

## Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing

### HOME RELEASE SCHEME

#### 1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval to for a new Council property downsizing incentive scheme, called the Home Release Scheme.

#### 2. Recommendation

**Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that the Home Release Scheme be approved with a new annual budget of £20,000 being established as part of the budget setting process for the Housing Revenue Account in 2023/24.**

#### 3. Detail

The Council offers Secure “lifetime” tenancies to its tenants. During the course of any tenancy, circumstances can change that can affect living in the accommodation and its size. A common eventuality is that a family home allocated becomes under occupied as children move on with their lives away from the family home. This under occupancy can lead to financial hardship.

Moving home to a smaller Council property can be a daunting prospect for tenants who may have lived in their property for a number of years and may not feel they can do so without support. The Home Release Scheme puts into place financial support as well as the support of officers to assist with some of the practical arrangements.

The Council has a high demand for larger property based on its waiting list profile, so additional homes to allocate to families would help those in high housing need on the waiting list or those that are threatened with homelessness. As at the end of September, there are 346 applicants requiring a property with three or four bedrooms. 133 of these are in Band 1 and Band 2, our priority bands.

Initial analysis of the housing waiting list and information held in the housing management system indicates that there are:

- 90 households currently under occupying family homes
- 19 households under occupying by two bedrooms
- 5 x four bedroom homes being under occupied (The Council only has 56 x four bedroom homes)

It is acknowledged that not all households will wish to move, even when incentives and support are offered. However, it is estimated that 8-10 households per year may move.

It is proposed that the work to contact each household to discuss their circumstances, reasons they have not previously moved, and if they would be

willing to move, would be completed in Winter 2022/23. This would provide an accurate, updated list of the potential. A £20,000 budget will be requested for 2023/34, to be financed by the Housing Revenue Account.

4. Financial Implications

The comments from the Head of Finance Services were as follows:

The total cost of this scheme will be determined by demand. In the meantime, an estimated budget of £20,000 will be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24 to be funded from Housing Revenue Account balances.

5. Legal Implications

The comments from the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal Services were as follows:

The Council must ensure that it is satisfied that the Homes Release Scheme payment is justified and meets the Council's obligations to ensure best value. This downsizing incentive scheme will enable the Council to realign its limited housing stock to meet key housing needs and will assist the Council in discharging its statutory housing functions and its duties and obligations to specific groups such as disabled persons and those persons with high priority needs. The Council must be satisfied that the criteria and application of the scheme is both proportionate in its effect and sufficiently robust to withstand any potential challenge. The Scheme is permitted by virtue of Section 137 of the Local Government act 1972 which allows the Council to incur expenditure in the interests of their local area and Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (the General Power of Competence) which permits the Council it to do anything an individual may do.

6. Human Resources Implications

No implications

7. Union Comments

No implications

8. Data Protection Compliance Implications

No implications

9. Equality Impact Assessment

As this is a new policy an equality impact assessment is included in the appendix to this report.

10. Background Papers

Nil