



COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 1 JUNE 2020
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM (10)
Subject	HOUSING FIRST MODEL
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr. Lisa Spivey - Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Email: lisa.spivey@cotswold.gov.uk Cllr. Mike Every - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing - Group Manager for Resident Services Tel: 01993 861221 Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
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Summary/Purpose	To seek approval for funding to implement a Housing First model to help reduce rough sleeping within the Cotswold District
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	<i>That Cabinet approves the funding to implement a Housing First model.</i>
Corporate priorities	Ensure that all services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard Help residents, businesses and communities access the support they need to achieve their ambitions
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Portfolio Holder, S151 Officer, Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, Group Manager, Senior Management Team

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.** Housing First is an approach by which people with multiple needs who have faced persistent challenges in sustaining accommodation are supported by intensive case management and a personalised approach to live in their own, permanent home
- 1.2.** Traditionally, housing services have taken a 'tenancy ready' approach to housing, where a person is required to address his/her issues before they can be housed. This traditional pathway from the street or repeat homelessness to a settled life involves structured moves through stages, adhering to rules, with housing at the end.
- 1.3.** Currently, floating support and personalised approaches are used successfully to help people navigate 'the system' yet people with multiple needs still tend to slip through the gaps. This is mainly due to services finding it difficult to engage with them; services may have rules that they have to follow in order to provide a roof over their head. People with complex needs may find it difficult to follow those rules as they may not be able to engage with services effectively, or at all. These mean their needs remain unmet and with no housing stability they are unable to break the cycle. Housing First offers them stability in one area of their lives and can demonstrate positive outcomes for people for whom services have not otherwise worked.
- 1.4.** The 'Housing First' approach has been well documented in the USA and Sweden for many years. The UK is gradually adopting the approach and this is strongly recommended by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 1.5.** In response to the Government's drive to move all Rough Sleepers from the streets and into short-term accommodation to self-isolate during the COVID-19 pandemic, Cotswold District Council has found emergency accommodation for 30 households. These are predominantly single males with multiple complex needs, who are in block booked accommodation which is likely to end on 30 June 2020.
- 1.6.** The complex needs of these individuals include:
 - Mental health, psychological and emotional needs
 - Drug and/or alcohol dependency
 - Entrenched rough sleepers (previously of the Big Yellow Bus cohort)
 - Contact with the Criminal Justice system
 - Physical health requirements

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1.** Of these complex cases (above), there are around 10 cases that have such high level support needs that it is proving difficult to find them alternative long term accommodation. Housing Associations are currently providing a limited emergency only service and are reluctant to offer social rented accommodation due to the high level of support required for these individuals.

- 2.2.** The traditional view of housing only being offered once an individual has successfully addressed their complex needs is likely to result in the vast majority of the 10 highly complex people in this short-term accommodation returning to the streets on 30 June 2020, or sooner if they are unable to sustain the rules of the accommodation and/or self-isolation and are therefore evicted.
- 2.3.** In order to address this issue and help these individuals move into a permanent residence, the implementation of a Housing First model is considered the best approach in partnership with a Housing Association.
- 2.4.** This model works in reverse to the traditional model by offering a person with multiple complex needs a permanent residence which would include intensive support to address their needs.
- 2.5.** Cotswold District Council would work in partnership with local Housing Associations to identify 6 units to place the individuals with the most complex needs into a permanent tenancy, supported by Housing Benefit and/or Universal Credit.
- 2.6.** The Housing Association would retain full ownership of the properties and would manage them as they would normally do; whilst Cotswold District Council could recruit or procure the intensive support required to manage the individuals' complex needs by way of a Housing First Support Worker. Research shows that these support workers typically manage a case load of 5 to 7 individuals as opposed to a traditional support worker who is likely to have 20 plus cases.
- 2.7.** The Housing First model is not for everyone, and individuals would be fully vetted prior to being accepted to ensure that they are fully committed to the principles and level of engagement needed for success.
- 2.8.** Individuals would be asked a series of questions around such areas as housing (previous tenancies), previous rent arrears, health, finance and social and personal relationships. If the individual has multiple issues and/or has a history of losing accommodation, the case will then be taken to a panel, in the first instance to review suitability for Housing First. Such a panel will include representatives of the local authority Housing Team, the Housing Association and the support provider.
- 2.9.** There would be a requirement for all parties involved to comply with the principles of the model. Individuals need to commit to complying with a high level of support and to address the issues identified in order to sustain the tenancy. The support officer/agency will work closely with them prior to offering any tenancy to ensure that the commitment is there.
- 2.10.** The Housing Association would commit to providing a permanent tenancy (usually a Starter Tenancy in the first 12 months) and to not evict individuals unless the panel agree that there is no other option.
- 2.11.** Those individuals who do not want to, or cannot commit to the support levels will not be put forward for the project. In these cases the Housing Team will continue to work with the individual(s) to find alternative accommodation as well as working with those individuals who do not meet the criteria for the Housing First model.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. Successful Housing First style models estimate the costs of support to be circa. £10,000 per property, per year. This figure is made up of staff costs, plus a personalisation budget for each individual to help provide such things as furniture, mobile telephones, transport to job interviews.

3.2. It is estimated that the annual costs for a Housing First model consisting of 6 properties would be:

- Full time support provider £33,000 (including on costs)
- Personalisation Budget £4,500 per unit x 6 = £27,000
- Total (annual) cost £60,000

3.3. The Council has a homelessness prevention earmarked reserve of £37,200 which can be made available to part fund the Housing First model for 2020/21. The balance of funding for 2020/21, up to £22,800, could be funded from the Council Priorities Fund. This would enable the Housing First style to be piloted during 2020/21 and, if successful, alternative funding could be sought to continue to finance the service from 2021/22 onwards. Housing First Officer support can be procured on an agency basis during the pilot period rather than permanently employing an Officer.

3.4. If the option at paragraph 3.3. is not approved, growth of £60,000 will need to be included in the budget for 2021/22.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, local authorities are required to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for any eligible person who is at risk of homelessness. Should any eligible person become homeless, the local authority is required to help secure accommodation.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1. There is a reputational risk to the Council if it is not taking positive steps to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping within its district.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

6.1. The project is targeted at any individual, inclusive of disability, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender reassignment

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

7.1. The model could be scaled back to a reduced number of properties, thus reducing the overall costs. However, due to the number of individuals already identified (above), if the model was to be scaled back there is a risk that there will be insufficient support in place to address the individuals' complex needs which could result in some returning to the streets.

(END)