

Housing, Health & Communities Committee	
Meeting Date	14 th July 2026
Report Title	Temporary Accommodation Programme Evaluation
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing & Communities
Lead Officer	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing & Communities
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. Members are asked to note the evaluation report. 2. To request that the modelling is reviewed based upon the evaluation findings and on a housing needs based portfolio and for a further programme to be considered as part of the Capital programme.

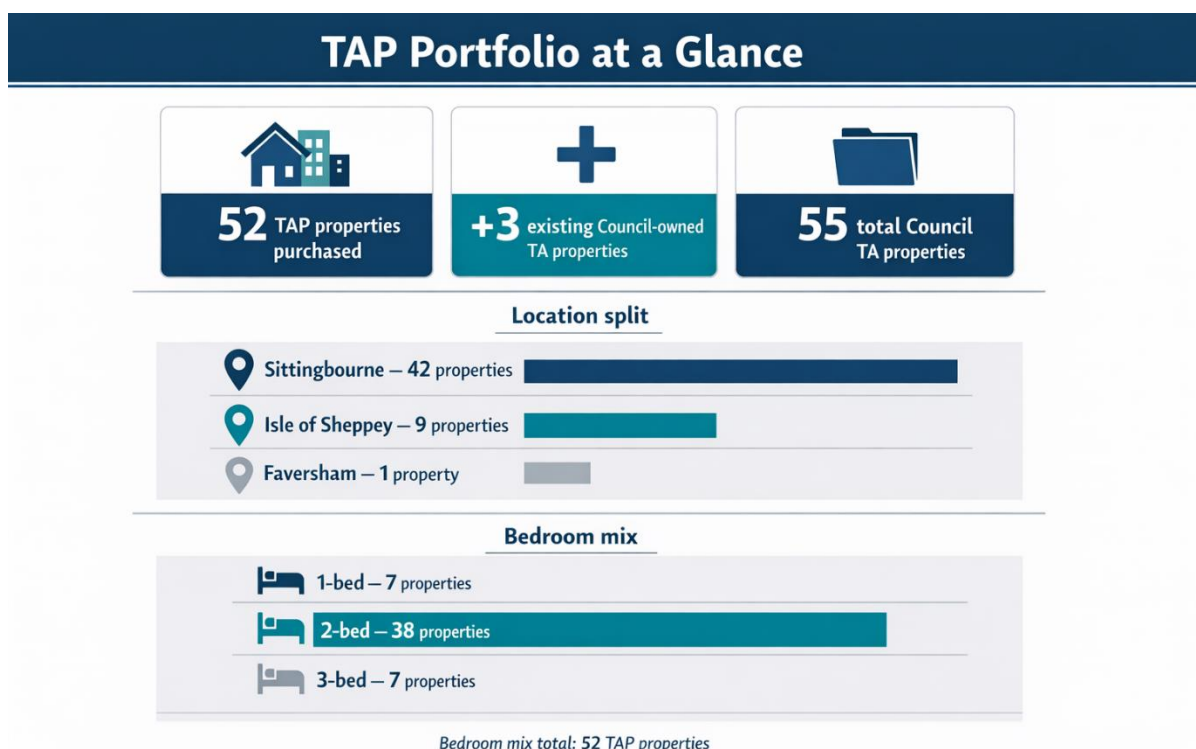
1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on the initial evaluation of the Temporary Accommodation Purchase (TAP) programme. It reviews the delivery mechanism and capital costs and looks at the effectiveness as a cost saving mechanism in providing TA.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 At the 17th January 2023 Housing and Health committee, members agreed the purchase of up to 50 properties for use as temporary accommodation within the borough of Swale, supported by a capital budget allocation of £11m. The report also sought agreement to recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the capital programme be established over a two-year period, with delegated authority for officers to purchase properties within the agreed modelling. A further report was considered by committee on 3rd July 2025, to purchase further properties within the original budget. This has enabled 52 properties to be purchased as part of the programme.
- 2.2 This decision was made on the backdrop of increasing households in TA and was a key intervention as part of the Housing Options Improvement Programme (HOIP) to reduce the overall cost burden to the Council for TA. The TAP programme was an invest-to-save approach with the aim of reducing reliance on private provision, improve local availability and quality of accommodation, provide greater control over management and revenue costs and enable the Council to retain a capital asset while supporting better outcomes for households requiring TA.

- 2.3 In addition to the Capital Budget identified by the Council, the government provided match funding towards TA purchases through the LAHF funding programme. We have successfully received funding from three rounds of the programme which has increased the size of the programme and has also enabled us to purchase some 3-bedroom properties as well as the original proposal for one- and two-bedroom properties. The first round focused on TA to support Homes for Ukraine households where host arrangements had broken down and were now entitled to TA, the remaining rounds were for general needs TA. Funding from KCC Ukraine programme also contributed to these properties.
- 2.4 52 properties have been purchased within the programme; this is in addition to the 3 properties that the Council already owned. Bringing the overall Council portfolio to 55 properties. Of the 52 properties as part of the TAP programme, 42 are in Sittingbourne, 9 on Isle of Sheppey and 1 in Faversham. The properties comprise of 7 one bed properties, 38 two bed properties and 7 three-bedroom properties.



- 2.5 The original model assumed that we would outsource the management of the TA properties, however when the team undertook research with other Council's it was apparent that these arrangements had not worked with outsourced providers for a range of reasons, and they eventually brought the services back in house. Taking their experience and advice, we therefore decided to manage the TA properties internally and staff within the restructure were identified to support these functions. This did cause an initial delay in mobilising the properties fully as we did not have the processes, systems and contracts or staffing resource in place that an existing provider would have. The team have

done an excellent job rising to the challenge and ensuring that the properties are suitable as occupation for TA, however, this has taken longer than originally anticipated and put additional pressure on the team.

- 2.6 We have had 11 first lets during 2025/26. The average time for contractor works was 45 days and a further 26 days from void works to occupation. We have had 30 re-lets during 2025/26, it has taken on average 47 days for the void works and a further 18 days from void works to occupation. The team are now working towards a 30-day void turnaround time.
- 2.7 The other change in the model was that we factored Housing Benefit (HB) in at the 90% of the 2011 TA rate, however, we became aware that we are able to claim the current and full rate of housing benefit for our own properties, The TA Policy was amended by the Housing and Health Committee on 22nd October 2024 to enable us to charge the relevant rent and claim the revised HB level.
- 2.8 To progress the purchase programme a small internal project team was created for delivery. This included recruiting a project surveyor who was recruited through an agency to identify suitable properties and manage the client-side conveyancing process with the legal team. We managed to recruit an experienced surveyor who had delivered a similar programme for another Council and had extensive local knowledge of the Swale borough. Mid Kent Legal Services also recruited an additional property lawyer to handle property transactions both for Swale and Maidstone (who were operating a similar programme). The Affordable Housing Manager was the project lead day to day supported by other team members, this was incorporated into their existing roles. We also instructed a local conveyancing firm to undertake RICS Home survey Level 2 on all the properties.

Finance Evaluation

- 2.9 The table below summarises the total cost of the TAP programme and shows an underspend on the overall programme. So, there is scope within the current programme to purchase another 2 or 3 properties. Further properties have not been purchased at this time due to team and contractor capacity and a need to review the programme acquisitions to date.

Table 1 - Capital Programme Summary Costs – 52 Properties

Capital Programme	
Property Purchase	£11,545,281
Professional and Other Fees	£845,242
Grant	-£2,457,000
Capital Programme	-£11,000,000
Balance	-£1,066,477

- 2.10 Monitoring the true revenue costs throughout 2025/26 has been difficult due to extended void periods, delayed correct housing benefit being applied and furniture and equipment needed for TA. This was rectified during Q4 and the 2025/26 financial year provides the most accurate financial data set in assessing a typical operational year. The annual operating costs within the TA model based upon the portfolio purchased and the original 3 properties equate to £742k, which averages £13,497 per property for 2025/26

2.11 **Table 2 – 2025/26 TAP Revenue Costs**

2025/26 TAP Running Costs	
Council Tax on voids	£18,389
Insurance	£4,155
Service Charges & Ground rent	£49,946
Utilities	£5,842
Furniture	£29,652
Maintenance	£227,179
Sinking Fund	£46,000
Staffing	£94,101
Capital Financing /MRP	£686,000
Rent	-£418,916
Balance	£742,349

- 2.12 The purchase prices were higher than the initial assumptions, therefore the savings were not as high as anticipated. However, if we had procured nightly let provision based upon the median costs of TA for the equivalent portfolio the net costs to Swale after HB and allowing for a void period of 6%. This would have cost us £1m. Therefore, this demonstrates that this programme has made a saving of £257k.

- 2.13 The project team reviewed the project at both delivery stage and current operational processes; they looked at what worked well and lessons learnt and challenges. The following are the key areas:

2.14 **Summary of What Worked Well**

- The use of a local surveyor provided strong market knowledge and enabled timely identification and acquisition of suitable properties.
- Dedicated legal support (when in place) supported effective coordination and smoother transaction processes.
- Later flexibility in the programme enabled the acquisition of larger family homes, improving alignment with housing need.
- Properties acquired were, overall, fit for purpose following completion of works and met required standards.

- Feedback from households placed in TA purchased properties has been very positive.
- Repairs and maintenance arrangements worked effectively, supported by good contractor communication.
- Compliance requirements (gas, electrical, fire and EPC) have been consistently met and monitored.

2.15 Strategic Lessons Learnt

- Future acquisition should be based on housing need rather than delivery against a fixed numerical target.
- Flats within privately managed blocks create additional legal, financial and management complexity and should be minimised where possible.
- A dedicated housing management function is required to ensure sustainable delivery and effective oversight of an expanded portfolio.
- Early involvement of all relevant services (Property, Legal, Finance, Housing and Insurance) is essential.
- Maintenance contractor capacity must align with programme scale, particularly to support void turnaround and responsive works.

2.16 Table 4 - Operational Lessons

Theme	Issue / Learning	Future Action
Legal Processes and Governance	Staff turnover in the in-house legal team led to delays towards the end of the programme. The absence of a clearly documented delegated authority framework also created delays in exchange and completion decisions.	Future phases should establish standardised legal processes, clear decision-making routes and delegated authority arrangements from the outset.
Transaction Timing and Coordination	Completion dates, particularly on Fridays, created operational pressures across Finance, Legal and operational teams, although staff supported delivery flexibly where required.	Set clear expectations on completion scheduling to improve coordination and reduce operational risk.
Property Inspection and Quality Assurance	Not all properties were inspected by council officers due to limited capacity.	Ensure consistent inspection processes and sufficient resourcing for pre-acquisition checks to help reduce void works and contractor input after purchase.
Compliance Expertise and	Limited in-house experience of residential compliance requirements required	Embed property and compliance expertise at programme design stage.

Programme Design	additional work during programme delivery.	
Maintenance Contractor Capacity and Voids	Contractor capacity was stretched, particularly where specialist works required subcontracting. This contributed to delays in void turnaround times.	Consider multiple or larger contractors to support programme scale and ensure first occupation is achieved more quickly.
Resource Pressures	Operational delivery relied on existing teams absorbing additional responsibilities, including maintenance coordination, furniture provision, compliance administration and financial management.	Provide dedicated resourcing to support any expanded programme.
Property Condition and Risk	Some properties required significant works post-purchase, including rewiring, new kitchens and bathrooms. Issues such as damp have created ongoing maintenance challenges to ensure compliance.	Strengthen pre-acquisition risk due diligence to mitigate future condition and compliance issues.
Market and Location Constraints	Acquisitions in higher value areas such as Faversham were limited by cost. Some locations were less suitable for demand, while Sittingbourne was identified as preferable.	Future acquisition strategies should balance affordability, demand and geographic spread.

2.17 **Table 5 - Evaluation of Programme Objectives**

Evaluation Criteria	Review / Assessment	Objective Met
Invest-to-save approach	The programme was designed as an invest-to-save intervention, using capital investment to reduce ongoing revenue pressures associated with temporary accommodation. The initial findings demonstrate that from an operational cost it is less than private provision. The Council also retains the asset.	Yes
Reduced reliance on private provision	The acquisition of council-owned properties has increased the supply of accommodation directly available to the Council and reduced the need to rely	Yes

	solely on private sector or externally procured temporary accommodation.	
Improved local availability	The programme has increased the number of temporary accommodation units within the borough, supporting placements closer to residents' existing communities, schools, employment and support networks.	Yes
Improved quality of accommodation	Properties acquired through the programme have been brought up to required standards before occupation, improving the quality and suitability of accommodation available for households requiring temporary accommodation.	Yes
Greater control over management and revenue costs	Direct ownership gives the Council greater control over property management, compliance, maintenance and cost management, although the evaluation also highlights the need for dedicated resources to manage the portfolio effectively. The Council does carry the risk of long-term voids.	Partially
Retention of a capital asset	The programme has enabled the Council to retain long-term capital assets while also increasing the supply of accommodation available for operational housing need.	Yes
Better outcomes for households	The programme supports better outcomes by providing more stable, locally based and good-quality temporary accommodation for households, with positive feedback reported from those placed in purchased properties.	Yes

2.18 Overall Conclusion

The TA Purchase Programme has demonstrated that a direct acquisition model can provide good quality, cost-effective temporary accommodation. However, successful expansion will depend on a needs-led acquisition approach, strengthened operational capacity, robust governance arrangements, and adequate contractor and staffing resources. The original model would need to be reworked based upon an in-house adequately staffed management model and intelligence provided by the initial programme.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Members are asked to note the evaluation report.

- 3.2 To request that the modelling is reviewed based upon the evaluation findings and on a housing needs based portfolio and for a further programme to be considered as part of the Capital programme.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Not applicable

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The project team were consulted to inform the evaluation process.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Health & Housing - To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing. Running the Council - Working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver in a transparent and efficient way
Financial, Resource and Property	This report provides an evaluation on the Capital programme to purchase Temporary Accommodation, and the assets acquired as part of this. It also details the operational annual costs of running the TAP during 2025/26
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Local housing authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Households might be placed in temporary accommodation pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they might spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	The TA budget has been identified as a corporate risk, due to demand on the service and the budgetary impacts. Health and Safety forms part of the property management process.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.
Local Government Reorganisation	Housing acquired by Swale will be transferred to the new authority when the unitary councils are established.

7 Appendices

7.1 None

8 Background Papers

8.1 [Temporary Accommodation \(TA\) Purchase 17th January 2023 Report](#)

8.2 [Temporary Accommodation \(TA\) Purchase Programme 3rd July 2025 Report](#)