

Title: **Amendment to a Delegated Housing Related Decision**

Portfolio holder: **Councillor Virginia Fortescue**

Reporting officer: **Angie Rawlins, Housing Options Team Leader**

Service Manager: **Graham Hogg, Housing Services Manager**

Key decision: **No**

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### **Purpose**

To amend the existing decision and power relating to homelessness grants and loans in the prevention of homelessness.

### **Background**

In March 2008 Cabinet Report, the Housing Services Manager outlined the requirement for the Housing Services Team to make determinations under a number of statutory powers. The Housing Services Manager was given delegated powers to make grants or loans for the purpose of preventing homelessness up to a limit of £2,000 in any individual case.

The introduction of the Local Housing Allowance in April 2008 has increased the rents on all properties but, in particular 4 plus bed properties. Taking this into consideration, the limit of up to £2,000 will need to be exceeded where households have a 4/5 bed housing need.

### **Key issues**

- Our prevention fund allows for one month's rent in advance and the bond deposit which is equivalent to one month's rent. Letting agents and some private landlords also require administration/set-up fees which will, potentially, take the funds over the £2,000 limit.
- Housing Needs have had two large families within the last two weeks requiring 4 and 5 bed accommodation: one to whom we have a statutory duty and who are placed in temporary accommodation and the other family who would have had to be placed in temporary accommodation if we had been unable to secure a private let.
- The household currently in temporary accommodation has 7 children and it is extremely unlikely that they would be rehoused in social housing in the near or medium future. We have been able to discharge our homelessness duty by securing a private let for this household and this required a Portfolio Holder Decision to be made as the funds required exceeded £2,000.
- The credit crunch is beginning to have an effect on the availability of accommodation in the private sector and some landlords/letting agents are requesting two months deposit when households have a number of children.

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- If we do not amend the £2,000 limit, there is the potential that we will require a Portfolio Holder Decision to be made on a monthly basis.

### **Proposed Delegations**

- **Housing Act 1996**

The exercise of all the powers of the Council relating to homelessness including the ability to make grants or loans for the purpose of preventing homelessness up to a limit of £3,000 in any individual case.

### **Risk management Implications**

If the limit is not increased, there is the risk that we will have to place large families in temporary accommodation and be challenged in court relating to the suitability of our temporary accommodation.

### **Finance and performance implications**

Financial requirements of this recommendation will be managed within existing housing budgets.

### **Legal and human rights implications**

The immediate legal implication is to amend the Constitution and to facilitate the exercise of the housing powers available to the Council.

### **Next Steps**

To update the Constitution to reflect the amended delegated responsibility.

### **Recommendations**

That Cabinet approve the amended delegated decision as listed above to the Housing Services Manager.