

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Housing Services Cabinet Committee

Date: 5 September 2023

Reporting officer: Joshua Arthur, Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability)

Subject: Recycled Furniture and Household Goods Project

Purpose and summary of report:

To inform Housing Services Cabinet Committee of a newly created sustainability initiative with Gravesend based charity, Ellenor Hospice, to recycle good quality unused furniture and household goods from void Council properties and estates to be sold in their charity shops reducing the waste sent by the Council to landfill.

Recommendations:

Housing Services Cabinet Committee are asked to:

1. To note the contents of the report and support the project.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	Whilst there are no legal implications, the Service Manager (Housing Landlord Services) has clarified that when a tenant terminates their tenancy, they sign to say that they accept that any belongings or furniture left in the property will be disposed of.
Finance and Value for Money	The Council will not have to contribute any finances towards the project and will not receive any income. The project is purely to support a local charity and reduce the amount of waste that would usually be sent to landfill. The Council will make a saving, the value of which will be dependent on how many successful collections are completed, as previously we would pay for these items to be cleared and disposed of.
Corporate Plan	People: Protected Environment - enforce high regulatory requirements and carbon neutral borough. Quality Living - safeguard residents and putting our customers first. Place: Connected Community - improve resident well-being Progress: Entrepreneurial Authority - deliver a more resilient, creative and cost effective council
Climate Change	The project contributes to the Council's Climate Change Strategy by: (a) Reducing carbon emissions of our housing stock

	<p>(b) Reduce the amount of waste generated by the service and tenants that is sent to landfill with the intention to increase recycling rates.</p> <p>(c) Continue to develop innovative and sustainable waste management solutions and opportunities for waste recycling and disposal.</p> <p>The expected outcomes of the works which contribute positively to climate change have been listed under Section 3 of the report.</p>
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and passed a motion pledging to make the Council's operations net zero by 2030. In December 2021, the Council introduced an ambitious Climate Change Strategy. Within the strategy, an action under 'Gravesham Borough Council – The Housing Provider' it was outlined that we would look to *'Reduce the amount of waste generated by the service and tenants that is sent to landfill with the intention to increase recycling rates'*.
- 1.2 The Housing Assets service outlined their intention of exploring a recycled furniture project to reduce the amount of good quality furniture and household goods that were being disposed from empty Council homes in the Corporate Climate Action Plan.
- 1.3 Furniture and belongings get left behind by tenants when they are deceased, evicted or have abandoned their properties and the Council bears the cost for the removal and disposal of these which is done mainly by the Waste Management team every Tuesday. Figures provided by the Waste Management team show that an average of 3 tonnes of waste is disposed from void properties on a weekly basis.
- 1.4 Discussions commenced with Gravesend based charity Ellenor Hospice in August 2022 about introducing a furniture collection service from our void properties which would result in a reduction of waste from our void properties sent to landfill and furniture being repurposed and sold in their shops to fund the care that they offer the community.
- 1.5 Ellenor is a specialist palliative care provider for adults and children in Gravesham, Dartford and Swanley and have 11 charity shops, with 2 in Gravesham, that help raise vital income to provide care and support to the community. The charity has a hospice based in the Coldharbour ward of Northfleet that provides end of life care and is the base for their furniture collection service.
- 1.6 The charity has had a considerable impact on the lives of so many in the borough and historically has been various Mayor's chosen charity.

2. The Project

- 2.1 The first trial collection day took place on 5th January 2023 which saw a washing machine, two beds, an electric fireplace, a dining room table, two wardrobes and a TV unit collected from one of our empty properties. The staff from Ellenor are provided with the access details for the collection in advance which does not

necessarily require an Officer to be in attendance. Risk assessments for the collections are completed in advance.

- 2.2 Due to the trial being positive and beneficial for both parties, more frequent collections have now been introduced with the charity continuing to collect items from the empty properties. They will also be called upon by the team to collect certain items such as large furniture and working white goods that have been left on the housing estates.
- 2.3 Ellenor are the only charity who can offer this service to the Council and guarantee that the funds generated will be spent on the people within Gravesham whereas larger national charities offering a similar service may not be able to guarantee this. However, we will seek opportunities to work with other charities and volunteer groups to recycle other goods such as garden tools and children's toys and bikes.

3. Expected Outcomes

- 3.1 The furniture sold in Ellenor's shops provide vital funding for specialist care services for the local community including end of life care at both the hospice and at home. Below outlines what can be funded from the income generated:
 - £38 could cover the cost of an online exercise or relaxation session for someone at home.
 - £54 could enable a home meeting between a patient and a hospice nurse.
 - £40 could pay for one hour of exceptional, expert nursing care at the hospice.
- 3.2 Currently, around £2,700 has been generated by Ellenor from sales of the items that have been collected from the empty properties.
- 3.3 As well as household items, dry and tinned food and unused toiletries are regularly left in void properties and we are working with Northfleet based food bank, Hive Hope, to provide them with these as they are found.

4. Appendices

- 4.1 There are no appendices.

5. Background Documents

- 5.1 There are no background documents.

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Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	Risk assessments in relation to the collections by the Ellenor Hospice have been put in place.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data ? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No
	b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? Not applicable
	c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk .
Equality Impact Assessment	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Crime and Disorder	N/A
Digital and website implications	N/A
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	Following GBC's Safeguarding Policy "Protecting children and vulnerable adults"