

SUBJECT:	Monmouthshire Lettings Service
MEETING:	Adult Select Committee
DATE:	14th February 2017
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to introduce members to the proposal for the introduction of a Council operated social lettings scheme within Monmouthshire. The proposal supports the Council's 'Future Monmouthshire' policy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To consider how the Monmouthshire Lettings proposal (**See Appendix 1**) will support the Council's statutory duty to prevent homelessness and provide the foundations for a future income generation opportunity and make recommendations as appropriate.
- 2.2 The Committee recommends to Cabinet to adopt Monmouthshire Letting Service (MLS).

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This proposal seeks to build upon the existing practice of the Housing Options Team of engaging with private landlords and using private sector accommodation to meet the Council's statutory homeless and prevention related duties. The proposal effectively brands and packages the existing service to private landlords whilst introducing new services to further to benefit landlords.
- 3.2 The purpose of MLS is to provide a lettings service that seeks to put the community at the centre of its core business of providing long term affordable properties to rent, but with a 'commercial' approach. A core emphasis of MLS is to support landlords. The context (**See Appendix 1**) to developing MLS is:
- Many households are unable to access accommodation through traditional high street letting agents because they are in receipt of benefits, they cannot afford to meet upfront payments and fees nor high market rents, which are in excess of housing benefit levels.
 - There is a shortage of social housing stock and vacancies
 - Accommodating low income households can be perceived as a risk
 - There is a need to manage the on-going demand from households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
 - There is a need to reduce expenditure or increase income generation.
- 3.4 Key elements of the proposed service are to:
- Provide a basis for increasing homeless prevention by hopefully increasing access to private rented accommodation and limiting the use of B & B.
 - Offering landlords a worry free letting service
 - Providing sufficient affordable rented accommodation to households who are unable to access the private rented housing sector.
 - Undertake regular marketing and landlord engagement
 - Providing the opportunity for future income generation
- 3.5 MLS will broadly consist of two service strands. A lettings service and a leasing service:

- The lettings service will be similar in design to a high street lettings agency. This will initially include legal advice, 'find a tenant' and tenant verification, inventories, sign ups, inspections, rent collection, tenancy agreement drafting and housing support. Initially services will be offered free to landlords to encourage take up. Additional services, such as rent monitoring, have been identified with a view to possibly working up and introducing at a later date.
- The leasing service will seek to offer landlords a leased option (where needed by the Council), such as the current Shared Housing scheme. (Also, Melin Homes management of the private leasing scheme is due to end in 2018). Leasing availability will be subject to financial viability. Leasing for temporary accommodation currently attracts a subsidy through housing benefit. This is due to end on 1st April 2017 and be replaced by a grant allocation. At the time of writing the level of subsidy level will be reduced. If it is not possible to continue with leasing, the lettings aspect of MLS becomes even more relevant.

3.7 The aim is for MLS to go live by 1st May 2017. Supported by the Communications Team, it is proposed that MLS will have its own distinct identity which will feature on stationary products, flyers, posters, web page and social media applications. A proposed delivery framework for MLS can be found in **Section 2 of Appendix 1**. This seeks to provide a clear strategic direction and provide a distinct and unique approach to delivery.

4. REASONS:

4.1 The reasons for the introduction of MLS is to fulfil the Council's statutory duty to prevent homelessness under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and support the 'Future Monmouthshire' Policy.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 On-going costs will be funded through existing Housing Options Team staff resources and through existing budgets allocated to prevent homelessness. MLS spending (to secure accommodation) will be regarded as contributing to homeless prevention outcomes and supporting the Council to avoid the need to use B & B. There will be a need to incur initial set up costs relating to Rent Smart Wales Registration, staff training and marketing. These will be funded through the existing budget.

5.2 There is an expectation that as MLS attracts more landlords and more properties are taken on a fee charging structure will be introduced. The intention is that the service over time will rely increasingly less on funding budgets and more on fee income.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 No negative impacts have been identified. **See Appendix 2**

7. SAFEGUARDING & CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 The service has an important role in relation to both safeguarding and corporate parenting in the context of preventing homelessness

7. **CONSULTEES:** Chief Officer Enterprise; Housing Management Team; Head of Planning

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS:** Landlord feedback

9. **AUTHOR:** Stephen Griffiths, Strategy & Policy Officer (Housing & Communities)

10. **CONTACT DETAILS:** E-mail: stephengriffiths@monmouthshire.gov.uk Telephone: 01633 644455



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Future Generations Evaluation (includes Equalities and Sustainability Impact Assessments)

<p>Name of the Officer Stephen Griffiths</p> <p>Phone no: 01633 644455 E-mail: karendurrant@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</p> <p>Homeless Prevention – The introduction of a Private Sector Letting Agency, Monmouthshire Lettings Service offering two distinct services 1). A leasing service 2). A lettings service.</p>
<p>Name of Service</p> <p>Housing & Communities</p>	<p>Date Future Generations Evaluation</p> <p>3rd January 2017</p>


1. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal.





Well Being Goal	How does the proposal contribute to this goal? (positive and negative)	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales	By creating sustainable and affordable housing accommodation.	Housing accommodation rents will be proportionate to the income of the household.

Well Being Goal	How does the proposal contribute to this goal? (positive and negative)	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs		
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	N/A	N/A
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	The service supports people to access and remain in good quality accommodation or access alternative accommodation which contributes to health and well-being.	All properties taken on by the scheme have to meet decent housing quality standards.
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	The service support this by creating sustainable long term affordable accommodation.	Financial assessments of household income is assessed to determine affordability. Rents are set at or about Local Housing Allowance
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	N/A	N/A
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	N/A	N/A

Well Being Goal	How does the proposal contribute to this goal? (positive and negative)	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation		
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	The scheme will create settled households in which they are better able to fulfil their potential.	Many of the services are currently available from the Housing Options Team. They aren't, however, formally marketed

2. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	How does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle?	What has been done to better to meet this principle?
 <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	The service supports the Council to discharge its legal duty to prevent homelessness as per the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.	The service has created a scheme that is able to offer tenancies within the private rented sector and will offer households support to maintain their tenancies.

Sustainable Development Principle	How does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle?	What has been done to better to meet this principle?
 <p>Collaboration Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>The service links closely with other agencies in order for services to complement each other. Other agencies can and refer into the service</p>	
 <p>Involvement Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>None done</p>	
 <p>Prevention Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>The service is a preventative service and accesses and utilises external resources to facilitate people to remain at home or secure alternative accommodation.</p>	<p>The service can provide on-going support with households to maximise sustainability</p>
 <p>Integration Positively impacting on people, economy and environment and trying to benefit all three</p>	<p>The services positively impacts upon the local economy by facilitating / creating a of long term tenure security of accommodation.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

3. Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	The service is available to this and all groups	The service is targeted at preventing homelessness and, therefore, can't necessarily assist other non-related referrals.	Non homeless prevention cases will be provided with advice and assistance and may be referred to other services
Disability	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto
Gender reassignment	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto
Marriage or civil partnership	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto
Race	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto
Religion or Belief	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto
Sex	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto
Sexual Orientation	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto
Welsh Language	Ditto	None	Bi-lingual information will be available

4. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on important responsibilities of Corporate Parenting and safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect either of these responsibilities? For more information please see the guidance note <http://hub/corporatedocs/Democratic%20Services/Equality%20impact%20assessment%20and%20safeguarding.docx> and for more on Monmouthshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy see <http://hub/corporatedocs/SitePages/Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy.aspx>

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	The service will help to identify issues and refer accordingly.	None	Level 1 Training
Corporate Parenting	Ditto	None	

5. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

<p>Homeless prevention related statistics</p> <p>Housing (Wales) Act 2014</p> <p>Welsh Government Code of Guidance for Local Authorities for the Allocation of Accommodation & Homelessness</p> <p>Good practice information</p> <p>Landlord feedback</p>

6. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

- The lettings agency service will help reduce the need to identify alternative or temporary accommodation, such as B & B and the associated costs.
- The service at the initial outset will not have the capacity to support non-homeless prevention households requiring accommodation, however it is expected that as the service grows and more properties are taken on all households looking for accommodation will be able to access the service.
- As the service grows so will it help to facilitate a small income for the Council.

7. Actions. As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible	Progress
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

8. Monitoring: The impacts of this proposal will need to be monitored and reviewed. Please specify the date at which you will evaluate the impact, and where you will report the results of the review.

The impacts of this proposal will be evaluated on:	<p>Will be reviewed on an on-going basis through quarterly monitoring reports and Team Meeting</p> <p>The service will be considered during periodic analysis of failed homeless prevention, undertaken to identify possible improvements and understand potential service flaws.</p>
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