

SUBJECT: LEASE APPROVAL FOR HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION – 3 Hillcrest, Wyesham, Monmouth, NP25 3LN
MEETING: COMMUNITIES & PLACE DMT
DATE: 8TH APRIL 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1 To agree to sign up to a lease agreement as follows :-

- 1 year lease at 3 Hillcrest, Wyesham, Monmouth, NP25 3LN at £1000 PCM

This property will enable the Council to provide:

- 1 three bed unit to accommodate a family currently in B&B.

A household with a 2-bed need has been identified as suitable for this property – a couple with 1 child. They have Section 75 duties under homelessness and are currently placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in Monmouth. The household are currently active on the Homeseach waiting list, in Band 1 with the effective date of 14th November 2023. It is anticipated that the household could have a significant wait for suitable settled accommodation, due to a shortage of move on accommodation and numbers waiting on the housing register.

2. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

2.1 The estimated net cost in taking on this property is listed in the below tables :-

Property			Total
----------	--	--	-------

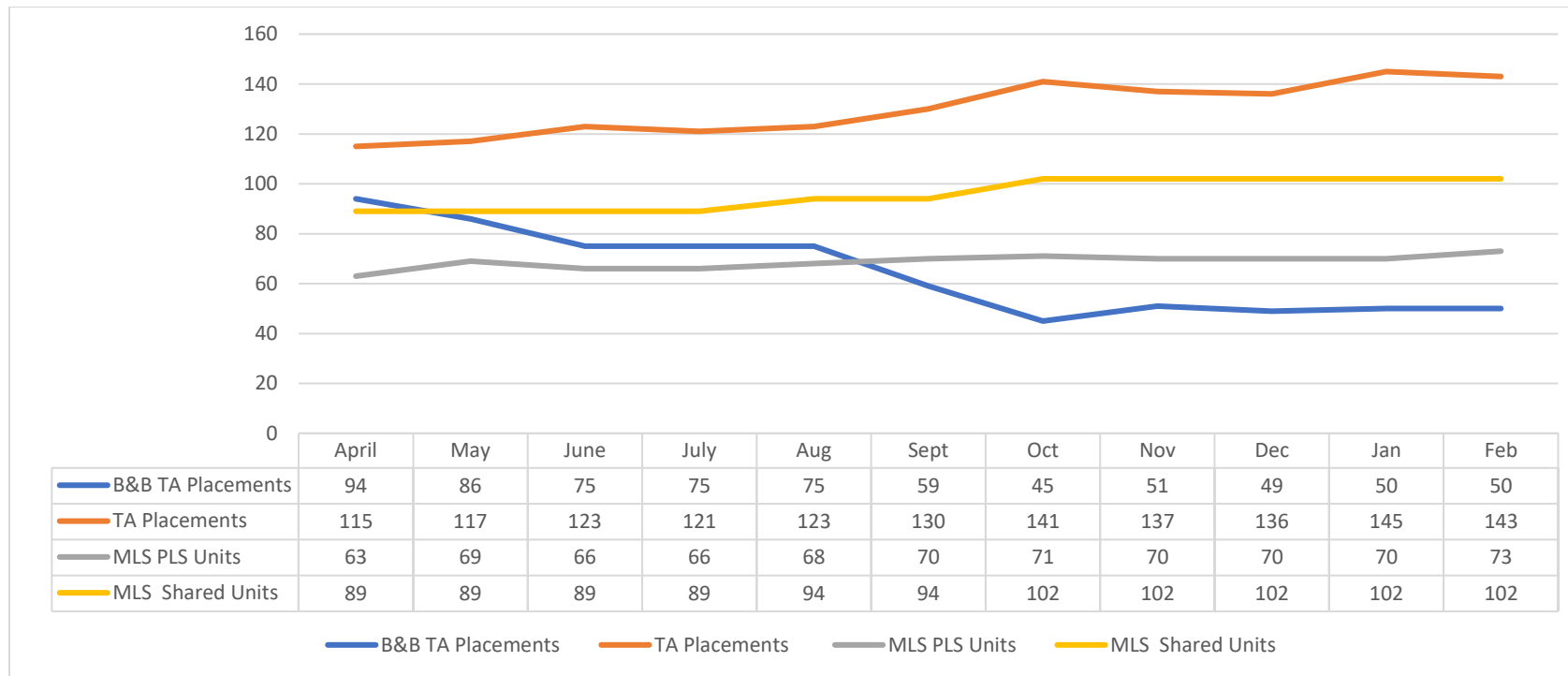
No. of Beds	3		
Lease Term (Years)	1		
Weekly Rental	230.76		
Weekly DWP Rate	124.61		
Total Rental	11,999.52		11,999.52
Total Voids	996.88		996.88
Total Arrears	996.88		996.88
Maintenance	1,200.00		1,200.00
Service Charge			
Total Exp			15,193.28
DWP Income	-6,479.72		-6,479.72
			0.00
Total Income			-6,479.72
Net Cost			8,713.56

B&B Comparison			Total
Weekly Rental	700.00		
Weekly DWP Rate	95.51		
Total Rental	36,400		36,400
Maintenance	1,200.00		1,200.00
DWP Income	-4,966.52		-4,966.52
Net Cost			32,633.48
Cost Avoidance			23,919.92

2.2 The lease of this property will have the following impact on the Council's temporary accommodation base:-

- Increasing MCC's portfolio by 1 three bed unit.
- The adoption of this recommendation will not produce a core budget saving, but it will help reduce the current pressure the authority faces with the cost of Homelessness provision. The uplift in accommodation base will cost £8,713.56 but there would be cost avoidance of £23,919.92 per annum when compared with continuing to accommodate the households in B&B due to a lack of alternative options.

- 2.3 The priority will continue to allocate these properties, intended for homeless use, to households currently residing in B & B, thereby reducing the use of B & B. The property will typically and wherever possible, be offered to applicants who have been residing in B & B the longest, but other housing need factors will also need to be taken into consideration on a property by property basis, such as the immediate needs of other homeless households (for example, serious health/medical conditions or safeguarding issues) needing temporary accommodation and type, size and location of the accommodation available. Homeless households normally will be able to remain in the accommodation until permanent social housing becomes available and a successful bid has been accepted.
- 2.4 A family currently in B&B accommodation has been identified with a need for 2-bedroomed accommodation. The family are from the Monmouth area. Both parents work, but on alternate shifts. They only have one car between them. The arrangement does enable them to meet childcare responsibilities. The Council is seeking to mitigate against either of the parents having to give up work and being able to remain in Monmouth supports the family in this regard. The household have homelessness duties under Section 75. B&B accommodation is not suitable for a family with duties under Section 75 and the Authority is open to a suitability challenge or review. Homeless households will normally be able to remain in the accommodation until permanent social housing becomes available and a successful bid has been accepted. As of 28th March 2024, there were 49 households placed in B&B accommodation across the County, with 15 of these being families.
- 2.5 The table and graph below show the numbers for households in B&B and numbers in other Temporary Accommodation placements (leased accommodation and shared). It also shows the number of Private Leasing properties and units of shared accommodation within the MLS portfolio. The graph illustrates that additional leased accommodation is helping to contribute to a reduced use of B & B accommodation, although the situation also continues to be reliant on the variables of the level of homeless applications, the ability to prevent homelessness and the number of social housing vacancies. Not all occupants of MLS properties are placed with homeless duties, due to the past pre-Covid practice of using properties to discharge the Council's prevention duty. However, all these households are now under notice and are subsequently now owed a S.73 duty.



In addition, the adoption of the recommendation might not result in a permanent reduction in the use of B&B due to the following:

- a possible suppressed and hidden homeless need that is believed to exist in the County, which can't be evidenced,
- because of a current number of households who are known to possibly need temporary accommodation soon,
- even if a vacancy in temporary accommodation exists, it may not be suitable for an individual household due to specific needs and requirements, which could relate to household size, disability or location – perhaps, for example to mitigate against a threat of violence or safeguarding and
- 'Whole system variables' that are out of the control of the Council such as an increase in homeless demand (e.g. unexpected spikes in demand) that can't be prevented and/or a reduction in social housing properties becoming vacant impacting upon move-on from homeless.

2.6 Deciding on these properties needs to take in the context of several on-going risks that could impact on future resource implications for the Council. These include:

- Both homeless and Ukrainian related demand can vary in terms of both the numbers of households and the type of households which may impact on B & B use. The Council is trying to mitigate against this by seeking to identify early homeless intervention opportunities.
- The current cost of living crisis, whilst not directly having impacting on accommodation provision yet, could result in an increase in homeless presentations relating to rent or mortgage arrears.
- The Council is seeing an increase in private rented landlords leaving the sector due to market and regulatory conditions. This will potentially impact on both presentations and loss of Monmouthshire Lettings temporary accommodation provision. Landlords not wanting to accommodate homeless households is an on-going challenge.
- Settled and permanent accommodation vacancies can vary in availability relating to existing tenants needing or wanting to move on and having the options available to facilitate moving.
- New and additional permanent social housing supported housing and temporary accommodation delivery is being impacted by several issues that are presenting challenges to the Council which, although expected to continue, overcoming or working around is an on-going priority. For example, phosphate related restrictions, revenue and capital availability, grant funding eligibility etc.

2.7 This proposal supports and contributes to the following objectives of the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28:

- A fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced – the proposal supports the household to reduce their living costs by having access to cooking facilities. It also would support the mother's employment.
- A safe place to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure – the proposal mitigates against the use of B & B and assists them to be part of the community.
- A connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued – the proposal creates an additional unit of temporary accommodation in the Monmouth area, where there is a shortage of temporary accommodation and a demand for placements.
- A learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential - the proposal mitigates against the young person being displaced from school and gives them a safe and quiet environment to support their education.

3. **AUTHOR:** Helen Horton, Senior Accommodation Development Officer

4. **CONTACT DETAILS:** Tel: 07773662131 **E-mail:** helenhorton@monmouthshire.gov.uk