

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 March 2024
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2024/25

| Summary and recommendations | |
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| Purpose of report: | To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision |
| Key decision: | No |
| Scrutiny Lead Member: | Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair |
| Cabinet Member: | Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing |
| Corporate Priority: | Support Thriving Communities; Enable an Inclusive Economy |
| Policy Framework: | Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28; Asset Management Strategy |
| Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report. | |

| Appendices | |
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| Appendix A | Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee |

Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 07 March 2024 to consider a report on the Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2024/25. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 March 2024, recommends that Cabinet approves the allocation of the Preventing Homelessness Budget and identified Housing Revenue Account funds to commission homelessness services in 2024/25 as detailed in Table 1 of the report; approves a commitment of £798,532 from the Preventing Homelessness budget to fund supported accommodation provision from Matilda House for the period of 01 September 2024 to 31 March 2027; approves the Council entering into the lease of the Floyds Row premises to St Mungo's on the basis set out in the report; and various delegations of authority.

2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing), Richard Wood (Housing Strategy and Needs Manager), Ossi Mosley (Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Manager) and Francesca Barr (Senior Rough Sleeping Officer) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Cllr L Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report; this report was submitted to Cabinet annually and set out the scale of the work the Council did to realise its ambition of nobody having to sleep rough in the City.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance funding; the lease for Floyds Row; the impact of the services which were due to be cut; women's homelessness provision; the impact of inflationary pressures on the budget and service delivery; the Council's engagement with Central Government to highlight key issues relevant to Homelessness Services; and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) funding.
5. In particular, the Panel queried what happened to SWEP funds in the event that there was an underspend in any given year. The Panel was advised that funds could be moved around between different budgets or rolled forward to the following year; the money was always spent in one way or another. In discussion, the Panel agreed that SWEP funding was vital and should be earmarked exclusively for SWEP purposes; as such it should be rolled forward to future years if there was any underspend, as this would help ensure financial resilience for that provision.

Recommendation 1: That the Council carries forward any underspend in SWEP funds to the next financial year, specifically earmarked for SWEP to ensure financial resilience of that vital provision.

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