

To: Cabinet
Date: 10 March 2021
Report of: Executive Director of Housing
Title of Report: Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2021/22

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To approve the grant allocations for 21/22
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing and Housing the Homeless
Corporate Priority:	Deliver more affordable housing.
Policy Framework:	Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 (extended)
Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the allocation of Homelessness Prevention funds to commission homelessness services in 2021/22 as outlined in paragraphs 23 to 30 and in Appendix 2 of the report; 2. Delegate to the Interim Director of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget if required; and 3. Approve the request for £15,000 of new expenditure from the 2020/21 allocation, outlined in paragraph 24. 	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Review of allocated homelessness funds 2020/21
Appendix 2	Proposed allocation of homelessness funds 2021/22
Appendix 3	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. This report presents an overview of how the funding allocated in 2020/21 has been spent and makes recommendations for the allocation of funding in 2021/22 to provide services for rough sleepers and single homeless people in Oxford. Allocations for 2021/22 represent a continuation of existing arrangements. Significant change is expected for 2022/23 due to an expansion of the countywide recommissioning of homelessness services which will be the subject of a future cabinet report.
2. The report also provides an update on developments this year which have been dominated by the response to Covid19. Organisations which we fund, as well as those we do not fund, have worked tirelessly and in partnership to meet the changing demands of the pandemic. This report places on record the Council's thanks to all of them in this most challenging of years.

Context and key developments 2020/21

3. At the start of the lockdown, the government's "Everyone In" initiative required local authorities to ensure that no-one was sleeping on the streets, in order to help prevent the spread of Covid19. In addition the council was advised that facilities with communal sleeping arrangements could no longer be used. This affected the 20 spaces of "sit-up" provision in O'Hanlon House, and meant that Floyds Row had to be closed (which had 56 bed spaces). At the time the Oxford Winter Night Shelter was also running, with up to 20 spaces available, and this too had to be closed.
4. To meet this requirement, the Council used a mixture of hotels, university accommodation and Oxford YHA to accommodate people who were formerly homeless. When the lockdown began to ease in June, these hotels indicated that they would need to go back to their normal business. As such, new accommodation was required at short notice, which presented a significant challenge. A student block, Canterbury House, owned by A2 Dominion and utilised by Oxford Brookes was identified and all parties worked very quickly to secure this additional accommodation by the end of July.
5. In 2019 the Council entered into an agreement with St Mungo's to provide a range of services supporting rough sleepers from the new Engagement and Assessment Centre at Floyds Row. This agreement has been refocussed to deliver equivalent services in the different settings that have been used this year. St Mungo's now manage both Oxford YHA and Canterbury House, as well as continuing to provide the Outreach service to engage with new and existing rough sleepers. Floyds Row is used to undertake triage assessments of new rough sleepers and place them in Canterbury House or the YHA.
6. The council has secured the use of Oxford YHA until March 2021, and Canterbury House until July 2021, a total of 118 units. By the end of January the "Everyone In" initiative has seen more than 300 individuals accommodated, of whom 141 have moved on to settled accommodation.
7. The provision of additional interim accommodation for people who may otherwise be rough sleeping has had an impact on the numbers of people seen rough sleeping in Oxford. Throughout the spring and summer, numbers at any one time were consistently in the mid 20's, with half of this cohort at any time

being on the streets for a very short period as they waited to be accommodated. Numbers increased during the November lockdown, and were 35 in the last week before Christmas. By the end of January this had reduced to 13.

8. This increase is reflected in the monthly figures at the end of last year with a total of 34 people seen rough sleeping during October, increasing to 71 during November. Circumstances are very different this year which makes comparisons with previous years somewhat redundant. However in 2019, there were 75 people seen rough sleeping in October and 59 in November. In 2018, it was 105 in October and 115 in November.
9. The Council's official street count was conducted in November 2020 which found 19 people rough sleeping (14 men and 5 women). This was a significant reduction from 43 recorded in November 2019, although the circumstances were very different.

Continuation of joint commissioning arrangements

10. The City Council, together with the Oxfordshire District Councils, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, have a pooled budget for the commissioning of supported accommodation for single homeless people. The arrangement was initially established for a period of three years (2017/18 to 2019/20) to mitigate the impact of reductions in Oxfordshire County Council's budget and to maintain the supply of supported accommodation for single homeless people in the county. This collaboration has served to maintain a supply of jointly commissioned bed spaces as part of the Adult Homeless Pathway, which is complemented by the City and District Councils' commissioning of their own supply of supported accommodation.
11. 2019/20 was to be the final year of the current pooled budget arrangements for the countywide Adult Homeless Pathway. However, the partners agreed in April 2019 to continue the arrangement for a further two years (2020/21- 2021/22) to allow time for the development of a countywide strategy on rough sleeping and single homelessness and the subsequent procurement of services. To support the closer partnership working, the city council's Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness manager is working with county colleagues on the recommissioning of pathway services from 2022/23 onwards.
12. There are currently a total of 106 jointly commissioned beds all of which are located in Oxford (79 of these are reserved for use by City-connected clients.). The City Council's annual contribution towards the continuation of these arrangements in 2021/22 will be £219,030

Development of a countywide strategy for rough sleeping

13. In 2019 the Oxfordshire local authorities collaborated on a successful bid, led by Cherwell District Council, to secure further funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund. This led to the establishment of a new, two-year fixed term post of County-wide Strategic Lead (Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping) to take forward the development of a joint, countywide strategy for rough sleeping and single homeless. The work is overseen by a steering group comprising the County

Council, district councils, Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (mental health) and SOHA Housing.

14. A strategy has been developed with the ambition to ensure no-one needs to sleep rough and to significantly reduce homelessness from the levels experienced in recent times. The new strategy will focus on prevention to identify opportunities for early intervention across the whole system and facilitate rapid action where the risk of homelessness is identified. This will include close working with other systems (e.g. Health, Criminal Justice), to identify people at risk of homelessness as early as possible. It is envisaged that all parts of the system will take joint responsibility for avoiding homelessness and ending rough sleeping.
15. A strengths based approach will be embedded across the system to ensure there is engagement with those who are homeless. This involves thinking about people in terms of their strengths and assets, not just their deficits and challenges. All agencies involved will share data to develop solutions for each individual. The approach will be knowledge and evidence based.

Ensuring sufficient provision to meet Oxford City's needs

16. In addition to the 79 bed spaces commissioned via the pooled budget for use by City connected clients, it is proposed that the City Council will directly commission a further 152 bed spaces in 2021/22. This brings the total number of spaces available to 231, an increase of 41 compared to 2019/20. There are 40 new spaces commissioned under the government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) to accommodate people housed on a temporary basis under the "Everyone In" initiative.
17. The number above excludes the 56 spaces in Floyds Row which cannot currently be used due to Covid restrictions. It is hoped that Floyds Row will be available as accommodation in full or part, during 21/22. This will support the exit from the 118 spaces of "Everyone In" accommodation.
18. Demand for supported accommodation remains high, particularly due to the additional demand from people accommodated in the "Everyone In" accommodation. Weekly meetings are held with accommodation providers to agree how to allocate void spaces.
19. Funding has been made available from MHCLG to ensure accommodation is available to all rough sleepers during winter. This includes eight rooms in Tower House being made available to rough sleepers who usually refuse most offers of accommodation and support. Funding is also used to accommodate people temporarily in hotels if there is a wait before being able to access accommodation in YHA and Canterbury House.

Further funding opportunities

20. In August 2018, the government published a new strategy for rough sleeping which sets out the government's vision for ending rough sleeping, called the Rough Sleeping Initiative. This was followed in December 2018 with the

publication of an action plan which confirms the government's intention to provide funding to help deliver its strategy.

21. The city council has since led several successful bids for MHCLG funding, on behalf of the City and jointly with District and County Council partners. In 2019/20 £1.6 million was secured on a countywide basis. A further bid into this fund is being constructed at the time of writing with a response expected in late March/early April.
22. In the summer £2,032,446 was bid for from the NSAP programme to provide funding over the next three years to help accommodate people at risk of rough sleeping. Funding has also been secured to provide additional support during the winter of up to £140,000. Most recently, £160,000 has been made available to ensure we are able to make accommodation available to all rough sleepers during the current lockdown.

Use of Homelessness Prevention Funds in 2020/21

23. Last year's report by the Head of Housing Services on the allocation of homelessness prevention funds indicated that a total of £1,401,842 had been allocated for the delivery of services and support for rough sleepers and single homeless people in 2020/21. There have been a number of developments over the year which have affected actual spending and these are summarised below and set out in detail in Appendix 1.

a) Acacia expansion

A total of £95,700 was allocated towards the development of the Acacia Project, a housing-led service for homeless people with multiple and complex needs including significant mental health needs for whom traditional offers of accommodation have not worked. The intention has been to increase provision from 5 to 10 units, but only one additional unit has been delivered. Dealing with the response to Covid has meant that it hasn't been possible to develop the project as anticipated this time last year. This has led to a forecast underspend against the Acacia allocations of £31,900. Expansion of Acacia will continue to be pursued in 21/22.

b) Welfare Reform Team

Funding is allocated towards the costs of two specific posts in the Welfare Reform team. This year one of these posts was undertaken on a part time basis and so the funding was reduced accordingly. This has resulted in an underspend of £10,007.

c) O'Hanlon House daycentre

Prior to the Covid pandemic, Homeless Oxfordshire had planned to stop providing day services in O'Hanlon House. This is because at times they could be disruptive to residents. In any event, the pandemic made it impossible to provide this service. Most rough sleepers have been accommodated and had access to support services during the year. Options are being considered with partners for the delivery of day services in 21/22 when Covid restrictions permit this. The absence of this service this year means there is an £82,778 underspend for this item.

d) Access to leisure services

The Covid pandemic has resulted in leisure centres being closed for the majority of the year resulting in no take-up for this service. This has resulted in an underspend of £5,000.

e) Contingency

An amount of £1,500 was set aside as contingency to allow for any in-year changes to costs.

24. The initial grant underspend is £131,185. It is requested that £15,000 of the underspend is used to extend our partnership with Crisis who are providing support in developing a countywide approach to homelessness. This results in a final underspend figure of £116,185 which will be transferred to reserves and balances at year end.

Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds 2021/22

25. The Council's priorities in terms of tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness are set out in the Council Strategy 2020-24. Tackling and preventing rough sleeping remains a key priority and the Council's ambition is that no-one should need to sleep rough on the streets of Oxford.
26. The Council's budget for 2021/22 allocated £4.95 million towards homelessness and prevention services. Within this is a provision of £1,614,684 for spend in the area of rough sleeping and single homelessness.
27. The budget of £1,614,684 allows all external services and projects to be continued in 2021/22. Due to the high levels of uncertainty relating to the exit of "Everyone In" accommodation and the timescale for returning to the provision of accommodation services at Floyds Row, as well as the extent of services which can be provided there, an unallocated amount of £135,798 has been left as contingency to ensure that rough sleepers can continue to be offered accommodation throughout the year.

Proposed allocations 2021/22

28. The proposed allocations for 2021/22 are shown in Table 1 below, with more details on the areas of commissioning at Appendix 2. In summary, it is proposed to maintain spending across all service areas, at similar levels to the 2020/21 allocations apart from the following exceptions:
- Acacia – the overall allocation is increased by £38,753 to support the increase of provision in this project
 - Matilda House – the allocation is £41,000 higher than in 2020/21 in order to enable more flexible provision within the project. There is significantly more demand for complex beds than move-on provision. The additional costs will allow more support to be provided within the existing move-on provision
 - Pre-tenancy course and Sanctuary Scheme – these services to be funded from this grant going forward
 - O'Hanlon House day services- Funding has been reduced in this area due to the challenges of providing day services under lockdown restrictions, and reduced demand due to the accommodation of most rough sleepers. New

services will be commissioned in 21/22 but on a reduced scale to the previous service

- Welfare Reform team – Funding has been reduced in line with previously agreed savings

Table 1.

Salaries or Commissioned Service	Current Provider (Supplier / Creditor)	Cabinet Report Allocation 2020/21	Proposed Allocation 21/22
Matilda House (37 beds)	A2Dominion	£225,000.00	£266,000.00
Housing First (5 beds)	Homeless Oxfordshire	£47,850.00	£47,850.00
Acacia (5 beds)	Response	£47,850.00	£47,850.00
Acacia x 3 (additional)	Response	£47,850.00	£86,603.00
Project 41 (41 beds)	Homeless Oxfordshire	£150,000.00	£150,000.00
Mayday Trust (10 beds)	Mayday Trust	£39,272.00	£39,272.00
OCC Contribution to AHP arrangements	JMG/County	£219,030.00	£219,030.00
Severe Weather Beds	Various - HO, St Mungo's, The Porch,SH	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
Rough Sleeping & Street activity service	Thames Valley Police	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
City Centre Ambassadors	Oxford City Council	£17,500.00	£17,500.00
Tenancy Sustainment Officer	Elmore Community Services	£35,630.00	£35,630.00
Welfare Reform Outreach Team	Oxford City Council	£83,379.00	£42,379.00
O'Hanlon House Day Centre	Homeless Oxfordshire	£82,778.00	£0.00
Provision for Day services	To be commissioined	£0.00	£61,164.00
Gatehouse Café	Gatehouse	£5,580.00	£5,580.00
The Porch Day Centre	The Porch	£55,000.00	£55,000.00
ETE Workers	Aspire Oxford	£77,623.00	£77,623.00
Single Homelessness Team	Oxford City Council	£196,000.00	£211,405.00
OxTHINK	Real Systems	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Access to Leisure Services	Fusion	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Tenant Ready Course	Connections	£16,000.00	£16,000.00
Sanctuary Scheme/Target Hardening	OCC Internal transfer	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
Contingency	To be agreed	£1,500.00	£135,798.00
		Total	£1,614,684.00

29. The proposed allocations will continue to maintain a wide range of services and support for single homeless people in Oxford. However, the following developments may mean that it will be necessary to make some revisions to this programme at the end of the current financial year or early in 2021/22:

a) MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative Round 4 Fund

A joint countywide bid for further funding from MHCLG is currently being prepared with a submission date of 12 March 2021. The proposal includes requests to continue funding for a range of projects and initiatives including the following:

- Supported Lettings Pilot Project
- Women's unit
- Pre-recovery unit
- Engagement & Assessment of rough sleepers

MHCLG have already confirmed continuation funding for existing projects until June 2021. Following discussions with MHCLG officials, officers are optimistic that these elements of the bid, estimated to cost £390,000, will be successful. If

they are not, some services may need to be discontinued and / or there may be a need to re-prioritise the 2021/22 allocation.

b) Continuing impact of pandemic

Officers are optimistic that the vaccination programme will offer a way out of lockdown and permit a return to Floyds Row. Plans are already underway to exit from the YHA and Canterbury House. A taskforce has been established comprising a range of internal and external partners to identify appropriate accommodation for people. However there is a scenario where YHA and Canterbury House may have to be exited, but Floyds Row cannot be occupied. Again in this event a reprioritising of allocations may be required.

30. For the above reasons, it is requested that Cabinet delegates to the Executive Director of Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget.

Financial implications

31. The net budgeted spend on homelessness prevention for 2021/22 is estimated at £1,478,886 with £135,978 held as contingency to ensure the council can respond to changing circumstances in relation to Covid19. Expenditure of this contingency will be agreed as outlined in paragraph 30, above.

Performance monitoring

32. In distributing this budget, the Council will ensure that there are clear outcomes and targets in each organisation's service specification which are reported on quarterly. Officers will schedule quarterly, 6-monthly or annual performance monitoring meetings with all services to ensure that outcomes and targets are achieved and issues are addressed in a timely and professional manner.

Legal issues

33. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has made significant changes to Council's homelessness duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Its main effect is to place increased duties on local authorities to assess an applicant's needs and to prevent and relieve homelessness.
34. All services funded from Homelessness Prevention Funds should have legal agreements in place setting out the service provider's obligations for services as well as consequences for not fulfilling these obligations.
35. The procurement, commissioning and award of contracts for the provision of services should be undertaken in compliance with the council's contract rules contained in part 19 of its Constitution.

Level of risk

36. The Risk Register is attached as Appendix 3.

Equalities impact

37. All services in receipt of funding are subject to monitoring which includes equality and diversity.

Report author	Paul Wilding
Job title	Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Manager
Service area or department	Housing Needs
Telephone	01865 252461
e-mail	pwilding@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

This page is intentionally left blank