

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

7 June 2022



Subject: HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION NEW BURDENS
GRANT FUNDING ACCEPTANCE AND EXPENDITURE

Report of: Managing Director of City Housing

Relevant Cabinet Member: Councillor Sharon Thompson, Cabinet Member
Homes and Neighbourhoods

Relevant O & S Chair(s): Councillor Mohammed Idrees, Housing and
Neighbourhoods, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report author: Debbie Parkes, Strategic Lead, Housing Solutions
and Support Case Management Service

Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 009899/2022		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential :		

1 Executive Summary

This report requests Cabinet to accept the Council's Homelessness Reduction Act New Burdens Grant of £2,632,759 for the financial year 2022/23 allocated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities(DLUHC).

- 1.1 This report sets out how the Council intends to utilise this revenue funding which focuses upon homeless prevention activities.
- 1.2 Delegated authority is also sought for the Acting Assistant Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for

Homes and Neighbourhoods to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments as necessary to ensure full utilisation of this grant.

2 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Authorises the acceptance of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 New Burdens Grant of £2,632,759 for the financial year 2022-2023.
- 2.2 Authorises the expenditure programme set out in 7.3.2 which focuses upon homeless prevention activities.
- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Acting Assistant Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, to use any unallocated grant as permitted under any grant conditions to make further adjustments as necessary to ensure full utilisation of this grant.
- 2.4 Authorises the City Solicitor (or their delegate) to negotiate and complete any agreements to give effect to the above decisions.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Council's allocation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) New Burdens Grant was confirmed by the DLUHC on 21 December 2021 for the financial year of 2022-23 of £2,632,759. The funding is intended to meet new burdens incurred by Local Authorities as a result of the ongoing implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) 2017.
- 3.2 The key provisions of the HRA came into force between April 2018 and October 2018. The HRA places new duties and increased demand upon English local housing authorities (LHAs) and it represents the most significant change to homelessness legislation since the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. This grant has been provided to help LHAs meet these legal responsibilities introduced as part of the HRA.
- 3.3 The HRA provisions significantly extend the Council's legal obligations to prevent and relieve homelessness. The new duties require an extensive assessment of need and more intensive casework over an extended period. The increase in homeless prevention activities and retention of skilled staff and services is crucial for the Council to meet its expanded legal obligations and Council priorities.
- 3.4 In addition, this legislation applies to a much wider cohort of service users. Within this context, many households have complex needs, and specialist services are required for rough sleepers and domestic abuse victims, hence the expenditure proposals in section 7.3.2.
- 3.5 In December 2021, the DLUHC confirmed that for the financial year 2022-23 *"This grant will be ringfenced to ensure local authorities are fully resourced to take action*

to prevent homelessness and to continue to embed the changes required through implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.”

- 3.6 The HRA provides everyone who is homeless (or at risk of homelessness) with access to assistance, irrespective of their ‘priority need’ status. There is also a much greater emphasis on prevention work, which is now enshrined within a statutory framework.
- 3.7 It is proposed that this grant allocation for financial year of 2022-23 is utilised to focus upon prevention and early intervention. This will help to support front-line homelessness pressures and provide capacity to increase the supply of, and access to, the various forms of accommodation, especially privately rented units. As more cases get to court in 2022, following the ban on evictions, we will see an increase in households facing homelessness.

4 Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

The options that have been considered are:

4.1 Do nothing:

This option would risk the Council not meeting its statutory duties to those threatened with homelessness and those who are experiencing homelessness including those placed in Temporary Accommodation under the Homeless provisions of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

This option is not recommended.

4.2 Accept Grant Allocation:

This is the fifth year of this grant allocation and is provided in recognition of the additional statutory homeless responsibly placed upon the Housing Options Service.

This option is recommended.

4.3 There are no equalities implications arising as a result of this report.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation has been embedded in Birmingham’s Homeless Prevention Strategy 2017+ with the Homelessness Partnership Board. This focuses on preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and supporting those who are homeless to build a more positive future.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 If the grant is not accepted and revenue expenditure approved, there is a risk the duty upon the Council will not be fully met due to the limited capacity of prevention resources. This will result in those who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, not receiving an appropriate level of assistance. In addition, there is therefore the risk that they may have to make a homeless approach with the following negative outcomes:

- increased temporary accommodation costs
- increased rough sleeping in Birmingham
- reduce early intervention support to limit the impact of homelessness, help people to recover from homelessness and prevent becoming trapped in a cycle of homelessness.

7 Compliance Issues:

7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

7.1.1 This report supports the delivery of one the Council Priorities as set out in the Birmingham City Council Plan 2018 – 2022.

Birmingham is a great, clean and green city to live in. We will work with partners to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness. We will have the appropriate housing to meet the needs of our citizens.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 amends the Housing Act 1996 Part VII and it places new duties on English LHAs. It came into force in April 2018, although the MHCLG introduced one of the more significant provisions in October 2018. The Act requires local authorities to carry out additional duties to prevent and relieve homelessness and to intervene earlier when it is likely that an applicant will become homeless within 56 days.

7.3 Financial Implications

7.3.1 The 2022/23 Housing Options budget reflects the grant as per the annual budget report agreed by Council. A specific income line for £2,632,759 has been included with corresponding expenditure budget. This report is required to formally accept the grant funds into the council and set out proposed use.

7.3.2 The revenue expenditure and income is outlined in the table below amounting to £2,632,759

7.3.3 In order to ensure value for money the delivery of prevention services funded by New Burdens, have been reviewed and summarised in Appendix 2. The effectiveness of prevention services provided by Birmingham City Council are regularly benchmarked against other Local Authorities, both through reporting to DLUHC and regular DLUHC scrutiny. The move towards early intervention and prevention across the City Council may bring further opportunities to secure best prevention services and best value.

Budget required:	2022-23
Private Rented Sector Access (Call before you service)	200,000
Additional Visiting Officer Capacity – currently funding 3 additional officers	60,000
Family Mediation	10,000
Childrens Trust Support	60,000
Sanctuary/Security Measures	307,759
Early Intervention Fund	820,000
Webchat	100,000
Domestic Abuse Hub	530,000
Officer/Partners Training	30,000
Rough Sleeper and Singles Hub, Statutory Homelessness Support	80,000
Court Officer, Statutory Homelessness Support	40,000
Offenders Hub, Statutory Homelessness Support	40,000
Contact Centre, support for increasing evictions	300,000
Homeless Finance and Monitoring Officer	5,000
Court Support	50,000
Total	£2,632,759

7.3.4 There are no capital implications arising from this report.

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

7.4.1 Current and newly procured services will be utilised following City Council procurement processes.

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

7.5.1 The recruitment process for the visiting officer resource will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Recruitment and Selection policy.

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

7.6.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7.6.2 An initial equality assessment has been carried out in **Appendix 1**.

7.6.3 This New Burdens Grant will benefit vulnerable customers by offering household's more options to prevent their homelessness, support them to remain in their own homes or help the Council to manage and support households in Temporary Accommodation.

8 Background Documents

8.1 DLUHC grant allocation.

List of appendices accompanying this report:

Appendix 1 – Equality Assessment

Appendix 2 – Breakdown of Funding