

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DECISION BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SECTION A

DATE OF DECISION:

22nd February 2023

PORTFOLIO AREA:

Housing & Environmental Health Portfolio

SUBJECT TITLE:

Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

SECTION B – IDENTITY OF THE “DECISION-MAKER”

Name of Officer:

Andrew Ferrier

Title:

Chief Executive

Pursuant to Delegated Powers as set out in paragraph (2) of “Delegations to Chief Executive” in Part 3 of the Constitution, namely

“To do anything, in consultation with the Leader, which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of the Council’s functions subject to:

- (i) the matter being regarded as an emergency or urgent situation; and
- (ii) a report back to the Council, Cabinet or Committee concerned. “

SECTION C – SUMMARY

Background

In December 2022, the DLUHC announced the launch of the Local Authority Housing fund for a number of local authorities in England. The funding would be targeted to provide accommodation to families who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or otherwise living in unsuitable temporary accommodation arrangements, and who arrived in the UK via Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes. Through the application of a formula, DLUHC identified 182 local authorities nationally who would be offered the funding, providing those authorities agreed to target it in scope of the associated prospectus. The fund is intended to contribute to helping local authorities address accommodation pressures associated with the resettlement schemes, as well as building a sustainable stock of additional affordable housing units for the future.

The eligible cohort for support through the funding are those on the:

- Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (including eligible British Nationals under this scheme) (ACRS),
- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- Ukraine Family Scheme (UFS),
- Homes for Ukraine (HFU),
- Ukraine Extension Scheme (UES)

TVBC has been awarded funding of £1,817,776 broken down as follows:-

‘Main element’: £1,560,000 - With this funding the council is expected to provide a minimum of 13 homes. Government anticipates these will be family sized homes to meet the needs of the eligible cohort.

‘Bridging element’: £257,776 - With this funding the council is expected to provide a minimum of 1 larger 4+ bed home(s) for Afghan households currently residing in Home Office bridging accommodation.

The DLUHC funding offered amounts to 40% of the expected total cost with local authorities or their registered

provider partners expected to fund the difference. It is anticipated that RPs will have a viable opportunity to purchase new properties with this funding and manage it within their funding models. However, it may be necessary to top-up the grant funding with an element of affordable housing s106 contributions to ensure the delivery of the project.

DLUHC require participating local authorities, as far as practicably possible, to deliver the programme by procuring all units of accommodation, by 30th November 2023. The LAHF programme requires very rapid mobilisation and delivery.

As required by DLUHC in order to be considered for the funding, on 25th January 2023, TVBC submitted a Validation Form, to confirm its commitment to delivering the number of homes required, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by DLUHC and TVBC is required to be finalised by 15th March 2023.

Following submission of the Memorandum of Understanding, payment of the grant will be made in tranches as follows:-

Tranche 1 – 30% of allocation – paid by 31st Mar 2023 - £545,332

Tranche 2 – 70% of allocation – paid at 3 months and 5 months from payment of tranche 1. The local authority must have spent at least 60% of tranche 1 payment (£327,199) before receiving tranche 2.

TVBC has been in discussion with local Registered Providers (RPs) regarding the scheme, along with colleagues at Hart District Council and Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council. These conversations have resulted in the identification of VIVID housing association as the best positioned RP in the local area. They will seek to acquire new build homes on new developments, or suitable existing homes for sale on the open market securing them as affordable homes for the long term.

SECTION D – THE DECISION

"That authority is given to the Head of Housing & Environmental Health:-

1. In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources, and the Head of Finance & Revenues, to make decisions associated with the targeting and spending of the Local Authority Housing Fund, in accordance with the requirements of the funding prospectus, to enable the delivery of affordable homes for the eligible cohort in the short term, with a view to those homes adding to the existing affordable housing stock in the borough.
2. In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources, and the Head of Finance & Revenues, to make decisions associated with the targeting and spending of S106 affordable housing contributions towards delivery of these homes, in accordance with the conditions set out in the relevant S106 agreements.
3. That the grant and any required S106 affordable housing contributions be added to the Council's capital programme."

SECTION E – REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The decision-maker's reasons for making the decision recorded in Section D:

The LAHF does not fall within the scope of existing delegated authority and the government timelines are incredibly ambitious and pressing. The Council must sign up to the Memorandum of Understanding by 15th March 2023 to receive the first tranche of funding by 31st March 2023. The council is already working with a Registered Provider who is actively seeking suitable properties to purchase, and the ability to spend funds at any time after 31st March 2023, is essential. Therefore appropriate authority is urgently required to enable officers to proceed.

There is no convenient meeting of the Council to which this decision could be brought. Waiting to bring the decision to Committee would cause unacceptable delay and could result in the council failing to meet DLUHC milestones. This could ultimately result in funds being returned to DLUHC and re-distributed to other local authorities.

SECTION F – DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The options are:

1. to give delegated authority to the Head of Housing & Environmental Health (in consultation with specified members and the Head of Finance & Revenues where appropriate); or
2. to refer decisions around how this funding is targeted (or the issue of giving delegated authority) to Committee.

Option 2 would result in delays in acquiring properties and spending the grant within the required timeframe and could ultimately lead to the funds being returned to DLUHC. It would also delay the rehousing of vulnerable refugee households, some of whom are currently residing temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation, and in the case of the Afghan refugee cohort, still residing in a bridging hotel. Delays in targeting this funding may also cause damage to the Council's reputation. Option 2 is therefore rejected.

SECTION G – OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None

SECTION H – BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were taken into consideration when making the decision:

1. Local Authority Housing Fund Prospectus

SECTION I – Any Conflict of Interest Declared and Dispensation Granted

None.

We certify that the decision this document records was made Pursuant to Delegated Powers as set out in paragraph (2) of "Delegations to Chief Executive" in Part 3 of the Constitution and is a true and accurate record or minute of that decision.

Chief Executive:



Dated:

6/2/23

The Leader of the Council



Dated:

28/02/2023