

<b>Meeting:</b>	Executive
<b>Meeting date:</b>	22/04/2025
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Housing & Communities
<b>Portfolio of:</b>	Executive Member of Housing, Planning and Safer Communities

## **Decision Report: Approval of Property Management Arrangements**

### **Subject of Report**

1. YorHome is a team within Housing Services in City of York Council which operates an ethical letting agency service. It is a non-profit service that allows people who have the means to pay rent (but cannot afford expensive upfront costs) to access the private rented sector. YorHome manage 86 properties located in and around York and arrange accommodation for people at risk of homelessness. All tenants are referred to YorHome through the Housing Options Team and the Refugee Resettlement Team.
2. This report outlines the rare opportunity to add a large multi tenancy property, in a city where such opportunities are in short supply at an affordable rent.
3. The recommendations in this report seek the ratification of a management agreement entered into in late 2024, seeks approval for the preparation of revised documentation in respect of the management of the property along with licences to occupy granted to the occupants, and delegates authority to the Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director of Governance, to conclude such documentation.

### **Benefits and Challenges**

4. The key benefits of the report are:

- Helping to meet the challenges set out in the Homelessness and Roughsleeping Strategy 2024-2029;
- Releasing tenancies in an improved condition; and
- Reducing risk for landlords and tenants and providing safe and secure homes.

## Policy Basis for Decision

5. The council has adopted the Homelessness and Roughsleeping Strategy 2024-29. The activity undertaken by the YorHome Team ensures that there is a constant supply of affordable private sector accommodation which contributes to meeting the Council's objective to ensure that the Strategy aims to build on existing successes and partnerships to make homelessness *rare, brief and non-recurring*.
6. As part of homelessness prevention, UK government provides funding for refugee resettlement through various schemes, including the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and others. Funding is allocated to local authorities, healthcare providers, and community sponsors to support refugees during their resettlement period. This funding covers costs like transitional accommodation, case working, healthcare, and education.
7. In light of the above the Council's Core Commitments clear contribution to **Affordability; Equalities and Human Rights**; and **Health Inequalities** are met by this work and the direct impacts are outlined in the implications section of this report.

## Financial Strategy Implications

8. The government has recognised that there are costs to Local Government in supporting those impacted by homelessness from both the United Kingdom and wider afield. There are a number of funding schemes available to the Council in ensuring these costs do not cause significant burden on the Council's housing budgets. These include Homelessness Prevention Grant, UK Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, Home for Ukraine Grant amongst others. The cost will primarily be funded from rents received inflation. Any upfront costs relating to voids, fees and

eligible repairs are to be funded from the resettlement schemes outlined above.

## **Recommendation and Reasons**

9. The Executive is asked to agree:
  - a. To ratify the management agreement entered into in late 2024;
  - b. To approve the preparation of revised documentation in respect of the management of the property and licences to occupy; and
  - c. To delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Communities (in consultation with the Director of Governance) to take such steps as are necessary to agree and complete the resulting documents.

*Reason:* To ensure appropriate arrangements are in place in respect of the property to receive new tenants in the very near future.

## **Background**

10. As described in the opening paragraphs YorHome is a team within Housing Services in City of York Council which operates an ethical letting agency service.
11. The YorHome operating model is based on the following approach:
  - All tenants are referred to YorHome through City of York Council housing departments, which includes the Housing Options Team and the Refugee Resettlement Team.
  - Prospective tenants are matched with a suitable property; or a suitable property is matched to a suitable tenant.
  - The team match the tenant and property by completing a financial assessment, as well as looking at the tenants' personal circumstances. This is to assess affordability and sustainability of any tenancy.

- They assist the tenant in the administrative process when moving from either temporary accommodation, dispersal hotels, or from overseas camps into permanent accommodation.
  - This can include, but is not limited to, receipt of relevant benefits, setting up council tax, utilities, and applying for discretionary payments and housing grants.
12. YorHome works alongside several York homelessness charities and organisations including City of Sanctuary, Refugee Action York, Refugee Council and Migration Yorkshire.
13. The financial model is as follows:
- A full Management Package for management of properties and tenancies charged at a % rate. Staff are kept up to date with changes in legislation and helping landlords remain compliant.
  - Out of Hours contact is available via the CYC Be Independent service for Emergencies.
  - Landlords can sign up for 2 years minimum to access potential resettlement schemes and associated government funding which can secure upfront periods of guaranteed rent plus repairs/improvements to bring homes up to an acceptable liveable standard.
  - The team assist tenants with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claims, maintaining strong relationships with the DWP and Benefits team at CYC. The rents are generally lower or at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate which are used to work out Housing Benefit/Universal Credit housing element amounts to support the payment of the rents. Some of the tenants are in full or part time work.
  - Where there is an agreement which includes 12 months rent for the landlord from resettlement funding, the tenant is responsible for paying the full rent from the moment they move in. They pay this to YorHome for the 12-month period. There is no waiver of the rent to ensure that the tenant is able to manage their finances and that the property is affordable for them in the longer term. After 12 months, the tenant will continue to be responsible for the full rental amount, however by then the Team will have spent a full year working with them to ensure

that they pay regularly to reduces any risk to the landlord of the tenant defaulting on the rent.

## Consultation Analysis

14. This report seeks to ensure the council's decision making and financial procedure rules are followed, and to ensure that technical legal changes are made to ensure safe management of tenancy arrangements in respect of this property. No consultation is necessary in respect of the content of this report.

## Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

15. The Executive can choose to accept or reject Recommendation 9(a), the risks of rejecting the recommendations are covered in the confidential Annex. Executive is recommended to accept the recommendation to validate the work to date to improve the accommodation and prepare the prospective tenants for moving in.
16. The Executive can choose to accept or reject Recommendation 9(b). Rejecting the recommendation would have the same implications as rejecting Recommendation 11(a) but accepting the recommendation will mean that the intention behind the two parties coming to an agreement, can be satisfied and honoured. This will be to the benefit of all parties including tenants for the short and medium term. Executive is recommended to accept the recommendation 9(b).

## Organisational Impact and Implications

17. Implications are summarised below:
  - **Financial.** The council historically has operated the Yorhome service by using rents collected to fund the payments due to landlords who enter the service. A management fee covers the cost of operating and any voids. Where the service uses properties to house resettlement families, the council will use grant funding to for any rent advances, fees, voids or repairs necessary to enable properties to become available. There is no impact to council tax funded budgets of this decision.

- **Human Resources (HR).** There are no direct HR implications of this report.
- **Legal.**
  - The Council has power to enter into the property managing arrangements and to charge to recover the costs of provision under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003.
  - It is necessary to ratify the arrangements that are currently in place in relation to the management of the property to ensure the arrangements are fit for purpose.
  - The use of grant funding for the initial rent payment, and upfront costs relating to voids, fees and eligible repairs from the grant funding schemes referred to in the report is in accordance with the grant funding agreements in place for those schemes.
- **Procurement.** There are no procurement implications of this report.
- **Health and Wellbeing.** Preventing homelessness is critical to public health. The health of people experiencing homelessness is significantly worse than that of the general population and poor mental and physical health is both a cause and consequence of homelessness.
- **Environment and Climate action.** There are no known direct implications, although improving homes may improve energy efficiency and reduce bills.
- **Affordability.** The report carries significant and positive implications for residents who are severely impacted by the risk of homelessness and trauma. This gives a chance of stability and recovery whilst living in an affordable home, within a city where the availability of these properties are a rare opportunity.
- **Equalities and Human Rights,** Given the urgent nature of this decision and that the report does not propose changes to policy, practice, or any significant service alterations, a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been conducted. Careful consideration, however has been given to potential impacts on individuals with protected characteristics and any additional support needs of the property's residents. Although time constraints prevented the consultation process required for a complete EqIA, we have balanced this against the fact that this property will provide much needed safe and secure accommodation for those facing homelessness, which necessitates making this decision promptly.

- **Data Protection and Privacy.** The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.
- **Communications.** The communications implications of this report centre around the need for clear, transparent messaging that highlights the positive outcomes of this opportunity while acknowledging and addressing any process improvements.
- **Economy.** Everyone's reasons for becoming homeless are unique however access to a home and an address they can afford and call their own, is often a significant factor. The provision of affordable accommodation to support those at risk of becoming homeless as a preventative measure can provide time and space to get the wider support they might need and provide a secure, stable environment to maintain existing or provide a pathway to new employments.

## Risks and Mitigations

## Wards Impacted

Holgate Ward

## Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

## Author

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<b>Report approved:</b>	Yes
<b>Date:</b>	17/04/2024

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## Background papers

Approval of Homelessness and Roughsleeping Strategy 2024-29  
- Executive 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024:

[Agenda for Executive on Thursday, 12 December 2024, 5.30 pm](#)

## Annexes

Annex A: Full report containing exempt information.

Annex B: Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012: Regulation 11 Notice (Special Urgency)

## Abbreviations

ACRS	Afgan Citizens Resettlement Scheme
CYC	City of York Council
DWP	Department of Work & Pensions
EqIA	Equalities Impact Assessment
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
HR	Human Resources
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
UK	United Kingdom
UKRS	UK Resettlement Scheme