



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Cabinet

11 July 2023

Councillor Phil Dilks
Cabinet member for Housing and
Planning

Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

Report Author

Jodie Archer, Head of Housing

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Purpose of the Report

To seek delegation for the spend of the awarded Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) grant to the s151 Officer and Cabinet member for Housing and Planning. This will allow the Council to increase the social housing stock to support the provision of accommodation to Ukraine and Afghan families

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 1. Delegates authority to the Council's s151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet member for Housing and Planning to acquire properties utilising the allocated LAHF grant funding and in accordance with the grant agreement arrangements.**

Decision Information	
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes (Urgent item in accordance with paragraph 17 (General Exception) of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules)
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Housing that meets the needs of all residents
Which wards are impacted?	All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 1 March 2023, it was approved to receive £2,098,750 of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to provide accommodation to Ukraine and Afghan families and agree approval of the memorandum of understanding with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and to approve an allocation of £2,383,750 from the Council's Housing Revenue Account Priorities Reserve to fund the Council's own contribution towards the Local Authority Housing Fund.
- 1.2 It is important any purchases are independently valued to demonstrate best price and that all grant agreement arrangements are met.

Completed by: Richard Wyles Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer)

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 This item is a key decision and is being considered as an urgent item in accordance with paragraph 17 (General Urgency) of the Council's Access to Procedure Rules in Part 4 (Procedure Rules) of the Council's Constitution.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities has awarded the Council Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), to support local authorities in providing accommodation to Ukraine and Afghan families, settled in the UK legally under various government schemes following the respective conflicts that have occurred in their countries.
- 2.2 The LAHF programme has two aims.
- To support in providing more suitable accommodation and affordable accommodation for these families, who arrived in the UK legally, until their visas expire in circa 3-5 years' time.
 - To support local authorities in meeting their duties to accommodate such families if they present as homeless, therefore reliving pressure on wider local housing challenges and constraints.
- 2.3 For clarity, the scheme is not aimed at households who have arrived in the UK illegally, outside of government sponsored resettlement schemes. As opposed to being a competitive funding scheme, the Government has directly approached around 180 local authorities to invite them to take part in the scheme. South Kesteven District Council is one such authority. Once the properties are no longer utilised by the cohort (likely upon the expiry of their visas), the council will be free to use the properties for whatever purpose they deem suitable. In other words, the homes will be available for use by the council as a long-term asset to meet local housing need.
- 2.4 The Council was provisionally identified as eligible for capital grant funding (under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003), with the following indicative allocation:
- Main element: £1,710,000 in funding. This funding is to aid to provide a minimum of 19, two/three-bedroom homes.
- Bridging element: £388,750 in funding. This funding is to provide a minimum of 2 larger four plus bedroom homes to be allocated to households currently residing in bridging accommodation.
- Any unspent funding by 30th of November 2023 will be required to be repaid to Government.
- 2.5 Approval to receive the grant was unanimously granted at Full Council in March 2023. Following initial discussions with local developers it has become apparent that we need to be able to react to emerging opportunities for property purchases to enable us to satisfy the grant conditions and deadlines.

- 2.6 Enabling a delegation to the s151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning shall ensure high level oversight and understanding of the level of grant spend and shall ensure value for money and effective delivery.
- 2.7 The newly formed Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee shall receive regular updates in relation to the progress of the LAHF programme.

3. Key Considerations and Other Options Considered

- 3.1 The LAHF is a government fund provided to aid local authorities to meet the significant challenges presented as a result of the Afghan and Ukraine schemes.
- 3.2 If the Council is unable to purchase the properties through this scheme, the housing need that the properties are designed to meet is likely to arise anyway. The homes provided under the scheme will make a net positive contribution to housing available to the council to meet need, therefore supporting the council in meeting the needs of the wider population too.
- 3.3 In light of the above, there were no other options considered.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 By enabling the delegation the Council shall be able to react to emerging opportunities at short notice with the aim to fully utilise the LAHF grant funding awarded.