

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Delegated Officer Decision – 14 November 2023

**Report Title**

Temporary accommodation for households displaced by flooding.

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

**Report Author(s)**

Sandra Tolley, Head of Housing Options,

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The purpose of this report is to give approval to increase the existing portfolio of Council owned temporary accommodation by 10 properties. These properties will be used for Rotherham residents displaced from their homes as a result of their home being flooded. The properties will be handed back to general lettings once they are no longer needed for displaced residents.

**Recommendations**

1. Agrees to increase the portfolio of temporary accommodation by 10 properties using the Council's housing stock on a temporary basis to accommodate households affected by the floods.

**List of Appendices Included**

None

**Background Papers**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Considered by any other Council Committees, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 In total there are currently 114 properties in the portfolio of temporary accommodation and also 13 properties which are used for victims of domestic abuse.
- 1.2 During the weekend of 20 and 21 October there was severe flooding to various locations in Rotherham which resulted in many households having to leave their homes because it was unsafe due to flood water ingress. Some households stayed with their families, some had their own insurance which provided hotel accommodation and 16 households were provided with temporary accommodation or hotel rooms by the Council's homelessness service.
- 1.3 As we move to a recovery position, families who had stayed with their families or friends have started to ask for help with temporary accommodation which adds to the existing demand.
- 1.4 Therefore, the current portfolio of temporary accommodation is insufficient to meet the current and additional demand from the households affected by the floods. At the time of writing the service is reliant on using hotel rooms for 12 households, some of which are families.
- 1.5 An additional 10 vacant properties, which are ready to let, have been identified from the general lettings portfolio to use as additional temporary accommodation.

## **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 It is imperative that there is sufficient emergency accommodation available to homeless households. The Council has a duty to provide emergency housing for people who may be eligible, homeless and in priority need of housing if they do not have anywhere to stay. Flood victims requiring accommodation are in a priority need group.
- 2.2 The existing and additional 10 units are transferred from the Council general stock managed by Housing Management to the Homelessness Service. The properties are fully furnished self-contained emergency homes, which include a mixture of flats, bungalows, and houses and all can be accessed at any time by a key code.
- 2.3 The additional units will help to deal with this unanticipated extra demand for temporary accommodation. All will be returned to general lettings once they are no longer needed for this purpose.

2.4 The Housing Allocation Policy Section 5. Housing Management Lettings states that:

*There are certain circumstances when vacant properties may not be advertised in the "Key Choices" letting scheme, and on some occasions properties may have been advertised but the accommodation is required for a Management Letting.*

*These will normally apply to the following situations where the Council and its partner landlords may need to use vacant properties for specific management purposes in urgent circumstances. The policy clearly states that properties can be used for:*

- *Provision of Homeless Emergency Accommodation*

### **3 Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 **Option 1 – Do Nothing.** This is not recommended due to the factors outlined in section 2. Failing to increase the provision will lead to families remaining longer in hotels with no cooking provisions and opens the Council up to risks around meeting its statutory homelessness duty and increase in expenditure for hotel rooms.

3.2 **Option 2 – Increase the provision by 10 Units (recommended).** This will ensure the Homelessness Service can meet its statutory responsibilities to homeless individuals and families.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 Consultation has been limited to homelessness officers, members of the flooding rehousing working group, legal services colleagues and relevant Cabinet Members.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 The Assistant Director of Housing is accountable for implementing this decision.

Following the decision, the portfolio of temporary accommodation will be increased by 10 fully furnished units. These properties will be handed back to

5.2 general lettings when the households have been able to return home.

### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)**

- 6.1 The current average HRA rent is £85 per week. The cost of 10 properties would be £850 per week. This will be a loss of rental income to the HRA. This is a cheaper option than the use of hotels and provides better living arrangements.
- 6.2 The 10 additional properties will need to be set up with furniture packages which will increase capital costs on the Furnished Homes service (General Fund).
- 6.3 Additional properties will increase the usual running costs for the Dispersed Properties service (General Fund) for utilities, cleaning, council tax, etc. These are usually partly covered by a nightly charge levied to temporary accommodation users. Due to the unusual circumstances surrounding the nature of this offer, discussions are taking place regarding the liability for users to pay the nightly temporary accommodation charge. In some instances, this may be covered by benefits, but for private homeowners displaced due to flooding this may not be possible.
- 6.4 There are no procurement implications

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)**

- 7.1 The legal implications are addressed within the main body of the report. As stated at paragraph 2.1, the Council has a statutory duty to provide emergency housing to individuals who are homeless, eligible and in priority need of housing. The Council must therefore ensure measures are in place to ensure compliance with this statutory duty, increasing the provision by ten units ensures that the Council is in a position to be able to meet this duty.
- 7.2 The allocation policy does allow for circumstances such as these and thus the Council will be acting in accordance with the policy when allowing properties to be used for the provision of homeless emergency accommodation.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 There are no HR implications arising from the report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 The proposals are likely to bring direct benefits for other directorates and partners, particularly in providing families with children safe self contained temporary accommodation in Rotherham

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 The additional units will bring a positive impact, in particular for families as they will be provided with self contained accommodation with cooking facilities.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 This proposal has no additional impact on emissions

## **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1. There are no implications for partners.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 The proposed additional properties mitigate the risk that the existing provision is insufficient to meet the statutory duty to provide emergency accommodation for homeless households.

## **14. Accountable Officers**

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health  
James Clark, Assistant Director of Housing  
Sandra Tolley, Head of Housing Options

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).