

SUBJECT:	HOUSING COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS BUDGET – HOUSING INTERACTION TRUST
REPORT OF:	Community Health and Housing – Portfolio Holder Councillor Graham Harris
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Head of Healthy Communities – Martin Holt
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WARD/S AFFECTED	All wards affected

1. Purpose of Report

This report summarises the work of Housing Interaction Trust in Chiltern District and puts forward a request from the Trust for a financial contribution from the Council to support the continuation of the Trust's work with young people

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council issues a grant of £40,000 to Housing Interaction Trust to support and maintain the Trust's work in Chiltern District Council in 2015/16 of which £10,000 to be applied from the Homelessness Reserve.

2. Executive Summary

Housing Interaction Trust delivers housing advice and support services to young people with a focus on homelessness prevention (including mediation). The Council has agreed grant funding on a year by year basis to support HIT's work (which directly impacts on the Council's statutory homelessness duties). During 2014/15 HIT saw a 45% increase in new clients compared to the previous year. HIT has requested a grant of £40,000 from the Council in 2015/16 to secure the continuation of its advice and support service this year.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

The recommendation is the preferred option because it will secure the continuation of effective and targeted housing advice and support for young people at a time when the demand for this service in Chiltern is increasing.

4. Content of Report

(see Appendix 1)

5. Consultation

Not applicable.

6. Options

Option 1 – The Council can agree to provide a grant for the full sum of £40,000 as requested by HIT. This could be funded as follows:

- The Council's housing revenue budget for 2015/16 includes a sum of £55,000 that is earmarked to support housing community organisation projects that will help the Council to meet its strategic objectives. The sum of £25,000 in this budget is set aside to support the continuation of the Chiltern CAB Specialist Debt and Money Advice Service in 2015/16. This leaves £30,000 that is currently unallocated. This could be allocated to support grant funding to HIT.
- The balance of £10,000 could be met from the Council's Homelessness Reserve.

By meeting the grant request for £40,000 in full, the Council will be supporting HIT to maintain its current level of advice, support and homelessness prevention work. This will minimise the number of young people who would otherwise approach the Council directly for homelessness assistance and potentially require temporary accommodation.

Option 2 – The Council could make a grant payment of £30,000 to HIT. This would reduce the annual grant payment to the level that the Council agreed annually prior to 2013/14. However, the demand for housing advice and support from young people and the complexity of cases has increased significantly since that time. Consequently, a grant of £30,000 would mean that the Trust could not meet the current demand for its services and would

potentially have to reduce opening hours and operate waiting lists. In turn, this would result in potential clients instead contacting the Council because they cannot access advice and support from HIT. This would have the knock on effect of increasing pressure on the Council’s homelessness service and temporary accommodation (with a consequent increase in costs from bed and breakfast placements).

Option 3 – The Council could pay a grant that is below £30,000 or choose to pay no grant at all. In both cases, it is likely that HIT could not continue to fund and operate a comprehensive and pro-active advice and support service in Chiltern beyond the short term. The service would then cease to be available. As stated above, if HIT’s services are no longer available then young people with housing issues will be contacting the Council instead (with consequent pressures on the Council’s homelessness service and budget).

7. Corporate Implications

7.1 Financial

The proposed grant payment can be accommodated within the existing budget and by utilising funding from the Homelessness Reserve. Any reduction in the delivery of the HIT service is likely to result in an increased temporary accommodation costs to the Council.

7.2 Legal

The Council has a statutory duty to secure that homelessness advice and support is available free of charge to any persons in the district who require it. The service provided by HIT directly contributes to the Council fulfilling its statutory duty

8. Links to Council Policy Objectives

This report links to the following objective:

“We will work towards safer and healthier local communities”

9. Next Step

If the recommendation is accepted, Officers will draw up a Service Level Agreement for the Council to enter into with Housing Interaction Trust for 2015/16. The grant of £40,000 will be paid to HIT in quarterly instalments in arrears.

Background Papers:	It is a legal requirement that we make available any background papers relied on to prepare the report and should be listed at the end of the report (copies of Part 1 background papers for executive decisions must be provided to Democratic Services)
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