

# **Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision - Purchase of a property in South Somerset to meet Housing Need**

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## **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report reflects an urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of Council, to use £67,620 to purchase a 27.6% share in an SSDC part-owned property, for the Council to help accommodate people at risk of homelessness in South Somerset.

## **Public Interest**

2. South Somerset District Council has a statutory duty under homelessness legislation to assess and provide people with suitable accommodation. One aspect of this is to assist people with complex needs who may require adapted accommodation but are unable to access anything within existing stock.

SSDC owns a 72.4% share of a 3-bedroom bungalow in Yeovil, which has recently become vacant and we have the opportunity to purchase the remaining 27.6%, to ensure the property can be used for another family in the future.

An urgent decision has been taken due to the timescales of sale and purchase, to meet the need of the current occupant to complete a purchase on another property.

## **Recommendation**

3. That the District Executive note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to use £67,620 from the Affordable Housing Capital Programme Reserve for the purchase of the remaining leasehold interest (27.6%) of a 3 bedroom adapted bungalow in Yeovil, to enable the Council to provide accommodation to people with complex needs where they are unable to access suitable accommodation from existing housing stock.

## **Background**

4. South Somerset District Council has a statutory duty under the Housing Act 2002 to assist people in accessing accommodation if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness. SSDC successfully works with customers to prevent homelessness through a number of measures, including, where appropriate, purchasing and adapting properties to meet specific needs.
5. In 2015/16, SSDC purchased a 72.4% share in a property in Yeovil to assist a family who required an adapted property. The family owned the other 27.6% share. SSDC also awarded a Disabled Facilities Grant to enable the specific alterations required for the family, including disabled adaptations in one of the bedrooms and the bathroom

6. The family are now moving out of the area and wish to sell their remaining share. The property has been valued at £245,000. These properties are few and far between and there is a high demand, in particular for adapted properties. There are several families in South Somerset with complex needs who would be able to be directly matched to this property. These families have been identified by their Occupational Therapists liaising with SSDC Housing Specialists.
7. Once purchased, SSDC would arrange for the property to be managed by a social landlord but would have first option on allocating the property. We currently have several properties in Yeovil which are SSDC owned, and managed by one of our 4 Main Affordable Housing Partners very successfully.
8. SSDC would be purchasing the tenant's current leasehold interest in the property of which there are 96 years left of a 99 year lease.

### **Financial Implications**

9. There is currently £955,000 in the Affordable Housing Capital Programme budget. These funds were agreed by District Executive in 2013. If Members approve the allocation of £67,620, this will leave a balance of £887,380.
10. SSDC has the powers to acquire land (which includes buildings and parts of) for the purposes of housing under s17 of the Housing Act 1985; in addition under the Local Government Act 1972 SSDC has the power to acquire any interest in land.

### **Council Plan Implications**

- Reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- Match life long independent living with appropriate property solutions

### **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

None

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

Through the ownership and adaptation of high demand properties SSDC is able to provide accommodation to people with disabilities who may otherwise become homeless

### **Privacy Impact Assessment**

No implications

### **Background Papers**

Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2018-19