

## **FLOATING SUPPORT SCHEME**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report proposes the introduction of joint working arrangements to provide intensive housing management services to vulnerable homeless people who would otherwise have difficulty in establishing a stable tenancy.
- 1.2. Members' agreement to the scheme and to the use of some Council or Registered Social Landlord accommodation is sought.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 A floating support service is designed to help homeless people to whom the Council owes an accommodation duty to manage their tenancy, when they otherwise risk experiencing difficulties due to social and behavioural difficulties such as drug/alcohol abuse, mental health problems and poor life-skills.
- 2.2 The Housing Corporation is making available funding through Social Housing Management Grant (SHMG) for use in Essex for this type of project. Several pilot Authorities in Essex are already starting to operate the scheme, which is being co-ordinated by Essex County Council to ensure an Essex-wide strategy approach.
- 2.3 Discussions have taken place with County on how the scheme might operate in Rochford and research is being undertaken to identify the likely level of need by analysis of the Council's homelessness records and Social Services records. However, Officers believe that there is a need for this service in Rochford.

### **3 SCHEME DETAIL**

- 3.1 The support scheme is targeted at people who are vulnerable because of:
  - mental health problems
  - substance abuse
  - they are a young person leaving care

Without initial support, such people often find it difficult to hold down a tenancy and risk becoming homeless again.

- 3.2 Support is provided by a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) selected through a tender process and which has the necessary skills and experience. The type and level of support would be flexible to meet the

assessed needs of each vulnerable person, but might typically average 2-3 hours a week; probably more at the start of the tenancy and less at the end.

- 3.3 Referrals would be made through the Council's Homelessness and Housing Advice team to a joint assessment panel comprising an Officer from the District Council, County Council and the RSL. Referrals might also come from Social Services, but in every case the person would need to be confirmed as homeless and eligible for accommodation from the Council.
- 3.4 It is unlikely that there will be sufficient demand for support to justify the employment by the RSL of a full time support worker solely for Rochford, and discussions are taking place about the possibility of joint working with another District/Borough Council in South Essex. It is estimated that 6 places would be appropriate for the District.
- 3.5 Vulnerable people accepted into the scheme would be housed in self contained, 1 bedroom, accommodation. The pilot Authorities have all achieved this by making available 1 bed units from their own housing stock which are leased to the selected RSL for a period of 2 years. The RSL pays the Council for the lease, and then sub-lets the units to the people needing support, and collects the rent from them. The Council retains the head lease and is responsible for major and structural repairs, with the RSL responsible for internal repairs for the duration of the lease.
- 3.6 The Head of Revenue and Housing Management supports the scheme in principal but has indicated that with 118 one bedroom, general needs properties in the Council's stock, which have a low turnover, it would be difficult to release six units for lease for this scheme. It may be possible to work with RSL's who have housing stock in the District to provide some of the units required. These need not necessarily be owned by the RSL which is finally selected as the provider of the floating support services. Investigations into this option are taking place. The scheme is intended for younger homeless people, so the Council's current policies would mean that vacant 1 bedroom accommodation designated for the over 55's would not be available.
- 3.7 Over the course of the two years the intention is that the confidence and ability of the supported tenant will be increased to the stage where support is no longer required and they will be able to live and manage a tenancy independently.
- 3.8 Permanent housing is likely to be offered through an allocation from the Housing Needs Register by the end of the two year period.

- 3.9 At the end of the two year lease, the property reverts back to the Council (or RSL if such an arrangement can be put in place as outlined above).

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The proposed scheme offers support to a small number of vulnerable homeless people who would otherwise be at risk of entering a cycle of homelessness through loss of tenancy because of medical or social problems. It is regarded as a model of good practice in inter-agency working.

#### **5 CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The scheme will help and support vulnerable, homeless people and prevent them losing their home through behavioural problems.
- 5.2 The scheme supports Primary Objective 7.7(d), action points, in the Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Officer time will be spent on researching to confirm the level of demand for such a scheme, on working with Essex County Council, the Housing Corporation and RSL's to appoint the support provider and produce the necessary documentation. This is estimated to total 10-20 man days. Operation of a joint assessment panel is unlikely to take significant amounts of time.
- 6.2 If a scheme is established it is likely to make some modest savings, perhaps up to 5 days per year, as time is currently spent on trying to find suitable accommodation and support for this client group.
- 6.3 The scheme can be introduced at no cost to the Council. The loss of rent on any Council stock used will be paid for by the lease. Funding for the support worker costs will come from Housing Corporation SHMG and Social Services.

#### **7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES:**
- (1) To support the establishment of a floating support scheme in Rochford, if appropriate in partnership with another District Council, as outlined in the report, and to authorise Officers to implement the scheme.

- (2) That the Head of Revenue & Housing Management be authorised to lease up to six units of one bedroomed accommodation at any time, for periods of up to two years, to enable the scheme to operate and the Council's allocations scheme be amended to incorporate this.
- (3) That efforts be made to secure the provision of accommodation for the scheme from registered social landlords.
- (4) That a monitoring report on the scheme be brought back to this Committee six months after implementation.  
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**Background Papers:**

None.

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