



Chester-le-Street District Council

Report to:	The Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	20 December 2007
Report from:	Housing Options Manager
Title of Report:	Prevention Fund
Agenda Item Number:	

1. Purpose and Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Council to consider the introduction of a prevention fund to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 1.2 The extension of the duties under the Homelessness Act 2002, increased the number of Homelessness Presentations to Local Authorities and as a result Local Authorities are expected to concentrate more on preventative measures and housing options.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 Advice on implementing a Prevention Fund was provided by Communities and Local Government
- 2.2 Consultation has taken place with the Chester le Street Homelessness Forum, The Head of Regeneration and the Housing Strategy Manager.
- 2.3 Staff within the Housing Options Team have also been invited to comment.

3. Corporate plan and Priorities

- 3.1 The implementation of the prevention fund would make a contribution in particular to:
 - Priority1, Customer excellence, Increasing our prevention measures and providing an excellent Housing Options Service accessible by all the community.
 - Priority 2, Working in Partnership to deliver the Community Strategy, engaging people in the development of services in Chester-le-street

for People threatened with Homelessness and to develop services for victims of Domestic abuse

- Priority 4, Regenerating the District, working with partners and customers to regenerate services amongst the diverse community who may be threatened with Homelessness.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Implications and Value for Money Statement

Funding for the Prevention Scheme has been obtained from the Homelessness Priority Needs Grant. £5000 will be available for the Homeless Support and Prevention Officers to use at their discretion when attempting to prevent homelessness within Chester le Street. Service users will enter into an agreement to repay the funds therefore minimal losses are expected.

Value for Money has been a key consideration in the development of this Scheme and it is envisaged that by implementing a Prevention Fund within Chester le Street the number of prevention cases will increase and reduce the number risk of submitting homeless applications.

4.2 Legal

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, the revised Code of Guidance on Homelessness 2007 suggests that local authorities should focus more on the prevention of homelessness.

4.3 Personnel

There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

4.4 Diversity

The Introduction of the Homelessness Prevention Fund will broaden the housing options for all applicants including those minority groups and those with support needs.

This Policy is critically important to the council in terms of equality and diversity. This Policy aims at preventing homelessness amongst all diverse groups or households, ensuring the service we provide meets the needs of the wider community.

4.5 Risk

The risks associated if this policy was not implemented are as follows:

- Increase the costs associated with B&B and temporary accommodation

- Increase the number of homeless applications being submitted

4.6 Data Quality

Every care has been taken in the development of this report to ensure that the information and data used in its preparation and the appendices attached are accurate, timely, consistent and comprehensive. The council's Data Quality Policy has been complied with in producing this report.

5. **Background, Position Statement and Option Appraisal**

- 5.1 The extension of the duties under the Homelessness Act 2002, increased the number of Homelessness Presentations to Local Authorities and as a result Local Authorities are expected to concentrate more on preventative measures and housing options.

During 2006/2007 95 cases were prevented through effective casework intervention, however, there were a total number of 737 presentations, 322 homelessness applications were still submitted. By introducing a homelessness prevention fund would enable the authority to increase housing options for applicants and have more options for preventing homelessness. The prevention fund will also assist with the reduction in the use of temporary accommodation, the authority placed 33 households in Bed and Breakfast during 2006/2007 and it is envisaged that this costs associated will also reduce as a result of the introduction of a prevention fund.

5.2 Benefits of a Homelessness Prevention Fund:

- Reduction in the number of Homeless Applications
- Increasing the prevention options to applicants
- Reduction in the number of households in bed and Breakfast
- Reduction in Bed and Breakfast costs
- Spending to Save and providing real and cost effective benefits

6. **Recommendations**

- 6.1 Members are recommended to approve the Prevention Fund Policy

7. **Background Papers/ Documents referred to**

- 7.1 Prevention Fund Policy

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