



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES

TOPIC – Hosting Option for the Communities & Local Government Homelessness Advisory Service

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Corporate Director (Governance), the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Principal Scrutiny Committee and all Members of the relevant Scrutiny Panel (individual Ward Members are consulted separately where appropriate). In addition, all Members are notified.

Five or more of these consulted Members can require that the matter be referred to Cabinet for determination.

Contact Officers:

Case Officer: Richard Botham, Tel 01962 848 421, Email: rbotham@winchester.gov.uk

Committee Administrator: Nancy Graham, Tel: 01962 848 235, Email: ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

The Council has been approached by the Communities & Local Government Department (CLG) requesting that we act as a host authority for a member of their Homelessness Advisory team. The post holder is currently directly responsible for advising local authorities in the South West and West Midlands regions, but also acts as the Co-ordinator for the Regional Resource Team, giving her overall responsibility for the Advisors nationally. The post is currently hosted by West Berkshire, although they are not in a position to continue with this arrangement.

The CLG cannot pick up the post within their department due to the localism approach, but it recognises the benefits of enabling the advisors to continue to work alongside local authorities and their partner organisations and therefore is taking a more locally centred approach. CLG will provide all funding for the cost of the post and related expenses (salary on costs, office expenses, travel, etc) as well as a significant increase in the "Preventing Homeless Grant" for 2011/12. The proposal offers the Council the possibility of a substantial amount of additional general fund income, for 12 months, but, once awarded, potentially available for 4 years.

The Council will need to employ the existing advisor at or near to SCP 60 (£52k), with the salary and all associated costs (including expenses) met in full by grant from CLG. Sufficient establishment is available within Landlord Services for an additional post due to existing vacancies which have no plans to be replaced. If we agree to proceed, an initial one off payment will be made to the Council of £50,000 which can be held in reserve to cover any risk of potential employment liabilities being incurred through this arrangement. The arrangement will commence in April 2011. Also, in recognition of Winchester agreeing to partner with CLG to facilitate the continuation of this national role, it is further proposed that the Council will receive a substantial uplift of its Preventing Homelessness Grant from £31,000 in the current year to £190,000 in 2011/12. £75,000 of this will cover salary, on costs and expenses, with the remainder being the net increase in grant. Formal notification of the funding figures for 2011/12 will be announced in December 2010 and will be paid to the Council as 'Area Based Grant'. The additional grant would be ours to spend as we see fit, on any service which assists in homelessness prevention (enablement, supported housing, housing advice etc).

The arrangement would bring a number of benefits:-

1. A significant uplift in Government funding to support an existing WCC staff post or recruit to a vacancy
2. The opportunity to work in partnership with CLG
3. The services on a project / consultancy basis of a homelessness and housing needs Specialist Advisor who could ensure our services benefit from best practice operating in local authorities throughout the country
4. The Specialist Advisor post would be fully funded, ensuring that the extra grant allocation would be 100% available to the Council to support services.

We would need to be mindful of accrued employment rights if the agreement went beyond two years, although this risk is covered by the initial payment. It is proposed that the Council's position be further protected by commencing this arrangement as a one year fixed term contract only. The Council would only proceed with the one year arrangement once all payments had been formally confirmed. If either was not forthcoming, the Council will not proceed with the arrangement.

DECISION

1. That the Council act as host employer for a member of the CLG Homelessness Advisory Service, offering a fixed term one year appointment, provided that CLG provide full funding for the salary and expenses and an additional £50,000 one off payment to cover any potential employment liabilities, to be held in an earmarked reserve against those potential liabilities.
2. That authority to extend the arrangement annually be given to the Head of Landlord Services, again subject to the CLG providing full funding in advance of any extension.

**REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS
CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The proposal is a positive opportunity to work in partnership with the CLG and to generate additional income to support homeless prevention work in the district.

**FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED
FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION
NOTICE**

None.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR
OFFICER CONSULTED**

n/a

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

n/a

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposal would result in no net additional costs to the Council and provides the opportunity to secure a significant increase in the annual homelessness prevention grant.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

The proposal has been developed in full consultation with the CLG and with the previous hosts for the role. In addition, all relevant council divisions have considered the proposal and support the principles it aims to achieve.

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 13.12.10

Councillor Lucille Thompson – Portfolio Holder for Communities