

Report title	Single Persons Accommodation Project	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal City Assets and Housing	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Ross Cook, Director of City Housing and Environment	
Originating service	Housing Strategy	
Accountable employee	Anthony Walker	Homelessness Strategy & External Relationships Manager
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Report to be/has been considered by	City Environment Leadership Team	11 May 2021
	Strategic Executive Board	27 May 2021

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Single Persons Accommodation Project.
2. Authorise the Director of City Housing and Environment, as the Senior Responsible Officer, to take all necessary steps to implement the Single Persons Accommodation Project.
3. Approve a virement of £2.5 million to increase the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme budget Bond House Conversion to Residential to £4.5 million to implement the Single Persons Accommodation Project, subject to the approval of the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme funding bid.
4. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, in consultation with the Director of City Housing and Environment, to enter into a contract with the preferred contractor in line with Council Constitution and The Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request approval to implement the Single Persons Accommodation Project in Wolverhampton. The model, based on learning from the Covid-19 pandemic, would ensure better outcomes for rough sleepers and vulnerable single people who have experienced homelessness in the City. The project would convert an existing Council-owned property into an Assessment Centre and 24 units of accommodation.
- 1.2 The project would be jointly funded by the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) 2021-2022. If approved, this report requests delegated authority for the Director of City Housing and Environment to take all appropriate and necessary steps to implement the project.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 As part of the Covid-19 response, local authorities across the country were mandated by MHCLG to 'Bring Everybody in', a request to accommodate all homeless individuals for the duration of the crisis. In order to achieve this, the Council entered into a contract with a city centre hotel, a partner with an established relationship with the homelessness service, to have exclusive use of the hotel to accommodate homeless individuals and couples.
- 2.2 As a result of the agreement, all homeless households in need of accommodation were accommodated within 48 hours, including 74 people over the first weekend. This included rough sleepers, homeless people in accommodation that was no longer suitable and newly emerging homeless households. Council officers, in partnership with Wolverhampton Homes, established a fully functioning accommodation service within 72 hours of set up. Rough sleeper service providers across the City offered support for the new provision and additional support was provided by a security firm, charity food provisions and the staff at the hotel.
- 2.3 This emergency provision provided a unique opportunity to support homeless individuals and couples. As a part of the model implemented at the hotel, 24-hour intensive intervention was offered to all residents and was based on their personalised needs. The support was delivered in a partnership approach, which included third sector homelessness providers, Probation services, the Police, treatment services, Mental Health Services, acute and primary health and other support providers.
- 2.4 Wolverhampton has a history of effective partnership working in the homelessness sector and these relationships were strengthened by the work at the emergency provision. It also enabled pathways with other partners (Probation, health services etc.) to be strengthened and any barriers were quickly removed.

- 2.5 The emergency provision was extremely successful and secured positive outcomes for the people who were accommodated and supported during this period. Over 150 people were accommodated in this provision over the period of 'Everyone In', including 19 of the City's most entrenched long-term rough sleepers. Utilising the partnership approach, over 100 people were supported to successfully move on to appropriate forms of accommodation, with half of those securing their own tenancy. In addition to housing outcomes, successful health interventions were also implemented, with over one third of residents supported into drug and alcohol treatment services, including 37 individuals who had previously disengaged with this support.

3.0 Needs Analysis and learning from 'Everyone In'

- 3.1 An extensive Needs Analysis was undertaken in August 2020, following the end of the emergency provision. The data showed that 55 of those supported had a history of rough sleeping, 50% disclosed substance misuse, 64 people had a history and/or ongoing involvement with the Criminal Justice System, 67 identified as BAME across 18 nationalities, 25% required mental health intervention and over 75% of those supported required GP registration.
- 3.2 The partnership working behind the emergency provision was integral to the success of the programme and allowed many barriers to be overcome. Having a base for all partners, third sector and statutory, to work from was key, as was having this hub of support based on the same site as accommodation. Great success was achieved with people with complex and challenging needs and a history of rough sleeping and homelessness.
- 3.3 Consultation undertaken in the summer of 2020 found that all partners involved with the emergency provision agreed that it had been a success and that it was key to utilise the learning taken from the programme going forward.

4.0 The model behind the Single Persons Accommodation Project

- 4.1 Following the end of the consultation on the emergency provision, it was clear that the City's offer for single people and couples experiencing homelessness would benefit from additional emergency and settled accommodation and a continuation of the strengthened and wider partnership working. A space for rapid assessments to take place and a hub for partners was also required.
- 4.2 The model utilised during 'Everyone In' was particularly effective for people with complex and challenging needs who experience multiple disadvantages. Having holistic, wrap around support on the same site was key to building trust and relationships and to removing barriers for accessing different types of support. The model would not replace existing services but would complement this offer and provide additionality and a focus for this cohort. The project would provide a platform for greater partnership working across all providers.

- 4.3 The model outlined in the Single Persons Accommodation Project uses this learning to provide support and accommodation for people with a history of rough sleeping. It would also provide additional accommodation units that would be available for other vulnerable groups, for example women experiencing homelessness or people who are made homeless and have secure employment. The rent and charges would be affordable and would allow people to be in employment, which is not always possible in traditional supported accommodation.
- 4.4 The proposed model is comprised of three separate elements: a Single Persons Assessment Centre, emergency accommodation and settled accommodation units. This model would provide bespoke, multi-agency support for the vulnerable people residing in the accommodation units, which would allow them to live safe and independent lives with the backing of the arms-length support as and when required.

Single Persons Assessment Centre

- 4.5 An Assessment Centre would provide a space for the first point of contact with homeless, single adults and couples. The Centre would also act as a holding space for staff to conduct rapid needs assessments to best assess the needs of the individual and determine the appropriate next steps, using the emergency beds. It would also ensure that a coordinated approach could be taken with the City's temporary accommodation, to utilise all options in the best and most appropriate way.
- 4.6 The Centre would provide a hub for partners involved in supporting homeless individuals. Office space would include drop-in desks that could be used by homelessness service providers and statutory partners, including Housing teams, Adult Social Care, Probation services and health partners. This wrap around support for the individuals accommodated on site is a key part of the model and builds directly on the success seen during the period of 'Everyone In'. The intensive nature of the support would be led by the individual and could be increased or decreased depending on their current situation and partners could step in at any time.
- 4.7 The multi-agency assessment centre would have the added benefit of continuing to strengthen and coordinate partnership working across the sector, which would also have a positive impact for existing providers.
- 4.8 As part of the RSAP funding, three full-time support workers would be employed to the project. These posts would coordinate the Assessment Centre and the office space for partners. The Support Workers would also provide support to the individuals accommodated on site, to the extent that they required on a case-by-case basis. They would also coordinate support from other partners (e.g. health and treatment services) for these individuals.

Emergency Beds

- 4.9 The addition of emergency beds would add to the City's existing provision and ensure that the City continues to work to a No First Night Out model by ensuring that an offer of

accommodation is available for all homeless individuals and couples. By placing an individual in this provision, coordinated work could be undertaken by the services involved to ensure that their next offer of accommodation (supported or otherwise) was the best option for that individual.

Independent settled accommodation

- 4.10 The units of settled accommodation would take the form of one and two bed flats. These would be of a high quality and would provide secure housing options for individuals. Intensive floating support would be available for the residents of the flats if required, and also for any additional clients accommodated in the community. The residents of these flats would also have full access to the services in the Assessment Centre. The majority of these units would be offered on two- or three-year fixed term agreements, with the option to extend on a case by case basis. Whilst a proportion of these flats would be utilised for people with a history of rough sleeping, units would be available for other groups. This includes those with social care needs, mental health problems and other vulnerable groups.

5.0 Co-production

- 5.1 The Single Persons Accommodation Project has been developed in consultation with homelessness service providers and wider partners. Co-production is key to the success of the model and the implementation of the project. Consultation with partners has been positive, with all partners keen to support the project and the service itself. Partners involved include homelessness service providers and charities, homelessness forums, Wolverhampton Homes, NHS Wolverhampton CCG, the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Probation services, primary care, adult social care and treatment services.
- 5.2 People with lived experience of homelessness have also been consulted with on the model behind the project. This feedback was also positive, with the idea of services being available in the same place cited as something that would be beneficial to the people receiving support.

6.0 Bond House

- 6.1 Bond House, situated in the city centre, has been identified as a suitable location for the Single Persons Accommodation Project. A city centre location was recognised as key to the model to ensure that residents and those supported by the Assessment Centre could easily access other services and transport links. Bond House is an existing long-term empty Council asset that was appropriated to the HRA by Cabinet (Resources) Panel on 17 February 2021, meaning that no additional money is required for the purchase of a building. The building is also large enough to encompass all of the elements of the Single Persons Accommodation Project in a safe and suitable way. Bond House has multiple entrances and can be neatly separated into three units, providing the opportunity for Adult Social Care to make use of some of the accommodation spaces. The building is

built in such a way that the units of accommodation provided would also include eight wheelchair accessible apartments and units with accessible facilities such as wet rooms.

- 6.2 The proposal includes security and concierge presence on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This was integral to the success of the emergency provision during 'Everyone In' and would ensure that the site is secure and residents are safe at all times.

7.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 7.1 An alternative option would be to not implement the Single Persons Accommodation Project in Wolverhampton. This would mean that the learning from the emergency provision provided during the Covid-19 pandemic would not be taken forward in this way.
- 7.2 Another alternative option would be to purchase a different building to develop into the Assessment Centre and accommodation units. This option is not deemed to be financially viable when the Council has a suitable asset in its existing portfolio.
- 7.3 A third option would be to lease a building to utilise as the Assessment Centre and accommodation units. If the project was implemented in this way, the Council would not be able to use the HRA to develop the property.

8.0 Reasons for decisions

- 8.1 The implementation of the Single Persons Accommodation Project would ensure better outcomes for rough sleepers and single, vulnerable people experiencing homelessness in the City. The project would strengthen successful partnership working practices and ensure that any barriers to pathways into support are removed in a timely manner. This would mean that Wolverhampton can continue to ensure the best possible outcome for the vulnerable individual concerned.

9.0 Financial implications

- 9.1 A Feasibility Cost Model has been undertaken based on architect plans of the work required to create the Assessment Centre and accommodation at Bond House. The capital costs have been estimated at around £4.5 million so approval is sought for a budget of this amount to be established in the HRA capital programme, subject to the funding bid being successful.
- 9.2 The HRA Business Plan, Rents and Service Charges report approved by Cabinet in January 2021 approved budget provision of £2.0 million within the HRA capital project to convert Bond House to residential use. Therefore, a budget increase of £2.5 million is required to fund this project. This will be provided for by way of a virement from the unallocated provision for new build accommodation.
- 9.3 The additional costs would be met through a combination of funding from the RSAP fund, should the bid for £1.039 million be successful, and a further commitment from the HRA as required. The three Support Worker posts would be funded using additional revenue funding from the RSAP bid. Should the funding bid not be successful there would be

options to reconfigure the project to general needs and supported HRA accommodation and fund it entirely from the HRA.

- 9.4 It is estimated that the annual operating costs would be cost neutral to the Council, landlord responsibilities being met from the rent and intensive management costs would be subject to a service charge which would be eligible for Housing Benefit. Support to rough sleepers would be met from existing budgets and/ or grant funding, potentially via current provider contracts.
- 9.5 The project would have additional financial benefits for both the Council and other partners. The cost of a single person sleeping rough in the UK for 12 months is estimated at £20,000 and the project creates additional accommodation options in the City. There are opportunities to use current budgets more efficiently.
- 9.6 The project will also create closer working relationships with probation and health services which will also create savings. For example, the average annual cost to the public purse of a prisoner is £42,000 and earlier prevention and assistance with vulnerable individuals should reduce the risk of re-offending. Earlier prevention work utilising health interventions will reduce the need for health services at the crisis stage and increase the number of people sustaining treatment for substance and alcohol misuse, both of which would create overall savings.
[JM/02062021/B]

10.0 Legal implications

- 10.1 The emergency measures undertaken during the 'Everyone In' campaign were not achieved via legislative reform. Furthermore, the Housing Minister has confirmed there are no plans to make any such changes.
- 10.2 The principal legislation remains as Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 which sets out the various duties owed by local authorities in relation to homelessness. The proposals contained in this report represent an innovative means of fulfilling those duties.
[DC/30042021/T]

11.0 Equalities implications

- 11.1 A full equality impact assessment has been undertaken. The proposed service would ensure that people experiencing multiple disadvantages could access services and receive the best possible support. Any adult aged 18 or over would be able to access all parts of the service and accommodation, without discrimination due to background or any other factor.

12.0 All other implications

- 12.1 All HR implications will be considered fully as part of the implementation of the Single Persons Accommodation Project. Three dedicated support workers will be funded by the

RSAP bid. Partners would be involved in the Assessment Centre and provide support to residents using existing staff members.

- 12.2 The project has been designed with Covid-19 safety practices in mind. All accommodation would be self-contained and there would be no communal areas in the building.
- 12.3 The project would have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of rough sleepers and people experiencing homelessness. People who are homeless can often have very poor physical and mental health. Despite this, this cohort often face difficulties in accessing healthcare and this service would provide a platform to continue to improve pathways into health services, both physical and mental health, and to remove barriers.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

- 13.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel, 17 February 2021 - [Appropriation of Bond House to the Housing Revenue Account](#)