



Cambridge City Council Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday, 22 June 2021

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Corn Exchange, Cambridge

Contact: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk, tel:01223 457000

Agenda

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Declarations of Interest
- 3 Minutes (Pages 7 - 34)
- 4 Appointment of Vice-Chair (Tenant/Leaseholder Rep) for 2021/22 and Introduction of Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives
- 5 Public Questions

Part 1: To be chaired by Vice Chair (Tenant/Leaseholder Representative)

Decisions for the Executive Councillor for Housing

- 6 Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024 (Pages 35 - 64)
- 7 Procurement of Contractor(s) to Deliver Planned Building Maintenance Work - 2022-2028 (Pages 65 - 70)
- 8 Procurement of Contractor(s) to Deliver Compliance Work – November 2022 – March 2027 (Pages 71 - 76)
- 9 Housing Services Communal Cleaning (Pages 77 - 82)
- 10 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances (Pages 83 - 104)

Part 2: To be taken by the Chair of the Committee

Decisions for the Executive Councillor for Housing

- 11 Social Housing Lettings Policy (Pages 105 - 172)
- 12 Purchase of Additional Affordable Housing, The (Pages 173 -

	Mews, Histon Road	180)
13	Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy – New Housing Policies	(Pages 181 - 226)

14 Refugee Resettlement Programme

A key decision by the Executive Councillor for Housing is required which has not been on the Forward Plan giving 28 days notice of that decision. Under the Constitution, Part 4B-Access to Information Procedure Rules, this decision can still be taken if a notice is given setting out the reasons why compliance with the publicity requirement is impractical.

A policy decision is required to facilitate the Council's stated commitment to supporting the resettlement of refugees (coordinated by the Home Office) over the next 5 years. Taking the decision at Housing Scrutiny Committee on 22 June allows this decision to be pre-scrutinised before it is taken.

Report to follow.

Housing Scrutiny Committee Members: Bird (Chair), Sheil (Vice-Chair), Bennett, Dalzell, Wood, Gilderdale, Lee, Pounds and Robertson

Alternates: Copley, Page-Croft, Sargeant and Sweeney

Tenants and Leaseholders: Lulu Agate (Tenant Representative), Christabella Amiteye (Tenant Representative), Diane Best (Leaseholder Representative), Mandy Powell-Hardy (Tenant Representative), Diana Minns (Tenant Representative) and Colin Stevens (Tenant Representative)

Executive Councillors: Todd-Jones (Executive Councillor for Housing)

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rapid testing centre at the Meadows Community Centre open Mon-Sat early til late also [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Rapid community testing - Cambridgeshire County Council](#).

Housing Scrutiny Committee
Terms of Reference
A. Overview and scrutiny of the strategic and other housing functions for which the Executive Councillor for Housing is responsible, including responsibility for the development of housing strategies and policies, tackling homelessness, the Council’s housing responsibilities with regard to the private rented sector, bringing vacant homes back into use, the development of new homes and partnership working with other housing providers.
B. Overview and scrutiny of functions relating to the management of the Council’s housing stock.
C. To be the main discussion forum between the Council, its tenants and its leaseholders for all matters relating to the landlord function of Cambridge City Council.
Membership
City Councillors (Such number as shall be decided by the Council from time to time)
Six elected tenants and leaseholders of Cambridge City Council of whom at least five shall be tenants of Cambridge City Council.
Appointment of tenant and leaseholder members
Tenant and leaseholder members shall be co-opted by the Scrutiny Committee following the procedure for election set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4E.
Voting
Tenant and leaseholder members are voting members in respect of matters concerning the management of the Council’s housing stock (Part 1 of the agenda.) Tenant and leaseholder members may contribute to discussion of other matters (Part 2 of the agenda) but shall not have a vote.
Appointment of Chair

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee shall be appointed by the Council and be a councillor and shall chair Part 2. The Vice-chair shall be nominated by the elected tenants and leaseholders and shall chair Part 1 if present. If the Chair or Vice-chair is not present, a councillor shall be appointed as the Vice-chair for that meeting.

Other matters relating to elected tenants and leaseholders

These are set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4E. They include information about the roles, responsibilities and training of tenant and leaseholder representatives, expenses and allowances, and the circumstances in which they may cease to be members of the Committee.

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HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 January 2021

5.00 - 9.50 pm

Present: Councillors Todd-Jones (Chair), Bird (Vice-Chair), Hadley, McGerty, Martinelli, Porrer, Robertson and Sheil

Executive Councillors: Johnson (Executive Councillor for Housing),

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Agate (Tenant Representative), Amiteye (Tenant Representative), Best (Leaseholder Representative), Powell-Hardy (Tenant Representative), Minns (Tenant Representative) and Stevens (Tenant Representative)

Officers:

Strategic Director: Fiona Bryant

Strategic Director: Suzanne Hemingway

Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager: Julia Hovells

Head of Housing: David Greening

Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets: Lynn Thomas

Head of Housing Development Agency: Claire Flowers

Asset Manager: Will Barfield

Home Improvement Agency Manager: Frances Swann

Housing Services Manager: James McWilliams

Residential Team Manager, Environmental Services: Claire Adelizzi

Senior Development Manager: Ben Binns

Senior Housing Development Manager: Jim Pollard

Policy and Performance Officer: Sally Norman

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Others Present:

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

21/1/HSC Apologies

Mandy Powell-Hardy sent apologies as she would join the meeting late (joined for 21/6/HSC).

Christabelle Amiteye sent apologies as she would not be able to join the meeting for part 2 (from 21/9/HSC).

Diane Best would leave the meeting during part 2 (from 21/12/HSC).

21/2/HSC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Robertson	21/6/HSC and 21/8/HSC	Personal: His daughter has a flat in Davey Road.
Mrs Minns	21/6/HSC	Personal: Resident who lived in flats being discussed in this item.
Councillor Bird	21/9/HSC	Personal: Was a service user.
Councillor Bird	21/10/HSC	Personal: Was Chair of the Licensing Committee that considered the issue of selective licensing.
Mrs Minns	21/11HSC	Personal: Convener of a voluntary group to support homeless women.
Councillor Bird	21/12/HSC	Personal: Tenant of Cambridge Housing Society.
Councillor Robertson	21/12/HSC	Personal: Trustee of Cambridge Cyrenians

21/3/HSC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2020 were approved as a correct record.

The Committee formally co-opted the Tenant and Leaseholder representatives.

21/4/HSC Public Questions

There were no public questions.

21/5/HSC Housing Ombudsman Self Assessment

This item was Chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair)

Matter for Decision

The report presented the findings of a self-assessment undertaken in response to the publication of the Housing Ombudsman's (HO) Complaint Handling Code and Self-Assessment Tool.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Approved the report and associated action plan included in Appendix A of the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Policy and Performance Officer.

The Head of Housing and Policy and Performance Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Officers had compared the City Council with several other councils, we were doing well in comparison to others.
- ii. The City Council had similar levels of complaint escalation to other councils.
- iii. The City Council performed better in responding faster to stage 1 and 2 complaints compared to other councils.

The Committee resolved by 13 votes to 0 (unanimous of all present) to endorse the recommendation.

Mandy Powell-Hardy joined the meeting after the vote.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/6/HSC Structural Repairs and Associated Works to Council-Owned Blocks of Flats

This item was Chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair)

Matter for Decision

The Council owns a number of blocks of flats built in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these flats have structural concrete elements. Further to a report submitted to Housing Scrutiny Committee in January 2020, Estates and Facilities have been surveying blocks of flats that have three stories or more and a further list of properties where structural repair work is required has been identified. Detail designs were underway, and the work needed to be tendered in order to award a contract(s) to a building contractor.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Approved the issue of tenders and, following evaluation of tenders, authorised the Strategic Director (following consultation with Executive Councillor, Chair, Vice Chair and Spokes of the Committee) to award a contract(s) to a contractor(s) to carry out structural repairs and associated repair works to Council housing flats.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Asset Manager.

The Asset Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. There would be no climate change impact from the repair work, it was making good what was already in place.
- ii. Other programs of work in the housing capital program may have a more positive impact in reducing climate change.
Councillor Todd-Jones said work would lead to more energy efficient buildings.
- iii. Stakeholders were being consulted about repairs, the council would listen to resident's wishes about whether they would like repairs to be undertaken or not. Officers would be mindful of the impact of repairs (eg noise) as people stayed at home due to covid lockdown.
- iv. The budget provision for work was already set out in the Council's 30 year plan. If committee members wished to scrutinise progress of the contract process then a report could be brought back to Housing Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Robertson said processes were in place for officers to oversee the contract process if/once delegation was given.

The Strategic Director said a general capital program delivery report could be brought to committee, but not one for individual projects.

Diane Best requested a change to the recommendation in the Officer's report (amendment shown as bold text):

Approved the issue of tenders and, following evaluation of tenders, authorised the Strategic Director (following consultation with Executive Councillor, Chair, **Vice Chair** and Spokes of the Committee) to award a contract(s) to a contractor(s) to carry out structural repairs and associated repair works to Council housing flats.

The Committee unanimously approved this amended recommendation.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation as amended.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/7/HSC Estates & Facilities Service Review and Compliance Update

This item was Chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair)

Matter for Decision

The report provides an update on the Estates & Facilities Service Review and information on compliance related work within the service, including a summary on gas servicing, electrical testing and fire safety work.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Noted the progress of the service review and compliance related work detailed within the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets.

The Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Officers were writing to leaseholders inviting them to use the same contract as tenants to install fire doors in flats. Some leaseholders had taken up this offer. A report would come back to committee in future after Fire Safety Bill information had been received.
- ii. Options around payment for fire doors for Leaseholders would be set out in the report.
- iii. Currently, it was not always possible for officers to undertake fire door work as people did not always want work personnel in their homes due to home working/schooling in lockdown. Officers were working with contractors and residents to find a compromise. Officers would wait until the end of lockdown to undertaken work if residents did not want work undertaken at present. A waiver to seek written confirmation to delay work would not be sought from residents. Officers could seek advice to ascertain the impact on home insurance if fire doors were not installed.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/8/HSC HRA Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2021/22

Recommendations (part 1) a to k were chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair /Tenant Representative) and recommendations (part 2) l to w were chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

As part of the 2021/22 budget process, the range of assumptions upon which the HRA Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy were based,

have been reviewed in light of the latest information available, culminating in the preparation of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

The HRA Budget-Setting Report provides an overview of the review of the key assumptions. It sets out the key parameters for the detailed recommendations and final budget proposals and is the basis for the finalisation of the 2021/22 budgets.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing Review of Rents and Charges

- a) Approved that council dwellings rents for all social rented properties be increased by inflation of 0.5%, measured by the Consumer Price Index(CPI) at September 2020, plus 1%, resulting in rent increases of 1.5%,with effect from 5 April 2021. This equates to an average rent increase at the time of writing this report of £1.52 per week.
- b) Approved that affordable rents (inclusive of service charge) are reviewed in line with rent legislation, to ensure that the rents charged are no more than 80% of market rent, with rents for existing tenants increased by no more than inflation of 0.5%, measured by the Consumer Price Index(CPI) at September 2020, plus 1%, resulting in rent increases of up to 1.5%. Local policy is to cap affordable rents (inclusive of all service charges) at the Local Housing Allowance level, which would usually result in rent variations in line with any changes notified to the authority in this level if these result in a lower than 1.5% increase. As the Local Housing Allowance was increased significantly in late March 2020, affordable rent increases will be capped at 1.5% from April 2021.
- c) Approved that rents for shared ownership properties are reviewed and amended from April 2021, in line with the specific requirements within the lease for each property.
- d) Approved that garage and parking space charges for 2021/22, are increased by inflation at 0.9% in line with the level of inflation incorporated into the HRA as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy process, and that charges for parking permits are reviewed, with resulting charges as summarised in Section 3 of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- e) Approved the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- f) Approved the proposed leasehold administration charges for 2021/22, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

- g) Approved that caretaking, building cleaning, window cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises and utilities, digital television aerial, gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts, electrical and mechanical maintenance, flat cleaning, third party management, specialist equipment and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report, recognising that local authorities should endeavour to limit increases to inflation as measured by CPI at September 2020 (0.5%) plus 1%, wherever possible.
- h) Approved with any amendments, the Revised Budget identified in Section 4 and Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, which reflects a net increase in the use of HRA reserves for 2020/21 of £550.
- i) Approved with any amendments, any Non-Cash Limit items identified in Section 4 of the HRA Budget Setting Report or shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- j) Approved with any amendments, any Savings, Increased Income, Unavoidable Revenue Bids, Reduced Income Proposals and Bids, as shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- k) Approved the resulting Housing Revenue Account revenue budget as summarised in the Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2020/21 to 2025/26 shown in Appendix J of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

The Executive Councillor recommended Council to:

- l) Approve the need to borrow over the 30-year life of the business plan, with the first instance of this anticipated to be in 2022/23, to sustain the proposed level of investment, which includes ear-marking of funding for delivery of a net 1,000 new homes over a 10 year timeframe.
- m) Recognise that any decision to borrow further will impact the authority's ability to set-aside resource to redeem 25% of the value of the housing debt by the point at which the loan portfolio matures, with the approach to this to be reviewed before further borrowing commences.
- n) Approve the latest Decent Homes Programme, to include updated decent homes expenditure for new build dwellings to recognise the increased ongoing costs of maintaining homes at Passivhaus standards, as detailed in Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

- o) Approve the latest budget sums, profiling and associated financing for all new build schemes, including revised scheme budgets for Tedder Way, Kendal Way, Clerk Maxwell, Campkin Road, Colville Road and Kingsway, based upon the latest cost information from the Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) or direct procurements, as detailed in Appendices E and H, and summarised in Appendix K, of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- p) Approve allocation of funds from the budget ear-marked for the delivery of 1,000 net new homes to the five schemes at Fen Road, Ditton Walk, Aragon Close, Sackville Close, and Borrowdale in line with the scheme specific reports presented to Housing Scrutiny Committee in the committee cycle.
- q) Recognition of removal of the budget and associated MHCLG grant income for the acquisition of property to accommodate rough sleepers, following confirmation that the authority was unsuccessful in the 2020/21 round of the Next Steps Grant bid process.
- r) Approve the revised Housing Capital Investment Plan as shown in Appendix K of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- s) Approve the inclusion of Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure and associated grant income from 2021/22 onwards, based upon 2020/21 original grant levels, with approval of delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to approve an in year increase or decrease in the budget for disabled facilities grants in any year, in direct relation to any increase or decrease in the capital grant funding for this purpose, as received from the County Council through the Better Care Fund. Approval of delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to determine the most appropriate use of any additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding announced in year, for the wider benefit of the Shared Home Improvement Agency.
- t) Approve delegation to the Strategic Director to review and amend the level of fees charged by the Shared Home Improvement Agency for disabled facilities grants and repair assistance grants, in line with any decisions made by the Shared Home Improvement Agency Board.
- u) Approve delegation to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to draw down resource from the ear-marked reserve for potential debt redemption or re-investment, for the purpose of open market land or property acquisition or new build housing development, should the need arise, in order to meet quarterly deadlines for the use of retained right to buy receipts or to facilitate future site redevelopment.
- v) Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to include both expenditure and income budgets in respect of any grant

bid made to MHCLG as part of the Next Steps Grant Programme, recognising that any net impact for the HRA will need to be retrospectively incorporated as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy in 2021/22.

- w) Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to make the necessary technical amendments to detailed budgets in respect of the outcome of the review of recharges between the General Fund and the HRA, with any change in impact for the HRA to be incorporated as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2021.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager.

The Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. There was an initial increase in rent arrears for tenanted properties in the first lockdown, this stabilised in May 2020 so the broad trend was that closing cash offices did not increase rent arrears as people moved onto other payment methods e.g. online.
- ii. There was sufficient provision for bad debt in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This also set out interest rates for loans.
- iii. There were no proposals to reduce the number of Open Door (magazine) issues from three to two. Funding for this had not been removed, there was historic underspend in the resident grant budget over a period of years so the budget had been reduced.
- iv. The Community Alarm Charge of £5.32 should include an enhanced response time by the County Council. As this service would not be provided, the figure was expected to change to £3.42 for a response within sixty minutes (as opposed to thirty under the £5.32 figure). This was subject to written confirmation from the County Council, which would then be agreed by Housing Scrutiny Committee and at Full Council.

The Executive Councillor said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The Council had a 30 year business plan to build and maintain housing stock.
- ii. The above inflation rent increase was fair and in line with other local authorities. Cambridge City Council had measures in place to assist people who had difficulties paying rent.
- iii. Reiterated that rent arrears were stable over a period of several months. Sufficient resources were in place to support tenants who experienced financial difficulties. No-one would be evicted during the pandemic. The council was trying to balance income with investment and service provision. Rents would be kept under review.

Councillor Martinelli introduced the Liberal Democrat Amendment to the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Budget.

Councillor Robertson requested a change to the recommendation in the Officer's report (amendment shown as bold text):

1.3ii A proposal to include a revenue bid for £50,000 to fund a project to explore **over two years** water conservation options for the existing housing stock, recognising that the findings from the project, once fully explored and quantified, are likely to result in a future capital bid to facilitate the desired investment in the housing stock.

The Committee unanimously approved this amended recommendation.

The following vote was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair / Tenant Representative).

The Chair decided that the recommendations highlighted in the Liberal Democrats Group alternative budget should be voted on and recorded separately:

1.3i A proposal to include a revenue bid of £30,000 to fund a project to review responsive and void repairs service standards, with the aim to improve service levels for council property maintenance, to manage tenant expectations and reduce complaints.

3 votes in favour to 11 against. The amendment was lost.

1.3ii A proposal to include a revenue bid for £50,000 to fund a project to explore over two years water conservation options for the existing housing stock, recognising that the findings from the project, once fully

explored and quantified, are likely to result in a future capital bid to facilitate the desired investment in the housing stock.

Committee unanimously in favour. The amendment was accepted.

1.3iii A proposal to extend the funding for the Energy Assessor post, from the current two year fixed term funding, for a further three years (at a cost of £47,200 per annum), to ensure that energy improvements can be considered for a greater number of existing council homes, recognising that the work of the Energy assessor is likely to result in future capital bids to facilitate the required investment in the housing stock.

3 votes in favour to 11 against. The amendment was lost.

Diane Best introduced the Resident Representative Amendment to the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Budget.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Fly tipping was an issue to address.
- ii. Councillors expressed concern that enforcement action could be taken against a whole block of flats if an individual perpetrator could not be identified.
- iii. Extra personnel could be needed in lockdown to assist tackling fly tipping in lockdown. Clean up days could be re-instated after lockdown. Council enforcement teams liaised with other officers, so if the enforcement team could not take action, other officers would.

The Resident Representative alternative budget: 11 votes in favour to 0 against with 3 abstentions. The amendment was accepted.

Unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations a to k of the budget proposal, as amended above.

The following vote was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Resolved (5 votes to 0 with 3 abstentions) to endorse the original recommendations l to v of the budget proposal.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/9/HSC Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency – Works Contract Procurement

This item was chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

Cambridge City Council are the lead authority with overall management responsibility for the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) shared service. In accordance with the City Council's corporate governance, the Officer's report sought approval for the CHIA Board's decision to procure new contractors for delivery of adaptations work managed by the Agency.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the CHIA's board decision to proceed with a procurement exercise for up to four years for the provision of three contracts for adaptations and repairs related work
- ii. Authorised CHIA to invite, evaluate tenders and to award contracts to suitable bidders following a competitive tender evaluation process.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Home Improvement Agency Manager.

In response to Members' questions the Home Improvement Agency Manager said that the contract retendering process would encourage local contractors as those based further away may not be able to fulfil the project brief.

The Committee unanimously* resolved to endorse the recommendations. (*Only councillors were able to vote on part 2 items.)

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/10/HSC Feasibility Study for the Implementation of Selective Licensing in the City of Cambridge - Publication and Actioning the Recommendations

This item was chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

An independent feasibility study was conducted into the need for selective licensing of private rented properties within Cambridge City. The study was for the purpose of identifying if it was appropriate for the Council to implement a scheme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Agreed that the Feasibility Study Report, contained in Appendix A of the Officer's report could be released into the public domain.
- ii. Agreed the actions outlined within the Committee Report to address recommendations of the Feasibility Study Report throughout 2021/22, continuing the Council's focus of improving and sustaining the quality of the private rented sector within the City.
- iii. Agreed that an annual report be brought back assessing progress on the work in time for any new bids to be submitted for work in the budget for the following year.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Residential Team Manager, Environmental Services.

The Executive Councillor said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The report raised several possibilities where the council could take action against private sector landlords where they did not respond to issues raised by tenants.
- ii. The report had a wider scope than just housing (acknowledged there was a high demand for this). The report looked at socio-economic issues (eg crime) and how actions could be taken to address these.

The Residential Team Manager said that work was underway to set up an enforcement group to share intelligence across regulatory services within the council as well as with external stakeholders including the Fire Service.

Councillor Robertson requested a change to the recommendation in the Officer's report:

Add third recommendation: 2.3 Agree that an annual report be brought back assessing progress on the work in time for any new bids be submitted for work in the budget for the following year."

The Committee unanimously approved this additional recommendation.

The Chair decided that the recommendations highlighted in the Officer's report should be voted on and recorded separately:

The Committee unanimously endorsed recommendation 2.1.

The Committee endorsed recommendation 2.2 by 5 votes to 0 with 3 abstentions.

The Committee approved (new) recommendation 2.3 unanimously.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations as amended.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/11/HSC Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2021 – 2026

This item was chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Public Questions

A member of the public (representing 'It Takes a City (Cambridge)') asked a question as set out below.

- i. Supported the strategy as it would help rough sleepers.
- ii. Asked the council to consider some additions to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy:
 - a. Reduce rough sleeping target to zero.
 - b. Collaborate with the public, private and third sectors.
 - c. Could all partners jointly own the Strategy and share actions.

The Executive Councillor said he would be happy to follow up with officers on how to develop the Strategy going forward.

Councillor Bick, speaking as a Ward Councillor raised the following points:

- i. Welcomed the report and Strategy.
- ii. Was seeking a joined up approach to address issues.
- iii. The adoption of the street to home approach would be of particular help to entrenched rough sleepers through support for individuals by a link worker.
- iv. There was concern that the County Council would close hostels, but they had stepped back from this. The County Council were looking to work with the City Council to ensure a strategy was in place before funding was withdrawn.
- v. The ambition was to reduce rough sleeping numbers, but this would involve dealing with people with complicated issues who were sometimes hard to engage.
- vi. The city was a magnet that attracted people to get money for substance addictions, which stopped them getting homes and jobs. This needed to be addressed to get to zero rough sleepers.
- vii. Members of the public wanted to help the homeless community, but did not always know how to. Queried how to educate them and show links to voluntary groups.

The Executive Councillor responded:

- i. Signposted priorities in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy to address rough sleeping and the complicated issues associated with it such as begging.
- ii. The Strategy was looking at advice, support and enforcement actions that could be undertaken with partner organisations such as the Police.
- iii. The public made enquiries about how to help people seen begging:

- a. Ways to give education information (eg webpages) were being reviewed.
- b. A future Communication Strategy was being considered (with partner organisations) on how to do this.

The Committee gave a formal vote of thanks from to the Housing Services Manager and colleagues for their work to tackle homelessness.

Matter for Decision

The Council is required by law to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This requirement is provided for in the Homelessness Act 2002 (as amended).

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2021-26) and the year one and two action plan as appended to the officer's report
- ii. Delegated authority to the Head of Housing to approve annual reiterations of the strategy action plans at years 3,4 and 5 of the strategy in consultation with the Executive Councillor
- iii. Agreed than an update on progress made in delivering objectives outlined in this strategy was brought to Housing Scrutiny Committee on a yearly basis.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Housing Services Manager.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Many homeless women were 'hidden' as they sofa surfed instead of living on the streets.
- ii. 80% of rough sleepers were men and 20% were women, so services were geared towards men.
- iii. Women were often homeless due to domestic abuse, so were a vulnerable group, which should be reflected in the Strategy.

- iv. Separate male and female accommodation should be provided in homeless accommodation.
- v. Queried how the LGBT community were affected by homelessness.
- vi. There were people who resisted coming off the street. Different solutions were needed to get people off the street and address anti-social behaviour such as campfires and drug abuse.
- vii. The pods were a good idea. Queried if they could be set up in all city wards. Asked Ward Councillors to recommend areas where pods could be built.

The Head of Housing said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. There were many reasons why homeless figures fluctuated such as inward migration. A target to achieve zero homeless people could be set, but it would be hard to achieve.
- ii. Jimmy's Homeless Shelter would provide an exceptions report to show the rate of homelessness to the County Council who were responsible for monitoring it.
- iii. The City Council would support people moving from hostels to private rented or local authority housing.
- iv. One pod will be allocated specifically for a LGBT person's use. Officers would look at LGBT needs separately, this did not require a change to the Officer's recommendation.
- v. Homelessness was a wider issue than just rough sleeping.

Councillor Martinelli requested a change to the recommendation in the Officer's report :

2.3 Agree that an update on progress with this strategy is brought to Housing Scrutiny Committee on a yearly basis.

This was amended by Councillor Sheil (with Councillor Martinelli agreement) to:

2.3 Agree that an update on progress **made in delivering objectives outlined in** this strategy is brought to Housing Scrutiny Committee on a yearly basis.

The Committee unanimously approved this additional recommendation.

The Committee resolved unanimously to endorse the recommendations as amended.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations as amended.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/12/HSC Homelessness Prevention Grants to Agencies

This item was chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

This report outlined grant funding to organisations providing homelessness prevention services. It provided an overview of the process, eligibility criteria and budget in Section 3 of the Officer's report and Appendix 1 detailed the applications received with recommendations for 2021-22 awards.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Approved the Homelessness Prevention Grants to voluntary, community and statutory organisations for 2021-22, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report, subject to the budget approval in February 2021 and any further satisfactory information required of applicant organisations

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Housing Services Manager.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. The City Council were doing a lot with a fixed amount of money.
- ii. The same amount of grant funding was available this year as last year, but the cost of services was increasing. Expressed concern that grant funding was increasing by 1% but inflation was increasing by 2%.

The Housing Services Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Organisations would have to source funding from other sources to cover their costs.

- ii. There had been an increase in domestic tension in the last nine to ten months due to covid. Officers were monitoring the situation. There had not been an increase in the number of people approaching the housing advice service.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/13/HSC Update on the Work Towards a new Council Housing Programme

This item was chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report provided an update on the new build housing programme for 2022-2032.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the recommendations from the Buro Happold Report, and agreed these should be included in the Updated Sustainable Housing Design Guide so that all council developments will be required to:
 - a. Target Net Zero Carbon from 2030.
 - b. Target Passivhaus certification from 2021.
 - c. Attain Sustainability targets for water, overheating, post-occupancy evaluation (POE), Electric vehicle charging, car parking and biodiversity.

To attain this will require the adoption of:

- d. the Sustainability Roadmap to Net Zero Carbon.
 - e. the decision-making process for sustainability standards.
 - f. the seven principles of sustainability.
- ii. Approved the following delivery strategy:

- a. Pursue a mix of delivery strategies to deliver the 10-year programme.
- b. The majority of the programme to be delivered through CIP.
- c. A programme of smaller schemes to be delivered through design and build contracts.
- d. Purchase of affordable units from developers delivered as a result of S106 agreements.
- e. Consideration of other opportunities which may arise for joint ventures or development agreements with other partners.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Head of Housing Development Agency.

The Strategic Director and Head of Housing Development Agency said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Circa two thousand homes were being built to the Passivhaus standard.
- ii. National bodies and other local authorities were supportive of the standard but were not building on similar scale schemes to Cambridge as the risks were higher to achieve targets.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes to 0 (with 3 abstentions) to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/14/HSC Proposed new Build Passivhaus Housing Schemes

This item was chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report brought forward proposals for 35 dwellings across five sites as a first step in delivering homes on Passivhaus principles.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved new build housing schemes
 - a. at Ditton Walk.
 - b. at 71-73 Fen Road.
 - c. at Aragon Close.
 - d. at Sackville Close.
 - e. at Borrowdale.
- ii. Approved the capital budget as set out in the Officer's report for the package of Passivhaus schemes noting that this will be reduced should any of the five sites not proceed.
- iii. Authorised the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to approve variations to the schemes, including the number of units and mix of property types and sizes outlined in the Officer's report.
- iv. Subject to Council approval of the budget, approved the development to be carried out through the Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) subject to a value for money assessment to be carried out on behalf of the Council.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Senior Housing Development Manager.

The Senior Housing Development Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Allocated disabled parking was available.
- ii. There was a lot of misinformation around what the City Council planned for the Fen Road site, it was hoped the Officer's report addressed this.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/15/HSC Update on the Programme to Build new Council Homes Funded Through the Combined Authority

This item was chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report provided an update on the programme to deliver 500 Council homes with funding from the Combined Authority.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the continued progress on the delivery of the combined Authority programme.
- ii. Noted the revised budget related to the Kingsway refurbishment scheme as detailed in paragraph 7.4.2 of the officer's report approval of which was sought under the HRA Budget Setting Report (HSC Item 8, Section 5).
- iii. Noted the revised budget related to the Tedder Way and Kendal Way schemes as detailed in in paragraph 7.4.2 of the officer's report, approval of which was sought under the HRA Budget Setting Report (HSC Item 8, Section 5).
- iv. Approved the revisions to the proposed Scheme at Tedder Way as outlined in paragraph 7.4.2 and Appendix 3 of the Officer's report.
- v. Approved the revisions to the proposed Scheme at Kendal Way as outlined in paragraph 7.4.2 and Appendix 3 of the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Head of Housing Development Agency.

The Strategic Director and Head of Housing Development Agency said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Funding for some of the program came from the Combined Authority, but this would not cover the whole program. The City Council would continue to report to the Combined Authority on a quarterly basis. Future funding may come from Central Government.
- ii. Jimmy's Homeless Shelter managed the pods. They would provide reports to the City Council. Pods were set up in Dundee Close and Newmarket Road. Crowlands Way pods had planning permission.
- iii. Sixteen pods were planned, future ones could be made accessible if there was demand. Pods and furniture had to be ordered in advance of being set up. The Council could order more modular homes if they were needed.
- iv. Officers were reviewing housing sites to balance the need for conventional homes and modular ones. Officers had to look at the need for different accommodation on-site.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes to 0 (with 3 abstentions) to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm

CHAIR

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 March 2021
5.30 - 6.40 pm

Present: Councillors Todd-Jones (Chair), Bird (Vice-Chair), Hadley, McGerty, Martinelli, Porrer, Robertson, Sheil, Johnson (Executive Councillor),

Tenant and Leaseholder representatives: Agate, Best, Powell-Hardy, Minns and Stevens

Officers:

Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets: Lynn Thomas

Head of Housing Development Agency: Claire Flowers

Head of Housing: David Greening

Committee Manager: Gary Clift

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

21/16/HSC Apologies

Apologies were received from Christabella Amiteye.

21/17/HSC Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

21/18/HSC Minutes - to follow

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January were unavailable and would be circulated to Members as soon as possible prior to being submitted to the June meeting.

21/19/HSC Public Questions

There were no public questions.

21/20/HSC Estates & Facilities Service Review and Compliance Update

Chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair)

Matter for decision

To note the update on the Estate and Facilities Service Review and compliance related work.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Housing

To note the progress of the service review and compliance related work set out in the officer report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. How quickly will the remaining electrical testing take (para 4.3)?
- ii. How have the annual tests (other than for gas safety) been impacted by the Covid restrictions this year?
- iii. Could an update be provided on fire doors?
- iv. Could the figures in para 6 and 7 of the report section on fire safety be less opaque?
- v. Thanked the officer for the useful report.

The Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets said the following in response to Members' questions:

Electrical testing will roll into the next financial year. The only legal route the Council currently take with in gaining access to a property is for gas safety inspections. However, officers are looking at the Council's processes with the Compliance Manager, we will also be involving the new tenant liaison officer in addition to the Council's contractors who have liaison officer (to look at ways to improve access rates).

Over the last three years, no access to properties for investment work that included compliance and safety has been 10% 2018-19, 23% 2019-20 and 37% for the current year.

On fire doors, the Council is waiting for the Government's Fire Safety Bill to be passed (expected in the next few weeks) and the matter will be brought to committee when the detail of the legislation and changes to Fire Safety Orders is known.

A structure chart of the estates and facilities team will be provided to the committee for information

The Committee resolved by 10 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/21/HSC Combined Update on the Programme to Build New Council Homes Funded Through the Combined Authority and Work Toward Development of the New Council Housing Programme

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report provided an update on the programme to deliver 500 Council homes by March 2022 with funding from the Combined Authority, along with the new programme work for 2022-2032.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the continued progress on the delivery of the Combined Authority programme.
- ii. Noted the work undertaken to date toward development of the new housing programme for 2022-2032.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Was there an update on Kingsway Medical Centre conversion?
- ii. Can Committee be updated with the Anstey Way and Ventress Close model of having a Custodian on-site.

The officers said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The Kingsway Medical Centre project was still on hold awaiting final settlement with insurers following the flat fire.
- ii. A report back to committee on the use of the Custodian model will be provided in due course.

Post meeting the Head of Housing proposed that as a full review of Housing First is planned by the end of 2021-22, and by this time there will hopefully be employed a number of custodians (as opposed to the one currently employed) the Council will be in a better position to evaluate the role's efficacy as part of a wider HF review. Therefore to bring a report to June 22 committee which covers all aspects of Housing First.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

21/22/HSC Decision Sheet

The meeting ended at 6.40 pm

CHAIR



Item

Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024

To:

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee [22/06/2021]

Report by:

David Greening, Head of Housing
Tel: 01223 - 458323 Email: Emily.Watts@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the new Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024. The Strategy incorporates business plan objectives, feedback from the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey and recommendations from The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020). Developed in consultation with the elected Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives, it will serve as an overarching guide to deliver a resident-focused service for the next four years.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

2.1 Agree the Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024 (Appendix 1).

3. Background

3.1 A new resident involvement strategy is developed every four years, providing a high-level guide for the focus and targeted delivery of resident involvement activities during that period. The Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024 (Appendix 1) offers an outcome-based method of ensuring that Resident Involvement continues to provide an effective, value-for-money service that answers the needs of today's social housing climate. In designing this strategy, two main resources were used:

- 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020)

3.2 In consultation with the elected Tenants and Leaseholder Representatives, we have developed a Strategy split into six chapters which focuses on the delivery of different aspects of the service:

1. Housing Service Priorities
2. Resources
3. Communication and Insight
4. Influence and Scrutiny
5. Neighborhood Improvement
6. Value for Money

3.3 Feedback from the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey (Appendix 2) informed the Strategy by helping to establish resident priorities and levels of satisfaction with the services they receive from their landlord. The Strategy seeks to respond to the following questions which received low levels of satisfaction, using resident feedback to make sustainable, customer-focused improvements:

- 52% agreed that City Homes gives you the opportunity to make your views known.
- 50% agree that City Homes publicise improvements made using tenants' feedback.
- 66% agreed that City Homes is good at keeping you informed.
- 72% of residents are satisfied with neighbourhood as a place to live, this is a reduction of 9% since 2014. 59% were satisfied with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood. Priorities for improvement are

paths 54%, estate lighting 39% and health and wellbeing of tenants 31%.

- Residents' suggested their top 3 priorities for the future, split by tenure type- general needs tenants, sheltered scheme tenants and leaseholders. A table listing the priorities is available in Appendix 2.
- Residents' preferred method of communication: letter 61%, email 23%, phone 11%, face to face 2% and online 2%. Almost three quarters 74% of tenants said they have access to the internet. Tenants were also asked if they were aware of MyCambridge portal 20% had signed up but half 50% were not aware.

3.4 The Strategy also incorporates recommendations from The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020). Developed in the wake of the Grenfell disaster, the Paper seeks to realign the tenant and landlord relationship, putting a greater focus on the resident voice. The following actions were incorporated into the Strategy. Landlords should:

- report annually on performance against a new national set of tenant satisfaction measures.
- should improve engagement opportunities, enabling tenant and leaseholder scrutiny and influence.
- report the value and successes of Resident Involvement across the organisation and to all key stakeholders.

3.5 In an environment where policy and legislation are ever-changing, especially during the post-pandemic recovery, this Strategy provides direction whilst remaining flexible. Enabling it to quickly respond to changing demands in a resident-focused way.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

Page: 3

All work details above are covered within the existing Resident Involvement budget.

b) Staffing Implications

Creating a strategy is part of the routine duty of existing staff.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

Some areas of resident involvement cross into social, financial, and digital inclusion. Where appropriate, these be linked to/delivered in conjunction with wider anti-poverty strategies.

d) Environmental Implications

None.

e) Procurement Implications

None.

f) Community Safety Implications

None.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

- The 6 elected Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives were consulted in the development of the strategy.
- Results from the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey (Appendix 2) helped inform the development of the strategy. The survey was sent to all City Council tenants and leaseholders in October 2020.

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020)

7. Appendices

- **Appendix 1- Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024**
- **Appendix 2- Statistics from the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey**
- **Appendix 3- EqlA**

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Emily Watts, Resident Engagement Officer, tel: 01223 - 458323, email: emily.watts@cambridge.gov.uk.

Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024

Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024

Page 3	Introduction
Page 4	1. Housing service priorities Linking tenant Resident Involvement directly to business plan objectives
Page 5	2. Resources Identifying support for effective Resident Involvement
Page 6	3. Communication and Insight Providing information to residents in ways they choose, Gathering and using customer insight effectively
Page 7	4. Influence and Scrutiny Ensuring residents and communities can influence services appropriately
Page 8	5. Neighbourhood Improvement Promote and facilitate avenues for neighbourhood improvements
Page 9	6. Value for money Measuring the effects of Resident Involvement to add value for stakeholders, communities, and individuals
Page 10	Reporting

Introduction

Introduction

Cambridge City Council is proud to involve tenants and leaseholders in the delivery and management of the the housing services they receive.

Involved tenant and leaseholder inspectors, panel and committee members, have direct input and scrutiny of key decisions around their housing. The Housing Scrutiny Committee, with tenant and leaseholder representatives having direct input alongside councillors has, since it was constituted in 2014, enabled tenants and leaseholders to have a powerful influence on their housing service.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents (government Social Housing White Paper, 2020), has the commitment (point 5 of the Charter) *"To have your voice heard by your landlord"* and this includes regular meetings and scrutiny panels - it's good to see the government catching up with Cambridge City Council!

The wider tenant community also participates via surveys, tenant newsletter / magazines, social media channels, the online portal, and local residents' groups and associations.

The Resident Involvement Strategy reflects feedback from the 2020 tenant and leaseholder satisfaction survey - such as the wish to be better informed whilst recognising that many tenants do not have access to the internet; and reinforcing that health and wellbeing is a resident priority. So, when we commit to, for example. a new e-newsletter, this has to go hand-in-hand with our digital inclusion strategy enabling more residents to have access to the internet.

With scarcer resources in the housing service, Resident Involvement must provide a targeted service that responds to the needs of tenants, the priorities of the housing service, and satisfies regulatory requirements.

This Resident Involvement Strategy offers a clear outcome-based method of ensuring that Resident Involvement continues to provide an effective, value-for-money service that answers the needs of today's social housing environment.

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones
Executive Councillor for Housing

APPENDIX 1

1. Housing service priorities

Linking Resident Involvement directly to business plan objectives

The priorities outlined in the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey must link to business plan objectives. In turn, residents must be empowered and enabled to influence the business plans of other services whose actions may also impact upon tenants and leaseholders, promoting an effective circle of engagement.

1.1 Ensure that tenant and leaseholder priorities are recognised when developing involvement projects or improving housing services:

Tenants' top three priorities for housing services*

1. Improve property standards through maintenance and upgrades.
2. Improve communication, ensure residents' views are considered and complaints are followed up.
3. Build more council homes

Leaseholders' top three priorities for housing services*

1. Improve the appearance of external communal areas and grounds maintenance
2. Improve the standard of internal communal cleaning
3. Improve communication, ensure resident's views are considered and complaints are followed up.

*Source- 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

1.2 Link involvement directly to the organisation's management structure. Priorities highlighted through involvement are reflected in business plans, strategies and operational plans for customer facing services. Effective resident involvement is recognised and valued by staff, councillors, and other stakeholders.

1.3 Create a service involvement charter which establishes where and when the residents will be involved with key decisions such as staff recruitment, tender evaluation, and services re-organisation.

1.4 Make sure that involvement is planned, monitored, and reviewed quarterly with HSC Resident Representatives. This approach should reflect the profile of residents, communities, and housing types.

2. Resources

Identifying support for effective Resident Involvement

We will promote an inclusive environment and identify the right support to put in place to enable effective involvement of tenants and leaseholders.

- 2.1** Allocate sufficient resources for Resident Involvement, reviewing annually to ensure it is effective in delivering planned outcomes. Ensure that all activities are targeted to make best use of financial resources.
- 2.2** Introduce new staff to the role of resident involvement in the housing service, training and equipping them with the skills needed to independently administer it within their role. Promote resident involvement as part of housing staff's performance objectives where appropriate.
- 2.3** Provide a clear remit of voluntary roles and the appropriate levels of support for involved tenants and leaseholders so that they can be effective.
- 2.4** Promote opportunities for involvement, through a variety of media channels, including printed media such as Open Door, web, social media, online portal, and events.
- 2.5** Monitor and measure the success of projects and increase the take-up of involvement opportunities.

3.Communication & Insight

Providing information to residents in ways they choose, gathering and using customer insight effectively

To ensure resident involvement is fully maximised, we will provide information to residents in ways they choose from the options available, gather their views, and use them to inform the direction of services. Regularly publishing the corresponding changes and improvements to complete the cycle of engagement.

Tenant and Leaseholder preferred methods of communication*

1. Letters (61%)
2. Email (23%)
3. Phone/text (11%)
4. Face to face (2%)
5. Online (e.g. website, My Cambridge portal) (2%)

3.1 Understand resident's preferred channel of engagement, use this to increase access to information and to allow feedback and information to be shared.

3.2 Feedback from residents indicates that the housing service need to keep residents better informed*. Information outlined in the tenant satisfaction measures, outlined within the Social Housing White Paper will be published annually. A new e-newsletter will also be created and published 3 times a year to increase the frequency of communication.

3.3 Information gathered through involvement is used to gain insight and influence services so that they reflect tenant, leaseholder and community profiles and preferences.

3.4 Evaluate and promote the changes and improvements brought about through Resident Involvement and share them with staff, tenants, and leaseholders. Housing is one of the largest services the council provides so it should be promoted accordingly.

3.5 Develop a digital inclusion strategy which recognises that 26% of tenants do not have access to the internet*. Work with stakeholder service to increase the usability of the online housing (Orchard) Portal.

*Sources - 2020 general needs-tenant/leaseholder satisfaction survey

4. Influence & Scrutiny

Ensuring residents and communities can influence services appropriately

As recommended in the Social Housing White Paper (2020), we will always seek to enable tenant and leaseholder scrutiny and influence at both a strategic and operational level. This ensures that residents have real power in holding the council to account for decisions, performance, and conduct. Residents also hold an accountable role in their landlord's decisions, performance, and conduct.

- 4.1 Allow tenants and leaseholders to have direct influence over housing strategy, policy, standards, approaches and performance targets and promote these involvement opportunities.
- 4.2 Give all council tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to stand as and vote for representatives on the Housing Scrutiny Committee, with elections happening every 4 years.
- 4.3 Ensure that tenants and leaseholders are involved in performance monitoring, learning from performance information, and improving performance through effective challenge.
- 4.4 Provide a framework that allows residents to hold the organisation to account through collaborative yet independent resident-led scrutiny.
- 4.5 Have a robust method for allowing residents to play a role in understanding complaints monitoring. Work collaboratively with the Policy and Performance Unit to suggest changes which respond to areas with high levels of complaints.
- 4.6 Ensure clarity about the role of tenant and leaseholder influence and scrutiny within the organisation amongst councillors, staff, and senior management. Increase transparency and provide more accessible information to increase residents' understanding of council's processes.

5. Neighbourhood Improvement

Promote and facilitate avenues for neighbourhood improvements

Our principles for working with communities rely on understanding their priorities and finding solutions within the community itself for long term sustainability. Our goal is to empower and support communities to develop their capacity and address their issues.

- 5.1 Work with local stakeholders to deliver community engagement projects that are designed to meet jointly identified needs.
- 5.2 Increase resident satisfaction with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood by encouraging input and enabling changes through the Estate Improvement Scheme.
- 5.3 Facilitate involvement for residents in monitoring estate services contracts- this will increase accountability, improve the standard of service, and ensure they represent value for money.
- 5.4 Improve the internal culture within the council to focus on the customer journey and joined up working between council departments.
- 5.5 Develop and gather input from communities to initiate changes which improve the health and wellbeing of residents on their estate which was outlined as a resident priority*.
- 5.6 Explore the possibility of co-producing services with the communities they serve, residents have greater responsibility and involvement in developing their estate and environment.

**Sources - 2020 general needs-tenant/leaseholder satisfaction survey*

6. Value for money

Measuring the effects of Resident Involvement to add value for stakeholders, communities, and individuals

We will always seek to demonstrate the value of Resident Involvement so we can arrive at cost-effective solutions and ensure that communities continue to support our future work. The 2022 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey will be key to measuring the success.

- 6.1 Ensure that involvement is planned, monitored, and measured and has clear aims, objectives, and outcomes. Review it regularly to understand the value created
- 6.2 As recommended in the Social Housing White Paper (2020), report the value and successes of Resident Involvement across the organisation and to all key stakeholders.
- 6.3 Maintain effective scrutiny of housing related contracts. Clear communication and resident involvement lead to improvements in service delivery which presents value for money.
- 6.4 Learn from reviews and share results with tenants, leaseholders, and other stakeholders to improve effectiveness of involvement.

Reporting

With involvement from the 6 elected resident representatives, the Resident Involvement team will produce an end of year report which records the progress made against each of the 6 key objectives. The report will be circulated to the Housing Scrutiny Committee, senior officers as well as published on the website and within established publications.

Outcome Table	
Heading	Outcome at annual review
1. Housing service priorities	
Ensure that tenant and leaseholder priorities are recognised when developing involvement projects or improving housing services	
Link involvement directly to the organisation's management structure. Priorities highlighted through involvement are reflected in business plans, strategies and operational plans for customer facing services. Effective resident involvement is recognised and valued by staff, councillors, and other stakeholders.	
Create a service involvement charter which establishes where and when the residents will be involved with key decisions such as staff recruitment.	

APPENDIX 1

<p>Make sure that involvement is planned, monitored, and reviewed quarterly with residents. Approaches should reflect the profile of residents, communities, and housing types.</p>	
<p>2. Resources</p>	
<p>Allocate sufficient resources for Resident Involvement, reviewing annually to ensure it is effective in delivering planned outcomes. Ensure that all activities are targeted to make best use of financial resources</p>	
<p>Introduce new staff to the role of resident involvement in the housing service, training and equipping them with the skills needed to independently administer it within their role. Promote resident involvement as part of housing staff's performance objectives where appropriate.</p>	
<p>Provide a clear remit of voluntary roles and the appropriate levels of support for involved tenants and leaseholders so that they can be effective</p>	
<p>Promote opportunities for involvement, through a variety of media channels, including print, web, social media, online portal, and events.</p>	
<p>Monitor and measure the success of projects and increase the take-up of involvement opportunities.</p>	
<p>3. Communication and Insight</p>	

APPENDIX 1

<p>Understand residents' preferred channels of engagement, use them to increase access to information and to allow feedback and information to be shared.</p>	
<p>Feedback from residents indicates that the housing service need to keep residents better informed*. Information outlined in the tenant satisfaction measures, outlined within the Social Housing White Paper (2020) will be published annually. A new e-newsletter will also be created and published 3 times a year to increase the frequency of communication.</p>	
<p>Information gathered through involvement is used to gain insight, influence services so that they reflect tenant, leaseholder and community profiles and preferences</p>	
<p>Evaluate and promote the changes and improvements brought about through Resident Involvement and share them with staff, tenants, and leaseholders. Housing is one of the largest services the Council provides so it should be promoted accordingly.</p>	
<p>Develop a digital inclusion strategy which recognises that 26% of tenants do not have access to the internet*. Work with stakeholder service to increase the usability of the online housing (Orchard) Portal.</p>	
<p>4. Influence and Scrutiny</p>	
<p>Allow tenants and leaseholders to have direct influence over housing strategy,</p>	

APPENDIX 1

policy, standards, approaches and performance targets and promote these involvement opportunities.	
Give all council tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to stand as and vote for representatives on the Housing Scrutiny Committee, with elections happening every 4 years.	
Ensure that tenants and leaseholders are involved in performance monitoring, learning from performance information, and improving performance through effective challenge.	
Provide a framework that allows residents to hold the organisation to account through collaborative yet independent resident-led scrutiny.	
Have a robust method for allowing residents to play a role in understanding complaints monitoring. Work collaboratively with the Policy and Performance Unit to suggest changes which respond to areas with high levels of complaints.	
Ensure clarity about the role of tenant and leaseholder influence and scrutiny within the organisation amongst councillors, staff, and senior management. Increase transparency and provide more accessible information to increase resident's understanding of Council's processes.	
5. Neighbourhood Improvements	
Work with local stakeholders to deliver community engagement projects that	

APPENDIX 1

are designed to meet jointly identified needs.	
Increase resident satisfaction with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood by encouraging input and enabling changes through the Estate Improvement Scheme.	
Facilitate involvement for residents in monitoring estate services contracts- this will increase accountability, improve the standard of service, and ensure they represent value for money.	
Improve the internal culture within the council to focus on the customer journey and joined up working between council departments.	
Develop and gather input from communities to initiate changes which improve the health and wellbeing of residents on their estate which was outlined as a resident priority*.	
Explore the possibility of co-producing services with the communities they serve, giving residents greater responsibility and involvement in developing their estate and environment.	
6. Value for money	
Ensure that involvement is planned, monitored, and measured and has clear aims, objectives, and outcomes. Review it regularly to understand the value created	

APPENDIX 1

<p>As recommended in the Social Housing White Paper (2020), report the value and successes of Resident Involvement across the organisation and to all key stakeholders</p>	
<p>Maintain effective scrutiny of housing related contracts. Clear communication and resident involvement lead to improvements in service delivery which presents value for money.</p>	
<p>Learn from reviews and share results with tenants, leaseholders, and other stakeholders to improve effectiveness of involvement.</p>	

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APPENDIX 2

This page lists six key results from the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey, which relate specifically to the Resident Involvement service. Actions which respond to the six key findings below are embedded in the Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024:

1. 52% agreed that City Homes gives you the opportunity to make your views known.
2. 50% agree that City Homes publicise improvements made using tenants' feedback.
3. 66% agreed that City Homes is good at keeping you informed. Tenants aged 70 and over were significantly more likely to agree that City Homes is good at keeping them informed compared to younger tenants aged under 60.
4. 72% of residents are satisfied with neighbourhood as a place to live, this is a reduction of 9% since 2014. Only 59% were satisfied with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood. Priorities for improvement are paths 54%, estate lighting 39% and health and wellbeing of tenants 31%. Tenants living in flats and maisonettes were the most dissatisfied with their neighbourhood.
5. Suggested priorities for the future (open ended question):

Priority Level	Tenants- General needs/ Sheltered	Leaseholders
1st	Improvement/ upgrades/ maintenance of property standards (e.g. replacing windows, new bathrooms, sort out damp/mould, guttering) 31%	External areas/ grounds maintenance/ neighbourhood appearance/ littering/ dog fouling/ road sweeping
2nd	Communication/ visits to properties/ views taken into account/ follow-up on complaints 16%	Communal cleaning (e.g. internal areas, window cleaning)
3rd	Build more housing/ new homes 15%	Communication/ views taken into account/ follow-up on complaints

APPENDIX 2

6. Residents referred method of communication, letter 61% and email 23%. Almost three quarters 74% of tenants said they have access to the internet. Tenants were also asked if they were aware of MyCambridge portal, 20% had signed up but half 50% were not aware.

Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool email Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223 457046.

Once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to equalities@cambridge.gov.uk for checking. For advice on consulting on equality impacts, please contact Graham Saint, Strategy Officer, (graham.saint@cambridge.gov.uk or 01223 457044).

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service
Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024
2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)
This is not yet available but once it has committee approval it will be placed here- https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement-strategies-updates-and-reports
3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?
The Strategy will guide the delivery of the resident involvement service for the next 4 years. Using feedback from the 2020 tenant and leaseholder satisfaction survey, it seeks to embed actions which respond to low areas of satisfaction. The information collected reflects local communities, elected Tenant Representatives have also played a central role in developing the Strategy. They are supported to engage from different protected characteristics (e.g. disability, and balance around caring responsibilities). Outcomes of the Strategy aim to lead to improvements to health and wellbeing of communities which are outlined as a resident priority.

The Strategy also incorporates recommendations from The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020). Developed in the wake of the Grenfell disaster, the Paper seeks to realign the tenant and landlord relationship, putting a greater focus on the resident voice.

4. Responsible service

Housing Services

5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

(Please tick all that apply)

- Residents
- Visitors
- Staff

Please state any specific client group or groups (e.g. City Council tenants, tourists, people who work in the city but do not live here):

Cambridge City Council tenants and leaseholders

6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?

- New
- Major change
- Minor change

7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes' please provide details below:

Estates and Facilities, repairs service. They host some of the resident scrutiny meetings.

8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?

It will go to 22nd June 2021 Housing Scrutiny Committee

9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

Findings from the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey were used to inform the Strategy. The survey was sent to all City Council tenants and leaseholders in October 2020, it was a largely quantitative survey which incorporated a few qualitative open questions.

Qualitative interviews were also held with the 6 elected Tenant and Leaseholder representatives. Recommendations from secondary research such as the The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020) also informed the direction of the Strategy.

10. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age

The proposals for new engagement activities outlined within the review aim to increase inclusivity of residents of all ages.

The Council's most recent Tenants and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey found that in 2020 26% of City Council tenants did not have access to the internet. Older people and young people from low-income households are especially likely to experience digital exclusion. Office for National Statistics in 2020, show that in the UK 54% of adults aged 75 years and over were internet users compared to 99% of people aged 16 to 44 years¹. There is a danger for those who cannot access digital facilities or who cannot afford the price of an internet connection to get left behind, so facilitating digital inclusion is a fundamental aspect of resident involvement and aligns with the wider Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and Digital Transformation Strategy. Action 3 of the Strategy aims to target these issues directly by developing a digital inclusion strategy which provides increased digital access, equipment provision, free digital session and supporting older people in sheltered facilities to engage more.

Resident involvement is also a potential way to help combat loneliness, Since the pandemic young people are especially likely to report feeling lonely: people aged 16 to 29 years were more likely than those aged 30 to 59 years or those aged 60 years and over to report being lonely (51%).

Source: [Coronavirus and the social impacts on young people in Great Britain - Office for National](#)

¹ ONS (April 2021), Internet Users UK 2020:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2020>

[Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk). Even though resident involvement work engages adults, it may have potential to combat loneliness for people aged 18 to 29

Loneliness is especially likely to be experienced by older people and has been identified as a public health issue by the Campaign to End Loneliness. They report that the number of over-50s experiencing loneliness is set to reach two million by 2025/6. This compares to around 1.4 million in 2016/7 – a 49% increase in 10 years².

Outcomes of the Strategy can lead to improvements of health and wellbeing of communities as a resident priority – this relates to preventing disability and long-term health conditions.

(b) Disability

Disabled people are especially likely to experience digital and social exclusion because they may find it hard to find technology that has been appropriately adapted to meet their needs. Mobility issues may also impede them from taking part in activities which leads to social exclusion. Reasonable adjustments will be made to allow a person with any disability to take part that applies to digital equipment or covering the cost for transport to travel to meetings. Easy read and British Sign Language services will be required where needed to increase resident involvement of disabled people³.

The garden competition, Phones for Patients scheme and sheltered scheme residents group are examples which highlight how people with disabilities can easily get involved in resident involvement activities. The Tenant and Leaseholder representative position is also fully inclusive allowing people with any disability to take part.

Moreover, outcomes of the Strategy can lead to improvements of health and wellbeing of communities as a resident priority – this relates to preventing disability and long-term health conditions.

(c) Gender reassignment

No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group

² Campaign to End Loneliness: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/>

³ ONS ibid

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

Volunteers able to claim expenses which cover the cost of childcare/dependency costs which are incurred to be able to attend meetings.

(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic ‘race’ refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

To increase involvement, we would employ the use of translation and interpretation services.

(g) Religion or belief

No Impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group

(h) Sex

No Impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group

(i) Sexual orientation

No Impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group

(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on low income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty

The review indirectly targets residents on low incomes because they are more likely to live in social housing provided by the Council. The proposals outlined should help deliver aspects of the council’s Anti-Poverty Strategy by contributing to increased digital and financial inclusion, reduce social isolation and increase employability skills.

An allowance is available for Tenant and Leaseholder Reps to claim which is separate to expense claims, this additional could help toward combatting poverty. Consideration has been given to the impact that allowance claims could have on benefit recipients so a direct link with the benefits time so that a dedicated officer is available to answer questions on an individual basis.

11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqlA accordingly.)

The progress of the review its proposals and equalities monitoring will be reviewed annually, an informal report will be circulated to Members of Housing Scrutiny Committee and officers. As part of the annual review the EqlA will be refreshed with the monitoring information to ensure any negative impacts can be mitigated. If any situations arise within the year which would suggest that some of the proposals are having a negative impact on residents in any way then they will be tackled immediately.

12. Do you have any additional comments?

Having residents sitting on the Council’s main housing committee is a unique approach to scrutiny and facilitates insight allowing the Council to tailor and target services. Their involvement ensures accurate feedback and challenge from service-users’, connecting decision-makers with the grassroots communities they serve. In an environment where policy and legislation are ever-changing, especially during the post-pandemic recovery; this Strategy provides direction whilst remaining flexible. Enabling it to quickly respond to changing demands in a resident-focused way.

13. Sign off

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment: Emily Watts, Resident Engagement and Performance Manager

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted: David Greening, Head of Housing

Date of EqlA sign off: 22.06.2021

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: March 2022

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: 23.06.21

All EqIAs need to be sent to Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer. Ctrl + click on the button below to send this (you will need to attach the form to the email):

[Send form](#)

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Item

Procurement of Planned Maintenance Contractor - 2022-2028

To:

Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 22/6/21

Report by:

Lynn Thomas, Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets
Tel: 01223 - 457831

Email: Lynn.thomas@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council currently has two long-term planned maintenance works contracts in place. One is with Foster Property Services and one is with TSG Building Services. The contract with TSG Building Services is due to expire in November 2022. It is proposed that the Council undertakes a procurement exercise to award a replacement contract so planned maintenance service delivery can continue uninterrupted at the end of the current contract.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

1. Approve the issue of tenders and, following evaluation of tenders, authorise the Strategic Director (following consultation with Executive Councillor, Chair, Tenant Representative Chair, and Spokes of the Committee) to award a contract(s) to a contractor(s) to carry out planned building maintenance / capital works to Council housing and other buildings for a period of five years and four months from November 2022 to March 2028, with an option to extend for one or more periods up to a maximum extension of three years.

3. Background

3.1 In 2014, following an OJEU compliant tendering exercise, TSG Building Services plc were appointed as main contractors to deliver the (mainly) internal elements of the Council's planned building maintenance programme of work.

3.2 The contract delivers planned building maintenance to all types of Council-owned buildings. Most services are delivered to HRA property.

3.3 The five-year contract was extended for three years in 2019 and is now due to expire on November 2022.

3.4 There is still an on-going demand for the services covered by this contract, so it is proposed that a new procurement is carried out to establish a replacement contract, or contracts.

3.5 It is expected that one replacement contract will be awarded, but the procurement will be carried out in a way that will allow flexibility to award two separate contracts, or lots, if this is advantageous to the Council.

3.6 The estimated value of the future contract is around £6m per annum – making a total estimated contract value of £30m between 2022 and 2028, or up to £48m, if the full three-year extension period was used.

3.7 The proposed services / works to be covered by the new contract are as follows:

Kitchen replacements
Bathroom replacements
Internal and external finishes
Central heating / boilers and renewable energy systems to domestic and non-domestic premises
Energy efficiency works including insulation
Electrical works and services including solar photovoltaic panels
Mechanical and electrical installations, inspection, repairs and servicing including; lifts, communal lighting, air conditioning and ventilation systems, emergency call systems, automatic doors, access control systems, MVHR systems and renewable energy installations, fire alarm systems.
Housing Health and Safety Rating System works, including work to address damp in property
Disability adaptations and improvements
Asbestos removal
Fire safety works
Building extensions, refurbishment projects, and structural works
Estate improvements projects (e.g. fencing, cycle stores, bin stores etc)

3.8 It is proposed that the contract is set up so that services will be available for all Council-owned built assets and for services delivered by the Council to privately-owned property. This will allow works to Council office accommodation, community buildings, Council-owned commercial and business premises to be carried out under the contract as well as work to the Council's housing stock. The Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency will be able to access the contract.

3.9 If other services are added in the future then the value of the contract will increase.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

The budgets for most of the work that will be carried out under this contract are included in the HRA business plan and 30-year investment plan. Works to other property types will be covered by existing budgets or will be subject to bids for resources.

It is possible that new tender prices will be different to existing prices. Tender price inflation is currently low but it is forecast to increase over the life of the new contract.

The evaluation of tenders will be based on a combination of quality and price with the emphasis on quality of service and work.

An external cost consultant will be appointed to assist with the financial evaluation of tenders to help ensure value for money for the Council.

b) Staffing Implications

The procurement will be managed by the Estates and Facilities team, working closely with the Strategic Procurement team.

Any project consultants will be managed by the Estates and Facilities Contracts and Procurement Manager.

City Homes staff will be responsible for arranging S20 consultation documentation to leaseholders.

Legal Services will provide legal contract advice.

Human Resources will provide contract advice re TUPE.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required – this project is repair work only.

Project specific EQIA's may be required for future maintenance work delivered under this contract.

d) Environmental Implications

The Council's climate change rating tool has been completed to assess the environmental implications of this proposal.

The assessment is that there is Nil net overall impact. The Council's Climate Change Officer has agreed with this assessment.

There is possibly a small positive impact from the installation of new communal and emergency lighting in some blocks which will be LED lighting with improved controls to minimize energy use.

There is likely to be positive impacts from energy efficiency projects carried out under this contract.

e) Procurement Implications

The work will be procured via the Council's procurement portal as an over-the-threshold tender. Routes to market are being considered and the current recommendation is the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation (CPN) procedure. This offers the widest possible flexibility and allows for engagement with suppliers prior to contract award.

It is currently intended that there will be one replacement contract, however it may be advantageous to the Council to award more than one contract, or lots, and flexibility will be built into the procurement process to allow this option.

The Strategic Procurement team will be involved in the project team and the Council's legal team will provide contract advice.

It is almost certain that there could be TUPE implications for the Council in respect of staff and contractors currently working for TSG.

f) Community Safety Implications

There are no procurement-specific community safety implications. This is a contract to ensure existing buildings and services are maintained in good condition.

There may be specific projects that impact on community safety that are delivered by this contract in future.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

The Council's Finance, Legal, Audit, HR, City Homes and Strategic Procurement teams will be actively engaged in the procurement, scrutiny and selection process.

The Strategic Procurement team have been consulted and their advice incorporated into this report.

Resident representatives will be involved as fully as possible in the selection process.

Residents representatives have been informed about the proposals.

A formal leaseholder consultation process will take place during the procurement exercise to ensure the Council complies with all legal requirements and will be able to recover cost of works from leaseholders.

6. Background papers

None

7. Appendices

None

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Will Barfield, Asset Manager

Tel: 01223 457843

email: will.barfield@cambridge.gov.uk



Item

Procurement of Compliance Contractor 2022-2028

Update

To:

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee

22nd June 2021

Report by:

Lynn Thomas, Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets

Tel: 01223 457831

Email: Lynn.thomas@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All Wards

This report is for decision.

1. Executive Summary

The report seeks a decision to approve the issue of tenders and authorise the Strategic Director (following consultation with Executive Councillor, Chair and Spokes of the Committee and elected tenant spokes) to award a contract(s) to a contractor or multiple contractors to carry out Compliance-based activities. These activities include the re-procurement of the Gas Servicing and Maintenance Contract which is currently being delivered by Mears Group, as well as servicing areas currently incorporated in the TSG contract including (but not limited to) Electrical Testing, Fire Safety Asset Servicing and the Water Hygiene contract currently delivered by Veolia. The contracts are proposed to be for a period of up to 4 years and 4 months, with an option to extend for one or more periods up to a maximum extension of 3 years.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to approve the decision to amalgamate the aforementioned contracts into a single procurement exercise and authorise the Strategic Director (following consultation with Executive Councillor, Chair and Spokes of the Committee and elected tenant spokes) to award either a single contractor, or multiple contracts for Compliance Delivery areas.

3. A New Approach to Compliance

Following the E&F Service Review conducted in 2020 a new Risk Assurance and Compliance Team (RACT) was formed. This team is made up of a Risk Assurance and Compliance Manager (Interim), Asbestos Officer (FTC), M&E Compliance Programme Manager (Vacant), Fire Risk Assessor and Advisor, Assistant Surveyor, Compliance Officer.

The Mears contract was extended in March 2020 until 22nd November 2022 which is also the date that the TSG contract is expected to end, the Veolia contract has ended and the Council are currently operating this contract on a rolling monthly arrangement. The existing contracts were procured before the Service Review and the servicing contracts were previously delivered by the Operations Team (Gas Servicing) and Asset Team (TSG and Veolia); with the formation of the new Compliance and Risk Team the opportunity has arisen to rationalise the contracts and one part of that is amalgamating the compliance servicing and maintenance contracts into a single broad-scope contract which will allow the Compliance and Risk Team to manage the contract easier whilst also removing the burden of Contract Management from other teams within Estates and Facilities.

As part of the new contract it is proposed that “call-off” options will also be procured, these options will include services for future ‘greener’ heating systems such as air-source heat pumps, electric car charging point servicing and maintenance and battery storage technology provisions. Given the Council’s commitment to greener technologies, the ban on new gas boiler installations in new build properties by 2030, the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars also by 2030, and Central Government’s carbon-neutral targets it is foreseen that these technologies will become increasingly prominent within the recommended life of the contract and therefore need to be included to ensure the Council is well placed to manage the transition from fossil fuels to electric and other more environmentally friendly alternatives.

4. Contract Services

The proposed works/services to be included within the new contracts are as follows:

Compliance Activity
Domestic Gas Boiler Servicing & Maintenance
Commercial Gas Boiler Servicing & Maintenance

M&E Servicing & Maintenance (including lifts, lighting, fire alarms, automatic doors and barriers and other compliance-related activities)
Electrical Safety Checks (EICR)
Air-source and Ground-Source Heat Pump Servicing and Maintenance

5. Timetable

The timetable below shows the draft procurement plan for the procurement and award of the proposed contract.

Task	Responsible	Completion Date Target
Specifications for new contract and decision on approach (i.e. division of services into Lots)	RACT	Sep 21
Production of Tender Documents	Procurement Manager	Oct 21
Issue of Tender Documents	Procurement Team	Nov 21
Return of Tender Documents/Clarification	RACM	Jan 22
Tender Marking and Contractor Decision	RACM	Feb 22
Cool-off Period & Section 21	Procurement	Mar 22
Award of Contract	Procurement	Apr 22
TUPE Implications (Contractor Only)	Contractors	Sept 22
Data and Process Development (including integration of ICT systems)	RACT / Contractor	Sept 22
Inform Tenant's and Stakeholders of the changes to service provisions	Comms	Oct 22
Mobilisation and Contract Start	All	Nov 22

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

The award involves approval to tender and award contract with value of up to £10m over a potential period of 7 years and 4 months.

This includes an estimated £225 per property per annum for the provision of Gas Servicing and Maintenance, £500,000 per year for other compliance related activities and up to £100,000 per year contingency costs.

There may also be TUPE and pension cost implications as a result of changing supplier due to a transfer of non-council staff.

It is anticipated throughout the life of the contract the spend on Gas Servicing and Maintenance will start to decrease, and the spend on Electrical and 'Greener' Heating Provisions will start to increase – it is anticipated that the decrease in gas spend and increase in other spend may correlate from a revenue spend perspective.

If other activities are added in future, then this spend will increase – for example as a result of the Building Safety Bill or Fire Safety Bill (and associated guidance) increasing the levels of checks required.

6.2 Staffing Implications

There are no new staffing implications directly relating to this report. The activity will be completed in existing resources across the council services (Procurement, Estates & facilities, Legal and Human Resources)

6.3 Equality & Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required – this project is repair work only.

Project specific EQIA's may be required for future maintenance work delivered under this contract.

6.4 Environmental Implications

The contract will include provisions for servicing non-fossil fuel-based assets in the future.

6.5 Consultation and Communication

Consultation with tenant and leaseholder representatives is an integral part of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

The Council's Finance, Legal, Audit, HR, City Homes and Corporate Procurement teams will be actively engaged in the procurement, scrutiny and selection process.

6.7 Community Safety

There are no new community safety implications directly relating to the content of this report.

7. Background papers

None

8. Appendices

None

9. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Gareth Basterfield – Interim Risk Assurance and Compliance Manager,
Tel: 01223 458685, email: gareth.basterfield@cambridge.gov.uk.

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Item

Housing Services Communal Cleaning

To:

Cllr Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 22nd June 2021

Report by:

David Greening, Head of Housing
Tel: 01223 457997 Email: David.greening@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All wards

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the current and proposed future arrangements for communal cleaning services across the City Council's housing stock and bin cleaning services in sheltered housing and details options for how the service could be delivered once the current contract ends in March 2022.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

2.1 Authorise officers to explore the option of transferring responsibility for the cleaning of the Councils Category 2 Sheltered Housing Schemes back in house to the Council, and to delegate authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing, Chair and Vice Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee (HSC) and the opposition spokesperson, to make a decision on whether or not this should go ahead.

2.2 Following decision 2.1, delegate authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Executive Cllr for Housing, Chair and Vice Chair of HSC and the opposition spokesperson, to tender and award a contract for the communal cleaning of the Councils General Housing, Category 1 sheltered housing and, potentially, category 2 sheltered housing stock.

2.3 Approve delegated authority to the Head of Finance to amend both expenditure and income budgets in relation to the provision of communal cleaning services and bin cleaning in sheltered housing schemes in the HRA in line with prices received as part of the recent procurement exercises.

3. Background

3.1 The Council contracts for the provision of general communal cleaning services for just under 2400 tenants and leaseholders across approximately 450 blocks or communal areas with a number of different specifications outlined for the contractor.

3.2 The Council also contracts for the provision of cleaning in 12 of its 13 sheltered housing schemes. 4 of these are classed as category 1 schemes with individual flats arranged into blocks and front doors leading from external areas. The cleaning in these areas is provided in the same way and to the same specification as the general housing cleaning. There are about 270 residents benefiting from these services across 45 communal areas.

It also has 9 category 2 schemes, in which the individual flats are all under one roof and have front doors leading from internal corridors. These schemes all have communal lounge and kitchen areas and offices for the staff team. One of the 9 schemes is Ditchburn Place, which is also an extra care scheme with its own arrangements for cleaning and is therefore not included in this report. A map of the schemes locations can be found here: [Sheltered housing schemes - Cambridge City Council](#).

3.3 In 2020 the Council undertook a procurement process which sought to award contracts for 5 different areas of its cleaning requirements to new contractors. The procurement was carried out in lots, with the cleaning of the communal areas in the City Council's general and sheltered housing stock being included as lot 3.

3.4 The Council was not able to award a contract to a successful provider for lot 3, and therefore an agreement was reached with the current provider, Churchill, to extend the contract until March 2022. The contract can not be extended past this date, and so a decision is required as to how to move forward with the future of the contract. Advice from colleagues in procurement suggests that the process to re-tender the contract will need to commence by July 2021 in order to have a new provider in place ready for 1st April 2022.

3.5 Failure to appoint a new contractor has presented an opportunity for the Council to consider how it delivers communal cleaning services in the future. Following the transfer of care services at Ditchburn Place to Radis in 2020, the Council has created a small team of staff to continue provide the cleaning services on site. As this scheme has similar facilities to the category 2 schemes, consideration is being given to whether there may be benefits in expanding this small team to deliver cleaning services across all of the category 2 schemes. This would allow the authority to ensure continuity and provide more flexibility in its service provision for the vulnerable residents in these schemes. This option would involve the transfer of staff under the TUPE regulations from the incumbent provider Churchill, and therefore further exploration and a business case will be required.

3.6 At this point, officers do not consider it feasible to transfer the staff in relation to the cleaning for general and category 1 sheltered housing as these services are provided in multiple locations across the city, would require a fleet of vehicles and would require the employment of a management structure as well as the transfer of the staff providing the service currently. For these reasons, this is not considered financially viable.

3.7 A separate procurement exercise has been undertaken in 2021 for the continued cleaning of communal bins across category 1 and 2 sheltered housing following the previous contractor ceasing to trade. Prices received have exceeded previous costs and therefore the budget. In order to be able to award this contract there will need to be an increase in budget and corresponding increase in service charges to residents receiving this service, to the value of £5000 per annum.

3.8 The cost of the bin cleaning service is incorporated into the scheme premises charges, with charges varying between schemes based upon the costs and number of tenants in each scheme, but the average inclusion as part of the premises charge would be an estimated 56p per week under

the new contract. This will be an increase in costs compared to prior years as the bin cleaning service has not been delivered in full for some time. Historically tenants might have paid approximately 27p per week on average for this service.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

The costs of communal cleaning services are passed on in full to tenants and leaseholders in the form of service charges. By tendering this service the Council seeks to ensure best value for those paying for the service. Based upon the previous procurement exercise in 2020 the authority will need to consider an increase in budget for the provision of this service with the cost fully met in the form of service charges.

The decision on whether or not to bring the cleaning of category 2 housing in house will consider if this can be done within the cost envelope from the tenders of 2020 to ensure best value is still delivered.

b) Staffing Implications

If a decision is made to transfer the cleaning of the indoor sheltered housing schemes back to the City Council, this may result in the Council transferring staff currently employed by the contractor, into the organisation under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment). The staff would be managed within the current Supported Housing team structure.

Any staff employed by the current contractor may be eligible to transfer to a new contractor under TUPE.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) will be carried out as part of the work to explore the option to take the cleaning back in-house, and as part of the procurement process.

d) Environmental Implications

The climate change rating tool has been completed and concludes that there is a 'net nil' impact meaning there should be no increase in the environmental impact of delivering the services in the proposed way.

If the Council do take on the delivery of elements of the cleaning services, specialist advice will be taken to ensure environmental impact is minimised.

The procurement evaluation process will include evaluating environmental aspects of the service provision.

e) Procurement Implications

It will be necessary to undertake a procurement process in order to appoint a new contractor, as detailed in part 3 of this report. The Council's procurement team will be involved in the process from start to finish.

f) Community Safety Implications

There are no community safety implications for this report.

Any staff working for the Council or a contractor would receive the necessary training and information to report any community safety concerns they may encounter through the course of their work. Staff would be subject to any relevant employment checks (e.g. DBS checks in sheltered housing schemes).

5. Consultation and communication considerations

As part of the decision in respect of the category 2 sheltered housing, officers propose to consult with affected sheltered residents.

On-going consultation will be required with the leaseholders as part of the statutory process for tendering and awarding the contract to a new supplier.

Consultation with tenant and leaseholder representatives is an integral part of the housing scrutiny committee process.

6. Background papers

No specific background papers used in the preparation of this report.

7. Appendices

None.

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Laura Adcock, Housing Services Manager – Housing Support and Performance, tel: 01223 457649, email: laura.adcock@cambridge.gov.uk.

Item

2020/21 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances – Housing Revenue Account

To:

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing

Report by:

Julia Hovells, Assistant Head of Finance and & Business Manager

Tel: 01223 - 457248

Email: julia.hovells@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents, for the Housing Revenue Account :

- a) A summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the final budget for 2020/21 (outturn position)
- b) Revenue and capital budget variances with explanations
- c) Specific requests to carry forward funding available from both revenue and capital budget underspends into 2021/22.
- d) A summary of housing debt which was written off during 2020/21.

2. Recommendations

Under Part 1 of the Housing Scrutiny Committee Agenda, the Executive Councillor, is recommended, following scrutiny and debate at Housing Scrutiny Committee:

- a) To approve carry forward requests totalling £7,598,300 in revenue funding from 2020/21 into 2021/22, as detailed in **Appendix C**.

Under Part 2 of the Housing Scrutiny Committee Agenda, the Executive Councillor for Housing is asked to recommend to Council (following scrutiny and debate at Housing Scrutiny Committee):

- b) Approval of carry forward requests of £18,610,000 in HRA and General Fund Housing capital budgets and associated resources from 2020/21 into 2021/22 and beyond to fund re-phased net capital spending, as detailed in **Appendix D** and the associated notes to the appendix.

3. Background

Revenue Outturn

- 3.1 The overall revenue budget outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account is given in the table below.

2019/20 £'000	Housing Revenue Account Summary	2020/21 £'000
(1,404)	Original Budget (HRA Use of Reserves)	3,998
773	Adjustment – Prior Year Carry Forwards	1,431
	Adjustment – Inflation Saving	(282)
251	Adjustment – Interest Receipts and Interest Paid	22
(335)	Adjustment – Increased Rent and Charge Income	(10)
8	Adjustment – Increased Bad Debt Provision	1,141
121	Adjustment – Depreciation	(324)
(343)	Adjustment - DRF	0
650	Other Adjustments	8

(279)	Final Budget	5,984
(3,392)	Outturn	(3,354)
(3,113)	(Under) / Overspend for the year	(9,338)
1,431	Carry Forward Requests	7,598
(1,682)	Resulting Variation for the HRA	(1,740)
0	Other variances	0
(1,682)	Variance and (reduced) / increased use of HRA Reserves	(1,740)

- 3.1 **Appendix A** shows original and final budgets for the year (with the movements summarised in the above table) and compares the final budget with the outturn position for the HRA for 2020/21. The original revenue budget for 2020/21 was approved by the Executive Councillor for Housing on 15 January 2020.
- 3.2 **Appendix B** provides explanations of the main variance.
- 3.3 **Appendix C** lists revenue carry forward requests.
- 3.4 The net underspend across the Housing Revenue Account of £9,338,008 incorporates a number of key areas of underspending and overspending.
- 3.5 General HRA Services were £155,403 less than budgeted due in part to deferral of some Housing Transformation activity (£48,051), coupled with underspending in City Homes (£106,321) due to underspending in operational costs as a result of the closure of the area office for 2020/21 and also in the resource identified to support tenants through the transition to Universal Credit. Underspending in HRA Central Provisions (£56,633) is due predominantly to the level allowed for in the HRA in respect of pay inflation, holiday pay due on overtime worked and contributions towards corporate activity.
- 3.6 Special HRA Services were overspent by a net £32,519, which combined underspending at Ditchburn Place (£63,514) and general sheltered schemes (£34,955), where the coronavirus pandemic made re-letting vacant units difficult or impossible for much of 2020/21, underspending in estate management activity (£42,695), with shrub replacement works

deferred until early in 2021/22, with overspending in temporary housing (£44,439), where the costs of council tax and cleaning in voids increased as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic and at Virido, Clay Farm (£60,088) where the authority was required to meet additional service charge costs for prior years and the cost of unmetered water, the latter of which was later recovered from the developer.

- 3.7 Also displaying in general and special expenditure as overspends, is expenditure incurred from Ear-Marked Reserves or Repairs and Renewals (R&R) funds for the Tenants Survey and Office investment (£32,607) and in Temporary Housing, Ditchburn Place and the General Sheltered Schemes (£42,205). These costs are fully funded from ear-marked reserves set aside for these purposes, but budgets are not set for the use of the reserves as the expenditure fluctuates between years. The existence of the reserve ensures that the impact of these costs is spread out across a period of years, as opposed to tenants experiencing huge swings in the level of service charge for their scheme from year to year.
- 3.8 Repairs expenditure reported a significant net underspend of £1,383,542, combining underspending in response repairs (£731,324) where only emergency or urgent work was carried out for a proportion of the year, with underspending in risk and compliance (£249,637), planned repairs (£163,110) and cyclical repairs (£93,958), where access issues and contractor capacity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic impacted delivery programmes. Heat and hot water servicing also underspent (£53,924) with a reduction in the number of repairs being required as part of the servicing and maintenance contract. The Estate Investment revenue funding reported an underspend of £118,104, with projects identified and ordered, but not fully delivered by March 2021. Conversely, void expenditure was greater than budgeted (£64,477) with an increase in activity and also in the level of work required in some voids to bring them up to a lettable standard.
- 3.9 Other HRA expenditure comprises variances in the level of depreciation charged for 2020/21, which was £312,588 more than budgeted based upon the assets held at 1 April and the need to reduce their remaining useful lives by a year pending review in 2021/22, and an underspend in level of contribution to the bad debt provision anticipated for 2020/21 (£1,186,619), where additional sums were incorporated in the summer of 2020 based upon the arrears trends in the early part of the year, but where the trend was not borne out by year end.

- 3.10 Income received in the HRA was marginally greater than anticipated (£30,958), combining a small over-achievement in rent income as a direct result of continued temporary use of units at Campkin Road, an under-achievement in service charge income due to the need to compensate customers for a reduced building cleaning service as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and a greater than anticipated recharge to capital for the costs of administering the right to buy process.
- 3.11 Interest receipts were higher than anticipated (£254,122) due predominantly to a higher level of both revenue and capital balances than expected. Underspending in the capital programme also resulted in a reduced call on revenue funding for capital purposes (£10,284,190) for 2020/21 and negated the need to call on an ear-marked reserve to meet some of this cost in the year.

Capital Outturn

- 3.12 The overall capital budget outturn position for the Housing Capital Investment Plan (HRA and Housing General Fund) is provided in the table below. **Appendix D** shows the outturn position by programme with the associated notes providing explanations of variances.

2019/20	HRA Capital Summary	2020/21 £'000	% Final Budget
£'000	Original Budget	60,995	111%
52,825	Adjustments (Re-phasing -prior year)	6,560	12%
5,256	Other Adjustments	(12,496)	(23%)
(12,310)	Final Budget	55,059	100%
45,774	Outturn	34,451	63%
38,360	(Under)/Overspend for the year	(20,608)	(37%)
(7,414)	Re-phasing Requests	18,610	34%
6,560	(Under) / Overspend	(1,998)	(4%)

- 3.13 Spending in the Housing Capital Investment Plan in 2020/21 was below that originally anticipated, with reduction in the budget, particularly for new build expenditure as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in

September / October 2020 and the Budget Setting Report in January / February 2021.

- 3.14 At outturn, against the latest capital budget approved, underspending of £7,363,000 was evident in new build investment, with slippage of £7,170,000 identified. This relates predominantly to delays in respect of re-development schemes at Colville Road and Campkin Road, both of which are now on site and are moving forward and at Meadows and Buchan Street and Clerk Maxwell, where the planning process took longer than hoped.
- 3.15 Investment in the housing stock, in respect of decent homes and other capital activity was underspent by £9,220,000, with access issues and contractor capacity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic being the key cause, with the need to defer £8,367,000 of investment into future years having been identified.
- 3.16 The capital expenditure relating to the acquisition of land and dwellings for development purposes was less than anticipated in 2020/21 (£648,000), with one land acquisition being deferred until 2021/22. Resource approved to purchase dwellings for use as rough sleeper accommodation (£1,901,000) was not used, and will be carried forward into 2021/22, when a second grant bid will be submitted to compliment the resource.
- 3.17 The project to replace the Housing Management Information System will span multiple years and the balance of funding to deliver this project will require re-phasing into 2021/22, when the project is now expected to conclude.
- 3.18 Permission is sought to re-phase the use of £10,284,000 of DRF (direct revenue financing) and £589,000 of Major Repairs Reserve funding into 2021/22, and £168,000 of Major Repairs Funding into later years, where these will be used to finance re-phased capital expenditure identified.
- 3.19 Recognise the early receipt of £16,597,000 of Devolution Grant, which was received by the authority in 2020/21, but will not be used to fund capital expenditure on new homes until 2021/22 and beyond.

HRA Write Offs

3.20 In line with the revised process for the writing off of HRA debt, considered by Housing Scrutiny Committee in March 2015, this report also provides an appendix detailing write off of HRA debt during the financial year 2020/21. **Appendix E** includes a summary of debt written off by both category of write off and also value banding.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The variance from the final revenue budget (see above), would result in a decreased use of Housing Revenue Account reserves of £9,338,008. After carry forward of revenue resource to fund deferred expenditure, the overall variance and resulting reduction in the use of Housing Revenue Account reserves is £1,739,708.

A decision not to approve a carry forward request may impact on officers' ability to deliver the service or scheme in question and this could have staffing, equality and poverty, environmental, procurement, consultation and communication and/or community safety implications.

(b) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this report.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

There are no new equality or poverty implications associated with this report.

(d) Environmental Implications

There are no new environmental implications arising from this report.

(e) Procurement Implications

There are no new procurement implications arising from this report.

(f) Consultation and Communication

Consultation with tenant and leaseholder representatives is an integral part of the Housing Scrutiny Committee process.

(g) Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

6. Background Papers

There were no specific background papers used in the preparation of this report. Data directly from the Council's financial management system was used in the report's preparation.

7. Appendices

- Appendix A – HRA Revenue Outturn 2020/21
- Appendix B – HRA Major Revenue Variance Explanations
- Appendix C – HRA Revenue Carry Forward Requests
- Appendix D – Housing Capital Investment Plan Outturn 2020/21
- Appendix D Notes – Notes to the Housing Capital Investment Plan
- Appendix D Notes (2) – Decent Homes and Other Investment in the Housing Stock Variance Explanations
- Appendix E – HRA Write Offs 2020/21

8. Inspection of Papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

Julia Hovells, Assistant Head of Finance & Business Manager

Telephone: 01223 - 457248 or email: julia.hovells@cambridge.gov.uk.

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Final Outturn

Service Grouping	Original Budget £'s	Final Budget £'s	Outturn £'s	Variation Increase/ (Decrease) £'s	Carry Forward Requests - see Appendix C £'s	Net Variance £'s
INCOME						
Dwelling Rents	(37,942,600)	(38,006,650)	(38,029,945)	(23,295)	0	(23,295)
Rental Income (Other)	(1,292,350)	(1,272,130)	(1,276,789)	(4,659)	0	(4,659)
Service Charges	(3,055,160)	(3,482,850)	(3,453,932)	28,918	0	28,918
Contributions towards Expenditure	(654,850)	(485,300)	(485,078)	222	0	222
Other Income (Incl. RTB Capitalisation)	(460,530)	(86,960)	(119,104)	(32,144)	0	(32,144)
Total Income	(43,405,490)	(43,333,890)	(43,364,848)	(30,958)	0	(30,958)
EXPENDITURE						
Supervision & Management (General)	3,721,290	3,842,560	3,687,157	(155,403)	109,300	(46,103)
Supervision & Management (Special)	3,146,150	3,009,570	2,977,051	(32,519)	21,300	(11,219)
Repairs & Maintenance	7,633,840	8,107,950	6,724,408	(1,383,542)	1,088,500	(295,042)
Depreciation	11,154,140	10,636,970	10,949,528	312,558	0	312,558
Other Expenditure	4,146,510	5,200,810	4,003,066	(1,197,744)	0	(1,197,744)
Total Expenditure	29,801,930	30,797,860	28,341,210	(2,456,650)	1,219,100	(1,237,550)
Net Cost of HRA Services	(13,603,560)	(12,536,030)	(15,023,638)	(2,487,608)	1,219,100	(1,268,508)
Interest Receivable (Interest on Balances & Item 8)	(451,910)	(375,370)	(629,492)	(254,122)	0	(254,122)
(Surplus) / Deficit on the HRA for the Year	(14,055,470)	(12,911,400)	(15,653,130)	(2,741,730)	1,219,100	(1,522,630)
Appropriations / Other Movement in the HRA Balance						
Loan Interest	7,506,750	7,452,250	7,494,242	41,992	0	41,992
Housing Set-Aside	(3,905,000)	(3,905,000)	0	3,905,000	(3,905,000)	0
Impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct Revenue Financing of Capital	14,182,120	15,078,520	4,794,330	(10,284,190)	10,284,200	10
Transfer to / from Ear-Marked Reserves	269,380	269,380	10,300	(259,080)	0	(259,080)
(Surplus) / Deficit for year	3,997,780	5,983,750	(3,354,258)	(9,338,008)	7,598,300	(1,739,708)
(Surplus) / Deficit b/f	(15,065,466)	(15,065,466)	(15,065,466)			
Balance Carried Forward	(11,067,686)	(9,081,716)	(18,419,724)	0	0	0

Changes between original and final budgets may be made to reflect:

- portfolio and departmental restructuring
- approved budget carry forwards from the previous financial year
- technical adjustments, including changes to the capital accounting regime
- virements approved under the Council's constitution
- additional external revenue funding not originally budgeted

and are detailed and approved:

- in the January committee cycle (as part of the Budget-Setting Report)
- in the June/July committee cycle (outturn reporting and carry forward requests)
- in September (as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy - MTFS)
- via technical adjustments/virements throughout the year

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Major Variances from Final Revenue Budgets

Service Grouping	Reason for Variance	Amount £
Supervision and Management (General)		
City Homes	City Homes underspent due to reductions in operational costs as a result of the offices at 171 Arbury Road being closed during 2020/21 and funding to introduce safety measures into the homes of those at risk from domestic violence not being fully spent as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, combined with underspending in the funds ear-marked to support tenants through the transition to Universal Credit as a result of delays in recruiting to an additional post within the team. The postholder is now employed on a fixed term contract which will necessitate carry forward of the balance of funding into 2021/22 to be able to both fulfil their contract and to meet other costs associated with tackling the impact of welfare reforms. A carry forward of £61,300 has been identified.	(106,321)
HRA Central Provisions	Budgets set aside at strategic level for the HRA when budgets were set before the start of 2020/21 were not required in full. Allowances made for pay inflation were marginally greater than required, as were provisions for paying holiday pay on overtime worked. Contributions towards corporate activity were also lower than anticipated.	(56,633)
Housing Transformation	Housing Transformation underspent, by £48,051, with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic resulting in holding off on some of the planned transformation activity in 2020/21, instead focussing on the delivery of existing key services. Carry forward of the balance of the funding has been requested to allow continued funding of the Asbestos Surveyor who was only recruited in the latter part of 2020/21 on a 12 month contract.	(48,051)
R&R Fund and Tenants Survey Expenditure	Expenditure on items for communal areas of sheltered schemes, replacement of emergency alarms and furniture, fixtures and fittings in temporary housing units. This expenditure is not budgeted for in year, but is fully funded from an ear-marked reserve set-aside specifically for this purpose.	32,607
Pension Deficit Contributions	The recharge to the HRA for it's share of the pension deficit contribution for 2020/21 was marginally higher than budgeted.	15,512
Other		7,483
Total		(155,403)
Supervision and Management (Special)		
Ditchburn Place	Underspending is evident at Ditchburn Place due to the authority still carrying vacant extra care flats in the scheme. Letting has been taking place again for some time following initial inactivity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, with risk assessments being carried out before any new resident is moved into the accommodation which has shared communal areas and is designated for older, vulnerable residents. Achieving and retaining full occupancy is sadly proving difficult.	(63,514)
Virido, Clay Farm	Overspending is evident in third party management costs for the affordable housing scheme at Virido, Clay Farm due predominantly to delayed invoicing by the management company in respect of the shared ownership units that proved impossible to sell and were converted to affordable rent and the actuals exercise for the previous financial year which resulted in additional recharges to the Council. Expenditure was also incurred in respect of unmetered water usage at the site (£28,032), but this was fully recovered from the developer, with the income to offset the expenditure shown elsewhere.	60,088

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Major Variances from Final Revenue Budgets

Service Grouping	Reason for Variance	Amount £
Estate Management	City Homes Estate Management costs were lower than anticipated, with less general estate based activity undertaken in 2020/21 during periods of lockdown and the shrub replacement programme being delayed from early spring until after 1st April, with the latter necessitating a carry forward of £21,300.	(42,695)
R&R Fund Expenditure	Expenditure on IT and office equipment replacements coupled with the costs of the tenant survey conducted during 2020/21. This expenditure is not budgeted for in year, but is fully funded from ear-marked reserves set-aside specifically for these purposes.	42,205
Independent Living Service	The Independent Living Service underspent, with staff vacancies coupled with reductions in alarm expenditure as fewer new installations took place during 2020/21 and therefore customer numbers and contract monitoring costs were reduced. This was partially offset by a loss of income as a result of the reduction in customer numbers caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which is shown elsewhere.	(44,938)
Temporary Accommodation	Temporary Housing overspent, with increased cleaning and council tax costs, both as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic, with shared units only being able to be occupied by one individual or household and enhanced cleaning required at resident change over.	44,439
General Sheltered Schemes	Sheltered housing schemes were also underspent in total, with a reduced level of general occupancy and associated spending during 2020/21 due to the vulnerable nature of the residents.	(34,955)
Other		6,851
Total		(32,519)
Repairs and Maintenance		
Response Repairs	Day to day repairs underspent significantly in 2020/21, with less reliance on external sub-contractors, coupled with significantly reduced repair activity and some furloughed staff during 2020/21 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic with only essential repairs being delivered at many stages. Carry forward of £375,000 is requested to allow the anticipated backlog to be tackled in 2021/22.	(731,324)
Risk and Compliance	Risk and Compliance underspent, with the full programmes of fire door and electrical inspections and asbestos surveys not completed by March 2021, due to contractor capacity and access issues. There is a need to carry forward resource to complete these programmes.	(249,637)
Planned Repairs	Planned repairs underspent as a result of reduced expenditure in respect of the PTR programme across the city, with delays due to the need to undertake remedial structural works in some areas, coupled with limited contractor capacity in others.	(163,110)
Estate Investment	The revenue aspects of the Estate Investment Scheme were underspent at 31 March 2021, where works had been ordered but not all were completed by year end. The underspend is requested as a carry forward to allow the works to be completed in 2021/22.	(118,104)

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Major Variances from Final Revenue Budgets

Service Grouping	Reason for Variance	Amount £
Voids	Void repairs overspent, with resource that would usually be deployed delivering response repairs having been redirected into this area whilst response repair activity was limited as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Increased activity was experienced later in the year, with a number of voids requiring significant works amongst these. Officers are exploring trends and the work of the new Tenancy Auditor should help to mitigate such costs going forward.	64,477
Citywide Schemes	Cyclical repairs reported an underspend, with the programme of heat detector installations having suffered some delays, in part due to the coronavirus pandemic, which affected contractor capacity and caused access issues. The underspend in heat detectors, is partially offset by overspending in respect of sheltered scheme boiler servicing, where more failures were experienced.	(93,958)
Asset Management and Compliance	Asset Management and Compliance reports an underspend for the year, predominantly due to vacancies within the team, with new posts created as part of the Estates and Facilities Service Review and restructure taking some time to fill and consultancy budgets not utilised in full.	(53,924)
Heat and Hot Water Servicing	Heat Servicing underspent, due in part to reduced levels of breakdown and failure. The authority continues to be compliant from a gas servicing perspective.	(53,646)
Client Repairs	Overspending was predominantly due to the cost of works that would otherwise have been met through an insurance claim if the authority didn't carry a 'stop loss' in their policy, with the first £250,000 each year being met in-house.	22,249
Other		(6,565)
Total		(1,383,542)

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Major Variances from Final Revenue Budgets

Service Grouping	Reason for Variance	Amount £
Other HRA Expenditure		
Depreciation	The level of depreciation charged to the HRA for 2020/21 was higher than anticipated based upon the opening value of the HRA asset base, coupled with a reduction of one year in the remaining useful life of the assets pending review of the remaining useful lives as part of the valuations to be undertaken in 2021/22.	312,558
Contribution to the Bad Debt Provision	A significant additional sum (£1,140,930) was added to the contribution to the bad debt provision budget as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy in response to the steep increase in rent arrears experienced between April and June 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The adjustment was made assuming the trend would continue in some way for the remainder of the year, but proactive arrears management avoided any further increase in arrears by March 2021.	(1,186,619)
Other		(11,125)
Total		(885,186)
HRA Income and Other		
Rental Income (Dwellings)	Dwelling rent income was very marginally higher than budgeted due to a combination of fewer right to buy sales in 2020/21 than anticipated, coupled with delays in vacating homes identified for demolition and re-development in Colville Road and Campkin Road, with those homes vacated in the earlier stages still being utilised for rough sleeper housing purposes, thus extending the income received for these properties.	(23,295)
Service Charges	Service charge income was under-achieved due in part to the 50% reduction made in building cleaning charges as a result of reduced service delivery by the contractor because of restrictions associated with the coronavirus pandemic.	28,918
Other Income	Other income is over-achieved due to the recharge to capital for the administrative costs of the right to buy process being greater than budgeted.	(32,144)
Other		(4,437)
Total		(30,958)

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Major Variances from Final Revenue Budgets

Service Grouping	Reason for Variance	Amount £
HRA Interest, Premiums and Appropriations		
Direct Revenue Funding of Capital Expenditure (DRF)	Revenue financing of capital was considerably lower than anticipated due to overall underspending in the Housing Capital Programme. The underspending in the capital programme was due in part to the inability to deliver work that was brought about by the coronavirus pandemic and the associated restrictions. This funding will now be needed in future years.	(10,284,190)
Housing Set-Aside	When budgets were approved, the assumption was included that the HRA would draw down funds from the ear-marked reserve for debt repayment or future reinvestment in anew homes, to help fund new build schemes in 2020/21. Delays in the capital investment in respect of new build homes during 2020/21 mean that this resource will not now be drawn down until 2021/22.	3,905,000
Transfer to or from Ear-Marked Reserves	A transfer from R&R fund reserves to finance the next phase of costs of the replacement Housing Management Information System (£184,268) was combined with also drawing from the reserve to fund expenditure at 171 Arbury Road and in communal areas of sheltered schemes, emergency alarms and temporary housing. Funding was also drawn down form an ear-marked reserve to meet the costs of the tenants survey.	(259,080)
Interest Received	The interest due to the HRA for 2020/21 was greater than anticipated due to the level of average revenue and capital balances which were held in the HRA during the year. Underspending in both revenue and capital budgets results in a greater level of reserves at year end than anticipated, and balances also included the remainder of the Devolution funding which was paid directly to the Council by MHCLG.	(254,122)
Interest Paid	The budget for interest paid included the Item 8 interest adjustment for interest on notional internal borrowing or lending. For 2020/21 it was assumed to be internal lending to the General Fund, with the net budget reflecting this. In the accounts, the interest due in respect of this ahs been credited to interest received, and the £39,863 is therefore included in the figure above.	41,992
Other		0
Total		(6,850,400)
Total for Housing Revenue Account		(9,338,008)

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Carry Forward Requests

Request to Carry Forward Housing Revenue Account Budgets from 2020/21 into 2021/22 and future years

Item		Request £
	Director - S Hemingway	
	Supervision and Management General	
1	Housing Transformation - Housing Transformation activity has slowed or been delayed during 2020/21 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and the need to focus on the delivery of key services. Resource carried forward will allow officers to fulfil a commitment to funding an Asbestos Surveyor for 12 months, recognising that the appointment was delayed in 2020. The carry forward value will also allow for completion of the sustainability consultancy work, which was also being delivered from the 2020/21 transformation allocation.	48,000
2	City Homes - Project resource to support tenants through the transition from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit, with pressure on this resource anticipated as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and as more claimants need to report a change in circumstances.	60,100
3	City Homes - Due to the pandemic Government restrictions on works required to tenants' homes which result in them having to be decanted to another property on a temporary basis have been delayed. When restrictions are lifted there will be backlog of these works which will result in the need to carry this budget forward to meet historic demand alongside arising need.	1,200
	Supervision and Management Special	
4	Estate Management - Due to Covid restrictions planting / shrub replacement has not been able to take place as scheduled. Once restrictions are lifted planting/shrub replacement will take place as planned.	21,300
	Repairs and Maintenance	
5	Cyclical Maintenance – Heat Detectors - Due to the coronavirus pandemic the start of these heat detector works was postponed until 1/8/20 and the contractor has experienced significant difficulties in gaining access to properties. The carry forward will allow continued heat detectors to be installed to meet the agreed programme.	122,500
6	Cyclical Maintenance – Smoke Detectors - Due to the coronavirus pandemic the start of these smoke detector works was postponed until 1/8/20 and the contractor has experienced significant difficulties in gaining access to properties. The carry forward will allow continued smoke detectors to be installed to meet the agreed programme.	16,600
7	Planned Repairs - PTR Programme - PTR works for Molewood / Hazelwood were not ordered as hoped in 2020/21 and will slip into 2021/22 due to delays with the structural works required on site. Ditton Court was also placed on hold due to coronavirus restrictions, and other works were delayed due to contractor capacity. A carry forward is requested to meet these commitments in early 2021/22.	197,400
8	Day to Day Repairs - Day to day repairs significantly underspent in 2020/21 as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic, with multiple periods throughout the year where only emergency or urgent jobs were being carried out. Also many tenants refused access at other points in the year when work could have been carried out. A backlog of response repair work is now being addressed in 2021/22 as restrictions allow. A carry forward request of £375,000 will be made to allow the use of sub-contractors or overtime to deliver the estimated backlog. It should be noted that the full extent of the pent up demand is not yet fully quantified.	375,000
9	Estate Investment Scheme - For a number of reasons, including the coronavirus pandemic, estate works anticipated to take place in 2020/21 will not be delivered in full until 2021/22. A carry forward of the remaining budget will allow the committed expenditure to be delivered across the 5-year programme.	118,100
10	Risk and Compliance - Hardwire Testing - Due to Coronavirus the start of these works was postponed until 1/8/20 and the contractor has experienced significant difficulties in gaining access to properties. Carry forward of resource will allow the contractor to continue undertaking electrical hard wire tests, and to ensure that the backlog is addressed and the authority is compliant with legislation.	62,600

Housing Committee - Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget 2020/21 - Carry Forward Requests

Request to Carry Forward Housing Revenue Account Budgets from 2020/21 into 2021/22 and future years

Item		Request £
11	Risk and Compliance – Asbestos and Fire Door Inspections - The budgets for Asbestos and Fire Door Inspections have not been spent as intended due to access issues as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. These statutory programmes are intended to continue and instead be delivered / completed in 2021/22.	196,300
	Appropriations	
12	Underspending in the Housing Capital Programme in 2020/21 resulted in a reduced call upon revenue resources to fund capital expenditure. To ensure that any re-phased capital expenditure can be financed in 2021/22, it is requested to carry forward the approval to use the balance of revenue funding approved for 2020/21 into the following year.	10,284,200
13	Underspending in the Housing Capital Programme in 2020/21 resulted in a reduced call upon revenue resources to fund capital expenditure as identified above. This in turn meant that the authority did not need to draw some of these resources from ear-marked reserves, but will instead need to do this in 2021/22.	(3,905,000)
	Total Carry Forward Requests for Housing Revenue Account / Housing Scrutiny Committee	7,598,300

2020/21 Housing Capital Investment Plan - HRA & General Fund Housing

	Original Budget £000's	Current Budget £000's	Outturn £000's	Variance £000's	Re-phase Spend £000's	Notes	Re-Phasing Year				Budget	
							2021/22 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's	Post 2023/24 £000's	2021/22 £000's	
General Fund Housing Capital Spend												
Investment in Non-HRA Affordable Housing	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0		0
Other General Fund Housing	877	1,130	281	(849)	0	1	0	0	0	0		902
Total General Fund Housing Capital Spend	877	1,130	281	(849)	0		0	0	0	0		902
HRA Capital Spend												
Decent Homes Programme	14,138	13,140	6,660	(6,480)	5,864	2	4,386	1,310	0	168		22,217
Other Spend on HRA Stock	3,762	4,743	2,003	(2,740)	2,503	3	2,503	0	0	0		5,683
HRA New Build	40,122	30,630	23,267	(7,363)	7,170	4	7,170	0	0	0		52,935
HRA Acquisition	1,500	4,383	1,834	(2,549)	2,549	5	2,549	0	0	0		2,549
Sheltered Housing Capital Investment	0	15	15	0	0		0	0	0	0		0
Other HRA Capital Spend	330	752	391	(361)	258	6	238	20	0	0		568
Inflation Allowance	266	266	0	(266)	266	7	266	0	0	0		1,005
Total HRA Capital Spend	60,118	53,929	34,170	(19,759)	18,610		17,112	1,330	0	168		84,957
Total Housing Capital Spend	60,995	55,059	34,451	(20,608)	18,610		17,112	1,330	0	168		85,859
Housing Capital Resources												
Right to Buy Receipts (General Use)	(478)	(405)	(468)	(63)	0	8	0	0	0	0		(478)
Right to Buy Receipts (Retained for New Build / Acquisition)	(10,217)	(6,702)	(2,446)	4,256	0	8	0	0	0	0		(6,131)
Right to Buy Receipts (Debt Set-Aside)	0	0	(266)	(266)	0	8	0	0	0	0		0
Other Capital Receipts (Shared Ownership)	(300)	(300)	(68)	232	0	9	0	0	0	0		(300)
Other Capital Receipts (Land and Dwellings)	0	0	(301)	(301)	0	9	0	0	0	0		0
MRA / MRR	(5,878)	(7,860)	(7,103)	757	(757)	10	(589)	0	0	(168)		(23,220)
Client Contributions	0	0	(271)	(271)	0	11	0	0	0	0		0
Direct Revenue Financing of Capital (Including R&R)	(14,182)	(15,079)	(4,794)	10,285	(10,284)	12	(10,284)	0	0	0		(29,417)
Other Capital Resources (Grants / Loan Repayments)	(23,468)	(17,288)	(31,520)	(14,232)	16,597	13	16,378	219	0	0		(1,932)
Prudential Borrowing	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0		0
Total Housing Capital Resources	(54,523)	(47,634)	(47,237)	397	5,556		5,505	219	0	(168)		(61,478)
Net (Surplus) / Deficit of Resources	6,472	7,425	(12,786)	(20,211)			22,617	1,549	0	0		24,381
Capital Balances b/f	(42,323)	(42,323)	(42,323)									(38,080)
Use of / (Contribution to) Balances in Year	6,472	7,425	(12,786)				22,617	1,549	0	0		24,381
Set-aside for future Debt Redemption	9,856	9,856	10,121									
Ear-marked for specific Retained Right to Buy Receipts 1-4-1 Investment	10,635	10,635	6,908									
Residual capital resources remaining to fund future Housing Investment Programme	(15,360)	(14,407)	(38,080)									(13,699)

Notes to the Housing Capital Investment Plan

Note	Reason for Variance
1	<p>Disabled Facilities Grants were underspent by £747,000 predominantly due to reduced demand and limited access to the homes of potentially vulnerable clients in 2020/21 as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic. No re-phasing has been requested as the funding through the Better Care Fund in 2021/22 is anticipated to be sufficient to meet demand. The authority will explore potential uses for the balance of funds held, but must ensure these comply with the grant conditions under which the funding was received. Private Sector Grants and Loans also reported an underspent (£102,000), where demand has reduced in recent years.</p>
2	<p>A net underspend of £6,480,000 in decent homes expenditure during 2020/21 is a combination of under and overspending against the specific decent homes elements. Overspending in roof structure (£144,000) and external doors (£86,000) is more than offset by underspending in bathrooms (£722,000), kitchens (£392,000), re-wiring (£147,000), energy and insulation works (£1,542,000), central heating (£506,000), sulphate (£102,000), other health and safety (£53,000), roof coverings (£199,000), HHSRS (£196,000), capitalised officer fees (£26,000), contractor overheads (£711,000), wall structure (£1,857,000), windows (£182,000), other external works (£73,000) and chimneys (£2,000). These variances are before accounting for leaseholder income, which is reported separately. Re-phasing of underspending in 2020/21 into 2021/22 is requested in respect of energy improvements (£1,542,000), roof covering (£54,000), re-wiring (£81,000), kitchens (£392,000), bathrooms (£279,000), wall structure (£1,050,000), windows (£182,000), HHSRS (£196,000), other health and safety works (£53,000), other external works (£73,000) and contractor overheads (£484,000). Some re-phasing of budgets is requested into later years in the programme, including central heating and boilers (£506,000), re-wiring (£66,000), bathrooms (£443,000), wall structure (£200,000), sulphate works (£102,000) and contractor overheads (£161,000) when the budget is now expected to be required.</p>
3	<p>A net underspend of £2,740,000 was evident in 2020/21. Fire prevention works were underspent (£629,000), with the need to carry this forward into 2021/22, electrical works to communal areas was underspent by £146,000, with the need to carry this resource forward. Underspending in Disabled Adaptations (£420,000) with £200,000 re-phased, lifts (£115,000) all re-phased, communal areas uplift (£82,000), all re-phased, asbestos removal (£31,000) all re-phased, hard-surfacing works (£57,000) all re-phased, fire works (£629,000), all re-phased, communal electrical works (£146,000), all re-phased and communal doors (£329,000), all re-phased into 2021/22. Underspending in capitalised officers fees (£17,000) does not require re-phasing. Overspending in garage improvements (£14,000) and communal area floor coverings (£11,000) are also reported at year end. The capital funding for Estate Investment works, was underspent by £783,000 with all of the resource requested as a carry forward to complete the 5 year programme. Underspending of £156,000 in respect of contractor overheads combines some slippage with the impact of underspending in other areas and £131,000 is requested to be re-phased.</p>
4	<p>The net underspend of £7,363,000 in the new build programme in 2020/21 relates predominantly to delays in 4 schemes. Securing vacant possession of the sites at both Colville Road and Campkin Road took longer than anticipated, with the coronavirus pandemic making this more complex in 2020/21, causing underspending of £1,692,000 and £1,682,000 respectively. Delays have also been experienced in the projects at the Meadows and Buchan Street and Clerk Maxwell, where delays in the planning process resulted in underspending of £1,072,000 and £586,000 respectively. Net re-phasing of £7,170,000 is required. Re-phasing of budget for Colville Road II (£1,692,000), Campkin Road (£1,682,000), Meadows and Buchan (£1,072,000), Clerk Maxwell (£586,000), Colville Road III (£539,000), L2 (£398,000), Anstey Way (£93,000), Akeman Street (£27,000), Ventress Close (£50,000), Kingsway (£58,000), Mill Road (£36,000), Cromwell Road (£57,000), Histon Road (£17,000), Ditton Walk (£60,000), Aragon Close (£98,000), Sackville Close (£99,000), Borrowdale (£98,000), POD Homes (£10,000), Queensmeadow (£1,000), Colville Road Garages (£1,000), Wulfstan Way (£1,000), Kendal Way (£1,000), Gunhild Way (£1,000) and Teddar Way (£1,000), is partially offset by negative re-phasing where spend is ahead of profile for Fen Road (£8,000). £500,000 of funding for early costs associated with the new 1,000 home programme is also requested as a carry forward into 2021/22 to supplement any land acquisitions. The profile of spending on all of these schemes will be reviewed again as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>

5	Budget of £2,482,000 was incorporated into the programme for land or property acquisitions to facilitate development. Of this £1,834,000 was spent and £648,000 is requested to be re-phased to allow one acquisition to complete when combined with the new homes programme funding of £500,000 above. £1,901,000 of resource was included to allow the authority to acquire homes for rough sleeper accommodation, but this was not utilised at 31 March 2021. A number of purchases are now progressing, with a request to carry forward the funds into 2021/22, when a new grant bid has been made to MHCLG for supplementary funding.
6	A net underspend of £361,000 in this area of the programme comprises reduced activity in respect of shared ownership re-purchase in 2020/21, giving rise to a £103,000 underspend, and underspending due to the need to recognise the revised timeframe required to implement the new Housing Management Information System (£238,000), with the latter requiring re-phasing into 2021/22. The underspend against funding for works to HRA commercial premises (£21,000) results in a request to re-phase £20,000 of resource into future years.
7	The inflation allowance of £266,000 was not allocated to schemes in 2020/21 due to the level of underspending. By re-phasing this into 2021/22 the allowance can be allocated where required once final scheme / contract values are known.
8	16 properties were sold in total during 2020/21. £468,000 of the capital receipt is available for general use (after all costs have been deducted from each receipt), while £266,000 of the overall capital receipt is identified as set-aside to be offset against the debt associated with the unit no longer owned. A further £2,446,000 of right to buy receipts have been retained by the local authority in 2020/21, but must be re-invested now in financing up to 40% of additional social housing units, provided this is done within a 5 year time frame.
9	With little activity in respect of shared ownership housing in 2020/21, a net sum of £68,000 was retained once any sums due to MHCLG had been paid. A net capital receipt was recognised in 2020/21 in relation to the sale of an HRA dwelling as part of an agreement to secure vacant possession of a development site.
10	The major repairs reserve was used to finance capital expenditure in the housing stock in 2020/21, including investment in decent homes work and other investment in the housing stock. Where less of this funding was utilised in 2020/21 than anticipated, it will instead be utilised in 2021/22 and beyond.
11	Income was recovered from leaseholders in 2020/21 in relation to their share of the cost of major improvements undertaken as part of the decent homes programme (£230,000) and was also received from private residents in relation to contributions towards DFG's or private sector housing repair grants (£41,000).
12	The use of revenue funding for capital purposes was less than anticipated, due to underspending across the capital programme. This resource will instead be required in 2021/22 to meet the cost of the re-phased capital expenditure.
13	Devolution Grant received in 2020/21 was significantly greater than anticipated as a direct result of MHCLG making the final payment of £15,000,000 to the Council directly, as opposed to paying via the Combined Authority and the Combined Authority paying across all unclaimed sums at 31 March 2021 (£7,785,000). The grant received in advance of incurring expenditure in 2020/21 (£16,597,000) will be used in 2021/22.

The capital underspend in respect of decent homes and other investment in the housing stock for 2020/21 can be summarised as follows, with more in depth explanations provided in the tables below:

Slippage – works ordered to be delivered in 2021/22	(£6,889,000)
Slippage – works ordered to be delivered in future years	(£1,478,000)
Savings (from disability adaptations, structural works, contractor overheads, officer fees, roof covering,	(£1,108,000)
Overspending in doors, roof structure, garages and floor coverings	£255,000
	(£9,220,000)

Decent Homes expenditure

A net underspend of £6,480,000 in decent homes expenditure during 20/21 is a combination of under and overspending against the specific decent homes elements.

	Value	Rephasing to 20/21	Rephasing to future years	Explanation
Overspending				
External doors	£86,000			Additional doors were ordered to partially offset forecast underspends in other parts of the programme
Roof structure	£144,000			The extent of structural roofing repair work at Books Road cost more than the allocated budget. This was offset by the underspend on roof coverings
Underspending				
Bathrooms	(£722,000)	£279,000	£443,000	Delivery of internal Decent Homes work was severely affected by national lockdowns and work did not start until September 2020. In addition there was a large amount of "no access" (119 properties) partly due to Covid 19. There-phasing is split over this year and future years as we do not expect to gain access to all these properties this year.
Kitchens	(£392,000)	£392,000		Delivery of internal Decent Homes work was severely affected by national lockdowns and work did not start until September 2020. In addition there was a large amount of "no access" (61 properties) partly due to Covid 19.
Re-wiring	(£147,000)	£81,000	£66,000	Delivery of internal Decent Homes work was severely affected by national lockdowns and work did not start until September 2020. In addition there was a large amount of "no access" (89 properties) partly due to Covid 19. The slippage is split over this year and future years as we do not expect to gain access to all these properties this year.
Energy and insulation works	(£1,542,000)	£1,542,000		The contract for external wall insulation and PV panels to 80 properties was approved by Committee in September 2020 and started on site in February 2021. Work is due to be completed in July 2021. In addition, of 600 loft insulation jobs issued only 150 were completed due to surveying delays and access issues as a result of Covid 19.
Central heating	(£506,000)		£506,000	The underspend is a result of access issues to 237 properties. This partly a result of Covid 19
Sulphate attack	(£102,000)		£102,000	This work is undertaken when a property becomes void - no affected property became void in 2020/21 so the budget is requested to be moved to later in the capital programme.
Balconies (Other health and safety)	(£53,000)	£53,000		This underspend relates to unfinished structural work and associated repairs at Sackville Close flats. This work is on site but was delayed starting due to Covid 19
Roof coverings	(£199,000)	£54,000		The underspend is off set by the overspend on roof structure works.
HHSRS	(£196,000)	£196,000		A large part of the HHSRS programme was completed. External staircase works at Shelly Row had to be postponed for access reasons due to Covid 19. Internal works were not programmed to start until September 2020 due to national lockdowns. There was also large amount of "no access" for internal works - this work is carried forward to 20/21.
Capitalised officer fees	(£26,000)			The value of officer time that can be capitalised each year depends upon the nature of work that is carried out by each member of the team. Underspends in a range of budgets account for this underspend in fees.
Contractor overheads	(£711,000)	£484,000	£161,000	Underspending in specific decent homes elements results in a corresponding underspend in contractor overheads.
Wall Structure	(£1,857,000)	£1,050,000	£200,000	There was a large underspend on this programme of work. Around £600,000 of this is savings as a result of competitive tenders for work being less than the estimate cost. In addition some properties were omitted from works programmes as a result of them being added to the Council's redevelopment programme. Works at Hawkins Road and Ekin Road had delayed starts due to national lockdowns.
Windows	(£182,000)	£182,000		A large part of the window programme was successfully completed but Covid 19 caused delays to the design / surveying process early in the year. Later in the year after work had resumed there were national shortages in materials.
Other external works (masonry painting)	(£73,000)	£73,000		2021/21 was the first year of the new masonry painting cycle. The property cycle follows the external repair and paint programme. So it is possible this programme may have overspends in some years and underspends in others for the first 7-year cycle.
Chimneys	(£2,000)			There was a small budget for this work and no work was required in 20/21
Total	(£6,480,000)	£4,386,000	£1,478,000	

Other Investment in the Housing Stock

A net underspend of £2,739,000 in other capital expenditure was evident in 2020/21.

	Value	Rephasing to 20/21	Rephasing to future years	Explanation
Overspending				
Garage improvements	£14,000			The overspend is result of additional works been ordered to complete both blocks of garages at Welstead Road at the same time
Communal area floor coverings	£11,000			Additional works were ordered at 38-82 Maitland Avenue so that flooring could be done at the same time as other works in this block.
Underspending				
Fire prevention works were underspent, with the need to carry this forward into 2020/21	(£629,000)	£629,000		The fire safety / prevention works programme contained a number of different elements in 2020/21. Some of these were delayed and this is why the request is made to carry the budget forward to 2021/22.
				Emergency lighting at Maitland Avenue and Albemarle Way - the survey / design of work was delayed by Covid 19. Works are now priced and will be on site in summer 2021.
				Fire escape from maisonettes 4.5m above ground level. Pilot installations were halted by coronavirus. Work did not resume until September 2020. Works are now progressing on site. The money needs to be carried forward to complete the programme.

	Value	Rephasing to 20/21	Rephasing to future years	Explanation
				Fire compartment improvements in five houses that have been converted into flats. There have been delays caused by access and lease issues. The money needs to be carried forward to address this risk in 21/22.
				Fire alarm installation at Kingsway flats - this work is in the design/ pricing stage so the budget needs to be carried forward to 21/22
Electrical works to communal areas	(£146,000)	£146,000		Work was originally planned at Edgecombe flats. Detailed surveys and design suggested the work was not as urgent as first thought. Work was not ordered. Work is now planned for Kingway flats and this project is in the design stage.
Disability Adaptations	(£420,000)	£200,000		Internal Decent Homes work was affected by national lockdowns and work did not start until September 2020. In addition there were access and shielding issues in this client group due to Covid 19. This work is based on Occupational Therapist referrals - these did not take place in the national lockdowns.
Lifts	(£115,000)	£115,000		Work on lifts at three sheltered housing schemes could not take place as a result of Covid 19 and the emergency work-only policy in our sheltered housing schemes. Work has now resumed and these will be completed in 21/22
Communal area uplift	(£82,000)	£82,000		Work has been ordered at Edgecombe flats but the work was not completed by end March. This is being carried out in 21/22.
Asbestos removal	(£31,000)	£31,000		This work to communal areas was postponed until 21/22 due to Covid 19.
Hard-surfacing works	(£57,000)	£57,000		Most of the hard-surfacing works budget was spent. A number of smaller trip hazards were ordered with our contractor and these had to be individually surveyed and priced before work could start. The work was all ordered but not completed by
Communal doors	(£329,000)	£329,000		£107,000 or work was ordered in 20/21 but was not completed by 31/3/21. The remainder of the programme has been issued to our contractor but has not been priced. The work is still required and re-phasing is requested to 21/22.
Capitalised officer fees	(£17,000)	£0		The value of officer time that can be capitalised each year depends upon the nature of work that is carried out by each member of the team. In 2019/20 there was an increase in the level of officer time spent on revenue activity, resulting in an underspend against the capital allocation.
Estate investment programme	(£783,000)	£783,000		The slippage relates to a street lamp column replacement contract. There were delay completing survey work due to Covid 19. In addition there have been delays completing the procurement of this work. The work is expected to start in summer 2021.
Contractor overheads - combines some slippage with the impact of underspending in other areas and £109,000 is requested to be re-phased.	(£156,000)	£131,000		Underspending in specific investment elements results in a corresponding underspend in contractor overheads.
Total	(£2,740,000)	£2,503,000	£0	

HRA Debts Written Off in 2020/21Write Off Cases by Category

Write Off Category	No. of Cases	Value Written Off
Bankruptcy / Insolvency	1	2,130.61
Debt re-instated	1	(744.85)
Debt relief order	8	14,244.94
Debtor deceased	32	21,341.91
Debtor is residing outside the UK	1	871.47
Debtor untraceable	8	21,691.59
Imprisonment	2	5,846.67
Other special circumstances	3	4,322.11
Statute barred	14	23,268.97
Uneconomical to recover	7	541.67
Recovery Procedures Exhausted	31	49,923.34
Unable to Substantiate Debt	0	0.00
Court has refused to make and order	0	0.00
Balance of debt is small	3	5.43
Total Written Off (Net)	111	143,443.86

Write Off Value Band	No. of Cases	Value Written Off
Less than £100	8	241.66
£100.00 to £199.99	11	1,230.31
£200.00 to £299.99	8	1,755.39
£300.00 to £399.99	3	1,122.39
£400.00 to £499.99	9	4,085.48
£500.00 to £749.99	19	11,854.83
£750.00 to £999.99	8	6,948.45
£1,000.00 to £1,499.99	8	11,048.19
£1,500.00 to £1,999.99	9	15,484.08
£2,000.00 to £2,999.99	14	34,060.56
£3,000.00 to £3,999.99	6	21,957.33
£4,000.00 to £4,999.99	5	22,590.37
Greater than £5,000.00	2	11,809.67
Debt re-instated	1	(744.85)
Total Written Off (Net)	111	143,443.86



Item

Social Housing Lettings Policy

To:

Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 22nd June 2021

Report by:

Simon Hunt, Housing Advice Operations Manager
Tel: 01223 457932 Email: simon.hunt@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All wards

Non-key decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The City Council, along with its Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk sub-regional local authority partners, has recently carried out a review of its Lettings Policy. The Lettings Policy sets out how housing register applicants are prioritised and how Council and housing association homes across the region are allocated. A revised policy was subject to a 12-week customer and partner consultation between October and December 2020 and has subsequently been updated further to reflect some of the feedback that was received.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the revised Lettings Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

3. Background

Page: 2

- 3.1 In 2008 the City Council, alongside its sub-regional local authority and housing association partners, launched a choice based letting scheme for the allocation of social housing properties across the region. This scheme is known as Home-Link and, because it is sub-regional, allows for some movement of applicants between local authority districts. At the same time, a sub-regional Lettings Policy, setting out how Home-Link applicants are prioritised and properties of participating landlords allocated, was introduced.
- 3.2 The Lettings Policy has been reviewed periodically since 2008, most recently in 2018 when some changes to the banding (priority) criteria had to be introduced for homeless applicants in order to reflect the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. At that point, a very limited consultation on the policy changes took place on the understanding that the amendments would be reviewed and more widely consulted on as part of a full policy review, scheduled for 2020.
- 3.3 Accordingly, following a series of policy review meetings between representatives of the local authority partners in 2019/20, a revised version of the Lettings Policy was drafted in the summer of 2020. The revised policy was checked by a solicitor specialising in local authority housing law.
- 3.4 A public and partner consultation on the draft policy ran from October to December 2020. Overall, there were high levels of agreement for the proposed changes. The draft policy remains largely unchanged following the consultation therefore, with only a few minor wording changes agreed by the Home-Link Management Board in January 2021.

4. Summary of the proposed changes

- 4.1 Adjustments to the banding criteria, agreed in 2018 in response to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, have been considered in detail and no substantial changes have been made to the 2018 amendments. The review does not seek to change the existing principles in the way that homeless applicants are prioritised, as the consensus amongst

local authority partners is that they work as effectively as they can in preventing and relieving homelessness. The review does, however, provide further clarity around some of the wording introduced in 2018.

- 4.2 In accordance with statutory guidance issued in 2020 on allocating social housing for the Armed Forces Community, ex-partners or spouses of armed forces personnel have been given the same local connection exemption as their former partners when they must move out of a Ministry of Defence property due to a relationship breakdown.
- 4.3 The revised policy incorporates changes to the definition of local connection and sets out greater clarity as to what is meant in relation to a local connection which may arise due to employment in the local authority area. Specifically, it seeks to clarify the criteria around the type and nature of qualifying work, including where the work is located.
- 4.4 The policy offers greater clarity in circumstances where an applicant has sufficient financial capital, or other means, to find a housing solution outside of the housing register. The revised wording makes it clearer that, in this situation, an assessment of 'sufficient financial resources' will override the needs assessment band but is subject to review if an applicant's circumstances change.
- 4.5 The majority of the other proposed changes relate to the clarification of wording to make it clearer what the policy actually means and to ensure that it is applied consistently across local authority partners. No changes to any of the priority 'bandings' are proposed. This sees those applicants in the highest need prioritised for housing ahead of those with less need.
- 4.6 The main aims of the policy, to provide homes to those most in need and to let council and housing association properties in a fair and transparent way, remain in place.

5. Implications

a) Financial Implications - None

b) Staffing Implications - None

c) Equality and Poverty Implications - An Equality Impact Assessment of the revised policy has been completed.

d) Environmental Implications - None.

e) Procurement Implications - The revisions to the Lettings Policy have no implications on the current contract with the Home-Link IT supplier.

f) Community Safety Implications - The lettings policy has a positive impact on community safety but the revisions do not add to it.

6. Consultation and communication considerations

6.1 A public and partner consultation on the draft policy ran from October to December 2020. A questionnaire was sent to all existing Home-Link applicants across the sub-region asking for their views on the proposed changes. Information about the review, and an invitation to complete the questionnaire, also appeared on the City Council and Home-Link websites. A significant number of partner organisations across the sub-region were also invited to comment by completing the questionnaire.

6.2 In total, 623 responses were received from across the sub-region. 48% of these were from Home-Link applicants. Additionally, a range of other people replied, including representatives from Home-Link partners and other interested organisations such as the Probation Service and domestic abuse support services. A summary of the results has been published on the Home-Link website.

6.3 Once approved, the revised Lettings Policy will appear on the Home-Link and City Council websites.

7. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Draft Lettings Policy for Cambridge City Council and sub-regional partners
- Equality Impact Assessment for the draft policy

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Lettings Policy

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

9. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Simon Hunt, Housing Advice Operations Manager, tel: 01223 457932, email: simon.hunt@cambridge.gov.uk

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Lettings Policy

This document sets out how the Council, in partnership with Registered Providers with properties in the district, will allocate their properties through the “Home-Link scheme”

Contents Page

Chapter 1	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 Objectives of the lettings policy	5
1.3 Statement on choice	6
1.4 Legal context.....	6
1.5 Equal opportunities and diversity	7
1.6 The welfare of children	7
1.7 The welfare of adults	7
1.8 Monitoring and reviewing the lettings policy	8
Chapter 2	9
2.1 How to apply for housing.....	9
2.2 Date of registration.....	9
2.3 Date in band.....	10
2.4 Armed Forces personnel – date in band	10
2.5 Multiple applications.....	11
2.6 Change of circumstances.....	11
2.7 Applicant’s consent and declaration.....	11
2.8 Data protection.....	12
2.9 Application review	12
2.10 Cancelling an application	12
Chapter 3	13
3.1 Who can be accepted onto the housing register?	13
3.2 Eligible applicants	13
3.3 Qualifying categories of applicants.....	13
3.4 Connection to the local area criteria.....	13
3.5 Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour	15
3.6 16 and 17 year olds.....	16
Chapter 4	17
Assessment of housing need	17
4.1 Legal background.....	17
4.2 Advice and information.....	17
4.3 Assessment of housing need	17
4.4 Local lettings criteria	17
4.5 Housing needs bands.....	18
4.6 Band A: Urgent need.....	18
4.7 Band B: High need	20
4.8 Band C: Medium need.....	22
4.9 Band D: Low housing need.....	23

4.10	Low priority	24
4.11	Intentionally worsening housing circumstances	24
4.12	Homeowners	25
4.13	Financial resources	25
4.14	Officer review for Band A applicants	26
Chapter 5	27
	Assessment information and criteria	27
5.1	Transfer applicants.....	27
5.2	Homeless applications	27
5.3	Split families	28
5.4	Bedroom requirement guidelines	28
5.5	Staying contact with children.....	28
5.6	Medical assessments	29
5.7	Harassment and domestic abuse.....	29
5.8	Applicant subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, (MAPPA).....	29
5.9	Emergency housing status	29
5.10	Direct Lets	29
5.11	Direct lets to homeless applicants.....	30
5.12	Applicants who require a specific size, type or adapted property.....	31
5.13	Housing for older people (also known as sheltered housing)	31
5.14	Extra care properties	31
5.15	Refusals of direct let.....	31
5.16	Local lettings plans.....	32
Chapter 6	33
6.1	Reviews of decisions.....	33
6.2	Statutory reviews.....	33
6.3	Homeless reviews	34
6.4	The Local Government Ombudsman	34
Chapter 7	36
7.1	Letting of accommodation	36
7.2	Labelling property adverts	36
7.3	Bedroom requirements.....	36
7.4	Shortlisting	36
7.5	Formal offer of the property	37
7.6	Withdrawal of offers	37
7.7	Refusing an offer of accommodation.....	38
7.8	Allocations to staff, council members or their family members	38
7.9	Tenancy management outside the scope of the lettings policy	38
Chapter 8	39
	Confidentiality and access to information.....	39

8.1 Applicants' rights to information	39
8.2 Data protection	39
8.3 Requesting information	39
Appendix 1	40
Home-Link Partner Organisation List	40
Appendix 2	42
Glossary of Terms	42

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is the Lettings Policy for the Council, which is a member of the Home-Link choice based lettings scheme, which covers the Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk area. The partner organisations to the Home-Link scheme are:

- a) Cambridge City Council
- b) East Cambridgeshire District Council
- c) Fenland District Council
- d) Huntingdonshire District Council
- e) South Cambridgeshire District Council
- f) West Suffolk Council

1.1.2 The Home-Link scheme and this lettings policy were designed through collaboration between the partner organisations listed above, with the aim of having as much consistency in the letting of social housing as is possible in a very diverse area. The lettings policy aims to ensure that all people seeking social housing in the Council area can exercise choice in deciding where they wish to live and in the type of property they would prefer.

1.1.3 The policy enables the Council to consider the individual needs of its applicants whilst making best use of the scarce resource of housing stock. The policy sets out:

- a) How to apply for housing.
- b) Who will qualify to be accepted onto the housing register.
- c) How priority for housing applicants will be given.
- d) What the decision-making processes are.
- e) How homes will be let.

1.1.4 You may view this lettings policy, at the Council's website, or request a copy from any of the partner organisation's offices. (See Appendix 1 on p.34)

1.2 Objectives of the lettings policy

- a) To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- b) To assist applicants in the highest assessed need
- c) To let properties in a fair and transparent way and provide a consistent lettings process
- d) To make best use of housing stock
- e) To ensure that applicants are not unlawfully discriminated against, whether directly or indirectly
- f) To support vulnerable applicants
- g) To provide increased choice and information to applicants
- h) To provide information and feedback on homes that are let through the Home-Link scheme
- i) To improve mobility across the Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk
- j) To promote social inclusion and help achieve sustainable communities
- k) To meet the legal requirements set out under the legislation and guidance referred to in Section 1.4

1.3 Statement on choice

- 1.3.1 The Council is fully committed to enabling applicants to play a more active role in choosing where they live, whilst continuing to house those in the greatest need in the Council.
- 1.3.2 The Home-Link scheme enables applicants from the Council's area to have access to a percentage of available homes from all the partner organisations across Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk.

1.4 Legal context

- 1.4.1 All applicants for housing will be assessed to determine their eligibility to be placed on the housing register. This is to ensure homes are let to those in the highest assessed need and ensures that the council meets its legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

This policy has also had regard to:

- a) Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England, and
 - b) The Public Sector Equality Duty, and
 - c) Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, and
 - d) The Council's Homelessness Strategy, and
 - e) The Council's Tenancy Strategy (containing details of the types of social rented tenancies that may be offered by housing association landlords).
 - f) Any future legislative obligations which partners share. If there are future changes, the partnership will review the legal context of this Policy.
- 1.4.2 The law states that there are five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered:
- a) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended))
 - b) People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3)
 - c) People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
 - d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and
 - e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)

- 1.4.3 The lettings policy has been designed to ensure applicants who fall into the above reasonable preference categories will be awarded reasonable preference.

1.4.4 Every application received by the Council will be considered according to the facts unique to that application as the Council recognises that every applicant's situation is different. Applications will be considered on an individual basis and individual circumstances will be taken into account. However, all lettings will be made in accordance with this lettings policy. Where individual circumstances are not covered by the on-line application form, applicants should contact the partner to whom they are applying to discuss their application so that all relevant facts can be considered fully.

1.5 Equal opportunities and diversity

1.5.1 The lettings policy will be responsive, accessible and sensitive to the needs of all by having regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In addition, the Council is committed to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011):

- a) Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- b) Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- c) Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Council also has due regard to the commitments made in Article 14 of the Human Rights Act (1998) as it relates to the service provided.

1.6 The welfare of children

1.6.1 The Council will ensure that decisions made under this lettings policy have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children taking into account Section 11 of The Children's Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

1.6.2 The Council will also have regard to the Children and Social Work Act 2017 as relates to the local arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children.

1.7 The welfare of adults

1.7.1 The Council will also have regard to the Care Act 2014, which includes provisions for adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

1.8 Monitoring and reviewing the lettings policy

- 1.8.1 The Council will monitor the operation of the lettings policy by regularly reviewing the policy to ensure that it meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.

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Chapter 2

2.1 How to apply for housing

- 2.1.1 The on-line form can be completed at www.home-link.org.uk. A paper form, if required, can be requested from the Council and they can also offer assistance to complete the form if needed.
- 2.1.2 An applicant may include anyone on their application who may reasonably be expected to live with them as part of their household. The Council reserves the right to decide who can reasonably be expected to reside in an applicant's household.
- 2.1.3 Where two applicants wish to have a shared application they will be known as joint applicants. Although adults who are not partners and need more than one bedroom may jointly apply to the register, due to the level of demand for family sized accommodation from family households (by "family" we mean households that have children (under 18) who are dependent on the adult(s)) they will not normally be prioritised for an offer of this size of accommodation ahead of families.
- 2.1.4 On receipt of the application the Council will assess this and will request additional information and supporting evidence so that the applicant's eligibility and housing need can be confirmed. The Council will verify the information provided which may include inviting the applicant for an interview or visiting them at home.
- 2.1.5 Applications will only be accepted onto the register where:
- a) The applicant is eligible for an allocation of social housing (see Chapter 3); and
 - b) The applicant qualifies for an allocation of social housing. (See sections 3.2 to 3.4).
- 2.1.6 After assessment the Council will write to applicants to inform them whether they have been accepted onto the housing register, or give reasons if they have not. Where accepted they will be informed of:
- a) Their unique reference number, which allows them to bid for homes through the Home-Link Scheme
 - b) The housing needs band in which the application has been placed
 - c) The date that the application was placed in the band (the "date in band")
 - d) The size of property for which the applicant is likely to be able to bid

If they have not been accepted onto the housing register the Council will set out the reasons for this decision and will provide information about the review process (see Chapter 6).

2.2 Date of registration

- 2.2.1 The registration date of an application will be the date the on-line housing application form is received electronically if a paper application is

submitted, the date it is received at the office of the Council, or any of the partner organisations.

2.3 Date in band

2.3.1 The principle of the policy is that normally no applicant should overtake existing applicants in a band. Therefore, applicants will be placed within a band in date order.

- a) **New applications:** the date in band will be the same as the applicant's date of registration.
- b) **Change of circumstances which results in a higher band assessment:** the date in band will be the date the applicant provides evidence of the change of circumstances leading to the award of a higher priority band.

2.3.2 When applicants move down bands due to a change in their circumstances the following applies:

- a) **Returning to a band in which they were previously placed:** the date in band reverts to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that band.
- b) **Moving into a lower band in which they have not previously been placed:** the date in band will be the date that the application was first placed into a higher band. In most circumstances, this is likely to be their date of registration.

2.4 Armed Forces personnel – date in band

2.4.1 Additional priority will be awarded to the following categories of people:

- a) serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- b) former members of the regular forces
- c) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- d) existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.

2.4.2 Additional priority will be awarded to the above categories of people by awarding their application the appropriate priority band, as set out in this lettings policy, and backdating their date in band by the total cumulative period of their length of military service (including where they have made a homeless application). This will have the effect of raising their priority above applicants in similar circumstances who have not undertaken military service.

This additional priority is awarded to meet the expectations set out in the Armed Forces Covenant and national guidance.

- 2.4.3 Current members of the Armed Forces may also request that this additional priority be applied to their housing application six months prior to the date when they are due to leave military service. Appropriate evidence of the end to military service will be required.

2.5 Multiple applications

2.5.1 An applicant can have only one active application on the housing register at any time where they are either the applicant or joint applicant. They may however be considered on other applications where they are eligible to be considered as part of another applicant's household, for example where living with a parent and included as part of their application. In exceptional cases, such as those involving violence or abuse, the council can decide to permit a second application.

2.6 Change of circumstances

2.6.1 Where an applicant registered with the Council has a change in their circumstances they must promptly inform the Council. Applicants can complete a change of circumstances on-line at www.home-link.org.uk or obtain a change of circumstances form from any partner organisation, but this must then be sent to the partner organisation who is managing their application. Change of circumstances received by the Council will be assessed based on the new circumstances. Examples of change of circumstances where a form must be completed are detailed below, although this list is not exhaustive:

- a) Change of address
- b) People joining or leaving the household
- c) Relationship breakdown
- d) Change to the medical circumstances of anyone included on the application

For the examples detailed below, applicants may not need to complete a change of circumstances form, but must contact the Council, who will advise what documentation/evidence is required:

- a) Pregnancy/birth of a child
- b) Death of a household member
- c) Death of a joint applicant
- d) Change of income and/or capital

2.7 Applicant's consent and declaration

2.7.1 When an applicant applies for housing, they will be required to confirm their understanding of, or sign a declaration to confirm that:

- a) The information they have provided is true, accurate and complete.
- b) They will promptly inform the Council of any change in circumstances.
- c) They understand that information will be shared with all the partner organisations.
- d) They consent to the Council making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct.

- e) They consent to the release of any relevant information either to the Council held by third parties, or by the Council to third parties.
- f) The information provided may be used to help in the detection and prevention of fraud.

2.7.2 The Council may take legal action against applicants who withhold or provide false information regarding their housing application. Where an applicant has been let a property as a result of providing false information, their landlord may take court action to obtain possession of the property.

2.8 Data protection

2.8.1 The Council's policy on General Data Protection Regulations is available on request and can also be found online at the Council's website.

2.9 Application review

2.9.1 Every year on the anniversary of an application being received, we will write to the applicant to see if they still wish to be on the housing register and ask them to update their application if there have been any changes to their circumstances. If there is no response within the required time limit, (28 days from the letter/email being sent) the application will be cancelled. We will write to the applicant to notify them of this. If an applicant contacts the Council within 28 days of their application being cancelled and indicates that they still want to be considered for housing, the application will be reinstated from their last applicable date in band (see s.2.3 above).

2.10 Cancelling an application

2.10.1 An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:

- a) At the applicant's request.
- b) If the applicant becomes ineligible for housing (see s.3.2).
- c) If the applicant no longer falls within a qualifying class of applicant (see s.3.3).
- d) When the applicant has been housed through the lettings policy.
- e) When a tenant completes a mutual exchange.
- f) Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the review process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address.
- g) Where the applicant has died.

2.10.2 When an application is cancelled, we will write to the applicant or their representative to notify them. Where an applicant has been highlighted as vulnerable, the Council will contact the applicant to check their circumstances before cancelling the application. Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision, (see Chapter 6).

2.10.3 Where an applicant wishes to re-join the housing register at a later date their new date of registration will be the date they re-apply.

Chapter 3

3.1 Who can be accepted onto the housing register?

- 3.1.1 The Council can allocate housing to anyone who qualifies for an allocation if they are not ineligible under the Housing Act 1996 section 160ZA.
- 3.1.2 The Council cannot allocate housing to two or more persons jointly if one of them is ineligible.

3.2 Eligible applicants

- 3.2.1 The Council is required, by law, to decide that certain applicants are ineligible for an allocation of social housing. Eligibility can change with a change of immigration status and therefore the Council will keep an applicant's eligibility for housing under review. Applicants are responsible for informing the Council of any change in their immigration status.
- 3.2.2 Applicants whose immigration status makes them ineligible to be considered on the register will be notified in writing of the decision and the reason for the decision. If an applicant is accepted onto the register, but subsequently becomes ineligible, their housing application will be cancelled and the applicant notified. Applicants found to be ineligible have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).
- 3.2.3 Where an eligible applicant includes people who are ineligible as part of his or her household the council can, in deciding who forms part of the applicant's household for the purposes of housing allocation:
 - a) Have regard to the fact that members of a person's household would not be eligible for accommodation in their own right.
 - b) Have regard to the fact that an ineligible person is not permitted to have recourse to public funds.
 - c) Conclude that an ineligible person does not form part of the household when assessing priority.

3.3 Qualifying categories of applicants

- 3.3.1 Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk are areas where the demand for social housing far exceeds the supply. For this reason only those applicants who meet the local connection criteria will qualify to join the housing register (see s.3.4).
- 3.3.2 Applicants will not qualify to join the housing register if they are considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant because of unacceptable behaviour (see s.3.5).

3.4 Connection to the local area criteria

- 3.4.1 An applicant will be considered to have a connection with the Council area and accepted onto the housing register if they meet one of the following criteria:

- a. The applicant is in full time or part time employment in the Council district for sixteen hours or more per week. See Section 3.4.2 below for further details; or
- b. The applicant has lived in the local authority area for at least 6 of the last 12 months, or 3 of the last 5 years; or
- c. The applicant has family members who have been resident in the local authority area for a period of 5 years or longer and are currently resident in the local authority area. Family members are defined as parents, adult sons and adult daughters or brothers or sisters. Other family associations will be considered on a case by case basis; or
- d. The applicant is owed a main housing duty under the s.193 (2) or 193C (4) of the relevant homelessness legislation by the Council; or
- e. The applicant is serving in the regular forces or who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of housing under Part 6 of the 1996 Act; or
- f. The applicant will cease to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following:
 - i. the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where the spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces; and their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
 - ii. divorce or separation from a spouse or civil partner where the spouse or civil partner is a member of the regular forces; or
- g. The applicant is serving or has served in the reserve forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
- h. The applicant is a "relevant person" as defined by Regulation 4 of the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015; or
- i. The applicant or a member of the applicant's household needs to move away from another area to escape violence or harm; or
- j. The applicant is a care leaver from the County who has been placed (by Children's Services) outside the Council area; or
- k. There are special circumstances that the Council considers give rise to a local connection.

3.4.2 Applicants will be considered to have employment in the Council district and therefore may meet the local connection criteria if:

- a) They are in paid full or part time permanent employment for 16 hours or more per week and their actual working location is within the district; or
- b) They are working within the district on a temporary or zero-hour employment contract that has been in place for at least 6 months and can demonstrate they have worked at least 16 hours per week since starting the employment contract; or

- c) Self-employed applicants are required to demonstrate that their permanent base of operations is within the District, even if their work requires them from time to time to work outside of the district; or
- d) The employment must be the actual place of work in the district and not employment based on a head office or regional office situated in the district but from which they do not work.

The Council reserves the right to waive the 16 hour requirement if necessary to avoid discrimination.

- 3.4.3 Applicants who are in one of the reasonable preference groups, but with none of the connection to the local area criteria above, may be eligible to join the register. Anyone who believes this applies to them should contact the Council directly to discuss their circumstances.

3.5 Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour

- 3.5.1 Where an applicant or a member of their household has a history of behaviour which in the opinion of the Council is unacceptable and makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant the Council may decide that the applicant does not qualify to be accepted onto the housing register. Unacceptable behaviour can include (but is not limited to) domestic or other abuse, harassment, anti-social behaviour, drug dealing or other criminal activity, failing to maintain or repair their home or associated garden or garage, noise nuisance or tenancy related debt.
- 3.5.2 When considering whether an applicant with a history of unacceptable behaviour qualifies to be accepted on the housing register, the Council will consider the nature of the behaviour, when it took place, the length of time that has elapsed since and whether there has been any change in circumstances which would show that the applicant or member of the applicant's household had amended their behaviour so that they are considered suitable to become a tenant. In addition, any extenuating circumstances, such as coercion or harassment, will be taken into account as well as any possible risks to others arising from a register exclusion.
- 3.5.3 If the Council decides that an applicant does not qualify to be accepted on the housing register because the applicant or a member of their household has a history of unacceptable behaviour that makes them unsuitable to be a tenant, the applicant will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for the decision. They will also be informed how they can become a qualifying person, for example, by agreeing an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears and adhering to this, or by the applicant showing that the circumstances or behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant, has changed.
- 3.5.4 If an applicant is accepted onto the register but a change in their behaviour means that they are no longer a qualifying person, their housing application will be removed and the applicant will be notified in writing of this decision and the reasons for the decision.
- 3.5.5 Applicants considered as not qualifying due to unacceptable behaviour have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).

3.6 16 and 17 year olds

- 3.6.1 Anyone aged 16 or over can apply for housing. However, until the applicant reaches 18 years old any offer of accommodation will be subject to appropriate guarantor or trustee arrangements being in place. The guarantor could be a family member, adult friend, or a professional body. Applicants under 18 years old will be referred to a housing officer for advice regarding their housing rights and options.

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Chapter 4

Assessment of housing need

4.1 Legal background

- 4.1.1 All eligible and qualifying applicants will be placed in a housing needs band following an assessment of their household's needs. This is to ensure that the Council meet their legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

4.2 Advice and information

- 4.2.1 The Council will ensure that advice and information on how to apply for housing in the Council area is available free of charge to everyone. If applicants are likely to have difficulty in making an application without assistance, then the council will make any necessary assistance they require available.

4.3 Assessment of housing need

- 4.3.1 Assessments of housing needs are based on an applicant's current housing circumstances. Assessments will be completed by housing officers of the Council. Medical assessments will be made by a medical professional or appropriately trained officer.

Where an adverse decision about an application is made by any of the Home-Link partners, any duplicate applications to another partner's housing register will have due regard to that original decision. Because the Home-Link partners use the same assessment criteria for housing applications, original decisions will only be overturned in exceptional circumstances following an assessment. The original partner applied to will be contacted to discuss the decision and the decision will generally apply to any new application when sufficient information has been received.

Any new or additional information not available for the original decision will be considered by the Home-Link partner to assess any impact on the decision.

4.4 Local lettings criteria

- 4.4.1 To ensure local housing needs are met, 90% of properties advertised through the Home-Link scheme will be labelled as available to applicants with a connection to the Council. 10% of advertised properties will be open to bidding from applicants with a connection to any of the Home-Link partner organisations. 25% of new growth homes will be made available for cross boundary moves. The relevant local area connection requirement will be clearly labelled on the property advert.
- 4.4.2 Where a property has local area connection criteria attached to it through a local lettings plan or s.106 agreement, then these properties will be let in line with the criteria within the lettings plan or the s.106 agreement. This

may differ from the connection to the local area criteria contained within this lettings policy and will be mentioned in the property advert.

4.5 Housing needs bands

4.5.1 Eligible and qualifying applicants will be placed in one of the following four bands in date order. Applicants placed in Band A will have the highest assessed need, Band D the lowest. When an applicant is placed in a housing needs band the same level of priority will apply with all partner organisations in the Home-Link scheme.

4.5.2 Any applicants accepted on to the housing register under section 3.4.3 of this policy (in a reasonable preference group but not meeting the connection to the local area criteria), will be placed in band C. However, they will only be considered for a property after any applicants in that band who have a proven connection with the local area.

4.6 Band A: Urgent need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band A:

a) Urgent transfer

Where an existing council or housing association tenant needs to move urgently because of circumstances that could include:

- a) Major repairs are required on the property in which they live and which cannot be undertaken with the tenant living in the property.
- b) The property is being demolished.
- c) Urgent social need to move.

b) Current supported housing resident

Applicants leaving Social Services care or other supported accommodation, and are ready to move to a permanent home of their own. This will be subject to the Council, Social Services (where applicable) and the landlord of the supported accommodation agreeing that the applicant is ready to move to their own home. If the applicant needs an on-going support package to allow them to live independently, confirmation that this will be put in place will also be required from the proposed support provider. The date that this priority is awarded (date in Band A) will be the date that the resident is ready to move to independent living, as recommended by their support worker.

The decision to apply this priority will be made by the relevant decision-making process in the district where the supported housing is based.

c) Urgent health and safety risk

The condition of the applicant's current accommodation has been assessed by the Council or a partner organisation as posing an urgent health and safety risk. This will apply where the assessment has classified the accommodation as unsafe, or where there is a risk of imminent harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the

applicant or a member of the applicant's household who will continue to live with them.

d) Urgent medical need

An urgent medical priority will be awarded where the assessment concludes that the applicant or household member has a severe medical condition or disability that is made substantially worse by their current housing. This would include people whose life is at risk due to their current housing conditions or who are completely housebound because of the type of accommodation in which they live..

Priority will be given depending on how unsuitable the current accommodation is in relation to their medical or disability needs. The assessment is not purely based on the applicant's health conditions.

The following are only examples of circumstances that **may** qualify (but not in all circumstances) for an urgent medical need award:

- Those who, on leaving hospital, either have nowhere to live or have somewhere to live but it is unsuitable for their medical needs and cannot be made suitable through adaptations
- Those who have somewhere to live but it is unsuitable for their medical needs and cannot be made suitable through adaptations because of cost effectiveness, structural difficulties or the property cannot be adapted within a reasonable amount of time. Applicants will be individually assessed
- Where an applicant's condition is life threatening and the existing accommodation is a major contributory factor
- Where an applicant's health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening
- Disabled persons (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) who have restricted or limited mobility and are limited by their accommodation and unable to carry out day to day activities or have difficulties accessing facilities e.g. bathroom, kitchen, toilet, inside and outside of their accommodation safely and the current accommodation cannot be reasonably adapted

e) Lacking two or more bedrooms

The household is assessed as lacking two or more bedrooms (see s.5.4).

f) Under-occupancy by two or more bedrooms or release of adapted property

Where an existing council or housing association tenant:

- a) Is assessed as having two or more bedrooms that are not required by the household (see s.5.4).
- b) Where a property has been adapted and the adaptations are no longer required. For example, if the person requiring the adaptations has moved or died.

g) Homeless households (Main homelessness duty owed under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended)

Where the Council has accepted a homelessness duty under s193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and this duty has not been brought to an end.

The date in band will be the date that the applicant approached the Council for housing assistance and a Prevention or Relief Duty was triggered.

h) Urgent multiple needs

This priority will be applied where an applicant is assessed as having two or more Band B needs. This may include an application where two household members have the same assessed need e.g. two high medical needs.

For multiple needs in Band A please see 'emergency housing status' (see Chapter 5)

4.7 Band B: High need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band B:

a) High health and safety risk

The condition of the applicant's current accommodation has been assessed by the Council or a partner organisation as posing a high health and safety risk to them or members of their household. This will apply where the assessment has identified that the applicant is living in a property, the condition of which places them or members of their household at a high risk of harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the applicant or a member of the applicant's household who will continue to live with them.

b) High medical need

A high medical priority will be awarded where the assessment concludes that the applicant or household member has a serious medical condition or disability that is made substantially worse by their current housing, but who are not housebound or whose life is not at risk due to their current housing. However, their housing conditions directly contribute to causing serious ill health and the condition of the property cannot be resolved within a reasonable period of time.

Documentary evidence will be required. Circumstances will be assessed and may need to be referred to a relevant health care professional. The following are only examples of cases that **may** qualify (but not in all circumstances) for a high medical need award:

- The applicant's accommodation is directly contributing to the deterioration of the applicant's health, such as severe chest condition, requiring intermittent hospitalisation because of chronic dampness in the accommodation
- Children with severe conditions such as autism, or cerebral palsy, where their long-term needs cannot be met without suitable accommodation
- A member of the household seeking accommodation is disabled and re-housing will enable that person to overcome physical barriers created by current accommodation e.g. steps and stairs
- A person with a severe disability requiring substantial adaptations to a property which is not, and cannot be provided for in their current accommodation
- A person with a terminal illness or long-term debilitating condition whose current accommodation is not having a significant impact on their condition but

where their quality of life would be significantly improved by moving to alternative suitable accommodation

- A person suffering with a diagnosed mental illness where the medical condition would be significantly improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

c) Lacking one bedroom

This priority will be applied where the household is assessed as lacking one bedroom based on the bedroom calculation in (see s.5.4).

d) Under-occupancy by one bedroom.

This priority will be applied where an existing council or housing association tenant is assessed as having one bedroom more than required by the household (see s.5.4).

e) Victims of harassment, violence or abuse

Where the Council or a partner organisation has identified that the applicant or a member of their household is being subjected to harassment or other conduct causing alarm and distress that will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation. Harassment might be, but is not limited to, harassment due to, race, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, mental health, physical disability, learning disability, religion, domestic abuse or harassment by a former partner or associated persons.

The Council will offer advice and support to assist the applicant in identifying possible ways to resolve the situation.

f) Applicants owed a Prevention or Relief duty (under s, 189a or 189B of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended))

Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness within 56 days, the Council will work with the applicant to try and prevent their homelessness. Those applicants who the authority has reason to believe may be in priority need in the event of a main duty assessment and have a local connection, will be placed in Band B whilst the prevention measures are being pursued and the applicants are actively co-operating with the prevention work being done.

Where homelessness prevention has not been possible and an applicant becomes homeless, they will be owed a relief duty. Those applicants who the authority has reason to believe may be in priority need in the event of a main duty assessment and have a local connection, will remain in Band B during this time. Where placed in temporary accommodation by the local authority, applicants will not be awarded additional priority on any other accommodation related factors.

This priority will no longer apply once the prevention and relief duties have ended and applicants will be re-assessed on their circumstances.

g) Sleeping rough

This priority will be applied where it has been confirmed that an applicant is sleeping rough and has no other accommodation available to them. The council will verify that an applicant is sleeping rough before awarding this priority. Rough sleeping priority will not be awarded when accommodation is available to the applicant, including a placement at a direct access hostel, but the applicant chooses not to take up this offer of accommodation. Applicants assessed as 'Sleeping rough' will not be awarded additional priority on any other accommodation related factors. This will apply even when duties have ended as described under Section 4.8 (d).

h) Multiple needs

This priority will be applied where an applicant is assessed as having three or more Band C needs. This may include an application where more than two household members have the same assessed need e.g. three medical needs.

4.8 Band C: Medium need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band C:

a) Medium medical need

Medium medical need will be awarded where an applicant has a medical condition or disability that is affected significantly by their housing circumstances, not at a critical or serious impact level but a move would be likely to improve their quality of life.

b) Need to move for social reasons

Where the Council or a partner organisation has assessed the applicant's need to move for social reasons. An applicant will only be awarded this factor once irrespective of the number of social needs that may apply to their situation.

Examples where a social need to move may apply may include where an applicant:

- a) Needs to move to or within an area of the sub-region to give or receive support, and a proven level of support is required and can be given
- b) Has found employment in the Council area and needs to move closer to work, or will otherwise lose their employment, or suffer hardship
- c) Has staying contact with a child/children and is living in accommodation where the child/children are not allowed to stay overnight.
- d) Is living in a first floor or above property and has children less than 10 years of age as part of their household, or is more than 24 weeks pregnant.

c) Housing conditions

This priority will be applied where the applicant/s either lack or share one or more of these facilities with persons, who are not members of their household. Facilities may include:

- a) A living room
- b) Kitchen
- c) Bathroom

d) Other homelessness

Applicants:

- a) Who are owed a Prevention Duty by the council but have been assessed as not having a local connection as set out in this policy.
- b) Who are owed a Prevention or Relief Duty but where the council believe the applicant would be unlikely to have priority need in the event of a Main Duty assessment if the relief duty were to come to an end unsuccessfully, although see 5.2.4.
- c) Where the Relief Duty has come to an end unsuccessfully and the applicant has been determined to be intentionally homeless.
- d) Where the Relief Duty has ended unsuccessfully and it has been determined that the applicant is not owed the main duty as they are not in priority need.
- e) Who are owed the s193C (4) duty where the Relief Duty has been ended due to the applicants deliberate non-cooperation.
- f) Who are owed a main homelessness duty by a local authority that is not a partner organisation in Home-Link scheme but has a local connection as defined in this policy.
- g) Where the Relief or Main Duty has ended due to the applicant's unreasonable refusal of an offer.
- h) Where the Relief Duty has ended following the expiry of 56 days.

Applicants assessed as 'Other homelessness' will not be awarded additional priority on any other accommodation related factors.

Applicants given this priority will have their application reviewed on the anniversary of the decision, unless there is a change in their circumstances in the meantime.

e) Reasonable preference but no connection to the local area

This priority will apply to any applicant in one of the reasonable preference groups but who do not meet any of the criteria for connection to the local area in section 3.4.1 of this policy.

4.9 Band D: Low housing need

- 4.9.1 Any applicant who does not meet any of the criteria in Bands A, B and C will be assessed as having a low level of housing need and their application will be placed in Band D.
- 4.9.2 Anyone assessed as having sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need (see s.4.13) will be placed in band D. These applicants will only be considered for an offer of a property once all other bidding applicants who do not have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need have been considered.

4.10 Low priority

4.10.1 In certain circumstances, applicants will be accepted onto the housing register, but their application will be considered as low priority as a result of unacceptable behaviour or circumstances that affects their suitability to be a tenant. In these circumstances their application will be placed in a housing needs band but they will not be actively considered for an offer of a tenancy or be able to express interest in available properties. Their application will remain in low priority until the applicant has shown that the circumstances or behaviour has changed so that they are considered suitable to be a tenant.

4.10.2 The following categories will be considered as low priority:

- a) Applicants with recoverable rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related charges or debts, where these are not sufficiently high to class them as not qualifying to join the register (see s.3.5). In most circumstances, an applicant with outstanding recoverable rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related debts will not be considered for an offer of a tenancy or eligible to bid for housing until they have shown a regular repayment record. In reaching this decision any extenuating circumstances will be taken into consideration, including coercion, harassment and abuse.
- b) Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour where this is not sufficiently severe to class them as not qualifying to join the register (see s.3.5).

4.10.3 All applicants who are considered low priority will be informed of this decision in writing, and how their application could be re-assessed, for example, by agreeing and keeping to an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears, or by the applicant satisfying the council that the circumstances or unacceptable behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant have changed.

4.10.4 The Council expects applicants to clear any recoverable housing related debts owed to any social housing landlord before an offer of a tenancy is made, where it is clearly within their means to do this (for example where the debt is relatively low and the applicant has a reasonable disposable income or has sufficient savings available).

4.10.5 When a financial assessment shows that the debt cannot be cleared immediately then a realistic and affordable repayment arrangement should be agreed to clear the debt. The applicant may become eligible to bid for property as long as they have made regular payments in line with the agreement they have made.

4.10.6 Applicants found to be low priority have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).

4.11 Intentionally worsening housing circumstances

4.11.1 If an applicant is assessed as having intentionally worsened their circumstances, the effect of which would be to improve their housing priority irrespective of whether they had prior knowledge of the lettings policy, their

level of housing need will be assessed on the basis of their previous accommodation, or previous circumstances at their current accommodation.

4.11.2 Applicants found to have intentionally worsened their circumstances have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).

4.11.3 All applicants deemed to have intentionally worsened their circumstances will have their application reviewed on the anniversary of the decision, or earlier if there is a material change in their circumstances in the meantime.

4.11.4 If the Council has assessed and accepted the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, has a priority need under the homeless legislation, but considers that they have become homeless intentionally; the applicant will be placed in Band C.

4.12 Homeowners

4.12.1 In line with the 'Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England', the Council will usually only allocate social housing to homeowners in exceptional circumstances. However, the council may allocate housing that is in low demand. Applicants who are homeowners will usually be allocated a Band D status. In exceptional circumstances the Council may consider a homeowner's status. For example, the Council may allocate housing to applicants who require support and whose age qualifies them for housing for older people, but who have insufficient financial resources to access housing for older people in the private sector.

4.13 Financial resources

4.13.1 All qualifying applicants are entitled to apply for housing regardless of income levels. However, if an applicant is assessed as having income and/or capital, which will enable them to resolve their own housing need through other tenures they will not receive any preference for social housing and when bidding will appear on the shortlist after all other applicants that do not have the resources to resolve their own need.

This assessment will be based on the following:

- a) The total income of the applicant/partner
- b) Any capital available to the applicant/partner
- c) Average property prices and rents in the area for the type of accommodation needed by the household
- d) The ability of the applicant/partner to rent a property in the private sector based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.
- e) The ability of the applicant/partner to acquire a mortgage and maintain required repayments based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.

4.13.2 Excluded from the above financial assessment will be any member of the Armed Forces who may have received a lump sum as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

4.13.3 An assessment of 'sufficient financial resources' will override the applicant's household needs assessment (and banding, if other than Band D). Applicants assessed as having sufficient financial resources will remain in Band D until such time as those resources are no longer considered sufficient. Applicants can ask for this to be reviewed if and when their resources reduce or are rendered inaccessible, for example as a result of a Court Order, such that they are no longer able to resolve their own housing need.

4.14 Officer review for Band A applicants

4.14.1 Where an applicant has held Band A status for three months or more from their applicable date in band or the applicant has refused more than three reasonable offers of accommodation or has made little or no attempt to bid for accommodation the Council may carry out a review of their circumstances. This will result in either:

- a) A direct let – usually for statutorily homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation.
- b) Priority being maintained.
- c) Moving into a lower priority band if the circumstances under which they were placed in Band A no longer apply.
- d) Making the applicant unable to bid for a specified period, not exceeding six months

Chapter 5

Assessment information and criteria

5.1 Transfer applicants

5.1.1 Transfer applicants are those applicants who are tenants of a council or housing association property in the UK who wish to move to alternative accommodation.

5.2 Homeless applications

5.2.1 Applicants who are already on the housing register will remain in their existing housing needs band whilst a homeless assessment is carried out (unless the criterion in s.5.2.3 below applies).

5.2.2 When a decision has been made by the Council that an applicant is owed a main homelessness duty under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) their application will be placed and remain in Band A until that duty is brought to an end (See s.4.6 (g))

5.2.3 A person who is threatened with homelessness may have an existing housing register application. Applicants already in Band A will retain their existing Band A status whilst homelessness prevention measures are pursued.

5.2.4 An applicant who is owed a Prevention or Relief Duty but would be unlikely to have priority need in the event of a Main Duty assessment will be placed in Band C (unless other circumstances are such that they are eligible for placement within a different band).

5.2.5 Applicants where a Main Duty decision has been reached but are intentionally homeless will be assessed as having Band C status in line with 4.8 (d) (c).

5.2.6 The main homelessness duty will come to an end, and a homeless applicant loses their priority under this section, when any of the circumstances within s.193 (6) or (7) of the Housing Act 1996 Act (as amended) are met. This will include an applicant:

- a) Accepting an offer of accommodation made through the Home-Link scheme
- b) Accepting an offer made through the direct let process within the policy (see s.5.10), or
- c) Accepting a suitable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector in line with section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012
- d) Having been informed of the possible consequences of refusal and the right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation, refuses a reasonable offer of suitable accommodation made through the direct let process, or in the private rented sector as outlined in c) above

S. 193(6) of the Housing Act 1996 Act (as amended) gives the full circumstances under which the main homelessness duty comes to an end.

5.3 Split families

- 5.3.1 Where an application is made by family members who it would be reasonable to expect them to live together but they are unable to do so, the Council will assess their particular circumstances to consider the best way of addressing their housing needs.

5.4 Bedroom requirement guidelines

- 5.4.1 Bedroom requirements are generally determined in line with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) regulations and these regulations will be applied when calculating bedroom requirements in overcrowding and under-occupancy assessments. They will also be used when calculating the size of property (number of bedrooms in the property) that an applicant will be able to bid on and eligible to be offered through the letting process.

Bedroom requirements are determined by the applicant's size of household. Ineligible household members may be included, subject to paragraph 2.1.2. Generally, the LHA regulations allow one bedroom each for:

- a) Every adult couple
- b) Any other adult aged 16 or over
- c) Any two children (aged under 16) of the same sex
- d) Any two children, regardless of sex, under the age of 10
- e) Any other child aged under 16
- f) A non-resident carer (claimant/partner or child have disability and need overnight care)

Applicants requiring help in calculating their bedroom entitlement can use the Directgov online bedroom entitlement calculator at <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/BedRoomCalculator.aspx>.

If, in exceptional circumstances, the Council considers that a room designated by a landlord as a bedroom is not capable of being used as a bedroom, they may re-assess overcrowding for the household.

- 5.4.2 Single and joint applicants of pensionable age may be eligible to be considered for one and two bedroom properties considered to be housing for older people.
- 5.4.3 A pregnant woman expecting her first child will be assessed as requiring two bedrooms from week 24 of her pregnancy.
- 5.4.4 An applicant may be assessed as requiring an additional bedroom where the Council considers there are special circumstances.

5.5 Staying contact with children

- 5.5.1 A child, or children, living between parents at separate addresses will only be considered as having one main home unless there are exceptional circumstances that mean that both parents should provide a home. A Court Order allowing access to children, or confirming residence between separated parents, does not mean that the Council must consider that the

child is part of an applicant's household for the purposes of a housing register application.

- 5.5.2 An assessment will be made by the Council as to which parent's property is considered as the child's main home. If the Council considers that an applicant does not provide the child with his or her main home then the child will not be considered as part of the housing register application. The child would then not be considered as part of the bedroom requirements when assessing overcrowding or under-occupation. They would also not be considered when assessing the size of property (number of bedrooms) that the application would be eligible to bid for and offered through the lettings process.

5.6 Medical assessments

- 5.6.1 Medical assessments will be carried out for any applicants who believe that their medical condition or disability is affected by their current accommodation. The applicant will be required to fill in a self-assessment medical form, or provide information from a medical professional, detailing the effect that their current accommodation has on their medical condition or disability. These forms will be assessed and where appropriate referred to a medical professional or appropriately trained officer for their opinion of how the medical condition is affected by the applicant's housing circumstances.

5.7 Harassment and domestic abuse

- 5.7.1 Where the applicant is a victim of harassment, domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour, the Council will offer advice and support to assist applicants in identifying possible ways of resolving their situation.

5.8 Applicant subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, (MAPPA)

- 5.8.1 Where an applicant is subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), the Council will liaise with the panel to ensure an appropriate housing solution to meet the needs of the applicant and the community.

5.9 Emergency housing status

- 5.9.1 An emergency housing status may be awarded to applicants in exceptional circumstances, where remaining in their current accommodation may cause risk of death or serious injury, where an applicant has been assessed as having multiple needs that fall within Band A, where an applicant is terminally ill, is already in Band A and, in the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner, is likely to have less than 12 months to live, or where the applicant's home is to be demolished under one of the council's or partner organisation's redevelopment schemes. An applicant with emergency housing status who bids for a home will be considered as a priority above all other applicants in any other band.

5.10 Direct Lets

- 5.10.1 Most properties will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. However, in certain circumstances some properties may be let directly to

applicants and these properties will be let outside of the allocation scheme. Where an applicant is identified as requiring a direct let the case will be referred to a senior officer for approval. The list below gives some examples of where this may happen.

- a) Where the Council has accepted a main homelessness duty towards a household but the household has not found suitable accommodation during a period of choice through the Home-Link scheme.
- b) Where the Council has accepted a s189 (b) relief duty towards a household but the household has not found suitable accommodation during a period of choice through the Home-Link scheme.
- c) Where an applicant and their household require a specific size, type or adapted property and the applicant has not been able to find suitable accommodation through the Home-Link scheme.
- d) Where an existing social housing tenant is required to move to make the best use of stock, including where their home is to be demolished, and they have not been successful in finding a suitable property through the Home-Link scheme.
- e) Where the applicant has emergency housing status.
- f) Use and occupation cases.
- g) Where an applicant in Band A has refused 3 reasonable offers or made little or no effort to bid.

5.10.2 Information as to which properties have been allocated though direct lets will be made available through the Home-Link feedback information.

5.10.3 Direct lets will be made based on a suitable property becoming available. Where a property becomes available that is suitable for more than one applicant with a direct let status, the date applicants were awarded a direct let status will be used as a deciding factor in deciding to whom the property will be let.

5.11 Direct lets to homeless applicants

5.11.1 Homeless applicants who are owed a main homelessness duty by the Council (under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended) will be placed in Band A and will be able to bid for properties through the Home-Link scheme. Their date in band will be the date they originally applied to the Council as homeless.

5.11.2 Where homeless applicants in Band A have not been offered a tenancy through the bidding process at the point at which the Council has accepted the main homelessness duty, the council reserves the right to make a direct let of a property, either in the social or private rented sector.

5.11.4 Where a homeless applicant is to be allocated a property through the direct let process the Council has responsibility for determining the suitability of any allocation. They will do this by assessing the household's particular needs and circumstances within the context of the general housing conditions in the area.

5.11.5 Where a homeless applicant is offered accommodation through a direct let, but does not feel that this offer is suitable; they have the right to request a

review of the decision that the offer is suitable. For details of the review process (see Chapter 6).

5.11.6 As the property does not have to remain available during the review of the suitability and reasonableness of a direct let, homeless applicants are advised to accept and move to the accommodation pending the decision on review. If the review outcome is unsuccessful for the applicant they will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.

5.11.7 If a homeless applicant refuses a direct let and it is then deemed suitable at review, the main homelessness duty will come to an end. They will also have to vacate any temporary accommodation that is being provided.

5.11.8 If, on reviewing an applicant's refusal of a direct let, the property offered is considered to be unreasonable or unsuitable, the duty under s.193 (2) will continue and the applicant will be made a further offer of suitable accommodation.

5.12 Applicants who require a specific size, type or adapted property.

5.12.1 Where an applicant requires a specific size, type or adapted property, they will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band, but may be offered a direct let if the Council have a shortage of suitable properties. For example:

- a) An applicant requires a very large property to accommodate their household.
- b) An applicant requires a property of a specific type in a specific area of the district.
- c) An applicant requires a property with specific adaptations and such a property becomes available.
- d) Where an applicant is willing to move to release a property larger than required to meet their housing needs.

5.13 Housing for older people (also known as sheltered housing)

5.13.1 Housing for older people will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. Housing for older people is generally available to applicants over 60 years of age but the age limit can be lower on some properties and it will be clearly shown in the advert. Prior to an offer of a tenancy, applicants will be subject to an assessment by the landlord of the property to establish their support needs and suitability to living in housing for older people.

5.14 Extra care properties

5.14.1 Extra care properties are for older people who need the additional support services that are provided. Extra care properties are not often advertised through Home-Link. Where they are advertised, applicants who bid will be assessed based on their care needs by a specialist panel.

5.15 Refusals of direct let

5.15.1 Where an applicant (other than a person owed the main homelessness duty) refuses a reasonable offer of a direct let a senior officer will review the reasons for the refusal and the applicant will lose any housing priority they held,

dependent on the reasons for the offer refusal. Applicants have the right to ask for a review of this decision (see Chapter 6).

5.16 Local lettings plans

5.16.1 There may be circumstances where a Local Lettings Plan is used to help prioritise applicants.

Local Lettings Plans are used across the Home-Link area. For example, to help create balanced and sustainable communities, or to help mitigate any housing management issues identified on specific schemes. They may also be appropriate where local authorities provide rural exception sites to ensure homes are prioritised to local people in perpetuity.

Some local lettings plans may ask for an applicant to have a local connection to a specific parish or village. In those cases, the connection criteria will be stipulated in the legal agreement for that development.

Where a Local Lettings Plan applies, it will be stated in the property details when advertised. Applicants who apply for one of these properties but do not meet the local letting criteria will find that their Home-Link bid will be given a lower priority than an applicant who does meet the criteria for that property.

Details of any Local Lettings Plans will be available from the local authority in whose area the property is situated.

Chapter 6

6.1 Reviews of decisions

6.1.1 The Council will carry out reviews of assessment decisions as required.

6.1.2 Examples of the types of decisions that may be reviewed include:

- a) Multiple need in band
- b) Emergency housing status
- c) Moving people up a band or down a band
- d) Priority assessments, in complex cases.
- e) Housing people in different accommodation to designated need size
- f) Low priority decisions
- g) Direct lets
- h) Being restricted from bidding

The above list is not exhaustive.

6.2 Statutory reviews

6.2.1 An applicant has the right to request a review of certain decisions made under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). These are:

- a) Decisions about the facts of the applicant's case which are likely to be, or have been, taken into account in considering whether to accept onto the housing register or to allocate housing accommodation to the applicant
- b) Lack of any reasonable preference based on previous behaviour s167 (2C) Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- c) Ineligibility for an allocation based on immigration status s160ZA (9)
- d) Decisions that an applicant does not qualify for entry on to the housing register (see sections 3.3 to 3.5)

6.2.2 Decision letters issued in respect of housing applications will advise the applicant of their right to request a review and provide appropriate guidance on how to do this. An applicant can obtain further details of the review procedure from the Council.

6.2.3 A request for a review of a decision can be made in writing or verbally to a member of staff at the Council. The request should be made within 21 days following the notification of the decision. Reviews will normally be considered within 56 days of the request being received but may be completed sooner. The applicant will receive a written response outlining the result of the review.

6.2.4 An applicant will only be entitled to one internal review. If an applicant is still unhappy following the review of a decision, they can make a complaint through the Council's complaints procedure. If they continue to be dissatisfied after the Council complaints procedure is concluded, they can contact the Local Government Ombudsman (see s.6.4) or seek to challenge the decision through a judicial review.

6.2.5 Statutory reviews will be undertaken by a designated officer who was not involved in the original decision, and who is senior to the original decision-making officer.

6.3 Homeless reviews

6.3.1 Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the Council in respect of their homeless application. Within the context of the Council's lettings policy this includes the decision to bring to an end the main homelessness duty by making a suitable offer of permanent accommodation through the housing register through the direct let process or in the private rented sector (see s.5.11).

6.3.2 If an applicant wishes to ask for the review of the Council's decision following a homeless application they must request this within 21 days of the date of the decision letter.

6.3.3 If an applicant wishes to request a review of the reasonableness of an offer or the suitability of the property, this must be made within 21 days of notification of a decision to make the offer. Late review requests can be considered under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the council.

6.3.4 Applicants who request reviews of decisions about suitability of accommodation will be advised to accept and move into accommodation pending the outcome of their review request. If the review goes in their favour alternative accommodation will be provided as quickly as possible. However, if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld the applicant will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.

6.3.5 The applicant has the right of appeal to the county court if they are dissatisfied with the decision on a review.

6.4 The Local Government Ombudsman

6.4.1 The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and other bodies. They can be asked to investigate complaints about most council matters including housing.

6.4.2 If an applicant is not satisfied with the action the council has taken, and has exhausted the council's own complaints procedure, they can send a written complaint to the ombudsman.

6.4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:
Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771 53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV4 0EH
Tel: 0300 061 01614
Website: www.lgo.org.uk

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint against a housing association, they should contact:
The Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ
Tel: 0300 111 3000
Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

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Chapter 7

7.1 Letting of accommodation

7.1.1 Properties will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. The advertising will be carried out on a regular basis and for specific periods of time, known as advertising cycles.

7.2 Labelling property adverts

7.2.1 All adverts will include a description of the property and any other relevant information, for example rent charge, property size, length and type of tenancy, local facilities, disabled adaptations or if the property is housing for older people. The property will be labelled to show who is able to express an interest in it (known as bidding), for example, where a local connection is required, or if there is an age restriction on the property.

7.2.2 At least 1% of adverts will offer preference to social housing tenants needing to move for employment reasons (who would otherwise suffer hardship) under the Right to Move scheme.

7.2.3 Applicants should check the information contained in the property advert labelling to see if they qualify to be considered for the property.

7.3 Bedroom requirements

7.3.1 Bedroom requirements will generally be determined in line with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) regulations (see s.5.4).

7.3.2 Landlords may choose to allow the under-occupation of certain properties including those that they advertise. The property advert will explain this on those properties the landlord is willing to under-occupy. Where a landlord is willing to allow under-occupation, this will generally be by allowing an applicant to be considered for one bedroom more than their assessed Local Housing Allowance (LHA) entitlement (for example allowing applicants with an assessed two bedroom LHA need to be considered for a 3-bedroom property). All households bidding for these properties and meeting the labelling criteria will be considered in line with the shortlisting criteria contained in 7.4.1 below.

7.3.3 Where a landlord is willing to allow under-occupation an affordability assessment will be completed to ensure that the applicant being considered for the property is able to meet rent payments and household utility bills. If the applicant is assessed as being unable to afford the rent payments and household utility bills the landlord may bypass them on the shortlist.

7.4 Shortlisting

7.4.1 After the end of an advertising cycle a shortlist of applicants bidding for the property and meeting the labelling criteria will be produced. Applicants will be ranked in order of their priority band with Band A above Band B, Band B above Band C, and Band C above Band D. Where more than one applicant in the same priority band appears on the shortlist they will be ranked in date

order as determined by their date in band (see 2.3). In circumstances where there is more than one applicant in the same band with the same date in band, the applicant with the earliest registration date will appear higher on the shortlist. If there is more than one applicant with the same band, date in band and registration date an officer will make an allocation decision based on the best use of the housing stock and needs of the applicants.

- 7.4.2 Preference during shortlisting will be given to applicants within a band who have a proven connection to the local area.
- 7.4.3 When a shortlist of applicants is completed the landlord of the available property may offer an accompanied viewing of the property to a group of the highest priority applicants. This is to ensure that if the applicant who tops the shortlist decides not to take the tenancy, the property can be quickly offered to the next person on the shortlist.
- 7.4.4 After viewing the property the applicant at the top of the shortlist will be given 24 hours to accept or refuse the offer. If an applicant is offered a tenancy (verbally or in writing) and does not reply to accept that offer within the deadline given, the landlord will take this as a refusal of the offer. If the offer is refused the next person on the shortlist will be offered the property. The landlord will work down the shortlist in order.
- 7.4.5 In exceptional circumstances an officer may make a decision to bypass an applicant on a shortlist, for example, if, in doing so, the offer could put a person at risk of any harm. Any such decisions will be explained fully to the applicant in writing by the landlord making the decision. This is known as a 'sensitive let'.

7.5 Formal offer of the property

- 7.5.1 Once the applicant has confirmed their acceptance of the tenancy the landlord of the property will write to confirm the formal offer of the tenancy. The Home-Link system will then not allow that applicant to be considered for any further properties and once the tenancy starts their housing register application will be cancelled.
- 7.5.2 Once the property is ready to let the landlord of the property will complete the tenancy sign up.

7.6 Withdrawal of offers

- 7.6.1 In exceptional circumstances an offer of a property may be withdrawn, for example:
- a) Where there has been a change in the applicants' circumstances
 - b) Where the successful applicant has rent arrears or other housing related debts that had previously not come to light
 - c) Following verification the applicant is not eligible for the property
 - d) Where an error has been made in the advertising criteria
 - e) Where an offer of accommodation could put a person at risk of any harm
 - f) Where the property is no longer available to let

7.7 Refusing an offer of accommodation

7.7.1 Usually, if an applicant refuses an offer of accommodation made through Home-Link, they will remain in their housing needs band. If an applicant unreasonably refuses three or more offers of a property made through Home-Link or has made little or no attempt to bid for accommodation, an officer may contact the applicant to offer support and assistance and verify their circumstances. The applicant may be moved into a lower priority band or be unable to bid for a specified period not exceeding 6 months.

7.8 Allocations to staff, council members or their family members

7.8.1 Members of staff, their close family and elected councillors who require housing with the Council may apply for housing in the same way as other applicants. Their status should be disclosed on the application form at the time of applying.

7.8.2 If an applicant who is a member of staff, elected councillor or a member of their direct family, makes a successful bid for a property the senior officer will be informed and must approve the letting prior to the formal offer being made.

7.9 Tenancy management outside the scope of the lettings policy

7.9.1 The following tenancy management areas are not included as part of this lettings policy as they are not included within part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended):

- a) Mutual exchanges
- b) Introductory/starter tenancies converted to secure/assured tenancies
- c) Where a secure/assured tenancy of a property is assigned by way of succession to the same property
- d) Where a secure/assured tenancy is assigned to someone who would be qualified to succeed to that tenancy if the secure/assured tenant died immediately before the assignment
- e) Where court orders are made under one of the following:
 - i. Section 24 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973
 - ii. Section 17 (1) of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984
 - iii. Paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Children Act 1989
- f) Managed reciprocals

Chapter 8

Confidentiality and access to information

8.1 Applicants' rights to information

8.1.1 Applicants have the right to request such general information as will enable them to assess:

- a) How their application is likely to be treated under the lettings policy (including whether they are likely to be regarded as a member of a group of people who are to be given preference by this policy, (see Chapter 3)
- b) Whether housing accommodation appropriate to their needs is likely to be made available to them.

8.1.2 Applicants have the right to request information held about their application which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account when considering whether to allocate them housing.

8.2 Data protection

8.2.1 When an applicant applies to the Home-Link scheme the partner organisations will only ask for information that they need to assess their eligibility and housing needs. The partner organisations will collect and keep data in accordance with the council's guidelines on handling personal, sensitive personal or special categories of personal data. You can find out how the Council hold and use information about you on the Council's website.

8.2.2 These guidelines are in accordance with the national regulations which cover both electronic and manual records and the govern everything we do with the data, including collecting, storing, using and disposing of it.

8.2.3 Personal, sensitive personal or special categories of personal data held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:

- a) Where the individual who is the subject of the confidential information has consented to the disclosure
- b) Where disclosure is made in accordance with an information sharing protocol that complies with the ICO's current data sharing code of practice
- c) Where the council or a partner organisation is required by law to make such disclosures

8.3 Requesting information

8.3.1 Applicants are able to request copies of the information held regarding their application. Please note that we cannot provide you with personal information about other people if doing so will breach the regulations.

Appendix 1 Home-Link Partner Organisation List

Local Authority

Cambridge City Council

Mandela House
4 Regent Street
Cambridge
CB2 1BY
Email: cbl@cambridge.gov.uk
Website: www.cambridge.gov.uk

South Cambridgeshire District Council

South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA
Email: cbl@scambs.gov.uk
Website: www.scambs.gov.uk

East Cambridgeshire District Council

The Grange
Nutholt Lane
Ely
Cambs
CB7 4PL
Email:
customerservices@eastcambs.gov.uk
Website: www.eastcambs.gov.uk

Huntingdonshire District Council

Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3TN
Email: housingservices@huntsdc.gov.uk
Website: www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Fenland District Council

Fenland Hall
County Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 8NQ
Email:
info@fenland.gov.uk
Website: www.fenland.gov.uk

LSVT Landlord

Sanctuary Housing

Avro House
49 Lancaster Way Business Park
Ely
Cambs
CB6 3NW
Email:
east-lettings@sanctuary-housing.co.uk
Website: www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk

Chorus Homes

Brook House
Ouse Walk
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3QW
Email: info@chorushomesgroup.co.uk
Website: www.chorushomesgroup.co.uk

Clarion Housing

Reed House
Peachman Way
Broadland Business Park
Norwich
NR7 0WF
Email:
March-Home-Link@myclarionhousing.com
Website: www.myclarionhousing.com

Local Authority

West Suffolk Council

West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

Email: customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Website: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk

LSVT Landlord

Flagship Housing Group

Keswick Hall
Keswick
Norwich
Norfolk
NR4 6TJ

Email: info@flagship-housing.co.uk

Website: www.flagship-housing.co.uk

Havebury Housing Partnership

Havebury House
Western Way
Bury St. Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3SP

Email: office@havebury.com

Website: www.havebury.com

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Appendix 2

Glossary of Terms

Adapted properties – a property that has been adapted for an applicant with disabilities.

Advertising cycle – how often properties are advertised and available to make a bid on.

Advertised – properties that are advertised and are available for applicants to bid for through Home-Link.

Age restrictions – where a property is labelled, as only being available to applicants of a certain age.

Application number – a unique housing register number generated by the computer system.

Bedroom eligibility – how many bedrooms a household is assessed as needing.

Bid – the process used by applicants in registering an interest in an available property.

Choice based lettings (CBL) – a method of allocating social and affordable homes which have become available for letting by openly advertising them, and allowing applicants to bid for these.

Customer/applicant – is either a tenant of a partner organisation (including those in temporary accommodation) or a housing applicant on the Home-Link housing register.

Date of registration – the date an application form is registered with a partner organisation.

Date in band – the date an application is placed in a housing needs band and used as the applicable date when shortlisting.

Decision making organisation – the organisation that made a decision about a housing or homeless application.

Direct let – a property that is offered directly to an applicant, without them having to bid.

Domestic abuse – is threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (physical, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional) by a partner, former partner or a family member.

Housing options – looking at the number of ways in which an applicant or customer might be assisted and supported to find a solution to their housing

needs. Housing options may include private rented accommodation, mutual exchange, or even a help to buy product.

Housing register – a list of those requesting, eligible and qualifying for housing.

Housing related debts – are defined as recoverable current rent arrears, former tenant arrears, outstanding re-chargeable repairs, current and former housing related service charge arrears and court costs. They may also include Council Tax debts or Housing Benefit overpayments.

Joint application – where more than one applicant applies to join the housing register on one application form.

Labelling properties – describing who is eligible to bid for a property and if there will be a preference applied.

Local Connection – The connection an applicant has to a specific area.

Local elected Councillors– each local authority is governed by a group of elected councillors also known as members.

LSVT landlord – Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, where a local authority has sold its housing stock to a Registered Provider

Mutual exchange – a scheme which allows two social housing tenants to swap their homes.

Partner organisations – all the councils that are partners to the Home-Link scheme.

Reasonable Preference – The phrase used in the Housing Act to describe those types of housing need that should be given a priority in a local allocations policy.

Registered Providers – also known as housing associations. These are social landlords who also provide social and affordable rented homes for which applicants/customers can bid for through the Home-Link scheme.

Regular Forces – Means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Her Majesty's regular army or the Royal Air Force

Reserve Forces – Means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Regular Reserves, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force

Section 193C (4) – The Main Housing Duty does not apply, but the authority will still have a duty to ensure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant.

Transferring tenant – an applicant who is currently a tenant of a local authority or registered provider and who wishes to move.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Introduction – Please read


The Public Sector Equality Duty, introduced under the Equality Act 2010, requires all public bodies, including local authorities, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) allow the Council to:

- Show that we are meeting this legal duty by demonstrating due regard for the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Identify possible negative impacts on individuals and groups with protected characteristics, plan mitigating action and seek to maximise opportunities to advance equality within our activities.

EqIAs provide a methodical approach to the assessment of impacts across the [nine protected characteristics](#) and should be completed during the development and review of all Council policies, strategies, procedures, projects or functions. Where there is any doubt, the completion of an EqIA is always recommended.

Throughout the course of this form, please hover over the [] symbol for guidance in relation to specific questions. When the form is completed, please send an electronic copy to equality.schemes@scambs.gov.uk. If you require any additional support completing the form, please email the above address.

Equality Impact Assessment Complete Form

Section 1: Identifying Details

- 1.1** Officer completing EqIA:
Heather Wood – Chair of Home-Link Management Board and Head of Housing Advice and Options for South Cambridgeshire District Council
- 1.2** Team and Service:
Housing Advice and Options Service – Allocations Function
- 1.3** Title of proposal:
Lettings Policy Review
- 1.4** EqIA completion date:
03/03/2021
- 1.5** Proposal implementation date:
01/04/2021
- 1.6** Who will be responsible for implementing this proposal:
Housing Advice and Options Service – Allocations staff

Section 2: Proposal to be Assessed

- 2.1** Type of proposal:
Policy
If other, please specify
Existing policy has been reviewed and updated.
- 2.2** Is the proposal:
Review of existing

2.3 State the date of any previous equality impact assessment completed in relation to this proposal (if applicable):

2018 and 2012

2.4 What are the headline aims of the proposal and the objectives that will help to accomplish these aims? (Approximately 250 words)

To allocate social housing fairly, consistently and in a transparent manner across the partnership area of Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk, ensuring that all statutory allocations requirements are that properties applicants are assessed in a manner which assists households in the highest level of need.

2.6 Which groups or individuals will the proposal affect:

- Service Users
 Councillors
 External Stakeholders
 Other
 Employees

If other, please specify [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2.7 How will these groups or individuals be affected? (you will be asked to provide more detail on the specific impacts on different protected characteristic groups later on in the form) (approximately 250 words)

The Allocations Policy applies to the way in which social housing is allocated and determines who can apply. Anyone living or wishing to live in the partnership will be affected (this includes the areas encompassed by Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdon District Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and West Suffolk Council). Certain categories of people are offered greater priority under the policy and so the policy will impact differently on groups of people depending on their circumstances.


2.8 How many people will this proposal affect? (Approximately)

Anyone is able to apply for social housing although there are eligibility and local connection criteria that will determine whether households can be accepted onto the register. As an indication of the levels of need there are approximately 10,288* households who currently have a live application for housing across the partnership area (*the exact number is fluid as new people register and existing applicants are housed, meaning the number changes on a daily basis).

- 2.9** If any part of the proposal is being undertaken by external partners, please specify how the Council will ensure that they will meet equality standards? (Approximately 250 words)

The Allocations Partnership includes 6 local authorities and 34 Registered Providers (RPs). The strategic direction of the partnership, including the allocations review, is overseen by the Home-Link Management Board comprising representatives from each council and RP representation. The day to day operational partnership work is undertaken by the Home-Link Manager.


Section 3: Evidence and Data

- 3.1** Describe any research (this could include consultation) and analysis you have undertaken to understand how [protected characteristic groups](#) are likely to be affected? Please list any key sources that you used to obtain this Information. 

(Approximately 250 words)

Existing measures identified during the 2012 Allocations Policy review are already in place to support applicants with protected characteristics. For example, processes are in place to identify and support people who may not have access to IT or lack the ability to place their own bids for properties. For those where English isn't their first or main language, translation and support is available on request. There is no plan to change any of the existing support measures identified during the [2012 Allocations Policy Review EqIA](#) to support applicants with protected characteristics. In terms of new impacts and mitigating measures, the 2020 policy review proposes very few


amendments and therefore the impact is not considered to be high. National legislation dictates much of the direction of the Allocations Policy including which groups of people should be given 'reasonable preference' for accommodation. During the re-drafting stage, Legal advice was sought from Bevan Brittain LLP to ensure the updated policy was legally compliant and was not unintentionally discriminatory. The legal advice was obtained in October 2020 and, based on this feedback, some small tweaks to wording were introduced to ensure the council did not inadvertently fetter its discretion (for example by allowing the minimum weekly employment criteria to be waived for people with disabilities). In addition, guidance was provided as to how the policy should frame its approach to dealing with allocations for people with housing related debt. These recommendations were also incorporated and included in the policy draft available as part of the public consultation. The public consultation ran for 8 weeks from 23rd October 2020 to 18th December 2020. No major issues, changes or areas for concern were highlighted as a result of the consultation process although some further small wording tweaks have been made to the final draft as a result. Overall there were high levels of agreement for the proposed changes to the policy.

- 3.2** Describe any research (this could include consultation) and analysis you have undertaken to understand any effects on any other groups of people not mentioned in the nine [protected characteristic groups](#) (for example people who live in rural areas, who live in areas of high growth, or from low income backgrounds). 

(Approximately 250 words)

Professional agencies (ie Criminal Justice, voluntary sector, Public Health colleagues and County Council colleagues) were contacted and invited to comment on the proposed amendments. Feedback was received from criminal justice colleagues which referenced the work already in place to create a bespoke accommodation pathway for offenders. (The Homeless Reduction Act requires bespoke accommodation pathways to be developed for specific groups of people

ie offenders, young persons etc. These pathways are already in place and are subject to regular monitoring and review. Minor amendments have been made to the draft Allocations Policy to better reflect the wider partnership and protocol working that exists). In addition, detailed feedback was received in relation to people experiencing domestic abuse and much of this has been incorporated into the final draft of the policy (for example minor wording tweaks to make it more explicit that people experiencing coercive control, including economic control, will not be adversely affected).


- 3.3** If you have not undertaken any consultation, please detail why not, or when consultation is planned to take place. 
(Approximately 250 words)
Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 4: Impact of proposal on those with protected characteristics

4.1 Age:

- 4.1.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?
yes

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.2 Disability
If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.1.2)

- 4.1.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including
- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
 - whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
 - approximately 250 words per impact

Positive impact as specialist provision is available for older people

4.1.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4.2 Disability:


4.2.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

yes

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.3 Gender Reassignment

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.2.2)

4.2.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

The changes to the 'local connection' criteria which clarify employment expectations could negatively impact on some groups of people ie people with disabilities who may be unable to work for the required 16 hours per week. However, to avoid the council inadvertently fettering its discretion, the policy explicitly states that the council can waive this requirement if it chooses in order to prevent the possibility of discrimination.

4.2.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
4.3 Ensure employment criteria contain the appropriate wording to ensure the council does not fetter its discretion and can respond sensitively to individual circumstances.	Heather Wood	Completed October 2020	n/a – already completed

Gender Reassignment:


4.3.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

No

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.4 Marriage and Civil Partnership

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.3.2)

4.3.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Click or tap here to enter text.

4.3.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4.4 Marriage and Civil Partnership:

4.4.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?


No

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.5

Pregnancy and Maternity

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.4.2)

4.4.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Click or tap here to enter text.

4.4.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.


4.5 Pregnancy and Maternity:

4.5.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

Yes

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.6 Race
If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.5.2)

4.5.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

This is a positive impact as pregnant women are assessed as needing two rooms from week 24.

4.5.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?

Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
----------------------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------

4.6 Race:


4.6.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

Choose an item.

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.7 Religion or Belief

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.6.2)

4.6.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Click or tap here to enter text.

4.6.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4.7 Religion or Belief:

4.7.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

no

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.8 Sex

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.7.2)

4.7.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 📖
- approximately 250 words per impact

Click or tap here to enter text.

4.7.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4.8 Sex:

4.8.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

no

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.9 (Sexual Orientation)

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.8.2)

4.8.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 📖
- approximately 250 words per impact

Click or tap here to enter text.

4.8.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4.9 Sexual Orientation:


4.9.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

no

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 4.10 (Other)

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.9.2)

4.9.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Click or tap here to enter text.

4.9.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4.10 Other: (e.g. rurality, growth, socio-economic status etc.).


4.10.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

yes

If you have selected no – please move forward to question 5.1

If you have selected yes – please continue below (4.10.2)

4.10.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

An increase in applications for social housing is anticipated as people experience the social/financial impacts of the pandemic. For example, loss of income, marital breakdown etc. The Allocations policy is designed to allocate social housing fairly and consistently, including a recognition of people’s financial circumstances as well

as other relevant factors that may impact on housing need. The policy does not discriminate against people on low incomes. Demand for social housing outstrips supply and so Housing Advice teams have a range of other measures in place to support people accessing housing advice, these include access to specialist debt advice through arrangements with the CAB, specialist housing advice via local authority teams and a range of services for rough sleepers. In addition, each local authority can offer support to people who are unlikely to receive support via the social housing register and/or who wish to access housing in the private sector. These measures include the loan of rent deposits and rent in advance as well as access to private sector leasing schemes.

Although negative impacts have been identified, suitable mitigation measures are already in place within local authority Housing Advice teams.

4.10.3 Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 5: Summary

5.1 Briefly summarise the key findings of the EqIA and any significant equality considerations that should be taken into account when deciding whether or not to proceed with the proposal (this section can be included within the 'equality implications' section of any committee reports). (Approximately 250 words)

The 2020 review of the Allocations Policy did not lead to many significant changes in the policy itself. Previous policy reviews (in 2012 and 2018) identified equality implications which have already been addressed including mitigation measures which are still in place. (For example, assisted bidding for people unable to pace property bids online). In terms of the 2020 revisions, only significant two aspects have been identified in relation to this impact assessment; the first element is in respect of the proposed employment requirements which had the possibility to negatively impact on people with disabilities. The policy wording has therefore been amended to allow the council the ability to over-ride or lessen the employment requirement where appropriate. In terms of the second element, detailed feedback was received via the consultation process in relation to people experiencing domestic abuse. Further tweaks to the policy wording were made to ensure the policy was more explicit in its intention not to inadvertently discriminate against people experiencing financial abuse and other forms of coercive control. No further equality implications were identified. It should also be noted that the policy has to conform to legal requirements in terms of the allocation of social housing, including giving 'reasonable preference' to certain groups of people. This policy is legally compliant and additional minor changes to the wording have been incorporated to reflect other statutory requirements ie in relation to accommodation protocols and pathways.

5.2 Confirm the recommendation of the officer completing the EqIA:

- Proceed with the proposal with no actions identified as required within Section 4 of the EqIA: Analysis demonstrates that the policy is robust, the
- evidence shows no potential for discrimination and we have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.

- Adjust proposal and proceed: We will take steps to remove barriers or better advance equality as detailed in the action tables in Section 4.
- Where possible actions should be done before the proposal is implemented. Where this isn't possible, timescales for completion are included in Section 4 action tables

- Reject the proposal: Analysis demonstrates that the proposal will cause unlawful discrimination and it must be removed or changed

5.3 Signature of individual completing EqIA:

Heather Wood

5.4 Date of completion:

03/03/2021

Section 6: Sign Off

6.1 Approving officer EqIA review outcome:

- Proceed with the proposal with no actions identified as required within Section 4 of the EqIA: Analysis demonstrates that the policy is robust, the evidence shows no potential for discrimination and we have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.

Adjust proposal and proceed: We will take steps to remove barriers or better advance equality as detailed in the action tables in Section 4.

- Where possible actions should be done before the proposal is implemented. Where this isn't possible, timescales for completion are included in Section 4 action tables
- Reject the proposal: Analysis demonstrates that the proposal will cause unlawful discrimination and it must be removed or changed

6.2 Do you give permission to publish this EqIA on SCDC website (delete as appropriate)? If no, please state reason

Yes

6.3 When will this proposal next be reviewed and who will this be?

Click or tap to enter a date.

Click or tap here to enter text.



6.4 Approving officer signature:

Heather Wood – chair of Home-link Management Board

6.5 Date of approval:

03/03/2021

Please send a copy to Equality.Schemes@scambs.gov.uk

**Item**

PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING,
THE MEWS, HISTON ROAD

To:

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing

Report by: Claire Flowers, Head of Housing Development

Housing Scrutiny Committee 22/06/2020

Tel: 01223 – 457515 Email: claire.flowers@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

Arbury

Key Decision**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 In September 2020 Approval was given for the purchase of 7 new Council homes at the Mews, Histon Road and Authority delegated to the Strategic Director to approve contract terms with Laragh Homes/LLP in respect of this transaction.
- 1.2 The Council has now been approached as a potential buyer of 3 additional Affordable homes at this development which were formerly earmarked for the Combined Authorities 100k homes programme.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval for a revised capital budget to purchase these additional affordable units from Laragh Homes, for rent as Council homes. These will consist of the following:
 - 3 x 1 bed 2 person Flats
- 1.4 The purchase of these homes will be included within an overall purchase for 10 homes.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the purchase of 3 additional new Council rented homes at the Mews, Histon Road and delegate Authority to the Strategic Director to approve contract terms with Laragh Homes/LLP in respect of this transaction.
- 2.2 Approve a revised combined total budget of **£1,978,300** to enable the development of 10 homes at the Mews, Histon Road.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has approved the purchase of 7 affordable homes for Council rent at this site. There is an opportunity to purchase a further 3 homes which were previously planned to be part of the Combined Authorities £100K home programme. The purchase by the Council has the benefit of having all of the homes in Council ownership in the flatted block and would meet housing need for 1- bedroom homes.
- 3.5 The Council's ability to purchase the three 3 additional 1 bed 2 person units is subject to final outcome of negotiations between Laragh Homes and the Combined Authority. It will also require variation to the Section 106 planning agreement.

3.3 Local Housing Need

There is a recognised need for more affordable housing across the city. The table below demonstrates the number of households on the Housing Needs Register as of March 21. There are currently 445 households in need of a 1- bed property across the city; progressing this scheme will help in meeting the needs of those on the waiting list.

Cambridge City	1bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
	445	195	109	31

4. Site Details

- 4.1 The Mews development is located on the former Scotsdale Laundry and Nursery Site, Histon Road, Arbury. The site was formerly allocated for development in the 2006 Local Plan. A location plan of the site is at Appendix 1. More recently, the site accommodated the Cambridge Squash and Fitness Club.



5. Scheme

5.1 The Development will deliver 27 new properties, 17 private and 10 affordable. It has full planning permission and works have started.

5.2 As well as the homes the scheme will deliver:

- Associated amenity space including 2 no. public green spaces,
- Adapted vehicular and pedestrian access onto Histon Road, part of which will be adopted, extent subject to negotiation with Highways as part of the Planning process,
- New vehicular and pedestrian road layout to allow circulation around site,
- Improved pedestrian/cycle connection to Darwin Green site to the west.

The proposed scheme layout is included as Appendix 1

5.3 Laragh homes have agreed to deliver the scheme to meet the Councils Employers Requirements. The Council would employ an Employers Agent and Clerk of Works to ensure quality is monitored throughout.

6. Programme

The indicative start on Site for this affordable component of the development is May 2021, with a completion date set for December 2022.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The total indicative capital cost of the Mews affordable housing approved in September 2021 was estimated at **£1,513,000 for the purchase of 7x Affordable units**. This included the purchase price of the dwellings and all associated internal and external fees.
- 7.2 Purchase of 3 additional 1-bedroom units will require an increase to a total cost to a total of **£1,978,300**. This is made up of a purchase value of £1,870,000 for 10 homes, and associated costs of £108,300.00
- 7.3 Provisionally it is expected that 10% of the investment be funded through Right to Buy receipts, with the remaining investment met from HRA resources for the purchase of the affordable homes on the site.
- 7.4 This will result in the following initial mix of funding:

Right to Buy receipts:	£197,830
Devolution Grant:	£0
HRA resources:	£1,780,470
General Fund	£0
Total:	£1,978,300

- 7.5 The housing capital budget will be **£1,978,300**

8. Implications

(a) Staffing Implications

The development scheme will be managed by the Housing Development Agency.

(b) Equality and Poverty Implications

A series of EQIAs have been undertaken for the Council House Programme, the Housing Development Service and for individual schemes. The EQIAs mainly highlight the benefits of the Council retaining direct control of new housing development itself to ensure a focus on the delivery of housing that meets a diverse range of housing needs. Part of the assessment underlines the need for Affordable Housing to help those most likely to suffer poverty as well as ways in which new Affordable Housing will directly save money for tenants, such as energy saving measures and reducing the impact of fuel poverty.

(c) Environmental Implications

A Renewable Energy Assessment informed the Development proposal by Laragh Homes as approved. PV panels were the preferred option, and these are required through a Planning Condition.

(d) Procurement Implications

n/a. Laragh homes have selected the Council as its affordable housing provider as required by the S106.

(e) Community Safety Implications

There are no recognised implications on Community Safety with the proposed developments. The scheme will be built in accordance to Secure by Design guidelines as set out within the City Councils Design Brief.

11. Risks

Below is a table setting out key risks associated with the project:

Description of risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Cost Risk – Construction works	Low – the council aims to enter into a fixed-price work contract.- with payment on completion of the homes	Increased build cost.	Fixed work costs agreed on signing of contract mitigate this risk.
Construction - Delivery	Med- Market led development therefore may be affected by market factors. However work has already started on site, Planning Approval is in place and underlying demand in Cambridge remains strong.	Failure to deliver the additional 10-council rented homes. A risk of some delay to the programme but risk of non-delivery is low.	Confirmation planning approvals are in place. Due diligence before contract and payment structure to ensure Council payment is on certificates of actual work.
Construction -Quality	Med- risk of CCC design & spec requirements not being met, and Risk of poor quality control on site during construction. The Council have not worked with this developer before due diligence will be	Med- will impact potentially on quality standards of completed buildings; increased defects.	CCC have appointed EA and Clerk of Works to oversee scheme. Contract will include agreed specification and drawings for the units.

	undertaken prior to contracting as well as quality control.		
Developer insolvency	Med- the construction and development industry may be impacted on further by changes to the economy.	Med- would delay delivery and potentially increase costs whilst administrators managed process.	Financial checks have been undertaken and the contract set up with payment on completion protects the Councils position.
Resources	Low- Allocation of resource is within CCC control	Low	Project management of scheme can be contained within current H DA resourcing
Another provider being selected	Med	High	As the council has not yet exchanged on these homes if the purchase of the additional 3 is not agreed the developer may review its affordable housing partner and move to an RP willing to take all 10 homes.

Background papers

Further detail on the proposed development may be accessed through the Greater Cambridge Planning portal using reference 19/0718.

20/39/HSC- Purchase of 7 homes at the Mews Histon Road.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – The proposed scheme layout

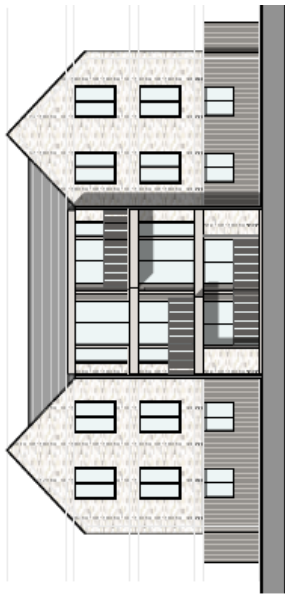
13. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Jaques van der Vyver, Housing Development Agency, tel: 01223 457515, email: Jaques.vandervyver@cambridge.gov.uk

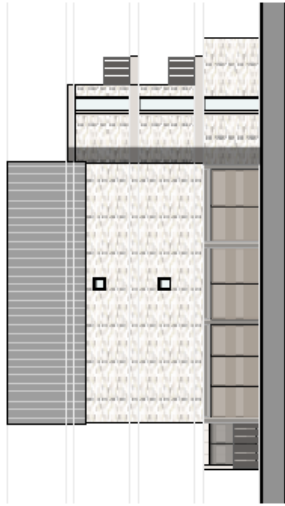
Appendix 1 – Proposed Scheme Layout



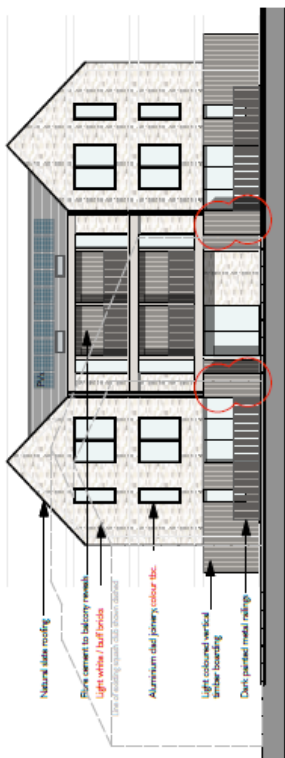
Site Plan



Rear Elevation

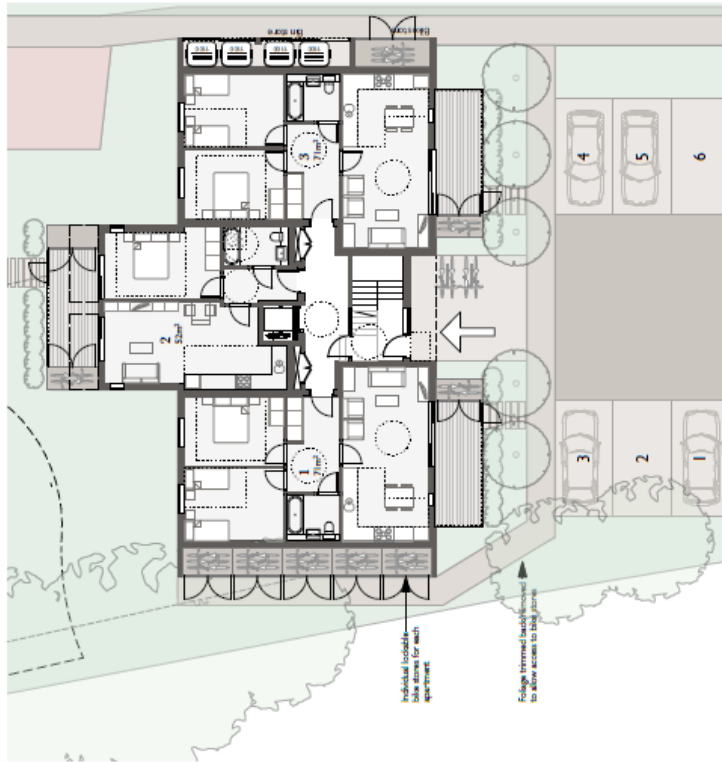


Side Elevation

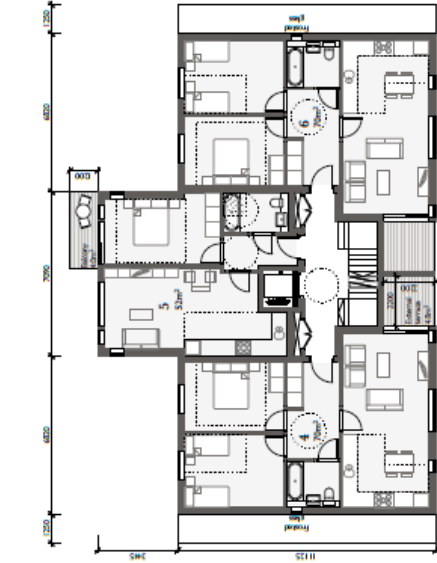


Front Elevation

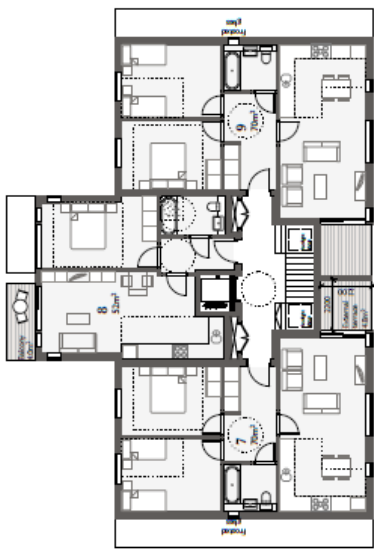
- ▶ Natural slate roofing
- ▶ Slate cement to balcony reveals
- ▶ Light white / buff bricks
- ▶ Aluminium clad joinery colour etc.
- ▶ Light coloured vertical slat boarding
- ▶ Dark painted metal railings



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

Notes		HaysonWardMiller Architects		APARTMENT PLANS AND ELEVATIONS	
1. This drawing must not be scaled - work only to figure dimensions		Project	295.301 Hinton Road, Cambridge	Job no.	18.630
2. Dimensions must be verified on site by the contractor before		For	LARA-GH	Drawing no.	P20
3. This drawing is for information only and is not to be used for construction		Scale	1:100 @ A1, 1:200 @ A3	Revision no.	G
4. This drawing applies only to this job and site					
5. This information on this drawing is copyright protected					



Item

Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy: New Housing Policies

To:

Mike Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 22/06/2021

Report by:

Suzanne Hemingway, Strategic Director
Tel: 01223 - 457461 Email: Suzanne.hemingway@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report seeks approval for three new housing policies for Greater Cambridge.

1.2 The proposed Build to Rent policy outlines what will be expected of developers bringing forward new purpose-built private rented sector housing. It will be used in dealing with planning applications for Build to Rent housing, and will help to inform the approach to be taken in the emerging joint Local Plan.

1.3 The Clustering & Distribution of Affordable Housing policy updates the councils' previous policy on how developers will be expected to group and locate Social and Affordable Rent housing across mixed tenure schemes to help create mixed, balanced and sustainable communities. Again, it will be used to help inform decisions on planning applications for affordable housing.

1.4 The Affordable Rents policy shows how the councils expect Registered Providers of social housing to set rent levels for Affordable Rent homes to ensure they are as affordable as possible to those who need them.

1.5 All three policies have been developed in conjunction with South Cambridgeshire District Council and will form annexes to the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019 to 2023.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

2.1 Approve the proposed Build to Rent Policy attached as Appendix A to this report

2.2 Approve the proposed Clustering & Distribution of Affordable Housing policy attached as Appendix B to this report

2.3 Approve the proposed Affordable Rents policy attached as Appendix C to this report.

3. Background

3.1 Since consultation on the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils' Local Plans published in 2018, and publication of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019 to 2023, new issues & priorities have been emerging in relation to new housing development and the affordability of affordable housing.

3.2 Build to Rent policy

3.2.1 The proposed Build to Rent policy stems from Build to Rent being included as a new form of tenure in the National Planning Policy Framework.

3.2.2 Build to Rent is a form of private rented housing, usually brought forward by private investors in order to generate a long-term rental income. It is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework, and further National Planning Policy Guidance covers how Build to Rent schemes are expected to come forward.

3.2.3 As well as providing good quality homes at market rents, Build to Rent schemes are expected to provide an element of affordable housing in the form of an Affordable Private Rent tenure.

3.2.4 There is growing interest from investors and developers in bringing forward new schemes in Greater Cambridge, and a clear policy approach is necessary to help to ensure that proposed schemes meet local needs.

3.2.3 The policy will be used in making planning decisions and will help to inform how Build to Rent is dealt with in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

3.3 Clustering & distribution of affordable housing policy

3.3.1 The council's existing policy on how new affordable homes should be grouped and distributed across new developments is outlined in Cambridge City Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2008 and draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document published in 2014.

3.3.2 Whilst these have been used as a basis to work from in considering planning applications for affordable housing, a more updated approach is required to meet current and future needs. These include the higher density, larger scale developments which are now coming forward, including developments on the urban fringes of the City; and the council's own house-building programme which has been bringing forward some 100% affordable housing schemes.

3.3.3 National policy has also made it clear, particularly through the Social Housing White Paper published in 2020, that affordable housing should not be separated or segregated from other forms of housing.

3.3.4 The proposed policy aims to support mixed, balanced and sustainable communities through ensuring that affordable housing is appropriately sited on mixed tenure developments.

3.4 Setting of Affordable Rents policy

3.4.1 National guidance allows Affordable Rents for social housing to be set at up to 80% of market rents. With high market rents across Greater Cambridge this would be unaffordable to many of those in housing need.

3.4.2 The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy currently urges providers to set Affordable Rents for social housing at levels at or below Local Housing Allowance Rates, to ensure they are as affordable as possible to those who need them. This approach has been generally accepted amongst Registered Providers operating across Greater Cambridge.

3.4.3 Local Housing Allowance rates (set by government) were raised significantly from April 2020, which means that using these as a benchmark for setting Affordable Rents now presents more affordability issues for prospective tenants.

3.4.4 The proposals, although not formally binding on Registered Providers, aim to ensure that Affordable Rents are set at reasonable levels so that, as far as possible, those most in need are able to afford to live in them.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

Page: 4

There are no immediate financial implications for the council from the Build to Rent policy.

There should be no financial implications from the Clustering & Distribution of Affordable Housing policy for the council or the council's housing development programme compared with the policy within the existing Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

The Affordable Rents policy aims to strike a balance between ensuring that providers do not charge unreasonably high rents so that people in high priority for housing cannot afford them, and ensuring that the delivery of new affordable homes, including those within the council's own house-building programme, remains viable.

b) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications from any of the three policies.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The Build to Rent policy should have a particular positive impact on younger people of working age as this is the main age group likely to form the market for Build to Rent, but it also explicitly recognises the potential demand for rented housing for older people.

Requiring Build to Rent schemes to meet Local Plan accessibility standards will also benefit older people and those with physical disabilities.

Ensuring provision of safe and secure Affordable Private Rent homes should also provide a housing option for the relatively high proportion of black and minority ethnic minority households living in the private rented sector compared with other tenures.

The Build to Rent and Affordable Rents policies both aim to ensure that affordable homes are as affordable as possible to those who need them.

The Clustering and Distribution of Affordable Housing policy should also have a positive impact on those within some of the protected characteristic groups; in particular on older people and those with disabilities through recognising that larger clusters of homes aimed at these groups may be appropriate to support efficient provision of any necessary care and support.

Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out on each of the three draft policies.

d) Environmental Implications

NIL climate change rating

e) Procurement Implications

There are no procurement implications.

f) Community Safety Implications

There are no direct community safety implications, although one of the objectives of the Build to Rent and Clustering & Distribution of Affordable Housing policies is to promote mixed and balanced communities, which in turn may help to promote community safety.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

A six-week public consultation was carried out on the draft policies, through a public survey questionnaire and a presentation to developers and Registered Providers of housing. Details of the consultation and how the results have

been used to influence the final version of the policies is available as a background paper.

The final policies, together with the results of the consultation, will be published on Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils' websites. A news release will be issued, and information provided through Twitter and Facebook.

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Equality Impact Assessments on each of the three policies;
- Analysis of results of consultation.

7. Appendices

Appendix A: Build to Rent policy

Appendix B: Clustering and Distribution of Affordable Housing policy

Appendix C: Affordable Rents policy

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Helen Reed, Housing Strategy Manager, tel: 01223 - 457943, email: helen.reed@cambridge.gov.uk.

Build to Rent policy - Annexe to the Housing Strategy

Purpose

1. This policy outlines the approach that the councils will take around the development of new, purpose-built homes for rent. It will be a material consideration in making planning decisions. It will form an annexe to the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023, and will help to inform how Build to Rent is dealt with in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan and in any future relevant Supplementary Planning Document.

Introduction

2. Build to rent is defined in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) as:

‘Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. It can form part of a wider multi-tenure development comprising either flats or houses, but should be on the same site and/or contiguous with the main development. Schemes will usually offer longer tenancy agreements of three years or more, and will typically be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control.....affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).’

3. Build to Rent and Affordable Private Rent, as types of private rented sector housing, are different from Social and Affordable Rent homes provided by councils and other registered providers specifically for applicants on the councils’ housing registers. Build to Rent, together with provision of Affordable Private Rent, is generally funded by commercial investors seeking a long-term rental income.
4. [National guidance on build to rent, 2018](#), states that local planning authorities should use a local housing need assessment to take into account the need for a range of housing types and tenures in their area, including provision for those

who wish to rent. If a need is identified, authorities should include a plan policy setting out their approach to promoting and accommodating build to rent, recognising the circumstances and locations where build to rent developments will be encouraged.

5. The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy supports the development of purpose-built private rented housing to help provide additional housing choice and to help accelerate the delivery of new homes. This Build to Rent policy gives more detail on what the councils expect from new developments coming forward.
6. The affordable housing requirement on Build to Rent schemes detailed in this policy does not change the overall requirement for 40% affordable housing on major multi-tenure development sites as set out within the councils' Local Plans. (Major housing developments are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more).
7. The policy has been informed by the National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance, together with recent research on Build to Rent commissioned jointly by the two councils (these being "Savills: [The Build to Rent market in Greater Cambridge and West Suffolk, June 2020](#)" and "[Arc4: Market demand appraisal reports, and Build to Rent Market Strategic Overview and Summary of Site-Specific Appraisals 2021](#)"). Implementation of the policy will also take into account any subsequent relevant research, including work to identify housing needs of specific groups which is currently under way to inform a new Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

What this policy covers

8. There is no single model for Build to Rent schemes, and sizes of schemes can vary. They can be stand-alone schemes – for example in infill areas – or blocks/phases within larger development areas planned or being brought forward for development. In the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and the councils' wider objectives, this policy applies to schemes which:

- 8.1. Provide good quality homes, designed and built specifically and entirely for rent (excluding conversions);
 - 8.2. Are held as Build to Rent under a covenant of at least 15 years;
 - 8.3. Offer tenancies of three years or more to all tenants who want them;
 - 8.4. Are professionally managed stock in single ownership and control; and
 - 8.5. Are expected to include appropriate provision of affordable housing.
9. It does not cover stock built for sale where a developer/investor or registered provider decides to retain a number of the homes for use as private rented stock. It also does not cover for-sale homes that are purchased on completion of a private for sale scheme.

Policy

10. An appropriately balanced mix of property sizes will be required in any scheme, taking into account profile of demand, to help support the councils' aspirations around place shaping and creating mixed and balanced communities.
11. The councils may require Build to Rent schemes on major multi-tenure development sites to be spread out across the development in small groups. They may also require a limit on the size of schemes and/or the proportion of Build to Rent homes provided in a particular location.
12. Quality of schemes is important; particularly environmental standards in line with the councils' Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document. National space standards will also apply, as will the relevant local authority's Local Plan, other planning policies and area specific requirements in relation to a range of issues, such as high quality design, amenity space, car & cycle parking, accessibility standards and biodiversity net gain. The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy also provides information on quality requirements.
13. Some internal and/or external communal space and/or in-house amenities are expected to be provided in Build to Rent schemes, including work-space

provision which should be available for use by both market and Affordable Private Rent tenants. Design also needs to take into account likely frequent movement of furniture and belongings through communal areas. Public open space around Build to Rent schemes should, where appropriate, add to the amenities available to the wider community to encourage wider social interaction.

14. A single management company or operator will be expected to manage the whole Build to Rent scheme, including providing an appropriate level of daily on-site management. We would expect the management company to also work alongside other local community development provision as appropriate to support cohesion between Build to Rent residents and the wider community.
15. A robust market report will be needed to clearly demonstrate how any scheme would meet local need and demand. Information will also be required on how schemes and management will support the place-shaping agenda.
16. The affordable housing contribution, as a long-term benefit in perpetuity, will normally be expected to be provided on-site where it is necessary to build or contribute to a mixed and balanced community, as Affordable Private Rent or through other affordable tenures where part of a wider multi-tenure development. Although there may be circumstances where the councils consider an equivalent financial contribution to be more appropriate to be invested in affordable housing elsewhere; for example where this would achieve a better overall mix of tenures.
17. A minimum of 20% homes in Build to Rent developments of 10 or more homes will be required to be provided as Affordable Private Rent, subject to paragraphs 15 above and 32 below. This is a minimum and the councils will seek to achieve a higher percentage than this wherever possible.
18. All the Affordable Private Rent homes must be constructed and managed to the same high-quality standards as the market rent homes. They must be tenure-blind and physically indistinguishable from the market homes in terms of design, quality, size and location on the site, and access to and payment for services &

utilities. In the case of apartments, different buildings for different tenures will not be acceptable.

19. Affordable Private Rent homes must be provided at a minimum discount of 20% relevant to local market rents, and be affordable and available to households on a range of incomes who would struggle to rent or buy locally on the open market. In setting rent levels regard should be had to the councils' Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy and Setting of Affordable Rents policy. This is a minimum discount, and the councils will seek to achieve a higher percentage discount wherever possible.
20. There should be clear arrangements for setting and reviewing rents for both the market and affordable homes, providing some certainty to applicants from the outset about how rent levels are likely to change. Rental discounts for the Affordable Private Rent homes should be reviewed on the same basis as rents for market homes.
21. The councils may want particular groups to be given some priority for the Affordable Private Rent homes; local workers on developments close to areas of employment for example.
22. For Affordable Private Rent homes, criteria around issues such as: eligibility; rent setting and review; marketing; monitoring; and clawback and other arrangements should units be decommissioned at any time, will need to be agreed with the relevant council.
23. The section 106 agreement will need to include a monitoring and review mechanism covering the option for post-occupation trade-off between the number of Affordable Private Rent units and the rental discount offered on them should future circumstances justify a higher level of discount.
24. Changing of Affordable Private Rent to another tenure may be permitted in some circumstances. For example, one-for one swaps between market and affordable;

where a trade-off is agreed with the council between the number of Affordable Private Rent units and the rental discount offered on them; or where it is clearly impracticable to continue to retain the dwellings as Affordable Private Rent.

25. A clear exit plan will need to be agreed with the council through the section 106 in case some or all of the market and/or affordable homes are decommissioned in the future, with agreed clawback arrangements in place.
26. Tenancies of at least three years should be offered, and preferably longer.
27. All tenants (market and affordable) should be given the opportunity to renew their tenancy at the end of their tenancy period, with tenant-only tenancy break clauses in place allowing a month's notice any time after the first six months. This should apply during the overall covenant period as a minimum.
28. No-one should be excluded on the basis of being in receipt of state benefits; and mechanisms should be in place for support to be available if a tenant falls into financial difficulties.
29. Introduction packs are expected to be provided for all new tenants.
30. A covenant period of at least 15 years will apply to the market homes. Longer covenants of up to 25 years or more will be sought wherever possible. A valuation of both the market and affordable units will be required as part of the s106 agreement to enable the level of clawback to be calculated should the covenant be broken.
31. Valuation for viability purposes should be in line with up to date nationally recognised guidance for Build to Rent.
32. On major multi-tenure developments or as part of larger development areas, viability should form part of the wider viability assessment covering the whole development area. As part of this, 40% of the homes across the whole

development will be required to be provided as affordable housing with the Affordable Private Rent or other Build to Rent affordable housing contribution contributing towards the 40%.

33. Any potential trade-off between complying with all the policy, Local Plan and any area specific plan requirements, and keeping rents, including service charges, at reasonable levels which are affordable to households on a range of incomes, will need to be negotiated with the council, providing clear evidence of why those requirements cannot be met.

Justification for policy

Strategic context

34. This policy is set within the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy's long-term vision and objectives, which in turn reflect the broader priorities of the two councils. In particular it will help to: promote health and well-being; support the local economy; and reduce carbon emissions and promote environmental sustainability and biodiversity, through:

- a) The creation of mixed, balanced, inclusive and sustainable communities.
- b) A mix of homes to meet a range of needs, including affordable housing.
- c) High quality homes, built to high sustainability standards, with built-in resilience to climate change and fuel poverty, which can help with the councils' aspirations to achieve zero carbon status by 2030 in Cambridge City and 2050 in South Cambridgeshire.
- d) Improving biodiversity and providing access to high quality public spaces and to the natural environment.

- e) Creating links between housing and local employment, helping to reduce reliance on private car journeys and promoting active travel, including through walking and cycling.

34. The [government website](#) gives some guidance as to what constitutes a material consideration in dealing with planning applications. The relevant council will decide on the weight to be given to the policy at the time and taking into account the particular circumstances.

The potential pros and cons of Build to Rent schemes

35. The councils recognise the importance of taking a positive approach to Build to Rent, and many of the benefits that well-designed and well-managed schemes can bring, including:

- a) Helping accelerate delivery on new sites, with Build to Rent not being subject to the same absorption constraints as housing for market sale.
- b) Helping to support the economy. For example, it is estimated in a report from the British Property Foundation (Build to Rent: Unlocking the potential of an emerging sector) that for every 500 Build to Rent units approximately 15 jobs are created (including concierge, estate management, building management, cleaners, maintenance and gardeners).
- c) Providing more consistent quality of management than is available across the private rented sector as a whole.
- d) Offering longer tenancy agreements and greater tenure certainty than is generally available in the private rented sector.
- e) Enabling people to live in the area who may be unable to purchase locally on the open market, or for whom renting is the preferred option.

- f) Providing more choice for house-sharers who seek alternative, high quality rented housing, which in turn may help to free up homes which could otherwise be made available to families.
- g) Providing the opportunity to deliver an element of affordable housing for rent at below market rents for people who would be unable to afford to buy or rent on the open market.
- h) Opportunities to accelerate occupation on larger sites. Also to start building communities within schemes, which can in turn contribute to shaping the wider community once further homes are built, subject to appropriate community infrastructure and a good internal customer-focused service being in place.
- i) Providing opportunities also to contribute to the sharing economy and reduce carbon emissions through transport and environment options which promote active travel (including walking and cycling).

36. However, the councils are also mindful that Build to Rent has the potential to present some challenges, particularly in relation to place-shaping and ensuring the provision of mixed, balanced and sustainable communities. With Build to Rent being relatively new in the UK, there is limited understanding of its community and place-shaping impacts. Therefore it is important that any potential risks are mitigated from the outset.

37. These may include:

- a) A sharp increase in new residents over a short period of time. For example, at an early stage of a larger development where minimal infrastructure is in place, or where schemes are brought forward in areas which already have an established population.
- b) Large concentrations of rental accommodation, of similar size and type of property aimed at specific target groups, may make it difficult to create balanced and mixed communities.

- c) Higher turn-over of residents than in most other tenures, again in the context of large, high density schemes, may limit residents' long-term commitment to or integration with the wider community.
- d) The success of schemes being dependent on the quality and control of the management company, with potential negative impacts on the wider community if management standards were to slip in the future; for example in relation to community safety and anti-social behaviour if management standards are not sufficiently high.
- e) The tension between providing high quality homes and management services and keeping rents, including Affordable Private Rents, at affordable levels. For example, in an article from JLL called "[Will tenants pay more rent for amenities?](#)" it is estimated that Build to Rent schemes in London are, on average, achieving a rental premium of 11% over their respective local markets.
- f) A tendency for most Build to Rent schemes to offer a lower proportion of affordable housing than in other types of development, and potentially less control for councils as to who is eligible for the affordable homes compared with schemes providing an element of social/affordable rent housing. This is of particular concern in an area where housing affordability is a significant issue for many.
- g) Impacts on the wider community that can arise from sub-letting of homes if permitted or if tenancy conditions are not enforced, including short-term weekend/holiday lets. Again, these may include anti-social behaviour and community safety issues.
- h) Risks around what happens to a development if it is later decommissioned as a Build to Rent scheme and the homes are no longer actively managed.

38. This policy aims to take a balanced view; on the one hand encouraging appropriate provision of Build to Rent schemes to meet local housing need, and on the other hand trying to ensure that any potential negative impacts are minimised.

Evidence of demand

39. The councils' Housing Strategy clearly identifies significant housing affordability issues in Greater Cambridge. There is high demand for private rented housing locally, as evidenced by high private rents and a lack of privately rented accommodation in the more rural areas. Research has been commissioned to get a better idea of the extent of this need to help inform the emerging joint Local Plan.

40. [Cambridge sub-region Housing Market Bulletin July 2020 data](#) shows there is a large private rental market in Cambridge, with a lower prevalence of private renting in the mainly rural area of South Cambridgeshire.

41. Median rents in South Cambridgeshire are shown in the [Cambridge sub-region Housing Market Bulletin July 2020 data](#) to be higher than in the rest of the Cambridge sub-region, and rents in Cambridge City are considerably higher than the national and local sub-regional average.

42. With a wide range of different types of homes available, the quality of existing private rented accommodation is inevitably mixed; and although the vast majority of private rented housing locally is well managed there is a small minority which is not. The councils are interested in widening the choice of good quality, well-managed homes available for the rental market. Supporting the local economy, and reducing reliance on private vehicle travel through good quality public transport and active travel links through well-located Build to Rent schemes are also very important.

43. Research commissioned by the councils through Savills uses the Experian Mosaic profiling model as an example of identifying the sorts of households with

a high propensity to rent across Greater Cambridge. It identifies the main groups likely to make up the market, which mainly comprise of younger singles or couples without children on a range of incomes, including some sharer households. However, there may also be other groups for whom Build to Rent may help to provide a housing solution, across all age groups. For example older people, in the context of an ageing population, the ability to free up existing family homes, and a growing interest for some in that group in renting privately. Families may also benefit from a good quality rental offer.

44. Whatever profiling model is used, a market report will be needed to demonstrate how a proposed scheme would meet local need and demand. The councils will consider this alongside other appropriate available evidence.

45. Research commissioned by the councils through Savills and Arc4 (referred to in paragraph 7 above) shows investors are already showing a keen interest in bringing forward Build to Rent schemes in Greater Cambridge, and suggests a market for a good quality private rental product, including an element of Affordable Private Rent. This includes likely demand on at least three of the large strategic sites within Greater Cambridge: North East Cambridge, Waterbeach New Town, Northstowe, and Bourn Airfield New Village.

Design and Distribution of Build to Rent schemes

46. The councils recognise that the more units in a scheme the more potential there will be for investors to make a return on their investment. However, creating successful places and promoting mixed and balanced communities are high priorities for both councils, as demonstrated in the councils' Local Plans and other area-specific policies, so any planning applications must evidence how the scheme will support the place-shaping agenda.

47. Any decision by the relevant council to limit the size of a Build to Rent scheme or the proportion of homes on a new development to be provided as Build to Rent would be made on a case by case basis in the context of issues such as housing need, potential community impacts, and to ensure an appropriate balance with

other tenures within an overall development and the surrounding area. This will also help to maximise the overall amount of affordable housing on a site in the context of the 40% affordable housing requirement in the councils' Local Plans.

48. The requirement to avoid large mono-tenure clusters of Build to Rent homes conforms with the councils' Local Plan and Housing Strategy requirements around providing a balanced mix of housing sizes, types and tenures, and reflects the approach being taken in the councils' Clustering and Distribution of Affordable Housing policy that is also an Annexe to the Housing Strategy.
49. Quality of schemes and management is important to the councils and also in contributing towards the councils' environmental sustainability and place-shaping objectives. The councils' Local Plans include a whole range of requirements which will also be applicable to Build to Rent schemes; and Build to Rent schemes will also need to be considered in the context of additional site specific planning policies, such as local Supplementary Planning Documents or Area Action Plans. Examples of such requirements may include: housing densities; policies around design quality; space and accessibility standards; recognising the wider area context; provision of local amenities; environmental requirements; sustainable transport; car & cycle parking; biodiversity and provision of green space.
50. Providing appropriate external communal space and/or in-house amenities which are available to all residents is also important; and design of communal areas needs to take into account likely frequent movement of furniture and belongings.
51. As with other forms of affordable housing, the councils will want to ensure that the Affordable Private Rent homes are constructed and managed to the same high-quality standards as the market rent homes. This includes being tenure-blind and physically indistinguishable from the market homes in terms of design, quality, size and location on the site.

Size of homes required

52. Research evidence referred to above suggests a current potential demand mainly for 1 and 2 bed homes, but also some larger homes (such as to cater for sharers or family households), although this could change over time.

53. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) as part of a Build to Rent scheme may be appropriate in some circumstances as part of a wider mix if they help to create a more balanced community, although this may depend on the existing provision of HMOs in the area and the extent to which other larger homes on a development might be reasonably expected to become HMOs at a later date. Any HMOs will be required to meet minimum space and accessibility standards. Sufficient private space must be incorporated into the design.

Provision of affordable housing (Affordable Private Rent)

54. The Greater Cambridge area clearly faces significant housing affordability issues. The provision of Affordable Private Rental options in new developments at below market rent levels can help to address these issues and create a balanced community.

55. National guidance states that 20% is generally a suitable benchmark for the level of Affordable Private Rent homes to be provided in any build to rent scheme; although there is the potential for this to be varied. Affordable Private Rent is required under the National Planning Policy Framework to be provided as community benefit in perpetuity.

56. Our Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy identifies a gap in provision for housing for those unable to access social or affordable rent housing, but who would also find it difficult to afford the existing private rental market. It is important that rent levels take account of local incomes, with 35% of net income considered reasonable to be spent on housing costs in line with our current Strategy.

57. There is a risk that if Build to Rent schemes are only able to provide 20% Affordable Private Rent housing in line with national guidance this may

compromise the councils' Local Plan commitments to providing 40% affordable housing. Therefore, the councils will seek a higher percentage of affordable housing wherever possible. Where Build to Rent is part of a major multi-tenure site or wider development area, 40% affordable housing will be required across the whole site/development area. As such, the Affordable Private Rent provided will be expected to contribute towards the overall requirement with a split between Social/Affordable Rent and intermediate tenures in line with Housing Strategy requirements. The councils recognise there may be challenges to achieving this; including viability issues and ensuring that rents remain at reasonable levels. Reasons for any deviations from this policy will need to be clearly justified.

58. Switching of tenure of individual units may be appropriate once an individual's tenancy comes to an end, in response to demand at the time, provided the agreed overall balance of market and Affordable Private Rent is broadly maintained across the scheme, and the Affordable Private Rent units remain appropriately distributed across the scheme.

Affordable Private Rent eligibility and rent setting

59. The National Planning Guidance on Build to Rent states that eligibility for occupying the Affordable Private Rent homes should be agreed locally between the local authority and the scheme operator, with regard to criteria set out in planning guidance. Local authorities are expected to take a reasonable position in negotiating criteria and eligibility should not constitute grounds for refusing planning permission.
60. The National Planning Policy Framework and guidance also require Affordable Private Rent levels to be set at least 20% below local market rents, including any service charges, for the same or equivalent property. Eligibility for Affordable Private Rent should be determined with regard to local household income levels, related to local rent levels.

61. As stated above, based on current evidence the councils will expect developers to demonstrate that Affordable Private Rent homes will be affordable and available to households with a range of incomes who would struggle to rent or buy locally on the open market. To achieve this, the councils will seek a higher discount than 20% wherever possible, and some properties (such as larger ones) may require a higher percentage discount than others.
62. In line with government guidance, discount from market rent is expected to be calculated at the point at which a home is rented out, or when the tenancy is renewed. Discounted rents are expected to be reviewed on the same basis as rent increases for market homes.
63. The councils may wish for some priority to be given to applicants for other reasons in addition to income levels. For example: awarding some priority to people working in the local area; to applicants on the councils' housing registers or with specific needs where appropriate; or to people already living in the area or who have local family connections.
64. They may also wish to seek a proportion of the Affordable Private Rent homes to be tethered to local employment/apprenticeship schemes where appropriate, or to meet other local needs, based on local circumstances.
65. Our Housing Strategy identifies homelessness as a serious problem for both councils, with homelessness prevention a key priority. Ensuring that neither applicants nor existing tenants are excluded from being eligible or from remaining a tenant on the basis that they are in receipt of state benefits, and that support is available for tenants who fall into financial difficulties, will go some way to help prevent homelessness amongst applicants and residents.
66. The councils will work with developers on a bespoke agreement covering issues such as eligibility, setting and reviewing of rents, and how the Affordable Private Rent homes are to be marketed, having regard to national planning guidance.

Tenancies (market and affordable homes)

67. Tenancies in the private rented sector tend to be for 6-months, although many will be renewed after that period. Evidence suggests that although some residents may only want short tenancies, there may also be demand for longer ones. The [English Housing Survey 2017-2018](#) reported that nationally private renters had lived in their current accommodation an average of 4.1 years. Around a quarter had lived there for less than one year, but with a similar proportion having lived there over 5 years.
68. Minimum 3-year tenancies for all new tenants who want one, together with tenant-only break clauses, and the opportunity to renew the tenancy at the end of the tenancy period, should allow tenants choice and a sense of security around how long they can remain.

Scheme management

69. Quality of management by a single management company or operator is key to minimising any community risks that might arise from Build to Rent schemes, and ensuring that schemes are well-integrated into the community.
70. An appropriate level of daily management, including an on-site presence should help ensure prompt resolution of any issues or complaints that may arise. It should also help support community development work across the wider area, to help promote cross-tenure community cohesion and interaction.
71. Providers will also be expected to demonstrate how they will prevent or at least mitigate any risks surrounding short-term sub-letting, including through enforcement of tenancy conditions. The need for introduction packs for all tenants, and the process for managing and monitoring the Affordable Private Rent units will need to be covered by the s106 agreement; with an agreed management plan in place before any of the homes are let.

Future decommissioning of schemes

72. The council recognises that Build to Rent investors will most likely want to retain schemes for the long term in order to get a good long-term return on their investment. However, there always remains the risk of schemes being decommissioned as rental schemes – for example if demand reduces or if an investor decides to pull out of the market.
73. The councils also recognise that unreasonably onerous exit clauses, giving insufficient flexibility to respond to market conditions, may prevent Build to Rent schemes from coming forward. Our research has identified that planning consents typically include a covenant period in the s106 which may be as short as 7 years, is typically 10-15 years, but may be longer. The covenant provides a legal agreement that the homes will remain as Build to Rent during the covenant period, with compensation payable to the council should the market homes be disposed of or converted to another tenure during that period.
74. Policy requirements around covenant periods and the need for an exit plan reflect the high priority that both councils give to the issue of community sustainability and place-shaping. The councils will seek to achieve covenants of longer than 15 years wherever possible, and where appropriate to address potential long-term implications; such as where a scheme is coming forward in the earlier stages of a much wider multi-tenure development which may take a number of years to build out.
75. One for one swaps of units between market and affordable homes would be acceptable, provided the Affordable Private Rent units remain appropriately distributed across the scheme and are replaced within a reasonable period of time.

Decommissioning of Affordable Private Rent

76. The councils recognise the necessity of Affordable Private Rent homes being provided as a long-term community benefit in perpetuity. The policy aims to ensure that appropriate clawback arrangements are in place should some or all

of the dwellings cease to be provided as Affordable Private Rent; with the clawback to be reinvested in further provision of affordable housing in the area.

Monitoring of Affordable Private Rent

77. The councils will want to monitor the arrangements put in place for the Affordable Private Rent homes. This is likely to cover issues such as: how lettings have met eligibility requirements; rent levels and affordability; occupancy levels; location of the homes across the development; marketing arrangements; equalities monitoring; management arrangements; and how the scheme is meeting the overall affordable housing level required in the planning permission. National guidance suggests this should be required by the s106 agreement in the form of an annual statement to authorities.

Viability

78. Valuation guidance for Build to Rent is set out by RICS in Valuing residential property purpose built for renting (1st edition 2018).

79. It is recognised that the viability challenges for Build to Rent schemes may be different compared with bringing forward homes for market sale. However, it is also important that the councils meet the objectives laid down in the policy. Therefore any potential trade-offs between different elements of the policy on viability grounds will require clear evidence of why the full requirements cannot be met.

80. The requirement for Build to Rent viability assessments on larger sites to form part of the wider multi-tenure site or area assessment stems from the councils' commitments to achieving 40% affordable housing wherever possible on new developments together with the necessary infrastructure required to support successful communities.

Equalities

81. This policy helps to ensure that as wide a range of people as possible are able to benefit from Build to Rent housing, including affordable housing provision for those unable to afford to rent or buy on the open market.
82. It also promotes community integration between market and affordable homes, and aims to help minimise travel costs by considering local workers as potentially being given some priority for Affordable Private Rent homes.
83. It recognises the potential demand for rented housing for older people, and requires Local Plan accessibility standards to be met to support older and disabled people.
84. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the policy, which will be available on Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Councils' websites.

Clustering and Distribution of Affordable Housing Policy– Annexe to the Housing Strategy

Purpose

1. This policy sets out the requirements of both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council with regards to Clustering and Distribution of Affordable housing on new developments. This policy covers how Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership should be clustered and distributed in relation to other tenures, and how sizes and types of affordable homes should be grouped together. It does not specifically cover Discount Market, Rent to Buy, or Build to Rent because ultimately they will be market homes but it does include how Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership should be placed in relation to those other intermediate tenures and to private market homes. The policy should be used to help guide applicants to submit successful planning applications and will be a [material consideration](#) in making decisions on applications.
2. This policy is set within the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy's long-term vision and objectives, which in turn reflect the broader priorities of the two councils. In particular it will help to promote health and well-being and tackle inequality through the creation of mixed, balanced, and inclusive communities.
3. This policy builds on the existing Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy published in April 2019 and will form an Annexe to that document. It supersedes the Cambridge City Council Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2008 and South Cambridgeshire District Council Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2010 regarding clustering.

Key Principles

4. Both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are keen that new developments will provide mixed, balanced, and sustainable

communities; therefore, to facilitate this they seek, wherever possible, fully integrated mixed tenure housing schemes with support given to acceptable levels of clustering and ensuring that the affordable housing is dispersed appropriately across the whole development.

5. Clusters of affordable housing should contain a mix of affordable tenures so that Social & Affordable Rent and intermediate units are not grouped separately from each other. This, equitable cluster placement and good design will create tenure blind clusters.
6. Additionally, the clusters should usually contain a mix of unit sizes, for instance a mix of 1, 2, 3, and 4-bedroom homes. This should help increase opportunities for different sizes and types of households to mix and can help to prevent similar household types being grouped together which may cause, for example, areas of high child density, groups of residents with similar economic backgrounds or with high support needs.

Policy

7. Clustering

- Small or rural developments of up to 30 units (except for 100% exception sites) – Maximum clusters of 6 to 8 units. Blocks of flats – Maximum of 12 flats should have access from a lift or common stairwell. Ground floor flats should have their own entrances, if possible, as they are likely to be allocated to older or disabled residents or families with children.
- Medium mixed tenure residential developments of 30 to 200 units – Maximum clusters of 15 units. Clusters should not abut each other and be dispersed appropriately across the whole development. This will include blocks of flats. Ground floor flats should have their own entrances, if possible, as they are likely to be allocated to older or disabled residents or families with children.
- Large mixed tenure residential developments 200 units and over – Maximum clusters of 25 units per parcel. Clusters should not abut each other and be

dispersed appropriately across the whole development. This will include blocks of flats. Ground floor flats should have their own entrances if possible as they are likely to be allocated to older or disabled residents or families with children.

- Where a development site is to be built out in separate phases/parcels developers must take account of the location of affordable homes within neighbouring parcels of land to ensure clusters do not adjoin each other and are well dispersed across the development as a whole.

8. Tenure distribution

- Clusters should contain a mix of affordable tenures, to include rented and intermediate tenures.
- Care should be given to placement of different tenures in flats to ensure a balance between tenure-blind design, ease of management and aiming to keep service charges to a minimum but avoiding too much segregation. . . There may be occasions where splitting the tenure type would be detrimental to the wellbeing of the residents. One such instance would be a number of units designated for over 55's, which may benefit being sited together to ensure interconnected similar lifestyles and more efficient provision of any necessary care and/or support, providing they are designed and located so that they integrate well with the rest of the development.

9. Unit size distribution

- Clusters should contain a mix of unit sizes. Care should be taken to refrain from placing more than 3 to 4 larger units together; preference is to intersperse the larger units with smaller 1 or 2 bed units.

10. For flats, if possible, there should be a mix of unit sizes in blocks and on each floor.

11. Finally, at all stages of design, service charges levels should be considered. High service charges will increase the risk of the affordable units being unaffordable.
12. It is recommended that there is early engagement with the relevant council's Housing Strategy Team and the Registered Provider. This will help to ensure that a timely agreement on the distribution of the affordable housing can be reached. It is also expected that the applicant will provide a robust Affordable Housing Statement to be submitted with the application. It will need to cover the reasonings for placement and tenure/size distribution of the affordable units across the development and how these are expected to contribute towards a mixed, balanced, and sustainable community.
13. For some schemes both councils will seek to implement a Local Lettings Plan detailing how applicants should be prioritised for the allocation and letting of affordable homes. A Local Lettings Plan, such as for initial allocations on new larger developments, will help to achieve broader objectives for creating mixed and balanced communities, or where it can help to address or prevent particular issues from arising in a local area. The plan will be discussed and agreed by all parties involved. The agreed Local Lettings Plans will be available publicly.

Exceptions to policy

14. Exceptions to policy may be possible and justified because of the scale of the development. For example if the scheme is very small or in an area of a particular character; 100% affordable housing schemes because of its built form (for example if the development is all made up of high-density flatted blocks); or for specialist, supported or age-related schemes where critical mass is needed.
15. In some instances the Council may consider proposals to go above the clustering thresholds referred to in the policy, where it is satisfied that the affordable homes are proportionally distributed within the wider scheme, that

there are no noticeable concentrations of affordable housing in a particular area which could potentially result in a non-inclusive community in the long term, or where the use of a Local Lettings Plan will help to ensure that the scheme can still be mixed and balanced despite having larger clusters or being 100% affordable housing.

16. The design, layout and management of the homes will be key considerations in determining proposals that exceed the clustering numbers. The onus would be on the developer to provide a robust Housing Statement alongside the planning application. It will specify the reason why the scheme deviates from this Clustering and Distribution Policy and further describe how they intend to ensure the scheme links with the Councils' Key Principles above. The developers would also be expected to demonstrate how they integrate with nearby existing communities. To mitigate issues with larger clusters it is important that Local Lettings Plans are agreed prior to occupation and the registered provider has an agreed robust management plan in place. Lettings Plans will be published in the public domain for transparency.

National and Local Planning Policy

The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper – November 2020 – Integrating social housing in communities

17. The Charter for Social Housing Residents published in November 2020 looks to address issues of inequality for social housing tenants. It sets out clear standards that every social tenant in England is entitled to expect from their landlords. Within the Charter there is a focus on ensuring integration of social housing in communities which aligns with the objectives of the Councils' Clustering and Distribution Policy.
18. Para 128 states: *'It is vital that social housing is treated as an integral and valued part of our housing system, rather than being separated or segregated from other forms of housing. That aspiration is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework which states that planning policies and decisions*

should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places. It also emphasises the need for planning policies and decisions to promote social interaction and provide shared spaces and facilities. It is supported by our planning practice guidance on Design: Process and Tools, published in October 2019, which includes guidance on the effective engagement of communities in shaping the design of their neighbourhoods’.

National Planning Policy Framework – June 2019 updated (NPPF)

19. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
20. It requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, and which are ‘safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion’.

National Design Guide – October 2019

21. The purpose of the National Design Guide, published by the government in October 2019 was to ‘illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice’. Their aim was to ‘address unfair segregation and promote integrated and socially cohesive communities’.

Cambridge City Council

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2008

22. Para 1.6 ‘There is no obvious ‘best’ method of mixing tenures, although ‘ghettos’ of affordable housing are best avoided. We found examples where physical integration had been achieved through pepper potting, buffering (i.e., providing a graduated range of different house types within the same street, starting from small affordable units, and going through to large executive

market housing), clustering and development of separate sites but to the same physical appearance. We recommend that consideration should be given to the use of all four techniques in developing affordable housing in the new communities in Cambridgeshire.'

23. Para 23. 'The layout of developments should integrate affordable and supported housing with the open market housing in ways that minimise social exclusion. The creation of tenure monocultures should be avoided. The following approaches exist to achieve this goal:

- Pepper potting, which is the development of the affordable housing as individual dwellings throughout a development. This approach has not yet been followed in Cambridge and can increase the difficulties involved in property management.
- Clustering, which is the development of the affordable housing in multiple groups normally of between 6 and 25 dwellings depending upon the size and design of the development and the nature of the affordable housing. In flatted schemes no more than 12 affordable dwellings should normally have access from a common stairwell or lift. Clustering is the usual approach that is followed in Cambridge. The affordable housing should be provided in prominent parts of a site to aid integration.'

24. Para 24. 'A buffering technique can be used to integrate a mix of tenures and house types from larger market housing through to small social rented housing provided that there is no physical segregation, and no tenure monocultures are created. At its simplest this technique could involve using intermediate housing to unite the social rented housing and the open market housing.'

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2010

25.3.24 The document makes recommendations relating to the mixing of tenures within residential schemes and the layout of developments, the provision and management of facilities, mixed-use developments, green infrastructure, integration and accessibility, relationship with existing communities, design and monitoring and delivery. The key lessons regarding mixing tenures and development layout are that:

26. “There is no obvious ‘best’ method of mixing tenures, although ‘ghettos’ of affordable housing are best avoided. We found examples where physical integration had been achieved through pepper potting, buffering (i.e., providing a graduated range of different house types within the same street, starting from small affordable units, and going through to large executive market housing), clustering and development of separate sites but to the same physical appearance. We recommend that consideration should be given to the use of all four techniques in developing affordable housing in the new communities in Cambridgeshire. This will offer maximum flexibility to accommodate a range of household types.”

27.3.25 Policy HG/3 of the Development Control Policies DPD requires that affordable housing is distributed through a residential development in small groups or clusters. Paragraph 4.13 of the DPD elaborates that affordable housing should be integrated with market housing and that in order to ensure sustainable communities. It says that small groups or clusters will typically be of 6 to 8 units. This description of the size of cluster in the district wide Development Control Policies DPD is particularly relevant to development in the rural area at villages where it reflects the relatively small settlement size.

28.3.26 The Area Action Plans forming part of the LDF for the major developments on the edge of Cambridge and at Northstowe make clear that affordable housing will also be distributed in small groups or clusters but explains that the appropriate cluster size will be determined having regard to

the location within the development, including whether it is in a town or district centre or in a residential neighbourhood and the type of housing being provided e.g., family housing or apartments. The North West Cambridge Area Action Plan, prepared jointly with Cambridge City Council, indicates that small groups or clusters may be between 6 and 25 dwellings, and in flatted schemes no more than 12 affordable dwellings should have access from a common stairwell or lift. This is also the definition included in the City Council's own Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, reflecting the different character and scale of the City compared with the currently predominantly rural character of South Cambridgeshire. The Cambridge definition of small group or cluster is considered to be an appropriate definition to inform discussions on the major developments in South Cambridgeshire, both those forming urban extensions to Cambridge and also the new town of Northstowe, although the actual size will be determined through the planning application process for those developments.

Evidence

29. There is no current national guidance on exact numbers for clustering of affordable housing. The numbers in the policy are partly based on both councils previous Supplementary Planning Documents which have generally worked well, and considers what appears to be established best practice in the Cambridgeshire Horizons Guide – Balanced and Mixed communities – A Good Practice Guide. The Cambridgeshire Horizons Guide says:
30. A wide range of house types is a better way of creating mixed communities than focussing on affordability. Another way of putting this is to say that:
31. “We should aim for a critical mass of people at different life stages: children, working age population and the elderly, so that each group can develop their own social networks and facilities”
32. Under key lessons it further goes on to say.

33. There is no obvious 'best' method of mixing tenures, although 'ghettos' of affordable housing are best avoided.
34. 12 units per stairwell/lift was originally based on the Homes & Communities Agencies Design Guide, which said that a maximum of 15 units should share a stairwell/lift. Previously both Councils' Supplementary Planning Documents have required all schemes to have a maximum of 12 units to a stairwell and this has worked for us and the Registered Providers. We recognise this may not be possible on larger, higher density schemes and the policy has been amended for medium/large schemes.
35. We have also undertaken a recent survey with Registered Providers who have stock in the areas of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.
36. The responses were very clear that they preferred to have clusters that are easy to manage and distributed evenly across sites. They preferred a mix of tenures and house types within a cluster to ensure a mix of single person households, couples, and families. They preferred that larger properties were not grouped together since this will lead to high child densities which can result in high cases of Anti-Social Behaviour.

Affordable Rents policy - Annexe to the Housing Strategy

Purpose

1. This policy sets out the objectives for both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council with regards to how Registered Housing Providers determine new Affordable Rents for social housing in Greater Cambridge. It applies only to Affordable Rents and does not look at Social Rent levels or the wider affordability issues of other affordable housing tenures. However, in considering Affordable Private Rent as part of a Build to Rent scheme, regard should be given to this policy.
2. It should also be noted that both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District are identified as high affordability pressure areas and therefore the Councils encourage Registered Housing Providers to provide social rented homes where possible.

Introduction

3. This policy is set within the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy's long-term vision and objectives, which in turn reflect the broader priorities of the two Councils. In particular it will help to tackle poverty and inequality and promote health and well-being through:
 - Ensuring homes are affordable to live in
 - Promoting mixed, balanced, and inclusive communities
4. This policy builds on the existing Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy published in April 2019 and will form an Annexe to that document.
5. The [Policy Statement for Rent for Social Housing](#) published in February 2019, states that: "the rent for affordable rent housing (inclusive of service charges)

must not exceed 80% of gross market rent. Housing Providers should have regard to the local market context including the relevant Local Housing Allowance for the Broad Rental Market Area in which the property is located, when setting Affordable Rents.”

6. Given the sharp increase in the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates for Greater Cambridge from March 2020, this has impacted on the affordability of Affordable Rents if they continue to be based on LHA rates. For many median rents within South Cambridgeshire, the LHA rate now exceeds 80% of market rent.
7. The Councils are committed to working with Registered Housing Providers to achieve a balance between increasing supply of affordable homes and ensuring that rented homes are affordable to those on lower incomes on our Housing Register. This policy has been developed having regard to the local market context and the affordability challenges facing the area. It builds on the current good practice and partnership approach with Registered Housing Providers, with the aim to achieve consistency and fairness across Greater Cambridge.

Policy Position – Affordable Rents

8. Based on affordability evidence below, the following discount should be considered when determining Affordable Rents for Greater Cambridge:
 - Cambridge City Council and City fringe sites crossing the border with South Cambridgeshire - the rent for Affordable Rent housing (inclusive of eligible property related service charges) should not exceed 60% of gross median market rent in Cambridge City for that size of property, location type and service provision, or the current Local Housing Allowance rate, whichever is the lower.
 - South Cambridgeshire District Council (excluding City fringe sites) - the rent for Affordable Rent housing (inclusive of eligible property related

service charges) should not exceed 70% of gross median market rent for that size of property, location type and service provision, or the current Local Housing Allowance rate, whichever is the lower.

- Alternatively, Registered Housing Providers may wish to continue to use the January 2020 pre-Covid LHA rates as a baseline, and apply the annual inflationary increase as set out in the Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing (paragraph 3.13)

Table 1: January 2020 pre-Covid weekly LHA rates (Cambridgeshire Broad Rental Market Area)

1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4 Bedrooms
£136	£156	£182	£242

9. Gross median market rent means the rent (inclusive of any applicable service charges) for which the accommodation might reasonably be expected to be let in the private rented sector in the relevant district. Property size, location type and service provision must be taken into account when determining what gross market rent a property might achieve if let in the private rented sector.
10. Valuations for initial rent setting must be made in accordance with a method recognised by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, as set out in the Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing. This requirement is intended to help ensure that Registered Housing Providers adopt a consistent and transparent approach to the valuation of market rents. Where a Registered Housing Provider chooses to apply the 2020 pre-Covid LHA rate (plus inflationary increase), a valuation will not be required.
11. For new developments, the Registered Housing Provider must inform the relevant local authority of the projected rents to be charged as part of the

scheme approval, providing details of the valuations undertaken where applicable.

12. Where the design and quality of homes is above national or local standards to help achieve the Councils' objectives in relation to zero carbon homes and tackling fuel poverty, consideration will be given for Affordable Rents to be charged at up to 80% of a median market rent. Registered Housing Providers will need to demonstrate that the overall affordability of the home, in terms of issues such as fuel costs and repair & maintenance of heating systems will be sufficiently reduced so that it is cost neutral to tenants.
13. In terms of rebasing Affordable Rents following initial lets, Registered Housing Providers may not always need to undertake a full valuation on each occasion that a property is let on Affordable Rent terms. As set out in the Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, paragraph 3.11 – *'in areas where affordable rent is widely used, providers might have a rolling schedule of tenancies coming up for re-issue or re-let. Where that is the case, providers might have adequate comparables readily to hand, and if so there might be no need for a full valuation. In these circumstances, providers may decide to re-set rents using a desktop review of recent transactions.'*

Justification for policy change

14. Since the introduction of Affordable Rents in 2011, there has been a general consensus between the sub regional local authorities and the Registered Housing Providers that Affordable Rents should be set at or below the Local Housing Allowance rate. This has also been the policy approach required since the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy was introduced in 2019. This ensured that the Affordable Rents were kept below the maximum threshold of 80% of the gross market rent and that housing benefit (or the housing element of Universal Credit) would cover the costs of an Affordable Rent. For Cambridge City this equated to between 55%-60% of median market rents depending on property size, and for South Cambridgeshire between 70%-75%. As the LHA rate is a fixed amount (payable for private rents based on

property size by number of bedrooms), this also ensured a level playing field in terms of Registered Housing Providers bidding for schemes and setting Affordable Rents.

15. Whilst the increase in LHA rates is good news for private renters on housing related benefits, it has unintended consequences for the setting of Affordable Rents. If Affordable Rents continued to be set at the LHA rate, this would see rent increases of between 22% and 33% on new and re-let properties and would provide a huge disparity across the area on the Affordable Rents charged.

Affordability

16. Affordable Rents should be targeted at those on lower incomes, where housing options are limited. According to a locally commissioned draft GL Hearn Report on 'Housing Needs of Specific Groups April 2020, based on Office for National Statistics modelled income estimates, English Housing Survey and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings', the lower quartile household income for Cambridge City is around £25,400 and £27,100 for South Cambridgeshire. The Councils' Housing Strategy states that for housing costs to be affordable, households should not spend more than 35% of their net household income on housing costs, such as rent or mortgage. Table 2 below demonstrates what would be considered affordable in terms of rent and service charges on this basis, with Table 3 identifying the likely discounts required to make rents affordable based on different property types.

Table 2: Affordability based on 35% of lower quartile household income spent on rent

Local Authority Area	Gross Income per Annum	Estimated Net Income per Annum	Estimated Net Income per month	Estimated Net Income per week	35% to be spent on Rent per week
Cambridge City LQ Household Income	£25,400	£20,914	£1,743	£402	£141
South Cambs LQ Household Income	£27,100	£22,070	£1,839	£424	£148

This table's data is sourced from [the Money Saving Expert's tax calculator](#).

Table 3: Discounts required for Affordable Rents to be affordable based on median private rents and 35% of lower quartile incomes

Local Authority Area	Average Median Weekly Market Rent (Hometrack February 2020 data)	35% to be spent on Rent based on Lower Quartile income*	% Discount required for Affordable Rent	Percentage of median rent
Cambridge	£321	£141	56%	44%
South Cambs	£245	£148	40%	60%

17. The significant increase in LHA rates does mean that those who receive full housing benefit are likely to get their rent paid in full even if Affordable Rents are based on the new LHA rate. However, some households on Universal Credit will be hit by the benefit cap which will mean that the gap between benefit and rent will increase. With higher rents charged this will impact on those on lower incomes who may be forced into claiming benefits where previously they were just managing, or for those currently reliant on full or partial housing benefit, making them less likely to be able to break the benefit cycle and who may be caught in the poverty trap. This is also likely to have implications for the public purse in terms of seeing an increase in benefit claimants.
18. In terms of determining Affordable Rent levels, as the current LHA rates are no longer an appropriate benchmark for rent setting, an appropriate discount percentage of local median market rent should be sought, unless the pre-Covid January 2020 LHA rates are used.
19. Whilst the discounts identified in Table 3 are calculated based on 35% of net income, it is recognised that this is unlikely to be achievable in terms of viability and that generally low income households will need to pay more than 35% of their net income on housing costs.
20. On balance, taking into account previous discounts achieved through the pre-2020 LHA rate that proved to be viable in terms of Registered Housing Providers' business plans, and the affordability analysis at Table 3, the Councils will seek a discount resulting in Affordable Rent levels not exceeding 60% of the local median market rent for each property size in Cambridge City (including the City fringe sites crossing the border with South Cambridgeshire) and 70% in South Cambridgeshire (excluding City fringe sites), or the LHA rate if this is lower.

Table 4: Example of estimated rent levels to be achieved under this policy.

Local Authority Area	District's Median Weekly Market Rent (Hometrack February 2020 data)	Affordable Rent Level	Pre-Covid LHA Rate January 2020
Cambridge		@ 60% of median weekly rent	
1 Bed	£219	£131	£136
2 Bed	£294	£176	£156
3 Bed	£334	£200	£182
4 Bed	£438	£263	£242
South Cambs		@ 70% of median weekly rent	
1 Bed	£178	£124	£136
2 Bed	£211	£148	£156
3 Bed	£253	£177	£182
4 Bed	£340	£238	£242

21. Within the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy it is acknowledged that affordability is not just about the cost of the rent or mortgage associated with an affordable home, but is also affected by living costs associated with the location and design of someone's home. For example, a highly energy efficient home can lead to it being more affordable in terms of utility costs. Therefore, provision has been made within this policy for Affordable Rents to be charged at up to 80% of a median market rent, where it can be demonstrated that higher rental costs (including service charges) will be offset by lower utility bills.

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