

Decision Number: 18 (2018/19)

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' including landlord incentives and deposits.

Details of Decision taken

To allocate £75,000 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 request is to enable the continuation of the PSL scheme 'offer to landlords', with £40,000 to fund cash deposits and £35,000 to fund landlord incentives.

Reason for Decision

With limited social housing stock in the District, the private rented sector is a vital resource in preventing homelessness. Assisting people who are facing homelessness to secure a private rental is crucial but the sector can be difficult to access, particularly for people on lower incomes or in receipt of benefits. The gap between private market rents and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is widening - LHA has been capped for over 5 years, whilst private rents have continued to rise. Customers seeking help through the PSL scheme are on lower incomes and/or benefits. The initial, upfront costs needed to secure a private rental can often be in excess of £2,000 (rent in advance and deposit) and most people who approach the Council for help do not have this amount of money available as a lump sum, although the monthly rent is affordable to them.

To maximise access to the private rented sector, the Council works proactively with private landlords by offering comprehensive incentive packages through the PSL scheme. The PSL scheme offers incentives including a one-off incentive payment, small repair/energy efficiency grants, rent in advance payments, a cash deposit/bond, full inventory service and ongoing tenancy sustainment and support. Consultation with landlords has demonstrated these incentives are valued by landlords and helps to encourage them to work with this Council to provide private sector accommodation for people on a low income.

This homelessness prevention scheme plays a vital role in alleviating and preventing homelessness and reducing the use/cost of placing households in bed and breakfast accommodation. Since April 2018 we have helped 58 households secure private rented accommodation, whilst working with 17 new landlords through more proactive work to encourage and support landlord engagement. This has prevented this Council having to place these households into nightly

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paid emergency accommodation, therefore making a significant saving to Council budgets (totalling over £166,000 for a 56 day period for each household). The cost of helping these households into private rentals was £95,483 (with a proportion of this to be repaid when tenancy deposits are returned and rent in advance loans cleared), saving at least £70,800.

All Documents considered:

Housing Strategy Action Plan
Core Strategy (Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document)
Community Plan
West Kent Housing & Homelessness Strategy

Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the Member when making the Decision:
None.

Financial implications

Funding is requested from S106 affordable housing planning gains. There is currently sufficient unallocated funding to support this work. Without this funding, there will be an increased need to place people in emergency nightly paid accommodation, therefore increasing expenditure on Council budgets.

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 or to provide deposits, there is a high risk that we will not be able to find suitable accommodation for households in need.

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
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

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

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

13/03/19

Record made by:

L. WEBB

Date of record:

13.03.19

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