

<b>Housing, Health, and Community Committee</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2025
<b>Report Title</b>	Temporary Accommodation (TA) Purchase Programme
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>The committee is recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the progress of the TA purchase programme and initial reporting.</li> <li>2. To agree to purchase additional properties with the remaining budget.</li> <li>3. To agree to extend the contract for the consultant to work on the acquisitions of the new properties.</li> <li>4. To conduct a full evaluation when all properties have been occupied for a minimum of 12 months.</li> </ol>

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides the Housing, Health, and Community Committee with an update on the progress of the TA Purchase programme that was agreed by the Housing and Health Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The former Housing and Health Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 agreed to the TA Purchase programme, giving authority to purchase 50 properties from the open market within Swale to utilise as temporary accommodation, providing a capital budget of £11m. A model was also developed to assess whether properties were suitable for purchase, it was the basis of this model that provided delegated authority to purchase relevant properties. The model also assumed the outsourcing of the management of the properties.
- 2.2 In addition to the Capital Budget identified by the Council, the government provided match funding towards TA purchases through the LAHF funding programme. We have successfully received funding from three rounds of the programme which has increased the size of the programme and has also enabled us to purchase some 3-bedroom properties as well as the original proposal for one- and two-bedroom properties. The first round focused on TA to support Homes for Ukraine households where host arrangements had broken down and were now entitled to TA, the remaining rounds were for general needs TA.

- 2.3 A project surveyor was recruited through a temporary recruitment agency to identify suitable properties and manage the conveyancing process with the SBC legal team. We managed to recruit an experienced surveyor who had delivered a similar programme for another Council and had extensive local knowledge of the Swale borough.
- 2.4 47 properties within the programme have been completed and we have 3 more properties that are near completion and are anticipated to be completed by the date of the committee, bringing the programme to completion. Of the 50 properties, 40 are in Sittingbourne, 9 on Isle of Sheppey and 1 in Faversham. The properties comprise of 7 one bed properties, 37 two bed properties and 6 three-bedroom properties.
- 2.5 The original model assumed that we would outsource the management of the TA properties, however when the team undertook research with other Council's it was apparent that these arrangements had not worked with outsourced providers for a range of reasons, and they eventually brought the services back in house. Taken their experience and advice, we therefore decided to manage the TA properties internally and staff within the restructure have been identified to support these functions. This did cause an initial delay in mobilising the properties fully as we did not have the processes, systems and contracts or staffing resource in place that an existing provider would have. The team have done an excellent job rising to the challenge and ensuring that the properties are suitable as occupation for TA, however, this has taken longer than originally anticipated and put additional pressure on the team.
- 2.6 It has taken on average 60 days for completion to first occupation. This does exclude the one property that was damaged due a fire on a neighbouring property and insurance works have been undertaken, this property has been void for an extended period. Initial works have been required at most properties to ensure they are compliant and safe to be used as TA. The team are now working towards a 30-day completion to tenant occupation period, and this will apply at void turnaround as well.
- 2.7 The other change in the model was that we factored housing benefit in at the 90% of the 2011 TA rate, however, we became aware that we are able to claim the current and full rate of housing benefit for our own properties, The TA Policy was amended by the Housing and Health Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 to enable us to charge the relevant rent and claim the revised HB level.
- 2.8 We have looked to complete a formal evaluation of the programme, however, very few properties have been occupied for a full year and therefore full operating costs for the whole programme are not currently available. Therefore, it is recommended that a full evaluation is undertaken next year when the whole programme would have been completed and all properties occupied for a 12 month period, we will however closely monitor the cost and quality of the properties and report to the committee in year through the TA scrutiny report.

2.9 Capital Programme Summary Costs – Year End Position (31 March 2025)  
(47 Properties)

Item	Cost
Property Purchase	£9,980,291
Professional and Other Fees	£702,308
Grant	(£2,187,271)
Capital Programme	(£11,000,000)
Balance	(£2,504,672)

Since 1st April there has been one further completion at a property purchase price of £255,000 and other fees incurred so far total £19,300. This leaves a balance of £2,230,400 as of 17th June 2025 to pay for other professional fees not yet charged, and to cover the cost of the last two remaining properties.

- 2.10 As there is a balance on the programme, it is recommended that the remaining budget is utilised to secure additional properties. Therefore, this report is seeking authority to purchase additional properties to fully utilise the programme budget.
- 2.11 The cost of the surveyor has now exceeded £120,000 including VAT, so retrospective approval of this contractor is now requested. Due to his knowledge of the area and the project, approval is sought to continue contracting the same surveyor to purchase the remaining properties that can be financed within this phase of the project. Costs for the surveyor are being met from the £11m capital budget provided, so there are no further budgetary implications from this decision.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 To note the progress of the TA purchase programme and initial reporting.
- 3.2 To agree to purchase additional properties with the remaining budget.
- 3.3 To agree to extend the contract for the consultant to work on the acquisitions of the new properties.
- 3.4 To conduct a full evaluation when all properties have been occupied for a minimum of 12 months.

### 4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 To not purchase any additional properties, this is not recommended as this will support the work to minimise costly nightly let provision as part of our Housing Options Improvement Plan.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 None.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Health & Housing - To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing.  Running the Council - Working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver in a transparent and efficient way
Financial, Resource and Property	This report provides an update on the Capital programme to purchase Temporary Accommodation, and the assets acquired as part of this.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Local housing authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Households might be placed in temporary accommodation pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they might spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	None at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The TA budget has been identified as a corporate risk, due to demand on the service and the budgetary impacts.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

## 7 Appendices

None

## **8 Background Papers**

### **8.1 [Temporary Accommodation \(TA\) Purchase 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 Report](#)**