

Report to: Portfolio Holder for Housing

Decision Date: 26 June 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director for Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Julie Davidson, Business Manager Housing Services. Ext 5542

Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open Report, Non-Key Decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Creation of an Independent Living Fund – Pilot Scheme
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To seek approval for the establishment of a pilot fund to assist tenants sustain their tenancies by covering or subsidising the cost of equipment or minor adaptations which fall outside of the Council's normal processes.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>This report proposes the following recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve the establishment of an Independent Living Fund as a pilot scheme for 25/26</li> <li>• Approve the use of funds from the HRA Efficiency Budget</li> <li>• Note the alignment to the Community Plan Ambitions Three and Seven</li> <li>• Note the production of a report after 12 months of the scheme running.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	<p>There continues to be a deficit between supply and demand of Council accommodation; by providing financial and practical support to assist tenants to remain independent in their homes and sustaining their tenancy for longer; having a positive impact tenancy turnover.</p> <p>Failure to implement this pilot initiative could increase numbers on our housing register, results in higher tenancy</p>

	turnover and impacts negatively on community health and cohesion.
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	The recommendations enable the Council, as a responsible and forward-thinking landlord to support tenancy sustainment and assist tenants to remain independent in their homes for longer creating healthy and cohesive communities.
<b>Decision Taken</b>	As per the recommendation

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The idea of an independent living fund was born out of a dilemma raised by a housing services colleague following interaction with a tenant with mobility problems. The tenant was struggling with controlling central heating temperature as the thermostat was wall mounted. The installation of a 'hive' type control onto a smart phone was considered but was dependant on the tenant having a smart phone and being able to use it effectively. Another option was the purchase of a wireless thermostatic controller, simpler to use and more cost effective.

Whilst successful negotiation between the Council and the utility company resulted in the purchase of the wireless controller for the tenant by the utility company it triggered a debate on what the Council could do in situations like these.

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 The establishment of an independent living fund would enable front line housing service colleagues to work with tenants who require additional assistance to remain independent in their tenancies.
- 2.2 Colleagues will discuss and agree with the tenant the item or service which would assist in tenancy sustainment and then access funds (up to an agreed limit) in line with a written procedure (appended to this report).

- 2.3 This proposal aligns with Community Plan Ambitions:

*Ambition Three – improve the health and wellbeing, with an emphasis on communities with lower levels of life expectancy*

*Ambition Seven – be a top performing, modern and accessible Council that gets its everyday services right for the residents and businesses it serves*

- 2.4 A report on expenditure and impact of the scheme will be presented to the Housing Portfolio in July 2026.

### **3.0 Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

#### **3.1 Financial Implications - (FIN25-26/3371)**

It is proposed that the scheme have a pilot budget of £10,000 initially, funded from the HRA efficiency savings budget. The efficiency savings budget has £338,000 left for 2025/26.

If the scheme were to continue and require funds for future years, a separate report will be prepared.

#### **3.2 Legal Implications**

None received

#### **3.3 Human Resources Implications**

Whilst there are no direct implications on employment for our people, this does require front line staff to have a clear understanding of the process, how it is applied, and any restrictions in place. It is key that those involved are provided with guidance on when it is appropriate and what it is appropriate for, as well as the financial processes and implications.

The process should be clear and transparent to ensure that access to the fund is provided in a consistent and transparent manner.

#### **3.4 Tenant Implications**

- 3.4.1 Tenants have been consulted on this pilot and are supportive of the initiative. They have assisted in the pulling together the associated procedure.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None