



Report of Head of Council Housing Growth and Head of Commissioning Adults and Health

Report to Director of Resources and Housing

Date: 7th December 2020

Subject: Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) – Leeds funding approval – Somewhere Safe to Stay accommodation

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Little London & Woodhouse	
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

Summary

1. Main issues

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) invited Local Authorities, Registered Providers, and their local partners to engage with the next stage of their COVID-19 Rough Sleeping response in July 2020 through bidding for capital and revenue funding to deliver either long-term accommodation and support for rough sleepers or interim accommodation and support for the 15,000 vulnerable people nationally accommodated during the pandemic.
- The Council bid for funding in August 2020 to provide temporary accommodation to support its “Somewhere Safe to Stay” programme and was successful in being awarded £350,000 to provide self-contained accommodation to meet the needs of women requiring emergency and supported accommodation (including emergency safeguarding and severe weather protocols). Onsite staff will provide support on a 24/7 basis.
- MHCLG advised that the bid was successful on 28th September 2020, on condition that the accommodation was operational by 31st March 2021.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- This proposal supports a number of the Council's Best Council Plan priorities including
 - a. **Safe, strong communities** – keeping people safe from harm and protecting the most vulnerable;
 - b. **Health and Well-being** – ensuring support for the health and social care sector to respond and recover from covid-19; and
 - c. **Housing** – minimising homelessness through a greater focus on prevention.

3. Resource Implications

- The scheme is proposed to be funded via a combination of £350,000 revenue funding from MHCLG combined with Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing.
- The scheme will need a new injection into the capital funding for the Council Housing Growth programme with Prudential Borrowing for the unfunded amount to meet the rest of the costs, estimated at £125,000.

Recommendations

The Director of Resources and Housing is recommended to

- a) Approve the acceptance of the MHCLG grant of £350,000 revenue funding as a result of the Council's bid to the Next Steps Accommodation programme;
- b) Approve proceeding with the proposed works to provide self-contained accommodation with support as part of the Somewhere Safe to Stay programme through the Council's internal service provider, Leeds Building Services at an estimated total cost of £475,000.
- c) Approve the necessary funding injection of £125,000 to [the council housing growth programme] enable the scheme to be delivered with the balance being met through HRA borrowing combined with the MHCLG grant funding; and
- d) Note that a further report will follow to request approval as a subsequent significant operational decision to establish the arrangements with a third party to provide management and support services for the proposed accommodation once completed.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek urgent Director approval for the proposed funding and delivery arrangements to enable the Council to continue to provide accommodation under the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as described in this report.

2. Background information

- 2.1 As part of the 'Everyone In' initiative, approximately 15,000 people nationally, who were sleeping rough, in unsafe communal settings or at imminent risk of rough sleeping were placed into emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) promoted by MHCLG aimed to make available the financial resources needed to support local

authorities and their partners to continue this initiative and prevent these people from returning to the streets.

- 2.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) invited local authorities, registered providers, and their local partners to engage with the next stage of their COVID-19 Rough Sleeping response in July 2020 through bidding for capital and revenue funding to deliver either long-term accommodation and support for rough sleepers in interim accommodation and support for the 15,000 vulnerable people accommodated during the pandemic which is compliant with best practice and minimises risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- 2.3 The Council bid for funding in August 2020 to provide temporary accommodation to support its “Somewhere safe to stay” programme and was successful in being offered £350,000 to provide self-contained accommodation to meet the needs of women requiring emergency and supported accommodation (including emergency safeguarding and severe weather protocols). Onsite staff will provide support on a 24/7 basis.
- 2.4 MHCLG advised that the bid was successful on 28th September 2020, on condition that the accommodation was operational no later than 31st March 2021.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 On the 27th March 2020, in responding to the government guidance of the Corona Virus Pandemic, Leeds City Council moved all people placed in shared units of emergency accommodation into hotel rooms that had self-contained amenities. This included the women who at the time were placed in the Somewhere Safe to Stay HUB.
- 3.2 As the Council received further guidance throughout the lock down period, it became clear that we would be unable to return to communal shared facilities for emergency accommodation due to the increased risk of spreading the virus to an already vulnerable cohort of people. The Council’s challenge was how we could now move customers away from the hotels into self-contained and sustainable accommodation with the right support in place to meet their needs.
- 3.3 The Council has identified an opportunity to provide a number of self-contained units that will be used to deliver emergency and supported accommodation for some of these vulnerable customers. One of these options is the refurbishment of an empty building in the city centre, formerly used as supported accommodation. This will provide a safe emergency environment away from the street that can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to women who are identified as homeless, living vulnerably or rough sleeping.
- 3.4 The facilities will include seven self-contained one bedroom flats and two units of accommodation that will be available for emergency safeguarding and severe weather protocols. An onsite staff office will allow for support to be provided on a 24/7 basis. The building is available to the Council on a rent free lease. Support will be provided by an experienced provider currently supporting homeless vulnerable women. The units will be leased on a license, meaning that the provider has the ability to assist women to claim housing benefit and to pay rent. Part of the rent will be used for housing management costs and part to repay the loan.
 - 3.4.1 The project builds on the successful Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub and builds on the model of providing self- contained emergency accommodation with onsite support, provided during the pandemic. The availability of the building and the location is ideal as it is near to other key services. People will receive support whilst

housed in the building and will be assisted to move into more permanent accommodation.

- 3.5 Wrap around support will include support from staff based in the building and from other agencies involved as part of a partnership approach.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 The bid specification has been developed through a collaborative approach involving partners from the statutory and third sector. The project has been designed to meet the needs and preferences of people housed in emergency accommodation as expressed via an evaluation which included conversations with people.
- 4.1.2 The Council's Lead Member for Communities has been engaged and is fully supportive of the proposed scheme.
- 4.1.3 Ward members have been consulted in line with the approved arrangements set out in the Housing Growth Member Engagement Strategy to ensure effective engagement, consultation and information is shared at key points throughout the life cycle of the scheme. The specific location of the properties has not been identified in this report in order to protect the vulnerable residents that would be supported by this project.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 **National Rough Sleeping Strategy:** The government published its national rough sleeper strategy in August 2018. The national strategy includes the targets to halve rough sleeper numbers (from the 2017 baseline) by 2022 and to end rough sleeping by 2027. The national strategy is rooted in three 'pillars':
- To prevent new people from starting to sleep rough;
 - To intervene rapidly when people start to sleep rough to help them off the street; and
 - To promote a person's recovery once they are off the street to build positive lives and don't return to rough sleeping.
- 4.2.2 The delivery of the proposed accommodation identified in this report directly contributes to the Council's response to homelessness and the additional pressures that covid-19 has placed on some of the most vulnerable people living in Leeds.
- 4.2.3 Other initiatives are underway to address and support homelessness prevention in the city, but this programme has been identified as a priority for the city due to the vulnerable nature of the proposed residents.
- 4.2.4 The provision of this accommodation will therefore have a significant positive impact on this group and support wider council initiatives in preventing homelessness in the city.
- 4.2.5 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) screening has been completed to evaluate the impact of the delivery of these homes. A copy of the EDCI screening document is attached for reference at Appendix 1.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 Housing has been identified as one of the Best City priorities and this programme will directly support the following priorities:

- Housing of the right quality, type, tenure and affordability in the right places;
- Minimising homelessness through a greater focus on prevention; and
- Providing the right housing options to support older and vulnerable residents to remain active and independent.

4.3.2 The programme will also directly contribute to the achievement of a number of the key performance indicators the Council will use to measure success including:

- Growth in new homes in Leeds; and
- Number of affordable homes delivered.

Climate Emergency

4.3.3 There are no specific proposals in regard to the works which relate to the Council's climate emergency targets. The works will meet all necessary Building Regulation requirements appropriate to the intended residential use.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 The scheme refurbishment costs will to be funded via a combination of £350,000 revenue funding from MHCLG combined with HRA borrowing.

4.4.2 The proposed works will be undertaken through the Council's in-house service provider Leeds Building Services, and they have identified the necessary resources to complete the work within agreed timescales to ensure the grant funding can be drawn down. The estimated contract sum is £475,000. Technical oversight will be provided by the Council's joint venture partners NPS. A contingency sum of around 10% of the contract value has been included in the total estimated cost to provide for any unforeseen costs as work will be undertaken to existing properties. The total estimated cost of the works is £475,000.

4.4.3 The building once redeveloped will have tenants who will for the most part be eligible for Housing benefit. The repayment of any borrowing will be serviced through the income generated through the payment of Housing Benefit. The delivery of this project also requires revenue funding for the operational management and support costs of the building of approximately £350,000 p.a. This element of the bid to the Next Steps Accommodation programme was unsuccessful but the Council has been advised to include this element of the cost in the Rough Sleeper Initiative submission for 2021/22. It is unclear whether the allocation of RSI will continue to be made on an annual basis or if the Council will receive a three year allocation.

4.4.4 If this project is not progressed, the funds for refurbishment will need to be returned to the Government.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 This report is a key decision to progress the delivery of this accommodation within agreed timescales to avoid the risk of losing the grant allocation being offered to Leeds.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 The scheme will be delivered using the Council's agreed project management methodology and a programme risk log will be maintained and risks managed, monitored through the governance process as necessary.
- 4.6.2 The project will be delivered through the refurbishment of existing properties. Surveys have been undertaken to inform the cost of the project and consultation has been held with Building Control to ensure that all the works meet the necessary requirements including in particular fire protection requirements to ensure the safety of residents and staff. As noted above a 10% contingency has been added to the scheme costs to meet any unforeseen costs.
- 4.6.3 There is a risk that the revenue costs for running this facility will not be available from grant funds.
- 4.6.4 The bid to NSAP for revenue funding was unsuccessful and the advice provided was to include the running costs as part of the Council's RSI submission. The costs of the former Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub (£200k) are included in the RSI budget and there are other elements which will not be included next year. It is feasible therefore that if the Council received an allocation of a similar amount to this year for 21/22 as is expected, that we will be able to earmark the necessary funds.
- 4.6.5 However there is a risk that this funding will not be forthcoming either next year or in future years. This means that if this was the case, either funds would need to be prioritised differently in terms of funding for commissioned services or the management and support for the building would need to be delivered in a different way. An example of this would be to base staff from other commissioned services there or to use the building as step down or move on accommodation for people who are more tenancy ready.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The offer of £350,000 of revenue funding from MHCLG to provide self-contained accommodation for the Somewhere Safe to Stay programme provides a major opportunity to support the Council's wider strategic aims to prevent homelessness and meet national targets in relation to the provision of accommodation for rough sleepers. In particular it provides an opportunity for a new facility for women offering supported and emergency accommodation to replace the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub.
- 5.2 The provision of this self-contained accommodation will enable the city to safely house and support some of the most vulnerable residents in Leeds, who have been even more impacted by the covid-19 pandemic.

6. Recommendations

The Director of Resources and Housing is recommended to

- a) Approve the acceptance of the MHCLG grant of £350,000 revenue funding as a result of the Council's bid to the Next Steps Accommodation programme;
- b) Approve proceeding with the proposed works to provide self-contained accommodation with support as part of the Somewhere Safe to Stay programme through the Council's internal service provider, Leeds Building Services at an estimated total cost of £475,000.

- c) Approve the necessary funding injection of £125,000 to [from the council housing growth programme] enable the scheme to be delivered with the balance being met through HRA borrowing and from the MHCLG grant funding; and
- d) Note that a further report will follow to request approval as a subsequent significant operational decision to establish the arrangements with a third party to provide management and support services for the proposed accommodation once completed.

7. Background documents¹

7.1

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.