

(For Democratic Services use)

Decision Number: 6 2016/17

Portfolio Holder Executive Decision Statement

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

Subject: *Improvement works to almshouses owned and managed by the Margaret Hyde Almshouses charity.*

Details of Decision taken: *To agree to contribute £10,640 from the District Council's S106 affordable housing planning gains to enable improvement works at the charity's almshouses scheme in Wellers Town, Chiddingstone.*

Reason for Decision

Evidence confirms a need for affordable housing for older people in the Sevenoaks District and this is set to increase as the local population ages. As well as there being a requirement for new provision to meet existing and future need, the District Council must also work with social housing providers to maintain and preserve the District's existing specialist and supported housing. In doing so, this will enable established schemes to continue to provide for specific needs well into the future. Almshouses provide for older people in need and are a key and valuable source of housing, they meeting a particular housing need for older people who have lived in the respective village environment for most, if not all, of their lives.

The scheme in Wellers Town is in need of improvement works to bring it up to current day standards and to enable its continued use as a decent and safe source of housing for local older people. The proposed project will repair a failing roof and also introduce a much more effective and efficient sewage treatment system (the scheme being off the main sewerage infrastructure). In doing so, the charity will see its operating costs greatly reduced as it goes forward and enable it to become much more financially self-sufficient - all of which will stand it in good stead going forward and see this traditional form of housing preserved for future generations. The charity is also undertaking a rent and service charge review to ensure it maximises revenue going forward and to enable an adequate sinking fund for future maintenance, improvement and repairs. To demonstrate the charity's commitment to stock maintenance, inspections (internal and external) are carried out routinely and several recent improvement works have been

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undertaken, including the provision of a walk-in shower for a resident suffering increasing mobility issues.

To further assist the charity, the District Council is also preparing a housing information pack. These will be made available to its residents and to raise awareness of the wide-range of housing and wider support services available. The District Council has also offered to help its residents to compare and switch to cheaper energy tariffs through its 'Sevenoaks Switch-and-Save' energy switching website (off the main gas network, so electricity only and much more expensive).

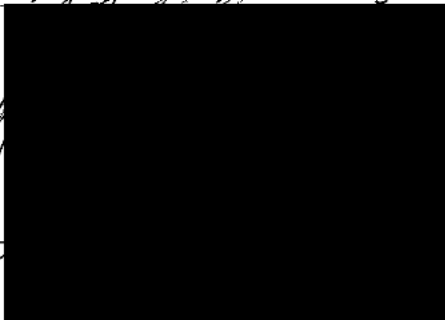
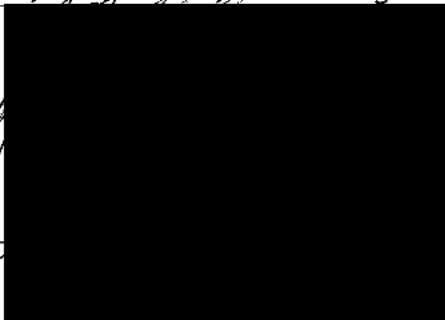

The charity identifies need through direct approaches, word-of-mouth, and adverts in the local village magazine. In the last fortnight, the charity has been approached by two further older households in need of more suitable housing and these will be placed on their waiting list. The charity's definition of housing need is broadly as per District Council's own and related objectives correspond, therefore. As far as rural isolation, this is not considered to be an issue as the housing is allocated to those with a long-standing connection to the village and, as would be expected, residents would typically like to remain in the quiet and rural surroundings of the village. Local services are available at around 0.5-miles away and a bus route passes the scheme, so isolation is limited in any event. There is also car parking provision for residents with the use of a vehicle.

As part of the District Council's emerging housing and health strategy, and the increasing focus on how its housing interventions can help to achieve wider health and welfare outcomes (reducing pressure on acute health and other support services in the process), this project will directly support those aims. Older people will also continue to be given the opportunity to live independently, which is by far the majority wish (as evidenced in several studies), and there will be less consequent pressure on the District's supported housing schemes. Older people are also a key client group and prioritised in housing and wider community strategy, both at District level and across Kent.

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Details of any conflicts of interest a) declared by any executive member who is consulted by the Decision Taker b) and any details of dispensations granted by the Chief Executive in respect of any declared conflict	
Decision taken by:	Cllr Michelle Lowe, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health; and Cllr Robert Piper, Portfolio Holder for Planning
Signed by Portfolio Holder	Cllr Michelle Lowe:  Cllr Robert Piper: 
Date of Decision	20/5/16
Record made by:	
Date of record:	24/5/16

Report prepared by: Gavin Missons, Housing Policy Manager

LINKS FOR DOCS CONSIDERED:

KCC Accommodation Strategy: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/adult-social-care-policies/accommodation-strategy-for-adult-social-care#>

District profile: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/adult-social-care-policies/accommodation-strategy-for-adult-social-care#>

Housing Strategy Action Plan:
http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/81364/hsapfinalcopy.pdf

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All Documents considered:

Housing Strategy Action Plan; Community Plan; Health Inequalities Action Plan; Kent Supporting People Strategy; Kent Accommodation Strategy.

Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the Member when making the Decision:

None

Financial implications

To be funded through S106 affordable housing planning gains and with no consequent impact on District Council budgets, therefore.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

This funding would enable the project to go ahead and the District would not, as a consequence, risk losing much-needed specialist housing for a vulnerable client group. Without this funding, the site could potentially be sold on and/or used for another purpose some time in the future.

Equality Impacts (Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty)

This project aims to advance equality of opportunity for older people (and their families and carers) and foster good relations between people from different groups. The decision recommended through this paper would directly impact end-users in a positive way.

Local Member (s), other Portfolio Holders and/or Directors/Heads of Service Consulted

- Richard Morris, Chief Planning Officer

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Community Plan:

<http://documents.sevenoaks.gov.uk/community%20and%20living/community%20plan/Sevenoaks%20Community%20Plan%202013.pdf>

Health Inequalities Action Plan:

<http://documents.sevenoaks.gov.uk/Community%20and%20Living/Health/2013-15%20Sevenoaks%20Mind%20the%20Gap%20HI%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

KCC Supporting People Strategy:

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/adult-Social-Services/housing-related-support/Updated%20documents%2016Dec09/Draft%20SP%20Strategy%202010-2015V3.pdf>

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