

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....19th January 2017

1. Title of Item/Report

Commissioning of Short Term Housing Related Support Services for Vulnerable People

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented the details of the re-commissioning of short term housing related support for vulnerable people including families and young people.

Stockton Borough Council takes a proactive approach to reducing and preventing homelessness. This included setting aside over half a million pounds to fund a dedicated team who work with residents of the borough to meet their housing needs, available resources to help struggling home owners and a rent deposit scheme. In addition a budget of £494k was available for discretionary housing payments and £167k from the 'Back on Track' scheme which offered emergency assistance for qualifying people who need essential household items. The Council also provided help to those who were not yet ready for independent living and may be facing problems such as homelessness, multiple debts, mental or physical health problems and substance misuse which can make landlords reluctant to offer them a tenancy. Housing related support was designed to identify and overcome the barriers a person / family had by making key interventions over a short period to time. Transition to independent living would then be facilitated and the person / family supported should be in a position to sustain their tenancy ensuring rent and household bills were paid and they fulfil their obligations as a tenant not to cause nuisance, to keep the property in reasonable order. The Council's approach to providing short term housing related support meant street homelessness could be kept to an absolute minimum.

The Council had commissioned housing related support services for a number of years and paid for 134 places. These services were for single adults, families and young people aged 16 to 18 years. The support was accommodation based, but the support provider and housing provider did not have to be the same organisation as long as partnership arrangements were in place. The Council objective was to provide good quality accommodation. Rent for the accommodation was usually

charged at an enhanced supported accommodation rate which was negotiated with the Council's Housing Benefit Team, and support costs were charged separately. It was the support service that the Council needed to re-commission.

A review had been undertaken in relation to what support was being provided. Over time support providers had developed their own individual approach to support, with some providing a range of services directly. There was a strong culture of partnership working between agencies in the borough and it was clear that many of the barriers that needed overcoming to enable people to live independently could be lifted by brokering and co-ordinating services rather than direct provision. Stockton Council had, despite Government's decision not to provide a ring fenced Supporting People resource, always chosen to put money into providing these types of support services. However the approach needed to be refreshed to ensure smarter working and improved more focused outcomes for the service users.

At the heart of developing the new model had been operational and commissioning staff from adult and children's' services, plus housing, procurement, legal and finance staff. This was to ensure any new approach would be practical and effective on the ground.

As part of the Council's Homelessness Service there was a gateway approach. This service ensured that people with more complex needs who sought rehousing were given additional support. The service continued to develop and was at the heart of ensuring people access the right housing with support. The intention was for this service to have a strengthened role in initial support planning ensuring consistency across all the commissioned places. The service would determine the level of support provided with an allocation of the appropriate number of hours per week for a defined period of time. An hourly rate for support would be set at a level comparable with other similar services. This approach was different to the arrangements where there was a prior agreed weekly fee set aside for providers (the amount differs from scheme to scheme). The service would work closely with providers to ensure timely outcomes were achieved and people could move onto independent living, thereby releasing a place for another service user.

An analysis of need, based on ongoing demand for housing related support, had shown that the Council required additional capacity. The Council was looking to increase the number of places to 168, an increase of 34. The new places would be funded by smarter commissioning, producing a tighter specification around the role of support providers, identifying outcomes the Council were looking for and providing indicative timescales for move on (depending on the complexity of the service

user/users). Enhanced partnership working would be the key to success.

The proposal was to outline the Council approach to re-commissioning short term housing related support via the Council's procurement portal (this would involve both existing and potential providers) followed by the issuing of tender documentation and selection criteria in February 2017. It was anticipated that new contracts would be in place for July 2017 and this would allow time for smooth service transition to the new contracts.

RESOLVED that the intended approach to commissioning in this area be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Supporting vulnerable people to address the barriers they have to securing permanent accommodation assists us in fulfilling both our legal obligations under homeless legislation plus the Council's policy objective to protect the most vulnerable.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 - Commissioning of Short Term Housing Related Support Services for Vulnerable People as he was a member of Tristar Board.

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight, 27 January 2017

Proper Officer  
23 January 2017