



# Doncaster Council

## Report

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**Date: 10 November  
2020**

**To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Equalities**

**To accept grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Next Steps Accommodation Programme**

<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Key Decision</b>
Councillor Glyn Jones	All	Yes

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The Council has been successful in a recent grant funding submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) funding to enable continuation of support for rough sleepers accommodated during the COVID19 response.
2. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to accept grant funding for 2020/21 totalling £291,344 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

### **EXEMPT REPORT**

3. This is not an exempt report.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4. For the Cabinet Member for Housing and Equalities to approve acceptance of grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for 2020/21 totalling £291,344.
5. For the Cabinet Member for Housing and Equalities to approve the plans to spend the £291,344 grant in accordance with the spend plans detailed in the report.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

6. The MHCLG grant funding award will:
  - Cover the cost of continuing to provide essential emergency accommodation put in place following the announcement of the national lockdown in March of this year to protect rough sleepers and those individuals presenting as homeless from the risks associated with COVID19 for this vulnerable group.
  - Financially assist the delivery of Doncaster's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2024), improving access to private rented housing and the expansion of dispersed supported housing to provide long term housing solutions for individuals as the emergency accommodation is gradually and safely wound down over the next six months.

## BACKGROUND

7. In March 2020 as part of the national lockdown requirements, the Government instructed local authorities to provide accommodation to everyone rough sleeping or in accommodation where it is difficult to self-isolate. This initiative is known as 'Everyone In.' The rationale being that rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping were physically unable to follow government advice to stay at home. They were not only at enhanced risk of contracting the virus, but also a huge potential risk to the rest of population. This remains a clear risk amongst this community.
8. Doncaster, like many other areas, procured hotel rooms to provide emergency accommodation to meet the needs of rough sleepers and ensure homeless people were temporarily housed in hotels and other accommodation. The impact was that anyone who was deemed to have nowhere to stay would be considered as needing accommodation due to the risk associated with COVID19 and to prevent those presenting as homeless from potentially rough sleeping.
9. In recognition of the significant numbers accommodated, a further ministerial letter was sent to Councils on the 24 June 2020 stating: *"We remain committed to ensuring that as many people as possible who have been brought in off the streets in this pandemic do not return to the streets. We know that you will need our support to achieve this and that many of you have sought funding certainty. That is why we have today announced an additional £105 million to help local authorities implement a range of support interventions for people placed into emergency accommodation during the Covid19 pandemic. This includes supporting moves into the private rented sector, helping individuals to reconnect with friends or family, and extending or procuring interim accommodation."*
10. In July 2020, MHCLG published the NSAP funding prospectus and guidance inviting local authorities to submit funding applications with the main objective of reducing rough sleeping and to ensure those brought into emergency accommodation in response to COVID do not return to sleeping rough. Applications needed to be coproduced with MHCLG advisers and have particular focus on the successful resettlement and recovery of those who have a long and/or repeat history of rough sleeping.
11. NSAP presented the opportunity to fund Doncaster's efforts to protect rough

sleepers and those presenting as homeless during COVID19 and also financially assist the delivery of Doncaster's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2024), approved by Cabinet in November 2019.

12. Specifically, Objective Two of Doncaster's strategy seeks to maximise opportunities for independence through a range of housing options ("*We will increase access into the Private Rented Sector.....*") Consequently Doncaster's successful bid for NSAP funding comprises:
- Emergency Accommodation (Hotel costs) £164,344
    - Cost of continued provision of hotel rooms in line with reduction plan set out in Doncaster's application (up to 31 March 2021) to protect rough sleepers and those individuals presenting as homeless from the risks associated with COVID19.
  - Private Rented Sector (PRS) access/personalisation £74,000
    - Establishment of a Landlord Insurance Scheme to improve access to the PRS to support with resettlement of individuals accommodated in hotels and the resettlement pathway.
  - Move on navigator £13,000
    - Located in the Complex Lives Team, the post will support the transition of individuals into permanent or long term accommodation and will work in partnership with established tenancy sustainability workers to look at any additional support needs when individuals move into a new property.
  - Winter pressures £40,000
    - Due to the existing winter plan being compromised in light of ongoing COVID19 restrictions, this funding will enable additional hotel capacity to be procured over the winter period as a more COVID19 secure alternative to shared bed spaces within hostels/sit up services.
13. As at the end of September 2020 there were 50 hotel rooms in use. Hotel occupancy peaked at 86 rooms in July 2020 and had reduced to 61 by mid-August 2020. Each individual accommodated in the hotel has an allocated case worker from Home Options (St Leger Homes) and have a co-produced personal housing plan in place or being developed. For the majority of individuals in hotels and rough sleepers, a move into the private rented sector is the most appropriate long-term solution, which is why Doncaster has prioritised initiatives under NSAP to open up access to this sector including the introduction of a Landlord Insurance Scheme. This will be supplemented by an additional Move-on Navigator in the Complex Lives Team to provide the necessary support to individuals in their resettlement journey.
14. The funding allocation is ring-fenced and must only be used as set out in the grant agreement. Future awards of rough sleeping funding will be reduced to the extent that funding is not used in line with the ring fencing condition. The funding is allocated subject to the following conditions:
- Funding must be used to achieve move-on for those rough sleepers accommodated during the pandemic and a sustained reduction in rough sleeping in the local area
  - Discuss and engage in communication on the NSAP programme where

- requested
- Work with MHCLG analytical and policy team for the national NSAP evaluation

15. In terms of the NSAP evaluation, MHCLG will be establishing data collection processes with local authorities for reporting against a range of Key Performance Indicators.
16. In addition to the national NSAP evaluation, the Local Government Association (LGA), in conjunction with MHCLG, will be launching a peer review process for local authorities that have received an allocation of the NSAP funding. The purpose of this will be to share best practice at a local level on the decisions made to support rough sleepers. The LGA will coordinate and facilitate the peer review process.

### OPTIONS CONSIDERED

17. The following options have been considered:
  - a) To not accept the funding (rejected) - this would create a funding issue in continuing to support the emergency accommodation response for rough sleepers as well as the necessary support to transition those in emergency accommodation into more permanent accommodation.
  - b) To accept the funding (recommended) - this would provide the necessary resource to continue supporting rough sleepers in emergency accommodation with a clear reduction plan as well as supporting individuals into more permanent accommodation options, assisting the delivery of Doncaster’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024.

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

18. To accept the funding (recommended) - this would provide the necessary resource to continue supporting rough sleepers in emergency accommodation with a clear reduction plan as well as supporting individuals into more permanent accommodation options, assisting the delivery of Doncaster’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024.

### IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

19.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p><b>Doncaster Working:</b> Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to good fulfilling work</li> <li>• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish</li> <li>• Inward Investment</li> </ul>	<p>The recommendation will support the re-integration of people back into the social and economic mainstream over time</p>
	<p><b>Doncaster Living:</b> Our vision is for</p>	<p>The recommendation will</p>

	<p>Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster</li> <li>• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home</li> <li>• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport</li> <li>• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean</li> <li>• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage</li> </ul>	<p>support the re-integration of people back into the social and economic mainstream over time.</p>
	<p><b>Doncaster Learning:</b> Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school</li> <li>• Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better</li> <li>• Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Doncaster Caring:</b> Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust</li> <li>• Older people can live well and independently in their own homes</li> </ul>	<p>The recommendation will support the re-integration of people back into the social and economic mainstream over time</p>
	<p><b>Connected Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern, efficient and flexible workforce</li> <li>• Modern, accessible customer interactions</li> <li>• Operating within our resources and delivering value for money</li> <li>• A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents</li> <li>• Building community resilience and</li> </ul>	

	<p>self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance</li> </ul>	
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## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

20. The key risks and assumptions associated with the recommendation in this report are:
- Lack of access to Private Rented Sector Housing - Introduction of a Landlord Insurance scheme within Doncaster will reduce financial risks to private sector landlords to incentivise provision of housing stock for previous rough sleepers/people who have experienced homelessness together with the appointment of a Move on Navigator (to be located within the Complex Lives Team) to support the transition of movement of individuals into permanent or long term accommodation.
  - Hotels withdrawing from current provision arrangements - NSAP funding will maintain current financial arrangements in the short term with a medium term reduction plan that winds down occupancy at one hotel whilst maintaining occupancy at the remaining hotel to avoid two hotels operating at suboptimal occupancy levels.
  - Potential impact of COVID19 second surge on rough sleepers/those at risk of rough sleeping - established relationships with hotel providers, which can be called on to provide additional capacity if needed.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PC Date 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

21. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with a general power of competence, allowing the Council to do anything that individuals generally may do.
22. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to purchase goods and services.
23. The procurement of services from third party providers must be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the terms and conditions of grant with MHCLG.
24. Legal Services should be consulted at the earliest opportunity to review the Grant Agreement from MHCLG and to ensure that any obligations, in particular clawback provisions are transferred down to third party providers carrying out services.
25. For the staffing requirements, S112 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows a local authority to appoint such officers as are necessary for the proper discharge of its functions, on such reasonable terms and conditions as it thinks fit. Salary grade should be determined by job evaluation. When recruiting to these posts consideration should be given to establishing them

as temporary contracts for a fixed term and appropriate advice sought from HR and Legal. For those staff already in post variations to terms must be implemented to take account of the extended arrangement. If the total length of the contract exceeds 1 year, upon termination the Employee may be entitled to be placed on the redeployment register and after 2 years may be entitled to a redundancy payment. It is important that sight is not lost of the Council's recruitment, retention, and vacancy management policies, which should be followed.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials NC Date 07/10/2020]**

26. The purpose of this report is for the Cabinet Member for Housing and Equalities to accept the grant funding recently awarded from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Next Steps Accommodation Programme. An award of £291k has been made following a bid process. Full details of the award and the conditions of the award will follow shortly.
27. Although the award is lower than the bid, a plan is in place to use the funds in accordance with financial procedure rules and use the funding for the continuation of support for rough sleepers accommodated during the COVID19 response.
28. Financial Procedure Rule E9 states grant acceptance and commitment is subject to key decision rules for awards over £250k. The decision to take the report to the cabinet member for Housing & Equalities has been agreed by the Director of Corporate Resource and the Mayor of Doncaster.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials AT Date 06/10/2020]**

29. There are no anticipated HR implications in relation to this report.

#### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 6/10/20]**

30. There are no anticipated technology implications in relation to this report.

#### **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KH Date 06.10.20]**

31. Poor health can be both a cause and consequence of homelessness and there is evidence to show that the health and wellbeing of those who are homeless is significantly worse than the general population. Living on the streets, in temporary accommodation or in an insecure tenure can have an impact on physical and mental health, drug and alcohol use and ability to utilise the health systems meaning, as a group, those whom experience homelessness also experience high levels of health inequality. There is a very real risk that these existing inequalities will be compounded by COVID-19.
32. Having a secure, healthy and appropriate home will have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and improves our ability to contribute to society. By reducing the number of people sleeping rough, homeless or at risk of homelessness it can be expected that there will be a positive health impact on this vulnerable population. Although placements in hotels can be necessary to reduce immediate risk, it is good to see that measures continue to reduce the numbers of people doing so in a gradual and safe way as recommended in this report.

33. It is essential that any work by the move-on navigators to move people on to more secure accommodation, especially in the private rented sector, takes into account the multiple and compounding challenges, morbidities and inequalities that these citizens face. Homelessness is more likely to affect those in society who are most at risk of experiencing poor health than the general population. Most at risk are: citizens with experience of the criminal justice system, BAME young people, LGBT young people, gay, bisexual or transgender men, gypsies and travellers, sex workers, those who have experienced domestic violence, people with long term illnesses or a disability, people with substance misuse problems, refugees and asylum seekers, care leavers and young people from rural areas (LGA, 2017). It is recommended that decision makers take into account the inequalities experienced by these groups and the barriers they may face during planning, delivery and evaluation.
34. Although the private rented sector can provide a viable and logical option for move on accommodation, it should be noted that significant challenges remain within this sector in relation to quality, safety and security of tenure. We recommend that wherever the private rented sector is used as move on accommodation, that property quality, suitability and security of tenure is always assured. It is essential that vulnerable people are not moved into low quality or insecure tenures and that they are provided with support to maintain and thrive in their home in same way that other citizens are able to. The opportunities presented by the Landlord Insurance Scheme to ensure that accommodation is good quality, secure and in a sustainable community should be maximised wherever possible.
35. Although much of the action in this report is in response to an immediate, short-term risk there is potential that, with learning and evaluation, that it could feed into Doncaster's longer term vision for all residents to live in healthy, secure housing in vibrant and supportive communities. It is recommended that decision makers closely monitor and evaluate the impact of this work ensuring that it represents the best use of resources and provides the best health outcomes for Doncaster residents. It is also recommended that prevention continues to be the approach of choice wherever possible. This is not only cost-effective, but also prevents our vulnerable communities developing more complex needs and experiencing further negative health impacts of homelessness and rough sleeping.

#### **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials MW Date 06/10/2020]**

36. Decision makers must consider the Council's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty at s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share that protected characteristic.

#### **CONSULTATION**

37. Doncaster's NSAP application was co-produced with MHCLG Advisers and colleagues from St Leger Homes of Doncaster (Mark Steward and Steve Waddington).



## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

38. MHCLG Allocation Letter 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.

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