

RECOMMENDED that: the project proposed for a four-bedroom supported housing scheme for single people with complex needs in partnership with B3 Living and Hertfordshire County Council be approved.

Purpose

To seek approval for a pilot scheme to provide supported accommodation for single people with complex needs to be established in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and B3 Living.

Introduction

The proposed pilot scheme will provide assistance to single homeless people in the Borough that the Council has a statutory duty to accommodate. The scheme will support those who are in priority need as they have multiple and complex support needs, including mental ill health and drug and alcohol addiction.

B3 Living has a vacant four-bedroom property situated at Juniper Close, Turnford, which could be made available to provide shared supported accommodation for this client group, and Hertfordshire County Council has support providers in place to provide the help they require.

The property can accommodate four single homeless people for a period of between six and eighteen months depending on the amount of support required for them to move on into settled accommodation. It is envisaged that this will result in six homeless persons per year being accommodated and supported within this scheme.

Due to the complexity of the needs of this client group and the current lack of appropriate supported accommodation, clients can spend long amounts of time in general needs temporary accommodation (TA) which is unable to provide the support they require. Often, this also results in individuals having to move around multiple TA placements causing added disruption to vulnerable clients' lives and increased costs to the Council.

The proposed project is the first time a new collaborative approach of this kind has been trialled in Hertfordshire. The outcomes and learning from this pilot will impact on ways of working across the county going forward and will become more widespread in the future. The Council is well-placed to be at the forefront of this change which will see additional support provided to vulnerable Broxbourne residents to help them access the support they need to manage their finances, seek employment and training and live independently.

The Project

B3 Living has offered a vacant four-bedroom property to be used for this project which can accommodate up to four single homeless people at one time for a period of between six and eighteen months per placement.

The Council has worked closely with Hertfordshire County Council to support the development of a new Supporting Adults with Complex Needs Strategy. The strategy sets out new principles and collaborative processes in the provision of support for homeless clients that will be implemented across Hertfordshire from April 2021 onwards.

Evidence gathered by Hertfordshire County Council for the strategy showed that between April and December 2018, the number of homeless households with housing related support needs in Broxbourne was 238, and the maximum capacity in current service provision was just 88¹. This constitutes the largest gap between provision and demand for these types of support services of all the district councils in Hertfordshire.

Hertfordshire County Council will therefore provide the support element through extending existing contracts with relevant support providers to the new scheme. This will enable joined up working between the Council and support providers for the first time, including joint assessment of needs. This will provide targeted support for this group of priority need homeless clients with the aim of helping them to become independent, able to sustain a tenancy and move on to settled accommodation.

The support provided to the clients will be provided on-site within the accommodation and the number of hours of support provided will be determined based on the needs of the individual clients as set in a support plan.

The Council will select clients for the scheme and it will only be available to those that have an ongoing homelessness case with Broxbourne Council and therefore all residents of the scheme will have a local connection to the Borough.

Financial, Legal and Risk Management Implications

Financial

There is no financial impact to the Council for this proposal.

As part of the proposal, B3 Living will fund the renovation work needed to make the property suitable for use as shared accommodation.

The support element would be provided by Hertfordshire County Council through extending existing contracts with relevant support providers to the new scheme. This represents an established and successful way of working and thereby reduces the risk to the Council that would be associated with having to source support from a new provider.

The Council currently expends significant resources on accommodating and supporting single people with complex needs within its general needs temporary accommodation schemes as there is a lack of supported accommodation available. Often, members of this client group are unable to move on from temporary accommodation due to their high support needs not being met, incurring further cost for the Council, as well as having to be moved between different temporary accommodation placements as none are suitable for their needs. Much of this temporary accommodation is procured on a nightly paid basis and represents an expense to the Council. This proposal would reduce such costs by providing suitable accommodation which would enable these clients to be supported and move on into settled accommodation elsewhere, as well as saving officer time in providing support to these clients.

If four units of nightly paid accommodation could be replaced via this proposal, this would represent a cost saving to the Council of £17,400 per year.

Legal

The Council has two existing schemes at Eleanor Cross Road and Cadmore Lane that provide support for single homeless clients with mental health needs. These offer a

¹ HCLIC April-Dec 2018

model upon which the pilot scheme will be based. These are similar in that a registered provider (RP) provides the accommodation and the support is provided via County Council support contracts. The client is provided with a licence agreement and management of the property and licence agreement is carried out jointly by the RP and support provider.

The licence agreement will require clients to adhere to 'house rules' while they are resident and to engage with the support being offered in order to maintain the agreement and continue to occupy the scheme. Whilst the Council is not involved in the day-to-day management of the scheme, the Council will be involved in ensuring all agreements are being met by residents and partners alike, in order to ensure the successful running of the scheme and positive outcomes for the clients. The Council will therefore intervene if required.

In addition, the clients will be accommodated at the scheme for a period of at least six months, meaning the Council would be able to discharge homeless duty to them as the client would no longer be living in TA.

When these clients are ready to move on to settled accommodation, the Council will work with the support provider to secure accommodation via the Housing Register if the client is eligible, or help to secure a tenancy in the private rented sector.

Were any of the clients to leave the scheme and become threatened with homelessness, they may then approach the Council for housing advice in the usual way.

Risk

It is important to balance the needs of the single homeless priority client group against the needs of those households who are on the Council's Housing Register seeking four-bedroom accommodation. At present, there are 78 households on the Council's Housing Register seeking a four-bedroom property. Within the last 12 months, four four-bedroom properties were available for letting. The average waiting time for a four-bedroom property is five and half years. B3 Living has 115 four-bedroom properties in their stock.

Outcomes of the scheme will be subject to regular performance monitoring and a review will take place by the end of March 2021. At this time options to continue the scheme going forward will be explored. Were it to be decided that the project should close, however, the four-bedroom property would remain as shared accommodation in the medium-term. It would continue to be available to the Council for use as accommodation for single priority need homeless households.

The project will have a positive impact on residents of the Borough who are vulnerable and unable to secure housing for themselves due to mental ill health and other factors.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The alternative is to allocate this vacant property using the allocations process. For the reasons noted above, it is recommended that the property be repurposed for use as supported accommodation. This is because of the gap between the demand and supply of supported accommodation for this clients group and the pressure on Council resources of continuing to support this client group in general needs temporary accommodation.

Contribution to the Council's Objectives and Environmental Sustainability Priorities

This project contributes to the following corporate objective:

Deliver affordable homes for local residents and reduce homelessness.

Conclusion

It is recommended that the request to use the vacant four-bedroom property as supported accommodation for homeless people with multiple and complex needs be approved as this would contribute to offsetting the current shortage of such accommodation within the Borough through innovative and collaborative working with Hertfordshire County Council and B3 Living.

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Action reported to the Cabinet on:
