



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 September 2020

BRIEFING NOTE:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP – O&S PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: TRIAL OF BUY BACK PROPERTIES: THE USE OF THE BUY BACK ARRANGEMENTS TO REDUCE THE COUNCIL'S USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group to undertake pre-decision Scrutiny regarding the use of the buy back arrangements to reduce the Council's use of temporary accommodation.
- 1.2 Membership of the Working comprises Councillor Emma Roberts (Chair); Councillors G Eales, Lane and Smith.

2 UPDATE

- 2.1 The Working Group held two meetings to undertake this pre-decision scrutiny exercise..
- 2.2 At its meeting held on 17 August 2020, the Working Group undertook pre-decision scrutiny on the report - Housing Acquisition Options', seeking the necessary authority to extend the Housing Revenue Account borrowing to cover the cost of purchasing new and existing homes, that was to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 19 August 2020.
- 2.3 The Working Group noted that the properties would be let as permanent homes to homeless households that have been living longest in the most expensive temporary accommodation (TA). Although it was originally intended that the homes would be used as TA, it was later decided to use the homes as permanent accommodation in order to rehouse people as quickly as possible and avoid the extra cost incurred in respect of furnishings and voids.
- 2.4 The Working Group enquired about the 30 one-bedroom homes that are to be purchased and let at social rents – subject to Homes England

agreeing to provide the required amount of capital funding; these would be purchased on the open market and let to rough sleepers.

- 2.5 The intention was to expand the scheme to include new homes and homes that have not previously been owned by the Council.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 In concluding the pre-decision scrutiny exercise, the Working Group highlighted the need for governance, due diligence and oversight to ensure that properties are repaired, refurbished and let as quickly as possible.
- 3.2 The Working Group further concluded that it would recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that it continues monitoring this issue. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing was supportive of this further monitoring that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is provided with regular updates on the housing acquisitions programme.
- 3.3 The Working Group conveys its thanks to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing for the speed in providing the report to the Working Group and acknowledged the high quality of the report.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That it is recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that it receives regular updates on the housing acquisitions programme to future meetings.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager, on behalf of Councillor Emma Roberts, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Working Group

19 August 2020