



## Officer Decision Record – Re-purposing RSI funding/cold weather provision

### 1. Subject and details of the matter (to include reasons for the decision)

In order to end rough sleeping in the Borough there is a need for defined pathways with collaborative and integrated support from commissioned services, partners and statutory services.

We intend to repurpose Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding, with the agreement of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to provide day time support and night supervision to rough sleepers accommodated in 7 self-contained flats and at Albert Street West (Harbour Place former day centre) during extreme cold weather whilst Hope Street night shelter is closed for renovations.

We will lease 8 flats, use one as a staff base, and for 1-1 support sessions, and give licensed accommodation to those in the other 7 flats. We are able to double-up in flats due to their size, so can accommodate up to 14 people in household bubbles.

#### **Background:**

During the Covid-19 Everyone In Government campaign, the Service leased a number of properties from social and private landlords. Many of the rough sleepers accommodated are still there or have moved on to more permanent options. A small number however, abandoned or caused damage, and predominantly this reflected the lack of support that services were able to provide, particularly from a psychologically therapeutic perspective.

Our RSI funding currently provides 4 x night staff (furloughed during Covid-19), 2 x outreach workers via Harbour Place and 2 Navigators and a Mental Health support

worker via MIND. We have short-term funding secured via next Steps Accommodation Funding from MHCLG to cover the cost of the leases for the flats for this project and some additional support worker costs. Outline Brief already submitted.

Our RSI funding had already been repurposed with MHCLG agreement back in July to provide Covid-19 support when the night shelter had closed.

Due to Covid-19 communal night shelters were ordered to close in May 2020. Public Health guidance on night shelters in October 2020 confirmed:

- The default position to protect against COVID-19 is individual rooms and individual washing facilities: local authorities and partners should work together to do everything they can to meet needs in this way
- Shelters should only be used as a last resort to protect against the risk to health and life of individuals remaining on the streets when other alternative options are unavailable, for example in very cold weather.
- Local public health teams must be involved in the decision- making process as to whether a shelter should or can reopen, and the measures that need to be in place should it reopen. [This goes much beyond providing IPC advice]

On 15/10/2020 a conference call was held between the Homelessness Prevention Service, Harbour Place, MHCLG specialist homelessness and rough sleeping advisors. when they updated us and answered questions around renovations required to Hope Street. They made it clear that they expected the 'night shelter' to have individual rooms with closing doors, not curtains and therefore self-contained.

Geoff Barnes then visited Hope Street night shelter and Harbour Place's former building and agreed that as that had individual rooms, we could form bubbles and accommodate 5 people there due to cold weather, until Hope Street was ready.

We have worked with Harbour Place to facilitate the funding for renovations at Hope Street but these will not be completed until January 2021.

We have a list of 7 current rough sleepers (a street count was carried out on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020) and after meeting on 18/11/2020 with Harbour Place, we identified a further 15 people at risk of rough sleeping ie sofa-surfing and spending occasional nights on the streets. Many of these are at high risk of harm, one is clinically extremely vulnerable and has been accommodated in a self-contained room in a hotel at present.

### **Rough Sleeper winter provision**

To maximise the use of self-contained units we will divert existing Outreach and Navigator support to those accommodated during the day- time and into the evening in self-contained accommodation. The rough sleepers will be allocated a placement throughout the winter, and therefore reduced numbers of rough sleepers are anticipated to require support on the streets.

Those who are not ready to live in flats with support, or not wanting to engage with services, will have night shelter at Albert Street West, but this will only be available in the evenings during extreme cold weather, although daily support will still be available from Harbour Place staff if people require it.

To access the flats rough sleepers will be required to sign a licence agreement and support agreement. We will be able to claim increased housing benefit levels for the supported accommodation and therefore cover replacement of furniture/furnishings and repairs, along with an element of housing management costs. The housing benefit subsidy claimed is 100% therefore this will not put additional strain on the Authority's financial resources.

We are only able to claim 90% of the rental costs in housing benefit for our current temporary accommodation units and due to the higher risk of the rough sleeper cohort, using this provision would not be cost effective. Damage would not be covered and any associated void costs would also be a direct cost to the Service.

By diverting the RSI funded support provided by MIND and Harbour Place and providing more stable, self-contained accommodation, we anticipate improved outcomes and reduced chance of individuals returning to rough sleeping.

## 2. Is it a Key Decision as defined in the Constitution?

No

## 3. Details of Decision

To repurpose Rough Sleeper Initiative funding to provide supported accommodation in self-contained, leased flats and a night shelter for rough sleepers at the Albert Street West premises managed by Harbour Place.

## 4. Is it an Urgent Decision? If yes, specify the reasons for urgency Urgent decisions will require sign off by the relevant scrutiny chair(s) as not subject to call in.

Yes provision is required for the cold weather and the temperature has started to drop close to freezing this week.

## 5. Anticipated outcome(s)

Agree the repurposing of the MHCLG grant monies paid by the Authority to Harbour Place and MIND to provide support to rough sleepers in self-contained flats and at Albert Street West in Public Health approved premises.

## 6. Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer when making the decision

**Use bed and breakfast** – this would be costly and still be shared facilities, so not in line with guidance to provide individual washing facilities.

**Use existing self-contained accommodation stock** – as above we cannot recoup any more than 90% of the rent we are charged in housing benefit. With the supported project we can factor in costs and expenses directly relating to the housing management of the accommodation so is more cost effective.

**Do nothing** – rough sleepers will be at risk of Covid-19 and other health conditions due to the cold weather through the winter. The Government has directed Authority's to ensure that all rough sleepers have received an offer of accommodation.

## 7. Background documents considered

Provision of night shelter guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters>

Memorandum of understanding for RSI funding 20/21 and annexed agreement for repurposing in July 2020.

**8. Does the taking of the decision include consideration of Exempt information? If yes, specify the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A and the reasons**

No

**9. Details of any conflict of interest declared by any Cabinet Member who was consulted by the officer which relates to the decision (in respect of any declared conflict of interest, please provide a note of dispensation granted by the Council's Chief Executive)**

None

**10. Monitoring Officer Comments (Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer)**

The decision is in line with both local and national priorities and outcomes, heightened by Covid-19. It re-purposes the funding to provide services with a more effective, supportive and targeted approach.

**11. Section 151 Officer Comments (Deputy S151 Officer or nominee)**

The decision relates to the utilisation of existing grant funding.

**12. Human Resource Comments (Strategic Workforce Lead or nominee)**

There are no direct HR implications contained within this report

**13. Risk Assessment (in accordance with the Report Writing Guide)**

LOW RISK:

Services already being provided, funding needs to be repurposed and agreement given to use it for support provided to rough sleepers in self-contained accommodation rather than via street outreach and for a night shelter in alternative premises but agreed as suitable by Public Health.

**14. Decision Maker(s):**

Name: Mark Nearney

Title: Assistant Director of Housing,  
Highways and Planning

Signed: Approved via email

Dated: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

**15. Consultation carried out with  
Portfolio Holder(s):**

Name: Councillor John Fenty

Title: Portfolio Holder for  
Regeneration, Skills and Housing

Signed: Approved via email

Dated: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

**16. If the decision is urgent then  
consultation should be carried out  
with the relevant Scrutiny  
Chair/Mayor/Deputy Mayor**

Name: N/A

Title: N/A

Signed: N/A

Dated: N/A

APPENDIX 1 – Email approval

From: Cllr John Fenty (NELC) <John.Fenty@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Sent: 07 December 2020 10:28  
To: Mark Nearney (NELC) <Mark.Nearney@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Cc: Katie Chadwick (NELC) <Katie.Chadwick@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Subject: Re: Officer Decision Notice RSI repurposing for supported accommodation

I'm good with the ODR thank you Mark

Kind Regards Cllr John Fenty  
07712398656

On 7 Dec 2020, at 10:25, Mark Nearney (NELC) <Mark.Nearney@nelincs.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Cllr,

Please see attached ODR. I am supportive.

I would be grateful if you can review/approve via email.

Thanks

Mark

Mark Nearney, Assistant Director of Housing, Highways and Planning  
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