

Urgent Decision of the Chief Executive relating to the provision of Hostel Accommodation

Executive Portfolio Holders: Val Keitch, Strategy
Nicola Clark, Housing
Strategic Director: Jane Portman, Chief Executive
Contact Details: Jane.portman@southsomerset.gov.uk

Decision Record

Under paragraph 4 of Section 6 of part 3 of the Constitution (Functions Delegated to Officers), the Chief Executive has delegated authority from Council to take urgent decisions in relation to Executive matters in consultation with the Leader (or Deputy Leader) of the Council and the relevant Portfolio Holder, providing that action is reported to the next appropriate meeting of Executive. An urgent decision is one that is considered by the Chief Executive to be necessary to protect the interests of, or advance the business of, the Council.

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Having consulted the Leader of the Council and the relevant Portfolio Holder, I am exercising the delegated authority set out in **paragraph 4 of Section 6 of part 3 of the Constitution (Functions Delegated to Officers)**, to take the following urgent decision, which I consider to be necessary to protect the interests of, or advance the business of, South Somerset District Council. The reasons for my decision are set out in the Appendix.

This is a key decision within the meaning of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. For the reasons set out in the Appendix, I am satisfied that regulation 11 (cases of special urgency) applies.

Decision

Subject to the consent of Somerset County Council under the section 24 Direction issued by the Secretary of State on 10 May 2022, to vire £219,829 from the Housing & Homelessness Reserve (X8380) to the revenue housing budget to fund a 10-bed space hostel with support for single homeless people and rough sleepers for 2023/24.

Jane Portman, Chief Executive
Date: 21st February 2023

Confirmation

I, Val Keitch, Leader of the South Somerset District Council, have been consulted by Jane Portman on the above urgent decision, which she considers necessary to protect the interests of, or advance the business of, South Somerset District Council. I have had the opportunity to read her reasons and concur with her decision.

Val Keitch, Leader of the South Somerset District Council

Date: 21st February 2023

I, Nicola Clark, the relevant Portfolio Holder, have been consulted by Jane Portman on the above urgent decision, which she considers necessary to protect the interests of, or advance the business of, South Somerset District Council. I have had the opportunity to read her reasons and concur with her decision.

Nicola Clark, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Date: 21st February 2023

I, Gerard Tucker, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, have been consulted by Jane Portman on the above urgent decision, which she considers necessary to protect the interests of, or advance the business of, South Somerset District Council. I have had the opportunity to read her reasons and I agree that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

Gerard Tucker, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Date: 21st February 2023

Appendix

Article 13 – Decision Making

Principle	Response
Proportionality Article 13.02(a)	<p>This action is proportionate to the desired outcome because of the Council's duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act and the likely adverse impact on the Council's ability to fulfil those duties, to vulnerable individuals and the wider community.</p> <p>It ensures that the interests of all stakeholder groups are protected and that the council can properly exercise its functions in a cost-effective way.</p>
Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers Article 13.02(b)	<p>This decision is an urgent decision and the Leader of Council and relevant Portfolio Holders have been consulted. Professional advice has been taken from the Monitoring Officer and the relevant Specialists in Housing and Finance.</p>
Respect for human rights Article 13.02(c)	-
Presumption in favour of openness Article 13.02(d)	<p>This decision record is a public document</p>
Clarity of aims and desired outcomes Article 13.02(e)	<p>These are set out in the reasons for the decision</p>
Reasons for decision Article 13.02(f)	<p>Background</p> <p>Provision of hostel accommodation and associated support forms a key part of SSDC's responsibilities in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, supporting vulnerable people in our community and delivering our requirements under the Homelessness Reduction Act. The service forms a key part of our/partners role in helping people move on from rough sleeping, through our accommodation pathway and into independent living.</p> <p>It is a high priority for all the Somerset Councils, and we have a joint Somerset Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy. Most of our services for homeless prevention and rough sleeper outreach support (apart from the hostel itself) are funded through DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) grants.</p> <p>In October 2022, BCHA (Bournemouth Churches Housing Association) the current provider running Pathways hostel gave 6 months' notice on their 5-year contract (2022-25) to provide hostel accommodation and support. Pathways 30 bed hostel at Newton Road</p>



Yeovil will close on 31 March 23, the reasons for the notice was due to the extremely poor condition of the building.

Since receiving notice, the Housing Team have been sourcing alternative accommodation, and have now found a licenced HMO which suits the needs of the client group. Due to the size of the unit the cost of managing the accommodation is significantly more than the costs of running Pathways.

Following direction from Members we are proposing the use of smaller units of accommodation to provide more appropriate accommodation for the client group and reduce the impact on the local communities.

The accommodation proposed utilises an existing House of Multiple Occupation, but ensuring we have office space for staff. The accommodation will be staffed 24/7. Staff will provide support to the residents to enable them to use other services with the aim of moving onto more permanent accommodation.

Reasons for Decision

Without hostel supported accommodation the Council will be forced to rely on Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

The cost of operating the HMO annually will be £379,829, the potential cost for the same number of households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation could be as much as £360,480 per year.

There is an additional cost due to the reduction BCHA will receive in Housing Benefit, Pathways is a 30-bed space hostel, whilst the new hostel is only 10 bedspaces. Both hostels have the same staffing costs to ensure the building is run in a safely and proactive way to support the residents.

The cost to the public purse is also likely to increase, since the decommissioning of Pathways we have had to place a larger number of clients into B&B accommodation, which has put additional demand on the Police and NHS.

The accommodation will provide a proactive, multi-agency support, which will reduce the demand for other public services for example the Police and NHS. Failure to provide the accommodation will also likely cause an increase in rough sleepers, street drinking and antisocial behaviour within the town centre.

To achieve this benefit, we will need the on-going support of BCHA. BCHA are due to serve redundancy notices to all the staff employed to deliver the South Somerset contract on 22 February 2023 unless we can



	<p>confirm that funding is in place to support the activities they support under the contract.</p> <p>The current accommodation is funded partly by housing benefit and partly from SSDC, due to the reduction in the number of units in the new property there will be a drop in income for BCHA. Unfortunately, there is no reduction in costs as the same number of staff are required to safely and effectively run the unit and ensure there is cover 24/7.</p>
Is this a Key Decision?	<p>Yes – it is an executive decision which, is likely to</p> <p>(a) result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; and</p> <p>(b) be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.</p> <p>In accordance with regulation 11 (cases of special urgency) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the Chair of the Council's Scrutiny Committee has agreed that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.</p>