

Housing First Caretakers

To:

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 15/01/2020

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has been working with the County Council to develop a *Housing First* programme for Cambridge City
- 1.2 There are plans to develop and test various Housing First models over the coming years so that the Council can evaluate the efficacy of these different approaches, but also because the needs of customers who sleep rough or who are at risk of rough sleeping cannot be met with a one-size-fits-all option and local consultation suggests they are in favour of a range of options.
- 1.3 One of the models being developed involves a 'caretaker' living adjacent to customers in designated Housing First flats.
- 1.4 The caretaker would be employed by the Council and consideration needs to be given to how to recruit the best person for the role and the process for allocating the accommodation.

2. **Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Delegate authority to the Head of Housing to allocate accommodation to Housing First caretakers outside of the Council's Lettings Policy

3. **Background**

- 3.1 *Housing First* departs from orthodox 'linear' approaches to homelessness by placing homeless people with complex needs directly into independent tenancies without first insisting that they progress through transitional housing programmes and/or undergo treatment. Tenants are then provided with flexible, personalised and non-time-limited support in their homes and communities.
- 3.2 Research conducted across the UK, North America and other parts of Europe suggests positive results for the majority of people taking this housing pathway. These studies have identified some encouraging results both in terms of rough sleepers sustaining their tenancies for longer periods and clear signs of improved well-being for those housed.
- 3.3 The Council is developing three models, namely Housing First 1 (HF1), Housing First 2 (HF2) and Housing First 3 (HF3)
- 3.4 The models broadly operate as follows:
 - HF1 – self-contained accommodation with intensive peripatetic support
 - HF2 - self-contained accommodation with intensive peripatetic support and a caretaker in a neighbouring property acting as the 'eyes and ears' of the scheme
 - HF3 – a shared model which has been used to assist rough sleepers who prefer a shared environment – a pilot property was particularly successful in supporting those with no recourse to public funds to break away from rough sleeping.
- 3.5 HF1 and HF3 schemes have already been trialed by the Council to a limited degree; HF2 schemes have not yet been developed but the first of these is due to become available at Anstey Way this month.
- 3.6 On a HF2 scheme a small number of tenants (2 to 5) would be augmented by a caretaker who would live in an adjacent flat and carry out the following duties:

- Brief weekly engagement with residents
- Health and safety checks
- Cleaning and maintenance of internal and external communal spaces
- Acting as an early warning system, flagging problems/issues with the support service / other professionals as appropriate
- Liaising with neighbours and acting as a point of contact
- Involvement in the selection of new residents for the scheme
- Logging any of the above

3.7 It is not intended that the caretaker provides a traditional support service; more that they provide a link between the customers, the support services and the local community.

3.8 A caretaker would be expected to spend an average of around 5 hours a week performing these duties and it is expected that most of those employed will have other jobs.

3.9 HF2 schemes are likely to benefit people who may be vulnerable to exploitation or attracting anti-social behaviour issues to the property.

3.10 The recruitment of officers to take on the caretaker role will be a particularly important part of the process; the Council is intending to offer service (or 'tied') tenancies to the successful applicants and let these outside of the normal processes governed by the Council's Lettings Policy.

3.11 Although this proposal allows for allocation of a small number of affordable accommodation units outside of the Lettings Policy it is proposed that caretakers will still be compliant with 'Sufficient Financial Resources' rules as outlined in the Lettings Policy; these relate to limits around income and capital, which do not bar applicants from the register but mean they are placed in a lower band if they exceed these. The Council would not appoint as a caretaker or allocate HF caretaker accommodation to anyone exceeding these limits.

3.12 All currently planned HF2 schemes are part of the Council's new build 500 programme and up to 8 caretaker flats will be required to support HF2 schemes at:

- Anstey Way
- Ventress Close
- Mill Road
- Cromwell Road
- Colville Road
- The Meadows and Buchan Street

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

Proposals to cover the salaries of caretakers are set out in the HRA budget setting report for 2020/21.

(b) Staffing Implications

As set out in the report

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

There are no significant equality or poverty implications

(d) Environmental Implications

None

(e) Procurement Implications

None

(f) Community Safety Implications

The caretaker role is designed to mitigate the risk of community safety concerns throughout the HF2 programme.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

The Council consulted 32 current or former rough sleepers on the range of Housing First models proposed in June 2019, most responding positively to the prospect of an offer of accommodation under HF2.

6. Background papers

No background papers

7. Appendices

None

8. Inspection of papers

If you have a query on the report please contact David Greening, Head of Housing, tel: 01223 - 457997, email: david.greening@cambridge.gov.uk.