

DATE OF COMMITTEE

25 July 2012

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING**TITLE OF REPORT****Tamworth Homelessness Education Project****EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the revised Tamworth Homelessness Education Project (THEP). This is a key prevention tool used to support homelessness prevention activity.

The THEP has been in place since 2003/04 and is funded by Tamworth Borough Council via its homelessness grant with the aim of preventing homelessness amongst young adults and educating those that do become homeless on who to approach for advice and what assistance may be offered.

Due to changes in education system within Tamworth it has become increasingly difficult to gain access to the schools. To ensure the continued success and further development of the programme it has now been fully revised to broaden the projects remit and make it more adaptable for use with a range of audiences. The programme will continue to be delivered in local schools but in developing a flexible approach it is intended the THEP will continue to be developed in such a way as to enable delivery of the programme to a range of partners where homelessness for young people may be an issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ **That Cabinet approves the use of the revised Tamworth Homelessness Education Programme as a key prevention tool to support homelessness prevention activity.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Homelessness Education Programme was originally launched in 2003 and was delivered by Cornerstone Housing Association. However, following a multi-agency review of the programme in 2009 the decision was taken to bring the programme "in house" and a Homelessness Education Officer was employed to develop and deliver the programme. As the review of the programme had involved a number of partner agencies that were active members of the Turnaround Project, it was also decided at this time to integrate the delivery of the Homelessness Education Programme into that scheme. The Homelessness Education Officer began delivering a refreshed programme to all of the educational establishments that were working with the Turnaround Project. This involved delivering sessions to year 6 and year 10 pupils in local schools. This approach proved successful but it became increasingly difficult to

gain access to schools.

In order to address this problem and enhance the profile of the THEP, a decision was taken at the start of 2012 to carry out a comprehensive review of the programme with the aim of getting it accredited by Staffordshire Education as a recognised resource to support the Personal, Social and Economic education (PSHE) curriculum in schools. Additionally, the revised scheme incorporates a more flexible range of resources to allow better joined up working with partners, to address both housing and health issues raised within Tamworth Borough Councils Healthier Housing Strategy and to allow for the remit of the Education Programme to be wider to enable it to be delivered to a range of audiences in addition to work carried out in schools.

Further details of the programme for delivery in schools are attached as **Appendix A**. At the time of writing further amendments are being made to the branding of the programme at the request of the Education Authority. Once these amendments have been completed and agreed it is expected the THEP will become an accredited scheme and plans for the forthcoming academic year can be developed and finalised.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

In May 2012, Cabinet approved the use of Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Preventing Homelessness Grant to support the delivery of key homelessness prevention projects. Appendix A of that report (attached here for information at **Appendix B**) gave details of the proposed spend during the period 2012-15 regarding a range of initiatives. The THEP was included as a key project for delivery utilising DCLG homelessness funding.

£15K per annum over the period to 2014 was allocated and agreed to fund the Homelessness Education Officer post. An additional £15K was set aside and agreed to enable the further development of the programme over the forthcoming 2 years. £6.6K of this funding for scheme development was received as a result of a joint bid for funding with other Staffordshire Authorities and must be utilised exclusively to develop homelessness education activity in local schools.

Preventing Homelessness Grant is not ring fenced but is clearly allocated by Central Government for the purpose of preventing homelessness.

Funding to support the development of the THEP will be reviewed at the beginning of the next financial year (2013-14). As highlighted above, an assumption has been made that DCLG Preventing Homelessness Grant may not be made available in the future. Should this be the case, alternative methods of supporting the continuation of THEP will need to be in place. Exploration of alternative funding sources for the scheme are currently being investigated.

However, it should be noted that work and initiatives such as the THEP to prevent homelessness will remain a key priority for the Council. The Government have acknowledged that tackling homelessness will be a demanding task over the coming years due to the ongoing economic uncertainty. Homelessness acceptances, both nationally and locally, are increasing and difficulties with meeting housing costs continue to affect many local people, including young people, a position that could be exacerbated by further cuts to Housing Benefit in 2013.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

A key risk would be to not continue to deliver the THEP as this may lead to an increased number of young people becoming homeless in Tamworth over the coming years. This would place an increased financial burden on the Council at a time it can least afford this. Consequently, effective use of the DCLG funding will be required to further develop the Council's approach to prevention and enable appropriate responses to increases in demand on services generated by welfare reform, continued economic problems or the availability of housing to meet need in the Borough. The revised THEP has been devised to allow more effective joined up working with key partners to further develop the Councils preventative approach to homelessness.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The THEP was identified as a key Homelessness Prevention Project in the report to Cabinet in May 2012 relating to the Preventing Homelessness Grant spend plan. The prevention of homelessness and other associated outcomes will contribute towards the delivery of key priorities identified by the Tamworth Strategic Partnership and within the Council's Healthier Housing Strategy and refreshed Homelessness Strategy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Education Programme has been in place since 2003/04 and is funded by Tamworth Borough Council through its homelessness grant. It was set up initially with the aim of preventing homelessness amongst young adults and educating those that do become homeless on who to approach for advice and assistance. The programme was at this time offered to all high schools across the Borough as well as the college.

When the scheme was initiated it was delivered by Tamworth Cornerstone Housing Association. However, following a full review undertaken by the Housing Strategy Team and partners during 2009, the decision was taken to adopt a new approach to the programme during the academic year 2009/10.

This review resulted in the programme being re-designed to make the programme more flexible and wide ranging. The decision was made for Tamworth Borough Council to employ a Homelessness Education Officer who would work in partnership with the Turnaround Team to deliver a refreshed Education Programme.

Due to a number of factors including changes to academy status of many of the schools within Tamworth, a further, more comprehensive review of the programme was undertaken by the Housing Strategy Team in the early part of 2012. The review looked at the aims of the programme, what was being delivered, the approach to joined up working and how the programme could be improved.

The review has resulted in the Programme being completely revised with new aims and a wider scope to allow improved joined up working. The THEP was then presented to the Education Transformation Team from Staffordshire County Council in May 2012 for Accreditation. At the time of writing some final amendments are being made following the positive feedback and recommendations received. Once these have been taken into account it is expected the programme will be accredited as a resource for schools to support their Personal, Social and Economic education (PSHE) Curriculum.

It is anticipated accreditation of the programme will help address the difficulty of gaining access to schools as the County will then promote the resource to schools as a tool that will enhance and support their PSHE work. Alongside this there has been more proactive work to engage with the PSHE leads in the schools including attending the PSHE leads meeting and as a result of this being invited to present the THEP to them at their next bi-annual meeting in November.

In addition to being accredited for use in schools the Programme has been developed to allow it to be more flexible, thus providing opportunities to work more closely with other partners such as Health and Probation. The Housing Strategy Team has undertaken early discussions with the National Offender Management Service around the potential for the delivery of a pilot project for Prisoners. Additionally, discussions are underway with Health colleagues to explore how the THEP might be utilised to contribute to key projects such as teenage pregnancy and other health improvement projects.

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

APPENDICES

Appendix A: What is the THEP?

Appendix B: Proposed use of Homelessness Prevention Funding 2012-15