

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of Paul Claussen, Executive Member for Planning & Environmental Services

To: Cabinet: 18 October 2011

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Subject: Rough Sleeper Funding

Purpose:

To request Cabinet to release funding of £10,664 which was awarded to Breckland District Council from the Department of Communities and Local Government department (DCLG) for the relief and prevention of Rough sleeping within the district.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Cabinet approve spend from the Council funding.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.2 Breckland is not immune to Rough sleeping and over the last 3 years the housing advice and homelessness team have been working with the migrant community and especially with rough sleepers in the district to prevent or alleviate the issues surrounding rough sleeping
- 1.1.3 During the Cold winter months, the Government requires all local authorities to have a severe weather protocol (SWEP) in place to ensure that no rough sleeper is left out when the temperature is predicted to drop below 0°C for 3 consecutive days.
- 1.1.4 Funding is provided on a yearly basis with various arrangements, in 2009/2010 funding was wholly provided by Breckland from its homelessness budget; in 2010/2011 funding was again funded by Breckland district. In 2011/2012, £10,664 has been provided by Department of Communities and Local Government department (DCLG). This was based on the severity of rough sleeping in the County, King's Lynn Council and Breckland Council received the highest allocation.
- 1.1.5 In 2009/2010 Breckland provided 234 nights of accommodation .Cost were kept low due to involvement of the Salvation Army, who indicated that due to the scale of managing such a project they would not take part in 2010/2011or in future years.
- 1.1.6 In 2010/2011 Breckland provided 176 nights this was as a result of our partnership working with St John's Housing trust.
- 1.1.7 As in previous years funding gives the Council the ability to secure bed and breakfast accommodation and with additional partnership working gained in 2010 the use of hostel space with the provision of basis amenities and a place of services to engage with the rough sleepers. This type of accommodation is also cheaper and easily accessible by services.

1.2 Issues

- 1.2.1 Rough sleeping by the determined few is very difficult to tackle, however we have a duty to ensure that no one is left sleeping outside during the activation of the severe weather protocol. The Government is determined to ensure that rough sleeping is prevented following considerable lobbying by MP's and it has authorised the release of funding to all affect Councils.
- 1.2.2 The Government through United Kingdom border agency has piloted a removal scheme which has had great success in Peterborough with an indication of additional success in Lincolnshire. This scheme is in the process of been rolled out in the Breckland and Kings' Lynn area.
- 1.2.3 It is believed that with the roll out of this scheme there will be a reduced number of rough sleepers within the district, however funding will be needed to provide accommodation pre removal , there will also be cost in secure travel document with further cost coming from covering travel expenses.
- 1.2.4 At present, the United Kingdom border agency has been engaging with the Rough sleepers, and have served them with removal notices. This is the first stage and we have already been informed that there will be attached cost.
- 1.2.5 For the rough sleeper who can not be removed due to their nationality or other reasons, accommodation will need to be sought over the winter months especially during periods of the severe cold weather.

1.3 Options

The options are –

- 1.3.1 To approve spend of Budget.
- 1.3.2 Do not approve

1.4 Reasons for recommendations

- 1.4.1 To summarise, the reasons for requesting the release of the funds -
 - The United Kingdom border agency can not fund removals and expect such expenses to be covered by the district council in which they are working
 - If removal is unsuccessful there is still the need to ensure that accommodation is provided during the winter months in line with the severe weather protocol.
 - There is no guarantee that the United Kingdom border agency can remove all rough sleepers from the district, even if they do there will be a cost involved
 - Reduced low level crime and anti social behaviour related to rough sleepers due to a reduction in the number of people rough sleeping.

The risks of not releasing the funds

- Serious risk of serious harm or even death where rough sleepers are left out bedded in extreme weather
- Continued low level rough sleeping crime to fund alcohol addiction.
- Bad press releases attributing rough sleeping to the Council's inability to act during severe weather periods.

2. IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Risk

I have completed the Risk Management questionnaire and can confirm that risk has been given careful consideration, and that there are no significant risks identified associated with the information in this report.

2.2 Financial

2.2.1 There are no financial implications above the currently requested budget.

Under advice from colleagues in the finance team a Proforma B is attached as approval will allow the finance team to release the funds.

2.3 Legal

2.3.1 Whilst there are no legal implications to this report, and to the implementation of the Action Plan, the Council does have significant duty in ensuring that during the severe weather protocol to provide accommodation to rough sleepers who are vulnerable and at risk of serious harm or even death due to extreme cold weather during the weather months.

2.4 Equality and Diversity

2.4.1 Has an Equalities Impact Assessment been conducted? Yes – an Equalities Impact Assessment was conducted in relation to the operation of the Housing Advice and Homelessness Service in late 2007. In addition, the consideration of such matters is implicit within the process of working to reduce housing inequalities.

2.5 Other

2.5.1 The Housing Advice & Homelessness Services' operational involvement in the Norfolk Vulnerable Adults Joint Policy and Operational Procedures should promote the welfare and well-being of vulnerable adults in the district.

3. Alignment to Council Priorities

3.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council priorities:

- Ensure all our services are provided in a fair & equitable manner
- Contribute to improving the health of people who live in Breckland
- Reduce the fear of crime

4. Wards/Communities Affected

4.1 Whole district

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Key Decision {Yes} Appendices attached to this report: Proforma B