

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

DECISION

meeting date: THURSDAY, 13 JANUARY 2022  
title: HOMELESS OVERVIEW  
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING  
principal author: RACHAEL STOTT, HOUSING STRATEGY OFFICER

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Committee with a general update and overview of all the various grant awards available to the housing needs service. To also seek endorsement for the continuation of a joint management approach of the Longridge unit of temporary accommodation through a Licence Agreement.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives        }
  - Corporate Priorities         }
  - Other Considerations        }
- To ensure those at risk of the homelessness or those rough sleepers are offered suitable accommodation.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The report collates all the various grant awards that are available to the housing department in the delivery of the homeless service and to ensure Members are fully aware of each of the different funding streams and the conditions of spend.

2.2 In addition the report seeks approval from Committee in respect of the temporary accommodation unit at Wellbrow Drive, Longridge. Ribble Valley Borough Council has used 23 Wellbrow Drive as temporary accommodation for over 5 years. It is a ground floor one bed unit that is let fully furnished under a simple Licence Agreement.

2.3 The unit is let on a temporary basis and the average length of stay in the property is 16 weeks. The property is owned by Onward and the Council have full nomination rights. The arrangement to use the property previously dates to the Transfer Agreement from 2008.

## 3 ISSUES

3.1 In 2021, Onward informed Ribble Valley Borough Council that they no longer wanted to keep 23 Wellbrow Drive on their general stock portfolio, due to the level of turnover in the property. To protect the Council's interests a simple Licence Agreement was put in place to ensure the unit remained available to the Council with the Council taking responsibility for the rent whilst retaining nomination rights.

3.2 The Agreement ensures all maintenance issues are still the responsibility of Onward but all rent is paid direct from Ribble Valley Borough Council and therefore any void costs must be covered by the homeless service budget. The unit is essential for addressing temporary accommodation demand in Longridge and demands are such that voids are minimal. Whilst this is a change to the previous arrangement, most importantly it ensures continued use of the unit. The approach has worked satisfactorily but needs to be formalised within the budget. Over the year the estimated net expenditure budget is attached at Appendix 1.

3.3 Members are asked to consider and endorse the continued delivery of the flat under a licence arrangement and that the Council continue to be responsible for the rent, furnishing and insuring the contents.

#### 4 OVERVIEW OF GRANTS AVAILABLE

4.1 Several sources of grant funding are made available to the Council to use to address Homelessness issues. In most cases these are provided by Government to meet identified needs by way of allocation. Other funding sources are delivered by way of a bidding process which can be either done by the Council itself or through schemes where joint bidding with appropriate partners is encouraged.

4.2 For information the current sources of funding are summarised below:

- **Homeless Prevention Grant Winter Exceptional Top Up Allocation 21/22**

The Government recently announced addition ringfenced top up grant of £14,200 for homelessness prevention. The purpose of this exceptional one-off payment was to support low-income private renters, as Covid 19 related rent arrears to avoid eviction or find a new home.

The allocation must not be spent on temporary accommodation and procedures for committing spend has been reported to CMT.

- **Accommodation for Offenders - MHCLG Grant**

This grant was reported to Members as an information item. The scheme was a joint bid across East Lancashire with Pendle as the lead. The overall grant was £180,000, this includes £123,000 to provide a support contract to assist individuals with rehousing on release from prison. The support contract was awarded to Calico.

Part of the grant was £75,000 which was to be distributed as individual £1000 maximum grants to provide individuals with help with funds/rented furniture etc. RVBC have received £10,000 allocation with a maximum of 10 individuals. This service is proving to be extremely valuable and currently the service is supporting 5 individuals in Ribble Valley.

- **Homeless Prevention Grant 20/21**

MHCLG confirmed the award of £67,912 to be used to fund homeless expenditure in 2021/22. The grant received is being used to fund overall homelessness costs incurred within the homelessness service. The Joiners Arms, all temporary accommodation units, Peel Street, Alma Place and Wellbrow Drive.

MHCLG have specified that this funding must be used in 2021/22.

- **Rough Sleeping Initiative – 2020/21**

This grant was received to help and deal with homelessness and rough sleeping by providing funding for emergency accommodation or support for those at risk of rough sleeping. A total of £8000 for quarters 1-4 in 2021/22 has been received.

- **Protect and Vaccinate 2021/22 allocations**

This award is for accommodating rough sleeping to try and find them a self-contained unit. Given the new threat posed by the Omicron variant, the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities recognises the need for

further support. This includes an element of vaccinations incentivisation to take over additional transport costs, meal vouchers or support staff. The total award is £10,000 with £8,855 for accommodation and £1,145 of vaccination funds. The notification for this award was released on 20 December 2021.

## 5 RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – The introduction of a specific budget heading relating to the Wellbrow property improves transparency and enables more effective monitoring. The main financial risk is that there may be rental voids that the Council will need to address however given that this is currently the only unit available to the Council in Longridge and faced with growing demands for accommodation the void risk is considered extremely low. For budget purposes an assumed void rate is included in the budget estimate of 5 weeks.

It is also important to note that the agreement is based on a 1-month notice period enabling the Council to minimise its risk if it was decided it was no longer necessary to retain the accommodation.

In relation to information on funding it is important that all the allocated grant awards are utilised to address housing needs in the borough.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – Monitoring expenditure against each of the specified budgets is required and returns made for each budget.
- Political – It is important that the Council utilise grant awards to assist households whenever possible.
- Reputation – It is essential that RVBC remains aware of all the current schemes and are able to access or refer in when appropriate.
- Equality & Diversity – Ensure all awards are available and accessible

## 6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Approve the continued use of 23 Wellbrow Drive, Longridge, under a Licence Agreement
- 6.2 Agree a total budget for the property as per Appendix 1 to recommend to next Policy and Finance Committee
- 6.3 Note the various grant schemes available along with their limitations in terms of usage.



PP  
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For further information please ask for Rachael Stott, extension 3235.

## APPENDIX 1

### 23 Wellbrow Drive – Indicative Budget

	Budget £
Rent, service charges and furniture and equipment charge income	-5,160
<b>Expenditure:</b>	
Electricity	50
Gas	50
Rent of Buildings	5,050
Council Tax Payments	130
	50
Water	
Insurance	50
Purchase of Equipment & Materials	610
Telephone Lines	50
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>6,040</b>
<b>Net Expenditure per annum</b>	<b>880</b>

Estimates Based on 21/22 costs