

# Arun District Council

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Full Council – 8 November 2023</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Use of urgent powers by the Chief Executive – Local Authority Housing Fund Grant</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Philippa Dart – Interim Joint Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Communities</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Matt Stanley</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>

## **CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:**

The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) will support the following aims of the Council Vision:

Improving the wellness of Arun

- Support those who are homeless, street homeless or at risk of homelessness in emergency or temporary accommodation to improve health outcomes.

Delivering the right homes in the right places

- Support households with complex needs to secure suitable accommodation.
- Ensure the existing housing stock in the district (private sector and council owned) is maintained to a high standard.
- Continue to bring empty homes back into use for the benefit of the community

## **DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:**

This report is in line with the Council's Constitution and the use of Interim Joint Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Communities' Urgent Powers.

The Local Accommodation Housing Fund (LAHF) will provide up to 40% of funding towards the cost of purchasing seven additional Temporary Accommodation homes, adding to the stock of 56 properties already owned by Arun.

These additional homes will be new, high standard properties that provide better than value than the alternative, which is expensive emergency accommodation

## **FINANCIAL SUMMARY:**

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) allocated up to £1,092,000 of grant to Arun District Council to acquire or develop seven additional temporary accommodation homes to fulfil our statutory homeless duties. The allocation provides for up to 40% of the cost and will require the Council to fund the remaining 60%, up to a maximum of £1,638,000.

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1. This report details the use of urgent powers by the Interim Joint Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Communities on 14 August 2023 to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which would enable the Council to receive funding of £1,092,000 from DLUHC from the LAHF).

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended to Full Council to note the use of the Interim Joint Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Communities urgent powers.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1. DLUHC have allocated £1,092,000 of LAHF funding for Arun District Council to acquire additional homes for use as temporary accommodation. The LAHF scheme is intended to support Afghan refugees currently occupying bridging hotels and to relieve our existing homelessness pressures.
- 2.2. The Council must match fund the LAHF grant up to at least 60%, (£1,638,000). The funding is also conditional on having the properties ready for use by 29 March 2024. A grant application was submitted and accepted in July 2023.

## **3. DETAIL**

- 3.1. At the time of application for the funding there were over 180 Arun households living in temporary accommodation of which 145 were in expensive nightly paid accommodation provided by private suppliers. The cost of temporary accommodation to the Council in 2022/2023 exceeded £2.6 million.
- 3.2. Homelessness is a statutory service and at a time of nationally increasing demand, the Council is also experiencing increasing numbers of households in temporary accommodation. However, it can reduce its reliance on the private sector supply and thereby reduce its costs by acquiring its own portfolio of properties. Furthermore, it can do so using matched funding from the LAHF.
- 3.3. A report was presented to the Housing & Wellbeing Committee on the 12 September 2023, which received Members approval to request that Policy & Finance Committee include the scheme outlined in paragraph 3.1 within the Council's capital programme.
- 3.4. Under Paragraph 5 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution, a committee, sub-committee, joint committee or officer discharging functions of the council may take a decision which is contrary to the approved budget or Policy Framework if the decision is a matter of urgency. However, the decision may be taken only:
  - a) if it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the full council; and
  - b) if the Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee and the Leader of the Opposition agree that the decision is a matter of urgency."

- 3.5. To be eligible for receipt of the LAHF grant the Group Head of Finance and Section 151 officer was required by DLUHC to sign a Memorandum of Understanding by the 14 August 2023. The urgency of this matter meant that it was not possible to convene a meeting of the Council to seek Members approval. Members will note that the signing of the MOU did not formally commit the Council to spending any money at that point in time. That decision remained with the Housing & Wellbeing Committee and, subsequently, the Policy & Finance Committee.
- 3.6. The agreement of the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition to the decision explained in paragraph 4.5 being taken as a matter of urgency was sought by the Group Head of Finance and Section 151 officer on behalf of the Interim Joint Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Communities on 11 August 2023. Approval was given by both Councillors on the 14 August 2023.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1. Consultation was undertaken by the Group Head of Finance and Section 151 officer and Interim Joint Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Communities with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition on 11 August 2023 and approval for the use of the Chief Executive's urgent powers to agree to this funding was approved.

#### **5. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

- 5.1. There were no other options to the urgent decision.

#### **6. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER**

- 6.1. Funding for the scheme has been dealt with as separate business by the Housing & Wellbeing Committee. Its inclusion in the capital programme is subject to approval by Full Council. The Urgent Decision itself does not commit the Council to any funding obligations until Full Council have approved the scheme and Officers have identified suitable properties to be acquired. Any acquisition will need to be assessed for affordability and supported by a fully costed business case.

#### **7. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 7.1. The risks associated with the scheme have been set out in the detailed report to Housing & Wellbeing committee. There are no risks associated with the Urgent Decision.

#### **8. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER**

- 9.1 The urgent action was taken by the Interim Joint Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Communities in accordance with the Constitution and this report sets out both the rationale for that urgency decision and the substantive background to the decision.

## **9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

9.1. There are no implications identified.

## **10. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT**

10.1. There are no implications identified.

## **11. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT**

11.1. There are no implications identified.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE**

12.1. This scheme will deliver additional social value to the district by providing suitable temporary accommodation for seven additional households.

## **13. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE**

13.1. None

## **14. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

14.1. There are no implications identified.

## **15. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT**

15.1. There are no implications identified.

## **16. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS**

16.1. There are no implications identified.

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### **CONTACT OFFICER:**

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Job Title: Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** LAHF Report to Housing & Wellbeing Committee, 12 September 2023, Minute 246.

To access these documents – please click on these links:

[Minutes of Arun & Wellbeing Committee – 12 September 2023](#)

[LAHF Report](#)