

East Herts Council Non-Key Decision Report

Date: 5 August 2021

Report by: Councillor Peter Boylan – Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Report title: Extension of the Place Scheme

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- The purpose of this report is to request approval for a five year extension to enable East Herts Council's continued participation in the PLACE scheme

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION that:

A. A five year extension to East Herts Council's participation in the PLACE scheme be approved.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 East Herts Council was founding member of the PLACE consortium in 2006. The council's participation in the PLACE scheme was extended in August 2015 for three years until August 2018 and again until August 2021. The consortium partners have agreed that they would want to continue with the scheme and to this end, an Amendment Agreement for a further five years, until August 2026, has been drawn up which requires a signature and common seal by each participating local authority. This Amendment Agreement is supplemental to the Original Agreement, which remains in full force and effect.

2.0 Background

2.1 East Herts Council is a member of a Consortium of Local Authorities working on the PLACE scheme. The Consortium members are currently Chelmsford City Council, Harlow Council, Hertsmere Council, Epping Forest Council, Uttlesford Council and East Herts Council. The scheme received funding from the East of England Project Board in 2006 and has the following objectives:

- return empty properties back into use
- renovate empty properties in disrepair to the Decent Homes Standard
- provide grants or loans to enable the renovation and improvement of single properties or the conversion of empty properties into a number of units of residential accommodation.

2.2 The council has recently utilised the PLACE funding on two successful projects:

- To provide a loan of £25,000 to a home owner to renovate an empty property. The works have now been completed and the property brought back into use.
- To assist with the council with costs of compulsory purchasing a mid-terrace property in Bishop's Stortford that was empty and in severe disrepair. The property has now been sold by auction with caveats that the property must be renovated and brought back into use.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The current extension to the original agreement has expired and to enable East Herts Council's continued participation in the scheme and access to the funding held by the Consortium an extension to the scheme needs to be agreed between all parties.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 An option would be to not sign the extension and forfeit our membership of the Consortium and access to the funding held. PLACE funding would not be devolved to East Herts Council if the council were to withdraw and so the council would need to fund such activities, should it wish to continue, using its own resources. This is not recommended.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 By not signing the Amending Agreement we will not have access to the funding held by the Consortium on our behalf that can be used to assist owners to renovate their empty homes and bring them back into use.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

Yes – by their very nature, empty or run down properties can attract vandalism or anti-social behaviour so by improving their appearance or bringing them back into use would make a positive contribution to alleviating community safety issues in the district.

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

Yes – any renovation are likely to maximise the energy efficiency of the properties and so contribute to the council's environmental sustainability aspirations.

Financial

PLACE funding would not be devolved to East Herts Council if the council were to withdraw and so the council would need to fund such activities, should it wish to continue, using its own resources.

Health and Safety

Yes – any property that is run down or empty has implications for health and safety and any capital works carried out to renovate or bring a property back into use would specify adherence to health and safety in construction.

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes - an Amendment Agreement for a further five years, until August 2026, has been drawn up which requires a signature and common seal by each participating local authority.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix A attached to this report is a copy of the Amending Agreement to be sign by each Consortium member

Appendix B attached to this report gives a summary of the current PLACE scheme with details of the financial assistance options.

Contact Member

Councillor Peter Boylan – Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
peter.boylan@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer

Jonathan Geall – Head of Housing and Health, Tel:
01992 531594. jonathan.geall@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Authors

Claire Bennett – Service Manager (Housing Services), Tel: 01992
531602. claire.bennett@eastherts.gov.uk