

# Supplement for

# Cabinet

On **Wednesday 9 August 2023** At **6.00 pm**

## Agenda Item 7 - Scrutiny Reports

### Contents

7. **Scrutiny reports**

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The Housing and Homelessness Panel will meet on 2 August 2023. The following report is expected and will be published as a supplement, together with any other recommendations from that meeting:

- Expansion of the Housing First Programme
- Update on Customer Complaints and Feedback

The agenda, reports and any additional supplements can be found together with this supplement on the committee meeting webpage.

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 09 August 2023  
**Report of:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Title of Report:** Expansion of the Housing First Programme

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Deliver More Affordable Housing; Support Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 02 August 2023 to consider a report concerning Expansion of the Housing First Programme. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 09 August 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves the Council's participation in the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) in order to purchase 12 new units for Housing First alongside commissioning support for a total of 17 units, including 5 units drawn from general needs stock. The report also seeks a Cabinet resolution to recommend to Council:
  - The allocation of a £2,888,000 capital budget (of which £1,688,000 will be borrowed by the Housing Revenue Account) for the Council's investment to

purchase the properties as part of the SHAP outlined in paragraph 19 of the report, the balance of which will be met by the SHAP grant; and

- A budget allocation of £600,000 to cover revenue costs to commission support providers to deliver support for the 17 units of Housing First. The funding equates to 3 years' worth of revenue but is spread over 4 financial years (paragraph 18 of the report).
2. In addition, the report recommends that Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer, to enter into agreements and contracts to facilitate the purchase by the Council of housing (to be held in the HRA) within the identified budget and within the project approval, as well as to enter into or amend agreements or contracts in relation to support provision (revenue spend) in line with procurement requirements.
  3. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing), Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services), Richard Wood (Housing Strategy and Needs Manager), Ossi Mosley (Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager) and Brendan Lewis (Senior Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Project Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

### **Summary and recommendations**

4. Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report. The Council implemented a Housing First programme in 2021/22 to help resolve homelessness of some of the most disadvantaged people in the community. The programme funded the purchase of up to 40 units; however this number had not been reached due to difficulty in identifying suitable accommodation. The 5 outstanding units were able to be carried forward into the current SHAP, extending the SHAP provision from 12 to 17 units. The Housing First programme represented a valuable contribution to long-term homelessness prevention and the worldwide evidence base showed that Housing First was successful in helping individuals to sustain tenancies. The evidence in Oxford was that Housing First was working; in particular there had been no evictions or abandonments in respect of individuals supported by Housing First in the City.
5. The Expansion of Housing First in Oxford was a key element of the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy; alongside the countywide Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which aimed to transform services across the county to end rough sleeping. There was a high level of need for Housing First provision within Oxford.
6. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the equalities impact and how individuals were prioritised to receive Housing First support; how the Council quality assures the services delivered by the external providers of wraparound support; the distribution of Housing First properties across the City; the impact of the Housing First programme on the availability of housing for other groups (e.g. Care Leavers); the impact of expanding the programme on other wraparound support agencies across the City; how far

Housing First will go to address existing need in the City; and the information contained within the risk register.

7. In particular, the Panel sought clarification on the contents of the risk register at Appendix 2 to the report. It was noted that the risks relating to Tenancy Sustainment and Housing First Acquisition were listed as opportunities, however the risk descriptions, causes and consequences seemed to suggest that these risks should be listed as threats rather than opportunities. The Panel agreed that a review of the risk register to ensure all information contained within it was accurate would be prudent.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council reviews the information contained within the risk register at Appendix 2 to the report to ensure accuracy.***

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**Appendix A**  
**Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of**  
**the Housing and Homelessness Panel of the Scrutiny Committee**

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Panel on 02 August 2023 concerning Expansion of the Housing First Programme. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1) That the Council reviews the information contained within the risk register at Appendix 2 to the report to ensure accuracy.	Yes	The Risk Register accompanying the Cabinet report has been amended to reflect that the risk descriptions relating to Tenancy Sustainment and Acquisitions are listed as threats rather than as opportunities, as pointed out by the Panel Chair at the meeting. Further corrections have been made to the Risk Register to ensure that it is accurate, including updating of the name of the owner for all risks following officer changes (see Annex 1).

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Appendix 2: Risk Register

Title	Risk description	Opp/ threat	Cause	Consequence	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current		Residual		Comments	Controls				
							I	P	I	P	I	P		Control description	Due date	Status	Progress %	Action Owner
Tenancy Sustainment	Tenants are evicted due to arrears, antisocial behaviour or other reasons	threat	Appropriate support not provided	Potential increase in rough sleeping	14/6/23	Ossi Mosley	3	3	3	2	3	1		Ensure Housing First services are delivered with a high fidelity to Housing First principles	31/3/24	In Progress	25	Brendan Lewis
Housing First acquisition	Properties are not suitable for HF tenants due to location, property type or other reasons	threat	Limited availability of suitable one bed properties	High failure rate of HF tenancies	14/6/23	Ossi Mosley	3	3	3	3	2	2		Review previous acquisition programmes with affordable development team. Work with Tenancy Management, Anti social behaviour and providers to manage any risk associated with certain locations.	31/3/25	In Progress	25	Brendan Lewis
Increase in demand for Housing First  6	Continual flow to the street leads to increasing demand for Housing First accommodation	threat	Cost of living and increasing housing affordability gap leads to an increase in homelessness and rough sleeping	Service unable to meet demand	14/6/23	Ossi Mosley	3	3	3	2	3	1		Ensure prevention work is increased across Housing Needs. Adopt a system wide approach to managing homelessness.	31/3/25	In Progress	10	Ossi Mosley

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 09 August 2023  
**Report of:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Title of Report:** Update on Customer Complaints and Feedback

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Deliver More Affordable Housing; Support Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

### **Introduction and overview**

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 02 August 2023 to consider an update on customer complaints and feedback. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing), Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services) and Bill Graves (Landlord Services Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services introduced the presentation and highlighted that the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill had received Royal Assent on 20 July 2023 to become the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. As a result, further changes in relation to housing complaints nationally were expected in the near future; and the Council had already received correspondence from the Housing Ombudsman. Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager delivered the presentation, which covered the period from October 2022 to March 2023.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the differences between Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints; oversight of the complaints process; and tracking emergent complaints trends.
5. The Panel noted responses to questions that the current ICT products had functionality to allow Oxford Direct Services to track, drill down into and analyse emergent trends within complaints. This functionality was due to be expanded to the Council in the near future. Officers advised that feedback was also sought through the recently launched 'Localz' text messaging service, which was proving to be transformational in terms of improved quality of service and emphasis on customer experience.
6. While the Panel agreed that progress was moving in the right direction, it agreed that it would be of benefit to the Council to focus on gaining more information related to customer experience in terms of communication more broadly, both through 'Localz' and other channels to ensure inclusivity. The Panel agreed that communication, and what tenants wanted or expected in terms of communication, was a key aspect of the service which should be prioritised for improvement.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council seeks to gain more information relating to communication more broadly within the customer experience via Localz and other channels, to enable experiences to be tracked and analysed with a view to identifying and implementing improvements.***

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**Appendix A**  
**Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of**  
**the Housing and Homelessness Panel of the Scrutiny Committee**

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Panel on 02 August 2023 concerning the Update on Customer Complaints and Feedback. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That the Council seeks to gain more information relating to communication more broadly within the customer experience via Localz and other channels, to enable experiences to be tracked and analysed with a view to identifying and implementing improvements.	Yes	Localz has already improved communication with tenants who have booked repairs. Learning from complaints is being shared and will be publicised.

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