

Delegated Decision Report

Decision below £250k



Subject:	Grant funding – RSL void properties
Decision maker: Senior Officer	Emma Barton – Deputy Chief Exec (Place)
Decision maker: Cabinet Member	Cllr Arooj Shah – Leader and Cabinet Member for Growth
Decision date:	29.07.25
Report author:	Simon Shuttleworth
Ward (s):	N/A

Reason for decision

Building on good practice from Tameside, an agreement was reached with MHCLG that £140,000 of Winter Pressures funding for 2025/26 would be used to pilot a scheme whereby funding is made available to local social landlords, in order to bring void properties back into use, rather than seek to dispose of them. This report seeks authorisation to enact this scheme.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the £140,000 received from MHCLG Winter Pressures funding is agreed to be used to support Housing Associations to bring voids back into use, rather than dispose of them.
2. That, working with Legal colleagues, a memorandum of understanding (or grant agreement if appropriate) between the Council and interested social housing providers is put in place, based on that used in Tameside, to specify terms around the use of this funding.
3. That sign-off on specific properties to be brought back into use through this scheme is delegated to the Director of Communities.

Background

As with other authorities across the country, Oldham is currently experiencing significant pressure in relation to homelessness, and the cost of temporary accommodation (TA).

Along with work to improve our preventative approach, our TA mitigations workstream is aimed at looking at how we are able to bring online more appropriate and less costly TA, and also at how we can ensure there are sufficient appropriate accommodation options available for us to move households out of TA. Conversations have been ongoing with housing providers, GMCA and other local authorities, around different options to address this situation, and identify good practice.

One option, currently in place in Tameside, is to support social housing providers to bring void properties back into use, where they would otherwise be considering disposing of them or, as a minimum, leaving them void for a lengthy period of time. Different associations have different policies in this area, but the lack of capital funds to address voids is a common factor.

The model would involve providing up to £15,000 per void property, with any costs above this met by the Housing Association. In return, the property would be returned to use for a minimum of five years, with the Council having the choice of placements, allowing homeless households to be placed out of temporary accommodation. As households within TA typically cost the Council between £10,000-£20,000 per year to accommodate (depending on household size, provider, etc), such an arrangement would allow for a significant reduction in cost over a five year period, while also helping to ensure that families are housed in the most appropriate accommodation possible.

On the basis of this assessment, agreement was reached with MHCLG around funding to test this approach in Oldham (as part of the Winter Pressures funding allocated to Oldham), with MHCLG earmarking £140,000 for this. This opportunity will be offered to local social housing providers via the Strategic Housing Partnership.

While initially grant-funded, a successful trial would allow for consideration to be given to continuing this model using Council funds, if further grant were not available.

Alternative option(s) to be considered *(please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s))*

Option 1 (preferred option) – agree the use of this funding as set out, subject to a memorandum of understanding, and with delegation on agreement of specific properties given to the Director of Communities.

Option 2 – do not agree to this proposal. This option is not recommended, as it would mean that opportunities would be missed to prevent social housing being lost to Oldham, would not allow us to place from TA into these properties (losing an opportunity to reduce cost to the Council, and improve provision), and would require renegotiation with MHCLG on the use of the grant funding received.

Consultation *(include any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted)*

Portfolio holder briefed (18th June) and supportive.

Risks

Not enough properties identified to make use of this scheme – this is deemed to be a low risk. There are currently four properties already identified that are void and would be appropriate for this proposal, and it is proposed to take a discussion to the Strategic Housing Partnership in July, to look at identifying more. In addition, further properties would be expected to come

forward during the course of the year, as they become void, with significant works needed to bring them back to lettable standard.

Usage of these properties not guaranteed for a five year period – this is deemed to be a low risk. This scheme operates successfully elsewhere. Social housing providers in Oldham are trusted partners, who are keen to support measures to address the homelessness situation. The memorandum of understanding will set out clearly the expectations for partners.

Implications

Financial	<p>In recognition of the significant pressures that local areas face in increasing provision of emergency accommodation and additional support required to safeguard vulnerable people at risk from sleeping rough during winter, the government provided £10 million in Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures funding to local authorities in November 2024.</p> <p>Oldham Council's total allocation was £221,752.</p> <p>MHCLG have approved the use of this funding for the pilot detailed within the body of this report.</p> <p>The estimated value of the pilot is £140,000 and will be fully funded from within this allocation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(John Hoskins)</p>
Legal	<p>It is important that the Council continues to have access to a stock of suitable temporary accommodation. It is a statutory function of the Local Authority to tackle homelessness, failure to do so could result in legal challenge from individuals but also the decision making of the Council.</p> <p>A form of Memorandum of Understanding or Grant Agreement as appropriate needs to be worked up with assistance from Legal officers to ensure the timelines and obligations of the Council and the relevant recipients are approved and achievable.</p> <p>If the Council intends to spend the money on works, services or supplies, all procurement activity must be conducted in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules and any associated regulations. The commissioning team must also liaise with the Commercial Procurement Unit to design and implement procurement activity.</p> <p>Prior to the award by the Council of an onward grant, a subsidy control analysis will need to be undertaken to determine if the grant funding award would amount to a subsidy and (if it would), whether the award would be deemed lawful when the subsidy</p>

	<p>control principles are applied. If required, specialist advice would be obtained on the application of the subsidy control regime and any reporting obligations to ensure full compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, the accompanying Statutory Guidance and any other relevant guidance.</p> <p>The Council must be satisfied it can meet the objectives and terms and conditions and milestones of funding imposed by any funding authority including any obligation to provide match funding and to monitor and keep any necessary records and file any necessary returns. Client Officers must also check the terms do not conflict with other funding conditions already in place.</p> <p>(Rebecca Boyle – Corporate Group Solicitor).</p>
Equality impact including implications for Children and Young People	N/A
Other	

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?	Yes
Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?	Yes
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	No

Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

1. NA


Appendix

1. NA

Report author sign-off	Simon Shuttleworth
Role	Service Manager – Strategic Housing Recovery

Date of sign-off	26.06.2025
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Approval	
Officer approval sign-off	Emma Barton
Role	Deputy Chief Executive - Place
Date of sign-off	26.06.2025

Approval	
Member(s) approval sign-off	 Cllr Arooj Shah
Role	Leader & Cabinet Member for Growth
Date of sign-off	22.07.2025