

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

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

Appendices	
Appendix A	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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