

**Report to CABINET**

# **Greater Manchester Empty Homes and Leasing Programme – Acceptance of Funding**

**Portfolio Holder:**

Cllr E Taylor – Cabinet Member for Housing and Licensing

**Officer Contact:** Neil Consterdine - Director of Communities

**Report Author:** Simon Shuttleworth – Service Manager - Strategic Housing Recovery

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026**

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## **Reason for Decision**

GMCA have allocated funding for local authorities with GM to deliver a programme bringing empty properties back into use, as part of wider plans to ensure appropriate quality housing for those in temporary accommodation (TA), as well as reducing the finance impact on councils of providing TA.

Proposals have been put forward for a three year scheme. In the meantime, Oldham Council has been given an allocation of £483,727 for 2026/27, comprising:

- £113,902 revenue funding, in order to employ 2 FTE staff, and
- £369,825 capital funding, to fund a range of measures to bring empty properties back into use

This report is presented under Rule 13 of the Council's Constitution, with the Chair of the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board having approved it being submitted without having been on the forward plan, due to the date of receipt of funding confirmation.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Approves acceptance of the £483,727 grant from GMCA
- Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Exec (Place) and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods for:
  - Approval of preferred model(s) to achieve delivery of expected outcomes

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- Approval of any necessary procurement exercises, to enable delivery of this scheme
  - Delegates authority to the Borough Solicitor or their nominee to formalise any necessary legal requirements including signing and/or sealing any documentation required to give effect to the recommendations and/or delegations in this report.
  - Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Exec (Place) or their nominee to approve the appointment of external legal advisors, as required, to protect the Council's interests and give effect to the recommendations in this report.

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## **LGM Empty Homes and Leasing Programme – Acceptance of funding.**

### **1 Background**

- 1.1 Oldham Council have been allocated £483,727 from GMCA, to initiate a new approach to bringing empty properties back into use in Oldham. While some authorities already have an Empty Homes Team, Oldham does not currently have this provision.

The funding is split as follows:

- £113,902 revenue funding, in order to employ 2 FTE staff, and
- £369,825 capital funding, to fund a range of measures to bring empty properties back into use

It is anticipated that the funding should enable a minimum of 20 empty homes within the Borough to be brought back into use, as temporary and/or settled accommodation for families who would otherwise be in less suitable TA.

- 1.2 A grant agreement (contained at Appendix 1) was issued by GMCA on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026. To secure the grant, the agreement needs signing, and a grant claim submitting no later than 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026. In practice, the need to recruit staff and initiate the programme means that it will be critical to accept this funding as soon as possible, in order to meet expected outputs.

### **2 Empty Homes**

- 2.1 As with many authorities across the country, Oldham saw a substantial increase in the numbers of households presenting as homeless over the past decade. While significant strides have been made in reducing the numbers of households in temporary accommodation (currently around 500, down from a peak of over 700), there is still much that work to be done to reduce this further.
- 2.2 As a Council, we have in place a multi-faceted plan, starting from continuing our focus on prevention of homelessness, and including work to help families already in this situation to move on to more permanent housing as soon as possible. Alongside the vital work to bring forward more development of social and affordable housing over the coming years, we also have a programme of schemes aimed at helping to access better quality and less costly temporary accommodation.
- 2.3 One approach that we do not currently have in Oldham is based around identifying empty properties and working to bring them back into use. There are currently estimated to be around 880 empty residential properties in Oldham, with over half of these empty for 12 months or more. These properties are not just a missed opportunity in terms of meeting our housing needs – if not properly maintained,

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they can often also result in a negative impact on our communities.

- 2.4 Bringing such properties back into use can be a complex issue, often involving significant investigative work, in order to ascertain ownership, make contact with the owner, and support them to identify the best way to bring their property up to standard and being lived in. In some cases, this can be done with little cost other than officer time. However, in others, financial intervention is required in order to make the property fit for purpose again. Either way, good practice from elsewhere confirms that little can be achieved without dedicated officer capacity.
- 2.5 Oldham does not currently have an approach around bringing empty homes back into use. However, along with authorities across GM, we have been working closely with GMCA colleagues around a variety of opportunities in relation to addressing our homelessness challenges, and empty homes has been a key area of focus.
- 2.6 GMCA has now agreed to offer grant funding for Councils set up or expand empty homes teams. Further proposals are going forward to provide funding for the next three years. In the first instance, a grant agreement has been received for funding for 2026/27. Oldham has been offered an allocation of £483,727, comprising:
- £113,902 revenue funding, in order to employ 2 FTE staff, and
  - £369,825 capital funding, to fund a range of measures to bring empty properties back into use
- 2.7 This opportunity would allow us to bring together a small team, who would work with colleagues across the organisation and wider partners, to start to tackle empty homes across the Borough.
- 2.8 The capital funding would allow for a number of possible interventions to bring properties to the appropriate standard, in return for an agreement for them to be used to support our housing needs for a defined period of time. A toolkit of potential interventions and delivery models will be established, building on best practice from other authorities, and supported by a peer learning group, to be facilitated by GMCA.

### **3. Options/Alternatives**

#### **Option 1 – Complete the grant agreement and accept grant monies**

Under this option, the Council would receive an initial £483,727 to set up a team and work to bring empty homes in the Borough back into use, to support our housing challenge. It is expected that this will be followed by subsequent funding for years two and three (subject to agreement at GMCA on 27<sup>th</sup> March)

#### **Option 2 - Decline grant**

The Council could decline to accept the GMCA grant and not take part in the scheme. By not completing the agreement, no grant would be paid to the Council, and we would not be able to instigate the proposed approach.

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#### 4 **Preferred Option**

4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option for the reasons outlined above.

#### 5 **Consultation**

5.1 The Cabinet Member for Decent Homes has been consulted and is supportive.

#### 6 **Financial Implications**

##### 6.1 Capital Implications

6.1.1 The £370k grant funding available for bringing empty homes back into use will need to be used to support capital expenditure and be spent in line with the provisions of the Funding Agreement with the Combined Authority.

(James Postle)

##### 6.2 Revenue Implications

6.2.1 By completing the grant acceptance and accepting the grant monies the Council will increase their revenue finance resources by £113,902. This is the preferred option.

(John Hoskins)

#### 7 **Legal Implications**

7.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides Local Authorities with a general power of competence, enabling them to do anything that an individual may do, subject to any statutory limitations, for the benefit of the authority, its area, or persons resident or present in that area.

7.2 The Council must be satisfied that it can meet all objectives, terms and conditions, and funding milestones imposed by GMCA or any other funding authority. This includes any obligations to provide match funding (where applicable), to maintain appropriate monitoring arrangements, to retain all necessary records, and to submit any required claims or returns within specified timescales. Client Officers must ensure that the terms of this funding agreement do not conflict with existing obligations or conditions from other funding streams.

7.3 Legal Services will be available to advise on Subsidy Control requirements, including completing any necessary analysis to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks. Such advice may also be required throughout the delivery of the schemes to mitigate legal risk and support lawful implementation.

7.4 Any property transactions or acquisitions undertaken as part of the scheme must comply with the Council's Land and Property Protocol and all applicable land and property law. Depending on the complexity of the transaction, specialist advice from the Council's Property legal team may be required to ensure compliance and to safeguard the Council's interests. Any works, services, or professional appointments procured to support the scheme must comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, and the Council's Financial Procedure Rules must be adhered to at all times.

8 **Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People**

8.1 N/A

9 **Key Decision**

9.1 Yes

10 **Key Decision Reference**

11.1

12 **Background Papers**

12.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act :

13 **Appendices**

13.1 Memorandum of Understanding