

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM 7

REPORT TO CABINET

19th January 2017

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

**Adult Services and Health – Councillor Jim Beall
Environment and Housing - Councillor Mike Smith**

**COMMISSIONING OF SHORT TERM HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES
FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

1. Summary

To present to Members details of the re-commissioning of short term housing related support for vulnerable people including families and young people.

2. Recommendations

Members note the intended approach to commissioning in this area.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

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. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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**COMMISSIONING OF SHORT TERM HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES
FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

SUMMARY

To present to Members details of the re-commissioning of short term housing related support for vulnerable people including families and young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members note the intended approach to commissioning in this area.

DETAIL

1. Stockton Borough Council takes a proactive approach to reducing and preventing homelessness. This includes 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 is available for discretionary housing payments and £167k from our 'Back on Track' scheme which offers emergency assistance for qualifying people who need essential household items. We also provide help to those who are 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 is designed to identify and overcome the barriers a person/family has by making key interventions over a short period to time. Transition to independent living will then be facilitated and the person/family supported should be in a position to sustain their tenancy ensuring rent and household bills are paid and they fulfil their obligations as a tenant not to cause nuisance, to keep the property in reasonable order. Our approach to providing short term housing related support means we keep street homelessness to an absolute minimum.
2. We have commissioned housing related support services for a number of years and currently pay for 134 places. These services are for single adults, families and young people aged 16 to 18 years. The support is accommodation based, but the support provider and housing provider do not have to be the same organisation as long as partnership arrangements are in place. Our objective is to provide good quality accommodation. Rent

for the accommodation is usually charged at an enhanced supported accommodation rate which is negotiated with the Council's Housing Benefit Team, and support costs are charged separately. It is the support service that we need to re-commission.

3. A review has been undertaken in relation to what support is currently provided. Over time support providers have developed their own individual approach to support, with some providing a range of services directly. There is a strong culture of partnership working between agencies in our borough and it is clear that many of the barriers that need overcoming to enable people to live independently can be lifted by brokering and co-ordinating services rather than direct provision. Stockton Council has, 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 our approach needs to be refreshed to ensure smarter working and improved more focused outcomes for service users.
4. At the heart of developing our new model have 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.
5. As part of the Council's Homelessness Service there is a gateway approach. This service ensures that people with more complex needs who are seeking rehousing are given additional support. The service continues to develop and is at the heart of ensuring people access the right housing with support. The intention is for this service to have a strengthened role in initial support planning ensuring consistency across all the commissioned places. The service will 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 will be set at a level comparable with other similar services. This approach is different to the current arrangements where there is a prior agreed weekly fee set aside for providers (the amount differs from scheme to scheme). The service will work closely with providers to ensure timely outcomes are achieved and people can move onto independent living, thereby releasing a place for another service user.
6. An analysis of need, based on ongoing demand for housing related support, has shown that we require additional capacity. We are looking to increase the number of places to 168, an increase of 34. The new places will be funded by smarter commissioner, producing a tighter specification around the role of support providers, identifying outcomes we are looking for and providing indicative timescales for move on (depending on the complexity of the service user/users). Enhanced partnership working will be the key to success.
7. The proposal is to outline our approach to re-commissioning short term housing related support via the Council's procurement portal (this will involve both existing and potential providers) followed by the issuing of tender documentation and selection criteria in February 2017. It is anticipated that new contracts will be in place for July 2017 and this will allow time for smooth service transition to the new contracts.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

8. These commissioned services provide essential support to vulnerable people and it is important we have refreshed support planning arrangements in place to ensure services are fit for purpose. There may be a risk of some current providers either not being able to or wanting to work to the new specification or not being successful at tender stage. Changes to service provision will need to be managed carefully with individual service users who may need to move to alternative accommodation. The intention is to procure the new service by dividing it into lots, which reflect services for young people, adults and families.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. Smarter commissioning with more focused specifications for service delivery will drive out efficiencies, ensuring an increase in service provision and some potential savings.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. The Council has duties under Homeless legislation to provide services to both tackle and prevent homelessness.

RISK ASSESSMENT

11. This re-commissioning is not without risks as the service delivery going forward will be quite different from current service provision. If there is a change of service providers, action plans will be developed to manage the process and ensure a smooth transition for service users.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

12. This service supports a key Council priority to protect the vulnerable. Ensuring people gain and sustain tenancies into the future will promote increased independence and help develop strong and healthy communities.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

13. Some of the vulnerable young people we are looking to provide short term housing related support for will be young people for whom we are corporate parents.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

14. Some consultation has taken place with young service users to discuss the level of support they currently receive and with operational staff who are familiar with Care plans.

Name of Contact Officer: Julie Nixon
Post Title: Transformation Team
Telephone No. 01642 527072
Email Address: Julie.nixon@stockton.gov.uk

Education related

No

Background Papers

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property

None

