

(For Democratic Services use)

Decision Number: 12 (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 Accredited Tenants Scheme (Flying Start) for a further six months, delivered by West Kent Housing Association.

Details of Decision taken

To allocate £20,000 from the District Council's S106 affordable housing planning gains under HP3 - 'Managing future needs for affordable housing including homelessness prevention'. This funding is to extend the Accredited Tenants Scheme for a further six months (initial funding of £40,000 for a one year pilot was agreed in October 2014 (Decision Number 31 2014/15)).

Reason for Decision

A tenant accreditation scheme, Flying Start, was developed by West Kent Housing Association through an identified need for a tenant educational scheme to prevent homelessness to support prospective tenants to sustain successful tenancies.

Flying Start aims to help prospective social and private sector tenants to achieve and sustain their tenancy through the delivery of a targeted workshop. The workshops aim to increase prospective tenants' knowledge and understanding of their rights and responsibilities when committing to a tenancy, as well as providing them details of other local housing, debt and employment support services available to them. Around 45% of the participants had never held a tenancy previously, so have little or no knowledge about tenancy sustainment and responsibilities.

During the one year pilot of this new scheme, a total of 109 prospective tenants have received tenant accreditation through the delivery of 13 Flying Start workshops. The majority of participants have also been signposted or directly referred into 16 different support services locally. The level of engagement with new tenants has increased significantly to offer additional support with 25% of the participants receiving a one-to-one support pre and post the workshops to address other tenancy related issues.

The reported outcomes from the evaluation over the one year pilot of the scheme demonstrated:

- 95% of responses reported an improvement in the awareness of local housing options;
- 88% reports improved knowledge of local agencies and support services;
- Over 90% stated they feel more confident that they would be able to successfully manage a tenancy
- 98% would recommend the workshop to others

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The additional funding will enable Flying Start to continue for a further six months until March 2017. During this extended period, further work would be carried out to evaluate the outcomes, complete follow ups with previous attendees and develop greater partnership links. Work will also be undertaken to look at options to sustain this scheme longer term, including sponsorship and buy-in from private landlords, businesses and letting agents and delivering this scheme for partners including other local authorities and housing associations in Kent.

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, the need for this Scheme has been identified as part of this Council's duty for homelessness and there is currently sufficient unallocated funding to support future projects.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications.

This funding will enable Flying Start to work with more prospective tenants in temporary accommodation, the Council's Private Sector Letting Scheme and social housing, to equip tenants with the required skills to sustain successful tenancies and therefore preventing homelessness. Without the funding there is a risk that tenants will continue to fail their obligations to pay their rent, be evicted which will in turn increase the work of this Council in relation to its statutory duty for homelessness as they will not have access to other accommodation. This will increase the need to place people in bed and breakfast accommodation, therefore impacting on existing Council budgets and applying additional pressures of this Council's housing services through increased demand.

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


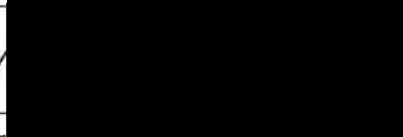
Details of any conflicts of interest

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:	DemSERU
Date of record:	5/9/16

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