

Cabinet Member Decision Note

Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)

To: Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety

Date: 22nd February 2021

Author: Director of Housing

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To seek project approval and delegations to enable capital spend, under the Next Steps Accommodation programme (NSAP), using grant received from Government for the purpose of acquiring an additional 10 x 1 bed units of Council housing for the purpose of reducing rough sleeping.
- 1.2 The funding secured through the NSAP is ring-fenced and must only be used for the acquisition of an additional 10 x one bed units for Rough Sleepers.
- 1.3 This links to the Council's Vision for Swindon 2030, Priority Four to Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults and Pledges 23 to ensure that Swindon's vulnerable adults are safeguarded and protected and Pledge 26 To prevent homelessness wherever possible, including using additional measures such as the temporary winter housing provision and offering a day centre to prevent rough sleepers from returning to the streets.

2. Recommended Action to be Authorised by a Cabinet Member Under Delegated Powers

Recommended that:

- 2.1 The Director of Housing, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets and the Chief Legal Officer, be authorised to:
 - 2.1.1 Enter into the legal agreement with Homes England to secure the NSAP funding from that body and
 - 2.1.2 Use £450,000 of unallocated s106 developer affordable housing contributions (in conjunction with the Homes England NSAP funding) to enter into the property purchase and other necessary agreements (such agreements to be reviewed by the Chief Legal Officer) for the purpose of delivering affordable housing through the NSAP programme, within identified budgets, for the work referenced in this report.

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3. Detail

- 3.1 In order to follow on from the 'Everyone In' initiative by central government to assist all rough sleepers into accommodation in March 2020, the Council successfully applied to the "Next Steps Accommodation Programme" (NSAP) in August 2020 with proposals which have been accepted by Ministry Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Homes England, awarding £650,000 to the Council.
- 3.2 The agreed proposal is for MHCLG / Homes England to provide £650,000 grant funding, which combined with some of the Council's Section 106 funds - £450,000 - , will provide £1.1m for the Council to acquire 10 x one bed units across the Borough. This is based on the value of 1 bed properties being on average £110,000 per unit.
- 3.3 The Council needs to have obtained properties and ensured that the capital spend is made, in accordance with bid requirements, by Quarter 4 (January to March 2021).
- 3.4 The Council accommodated around 50 individuals at significant additional costs to the Local Authority as per the 'everyone in' initiative during the pandemic. Additional units of accommodation will reduce the number of individuals in more expensive temporary accommodation and Bed & Breakfast.
- 3.5 Allocations to these units would be under 'Housing First' principles, allocating homes to vulnerable persons who have been, or are presently, rough sleeping and who are considered to have complex needs.
- 3.6 A number of individuals have been identified from the 'Everyone In' work who require this model of housing. This project builds on the Council's successful model of 'Housing First' a service for those individuals with multiple and complex needs and history of entrenched rough sleeping.
- 3.7 There are significant benefits to the individuals who are housed under these principles. A stable home, flexible support and improved health both physically and mentally and reduces the likelihood of individuals experiencing the cycle of homelessness.
- 3.8 This initiative links to the Council's Reducing Rough Sleeper Strategy and the 5 Strategic priorities and in particular to 'Enable the provision of sustainable housing solutions' and developing a 'Housing First Model' within the relevant Action Plan.

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4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There is an option not to accept the grant allocation, however the Council will not have the necessary funds to purchase 10 additional units of self-contained information.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The following Opposition Spokespersons have been consulted on the recommendations of the report and their responses are also summarised below:

Councillor Paul Dixon – I am happy to support this proposal, it is a positive use of the funding.

Councillor Stan Pajak - Very happy to support this initiative which has come at a very opportune time

Councillor Oliver Donachie - I understand the logic and opportunity behind this proposal and support it.

6. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 Prior to COVID-19 the Council under its statutory duties housed on average 10 single persons per week in Bed & Breakfast Accommodation who would have otherwise been Rough Sleeping. The average cost of a Bed & Breakfast placement is £350 per week (Net of Housing Benefit Subsidy) and equates to an annual £182k cost to the Homeless General Fund Budget. The use of NSAP grant as proposed in this report will provide a significant saving on the net cost of homelessness accommodation in the General Fund budget, as well as reducing levels of homelessness.
- 6.2 The units will be earmarked for rough sleeper use for the next 30 years in accordance with the NSAP guidelines, and managed within the HRA. In this way, the HRA will retain the rental income from the tenants rent payments, manage the tenancy and maintenance of the property, whilst the General Fund will benefit from any savings in reduced accommodation costs.
- 6.3 Prior to the pandemic there was an average of between 15 – 25 individuals sleeping rough on any given night. Rough Sleeping is not a static cohort and includes those who have been sofa surfing, those who have been living in temporary solutions, such as staying family or friends and those new to Rough Sleeping.

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6.4 It is estimated that a Rough Sleeper with substance misuse and offending issues will cost the public sector services £14k to £21k per year compared to £4k for the average adult.

6.5 The Council is a certified Investment Partner with Homes England for Shared Ownership Affordable Housing Programme 2016-2021

Legal and Human Rights Implications

6.6 Legal and Human Rights implications have been taken fully into account in the preparation of this Decision Note and it is believed the recommendations are compatible with Convention rights.

6.7 Local authorities' homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed significant new duties on English housing authorities.

6.8 The proposals in this report meet reflect the bid documentation submitted and the MHCLG requirements for use of the NSAP grant and are also consistent with the aims and objectives of Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy (2018-2021) that has a specific focus on actions regarding the prevention of Rough Sleeping.

6.9 Legal Services have reviewed the proposed agreement from Homes England for the NSAP funding. HE as clearly stated that the terms are non-negotiable, 'take-it-or-leave-it' basis. The legal review as not revealed any issues of significant concern. Some minor points Covid-19, formal service of notices and not fettering the Council's powers (e.g., planning) were raised with HE and there are email exchanges that provided the Council with reassurance.

6.10 Any further legal documentation associated with taking forward the actual development of the Rough Sleeper accommodation, will include the engagement of Legal Services any the associated legal agreements

Climate Change Impact

6.11 The properties will comply with meeting the Decent Homes Standard and be included in the Council's objective to improve energy efficiency across our stock.

Children Looked After Impact

6.9 Approximately 5% of Care Leavers in Swindon will experience Rough Sleeping after they turn 18. An increase in appropriate housing solutions will contribute towards a wider

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housing offer to suit the needs of this cohort and reduce the likelihood of this occurring in Swindon.

- 6.10 There are a number of statutory duties contained within the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 to ensure that this cohort are recognised as a priority.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 6.11 None specific to this Decision Note have been identified

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 6.12 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been undertaken on the development programme and no adverse impacts were identified. A copy of the DIA can be obtained from the report author.

- 6.13 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) is available for the Reducing Rough Sleeper Strategy and Preventing Homelessness Strategy which this proposal supports from the report author.

Risk Management

- 6.12 The proposed approach mitigates the risk of achieving the best price that could be obtained for properties.

7. Consultees

- 7.1 Corporate Director of Finance and Assets and the Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) have been consulted in relation to this report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 None.

9. Appendices

10. Declarations of Interest

- 10.1 Cabinet Members are reminded to consider whether they have any known interests in any of the matters referred to in this Decision Note. If such an interest exists this should be declared to the Monitoring Officer (or Committee and Member Services Manager), and they should take no part in the consideration of the Decision Note and should refer the Decision Note to the Leader of the Council instead for consideration.

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11. Sign-off

- 11.1 The Cabinet Member is requested to respond with 5 days of the date of this report by [28th February 2021]
- 11.2 Decisions of Cabinet Members will be published in the Members' Bulletin. The Decision must not be implemented until such time that a five-day "Call-in" period has expired. This date will be specified in the Members Bulletin. If a Decision is "called-in" it will be referred to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. It must only be implemented if the Scrutiny Committee has raised no objection. If an objection is forthcoming the matter will be referred back to the Decision-Maker.
- 11.3 The Cabinet Members are requested to support the Recommendations set out in Section 2 of this report:

[to be signed electronically and redacted for publication]