

Decision Number: 53 (2013/14)

## Portfolio Holder Executive Decision Statement

The Local Authority (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

**Subject:** Extension of the District Council's financial contribution to the 'Small is Beautiful' under-occupation initiative and joint funding of the Under Occupation Officer post with West Kent Housing Association.

### Details of Decision taken

To allocate £35,215 to West Kent Housing Association from the District Council's S106 affordable housing planning gains (as per Appendix A: SLA Second Phase). This would enable a second phase to take place on the social sector under-occupation project.

### Reason for Decision

Back in 2011/12, the District Council's (then) Services Select Committee undertook an in-depth scrutiny to review under-occupation in the social housing sector. An under-occupation strategy subsequently followed and this was adopted as District Council policy in late 2012.

The strategy contains a number of key objectives including those relevant to this report, which are: 1) to explore opportunities for a specialist officer to act as an advocate for people looking to downsize; and 2) to increase funding for the Small is Beautiful scheme to coincide with a strategy drive.

Both of these objectives were achieved through a contribution from affordable housing planning gains and progress was subsequently presented to the District Council's Housing, Welfare and Community Safety Advisory Committee on 11/02/14.

Results have been positive and showed these tactics to be effective in the freeing-up of family-sized housing for those in need. There was consequently general consensus that this strategy approach should continue, particularly as West Kent Housing Association has identified a further 33 potential cases of downsizing (subject to funding availability).

In order to take these additional opportunities forward, a sum of £35,215 is requested from affordable housing planning gains. This would provide an additional £20,000 for the Small is Beautiful scheme itself and £15,215 (50% cost) to extend the temporary officer's post until 31st March 2015. This is considered to represent good value for money, taking into account the project outcomes to date.

### All Documents considered:


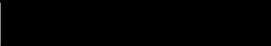
Under-occupation Strategy 2012

### Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the Member

When completed a copy of this record must be sent to the Democratic Services Section by e-mail [and a signed copy by internal mail](#)

(For Democratic Services use)

Decision Number: 53 (2013/14)

<b>when making the Decision:</b>	
<b>Financial implications</b> – funding to extend this strategy objective would continue to be a cost-effective approach.	
<b>Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement – there are no legal issues to consider.</b> As per committee report: Strategy for Under-occupation in the Social Sector (13/09/12)	
<b>Equality Impacts</b> As per committee report: Strategy for Under-occupation in the Social Sector (13/09/12)	
<b>Local Member (s), other Portfolio Holders and/or Directors/Heads of Service Consulted</b>  <b>Debated at Housing and Community Safety Advisory Committee (02/14) and general consensus as to continuing current strategy approach</b>	
<b>Details of any conflicts of interest</b> <b>a) declared by any executive member who is consulted by the Decision Taker</b>  <b>b) and any details of dispensations granted by the Chief Executive in respect of any declared conflict</b>	
<b>Decision taken by:</b>	Cllr Michelle Lowe, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Housing, Welfare and Community Safety Cllr Ian Bosley, Portfolio Holder for Local Planning and Environment
<b>Signed by Portfolio Holder</b>	 
<b>Date of Decision</b>	22 April 2014                      25 April 2014
<b>Record made by:</b>	George Lewis
<b>Date of record:</b>	29 April 2014

When completed a copy of this record must be sent to the Democratic Services Section by e-mail [and a signed copy by internal mail](#)