

Decision type: Decision Specifically Delegated to Officers
Decision date: 20 October 2025
Decision maker: Tom Hook – Deputy Chief Executive – City and Citizens
Decision title: Furnished Tenancy Scheme contract award

Summary	
Decision being taken:	Award of contract to Underley Furnishings Ltd (T/a 'Furnished Homes') to provide a Furnished Tenancy Scheme for 3 years with the option to extend by a further two years, to a maximum contract length of 5 years.
Key decision:	Yes
Source of delegation:	Cabinet on 13 th November 2024 delegated authority to the Interim Executive Director for Communities and People (replaced by Deputy Chief Executive) in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, authority to award a Furnished Tenancy Scheme contract to a supplier or supplier, selected by an evaluation panel, following a fully compliant procurement process. Furnished Tenancy Cabinet Report - Final Draft.docx Cabinet Response - Furnished Tenancy Scheme.docx
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities.
Corporate Priority:	Good, Affordable Homes, Thriving Communities.
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028.

The Deputy Chief Executive – City and Citizens’ Services decides as follows:

1. Recommendation is to award the contract to Underley Furnishings Ltd (T/a ‘Furnished Homes’), the highest scoring bidder following a compliant procurement exercise, for the Furnished Tenancy Scheme.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Furnished Tenancy Budget	Yes
Appendix 2	Risk Register	No

Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council has operated the Furnished Tenancy Scheme (“**FTS**”) for over 26 years, offering furnished tenancies to new council tenants who have not previously held a social housing tenancy. The scheme is designed to support tenancy sustainability by removing the financial burden of furnishing a first home.
 1. The FTS provides essential household items such as:
 - Carpets
 - Curtains
 - Cookers
 - Beds
 2. It is particularly targeted at vulnerable tenants, including those affected by homelessness, domestic abuse, or other exceptional circumstances. The scheme operates on a cost-neutral basis, with tenants repaying the cost via a service charge eligible for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.
 3. The scheme plays a vital role in:
 - Reducing financial hardship
 - Supporting tenancy sustainment
 - Preventing tenancy failure
 - Minimising costs associated with voids, repeat homelessness, and property management
 4. Recent years have seen a significant increase in demand due to:
 - Growth in new housing supply
 - Cost-of-living pressures
 - Increased rehousing of homeless households
 5. This has led to full utilisation of the current contract’s financial capacity, prompting the need for expansion.

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6. To meet current and future service demands, the following additions were proposed:
 1. Emergency Furnishings for Temporary Decants
 - Provision of furnishings for tenants temporarily relocated due to property repairs or refurbishment.
 2. Emergency Furnishings for Temporary Accommodation
 - Furnishing of properties used to house homeless households under the Council's statutory housing duties.
7. These additions are essential to maintaining suitable living conditions during temporary housing arrangements and align with the Council's commitment to tenant wellbeing and housing stability.
8. Approval was sought to expand the scope of the Furnished Tenancy Scheme contract to include the two new service areas outlined above, ensuring continued support for vulnerable tenants and effective delivery of housing services.

Reasons for the decision

9. The purpose of the decision is to award a new contract for the Furnished Tenancy Scheme. The decision achieves the following benefits:
 - Reducing financial hardship
 - Supporting tenancy sustainment
 - Preventing tenancy failure
 - Minimising costs associated with voids, repeat homelessness, and property management
10. The risks if the decision is not made are that the scheme will not be provided and there could be failed tenancies.

Alternative Options Considered

11. Other options are:
 1. Not to award a new contract and to stop this service leaving tenants to maintain and supply their own furnishings.
 2. Extend the existing contract and run the risk of breaching the law.
 3. Undertake a new procurement exercise.

Equalities Impact

12. The original remit of the Furnished Tenancy programme, how this is delivered and the furnishings provided, does not need a new Equalities Impact assessment. The scheme is aligned to the Housing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy and is covered therein.
13. If the scheme is now to include emergency furnishings and temporary accommodation support, the individual characteristics of the tenants will need to be taken into review at the time of the referral.

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14. Any disability or protected characteristic of an applicant should be known at the outset. The confirmation their own needs have been considered should be included in the sign off/ authorisation paperwork to meet the Public Sector Equality Duties and Equality Act 2010.

Risks

15. See Risk Register Attached under Appendix 2.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

16. Successful bidder has provided assurances over its net zero targets which meet OCC expectations.

Implications of making the decision

Financial implications	By establishing a fixed pricing schedule with the supplier, the council aims to achieve Value for Money and the contract will be monitored throughout the duration of the contract. See Appendix 1	Completed by: Jason Jones – Finance Business Partner Date: 11-09-2025
Legal implications	<p>The Council has undertaken a complaint procurement exercise in accordance with the relevant Procurement legislation and the Constitution.</p> <p>The proposed decision is a Key Decision which means that in accordance with the Constitution it must be entered on to the Forward Plan and published for a period of 28 days before the decision is taken.</p> <p>On 13th November 2024 the Cabinet delegated the authority to the Interim Executive Director for Communities and People (Deputy Chief Executive being the successor) in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, authority to award a Furnished Tenancy Scheme contract.</p>	Completed by: Justin Zizys – Contracts Lawyer Date: 12 September 2025
Other implications	No other implications	Completed by: Carolyn Devenney, Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer, Housing Services Date: 11/9/2025


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Member declared interests	No interests declared	Completed by: Carolyn Devenney, Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer, Housing Services Date: 11/9/2025
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Background Documents
None

Report author	Carolyn Devenney
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Service area or department	Housing Needs
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Consultee checklist

Consultees	Name and job title	Date
Senior officer e.g. the relevant service manager / Director where the decision maker is the Chief Executive or a Deputy Chief Executive.	Not applicable	
Group Finance Director Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	 Nigel Kennedy	16/10/2025
Director of Law, Governance and Strategy Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	Not applicable	
Cabinet Member(s)	Not applicable	

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Where required by the conditions of the delegation		
Ward Members Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	Not applicable	

Decision Maker Approval

<i>Name and job title</i>	<i>Date</i>
 Tom Hook – Deputy Chief Executive	20/10/2025

This form must be completed and sent to Committee and Member Services **on the date that the decision maker signs it. This must be only done once all consultees have given their approval. The decision shall be effective from the date of publication; therefore, it is important that you send to Committee and Member Services as soon as it is completed and dated by the decision maker. Please note that it is not effective until it is published and the call in period has passed.**

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NOTES

The law¹ requires the Council to record executive and non-executive decisions taken by officers under delegated powers and to publish them on the Council's website.

These requirements apply to decisions that would have been taken by Council or the Cabinet if delegated powers had not been given to an officer:

- under an express delegation granted at a meeting of Cabinet, Council or a Committee.
- in accordance with Part 4.4 of the Constitution as follows:
 - Awarding a contract where authority has been specifically delegated to officers by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member (regardless of value)
 - Acquiring or disposing of freeholds or leaseholds granting new leaseholds (excluding assignments and rent reviews) where authority has been specifically delegated to officers by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member (regardless of value)
 - Making a regulatory order which affects a number of people, for example a Public Space Protection Order or a Parking Place Order
 - Where the effect of a decision is to grant a licence or permission or it affects the rights of citizens
 - Discharging any other express delegation from Cabinet or a Cabinet Member a committee or Council.

These requirements **do not** apply to:

- planning and licencing matters where there are established arrangements for recording decisions: or
- decisions which are purely administrative or operational in nature

All other officer decisions should be recorded on an officer decision form but do not need to be published. They must though be stored so as to ensure that they are not lost should an officer leave the authority.

Exempt or Confidential information

Information relating to a delegated officer or single member decision does not have to be made public if it is exempt or confidential. Summary information from this decision sheet (excluding all exempt or confidential information) will be published on the Council's website.

¹ the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012/2089 (Regulation 13(4)) and The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014/2095 (Regulation 7)

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Key or Non Key Decision

A key decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

- Have a significant effect on people living or working in a least two wards or
- Involve spending, income, or saving a significant amount – whether an amount is significant depends on the Council's total budget for the service involved. For this Council 'significant' in budgetary terms is:
 - Expenditure, income, or savings of £750,000 or greater in the context of the medium term financial strategy,
 - Acquiring or disposing of freeholds with a consideration over £500,000 in the context of the medium term financial strategy except for disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation
 - Acquiring or disposing of leaseholds where either the rental value is in excess of £250,000 per annum and/or the premium is £750,000 except for statutory lease renewals under Part 2 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 and disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation and disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation.
 - Acquiring or disposing of easements with a value over £750,000 and/or rental value over £250,000 each year

A key decision can only be taken and recorded here if notice of it has been published on the Forward Plan for at least 28 clear days. Key decisions taken by officers may be “called in” by any four councillors or the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee within two days of the notice of decision being published.

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