

HOUSING AND HOMELESS SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION – 7 MARCH 2023

PROPOSED PURCHASE OF TWELVE HOMES FOR UKRAINIAN AND AFGHAN FAMILIES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from the Housing and Homelessness Services Portfolio Holder to purchase up to twelve additional affordable homes to meet the needs of twelve Ukrainian and Afghan families. Subsidised with central Government funding the homes will be retained to address local needs as and when families are repatriated.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 2022 the Government set up a £500m capital fund to deliver 4,000 additional homes across 182 local authority areas to increase the supply of longer-term accommodation for Afghan & Ukrainians families. The initiative has been introduced to help mitigate added pressures on local authority homeless resources, and to reduce emergency and temporary and bridging accommodation costs. However once families are repatriated and needs from the cohort have been addressed, the homes can be retained to provide a lasting supply of accommodation to relieve homelessness and housing pressures.
- 2.2 The initiative builds on the Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family schemes through which more than 150,000 Ukrainians have been welcomed into homes and communities, and to assist the 23,000 Afghans who have also been welcomed and who worked alongside the UK Government and Armed Forces in Afghanistan.

3 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 As one of the local authorities selected under the scheme New Forest District Council has been offered £1.87m in capital grant funding by central Government, to help deliver 12 homes for Ukrainian and Afghan families.
- 3.2 After careful consideration it has been concluded that the most appropriate and achievable procurement route would be an extension of the Council's existing Buy Back programme with its proven delivery record. Furthermore, extending the Buy Back programme in this way would not present an opportunity cost to the existing affordable housing development programme.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 The proposal has been evaluated by Senior Housing Managers and the Executive Management Team and has been supported by Senior Councillors.

5. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

- 5.1 S17 (1b) of the Housing Act 1985 provides general statutory powers for the Council to acquire land and property. Funding has been offered to the Council under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Given the national priorities associated with this initiative; the local benefits it will provide for Ukrainian and Afghan families, and the long-term assets that will be added to the Council's existing housing stock as a result of central government subsidy - the case exists to participate in the programme.
- 6.2 By using the well-established Buy Back procurement route and/or purchasing other privately owned existing properties, the 12 homes can be procured without compromising the existing affordable housing development programme.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In February 2023 Council approved a 2023/24 budget of £15.2m for the Housing Acquisition and Development Programme. Decisions on individual sites or properties are made by the Housing Portfolio Holder. The acquisition proposed in this report is covered within the current approved budget and will be augmented with £1.87m in capital grants from central Government.

8. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None.

10. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 It is recommended that the Council enters an agreement with central Government to purchase up to 12 homes under the Local Authority Housing Fund for Ukrainian and Afghan households.

12. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ENDORSEMENT

I have agreed to the recommendations in this report

Sign: Cllr Edward Heron

Date: 7 March 2023

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