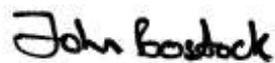


1 HOUSING OPTIONS PREVENTION FUND POLICY

1.1 Pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15(C)(1), three Members of the Review Committee have requested that the decision made by the Portfolio Holder for Community on 16 January 2018 be called in for scrutiny:-

'To agree the Housing Options Prevention Fund Policy.'

1.2 To assist Members, copies of the original report of the Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services and the decision by the Portfolio Holder for Community are appended.



John Bostock

Assistant Director, Democratic Services

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Paul Gowers (Overview & Scrutiny Officer) on:-

Phone: 01702 318178

Email: paul.gowers@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

REPORT TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY

REPORT FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND HOUSING SERVICES

SUBJECT: HOUSING OPTIONS PREVENTION FUND POLICY

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To agree the Housing Options Prevention Fund Policy; as set out in the Appendix to this report.

2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE No: 14/17

3 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The ongoing allocation of homeless prevention incentives has been operating successfully to prevent homelessness. However, the publication of a Policy enables the Council's approach to be transparent and ensures that types of funding and eligibility are described in sufficient detail and are administered properly.

4 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 4.1 Housing Option officers aim to provide tailored and constructive advice to residents facing homelessness, but sometimes this is not sufficient to resolve homelessness without a package of targeted financial assistance.
- 4.2 In all cases, the purpose of this prevention policy is to assist in reducing the number of households placed in bed and breakfast and/or temporary accommodation, or delay homelessness until a planned move can be made.
- 4.3 This policy outlines the scope of assistance the Council can provide, which includes both repayable and non-repayable assistance, eligibility, application and standards.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The lack of ongoing flexible preventative initiatives will mean that the Council will need to house greater numbers in temporary accommodation.
- 5.2 Repayable financial assistance will normally be made by way of an interest free loan, repayable by instalment, and Housing Option officers are responsible for undertaking all reasonable due diligence in preparing the authorisation for payments, which includes collecting proof and evidence to show compliance with this policy and procedure. The implementation of

Universal Credit in the District in July 2018 may, however, impact on the recovery rates of clients and this will need to be monitored.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Policy focus is on early intervention through an increase in homelessness prevention work. The prevention work to date (end of November) has helped prevent 128 households having to go into bed and breakfast accommodation, resulting in prevention savings for the Council totalling £131,000.
- 6.2 The current Homeless Prevention Fund budget allocation totals £50,000 and is fully paid and committed for 2017/18. A further allocation of £50,000 has been allocated for 2018/19.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has duties and powers under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (“the Act”) to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is homeless or facing homelessness. Alongside this Act, a body of guidance and good practice has developed which promotes a pro-active, flexible and interventionist approach to homelessness. The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 further strengthens the prevention approach with new duties.
- 7.2 This policy sits alongside the Council’s other statutory duties with respect to investigating and determining homeless applications.

8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The aim is to maintain the policy ensuring that no potential or current homeless person is treated less favourably than any other applicant and that targeted help and assistance ensures that all households are able to access the relevant prevention assistance. Information can be translated or made available in other formats, where necessary.

EXECUTIVE DECISION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY

SUBJECT: HOUSING OPTIONS PREVENTION FUND POLICY

1 DECISION MADE

1.1 To agree the Housing Options Prevention Fund Policy.

2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE No: 14/17

3 REASON FOR DECISION

3.1 The publication of a Policy enables the Council's approach to be transparent and ensures that types of funding and eligibility are described in sufficient detail and are administered properly.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5 NAME OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER

5.1 Councillor M J Webb.

6 LEAD OFFICER

6.1 Louisa Moss (Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services).

I confirm that the above decision does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

Portfolio Holder Signature: _____



Date of Decision: 16 January 2018

Note: Please ensure that Member Services are provided with the original of the decision on the day it is taken (or by 10.00 am the following morning at the latest) to enable publication.