



**Prosperous Communities  
Committee**

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

**Subject: Healthy Homes Project (Private Rented Sector)**

Report by:	Director ICT, Change Management and Regulatory Services
Contact Officer:	Andy Gray Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager  andy.gray@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To seek approval from committee for the proposed distribution of funding in relation to the Healthy Homes Project

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

Committee are asked to:

- a) Approve the proposed usage of the Healthy Homes Grant.
- b) Approve that the Director for ICT, Change Management and Regulatory Services, in conjunction with the S151 Officer and in consultation with Chairman of Prosperous Communities Committee can determine any amendments to the proposed spending of the grant, subject to it being in line with the overall guidance and within their financial delegation levels.

## IMPLICATIONS

### **Legal:**

The Council committed to be part of the Governments Healthy Homes Project following on from the approval of recommendation at Prosperous Communities Committee in March 2024. The decision to approve seeking funding was then ratified at Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

These matters were dealt with quickly due to the need for a timely response to be sent to DLUHC before the end of March 2024.

### **Financial : FIN/40/25/PC/SSC**

The Council is due to receive £130k in grant funding during the 2024/2025 financial year to be allocated and spent within the funding framework that has been provided.

The first tranche of grant funding is £65k due in June 2024, followed by the second £65k in October 2024.

The guidance in relation to the funding is attached at Appendix 1. The funding can be used for:

- Resources,
- Training and upskilling,
- Communication and engagement,
- Data collection and administration
- Supplementary

Once the proposed usage of the Healthy Homes Grant is approved the income and expenditure budgets will be created within the service to reflect the grant being received and spend activity.

### **Staffing :**

The project will require a staffing resource and this type of resource is eligible for funding within the project.

Initially, the project will be supported by an existing officer who will be taking on additional duties and additional hours. This proposal will be confirmed with HR and the relevant processes followed in terms of the formal letter being sent to the individual for their approval and subsequent sign off by HR and the Director.

Further into the project, there may be a requirement for a Tenancy Liaison type role as well as a further resource to complete additional inspections.

Where recruitment may be required then the appropriate process will be followed with HR. This process is likely to commence during October 2024.

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

The report does not seek to discriminate against any individual groups as it sets out, in the main, how the Council will seek to deliver its statutory obligations and address issues related to the private rented sector and improve it for those using it.

**Data Protection Implications :**

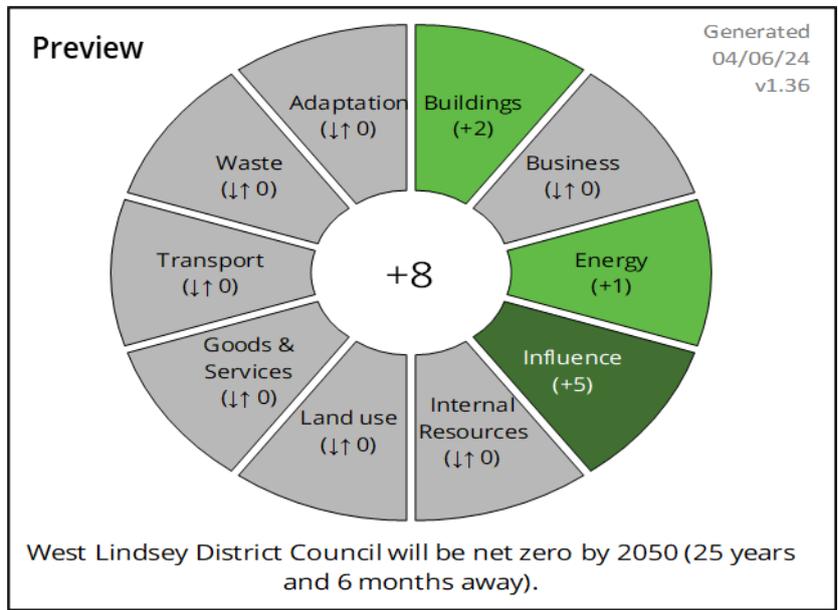
There are no data protection implications. Existing data protection arrangements are sufficient to cover the scope of this project.

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :**

The improvement of housing standards has a direct impact in regard to carbon reductions and helping to minimise energy usage for persons living in any properties.

Specific regulations such as MEES (Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards) focus directly on improving the energy performance ratings of homes and are regulations that the Council currently enforces. The Healthy Homes project intends to have a direct impact on the quality of properties in the PRS, therefore in turn, benefits to the environment will be forthcoming.

A CESIA wheel has been completed for this report below, outlining the areas where improving housing standards can have a positive environmental impact.



**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :**

There are specific areas of West Lindsey where the levels of ASB and deprivation are significantly high, and these areas generally have greater number of private rented sector tenancies. (see WLDC Metastreet Housing Stressors Report). <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/housing-homelessness/private-sector-housing/selective-licensing>

Steps to improve the sector therefore could have a direct impact on the levels of crime, disorder and ASB that are recorded.

**Health Implications:**

It is broadly accepted that improving the condition of and safety of housing contributes to the improved health and wellbeing of the persons residing within it.

The role of homes and buildings in levelling up health and wellbeing  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0170/>

The Healthy Homes Project has been derived from this evidence and is being run in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Prosperous Communities Committee 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024

<https://democracy.west-lindsey.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=176&Mid=3436&Ver=4>

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024

<https://democracy.west-lindsey.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=142&Mid=3604&Ver=4>

**Risk Assessment :**

The developed business case has a full risk register attached and this can be found within appendix A of the business case, which is attached to this report as appendix 2.

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

**Yes**

**No**

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2024 Prosperous Communities Committee and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee resolved that the Council engage in the Healthy Homes Project and commit to seek the associated funding.
- 1.2 The Healthy Homes project will be led by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and run in collaboration with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to understand the impact of housing interventions on health and wider societal outcomes.
- 1.3 The project is focused on tackling damp and mould hazards and forms part of the Government's response following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak who was 2 years old when he died from prolonged exposure to mould in his home environment.
- 1.4 West Lindsey have been successful in seeking funds and will receive £130,000 to deliver initiatives targeting to damp and mould reporting and treatment in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) from May 2024. This will be received in the form of Section 31 grant payments and will be allocated to initiatives agreed by WLDC in resourcing, communication and engagement, supplementary equipment, training and upskilling, and data and administration. Due to short timescales to initiate the project it is believed that DLUHC will be flexible with any funding being allocated for beyond May 2025, for example where authorities are recruiting to fixed term contracts to deliver specific elements of the project.

## 2 Links to existing work

- 2.1 In March 2024 Committee approved the Council's PRS Commitment, which set out the key areas of work that the Council would focus on over the next two years. A number of the objectives within the PRS Commitment are aligned with the work that the Healthy Homes Project can potentially deliver.
- 2.2 Where appropriate, officers will look to integrate the two pieces of work together so that efforts are not duplicated, but maximised. The PRS Commitment can be found here <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/housing-homelessness/private-sector-housing/housing-repairs-standards-enforcement>

## 3 What can be funded?

- 3.1 DLUHC have broadly allocated funding in the following way;

<b>Proposed allocating of funding</b>	
<b>Resourcing:</b> (staff to support project)	£45k
<b>Training and Upskilling:</b> (specialist training for staff)	£10k
<b>Communications and Engagement:</b> (specific and targeted media campaigns, landlord and tenant engagement)	£30k

<b>Data Collection and Administration:</b> (improvements to systems and data capture, additional analytical or administrative support)	£36k
<b>Supplementary Equipment:</b> (damp meters, thermal cameras, replacing aging kit)	£9k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£130k</b>

3.2 It has been confirmed by DLUHC that there is flexibility within the funding allocations, subject to it staying within the overall £130k total. Where any deviation from the totals is likely to occur, DLUHC will be consulted for approval.

#### 4 How is the funding proposed to be spent?

4.1 Table 1 below sets out broadly how it is intended to allocate Healthy Homes grant;

	Allocation	Initiative/s
<b>Resourcing</b>	£45,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Healthy Homes Project co-ordinator (Internal appointment via an additional duties payment)</li> <li>- Tenant liaison and support officer FTC (Oct 24 onwards)</li> <li>- Inspecting Officer (Winter 24 onwards)</li> </ul>
<b>Training and upskilling</b>	£10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Officer damp and mould training (advanced).</li> <li>- Investigation Training.</li> <li>- Resident/Landlord/Tenant training on damp and mould and other key areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Communications and engagement</b>	£30,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targeted comms campaign across various medias raising awareness of risks of damp and mould. Including social media and interactive videos.</li> <li>- Creation of a tenant's guide to renting to include existing damp and mould guide.</li> <li>- Community drop-in sessions in areas of high density PRS.</li> </ul>
<b>Data collection and administration</b>	£36,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Administrative support for the project.</li> <li>- Procurement of the "Inspector App" for a one-year period.</li> </ul>
<b>Supplementary equipment</b>	£9,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Replacement of ageing damp meters.</li> <li>- Procurement of thermal cameras.</li> <li>- Additional devices (tablets) to assist with inspections and operate "Inspector App".</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£130,000</b>	

## **5 Resourcing**

5.1 The initial project is going to be developed by providing an existing staff member with some additional duties and hours in which they will focus on:

- Development of a communications and engagement campaign (including the branding) for the Healthy Homes Project. This will include social media, written media, advertising etc as well as methods for engaging with tenants and landlords.
- Coordination of the training offered to staff, partners, tenants, landlords and letting agents (our colleagues at DASH will be doing the training and we have already engaged with them)
- Ordering of additional/replacement equipment
- Creation of a tenants guide to renting that can also be accessible online and will include enhance information relating to damp and mould

5.2 The financial implication relating to the additional duties will initially require an allocation of £7,500 for a twelve month period. Given that we are already two months into the funding period and the flow of work for this role may reduce towards the winter, an initial agreement to fund this for 6 months has been proposed, totalling £3,750.

5.3 It is proposed within the project to then consider any further staffing resources required before October 2024 once the communications campaign is developed and in delivery phase. Reports relating to damp and mould reduce significantly during the summer months therefore any additional resources can be aligned with a potential increase from autumn and into winter.

## **6 Training and Upskilling**

6.1 Additional training for officers to give them advance knowledge of damp and mould has been identified and we are working with other councils within the project to seek to deliver this. There is also scope to deliver a lighter touch version of this training to other front line practitioners. Additional investigation training has also been identified and a number of staff have completed this previously, therefore we can now fund the remaining staff cohort in this area. This training provides skills and knowledge relating to evidence collection and offence identification.

6.2 There is also scope to provide training and awareness to landlords and tenants on the impacts of damp and mould and we are looking at the best method to deliver this currently.

## **7 Communications and Engagement**

7.1 This area of work will be the focal point for the Council. We intend to commission a specifically branded communications campaign with supporting assets to promote the role we play in the PRS. This will be wide ranging and include various mediums and be deployed for the

duration of the project and beyond. It is intended to create assets that we can utilise in the longer term.

7.2 There is scope for some of the comms and engagement to be branded regionally and nationally in order to make any campaign more effective as well as providing greater value for money. The Council will engage in this broader branding discussion, which is being led by DLUHC.

7.3 We are also looking to commission, in line with our landlord accreditation colleagues at DASH, information videos similar to those used in [Suffolk Safe Suffolk Renters - YouTube](#)

## **8 Data Collection and Administration**

8.1 It is proposed to purchase an application that can be utilised for inspections and recording of data for a one year period, this can be viewed here <https://metastreet.co.uk/application.html>

8.2 In order to deploy this we will also need to acquire additional devices (tablets), which will be used by all of the existing officers. The use of this system for a one year period will provide an insight into how data can be collected in a more efficient manner on inspections and provide an opportunity to look at how the move to the CRM system can be linked into this or incorporate it. The one-year trial will cost circa £20k.

8.3 Initial discussions with ICT colleagues have been undertaken and will be furthered in due course to look at the effectiveness of the system and its future ability to be integrated into the Council's existing systems.

## **9 Supplementary Equipment**

9.1 The intention is to use this funding to replace ageing or old kit that is currently utilised and ensure that each officer has a damp meter and thermal camera available to them for inspections. Other teams within the Council already have some of the equipment needed therefore we will look to ensure that the best value for money is achieved and also explore where the equipment can be shared.

## **10 Governance**

10.1 Given the quick decision timeframes in relation to the project, it is proposed that a delegated recommendation is made to enable the Director of ICT, Change Management and Regulatory Services and S151 Officer to have further discretion when it comes to the allocation of the funding. Whilst every effort will be made to commit and spend the funding in line with the proposals there may be a need to make further decisions based on the current project status in order to deliver the required objectives.

10.2 The project is being developed and considered via the relevant internal boards and approval processes and was considered at the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Board on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.

10.3 The full business case that has been developed is attached as appendix two.

**END**