

Public Document Pack

Please ask for:

Linda Coote

Direct dial:

(023) 9254 5421

Fax:

(023) 9254 5587

E-mail:

Linda.coote@gosport.gov.uk

S U M M O N S

MEETING: Housing Board
DATE: 16 September 2020
TIME:: 6.00 pm
PLACE: Virtual
Democratic Services contact: Linda Coote

PAUL GRANT
BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

The Mayor (Councillor Hook (ex-Officio))
Councillor Mrs Huggins (Mayor) and Councillor Burgess (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Mrs Batty	Councillor Mrs Morgan
Councillor Beavis	Councillor Murphy
Councillor Farr	Councillor Pepper
Councillor Foster-Reed	Councillor Philpott
Councillor Hammond	Councillor Scard
Councillor Hutchison	Councillor Westerby
Councillor Mitchell	

NOTE:

- i. Councillors are requested to note that, if any Councillor who is not a Member of the Board wishes to speak at the Board meeting, then the Borough Solicitor is required to receive not less than 24 hours prior notice in writing or electronically and such notice shall indicate the agenda item or items on which the member wishes to speak.
- ii. Please note that mobile phones should be switched off or switched to silent for the duration of the meeting.
- iii. This meeting may be filmed or otherwise recorded. By attending this meeting, you are consenting to any broadcast of your image and being recorded.

AGENDA

RECOMMENDED
MINUTE FORMAT

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All members are required to disclose at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter, any disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest in any item(s) being considered at this meeting.

3. DEPUTATIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.4

(NOTE: The Board is required to receive a deputation(s) on a matter which is before the meeting of the Board provided that notice of the intended deputation and its object shall have been received by the Borough Solicitor by 12 noon on Monday 14th September. The total time for deputations in favour and against a proposal shall not exceed 10 minutes)

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS-STANDING ORDER 3.5

(NOTE: The Board is required to allow a total of 15 minutes for questions from Members of the public on matters within the terms of reference of the Board provided that notice of such Question(s) shall have been submitted to the Borough Solicitor by 12 noon on Monday 14TH September 2020)

5. HOUSING SERVICE UPDATE (Pages 1 - 14)

This report sets out a general update of the Housing service together with proposals relating to the interim Housing accommodation at Walpole Park.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 5

Agenda item

Board/Committee:	Housing Board
Date of meeting:	16 September 2020
Title:	Housing Service update
Author:	Julie Smith, Head of Housing
Status:	FOR DECISION/ NOTING

Purpose

This report sets out a general update of the Housing service together with proposals relating to the interim Housing accommodation at Walpole Park.

Recommendation

That the Board:

- i) **Approves the phasing out of the interim Housing accommodation at Walpole Park together with associated services.**
- ii) **Notes the general update of key Housing services.**

1.0	Background
1.1	In response to the public health emergency, and the Government's 'Everyone In' directive to provide safe and secure accommodation for anyone presenting as homeless, the priority for Housing was to ensure that all rough sleepers had an offer of accommodation and a place they could self-isolate if required. This included all non-priority homeless.
1.2	This directive has now ended and focus has shifted to finding more settled accommodation for all those placed in interim accommodation. Approval of the Board is required to phase out the welfare cabins at Walpole Park together with associated services.
1.3	This report also provides a summary of service provision throughout the pandemic and current status of key service delivery
2.0	Housing Pods, Walpole Park
2.1	Since 26 March 2020, and in response to the 'Everyone In' directive, the Council has accommodated a total of 89 homeless individuals, either in the Pods at Walpole Park, in bed & breakfast accommodation, or in the Council's own hostels, with a small minority requiring more specialist accommodation.
2.2	These numbers are unprecedented and all support has been delivered by existing service provision based on significantly lower rough sleeper estimates. Despite this, all placements have had an assessment of their

	<p>support needs, been linked in with GP services and have been offered outreach and inclusion services support. For many of the people we have helped, this has been a positive experience, not just in securing more settled accommodation, but making real lifestyle changes by engaging with support services to address their physical and mental health needs.</p>
2.3	<p>Whilst the 'Everyone In' directive ended on 21 August 2020 and Local Authorities no longer have to accommodate non-priority applicants, the Council is taking a more pragmatic approach to minimise risk to public health. Officers are assessing each approach for assistance on a case by case basis, and anyone identified as high risk, for example, sofa surfing across a number of addresses containing vulnerable household members, will continue to be accommodated.</p>
2.4	<p>The main focus for officers now is to move occupants out of the interim accommodation into more settled, long term accommodation, and a number of people have already been successfully placed. As individuals move out of the pods, these are not being backfilled and the intention is to phase their return to the supplier over the coming months.</p>
2.5	<p>A number of factors will need to be taken into consideration when deciding how to phase the return of the pods. These factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to be able to flexibly respond to additional pressures as circumstances arise, such as the lack of usual winter bed provision in the hostel at 101 Gosport Road, Fareham, and services provided by local faith groups, due to the continued high risk of infection in shared sleeping arrangements • Potential for a second wave or local outbreak of the virus • Limited availability of suitable move-on accommodation for individuals with intensive support needs. Whilst some options are being considered, such as Housing First initiatives, these will take some time to implement • Although the temporary suspension of evictions has been extended to 20 September 2020, it is anticipated that, when this is lifted, the Housing Service will see a rise in the number of homeless approaches.
2.6	<p>Whilst a number of individuals have been moved on to more settled homes, 34 individuals remain in interim accommodation. 18 of these are placed in the pods.</p> <p>It is considered that the Council no longer requires all of the temporary accommodation available at Walpole Park and it should now send back 6 of the housing pods which are unoccupied.</p>
3.0	<p>Housing Service update</p>
3.1	<p>Housing Register</p> <p>Due to Covid-19, the Housing Register was closed to new applicants from 20 March 2020 and the Housing Service moved to only dealing with emergency homelessness situations. This also including prioritising</p>

	accommodation for patients discharged from hospital and unable to return to their home to help free up hospital beds during the pandemic.
3.2	<p>On 27 April 2020, the Government provided further guidance for social landlords on prioritising Essential Moves to support the most vulnerable to move home. Essential Moves include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting victims of domestic abuse and people fleeing violence • Preventing severe overcrowding • Facilitating move-on from temporary accommodation • Supporting discharge from hospital to free up bed space for others requiring care • Supporting those living in unsafe accommodation, or without settled accommodation which poses a risk to their health
3.3	Since this guidance was introduced, the Housing Service has facilitated a total of 86 Essential Moves.
3.4	With effect from 1 September 2020, the Housing Register has been re-opened and normal service has been resumed. The number of households currently on the Housing Register is 745, with varying degrees of priority need.
3.5	<p>Housing Repairs and Voids</p> <p>The Housing Service moved to carrying out emergency repairs only from 20 March 2020. This included compliance works such as gas safety checks. At the end of April 2020 and to mitigate the scale of any backlog of work, the scope of service was reviewed to include essential repairs and communal and exterior repairs, where safety permitted.</p>
3.6	Long duration works that involve multiple operatives over an extended period, such as new kitchen and bathroom installations, and electrical re-wires, have been reintroduced with effect from 01 September 2020 and contractors are returning to normal service provision. Any backlog has been reduced to cover only long duration works.
3.7	Void works have continued throughout the pandemic, where safe to do so. Initially, void properties were held for potential hospital discharges, or households in shared accommodation, such as GBC's hostels, needing to safely self-isolate due to the virus.
3.8	In May 2020, the Government amended the Covid-19 regulations making it clear that people who wished to move home could do so. All applicants that had either been nominated for, or allocated, a vacant property pre-lockdown were contacted to determine if they wished to proceed with a move. All other voids have been allocated using the Essential Move criteria.
3.9	Currently, there are a total of 36 voids, all at various stages of the process. End to end time has been impacted by the backlog at the Public Trustees Office as well as the volume of Essential Moves, all of which have required

	an additional layer of approval to ensure they meet the criteria.
3.10	Housing Development Programme A report was submitted to Community Board on 22 January 2020 outlining the Council's plan to deliver 100 new social housing dwellings over a 3 year period. Approval was given to proceed with the first three development sites to deliver 30 new dwellings.
3.11	A number of Registered Providers were approached to provide a project management service for the programme but unfortunately they did not have the capacity to assist at this time. The intention was to commence procurement of a consultant to undertake this role but this has been delayed due to the pandemic.
3.12	In July 2020, Portsmouth City Council was approached to provide strategic advice in relation to the programme. They are now engaged on a consultancy basis to assist with project management and the procurement of additional consultants to move the programme forwards; and are currently working on the first phase of the programme.
3.13	Core project strategies at this stage include Conservation, Fire Safety, Health & Safety, Inclusive Design, Planning, Plan for Use, Sustainability, Cost and the creation of a Risk Register.
3.14	The project team is also keen to bring forward any learning from the previous development at St Vincent Road that was completed in 2016 to inform future design. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting with the occupants of the development to gain end user feedback. • Undertaking a review of all repairs and maintenance to the St Vincent Road properties. • Collating any relevant feedback from previous members of the original project team.
4.0	Conclusion
4.1	The report provides consideration of the current operational priorities being delivered by Housing services and an opportunity for the Board to consider the phased reduction of temporary Housing accommodation at Walpole Park.

Financial Services comments:	<i>The proposed reduction in the number of PODs is expected to have a positive financial impact to the Council as all of the expenditure is outside of the budget. Although Government grant is easing the financial burden.</i>
Legal Services comments:	<i>Contained within the report</i>
Equality and Diversity:	<i>No issues identified in the report</i>
Climate Change implications:	

Crime and Disorder:	
Service Improvement Plan implications:	
Corporate Plan:	
Risk Assessment:	
Background Papers:	Report to Policy and Organisation Board dated 28 July 2020
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Report to Policy and Organisation Board dated 28 July 2020 'Emergency Procurement IT Equipment/ Housing Pods'
Report Author/Lead Officer:	Julie Smith Head of Housing

This page is intentionally left blank

Board/Committee:	POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
Date of meeting:	28 JULY 2020
Title:	EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT IT EQUIPMENT/HOUSING PODS
Author:	BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic the Government circulated an emergency procurement note, "Procurement Policy Note – Responding to COVID-19 Information Note PPN 01/20" ("PPN") drawing attention to the powers available to local authorities in entering into contracts and procurement during an emergency.

The Council has the ability to make an exemption to its usual Contract Procedure Rules in accordance with paragraph 3.3 to enable procurement in an emergency situation by approval of the Chief Executive, Borough Treasurer and the Borough Solicitor.

The Chief Executive has delegated his powers set out in the Constitution to the Assistant to the Chief Executive. As a result the Assistant to the Chief Executive is also empowered to provide approval in this situation.

Recommendation:

That the Board:

- i) Notes the procurements made in relation to IT equipment for Council staff to enable critical council services to remain operational through remote working and the provision of Housing accommodation for rough sleepers and the homeless at Walpole Park**
- ii) Approves the procurement of the Housing accommodation at Walpole Park together with associated services, as set out in the report.**

1.0	Background
1.1	<p>The Council has Contract Procedure Rules ("CPR") that set out how it is to procure goods and services. At paragraph 3.3 of the CPR it states that:</p> <p><i>"Where an exemption is necessary because of an unforeseeable emergency (below the EU Threshold) involving immediate risk to persons, property or serious disruption to Council services, the Chief Executive, Borough Treasurer and the Borough Solicitor may approve the exemption but they must prepare a report for the next appropriate Board to support the action taken".</i></p>

1.2	In early March 2020 the Government circulated an emergency procurement note, "Procurement Policy Note – Responding to COVID-19 Information Note PPN 01/20" ("PPN") drawing attention to the powers available to local authorities in entering into contracts and procurement during an emergency. These powers appear in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("PCN"). The EU Threshold is £189,330.
1.3	Procurement of these two items was taken using the emergency power set out in the Contract Procedure Rules.
1.4	The procurement of the Housing accommodation has been particularly fluid with significant uncertainty relating to the length of any provision required, emerging government policy and future longer term arrangements. Consequently, the costs of the procurement have been increasing on a monthly basis as a result of continued hire of the pods and associated services. Whilst the 'Next Steps' exit arrangements are developed, approval of the Board is required to extend the hire of the Housing accommodation beyond the EU Threshold, as continued provision of the accommodation will be required whilst alternatives and the long term position of the Council on this issue is determined.
2.0	IT equipment
2.1	In mid-March as the Council started preparations for the Covid-19 pandemic Officers began to consider how to enable staff to work from home utilising existing and new equipment. Subsequently, Government guidance in relation to working practices during the pandemic was updated on 23 March 2020 with the effect that people should work from home unless it was absolutely necessary for them to attend their place of work. IT were engaged to source additional equipment to enable this to take place with IT equipment being distributed on a phased basis.
2.2	By Friday 3 April 2020 the Emergency Covid-19 Team had co-ordinated the rollout of IT equipment with a plan for keeping mission critical services running. This plan set out arrangements to enable as many members of staff as possible to work from home.
2.3	The Head of IT consulted with the Emergency Covid-19 Team at the Council to determine the number of additional laptops required, the running and estimated final total cost, and who these would be distributed to. The Assistant to the Chief Executive gave approval to the procurement of the equipment, and the Head of Finance updated the Borough Treasurer in separate exchanges of emails as the situation developed.
2.4	The total procurement as of 1 June was for equipment to a value of £101,120.00 from one supplier (Vokhus) and a further £14,309.00 from another (Sophos) giving a combined total of £115,429.00.
2.5	This procurement was below the EU threshold and assessed to be

	appropriate for a direct award due to extreme urgency (PCR regulation 32(2)(c)).
3.0	Housing Pods, Walpole Park
3.1	Prior to the lockdown, officers assessed the suitability of accommodation in council-owned hostels at Agnew House and Barclay House and the impact COVID-19 would have in these setting where there are shared facilities. The initial response was to ensure that the hostel housing provision remained open as a critical and essential service and all high risk individuals that fell into the shielded category were moved out into alternative self-contained accommodation. Steps were taken to provide means of self-isolation for all other individuals where possible, but it became apparent that additional accommodation would be required.
3.2	On 26 March 2020, in response to the public health emergency, and the Government's 'Everyone in' directive to find safe and secure accommodation for anyone presenting as homeless, the priority for all local authorities was to ensure that rough sleepers across the country had an offer of accommodation and a place they could self-isolate if required. This directive included all non-priority homeless.
3.3	The Council needed to respond to this directive and find a solution within a matter of days and at a time when the normal supply chain of temporary accommodation, such as hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation, was unavailable. The Head of Housing was able to source 30 Bunkabins quickly, at a time when other Local Authorities were doing exactly the same.
3.4	Since the 'Everyone in' directive, the Housing Service has seen a total of 78 approaches for housing under COVID-19. Of these, 21 have been assisted into more settled accommodation, either in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) or via supported housing pathways. The remainder have been accommodated in the cabins, limited available bed and breakfast accommodation, and the Council's own hostels. A small number declined assistance or were unable to be accommodated as they were deemed to be too high risk.
3.5	In addition to the COVID-19 placements, a further 69 households have been accommodated where the Council had a homeless duty in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. All those that approach the Housing Service as homeless are assessed and the data for those accommodated under COVID-19 shows that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26% will require supported housing with intensive support • 29% will require supported housing or PRS accommodation with floating support • 45% will be able to access PRS with assistance such as rent deposit, bond guarantee
3.6	A specialist taskforce, headed by Dame Louise Casey, has been created to

	<p>lead the next phase of the government's support for rough sleepers during the pandemic and build on the work undertaken so far. The taskforce aims to ensure that rough sleepers in emergency accommodation continue to receive the physical and mental health support they need to continue to self-isolate from the virus, and can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over with as few as possible returning to life on the streets.</p>
3.7	<p>The Next Steps Accommodation Programme has recently been launched and makes available funding to support local authorities. This programme makes available the financial resources to support local authorities to ensure that as few individuals as possible return to the streets following time spent in emergency accommodation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes separate funds for:</p> <p>(1) shorter-term and interim accommodation, reconnections and immediate support into sustainable move-on options such as the private rented sector to continue to support this work and sustain interim accommodation options until vital longer term move-on options can be put in place; and</p> <p>(2) longer-term move on accommodation, including capital for acquisitions, refurbishments and new build, and an attached long-term revenue stream to ensure people are supported in their new tenancies.</p>
3.8	<p>The Head of Housing consulted with the Emergency Covid-19 Team at the Council to determine the number of housing pods that were required and the costs involved. The Assistant to the Chief Executive gave approval, and the Head of Finance updated the Borough Treasurer in exchanges of emails as the situation developed.</p>
3.9	<p>The total procurement as of 10 July was £79,399.00 in relation to the supplier of the pods (Bunkabin) and a further £106,739 in relation to support services to be supplied to the pods (Mobile Mini UK Limited (Southampton)). There has also been additional costs of £12,020 for repairs (Kier) giving a combined running total of £198,158. The Head of Housing intends to bid for additional revenue funding to support the costs of the cabins through to January 2021 (from the national £105m fund) as well as other initiatives to facilitate longer term plans (from the national £161m fund). The overall cost to the Council will also be offset by contributions via rental charges to occupants of the pods at the Local Housing Allowance rate and paid for through Universal Credit. This income currently stands at £41,000.</p>
3.10	<p>Whilst the initial procurement of the housing accommodation was below the EU Threshold and assessed to be appropriate as a direct award due to extreme urgency (PCR regulation 32(2)(c)), with the running costs of the housing accommodation having increased above the PCN threshold, the Board's approval is sought. This will enable the continued hire of the accommodation until the 'Next Steps' strategy can be implemented.</p>

4.0	Future provision of housing accommodation
4.1	<p>Consideration has been given to moving occupants out of the emergency temporary accommodation into more settled, long term accommodation with support. This is not straightforward for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration needs to be given to the complex situation of non-priority homelessness, taking into account and balancing the requirements of those individuals that have been identified as having a priority housing need • The cohort will require varying levels of support to sustain future accommodation. Any new support contracts or existing contracts subject to a material change will need to be procured in line with the Contract Procedure Rules • Whilst the Next Steps Accommodation Programme has been announced, a successful bid and funding levels cannot be guaranteed either in the short or long term • Limited availability of suitable move-on accommodation, particularly for those with intensive and medium support needs • The temporary suspension of evictions is due to be lifted 23 August 2020 and it is anticipated this will lead to an increase in number of homeless approaches, placing additional demand on already limited housing options. The service is seeing increased numbers of relationship breakdowns and this will continue to add further pressure • Usual sources of temporary accommodation in hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation are still unavailable and conversations with local hotel chains indicate these will not be available for the foreseeable future • MHCLG has advised that the winter bed provision in the hostel at 101 Gosport Road, Fareham and provided by local faith groups will not be available for rough sleepers this year due to the shared sleeping arrangements and the high risk of infection.
4.2	<p>A number of long term accommodation solutions, appearing in the following paragraphs are being considered and evaluated by the Head of Housing. To assist in securing realistic housing options, an Accommodation Procurement Officer has been appointed for a fixed term until September 2021 following a successful Rough Sleeper Initiative joint bid with Fareham Borough Council.</p>
4.3	<p>Private Rented Sector (“PRS”) accommodation: Although there are a number of PRS properties in the Borough, it is unknown how many would be suitable or considered for single homeless households. Some landlords and letting agents have already expressed that they will only consider</p>

	<p>homeless families as rough sleepers are perceived to be a high risk. The Accommodation and Procurement Officer will be tasked with bringing empty properties back into use, including MOD properties where possible.</p> <p>Affordability of PRS for single homeless households remains a challenge. Despite the rise in Local Housing Allowance rates in April 2020, it is still well below the median rent in the private sector. This is in addition to the limitations for the under 35's who are only entitled to a Single Room Rate meaning they are only able to access a room in shared accommodation. A temporary increase to LHA rates was brought in by the government to ease homelessness pressures brought on by the pandemic, but it is unknown how long this measure will remain in place.</p>
4.4	<p>Private leasing schemes: Secure a portfolio of properties with a long lease for Council to let to homeless at LHA rates. Support will be provided using Flexible Homeless Support Grant funding. Consideration will also be given to alternative models whereby properties, including an HMO, can be purchased by charities or faith groups and leased to the Council with an agreed support package.</p>
4.5	<p>Housing First model: Work with Private Registered Providers to identify suitable properties in their stock to use as Housing First accommodation for single homeless with intensive support needs funded through the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. This will only be available to a limited number of individuals due to the high support costs.</p>
4.6	<p>Repurpose existing stock: Identify council owned properties that could be repurposed to provide additional housing i.e. convert redundant drying rooms in 4 x blocks into one bed, studio flats.</p>
4.7	<p>Having all the rough sleepers in one place has not been without its challenges, but it has been a real opportunity to help some of the most vulnerable in our society and work with them in a settled environment rather than on the streets. Traditionally, many night shelters are run on a night by night basis and the government does not want us to return to this model. The Council has a chance to offer rough sleepers more stability through a range of housing initiatives so we can continue to work together with health professionals to help address their physical and mental health needs and support the government's long term strategy to end rough sleeping by 2024.</p>
5.0	<p>Risk assessment</p>
5.1	<p>Procurement of these items was required as part of the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Further approval is required to continue the hire of the emergency housing accommodation otherwise alternative means of accommodation will need to be sought on an emergency basis. The Council has received, and continues to receive Government funding to mitigate the costs incurred in response to the pandemic. The Council has so far received two tranches of funding</p>

	amounting to £855,587 from Government in non-ring fenced government grants and last week it was announced that the Council would receive a further £144,232, taking total funding to £1,029,819.
6.0	Conclusion
6.1	The report sets out the reasons why the items were procured and are being reported. The Board is requested to approve the recommendation to enable to the continued provision of housing accommodation for the homeless.

Financial Services comments:	Contained within the report
Legal Services comments:	Contained within the report
Crime and Disorder:	
Equality and Diversity:	
Corporate Plan:	
Risk Assessment:	See paragraph 4 in body of report
Background papers:	None
Appendices/Enclosures:	
Report author/ Lead Officer:	Paul Grant, Borough Solicitor & Monitoring Officer

This page is intentionally left blank