

Finance and Resources Committee

10am, Thursday, 25 January 2024

Homelessness Services: Use of Temporary Accommodation

Executive/routine
Wards

Executive
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Finance and Resources Committee:
- 1.1.1 Approve, through a waiver of the Council's Contract Standing Orders (CSOs), extending 26 current contracts for the provision of temporary accommodation for the period to 31 March 2024. The additional cost would be up to a maximum of £5,123,255 (see Appendix 1 B Agenda); and
 - 1.1.2 Note that the values requested per provider are indicative only and are dependent on accommodation requirements, therefore Committee is asked to grant delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place to adjust (within the agreed total) the values between the named providers as necessary depending on need, type, and appropriateness of properties available from these providers.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 During the COVID-19 emergency, the Council was required to significantly increase the amount of temporary accommodation available to meet demand. The 2023/24 approved budget reflected expected reductions in the amount of temporary accommodation required due to mitigating initiatives that were being developed.
- 2.2 However, the estimated requirement exceeds what has been contracted through the Flexible Purchasing System (FPS) to date and there is a requirement to extend some existing agreements to allow the Council to meet its statutory duty to accommodate people who are homeless.

3. Background

- 3.1 During the COVID-19 emergency, the Council was required to significantly increase the amount of temporary accommodation available to meet demand. Pre-pandemic there were 3,570 households in temporary accommodation, and this has risen to 4,911 on 1 December 2023 (an increase of 38%).
- 3.2 Throughput from temporary accommodation services slowed during the pandemic across all tenures including alternative temporary accommodation, the private rented sector and social housing. This position is improving but has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Officers have been assessing the ongoing requirements for temporary accommodation taking account of demand and the progress of the expected financial benefits from mitigating actions being implemented, including the development of the housing emergency action plan.
- 4.2 This includes an increase in the number of Council owned properties available for temporary and settled accommodation via the ongoing work to reduce the number of voids in Council owned properties, continued increases in the number of Private

Sector Leasing (PSL) properties, and the impact of the continuation and extension of preventative services.

- 4.3 Having reviewed the current demand for temporary accommodation, officers are requesting approval for a continuation at existing levels (should this be required) to allow the service to meet its statutory responsibilities. The amount of temporary accommodation required from 1 January to 31 March 2024 period is partly dependent on:
- 4.3.1 The number of void properties that are brought into use through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA); and
 - 4.3.2 The demand for temporary accommodation from new homeless presentations and, particularly, those that relate to the removal of local connection and refugee and asylum programmes.
- 4.4 This request would, subject to delivery of planned mitigating actions, provide some capacity for impact from these potential demands. There remains an expectation that the mitigating actions will reduce the requirement for this temporary accommodation on an on-going basis.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will continue to monitor demand and the impact of mitigating actions with updates provided to Committee as part of the financial monitoring reports.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Finance and Resources Committee approved a [waiver](#) to the Council's Contracts Standing Orders to the value of £16,798,303 on 10 March 2023. This request covered the full year requirements for Private Rented Accommodation and Shared Houses.
- 6.2 This also included B&B accommodation waivers up to 30 June 2023 and a further extension to the value of £8,899,221 were agreed to cover the period 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023 within the agreed budget.
- 6.3 This report requests a further waiver to cover anticipated B&B requirements for the period 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024. The maximum value of these additional waivers is expected to be circa £5,123,225.
- 6.4 An update on the Homelessness service budget is included in the month eight revenue update report which is also on the agenda for Committee on 25 January 2024.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment highlighted some negative impacts on equality, human rights and social-economic disadvantage with regards to the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 7.2 However, the mitigating actions highlighted in this report were found to have positive impacts on these and correspond with the End Poverty Edinburgh Plan action to increase access to a decent home people can afford.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions, and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

Environmental Impacts

- 8.3 There are no environmental impacts as a direct result of this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The Council recognises that this is an area of risk as a result of some accommodation noted in this report breaching the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.
- 9.2 Should the Council not provide enough temporary accommodation to meet demand the Council will be in breach of its statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 None

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 – B Agenda – Waivers for temporary accommodation for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024