



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Cabinet

Committee date: 13/12/2023

Report title: Allocation of Better Care Fund to support new developments

Portfolio: Councillor Jones, Deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety

Report from: Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety

Wards: Lakenham and Thorpe Hamlet Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

KEY DECISION

Purpose

To seek approval to allocate some of the Better Care Fund allocation to the County Council to enable 2 supported housing schemes, which could deliver 23 sheltered housing properties.

Recommendation:

It is recommended to authorise the allocation of £0.5m of the councils Better Care Fund allocation to the two capital projects detailed in this report, and the funds be distributed to Norfolk County Council to enable these projects to proceed.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the corporate priority for Norwich to have the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.

1. Background

- 1.1. Since 2015, the Council has received an allocation from the Better Care Fund (BCF) as part of an integrated approach to housing, health and social care locally, and to help promote joined up local person-centred approaches to supporting communities.
- 1.2. Grant paid under this determination must be spent in accordance with a Better Care Fund (BCF) spending plan jointly agreed between the relevant local authority or local authorities and the relevant Clinical Commissioning Groups.
- 1.3. In 2-tier areas, decisions around the use of the Fund will need to be made with the direct involvement of both tiers of local government (county and district councils) working jointly to support integration ambitions.
- 1.4. Authorities may decide to spend the Better Care Fund allocation in three ways:
 - Approving disabled facilities grants in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the 1996 Act)
 - Providing housing assistance in accordance with a locally published Housing Assistance Policy under RRO powers
 - Using a portion of the funding for other social care capital projects (as locally agreed with district councils in two-tier areas).

2. The need to use a portion of the funding on ‘other social care capital projects’

- 2.1. In recent years the demand on the BCF allocation for disabled facilities grants has been lower than the amount allocated to the city council, meaning that this can be used for other social care capital projects.
- 2.2. Work has already taken place with our commissioning partners at the county council to look at how best the budget could benefit residents. For example, in 2022/23 we introduced the affordable warmth grant, replacing old inefficient boilers for owner occupiers in receipt of council tax reduction.
- 2.3. There is a risk that if this allocation was not made, the county council could reclaim unspent budgets. They have made it clear that at this point, it is not something they are considering.

3. Capital budget carried forward.

- 3.1. Discussions have taken place between our development team and the county council commissioners. Initially, 2 schemes have been identified where some of the allocation could help these project progress. They are:

Great Hospital - £0.200m

Norfolk County Council are working with the Great Hospital and Homes England (HE) to explore the development of 19 units of accommodation on

the existing retirement housing site in central Norwich. The site has planning approval and has been cleared, meaning it could be built and operational within two years. Discussions are ongoing how the new development could meet the needs of people in Norwich as their care needs change.

The proposal is for an Independent Living development which would offer homes for older people with care and support needs including 24/7 staff on site to respond in an emergency. The development would be similar to the successful schemes developed in Acle and Fakenham with the contribution of Norfolk County Council and HE capital.

The Great Hospital site offers real potential to build on the service offer that is already in place and provide a flagship development in the centre of Norwich. Needs analysis completed in conjunction with all districts indicated that Norwich needs 245 units of specialist housing to meet the needs of the older population. This proposal is part of meeting that need.

Referrals to the service would be made through a nominations panel which would include Norwich City Council and would prioritise residents of the local district. This capital contribution from Norwich City Council would be in addition to capital from Norfolk County Council and would support the increased costs of development and the provision of assistive technology which would improve responsiveness of care provision across the whole site.

Webster Court - £0.300m

Webster Court provides 32 units of accommodation for people with mental health, care and support needs including those who have previously been street homeless. 25 of the units are currently commissioned as extra care housing for people with serious and long-term mental illness, 4 of the units are for people with physical mobilities and frailty, and 3 of the units are currently let for general needs. Over time Webster Court will work exclusively as a mental health extra care housing setting (as people with general needs and frailty move on).

Webster Court is one of a number of services developed and commissioned jointly between Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council for people who are homeless with mental health support needs and local connections to Norwich.

This proposal for additional units of accommodation, has been developed with the existing care provider who also holds the lease (from Norwich City Council) on the site.

The development would see up to 4 additional units of accommodation created from redundant staffing accommodation (subject to planning permission being granted). Norfolk County Council are committed to providing capital funding for this important development supporting people who represent a vulnerable part of society, and this funding would ensure the viability of the project.

Referrals to the service are managed through the Adult Social Care Mental

Health Team. Service users are also well known to the City Council led and commissioned rough sleepers and Pathways service of which St Martin's is a key provider. The additional provision will expand this service which has been highly successful in supporting both the physical and mental health needs of vulnerable rough sleepers in Norwich.

Implications

Financial and resources

4. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.
5. The 2023/24 current approved Disabled Facilities Grant budget is £2.217m and the expenditure proposed within this report is included within the forecast outturn of £1.954m reported at quarter 2.
6. In addition to the £0.263m underspend forecast at quarter 2, there remains a further £0.105m of Better Care funding, providing a total of £0.368m for which opportunities will continue to be reviewed to ensure its effective utilisation.

Legal

7. The Council has a legal duty to provide disabled facilities grants, which is pooled with the Better Care Fund. The Council has sufficient budget to fulfil demand for disabled facilities grants and the Better Care Funding can therefore be allocated to other projects that meet the criteria of the Fund.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	Please see the attached Equality Impact Assessment. The proposals will benefit older people with care and support needs and people who have been street homeless with serious or long-term mental illnesses.
Health, social and economic impact	These supported housing schemes will have a positive Health and Social impact.
Crime and disorder	It is not considered there are any crime and disorder impacts arising from this decision.
Children and adults safeguarding	It is not considered there are any impacts on children or adults safeguarding arising from this decision.

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Environmental impact	It is not considered there are any environmental impacts arising from this decision. The environmental impacts of the schemes will be assessed under the planning applications.

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
The BCF underspend is not utilised.	Potentially, the county council could seek to reclaim underspend and invest it in other district council settings.	Approving this report, ensure the BCF underspend reaches Norwich residents.

Other options considered

8. There are no other identified projects that would be a reasonably viable alternative.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation


9. Passing this funding to the county council ensures it remains of benefit to residents in Norwich and the remaining funding can continue to be used to finance the package of grants and loans offered by the city council.

Contact officer:

Name: Kevin Ayers

Telephone number: 01603 989192

Email address: kevinayers@norwich.gov.uk

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What is being assessed	Better Care Fund allocation	Status	First assessment of new proposal
Officer completing	Kevin Ayers	Role	Home Improvement Manager
Team	Home Improvement Team	Directorate	Housing and Community Safety
Senior leadership team sponsor	Bob Granville	Role	Executive Director Housing and Community Safety

What are the main aims or purpose of the policy, practice, service or function?

To divert better care fund budget allocation to 2 new supported housing schemes.

The 2 schemes are the Great Hospital site and Webster Court.

The Great Hospital will offer homes for older people with care and support needs including staff on site 24 hours a day to respond to any emergency situation.

Webster Court provides extra care living accommodation for people who have been street homeless with serious or long-term mental illness. This will see 4 additional units of accommodation created from redundant staffing accommodation.

How does it fit with other services and policies, and how does it support our [corporate objectives](#) and [City Vision](#)?

It supports the corporate priority for Norwich to have the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.

This proposal also works to support our efforts to realise the 'Fair City' theme of our 2040 City Vision for Norwich, through assisting the development of housing options which promote individual and community physical and mental wellbeing.

What is the reason for the proposal or change (financial, legal etc)?

Financial: There is sufficient allocation of Better Care Fund enabling this proposal to proceed

Equality Impact Assessment

Who implements, carries out or delivers the policy, practice, service or function?

Norfolk County Council will oversee and commission the projects.

What outcomes do we want to achieve, why and for who?

These 2 schemes will provide suitable and appropriate housing for older people with care and support needs and people who have been street homeless with serious or long-term mental illnesses.

Will anyone be disproportionately affected by the programme, and/or will it create any benefits? (customers, employees, groups in the wider community etc)

No group will be disproportionately affected. Although the money is intended for disabled people to enable them to have their homes adapted.

It will however benefit older people with care and support needs and people who have been street homeless with serious or long-term mental illnesses.

If yes, complete the relevant sections below for any benefits and adverse impacts identified.

Affected group	Key findings from analysis of data and evidence. Identify any gaps in data here	Level & type of impact: low/medium/high, positive/adverse	Justifiable if adverse	Actions to mitigate impacts, maximise benefits or address identified gaps in data	By when
Age	Additional specialist housing schemes will be enabled by the development of the Great Hospital Site that will benefit this protected characteristic.	Positive	N/A	Actions to mitigate negative impacts and promote benefits will be the responsibility of Norfolk County Council, as they will be fully responsible for the delivery of the 2 housing schemes related to this proposal.	N/A
Disability	Additional specialist housing schemes will be enabled by the development of the 2 schemes	Positive	N/A	Actions to mitigate negative impacts and promote benefits will be the responsibility of Norfolk	N/A

	identified that will benefit this protected characteristic.			County Council, as they will be fully responsible for the delivery of the 2 housing schemes related to this proposal.	
Gender reassignment	No impact identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage and civil partnership	No impact identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	No impact identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Race/ethnicity	No impact identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Religion and belief	No impact identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sex/gender	No impact identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sexual orientation	No impact identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other groups: People who are sleeping rough	Additional suitable specialist housing schemes will be enabled by the development of the 4 additional units at Webster Court.	Positive	N/A	Actions to mitigate negative impacts and promote benefits will be the responsibility of Norfolk County Council, as they will be fully responsible for the delivery of the housing scheme aimed at supporting those with a history of street homelessness.	N/A

What evidence and data has been used for this assessment, including community engagement and consultation? *(include links to data sources, consultations etc)*

This proposal has been jointly developed with the County Council who have identified the 2 schemes to be developed. The development team were consulted on this proposal, which they support. They did not identify any other alternative schemes or potential uses for the Better Care Fund underspend.

How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?

N/A

What actions have been identified going forward?

No future actions relating to the Home Improvement team have been identified because this is a one-off action to hand the funds to Norfolk County Council.

How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?

N/A – Once these funds are transferred to the Norfolk County Council, they will assume total responsibility for the use of these funds to aid in the delivery of the 2 housing schemes identified above. As this is a one-off action, the Home Improvement team will resume business as usual practice and continue to allocate and use any future Better Care Funding as was originally intended.

Officer completing assessment	Kevin Ayers	Date	27/11/2023
Senior leadership team sponsor	Chris Hancock	Date	06/12/2023
Equality lead (strategy team)	Joe Siggins	Date	28/11/2023