



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 10th August 2022

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

APPROVAL TO AWARD HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING RELATED CONTRACTS

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Cllr Andrea Robinson	All	Yes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Government is committed to ending rough sleeping in this parliament and to fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act.
2. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act fundamentally changed the delivery of homelessness services with a significant greater focus on prevention and upstream working. However since introduction of the Act, demand for homelessness services has increased significantly linked to local flooding events and the impact of the COVID19 pandemic and 'Everyone In' directive, which have put unprecedented and unmanageable pressure on the local homelessness service provided by St Leger Homes on behalf of the Council. This has resulted in the service focussing predominantly on homelessness response and the emergency end of the process as opposed to upstream prevention activity.
3. This report sets out the intention to focus resources on homelessness prevention via short term additional investment in St Leger's homelessness service offer whilst maintaining capacity within the homelessness resettlement pathway. This will be achieved through the award of two short term contracts providing a period of stabilisation whilst the shift to a more prevention focussed approach is embedded. The impact of the increased focus on prevention will inform future commissioning of supported accommodation in terms of offer and capacity.

EXEMPT REPORT

4. This report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care:
 - a) Notes the direction of travel for the front door/prevention aspect of the homelessness system (St Leger Homes of Doncaster)
 - b) Delegates the approval of the award of the Homelessness contract for a period of twelve months with the option to extend for a further twelve months to the Director of Public Health
 - c) Delegates the approval of the award of the Supported Housing contract for a period of twelve months with the option to extend for a further twelve months to the Director of Public Health

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

6. Homelessness will be prevented where possible and capacity will be maintained within the homelessness resettlement pathway for those individuals where homelessness is not able to be prevented and supported accommodation is the most appropriate response to meet their needs.

BACKGROUND

7. In 2019, Imogen Blood Associates were commissioned to undertake an independent review of homelessness and rough sleeping. The findings informed the development of Doncaster's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 approved by Cabinet in November 2019.
8. In summary, the review highlighted the need for the local homelessness system to:
 - have a stronger focus and whole system approach to preventing homelessness
 - only bring people into the 'resettlement pathway' who have a clearly identified need for accommodation and support
 - reduce the levels of congregate (hostel) accommodation
 - improve access to settled accommodation to improve system flow
9. These are reflected in the strategy through the following key objectives with each objective being underpinned by a delivery plan that Doncaster's Homelessness Board oversees delivery against:
 - i) Prevention - deliver a "whole system" wide plan for homelessness prevention
 - ii) Accommodation - maximise opportunities for independence through a range of housing options
 - iii) Care and Support - effective and joined up care and support services for those most in need

A series of recent Director Workshops linked to the homelessness system have agreed a range of short to medium term actions linked to both the prevention

agenda and also in relation to the main commissioned homelessness contract and supported housing contract, which form the basis for this key decision.

10. Front Door/Prevention - St Leger Homes

11. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act fundamentally changed the delivery of homelessness services with a significant greater focus on prevention and upstream working. However since introduction of the Act, demand for homelessness services has increased significantly linked to local flooding events and the impact of the COVID19 pandemic and 'Everyone In' directive, which have put unprecedented and unmanageable pressure on the local homelessness service provided by St Leger Homes on behalf of the Council. This has resulted in the service focussing predominantly on homelessness response and the emergency end of the process as opposed to upstream prevention activity.

12. The Council has agreed (via an Officer Decision process) short term additional investment in St Leger's homelessness service offer to enable current backlogs to be cleared and a refocus to preventing homelessness.

13. This report is recommending that this direction of travel is noted.

14. Homelessness Contract

15. Whilst a reduction in congregate (hostel) capacity is still the strategic direction of travel, it is necessary in the short to medium term to maintain hostel capacity at the current levels to provide a period of stabilisation while the shift to a more prevention focussed approach is embedded and starts to take effect.

16. The main homelessness contract, which comprises the two main homeless hostels (Wharf House and Open House Plus) along with street outreach and floating tenancy support, is due to expire in September 2022 and, as such, it is necessary to tender the service in line with Contract Procedure Rules. It is proposed that the contract be awarded for a twelve month period with the option to extend for a further twelve months.

17. During the contract term, there will be a focus on improved data reporting to better inform flow within the homelessness system and inform future commissioning intentions.

18. This report is seeking approval to delegate the award of the contract to the Director of Public Health.

19. Supported Housing Contract

20. The main supported housing contract, which comprises a number of dispersed housing units together with support for individuals, is due to expire in November 2022. It is proposed that the contract be awarded for a twelve month period with the option to extend for a further twelve months in line with the approach being taken with the term of the main homelessness contract as set out above. Liaison is currently taking place with Legal and Procurement to determine the most appropriate method to award this contract.

21. This report is seeking approval to delegate the award of the contract to the Director of Public Health.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

22. To allow the existing contracts to expire. This option has been discounted as it would negatively impact on the individuals supported and potentially lead to an increase in homelessness and rough sleeping.
23. To tender for longer term contracts. This option has been discounted at this stage given the need to understand the impact of the increased focus on prevention to inform future commissioning of supported accommodation in terms of offer and capacity.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

24. Approving the delegation of the award of the contracts will maintain capacity within the homelessness resettlement pathway to provide a period of stabilisation while the shift to a more prevention focussed approach is embedded within the homelessness system.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

25.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: 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">• Better access to good fulfilling work• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish• Inward Investment	
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for 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">• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage	

	<p>Doncaster Learning: 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"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	<p>The recommendations will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the demand on homelessness services • enable individuals who do experience homelessness and rough sleeping to access supported accommodation in line with their needs
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

26. There is a risk that a refocus on prevention does not have the intended impact on demand for homelessness services. This risk will be managed through a robust performance management framework including strategic key performance indicators with oversight/governance provided by Doncaster's Homelessness Board.

27. There is a risk that the short term nature of the supported housing contracts may negatively impact on the number of bids received. Legal, procurement and

finance colleagues have been actively involved in the procurement preparatory work.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials NJD Date 11 July 22]

28. 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. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to purchase goods and services.
29. The Council has a range of statutory duties relating to homelessness.
30. The procurements set out in this report should be procured and awarded in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Councils contract procedure rules.
31. Further legal advice and assistance will be given as this matter progresses.

32. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [NC 6th July 2022.]

33. This report seeks to Delegate the approval of the award of the following contracts -
34. Award the Homelessness contract for a period of twelve months with the option to extend for a further twelve months to the Director of Public Health.
35. The current Homelessness contract is paid to Riverside housing and amounts to circa £788k per annum. This is funded from existing budget within the Quality & Safeguarding – Supporting people budget of Adults health and wellbeing, and Future options – Complex lives BCF within Adults health and wellbeing. There is scope within the existing budget including some unallocated budget to award a contract based on a fixed price, based on current contract values for the period of twelve months with the option to extend for a further twelve months including inflationary uplifts.
36. Award the Supported Housing contract for a period of twelve months with the option to extend for a further twelve months to the Director of Public Health
37. The current Supported Housing contract is paid to Target Housing and amounts to circa £319k per annum. This is funded from existing budget within the Quality & Safeguarding – Supporting people budget of Adults health and wellbeing and Future options – Complex lives RSI5 within Adults health and wellbeing. There is scope within the budget to award a contract for the period of twelve months based on current contract values with the option to extend for a further twelve months. Inflationary uplift for this contract will need to be agreed & funding secured.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials SB Date 07.07.22]

38. There are no apparent DMBC HR Implications as far as this particular key decision is concerned as it relates to the procurement of the homeless contract through St Leger homes, resources that include employment and staffing matters are in place within St Leger homes.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...PW Date..05/07/2022]

39. There are no technology implications in relation to this report.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [MW Date 16 June 2022]

40. 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 the ability to utilise the health systems. This means that, as a group, those whom experience homelessness also experience high levels of health inequality, exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Homelessness is more likely to affect those in society who are most at risk of experiencing poor health than the general population. It is important to consider the longer term consequences if services/support are not provided, for example, if a "reasonable" first offer of accommodation is refused or a client's behaviour/inability to engage leads to them not being housed.
41. 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 short term placements are essential to get people off the streets and into a safe, healthier environment and can be necessary to reduce immediate risk, it is important that there is an adequate supply of and access to affordable settled housing to both prevent homelessness and enable progression out of the temporary supported housing pathway.
42. It is recommended that prevention continues to be the approach of choice wherever possible to prevent our vulnerable communities developing more complex needs and experiencing further negative health impacts of homelessness and rough sleeping.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials MW Date 16 June 2022]

43. 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.
44. There are no specific equality considerations arising from service delivery, which will be undertaken in a fair and equitable way and the increase in resources and service improvements will increase the level of service to all customers throughout the homelessness and rough sleeping system.

CONSULTATION

45. Consultation has taken place with a range of stakeholders including Directors, Legal, Procurement, Finance, Complex Lives, St Leger Homes of Doncaster.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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