

Notice of:	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Performance
Decision Number:	PH34/2023
Relevant Officer:	Vikki Piper, Head of Housing
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ivan Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Performance
Date of Decision:	1 March 2023

PROVISION OF FURNISHED COUNCIL TENANCIES

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To summarise the business case for Blackpool Coastal Housing, on behalf of the Council, commencing a furnished tenancy provision from the Housing Revenue Account, and to seek approval to introduce and fund a pilot scheme.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To approve a furnished tenancy service for Council tenants to be introduced, alongside existing unfurnished tenancies.
- 2.2 To agree that this concept be run as a pilot (proof of concept) for an initial twelve month period, with initial outlay of up to £100,000 with the intention that this is fully recoverable over 3 years
- 2.3 To agree that the service is only offered to new tenants at the outset.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 Evidence from Council tenants and others on the housing waiting list is that the cost of furnishing a new home can be prohibitive. A full report was provided to Blackpool Coastal Housing's Board setting out how a choice of furnished and unfurnished tenancies would give tenants more choice to better meet their particular circumstances.
- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 There is no other viable option to provide furnished tenancies under a social housing tenancy. The alternative is to do nothing, and continue to provide solely unfurnished tenancies.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

6.1 A group of Blackpool Coastal Housing board members and senior managers have undertaken research into the viability of such a scheme, including site visits to housing providers already offering furnished tenancies as part of a wider social housing officer. A full report was taken to the board meeting of Blackpool Coastal Housing on 10 February 2023, which recommended the option. This was approved by the board to be considered by the Council.

6.2 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

None.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The set-up costs would be £100,000 but the intention is that the scheme covers its costs including this initial investment.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 No direct legal implications arising from this report. This is a proposal which has already been implemented successfully by other social housing providers with no legal challenges.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 If the scheme was unsuccessful there could be reputational risks, but active management would help prevent this.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 The proposal would not negatively impact on any groups with protected characteristics. This is an additional choice based option, not a requirement on new social housing tenants.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 This proposal includes options for recycling furniture, which improves sustainability. Reduction in tenancy turnover would also improve sustainability by reducing the resources used in moves and re-letting tenancies.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Site visits to schemes which are already operating was undertaken to learn what works well in practice. Consultation also took place with some tenants who had recently moved into their new homes to see whether a furnished tenancy package would assist them to settle into their new home. There was considerable support for such an initiative.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None

15.0 Key decision information:

Is this a key decision? No

If so, Forward Plan reference number:

If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days?

If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: N/A

Date approved: N/A

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1 None.

19.0 Executive decision:

19.1 The Cabinet Member agreed the recommendations as outlined above namely:

1. To approve a furnished tenancy service for Council tenants to be introduced, alongside existing unfurnished tenancies.
2. To agree that this concept be run as a pilot (proof of concept) for an initial twelve month period, with initial outlay of up to £100,000 with the intention that this is fully recoverable over 3 years
3. To agree that the service is only offered to new tenants at the outset.

20.0 Date of Decision:

20.1 1 March 2023

21.0 Reason(s) for decision:

21.1 Evidence from Council tenants and others on the housing waiting list is that the cost of furnishing a new home can be prohibitive. A full report was provided to Blackpool Coastal Housing's Board setting out how a choice of furnished and unfurnished tenancies would give tenants more choice to better meet their particular circumstances.

22.0 Date Decision published:

22.1 1 March 2023

23.0 Executive Members in attendance:

23.1

24.0 Call-in:

24.1

25.0 Notes:

25.1