

**20 June 2023**

**ITEM: 10**

## **Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **Hostel Management**

**Wards and communities affected:**

All

**Key Decision:**

Yes

**Report of:** Cllr Barry Johnson - Cabinet Member for Housing

**Accountable Assistant Director:** Ewelina Sorbjan - Assistant Director Housing

**Accountable Director:** Ian Wake - Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health

**The introductory executive summary is Public**

#### **Executive Summary**

Housing Solutions Homeless Hostels at Charles Street and Clarence Road, the Housing 1<sup>st</sup> Programme, Street Homelessness outreach service and Floating Support Workers are currently externally commissioned services delivered by Sanctuary Housing.

Charles Street consists of 29 rooms, five of which are dedicated to Children's services within a self-contained block ('Blossom House'). There are 18 rooms at Clarence Road, nine utilised by Housing and nine by Children's Services and three additional temporary accommodation units held by Housing Solutions. Housing 1<sup>st</sup> utilises five Thurrock Council properties at any time with support attached to the individual. There are Floating Support Workers delivering tenancy sustainment services. The outreach work is funded by DLUC and works closely with existing Thurrock provision with further opportunity to collaborate.

Bringing the contract in house would allow these services to be combined with existing provision, providing more joined up services and a potential cost saving.

Council already runs one hostel directly, Brooke House, which is designated for single woman, with or without children and is cost neutral to run.

This report examines the benefits and risks of bringing the service in house as the current contract comes to an end in September 2023 with a possible 1 year extension. Bringing the contract in house would allow these services to be combined with existing provision and provide more joined up services and economies of scale. An example of this would be substance misuse, which has long been an issue in the Charles Street area and which several council teams are involved. It would allow greater discretion on how the rooms were utilised day to day. Currently we have nomination rights but according to strict criteria, and the hostel can currently veto

nominations. While there is clearly operational risk to delivering large complex services, there is also a great deal of opportunity allowing services to be modelled according to Thurrock's long term strategic plans to support the Better Care Together Thurrock and integration. Bringing the contract on house represents a potential cost saving despite recent inflation. Hostel services present operational risk which requires preparation and mitigation, this is particularly true in relation to new Ofsted regulations which would require significant preparation.

For these reasons we are recommending an extension to the end of the financial year which allows Housing services to fully prepare for direct delivery from April 2023.

