

Pods off in bricks grant for Epsom homeless

16 November 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) will receive £1,493,250 in one-off funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help tackle its spending on homeless families. The Council will use it to buy five properties and one to be used for helping Afghan families resettle.

The grant was initially hoped to be spent on Epsom and Ewell council's recently approved temporary housing pods but it was refused by the government. Cllr Hannah Dalton told the committee on November 12: "They turned us down because they want us to invest in bricks and mortar."

Council documents state the programme will reduce local housing pressures by providing better quality housing, reduce emergency accommodation costs and reduce the impact on those waiting for social housing. It adds that the initiative will also provide sustainable housing for Afghan citizens on the resettlement scheme so they can "build new lives in the UK, find employment and integrate into communities."

Following the unanimous approval of the scheme, EEBC will receive the first payment in January 2025, with three instalments spread out over two years.

EEBC is also contributing £75,000 from Section 106 contributions, contributions from developers, to pay for the scheme. Section 106 is put towards community and social infrastructure projects, this can include social housing.

The new scheme will still cost the taxpayer £35,000 a year for the maintenance of the properties. However, it is a smaller sum than the £115,000 the Council was spending on the equivalent accommodation costs. Saving an estimated £80,000 in total, it would take just over nine years for the council to be paid back from buying the properties.

Around £2.34m was forked out on temporary accommodation by the council last year alone. EEBC said the new funding to purchase houses will help it reduce the annual cost of expensive nightly accommodation with permanent homes.

The two-three bedroom houses would be owned by the council and located within the borough of Epsom and Ewell. Officers told the committee they had already identified a couple houses suitable for the scheme before they have been put on the market. Conditions set by the ministry mean that the properties have to be either freehold, or minimum leasehold of 125 years.