

## Operational Decision Record

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| Publication Date<br>24.02.2022  | Decision Reference Number<br>4535 |
| <b>Decision Title</b>   |                                   |
| LGA Housing Adviser Programme 2021/22   |                                   |
| <b>Decision Value</b>   |                                   |
| £25,000   |                                   |
| <b>Revenue or Capital Spend?</b>  |                                   |
| Revenue (grant)   |                                   |
| <b>Department</b>   |                                   |
| Growth & City Development, Planning & Regeneration  |                                   |
| <b>Contact Officer (Name, job title, and contact details)</b>   |                                   |
| Mark Lowe, Head of Housing & Regeneration – 0115 8763532<br><a href="mailto:Mark.lowe@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Mark.lowe@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>  |                                   |
| <b>Decision Taken</b>   |                                   |
| To accept £25,000 grant funding from the Improvement & Development Agency for Local Government (IDEA) to procure a Housing Adviser to provide bespoke expert support.   |                                   |
| <b>Reasons for Decision and Background Information</b>  |                                   |
| <p>The Housing Adviser (HA) would assess the suitability of a portfolio of approximately 50 small council-owned sites for (all tenure) housing development and make recommendations on the most appropriate delivery model to maximise their use.</p> <p>The majority of these sites are HRA owned garage or former garage sites but the portfolio includes HRA owned amenity land and parcels of General Fund owned land located next to privately owned sites which have proved problematic to develop.</p> <p>The initial development strategy was for NCC to directly deliver affordable homes on these sites with 58 homes constructed on 12 of these sites. The programme was halted in 2017 due to unit costs being significantly higher than those on a larger development sites. A pilot project is underway to test the market for self-build interest in four of the sites.</p> <p>These sites are being marketed as potential self-build plots with outline planning permission in place but not as fully-serviced plots. So far, this approach has</p> |                                   |

proven successful, with small builders acquiring for the desired amount. NCC are continuing to work with NCH on bringing some of these sites forward. The HA will assist to this end with assessment on more challenging or borderline development options.

The HA will evaluate the delivery options for the remaining sites taking account of the successes and challenges of the previous approaches and the size, constraints and location of each site. The HA would also assess the sites for suitability for development with supported housing units to meet the increasing need for accommodation for care leavers and other vulnerable client groups in the city believed to have been partially suppressed by Covid 19 restrictions in the last 18 months.

Integral to all options would be to highlight how development costs may impact on the viability of the development of zero carbon housing units.

It is important for Nottingham to maximise the use of all available land to meet its housing delivery targets. Many of these sites are in low value areas and the nature of the sites presents significant viability issues. Marketing the sites inappropriately would not necessarily produce development of the right type of homes to meet local need.

The appointed HA will provide assessment on the potential development of the sites for supported accommodation by RP partners too. NCC do not currently have the relevant skills in house in sufficient quantities to deliver this overall evaluation nor to present it in such a way as to provide an onward set of metrics or replicable approach for other authorities, which is something the LGA look for as an output.

### **Other Options Considered and why these were rejected**

#### **Option 1 – to use in house resources.**

This was discounted due to resources with the relevant skills being in short/no supply in the council and would divert their time from delivering higher council priorities and potentially see these sites vacant for longer.

#### **Option 2 – to not accept the grant**

This would mean the council will miss out on an opportunity to fund independent advice and expertise to help maximise the use of all available land to meet its housing delivery target.

### **Reasons why this decision is classified as operational**

This decision is classified as being operational as it has a value below £150,000 and is within agreed policies and budgets.

The financial value (£25,000) is a one off payment which will be paid directly to the council at the outset of the scheme and reflects the total committed financial impact to the Council.

### **Additional Information**

The terms of the grant offer has been checked and approved by Legal Services, they raised no concerns around the funding agreement, however it was pointed out that consideration should be given to time being committed to attend shared learning events and the delivery of a case study report. These will be included in the Housing Adviser project brief. They have also asked for it to be noted that the funding must be kept ring fenced and only used for the purposes as agreed with LGA.

Procurement Services have confirmed that as the cost of the Housing Adviser service will not exceed £25,000, this can be procured through the obtaining of 3 quotes and that the timescales are achievable.

The project brief has been agreed between colleagues in Property, Nottingham City Homes, Strategic Housing & Regeneration and it has been agreed that the role will provide additional value and benefits to the role being done by Nottingham City Homes regarding the garage assessments.  
The funding has to be spent within a year of accepting the grant.

### **Decision Maker (Name and Job Title)**

Sajeeda Rose, Corporate Director, Development

### **Scheme of Delegation Reference Number**

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### **Date Decision Taken**

23.02.2022