

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

REQUEST FOR THE USE OF EMERGENCY POWERS – CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

SUBJECT: Emergency Accommodation for Households Fleeing Domestic Abuse during the COVID 19 Pandemic

1. **Originating / Department / Service** –

Housing & Building Services – Housing Solutions Team

2. **Reason for Seeking Emergency Powers** –

There has been a significant increase in the demand for all temporary accommodation resulting from Welsh Government guidance on managing homelessness during the Covid19 pandemic (<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-support-for-rough-sleepers-html>) and £10 million of additional funding has been provided by Welsh Government to enable Local Authorities to secure accommodation needed to ensure those without a home can be protected, supported and isolated if necessary (<https://gov.wales/10-million-emergency-support-rough-sleepers-wales-during-coronavirus-outbreak>).

Following agreement from CMT the Housing Solutions Team has already secured the following additional emergency accommodation to respond to the increase in homelessness / rough sleeping due to COVID 19 pandemic:

- 66 rooms in three B&B / hotels within the Vale of Glamorgan; and
- 4 Local Authority properties retained as alternative accommodation for people in shared accommodation if an outbreak of the virus occurs and we are unable to ensure that residents can self-isolate in line with Public Health Wales guidance.

In May, a joint letter was issued by Jane Hutt AM (Deputy Minister and Chief Whip) and Julie James AM (Minister for Housing and Local Government) advising Local Authorities to ensure that there is adequate provision for victims needing to flee their homes due to domestic abuse. It also set out the range of additional measures and support in place to assist Local Authorities and the specialist sector in supporting victims of domestic abuse or other forms of violence during this pandemic.

In line with guidance from Welsh Government on tackling homelessness and to ensure we support those fleeing domestic abuse during this pandemic, the Housing Solutions Team has been working closely with colleagues from Supporting People, Safer Vale and Atay Y Fro to monitor demand for safe emergency accommodation due to domestic abuse and to consider opportunities to ensure adequate additional emergency accommodation is available.

There is concern from all agencies involved around the availability of sufficient emergency accommodation due to the increase in presentations of people fleeing domestic abuse, the lack of move on opportunities exacerbating the pressure on the emergency accommodation options available and the unsuitability of placing victims of domestic violence in emergency B&B accommodation currently being used by the Local Authority where a number of perpetrators are already accommodated.

Therefore, the Housing Solutions Team is seeking permission from CMT to secure and underwrite the cost of two suitable properties identified within the private rented sector on a 6-month lease to increase the resources available specifically for emergency accommodation for households fleeing domestic abuse.

The two properties identified are:

- a 2-bedroom property at a rental cost of £138.46 per week; and
- a 3/4 bedroom with the rental cost of £173.07 per week.

(The total cost of leasing these properties for the 6-month period is approximately £8,122.)

Issues to consider:

Housing Benefit applications will be made by the individuals when the properties are occupied, so any costs incurred will be reduced by their entitlement, however this could have financial implications for the Council if the payments are not made.

However, as these properties will be retained specifically for emergency accommodation for households fleeing abuse, there may be periods when either or both properties may not be required, and void costs for the full weekly rent will be incurred. There may also be costs in respect of rental top-ups, removals and other associated costs, as households fleeing domestic abuse may not have the financial means ordinarily available to them to move to alternative safe accommodation.

In accordance with the Welsh Government guidance, the Housing Solutions Team will make a claim for all costs for the 6 month lease period (minus any housing benefit entitlement) from the £10 million of additional funding that has been provided by Welsh Government. However, there is a risk that the funding could run out and the Authority may not be fully compensated.

As there is a continuing increase in the number of people fleeing domestic abuse, it also requested that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing and Building Services to secure additional properties for the sole use of victims of domestic abuse and their families should the need increase during the Covid19 pandemic.

Recommendations:

- Approve the Housing Solutions Team to enter a lease agreement for two PRS properties (one 2 bed and one 3 bed) for a 6-month period to

ensure we have emergency accommodation available specifically for households fleeing domestic abuse.

- That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing and Building Services to secure additional leased properties for households fleeing abuse during the COVID 19 pandemic should there be a need.

3. **Policy Framework and Budget** –

PLEASE INDICATE as appropriate that the matter that you are seeking the use of Emergency Powers for is a Cabinet or Council function.

Cabinet

Council

4. **Relevant Scrutiny Committee** –

Homes and Safe Communities

IMPORTANT

The following sections **must** be completed **prior** to the request being submitted to the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Section for processing.

I confirm (delete as appropriate)

~~(a) That there are no financial implications and the relevant Cabinet Member, Leader and / or the Deputy Leader has been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers; **or**~~

(b) That, in view of the financial commitments, the Head of Financial Services, the appropriate Chief Officer, the relevant Cabinet Member, Leader and / or Deputy Leader have been consulted and are in agreement with the use of the Emergency Powers and that

~~(c) For matters relating to the Planning Committee the Chairman of the Planning Committee has also been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers;~~

~~(d) For matters relating to the Licensing Committee the Chairman of the Licensing Committee has also been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers.~~

~~(e) For matters relating to the Welsh Church Act Estate Committee the Chairman of the Welsh Church Act Estate Committee has also been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers.~~

(f) For matters relating to policy the relevant Scrutiny Committee Chairman has been consulted and is in agreement with the use of Emergency Powers.

Signed: Mike Ingram **Date:** 2nd June 2020
(Instructing Chief Officer)

Please print name: M P Ingram

I hereby approve under my Emergency Powers the attached recommendation(s) on behalf of the Cabinet / Council (please delete as appropriate).

Signed: ..D.R. Thomas..... **Date:** 16th June 2020..
Managing Director

NB Should the relevant portfolio Cabinet Member be unable to be consulted only the Leader and / or Deputy Leader be consulted in their absence.

N.B. Cabinet: 23rd March, 2020 Minute No. 295