

Purchase of Transitional Accommodation

Report of Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing (carole.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk), Cllr Richard Wenham, Executive Member and Deputy Leader of the Council (richard.wenham@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officer: Julie Ogle, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing (julie.ogley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk), Tony Keaveney, Assistant Director Housing (tony.keaveney@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This report relates to a Key Decision

Purpose of this report

1. The report seeks approval for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to purchase residential accommodation identified in exempt papers. The rationale is to provide transitional accommodation to clients presenting as homeless (CBC has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation).

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to:

1. **delegate to the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery, to authorise the acquisition identified in exempt papers.**

Background

2. Housing needs, including homelessness, is increasing in Central Bedfordshire and must be met. This has arisen due to affordability problems and limited supply of rented housing at or below Local Housing Allowance (LHA) limits.
3. The acquisition of these units is one of many actions being taken to reduce housing and homelessness pressures facing CBC. Some of these also include: empty home reoccupation; new build schemes; affordable housing delivery through section 106 entitlements.

Council Priorities

4. The proposed action supports the priority to enhance CBC by providing great resident services, protecting the vulnerable and improving wellbeing. By reducing spend on transitional accommodation, this demonstrates our aspiration to maximise efficiency. In addressing homelessness, our actions illustrate CBC is responsive to an evolving local and national issue.

Risk Management

5. The client mix will be varied, vulnerable and likely to incorporate individuals with mental health needs. CBC is already managing large multiple unit accommodation and has effective management and support arrangements in place to mitigate this risk.

Community Safety

6. There is a pro-active approach to casework, as well as close monitoring of performance, to ensure anti-social behaviour is managed by the Housing Service. Security arrangements will be put in place to minimise any adverse impacts arising from the use of this site for transitional accommodation.

Sustainability

7. The addition of assets to the HRA will assist the HRA Business Plan as a result of retained rentals, which can be used to make further investment or repay debt. Additional units also offset the stock implications arising from the Right to Buy (RtB).

Conclusion and Next Steps

8. These acquisitions are opportunities for the following reasons:
 - the properties provide multiple units, they are well located for transport routes, within easy access of local amenities;
 - critically they are suitable specifications for use as transitional accommodation, there is limited additional cost or time delay and demand could be addressed.
9. The report highlights pressures in neighbouring authorities (evident for some years) are now becoming significant challenges within Central Bedfordshire. Approximately 50% of the current Transitional Accommodation (TA) demand is from those who are generally in low paid, uncertain employment, those who are young, unsettled and in transient relationships.