

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 16 June 2021  
**Report of:** Executive Director of Housing  
**Title of Report:** Housing First Programme

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To seek project authorisation for a Housing First programme with the aim of supporting the Council's objective to end rough sleeping
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Diko Blackings, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing and Housing the Homeless
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 (extended)
<b>Recommendation:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:	
1. <b>Approve</b> the procurement of a support service for the Council's Housing First programme.	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Housing First principles
Appendix 2	Risk Register

## **Introduction**

1. Following the government's 'everyone in' call, at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown period in March 2020, emergency self-contained accommodation for rough sleepers and persons living in shared-space homelessness accommodation was rapidly secured. This has seen 350 people accommodated with 176 people successfully moving on to more permanent accommodation.
2. The next stage of this work is to successfully exit from the emergency accommodation, and to provide appropriate accommodation for everyone who is still residing there. To ensure the right solutions are available, the Council is establishing a Housing First programme to provide a bespoke housing and support solution for people whose needs haven't been met by other types of supported accommodation. This supports the new Countywide Strategy for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping which aims to deliver a housing led approach to tackling homelessness, of which Housing First projects are a key element.
3. The Council made a (revenue and capital) bid submission for £1,996,409 funding under the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) in late August 2020. This funding programme sought to fund interim and move-on accommodation provision from the emergency accommodation required under "Everyone In". The Council's bid included £150,000 capital funding as a contribution together with Council funding to purchase five properties and long-term revenue funding of £566,501 to provide a support service to 20 properties. The additional 15 properties will be made up from relets of council stock and properties made available by registered providers.
4. On 11 November 2020 the Head of Housing Services brought a report to Cabinet seeking approval in respect of the capital element of this funding, for the acquisition of additional Council housing to deliver a Housing First programme. Now that the initial five properties have been purchased, this report seeks approval for the procurement of a Housing First support service.
5. In addition, on 29 April 2021, the Council submitted a bid for a second phase of the Housing First programme from the government's Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP). This has requested funding to support the purchase of 10 units, and a support service for 20 units. It is expected that the outcome of this bid will be known before the June Cabinet meeting.

### **Housing First**

6. Housing First is an internationally evidenced housing intervention, which has proven successful in supporting people with multiple and complex needs to maintain housing. The main premise is that an individual should not need to prove they are ready for housing and is instead given a permanent offer of their own home, along with an intensive long-term support package to enable them to maintain it. A permanent offer of a home does not mean that they will remain in the same place for the rest of their life. It means that the offer of housing is permanent; if they lose or leave their accommodation they will be supported to find another home.
7. It is acknowledged that the Housing First cohort may experience difficulties along the way, but that support will always be there. Unlike traditional homelessness services, the only condition placed on the individual is a

willingness to maintain a tenancy. Support is bespoke to the needs of the individual, and they are able to engage with this on their own terms. The support and accommodation are not linked and are generally not delivered by the same provider. This means support can flex according to the person's needs and aspirations over time.

8. The Crisis commissioned Housing led feasibility study in Oxfordshire, recommends the delivery of a Housing First programme as part of a wider solution for tackling homelessness. Further detail of this wider transformation is covered in a separate report to June Cabinet entitled Countywide transformation of Rough Sleeping. The recommendations of this report are being incorporated into both city and countywide strategies for homelessness. Appendix One provides a summary of Housing First principles taken from this report. Approval is sought from Cabinet to procure a Housing First support service.

### **Target group**

9. As of 28 April 2021 there were 115 individuals accommodated across three separate emergency accommodation venues. Additionally, on this date, it was estimated that there were 15 people experiencing rough sleeping in the city. It is considered that 71 of this number are what we have previously termed "entrenched" rough sleepers or repeat rough sleepers that have previously interacted with commissioned services.
10. Many of these individuals are well known to services in Oxford and have previously been accommodated within the adult homeless pathway. It is often the case that periods of being accommodated have been interspersed with prolonged stays on the street. For instance 59 of this group have been known to rough sleeping services for at least 2 years; and of that group 31 have been known to services for at least 5 years. This demonstrates that our current offer has not been adequate to resolve these people's homelessness. Housing First units will be prioritised for people in this latter group.
11. Many people within this group have overlapping support needs with drug, alcohol and mental health issues being the most commonly identified. Housing First will be the best model for helping many of these individuals to sustain periods of accommodation, which in turn will support them to address their complex needs. Housing First schemes elsewhere in the country report a tenancy sustainment rate of more than 80%.

### **Property leasing**

12. The NSAP funding secured has helped fund the acquisition of five units, ten units will be made available to the Housing First programme from council relets, and a further five will be provided by a registered provider. The recent RSAP bid has requested funding to support a further ten acquisitions, with another ten becoming available from relets.
13. The conditions of both the NSAP and RSAP funding require tenancies to be issued for a maximum of two years in order for the properties to be retained for the use of people recovering from rough sleeping in the future. To comply with these conditions, we will issue fixed term secure tenancies of two years. At the end of this period the tenancy will be renewed on the same basis, or a secure tenancy will be issued in respect of the same, or an alternative property.

## Financial implications

14. Funding of £566,501 has been obtained from the NSAP programme for phase one of the Housing First programme. Approval is sought from Cabinet to procure a Housing First support service until the end of 2023/24. Procurement for this service has commenced but will not be completed until after the June Cabinet meeting.
15. Funding of £416,650 has been requested from the RSAP programme to deliver support for the proposed second phase of the Housing First programme which also runs until the end of 2023/24.
16. The capital funding for the acquisition of five properties referenced in paragraph 3 has been included in the Council's capital programme, as reported to Cabinet on 11 November 2020.
17. All the funding for the Housing First support service has been successfully bid for from the government, so there is no additional cost to the Council for this project. Costs of procuring and monitoring this service will be met from existing budgets.

### Legal Issues

18. The procurement, commissioning and award of contracts for this service will be undertaken in compliance with the council's contract rules contained in part 19 of its Constitution.

### Level of risk

19. The Risk Register is attached as Appendix 2.

### Equalities impact

20. The service will be subject to monitoring of its performance and impact on individuals including matters of equality and diversity.

<b>Report author</b>	Paul Wilding
Job title	Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Manager
Service area or department	Housing Needs
Telephone	01865 252461
e-mail	<a href="mailto:pwilding@oxford.gov.uk">pwilding@oxford.gov.uk</a>

**Background Papers:** None