

East Herts Council Non-Key Decision Report

Date: 23rd December 2021

Report by: Jonathan Geall, Head of Housing and Health

Report title: Block purchase of accommodation with support for rough sleepers

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

Block purchase of accommodation with support for rough sleepers for 14 weeks from One YMCA.

DECISION:

- (a) Enter into a contract of a value of £30,158 with One YMCA to block purchase five units of accommodation with support for rough sleepers and homeless households for a period of 14 weeks.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 To provide accommodation with support for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping with a specific view to increasing Covid vaccination uptake. The accommodation to be funded by housing benefit payments and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) 'Protect and Vaccinate' grant to East Herts Council specifically made for this purpose.
- 1.2 To enter into a contract of a value of £30,158 with One YMCA to block purchase five units of accommodation with support for rough sleepers and homeless households for a period of 14 weeks.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has asked local authorities to make every effort possible to support rough sleepers and homeless households at risk of rough sleeping in terms of accommodation and support, notably to maximise Covid vaccination rates.
- 2.2 To this end, on 20th December 2021, the council was awarded £61,480 towards accommodation and £7,953 for vaccination support among this client group.
- 2.3 These monies are being paid as a ring-fenced grant paid under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2.4 DLUHC has stated '*the purpose of the grant is to:*
 - *subject to individual assessments, make offers of safe and appropriate accommodation and support to people who are rough sleeping in order to facilitate vaccinations and safeguard from infection from COVID-19; and*
 - *increase take-up of vaccinations among people sleeping rough by providing appropriate incentives...'*

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The council's Housing Service is currently providing rough sleepers with accommodation but only limited support. It is recognised that this is hampering efforts to prepare these clients for more settled accommodation and is potentially detracting from efforts to ensure these clients take up Covid vaccinations. Hence, using the DLUHC as proposed will help to better support this vulnerable client group.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 Not enter into a contract with One YMCA – REJECTED. The council does not directly provide accommodation with significant levels of support for rough sleepers / those at risk of rough sleeping as envisaged by the DLUHC. While other organisations, operating in neighbouring districts, provide this form of accommodation and support, One YMCA (a) is recognised as a specialist provider in Hertfordshire (and already provides accommodation for other client groups in the district), (b) has accommodation available in Hatfield and (c) is willing to enter into a temporary block purchase with immediate effect. In addition the DLUHC grant is predicated on the council acting swiftly to use it to support this particularly vulnerable client group during the Omicron Covid wave. Therefore, it is the view of the Head of Housing and Health that both (a) choosing not to provide any accommodation with support and (b) carrying out a full procurement exercise should be rejected.
- 4.2 Enter into a block purchase contract with One YMCA – APPROVED for the reasons in this report.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 Officers have not identified any significant risks associated with this proposal.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The proposal has been discussed with the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods. He is supportive.

Community Safety

Yes – providing accommodation with support for rough sleepers provides a means of minimising rough sleeping which in turn promotes the safety and wellbeing of the clients themselves and, potentially, anyone adversely impacted by people ‘bedding down’ in open/communal areas.

Data Protection

Yes – this will be covered in the contract between the council and One YMCA.

Equalities

Yes – the rough sleepers who will benefit from this are single people with complex needs including mental health issues and so the proposal will make a positive impact on promoting equalities. The provider, One YMCA, will be able to make any reasonable adjustment required to accommodate specific needs.

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

Yes – given the contract value is above £10,001 and below the appropriate supply of services threshold (formerly termed the EU threshold), the Head of Housing and Health has sought the Head of Strategic Finance and Property’s consent, provided on 23rd December 2021, to exempt the letting of the contract from the council’s contract procurement rules on the grounds offered in Part 4(h), paragraph 4.6.(a), that is, that there is *‘an unforeseeable emergency involving immediate risk to persons or property, or serious disruption to council services’*.

The proposal will act as a direct alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation. It has been calculated that, at the most, the council will incur £5,670 additional costs via this scheme rather than relying

on bed and breakfast. This amount can be met in full from the DLUHC 'Protect and Vaccinate' grant.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes – the council has a legal duty to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people likely to be owed a statutory housing duty under the homeless legislation while it assesses their needs. In addition, the council has the power to assist those for whom no statutory duty applies.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – Exemption for procurement rules form.

Contact Member

Cllr Peter Boylan, Executive Member for
Neighbourhoods
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Contact Officer

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Report Author

See contact officer

Appendix A

EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL Exemption Action from Contract Procedure Rules Request		
Requesting Officer Name:	<input type="text" value="Jonathan Geall"/>	Tel/Ext: <input type="text" value="1594"/>
Service Area:	<input type="text" value="Housing & Health"/>	HoS Name: <input type="text" value="Jonathan Geall"/>
Select CPR Exemption Clause this is being applied under:		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	4.6a	<i>an unforeseeable emergency involving immediate risk to persons or property, or serious disruption to council services</i>
<input type="radio"/>	4.6b	<i>the goods or services are supplied at a fixed price or the prices are wholly controlled by trade organisations and the relevant Head of Service is satisfied that no satisfactory alternative is available</i>
<input type="radio"/>	4.6c	<i>Where exceptional circumstances clearly show it is the best interests of the Council to negotiate a new contract with an existing supplier.</i>
<input type="radio"/>	4.6d	<i>the items to be supplied consist of goods or services which are currently in use and are required for the purposes of standardisation;</i>
<input type="radio"/>	4.6e	<i>the specialised nature of the goods, services to be supplied or the works to be executed means that only one suitable supplier has been identified or is available;</i>
<input type="radio"/>	4.6f	<i>emergency action is required and/or immediate repairs are required to buildings, structures and other assets damaged by fire, flood or vandalism;</i>
<input type="radio"/>	4.6g	<i>unforeseen works or circumstances where delay will adversely impact on the service delivery for the council or access to external funds</i>
Detail the subject matter & reason for exemption below:		
<p>Contract of a value of £30,158 with One YMCA to block purchase five units of accommodation with support for rough sleepers and homeless households for a period of 14 weeks. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has asked local authorities to make every effort possible to support rough sleepers and homeless households at risk of rough sleeping in terms of accommodation and support, notably to maximise Covid vaccination rates.</p> <p>To this end, on 20th December 2021, the council was awarded £61,480 towards accommodation and £7,953 for vaccination support among this client group. The council does not directly provide accommodation with significant levels of support for rough sleepers / those at risk of rough sleeping as envisaged by the DLUHC. While other organisations operate in neighbouring districts which provide this form of accommodation and support, One YMCA (a) is recognised as a specialist provider in Hertfordshire (and provides accommodation for other client groups in the district), (b) has accommodation available in Hatfield and (c) is willing to enter into a temporary block purchase with immediate effect. Entering into a contract with One YMCA would thus be in line with the DLUHC grant which is predicated on the council acting swiftly to use it to support this particularly vulnerable client group during the Omicron Covid wave.</p>		
Additional supporting document submitted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Procurement View & Conditions:

In view of One YMCA being the only provider with accommodation and support package available and the need to support this vulnerable group at Christmas and to persuade to be vaccinated against COVID 19 I approve this exemption request.

Budget, Invoicing, Contract & Costs Information and Implications (if application):

£5670 cost variance to standard TA arrangements but these do not have support arrangements for this difficult client group and therefore the effectiveness of the intervention would be reduced significantly. Also to be balanced into this is the likely higher rate of HB award for supported accommodation.

Agreement...

I authorise the above waiver in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules as above.

Head of Strategic Finance and Estates or Monitoring officer or Corporate Procurement Manager

Name:

Steven Linnett

Date:

23/12/2021

Signed:



REMEMBER - Award Notification Forms must also be completed for any approved waiver over £5,000 - download the form from the intranet/Finance/procurement