

This report is public	
Purchase of Housing Accommodation	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	14 July 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Greener Communities – Councillor Ian Middleton
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	27 May 2026
Report of	Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, Nicola Riley

Purpose of report

To put the necessary approvals in place for the Council to be able to purchase suitable property with funds within the capital programme.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To authorise the Head of Housing to determine the requirements of the additional housing (including location and specification), tenancy and rent setting and manage the acquired housing in accordance with obligations of the Council as a Registered Provider of Social Housing.
- 1.2 To authorise the Executive Director - Neighbourhoods, in consultation with Assistant Director – Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make initial offers and begin the appropriate due diligence, once appropriate freehold or leasehold properties have been identified. A separate report to seek final approval for the exchange of contracts to purchase property will be submitted to the Executive. This will then enable the purchase of property above financial thresholds.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council approved a budget for 26-27 which included additions to the capital programme for investment in housing for temporary use, to assist with homelessness pressures that the Council faces. Specifically, the demand for temporary accommodation and that this demand exceeded the supply that the Council had access to through partnerships or its own stock. Increasing stock for temporary accommodation would negate future pressures that would be brought from increasing and continued use of nightly charged accommodation.
- 2.2 The levels of expenditure required to purchase or lease property are above limits delegated to officers within the Council constitution. Therefore, to acquire property

to assist with temporary accommodation pressures outlined above, an additional report is required.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	The purpose of this report is to authorise delegation to officers to determine and manage the acquisition of suitable properties for temporary accommodation. In approving this recommendation, the process of acquisition will not be delayed, avoiding additional costs. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 5 May 2026
Legal	The process for acquiring properties can take several months given the need to obtain various searches, surveys, title reports and other due diligence. We understand that properties come on and off the market quickly. There is therefore the need for Housing to be able to act dynamically and make enquiries and put offers on properties in order to allow the necessary due diligence to begin quickly in order to not lose out on potential opportunities. This requirement to react dynamically to potential opportunities needs to be balanced against the relevant spending limits and delegations within the Council's constitution. The conveyancing process can take several months to complete, and parties are free to make overs and retract them until they have exchanged contracts. Only once parties have exchanged contracts is there a legal obligation on them to proceed with the proposed sale and purchase. The proposed delegation should therefore allow officers the confidence to make offers and begin the necessary due diligence but allow time for the Council's correct governance procedures to be followed prior to exchange of contracts. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 15 May 2026
Risk Management	The recommended delegations enable the Council to act promptly in a competitive market, whilst ensuring each acquisition is subject to appropriate due diligence and approval in consultation with Finance and Law & Governance. Bringing homes into use through a planned works programme, alongside ongoing performance and cost monitoring, will help reduce reliance on nightly paid accommodation and support delivery of the intended benefits. Overall, the potential risks are considered manageable and will be mitigated and monitored through the service operational risk register, within the corresponding governance and controls.

	Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader, 12 May 2026			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		There is no overall impact to Equality as a consequence of this proposal.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		Not applicable
ICT & Digital Impact		x		Not applicable
Data Impact		x		Not applicable
Procurement & subsidy		x		Not applicable
Council Priorities	Quality housing and place making			
Human Resources	Not applicable			
Property	Not applicable			
Consultation & Engagement	Not applicable			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Demand for homelessness services has increased since 2023. The trend had seen some flux through the COVID period but has since steadily risen. Due to consequential demand pressures, temporary accommodation has also risen. The Council saw a sharp rise in late 2023/early 2024 before it plateaued, later rising sharply again in winter 2025. This led to a peak of 60 households in hotels, which included the Musketeer.
- 3.2 A number of measures put in place by the Council has helped to slow the rise and begin to reverse the trend. This have included changes to the Allocations Scheme for social housing and increasing units of self-contained temporary accommodation, either in partnership with others or within the Council's own stock, such as at the refurbished Town Centre House, Banbury.
- 3.3 These changes have helped reduce the number from 60 to a figure of around 20 in hotels, and the Council has ended its use of the Musketeer. Overall numbers in temporary accommodation have reduced by between 20% and 25% in a year, through 25-26. However, the number the Council currently is working with, which is between 70 and 75 households, is still double the figure that it routinely reported in 22-23.
- 3.4 Financial pressures created by nightly charged accommodation has been a challenge for the service through this period. This continues following changes to MHCLG homelessness grant rules.
- 3.5 The trend that the Council has observed has been similar across the other districts and City Council, as well as the rest of the Country. In 25-26, there was an overall rise in temporary accommodation usage of around 20% across the City and County combined. Cherwell was the only district to see a fall in placements.
- 3.6 The Council agreed within its budget 26-27 to invest in housing to assist homeless households. This is in the form of property acquisition and development. £5 million was allotted within its capital programme.
- 3.6 Property acquisition is an approach that is being replicated in similar forms across South Oxfordshire DC and Vale of White Horse DC, West Oxfordshire DC and Oxford City Council. The outcomes and approach are therefore compatible with future Local Government Reorganisation. Using self-contained accommodation reduces costs of temporary accommodation placements, as housing benefit does not cover the total cost of nightly charged accommodation. It also provides a rental income to the Council.

4. Details

- 4.1 The levels of expenditure required to purchase or lease property are above limits delegated to officers within the Council constitution.

- 4.2 As the property market can be fast paced, to stand a greater chance of success if a suitable opportunity arises, it is prudent for the Council to be able to move at pace. To do this, officer delegations are necessary, as outlined within the recommendations.
- 4.3 The report will enable officers to submit offers and enter legal negotiations on properties that are considered suitable, following the appropriate due diligence.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Do not grant the authorisations

This is the status quo option. This would lead to delays and would likely mean that the Council would be delayed in closing deals and entering negotiations, which could prove counterproductive to the purpose of the agreed funding.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The report is necessary to assist in the delivery of the project aims and funding agreed within the budget.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes Financial threshold met
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	Not applicable
Ward(s) Affected	All wards

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	None
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
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Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services 12 May 2026