

(For Democratic Services use)

Decision Number: 11 (2016/17)

Portfolio Holder Executive Decision Statement

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

Subject: To agree a S106 affordable housing planning gains spending proposal to continue to fund the Private Sector Lettings (PSL) Scheme 'Offer to Landlords'.

Details of Decision taken

To allocate £25,000 from the District Council's S106 affordable housing planning gains under HP3 - 'Managing future needs for affordable housing including homelessness prevention and benefit advisory services'. This funding is to enable the continuation of the PSL Scheme 'Offer to Landlords' (funding of £55,000 approved in December 2014 is now almost spent).

Reason for Decision

The Council relies heavily on the private rented sector to alleviate and prevent homelessness. With limited social housing stock in the District, assisting people who are facing homelessness to secure a private rental is crucial. However, the gap between private market rents and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is widening due to rents increasing but LHA remaining the same (LHA has been capped for the next 4 years). Most of the people who seek help through the PSL scheme are those on lower incomes and therefore in receipt of partial or full LHA.

This Council works proactively with private landlords by offering comprehensive incentive packages as part of this Council's Private Sector Lettings Scheme to alleviate homelessness and reduce the use/cost of placing households in bed and breakfast accommodation. The 'Offer to Landlords' Scheme enables us to support people into private rented accommodation, as the demand for social housing is greater than the current housing stock in this District. Incentives offered as part of this scheme include insurance to cover potential rent arrears, enhanced deposit bonds, small grants to improve energy efficiency and an incentive payment for landlords who agree to work with us for at least three years.

Original funding for the PSL Scheme 'Offer to Landlords' Scheme was approved in December 2014 (£55,000). This funding has allowed the PSL scheme to secure private rented accommodation for 27 households and reduced pressure on the social housing stock. The approximate cost of bed and breakfast accommodation for 1 week is £420, with an average stay of at least 1 month this would have cost the Council £45,360 (this amount would increase depending on the size of the household). In addition, it costs an estimated £8,000 for the Council to take a single homeless application (officer time, fees etc.). So, even if just half of these 27 cases had resulted in an application, this would have cost the Council around £104,000.

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The households supported as part of this scheme have now secured homes for at least 12 months. By helping people into private rented accommodation, the PSL scheme also provides households with longer term security and a chance to put down roots (particularly important for families). In turn, this benefits the local community and economy.

The PSL scheme also provides additional support and advice to applicants and works closely with the HERO service and the Flying Start scheme to enable tenants to sustain their tenancies, therefore preventing future problems with homelessness.

All Documents considered:

Housing Strategy and Action Plan
Core strategy (Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document)
Community Plan

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

None.

Financial implications

Funding will be from S106 planning gains (affordable housing payments) and will decrease the total available for future projects. However, there is currently sufficient unallocated funding to support future projects.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications.

This funding will allow the PSL scheme to help secure private rented accommodation for people facing homelessness. Without the funding to offer incentives for landlords to work with us, there is a high risk that we will not be able to find suitable accommodation for households in need. This will increase the need to place people in bed and breakfast accommodation, therefore impacting on existing Council budgets.

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

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

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

Cllr Michelle Lowe – Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health
Cllr Robert Piper – Portfolio Holder for Planning
Lesley Bowles – Chief Officer for Communities & Business
Hayley Brooks – Head of Housing & Health

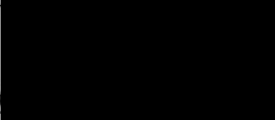

Details of any conflicts of interest

a) declared by any executive member who is consulted by the Decision Taker

N/A

b) and any details of dispensations granted by the Chief Executive in respect of any declared conflict

N/A

Decision taken by:	Cllr Michelle Lowe, Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health. Cllr Robert Piper, Portfolio Holder for Planning.
Signed by Portfolio Holder	 
Date of Decision	23/08/16
Record made by:	DEMSGW
Date of record:	5/9/16

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