

Portfolio Holder decision record sheet

Name of decision maker: Councillor Margaret Griffiths

Portfolio: Housing Services

Date of Portfolio Holder decision: 12/07/2022

Title of decision: Dacorum Street Outreach and Housing First

Part II:

Part II reason:

Background to report:

Dacorum has recently been successful in securing Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) year 5 funding from DLUHC to enable the continuation of our Housing First and Outreach services. The funding stream has altered and we now have sufficient funding to continue providing these services for the next three years.

RSI 5 has enabled development of a three year initiative that is dynamic and adaptable, allowing full focus to be on the needs of Dacorum, complementing our approach and pathway which is unique to that of others in the county. Full details regarding the changes both to the funding stream and our approach to the service and the provider are detailed in the briefing paper in Annex A.

Our RSI 5 bid reflected these changes and rather than continue in its current format we have made the mutual decision to 'de-couple' from St Albans. This also reflects the current demand we are seeing, as well as taking into account the wider context including Hertfordshire County Council's Complex Needs strategy and the Co-Located MDT Pilot project they have launched as a result of this work.

At present our current provider for all RSI provision is Hightown. However as we now take a step back and re-evaluate our position, we no longer require a provider that has a presence in both districts, it has therefore been necessary to scope out what provider ensures alignment with Dacorum's priorities moving forward.

There are a number of services/schemes locally that we have always had strong relationships with, these have further developed and strengthened over time, particularly with DENS. DENS operate Dacorum's Day Centre and foodbank, vital hubs in our town centre, and through these have day to day contact and knowledge of all rough sleepers locally. Additionally they will be providing the support for another of our upcoming projects which is our eight unit modular home RSAP programme to ensure a seamless transition from the Elms hostel. With a solid flexible staff base and greater knowledge of the single homeless cohort, it is felt that our Outreach service could be better delivered with DENS providing a more robust, holistic single homeless pathway and reducing single points of failure.

It is important to note that this change would not be a reflection of the current service provision by Hightown in this regard, but more ensuring alignment with DBC's changing priorities and closer alignment with the current service provision, which differs greatly from what it was at the time of the original bid, and that of the wider community safety partnership.

Our bid was successful and we have been awarded £475,158 over a three year period. Broken down and based on the above this would be £305,736 award to DENS and it is proposed £167,484 award to Hightown to continue delivery of Housing First. A full breakdown of costs is in Annex B of the award letter that accompanies this report.

Due to delays in the decision making process from DLUHC as a result of the Ukraine response, Dacorum was only notified of this award on the 19th May. Current RSI 4 initiative ends at the end of June with RSI 5 due to mobilise on the 1st July. This means that a full tender process will not be achievable given the timeframes we are now restricted to and so the decision being sought is for a direct award to both Hightown and DENS to enable us to mobilise as quickly as possible and continue this vital provision for some of the most vulnerable in Dacorum.

It should be noted that due to the changes in approach, Hightown may determine that they are not in a position to continue delivery of Housing First in Dacorum, should this occur the service will need to seek an

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alternative provider.

Decision made and reasons:

1. Due to the specialist nature of the homeless support requirements, to approve an exemption to the Council's commissioning & procurement standing orders and award a contract directly to Hightown and DENS without the need to carry out a competitive tendering process.
2. The award of grant funding to DENS will enable delivery of Street Outreach functions, by recruitment of 2 FTE dedicated outreach workers.
3. To direct award grant to Hightown for the continued delivery of enhanced Housing First project with 1 FTE Housing First worker in line with the bid submission to DLUHC.
4. The reason for awarding the grant to both DENS and Hightown Housing Association is because they are recognised specialist providers of housing related support to: complex clients, clients with learning disability and mental health needs, homeless households via current street outreach projects and management of the homeless hostel in Dacorum.

Reports considered: (here reference can be made to specific documents)

Grant Funding Submission to DLUHC and Self-Assessment

Officers/Councillors/Ward Councillors/Stakeholders consulted:

Deputy Monitoring Officer comments:

There appear to be special circumstances to make a direct award of contract without carrying out a tender exercise as permitted under Section 1 paragraph 20 of the Council's Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders.

Officers should ensure that an appropriate contract for services is completed prior to award of contract which include any relevant conditions of funding from DLUHC.

Chief Financial Officer comments:

The proposed contract awards will be financed in totality by the government grant awarded to DBC by DLUHC of £475k.

Implications: The project involves directly working with homeless clients who are extremely complex in nature, presenting with challenging behaviour, which may pose risks to potential staff and the community. As this provision has been in place for several years both services are aware of this and ensured they have actively considered the approach and engagement. However this will be reviewed given the provider change and a new community Impact Assessment may be required.

Risk: The primary risk to be considered is the potential that doing this could cause a damage to the working relationship between Dacorum and Hightown and have knock on impacts in other service areas. Hightown have made it clear that their aim was to grow and develop their presence in Dacorum, this change will reduce their impact.. There has been some inference that if the above provision was removed they would have to consider the viability of retaining just one post in Dacorum for Housing First.

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There is already the potential for some level of friction between our organisations in terms of their position on what is deemed to be affordable housing and it's clear that reputationally, providing services of this nature is of great importance to Hightown so this move will be seen as a loss to them from that perspective.

Historically it should also be noted that there has also been a lack of willingness from Hightown in terms of collaborative working with DENS due to what could be considered as professional competition so the decision to withdraw from Hightown and award to DENS could be a contentious issue.

It is also key that if the service demands shift over the next three years that our project is set up to adapt to that, with DENS staffing and service base both at the Elms and within their other service remits, they have a strong basis to be able to adapt quickly to any changes that may need to be made.

Value for money: Hightown and DENS currently deliver similar services to that which is proposed and are competitively placed in the market in respect of salary expectations for staff. Rough Sleeper Initiative funding is provided directly from DLUHC and by streamlining our approach over these three years we will ensure that the project is delivered within the funding provided and without further demand on existing budgets. Consideration will also be given as to how the project can be sustained post expiration of the funding.

Options considered and reasons for rejection:

Portfolio Holder's signature:

Date:

Details of any interests declared and any dispensations given by the Standards Committee:

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Date of expiry of call-in period: 19/07/22

Date any call-in received or decision implemented: