

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 29 March 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## **Approval to extend the financial 'Homemaker' check service and to add a delegated authority for the Homes for Ukraine project**

### **Report summary:**

This report seeks to extend the financial check service provided by Homemaker Southwest to assist more Ukrainian guests to move in to private rented accommodation and to introduce a delegated authority to the Homes for Ukraine project.

### **Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget                      Yes  No

Policy Framework      Yes  No

### **Recommendation:**

Cabinet:

1. Agree to extend the financial check service provided by Homemaker Southwest for an extra 2 days a week for use by Ukrainian guests looking to move in to private rented accommodation for an initial 6 month period from 1 April 2023, at a cost of £8,000;
2. Agree that that this new service be delivered within the finances provided by the UK Government;
3. Future approval for spending on this project within existing budgets and to enter into such agreements as are required to ensure that the project meets its aims to be delegated to one of the following: Director – Finance; Director – Housing, Health and Environment; or Director – Governance and Licensing; such spend to be in discussion with the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Sustainable Homes and Communities.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

The extended financial check service provided by Homemaker Southwest will enable more Ukrainian guests to move in to private rented accommodation and will ease the pressure the service is experiencing at this time due to the number of referrals it is receiving.

The introduction of a delegation to the project will enable the Homes for Ukraine scheme to become more agile and flexible and to enable new initiatives to be agreed in a timely manner.

Officer: Andrew Hopkins, Communications Consultant. 01395 571699

[andrew.hopkins@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.hopkins@eastdevon.gov.uk)

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination

- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Medium Risk; The project is funded by the UK Government grant to support Ukrainian guests and hosts. A flexible approach is required to allow us to address any changes required as a result of changes to UK Government policy or guidance.

**Links to background information** [Homes For Ukraine scheme.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#) – Report to Cabinet – 8 June 2022

[Homes for Ukraine.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#) – Report to Cabinet – 7 September 2022

[Homes for Ukraine transition policy.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#) – Report to Cabinet – 2 November 2022

**Link to [Council Plan](#)**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

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## Report in full

### 1. Extension of the Homemaker Southwest financial check service

1.1 Homemaker Southwest was set up to prevent homelessness and promote independence. The service provide money advice, budgeting, housing guidance and will carry out a financial check looking at a person's income and outgoings to advise on what a person referred to the service can afford in the private rented accommodation sector. The Housing Options team use the service as part of the procedure for processing applications through the Council's Rent Deposit and Bond Scheme which assists households from homeless situations into private sector accommodation. The independent financial assessments are essential in assessing the affordability and viability of the proposed moves, aiming at ensuring a sustainable positive outcome. There is also a separate contract between Homemaker and the Housing Rental team, specifically for EDDC housing tenants.

1.2 The Homemaker service currently offered to the council for 3-days a week is experiencing a pressure due to the number of people seeking a financial check to be carried out this has been compounded by the large number of Ukrainian guests currently looking to move in to private rented accommodation. By procuring an extra 2-days a week from Homemaker Southwest will enable the Housing Options team at the council to offer a proactive service for Ukrainian guests to seek a financial check before guests start to look for private rented accommodation.

1.3 The council agreed to a Private Renter Sector (PRS) policy for the Homes for Ukraine project on 2 November 2022, this policy is funded from the grants provided by the UK Government for the scheme. The PRS policy provides financial assistance to Ukrainian guests to move in to private rented accommodation, the addition of an extended Homemaker service will help speed up that transition. Currently a number of moves by Ukrainian guests to the private

rented sector have either been delayed or have failed due to the time it has taken for the financial check carried out by Homemaker to be completed which is one of the requirements for the PRS funds to be released by the council.

## **2 Introduction of a delegated authority to the Homes for Ukraine project**

2.1 At present all requests for spend within the Homes for Ukraine project need to seek approval from Cabinet which can cause delays to initiatives starting. With the forthcoming elections and a potential gap of 2 months for a cabinet meeting to take place a delegation to one of the Directors listed would enable the project to be remain agile and flexible. Any spend would be carried in consultation with the Portfolio Holders named.

2.2 Regular briefings and updates will continue to be provided by the Homes for Ukraine project team on the project to Cabinet and councillors as members and cabinet request. Weekly newsletters for hosts and guests are shared with councillors and an invite to Cabinet and councillors to any relevant events laid on for guests and hosts will be extended. It is suggested an update on the project be provided to Cabinet every 6-months.

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### **Financial implications:**

It is assumed all costs with the proposals outlined in the report will be met from Government funding, monitoring of costs and funding will be ongoing to ensure this is the case.

### **Legal implications:**

There are no legal implications arising.