

DECISION TAKER: CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND ASSET
MANAGEMENT

REPORT TITLE: CAPITAL GRANT APPLICATION FROM THE TRINITY CENTRE

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Contact Officer: Gillian Knight Tel No: - 01962 884 577

Email gknight@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This report provides information to support a one-off capital grant contribution to Trinity Winchester of £50,000 resourced from the Housing Section 106 receipts to support the delivery of 11 units of affordable social housing.

The contribution from the Council will support Trinity Winchester's funding appeal shortfall to build a bespoke affordable social housing scheme for the most excluded rough sleepers. The scheme will help the Council to deliver on the government's commitment to end rough sleeping by 2027.

The funding contribution also supports the aims and objectives of the Council's Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 with its pledge to eradicate rough sleeping by 2023 (except by choice).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Council approves a capital budget in 2020/21 and offers a one off capital grant contribution of £50,000 to Trinity Winchester to support the delivery of 11 units of affordable social housing.
2. That the funding is paid through Housing Section 106 receipts.
3. That the Service Lead – Legal be authorised to enter into a grant agreement between Trinity Winchester and the Council which provides the grant terms and conditions, inclusive of project delivery milestones, timeframes, and clawback arrangements, stipulating that there should be no expectation of repeat or additional funding during the grant arrangement period.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The Council Plan identifies the Winchester district needs “Homes for All”, including homes that are affordable and built in the right areas for our changing communities. It also includes a commitment to end rough sleeping other than by choice and to work in partnership with the voluntary sector to provide support for our homeless and most vulnerable people.
- 1.2 The bespoke Trinity affordable housing project will support the most socially excluded and provide onsite health services to those who find it challenging to access mainstream services. Reducing health inequalities focusing activities on the most disadvantaged areas, communities and groups to live well.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The capital grant of £50,000 will be funded through the Housing Section 106 receipts available for new build affordable housing developments. The fund currently retains £1.1m of Section 106 receipts held up to 2022/23 to support the provision of affordable housing.
- 2.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018, with a commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. In order for the Council to reach the governments targets in a local context will require close partnership working with the local voluntary sector to provide a variety of bespoke housing options. Failure to meet the government’s national rough sleeping strategy aims may result in future reduced flexible homelessness grants allocated annually by the government. Grants that currently underpin the delivery of the Council’s homelessness service.
- 2.3 The Council holds the statutory homelessness duty and will need to meet the government’s ending rough sleeping targets by 2027. The suggested contribution of £50,000 to help support Trinity Winchester to reach its funding target to deliver 11 new affordable housing units for rough sleepers represents good value for money. The Council may otherwise be reliant on reaching the government’s target through costly and unsuitable bed and breakfast placements or a need to build a further purpose built homelessness scheme.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence, to enter into a grant agreement provided there is good reason to do so. DCLG guidance specifically comments on the option to grant fund housing providers. Authority to enter into the agreement is under the scheme of delegation to Service Lead – Legal in Part 3.4 of the Council Constitution

- 3.2 Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing have been negotiated for some developments through section 106 agreements under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). These funds must be spent in accordance with the terms of the relevant section 106 agreements which include the provision of affordable housing.
- 3.3 It is intended for the Council to enter into a grant agreement with the external social housing provider. This grant agreement should include provision for delivery of the project, time scales, and robust monitoring requirements need to be in place, and contingency plans developed. Provision should be included in the agreement for clawback of a grant if the project is not delivered in accordance with the project timeframe and delivery objectives.
- 3.4 It is understood that the funds are to be made available in order to create bespoke affordable housing in Winchester. The proposed grant documentation should refer to definitions of affordable (and social) housing as set out in Sections 68 – 71 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. Affordable housing is regarded as one of the Services of General Economic Interest which is one of the State Aid exemptions, and therefore it is not considered that the proposed arrangements breach State Aid laws.
- 3.5 A grant to a single organisation as opposed to a procurement exercise is a more appropriate option. As Trinity Winchester is a voluntary organisation raising capital funds to deliver a unique and bespoke homelessness provision within the district, has the expertise required to deliver the service with high expectations that it will reach its funding target.

4 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 4.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management has met with representatives from Trinity Winchester along with the Strategic Director, Services (Interim) and the Corporate Head of Housing to discuss the grant request and the benefits it can offer in support of meeting the Council Plan objectives.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Trinity Winchester has been granted planning consent following the submission of detailed information on the issues of ecology and sustainability, with the planned individual flats within a communal building designed to low carbon green impact specifications, meeting current planning guidelines on energy and water sustainability.

5.2 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.3 The principle risk is to the Council's reputation should the capital grant be refused and Trinity Winchester fail to build the bespoke housing project. The Council has the statutory duty to prevent homelessness and a Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy pledge that 'no one needs to sleep rough in the district by 2023'.
- 5.4 Refusing the capital grant application may have implications on the Council's Bed & Breakfast budget maintained at nil use since 2012, against increased national trends and may also have an impact on the Council's temporary accommodation capacity.
- 5.5 Reputational failure to meet the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Governments commitment to end rough sleeping by 2027, and subsequent reduced flexible homelessness grants allocated annually by the government.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<i>Property</i> Property Risk is with Trinity Winchester and the Council's reputation should the project fail due to a shortfall in funding.	Award of the £50,000 grant request. Trinity's excellent fund raising reputation and outcomes.	Good news story and opportunity to fund a voluntary sector partner to assist with the Council's homelessness duties.
<i>Community Support</i> Risk of increased rough sleeping should the funding gap not be met.	Award of the £50,000 grant request.	Meeting the governments Rough Sleeping strategy commitments. Supporting the delivery of the Council Plan and Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy pledge that 'no one needs to sleep rough in the district by 2023'.
<i>Timescales</i> Sits with the Trinity Winchester Board	The council has limited funds and a time limited award should be made linked to the project timetable	
<i>Project capacity</i> - Sits with the Trinity Winchester Board		
<i>Financial / VfM</i>		Good VFM via a small grant award to support the Council's homelessness duties, savings to the B&B budget and temporary

		accommodation lettings.
<i>Legal -</i>	The Council must ensure that suitable measures are in place to ensure the project is delivered in accordance with the purposes of the grant	Provision of affordable housing and use of the s106 receipts.
<i>Reputation</i> Council's reputation should the grant application be refused and the funding gap not be met.	Award of the £50,000 grant request. Trinity Winchester excellent fund raising reputation and outcomes	Positive intervention to support a voluntary sector partner to reach its fundraising goal.

6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 6.1 Trinity Winchester has supported homeless and vulnerable people in Winchester since 1986, providing a place of safety for those rough sleeping, also offering a range of services including bathing and laundry facilities and hot meals. Trained on site support workers offer one-to-one advice and guidance and signposting to specialist partner support agencies. The centre has onsite healthcare with GPs, opticians, chiropody and dentistry, a learning programme helping people back into employment. A dedicated women's service for those escaping domestic violence and a counselling service.
- 6.2 Trinity Winchester has experience of running a homelessness day centre which lead to the organisations expanding its remit to offer vulnerable people a safe and secure bespoke affordable housing provision for rough sleepers attached to the day centre.
- 6.3 Situated on the edge of a nature reserve, the proposed new housing provision is designed to low carbon green impact specifications and will provide a setting for enhancing mental health and wellbeing for people with complex needs and chaotic lives. The new project will provide 11 self-contained units of accommodation comprising a studio room with en-suite bathroom and mini kitchen. Two of the rooms will be doubles, enabling up to 14 people to be housed at any one time.
- 6.4 The housing scheme is based on a 'Housing First' model - an approach that provides affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals experiencing homelessness and then provides the supportive services and connections to the community-based support agencies to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness.

- 6.5 Developing the Trinity Winchester housing offer is a vital next step to support the most socially excluded people in greatest housing need. It will also meet the government's 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy aims and objectives and deliver on the Councils Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy pledge that 'No one needs to sleep rough in the Winchester district by 2023'.
- 6.6 The Council has worked in partnership with Trinity Winchester for many years and is a valued voluntary sector partner helping the council to meet and discharge its statutory homelessness duties. It is already a recognised partner funded through the community grants programme for its day centre activities and conditions attached to the capital grant application could be encompassed within the community grant funding agreement.
- 6.7 Trinity Winchester recently approached the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for of Housing and Asset Management with a capital fund request to help meet the shortfall of funding (£304,850 as at 10.2.20). Trinity Winchester trustees were confident that the fundraising appeal target is realistic and attainable and confirmed that construction will commence when the capital fundraising appeal total reaches £1.3 million.
- 6.8 Trinity Winchester has a successful and high profile record of fundraising and has to date raised £1,165,150 through their 'UnderOneRoof@trinity' funding plan. Whilst a shortfall of £304,850 remains the Trinity Winchester Board has authorised using £370,000 of their reserves for bridge funding, to enable the build to commence in spring 2020.
- 6.9 Details in the Trinity Winchester funding application and through the identified bridging loan taken from reserves provides confidence that the project will progress and that the award of a £50,000 contribution represents good value for money with limited risk to the Council. However, a time limited award is recommended to enable the Council to commit the funds elsewhere if the project does not proceed as planned.
- 6.10 Supporting Trinity Winchester with a low risk capital grant of £50,000 through the Councils robust Housing Section 106 receipts delivers a much needed and alternative affordable housing provision for the most vulnerable and socially excluded people. Reducing health inequalities, supporting both the governments and councils strategic aims to end rough sleeping nationally by 2027 and locally by 2023 and supports the Council to discharge its homelessness duties.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 7.1 Refusing the Trinity Winchester funding request has been considered and rejected as once completed the project will support the Council to deliver on its statutory homelessness duties and offer a viable longer term local housing offer to those rough sleeping.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Cabinet/Committee Reports or Cabinet Member Decisions:-

None

Other Background Documents:-