**Cabinet**

**03 June 2025**

**Part 1 - Public**

**Executive Key Decision**

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| Cabinet Member | Robin Betts, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment & Economy |
| Responsible Officer | Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health |
| Report Author | Linda Hibbs, Head of Housing & Health |

**Housing Staffing**

**1        Summary and Purpose of Report**

1.1      The capacity within the Housing Service requires increasing on a temporary basis to respond to an increased number of housing register applications to ensure the Council's statutory housing duties are fulfilled. This report seeks approval for funding to be transferred from the Homelessness Reserve into the revenue budget to support this outcome.

**2        Corporate Strategy Priority Area**

2.1      Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.

2.1.1   This will ensure adequate staffing resources are in place to deliver key statutory Council services

2.2      Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance.

2.2.1   Our work across the Housing Register and Housing Solutions teams help improve options for local people.

**3        Recommendations**

3.1      To APPROVE the transfer of £281,601 from the Homelessness Reserve into the revenue budget to fund the temporary increase in staffing capacity set out in this report subject to the General Purposes Committee approval of the gradings for the Housing Allocations Officers on 11 June 2025.

**4     Introduction and Background**

4.1     Cabinet will be aware of the ongoing service demand within the Housing Allocations team. An average of 237 applications per month were received across 2024/25 and this level of demand continues into 2025/26. The housing service has a backlog of housing register assessments, that although consistently we are now seeing reduce, remains at a level whereby assessment of applications received in September/October 2024 are currently taking place so there is a 7/8 month wait.

4.2     It is also of note that the Housing Allocations team have also been dealing with several new development allocations and local lettings plans including shortlisting over recent months with more still to come. It is an important task as it contributes to the corporate priority of ensuring local homes are for local people. However, these divert resources away from reviews, complex assessments and wider support for the team as they are usually managed by the Housing Allocations Coordinator.

4.3     It is proposed to retain four temporary Housing Allocations Assistant posts (proposed to be renamed as Housing Allocations Officers and regraded from SCP3/4 to 5/6 – subject to General Purposes Committee approval on 11 June 2025) and to the recruitment of an additional two Housing Allocations Officers all for one year. The existing posts would be extended until 31 March 2026 and the new posts would be in place for one year from start date.

4.4     To accelerate the reduction in the housing register backlog, it was also proposed that overtime be re-introduced for a temporary period to assist with housing register documentation checking, assessments and reviews depending on the skills of the Officers involved. This will be closely managed to match what is required at the time with a maximum limit of 16 hours a week being available over a 12-week period. Overtime had a big impact on progress being made last time it was used and there is again an appetite within the team to help with this.

4.5     The Council have received a Homelessness Prevention Grant of £834,176 for 2025/26. The Homelessness Prevention Grant is ringfenced to ensure local authorities can focus on preventing homelessness as well as funding the provision of temporary accommodation, and to continue to embed the changes required through implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. A new ringfence has also been introduced which means that 49% of the funding allocation must be spent on prevention, relief and staffing activity. There is a clear link between the work of the housing register team and homelessness.

4.6     The Housing Service continues to update Members directly on the housing register work on a quarterly basis.

**5** **Proposal**

5.1 To meet the cost of continuing and bringing in additional resources to address the housing register backlog and meet increased demand it is proposed that funding from the Homelessness Reserve is transferred to the revenue budget.

**6** **Other Options**

6.1 There are no other options to fund this proposal.

**7** **Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

7.1 The total cost of the proposals above is £281,601. This can be funded from the Homelessness Reserve including from funds received in 2025/26.

**8** **Risk Assessment**

8.1 The delay in assessing housing register applications has an impact on residents who are waiting for an outcome as it can lead to uncertainty about their future housing options.

**9** **Legal Implications**

9.1 The allocation of housing by LAs is framed by Part VI of the HA 1996. The council is required to have a Scheme for determining priorities and the procedures that will be followed when allocating social housing.

**10** **Consultation and Communications**

10.1 Staff have been kept fully informed and engaged, including in relation to the proposals set out in this report, and are fully committed to this work.

**11** **Implementation**

11.1 The agreement for this resource is in place, this decision relates to the funding mechanism.

**12** **Cross Cutting Issues**

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

12.1.1 Adaptation and resilience have not been considered.

12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

12.3    Other If Relevant

- Human Resources
- Business Continuity / Resilience

12.3.1  This proposal ensures an adequate level of human resources to meet demands on the housing service.

12.3.2  This proposal ensures that the service can progress to a "business as usual" position.

| Background Papers | None |
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| Annexes | None |