

## DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	7 OCTOBER 2021	6
<b>FULLY FUNDED REVENUE BUDGET INCREASE - PRS HMO INSPECTION PROGRAMME</b>			

### PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY

Fylde Council wish to undertake a proactive inspection programme of HMOs detailed in this report during 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The project will be funded using Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) funding for 2021/22, totalling £107,457. Direct project costs total £96,623 and the remaining £10,824 will be used to support the work of the Housing Service to provide continued support for clients identified as facing homelessness during the project. The HPG grant is received annually by Local Authorities for MHCLG and is designed to transform the way councils fund homelessness services to give them greater flexibility to priorities the prevention of homelessness.

Proactively inspecting properties within the private rental sector (PRS) maintains standards and overall property condition which will assists in reducing transiency and homelessness.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee are requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report and the proposed HMO inspection programme, in accordance with Part 1, Chapter 3 of Housing Act 2004, in which local authorities have a statutory duty to maintain housing standards within their district.
2. Approve a fully funded revenue budget increase to undertake the proactive inspection programme of HMOs in Fylde for the total of £96,623 to be met by the HPG (£25,742 21/22 AND £70,881 22/23)
3. Approve a fully funded budget increase for 2021/22 for the Housing Services Team for the remainder of the funding in the sum of £10,834 to be used to support the work of the Housing Service to provide continued support for clients facing homelessness in 2021/22 and 2022/23 (£2,000 21/22 and £8,074 22/23)

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

[Enforcement-Policy-April-2020](#)

[Environment, Health and Housing Committee - 2nd September 2021](#)

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	√
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	√

### FYLDE COUNCIL HOUSING SERVICES PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR

#### BACKGROUND

1. Within Fylde there is a growing number of HMOs. The main area for HMOs is the centre of St Annes where there is a higher concentration here than anywhere else within the Fylde Borough.
2. A Licensed HMO falls under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 and is a property for which there must be in place a mandatory license, renewed every 5 years, it is rented to 5 or more people who form more than 1 household with shared facilities. It is estimated that the majority of HMOs within Fylde do not currently require a license, this is due to HMOs having less than five people living within the property.

#### PROACTIVE PROGRAMME OF HMO INSPECTION

3. The Housing Service are proposing to embark on a project to proactively inspect HMO's. The proposal is for a separate project to run alongside existing reactive work. The project will last for a period of 2.5 years and will be reviewed at the end of two years in March 2024. Appendix 1 provides a flowchart detailing the inspection programme.
  - Week 1 Decide on the area for door to door and send letters/emails to LL, agents, and attending agencies.
  - Week 2 Door to door, establish their residential status and need for HHSRS survey and fire safety interventions.
  - Week 3 Send sections 239s to properties that were highlighted as needing further intervention for week 4 inspections.
  - Week 4 Conduct HHSRS inspections.
  - Week 5 All notices must be finalised and served, multi-agency meeting.
4. Clarification was requested at Environment Health and Housing Committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September on what was termed the computer database. It was explained that this is a new computer system 'Pentagull, ESB' designed to increase efficiency of Officers, ease the burden of notice writing and keep all information on HMOs in one easily accessed and monitored system. Photographs, notes, and all evidence relating to each HMO inspected under the programme will be stored on a secured system (Appendix 2)
5. The cost of the computer system is £10,000 in year 1 which includes an annual maintenance fee of £5,000. A similar system has been considered and the year 1 costs was £20,000 with an annual maintenance of £10,000. This system is in operation at Blackpool Council and is user friendly for the producing of Notices and providing data on the condition of the private sector stock.
6. When carrying out a Housing Health and Safety rating System inspection, Officers are looking for total of 29 hazards. These hazards are not always visible, damp is not always obvious, therefore equipment is required to enable officers to carry out their inspections in full. Damp meters, socket testers and volt readers, is an example of how equipment allows officers to make confident decisions when scoring the health and safety of tenants and properties during the HHSRS report.

## STAFFING RESOURCES

7. Clarification was requested at Environment Health and Housing Committee on the new posts to be created to support the Project and provide essential services to the inspection programme.
8. **The first post, a Housing Services Technical Assistant**, will provide support to Technical Officers undertaking inspections and serving Notices related to property disrepair. This post will be for 18 months starting in the Autumn of 2021.
9. The post will assist with the HMO programme and daily reactive work providing refile to officers. The assistant will be required to:
  - Take part in essential training regarding PRS housing including understanding HMOs.
  - Respond both directly and indirectly to tenant and landlord queries regarding the operation of the programme and reactive work.
  - Keep and update spreadsheets on the progress of the programme.
  - Plan the route and provide a list of where is to be inspected in week 4 to officers.
  - Log and provide officers with equipment and calibrate equipment as required.
  - Write, print and post all correspondence to be sent to landlords, agents and tenants throughout the programme.
  - Be the second person on inspections to cover absences in accordance with our risk assessment (this is only for safety and will not involve carrying out inspections)
10. **The second post will be a Housing Services Officer**, who will attend inspections to provide advice and support to vulnerable tenants who face homelessness, need tenancy support, advice on how to improve their health and well-being, to ensure their home is affordable, settled, and if they are facing difficulties know who to approach for help.
11. The first post, Housing Services Technical Assistant, is currently at Job Evaluation Panel and the results are expected shortly. The costings in Table 1 for this post have been based on the role being a Scale 5 position (SCP range 12-17).
12. The second post, Housing Services Officer, is an established position within the housing service and is graded at Scale 6 (SCP range 19-22).

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES

13. The project will be funded for 21/22 and 22/23. Future HPG monies received will be prioritised for this project until the full inspection of 530 HMOs has been completed. The new posts Technical Assistant and Housing Services Officer are for 18 months and 12 months respectively. However, the posts will be extended if funding is available.
14. Table 1 overleaf details the project costings.
15. Clarification was requested at Environment Health and Housing Committee on the purpose of the Homeless Act Reduction initiatives budget in 21/22 £2,000 and 22/23 £8,834. This budget is used to support vulnerable clients into accommodation and includes rent bond, rent in advance, essential items, carpets, and white goods.

## CONCLUSION

16. Note the contents of the report provides details on the proposed houses of multiple occupancy (HMO) inspection programme operated by the Housing Services private rental sector (PRS) team which is in accordance with the Part 1 Chapter 3 of the Housing Act 2004 in which local authorities have a statutory duty to maintain housing standards within their district.
17. An HMO inspection programme is required to ensure properties within the PRS meet current standards in accordance with the Housing Act and reduce transiency, support tenancies, and provide sustainable and quality housing in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
18. Approve a fully funded revenue budget increase to undertake the proactive inspection programme of HMOs in Fylde for the total of £96,623 to be met by the HPG (£25,742 21/22 and £70,881 22/23)

19. Approve a fully funded budget increase for 2021/22 for the Housing Services Team for the remainder of the funding in the sum of £10,834 be used to support the work of the housing service to provide continued support for clients facing homelessness in 2021/22 and 22/23 (£2,000 21/22 and £8,074 22/23).

**Table 1: Project Costings**

Note: Current funding available through the HPG for 21/22 will enable the project to run to April 2023. Future HPG funding will be prioritised to this project until all HMO's have been inspected.

Equipment	Cost	21/22	22/23	Total
Technical Officer (18 months)		15,190	31,251	£79,282
Housing Services Officer (12 Months)		0.00	34,630	£71,017
Computer system		£10,000	£5,000	£15,000
Volt reader	£7.50x4	£30		£30
Socket Tester	£7.50x4	£30		£30
CO Reader	£23.00x4	£92		£92
Damp Meter	£50.00x4	£200		£200
Laser measurer	£50.00x4	£200		£200
<b>TOTAL FUNDING REQUIRMENT</b>		<b>£25,742</b>	<b>£70,881</b>	<b>£96,623</b>

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	This report requests a funding to the total sum of £96,623 detailed within the report, to support the work of the PRS HMO inspection programme 2021-2023. £10,084 towards Homeless Reduction Act initiatives. All funding is to be met from the HPG funding allocation for 2021/22.
Legal	No implications.
Community Safety	The programme is community based and is customer facing. Officers will be approaching customers of Fylde at their homes and entering properties. No home will be entered without prior notice by letter at least 48 hours before the inspection date. The inspection programme will tackle anti-social behaviour and as a result, be making communities safer.
Human Rights and Equalities	No implications.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	No implications.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	Entering people's homes. Officers will be in groups of two, no officer is to be left alone in a property. Covid-19 – All those going to properties will have been offered the vaccine, masks and gloves will be provided and residents will be asked to confirm if they have been in contact with anyone with Covid-19 or displaying symptoms within the last 5 days.

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Housing Act 2004		<a href="#">Housing Act 2004</a>
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017		<a href="#">Homelessness Reduction Act 2017</a>

Attached documents

Appendix 1 - Proactive HMO Inspection Programme 2021

Appendix 2 - Technical Details for the Computer System