustainably*"<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.3. Since April 2022, the council has commissioned The Purfleet Trust to provide an Intensive Support Service for people who are sleeping rough, in temporary accommodation or otherwise vulnerably housed. The service has been funded directly by a ringfenced grant under the previous government's Rough Sleeping Initiative programme (RSI)<sup>4</sup>. This service has been effective – in some cases, life-saving – in

<sup>1</sup> [Full strategy document | Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk](#)

<sup>2</sup> [BCKLWN Homelessness Review 2024 - final.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> KLWN Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (link above), p.22

<sup>4</sup> [Rough Sleeping Initiative: 2022 to 2025 funding allocations - GOV.UK](#)

- identifying and supporting people sleeping rough to move into accommodation as quickly as possible and has had a positive impact on minimising the number of people sleeping rough in the borough.
- 1.4. Following the change of government in July 2024, the council has been awaiting guidance and clarification from MHCLG regarding any extension of the RSI programme. On 18<sup>th</sup> December, the council was advised by MHCLG that it will receive £139,728 towards rough sleeping prevention and recovery, but has received no assurances regarding future years' funding.
  - 1.5. To preserve the safety of people sleeping rough, it is essential that we provide continuity of service. Therefore, we have carried out a procurement exercise for the delivery of an Intensive Support Service from 1 April 2025 – the day after the expiry of the RSI contract – for a minimum of three years.
  - 1.6. The council currently holds reserves from previous years of central government funding that are ringfenced for the prevention and relief of homelessness. If the council receives no further RSI funding (or insufficient RSI funding), we propose using some of these reserves to commission the service.
  - 1.7. This approach enables us to proceed without having to wait for a funding announcement from MHCLG. It ensures continuity of an essential service. A three-year contract provides a degree of 'job security' to frontline workers who support people sleeping rough, at a time when the sector is struggling to recruit and retain staff.

### **Early Intervention Service**

- 1.8. The prevention of homelessness is at the heart of this strategy. *“To end homelessness, we need to prevent it happening in the first place”*<sup>5</sup>. Data from the Homeless Review identified two 'target groups' at particular risk of homelessness:
  - Private Rented Sector Tenants (with families particularly affected)
  - People currently living with friends or family, whose living arrangements may be fragile.
- 1.9. To address the needs of these target groups, and in line with the aims of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, we propose the creation of an Early Intervention Service. We have carried out a procurement exercise for its delivery. The service is due to commence on 1 April 2025 for a minimum of three years.
- 1.10. This service is intended to provide low to medium-level support to households including families, childless couples and single people to assist them in accessing and/or maintaining accommodation by providing short term support typically between 3-6 months. This will, in turn, reduce the number of people approaching the council at the point of crisis, and reduce the volume of people requiring costly emergency accommodation.
- 1.11. Whilst this service is not subject to the same continuity pressures at the Intensive Support Service, it made good sense to procure the two services at the same time, as:

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<sup>5</sup> KLWN Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (link above), p.14

- It attracted bidders interested in delivering both services
  - It ensures that the service is operational at the earliest possible opportunity, delivering against the aims of the Strategy.
- 1.12. The council receives an annual ringfenced Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG)<sup>6</sup> from MHCLG. As per paras 1.4-1.6 above: we expect to receive HPG funding from 2025/26 onwards but we are yet to learn of the level of funding. If HPG funding is insufficient to cover the value of this contract, we intend to use some ringfenced reserves (1.6) to commission the service.

### **Procurement Exercise**

- 1.13. For information: the Invitation to Tender for both lots closed on 25 November. We are in the process of evaluating the bids and should be able to confirm our preferred bidder(s), subject to contract, by the date of the Environment and Communities Committee.

## **2. Options Considered**

- 2.1. **In-house delivery:** theoretically, the above services could be delivered internally – other local authorities such as Peterborough City Council deliver similar services ‘in-house’. However, we have strong relationships with local service delivery providers, who in turn have excellent relationships with people who are experiencing homelessness, who may have a mistrust of statutory services.
- 2.2. **Delayed delivery:** we could have waited for MHCLG to announce funding for 2025/26; however we have been provided with no clear timescales. In the meantime, we risk losing frontline staff to other services, which would be at the detriment of people sleeping rough or otherwise vulnerably housed.
- 2.3. **Procurement via tender:** therefore, the proposal laid out in section 1 is our recommended option.

## **3. Policy Implications**

- 3.1. **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy:** the proposals address several key strategic aims, including:
- Reinstating a home visiting function aimed at preventing family evictions (aim 1.7)
  - Redesigning and recommissioning the existing Intensive Support Service (1.8)
  - Ensuring that prevention activities have a specific remit towards families, based in the community (1.11)
  - Developing a “by name” meeting / partnership to resolve the homelessness of those who are furthest away from having their housing needs met (2.8)
  - Improving access to mainstream health services for homeless people (4.1)

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<sup>6</sup> [Homelessness Prevention Grant: 2023 to 2025 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/grants/homelessness-prevention-grant-2023-to-2025)

- 3.2. **Corporate Strategy:** the proposals fit with the council's wider Corporate Strategy (2023-27) including:
- Reducing isolation, improving health and wellbeing
  - Tackling social and health inequalities
  - Helping prevent homelessness, assisting people with access to benefits advice and ensuring there is equal access to opportunities.
- 3.3. **Marmot Places:** the proposals fit with the council's overall ambitions to become a Marmot Place, including:
- Enabling [...] adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.
  - Ensuring a healthy standard of living for all.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1. As outlined in section 1, we will fund the services through:
- Any extension (or equivalent replacement) of MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative funding
  - Any extension (or equivalent replacement) of MHCLG's Homeless Prevention Grant funding
  - Existing reserves, which derived from previous central government grants, which were ringfenced by central government for the prevention and relief of homelessness<sup>7</sup>.
- 4.2. Therefore, there are no direct financial implications for the council.

#### **5. Personnel Implications**

- 5.1. As outlined in section 2, the services will be most effective (and cost-effective) when delivered by external agencies who specialise in supporting people within the target groups identified. Therefore, no additional posts will be created because of this proposal.
- 5.2. The services will be subject to a robust contract monitoring process, led by the council's Senior Housing Manager. This work falls within the postholder's usual duties and has been identified as a current priority.

#### **6. Environmental Considerations.**

- 6.1. Although instances of rough sleeping in the borough are relatively rare, behaviours associated with rough sleeping can occasionally have a negative impact on the local environment, including:
- Discarded bedding and tents
  - Public urination / defecation (where no toilets are available locally)
  - Unsafe disposal of needles or other drug paraphernalia
- 6.2. Whilst the Intensive Support Service's priority is towards the safety and welfare of those sleeping rough, the service will have a knock-on positive effect on the local environment, street scene and so on.

#### **7. Statutory Considerations**

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<sup>7</sup> NB: in previous years, central government funding was not required to be spent within the financial year of allocation. Therefore, local authorities retained underspent funding for the purpose of future years' homelessness services.

- 7.1. The council holds a statutory duty to prevent and relieve homelessness under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It is required to provide support to all applicants, not just those who are in 'priority need' of assistance.
- 7.2. Whilst the council is free to choose how it discharges its duties, the Homelessness Code of Guidance (Chapter 3) explains that the council could provide such services in-house, commission services externally or deliver in partnership.
- 7.3. Both services proposed support the council's legal duty to provide advice and assistance, whilst ensuring that it is delivered in a meaningful, trauma-informed and accessible manner.

## **8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

(Pre screening report template attached)

## **9 Risk Management Implications**

None identified

## **10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted**

None identified

## **11 Background Papers**

(Definition : Unpublished work relied on to a material extent in preparing the report that disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based. A copy of all background papers must be supplied to Democratic Services with the report for publishing with the agenda)

See footnotes for references.



## Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

|   |  |            |          |              |
|---|--|------------|----------|--------------|
| Name of policy/service/function   | <p>Housing Services</p> <p>Commissioning of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intensive Support Service</li> <li>2. Early Intervention Service</li> </ol>   |            |          |              |
| Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>   | New  | Early int. | Existing | Int. support |
| <p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Intensive Support Service is designed for people who are currently homeless (whether rough sleeping, sofa surfing or otherwise vulnerably housed) and who may have multiple and complex support needs. It will provide support to help identify such individuals and support them to find and sustain accommodation.</li> <li>2. The Early Intervention Service is designed to provide short-term, targeted help to people who may be at risk of homelessness but who may not have reached the point of crisis yet. This could include families in Private Sector accommodation, individuals staying with friends/family or others.</li> </ol> <p>The services support the council in discharging its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Legislation allows the council to design services flexibly to provide advice and assistance to people who are homeless or at risk – but there is a statutory duty for advice and assistance to be available to all (see ch.3 of Homelessness Code of Guidance)</p> |            |          |              |
| Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>  | <p>The services form part of the council's wider Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which was endorsed by councillors in October 2024 and launched in November 2024. The strategy was developed from a large consultation and co-production process taking into account over 100 voices, including over 25 people with lived experience of homelessness.</p> <p>Consultees included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elected members</li> <li>2. Other council departments</li> <li>3. Other statutory bodies (police, DWP, NHS etc)</li> <li>4. Commissioned services (Shelter, Purfleet Trust etc)</li> <li>5. Voluntary sector services (King's Lynn Night Shelter, King's Lynn Foodbank etc)</li> <li>6. Members of the public</li> <li>7. People with lived experience of homelessness</li> </ol>  |            |          |              |
| <b>Question</b>   | <b>Answer</b>  |            |          |              |

|   |                            |          |          |         |        |
|---|----------------------------|----------|----------|---------|--------|
| <p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><b><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></b></p> |                            | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Unsure |
|   | Age                        |          |          | X       |        |
|   | Disability                 | X        |          |         |        |
|   | Sex                        | X        |          |         |        |
|   | Gender Re-assignment       |          |          | X       |        |
|   | Marriage/civil partnership |          |          | X       |        |
|   | Pregnancy & maternity      |          |          | X       |        |
|   | Race                       |          |          | X       |        |
|   | Religion or belief         |          |          | X       |        |
|   | Sexual orientation         |          |          | X       |        |
| Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)  | X                          |          |          |         |        |

| Question   | Answer | Comments   |
|--|--------|--|
| 2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another? | No     | The service will be funding through monies that are exclusively for the prevention and relief of homelessness, but that are accessible to all who need them.                     |
| 3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?   | No     | As above   |
| 4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?   | Yes    | Service is intended to tackle the disadvantage that stems from homelessness, as well as helping service users address underlying areas of disadvantage (e.g. poor mental health) |
| <p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?</p> <p>If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>                       | N/A    | <b>Actions:</b>  |
|  |        | <b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b><br>.....  |

**If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:**

The service falls under the overarching aims of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which has already been subject to a full EIA. The service will only deliver positive impacts for some of the borough's most vulnerable residents.

**Decision agreed by EWG member: .....C Marriott.....**



|                                 |                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Assessment completed by:</b> |                        |
| <b>Name</b>                     | <b>Andy King</b>       |
| <b>Date completed</b>           | <b>4 December 2024</b> |

**Complete EIA Pre-screening Form to be shared with Corporate Policy ([corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk))**