

Meeting	CABINET
Time/Day/Date	5.00 pm on Tuesday, 5 March 2019
Location	Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville
Officer to contact	Democratic Services (01530 454512)

AGENDA

Item	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
Under the Code of Conduct members are reminded that in declaring disclosable interests you should make clear the nature of that interest and whether it is pecuniary or non-pecuniary.	
3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION	
4. MINUTES	
Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2019.	3 - 8
5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY	
Report of the Chief Executive Presented by the Leader	9 - 34
6. DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT	
Report of the Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder	35 - 50
7. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY	
Report of the Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services Presented by the Housing Portfolio Holder	51 - 86
8. TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT ON ESTATE MANAGEMENT SERVICES	
Report of the Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services Presented by the Housing Portfolio Holder	87 - 98

9. COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Report of the Strategic Director of Place
Presented by the Business Portfolio Holder

99 - 140

10. FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS, CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS, COUNCIL TAX, NON DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE OFFS

Report of the Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services
Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder

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11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The officers consider that the press and public should be excluded during consideration of the following items in accordance with Section 100(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 as publicity would be likely to result in disclosure of exempt or confidential information. Members are reminded that they must have regard to the public interest test and must consider, for each item, whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure outweighs the public interest in making the item available.

12. PROPOSAL FOR NWLDC SITE IN COALVILLE

Report of the Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services
Presented by the Housing Portfolio Holder

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Circulation:

Councillor R D Bayliss
Councillor R Blunt (Chairman)
Councillor T Gillard
Councillor T J Pendleton
Councillor N J Rushton
Councillor A V Smith MBE

MINUTES of a meeting of the CABINET held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on
TUESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2019

Present: Councillor R Blunt (Chairman)

Councillors R D Bayliss, T Gillard and N J Rushton

In Attendance: Councillors R Adams, J G Coxon, T Eynon, J Geary, G Hoult, J Legrys,
S Sheahan and M Specht

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs T Bingham, Mr G Jones, Mrs M Meredith and Miss E Warhurst

77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T J Pendleton and A V Smith.

78. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

79. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

No questions were received.

80. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2019.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor N J Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2019 be approved and signed by the
Chairman as a correct record.

Reason for decision: To comply with the Constitution.

81. GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGETS PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to members. He asked Cabinet to note the assurances from the Section 151 Officer and to recommend that full Council approve the General Fund and Special Expenses Revenue budgets for the forthcoming year, freeze the district's share of council tax and transfer the budgeted surplus income over expenditure to the Self Sufficiency reserve. He highlighted the changes to the draft budget which had been presented to Cabinet in December as outlined at Appendix B, and the increase to the Special Expenses budget as set out in Appendix C.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor N J Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The assurance statement by the Section 151 Officer be noted;
2. Council be recommended to approve the General Fund Revenue budget for 2019/20 as summarised in Appendix B

3. Council be recommended to approve the Special Expenses Revenue budget for 2019/20 as summarised in Appendix C
4. Council be recommended to freeze the district's share of council tax in 2019/20
5. Council be recommended to require budgeted surplus income over expenditure in 2019/20 to be transferred to the self sufficiency reserve

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2019/20 as required by statute.

82. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the report to members, outlining the consultation process which had been undertaken and the revised treasury management approach after 2022 as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report. He drew members' attention to a revision to recommendation B(b), that service charges would be increased by an average of 8.07%, rather than 7.96% as set out in the report. He highlighted the projected surplus of £1.4m which would be contributed to the Loan Redemption fund, ensuring that the full provision would be in place for repayment of the maturity loans due in 2022.

Councillor N J Rushton commented that the Loan Redemption fund had accumulated the required funds 2 years ahead of the required date and in addition, new council homes were being built. He commented that that this was a great local housing authority in a sound position.

It was moved by Councillor R D Bayliss, seconded by Councillor N J Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

- A. The assurance statement by the Section 151 Officer be noted; and
- B. Council be recommended to approve the following changes to rents and charges for 2019/20:
 - a. decrease council house rents by 1%;
 - b. increase service charges by an average of 8.07%;
 - c. maintain central heating charges at their current levels;
 - d. increase garage rent by 3.3%, in line with retail price index (RPI) inflation;
 - e. increase Appleby Magna caravan park ground rent by 3.3% on the anniversary of each individual rent agreement, in line with RPI;
 - f. increase lifeline charges for East Midlands Housing and private customers by 3.3%, in line with RPI; and
 - g. increase shop leases by an average of 14% to gradually move them to market levels.
- C. Council be recommended to approve that sufficient surplus housing revenue be paid into the loan redemption reserve in order to repay the 2022 loan commitments.
- D. Council be recommended to note the revised treasury management approach set out in section 2.

E. The Director of Housing and Customer Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be authorised to make any minor amendments needed to the 2019/20 HRA budget to align with any government guidance on the matter described in paragraph 4.5 issued after budget approval.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to set a balanced Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2019/20.

83. 2019/20 - 2023/24 CAPITAL PROGRAMMES AND 2019/20 CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to members. He asked Cabinet to note the estimated outturn for 2018/19 and to recommend to Council the proposed capital programmes. He highlighted that the General Fund Capital Programme stood at £12.7m for next year; £9m would be spent on the commencement of building Coalville Leisure Centre and £1.2m would be spent on Hood Park Leisure Centre in 2019/20.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The estimated General Fund, Coalville Special Expenses and H.R.A. capital outturn for 2018/19 and planned financing be noted at Appendices A, B and C
2. Council be recommended to approve the Capital Programmes in 2019/20 detailed in:
 - Appendix A - General Fund capital schemes
 - Appendix B – Special Expenses capital schemes
 - Appendix C - H.R.A. capital schemes

And in 2020/21, these schemes only:

 - £1,150,000 for the vehicle replacement programme, as detailed in paragraphs 3.6.1 to 3.6.6
3. The proposed procurement routes in respect of vehicles, equipment and plant be noted and authority be delegated to award these contracts and any associated agreements in furtherance of the project to the Strategic Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, subject to final approval of the Capital Programmes in February 2019.
4. The 2019/20 Capital Strategy included in Appendix E be approved, in line with the prudential code.

Reason for decision: To enable projects to be included in the Programmes and proceed.

84. 2019 - 2024 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to members. He advised that the assumptions made had been reassessed following the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announcement and final budget changes. He explained that the revisions to the General Fund had resulted in an adverse movement in the 5 year savings target, moving it from £4.6m over the period to £5.2m.

In response to comments from Councillor R Blunt, the Section 151 Officer advised that the predicted debt requirement in future years was as a result of the potential risks and assumptions being made going forward relating to the government spending review.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved.

Reason for decision: To keep members up to date in respect of the council's financial projections.

85. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2019/20 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2019/20 TO 2021/22

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to members, drawing their attention to the forecast treasury position up to 2022 as set out in the table at paragraph 10.1. The Section 151 Officer added that the table showed the Council was in a position to lend funds out up until 2022; in future years there would be a borrowing requirement.

Councillor R Blunt commented that he would like to see an extended projection and to consider reducing capital spend during periods where the Council potentially had a future borrowing requirement.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. Council be recommended to approve the treasury management strategy statement 2019/20, treasury management prudential indicators - revised 2018/19 and 2019/20 to 2021/22 and the annual minimum revenue provision statement.
2. Council be recommended to approve the proposed change in approach to redemption of HRA loans (paragraph 1.8).

Reason for decision: These are statutory requirements.

86. INVESTMENT STRATEGY - SERVICE AND COMMERCIAL 2019/20

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to members, outlining the new requirements for supporting local public services and earning investment income.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Investment Strategy – Service and Commercial 2019/20 be recommended for approval by Council on 26 February 2019.

Reason for decision: To meet statutory requirements.

87. NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Leader presented the report to members.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

The formal adoption of the NWL Health and Wellbeing Strategy be approved.

Reason for decision: To seek the adoption of the strategy.

88. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Leader presented the report to members, highlighting the requirement to approve a new Statement of Community Involvement and the consultation process undertaken.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

The adoption of the new Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix A be approved.

Reason for decision: In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Cabinet is required to approve the new Statement of Community Involvement.

89. HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

The Leader presented the report to members, outlining the proposed changes to the existing policy to reflect the revised legislation, which would provide the Council with more robust enforcement tools to deal with rogue landlords.

Member referred to the particular issues in Kegworth. The Strategic Director of Place advised that there were no additional powers to deal with associated parking problems, however the issues in Kegworth were being addressed.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The licence fee increase for houses in multiple occupation, minimum room sizes and licence conditions, the use of civil penalties and banning orders be approved.
2. Future revisions to the policy be delegated to the Strategic Director of Place.

Reason for decision: The changes in legislation have meant minimum room sizes need to be adopted and it has allowed for a review of the fee.

90. ENFORCEMENT POLICY - PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

The Leader presented the report to members.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The planning enforcement policy which is read in conjunction with the general enforcement policy 2015 be approved.
2. All future changes to the policy be delegated to the Strategic Director of Place.

Reason for decision: To ensure that a clear and specific enforcement process is followed in planning enforcement.

91. PROPOSALS TO ALLOCATE IN PRINCIPLE THE LEISURE VAT BENEFITS FROM A FORTHCOMING CLAIM TO HMRC INTO COMMUNITY LEISURE PROVISION

The Leader presented the report to members.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor N J Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The proposed process for allocating the VAT reclaim into community leisure provision be supported.
2. Cabinet notes that it will receive further reports to award high value packages of funding once applications processes have been concluded and the VAT benefit secured.

Reason for decision: To seek approval to progress the process.

92. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Reason for decision: To enable the consideration of exempt information.

93. CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SUCCESSFUL BIDDER FOR THE SPORT AND LEISURE PROJECT

The Leader presented the report to members.

Members commented on the walking and cycling provision in and around Ashby de la Zouch, and in Coalville, and would welcome links from the new Coalville leisure centre to Snibston Country Park.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The progress and evaluation of the final tenders be noted.
2. Cabinet notes that the highest ranked bidder will be appointed as the Council's preferred bidder pursuant to Cabinet's delegation to the Strategic Director of Place at its meeting on 1 November 2017.
3. Cabinet notes that the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services, awards the contract and grants the leisure centre leases to the preferred bidder which will include the staff employed at both leisure centres being transferred under TUPE.

Reason for decision: To confirm the appointment of the highest ranked bidder based upon the evaluation scores.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.46 pm

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET – TUESDAY, 6 MARCH 2019**

Report Title	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community No
Contacts	Councillor Richard Blunt 01530 454510 richard.blunt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Chief Executive 01530 454500 bev.smith@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development 01530 454518 mike.murphy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk
Purpose of report	The report provides members of Cabinet with information on the proposed Equality and Diversity Policy for the Council, with an associated action plan.
Reason for decision	To approve the Equality and Diversity Policy.
Council priorities	The report impacts on performance across the Council's priorities and service areas.
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	The report contains proposals for manager and staff development and training. There is no additional financial impact as provision is already in place within existing budgets.
Risk Management	No direct implications
Equalities Impact Screening	Considered within the report
Human Rights	No direct implications
Transformational Government	No direct implications
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.

Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	The report and action plan have been widely circulated to external interest groups and the Councils recognised trade unions.
Background papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Act 2010 • Human Rights Act 1998 • Public Sector Equality Duty • Equality Framework for Local Government
Recommendations	THAT CABINET RECIEVES, APPROVES AND ADOPTS THE EQUALITY POLICY AND ACTION PLAN.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council has a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and in its role as a community leader, service provider, leading employer and purchaser of goods and services to set out its approach to Equality and Diversity. The Equality and Diversity Policy and Action plan attached at Appendix 1 sets out the Council's proposed approach.

1.2 Summary of key features of the proposed policy.

The Policy and Action plan sets out the following relevant considerations:-

- The setting out of an Equality statement
- Defining our roles as leaders
- Explaining the communication methods we will use to prevent exclusion
- Our approach to Equality monitoring.
- The legal context around "protected characteristics" covering discrimination against people on grounds of their age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.
- An explanation of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Framework
- Outlines the relationship between Equality and Diversity considerations and Social Community Inclusion.
- How we will manage equality and diversity in our own workplaces and our in-house workforce, including employment monitoring, having relevant policies and training arrangements.
- Equality and Diversity considerations around the Council's procurement processes and purchasing decisions.
- Our approach to engagement and consultation with our communities and our involvement with other equality groups.

2.0 CONSULTATION

2.1 The Policy and action plan has been considered by the Equality and Access group and a wide consultation process took place with interested groups and individuals in late November / December 2018. The responses from those that replied were supportive of the proposed policy and action plan.

3.0 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW

- 3.1 The review of the Equality and Diversity policy was identified as being an important action in the Council's 2016/17 annual governance review to meet the requirement for Local Authorities to 'Behave with integrity, demonstrate strong commitment to ethical Values and respect the rule of law' under the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' 2016. The action was repeated in the 2017/18 statement and adopting the proposed Equality and Diversity policy will complete the outstanding action.

4.0 COMMENTS FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP.

- 4.1 This report and the Policy document and action plan was considered by the Policy Development Group at its meeting on 6 February 2019. The comments of the group are attached at Appendix 2.

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Equality and Diversity Policy

March 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 North West Leicestershire District Council (the Council) prides itself in its proactive approach to equality and diversity which stems from the Social Model of Disability.

The Social Model of Disability takes the focus away from the individual and gives it to the environment (this could be a person, policy or place). With the belief that it is environmental barriers that cause a person to become disabled, the Council has the opportunity to remove such barriers and promote barrier free design by automatically incorporating aids and adaptations to promote inclusion. Although this model is specific to disability, the general principals can be employed to prevent the discrimination of those with other protected characteristics.

With the belief that discrimination has no place within the Council this Policy provides a clear and strong direction, so our staff, partners and stakeholders know what to expect from us and recognise the importance of ensuring the principals of equality and diversity inform key decision-making at every level within the council.

- 1.2 This Equality and Diversity Policy is a public statement of our objectives and approach. This document, which we refer to as the Policy, has been developed to ensure we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Policy however, goes much further and contributes to our commitment to equality and diversity with specific focus on:-

- Reinforcing the council's responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and our role as community leaders, service provider, employer and purchaser of goods and services.
- Developing an action plan to help us ensure equality of opportunity across all sections of the community, and our workforce. To ensure our services to all residents are provided fairly and without discrimination.
- Promoting equality and diversity across our staff and among our residents, to ensure the removal of unfair discrimination and disadvantage, harassment, and to foster good relations, in the workplace and between different community groups.
- Educating all staff at all levels to approach their work with an open mind and to offer support and assistance to others without relying on preconceptions.

2. DEFINITIONS AND EQUALITY TERMS

2.1 WHAT IS EQUALITY

Equality means everyone is treated fairly, with respect and are given fair chances. We realise, individual's needs are sometimes best met in different ways but people must not be unfairly discriminated against. To assist us with this the Government have listed nine protected characteristics in the Equalities Act 2010 and we must all contribute to creating a positive environment where discriminatory practices and unfair discrimination does not happen.

Equality of opportunity, in terms of access to fair and equitable services, is equal treatment and outcomes that meet the needs of the individual.

2.2 WHAT IS DIVERSITY

This refers to the differences which exist between each of us and the need to consider our own unique needs when helping others.

This means understanding how people's differences and likenesses can be used for the benefit of the individual, the organisation and our communities.

People with diverse backgrounds and attitudes may bring a variety of ideas and perceptions and a diverse organisation can draw upon the widest range of experiences so it can listen to and meet the needs of its employees, customers and the community it serves.

2.3 DISCRIMINATION

This refers to when a person is treated less fairly due to a perceived difference they may have. For example, Fred, a senior manager turns down June's application for promotion as a supervisor. June, who is a lesbian, learns this is because Fred believes the team she applied to manage are homophobic. Fred thought June's sexual orientation would prevent her from gaining the team's respect and managing them effectively. This is direct sexual orientation discrimination against June.

2.3 INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION

This occurs when, for example, a rule is applied fairly to all but in fact, the ability of one group to respond to that rule, is much greater than the ability of another. An example of this might be a rule that everyone should apply for something via the internet. This could exclude the older generation who may not have internet access or computer skills.

2.4 POSITIVE ACTION

This refers to any action taken to attempt to put right an imbalance in the makeup of a workforce or deal with existing stereotypes/problems. For example, an organisation may wish to employ more individuals with a disability or those who align themselves as from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, in order to have a more diverse workforce and therefore, encourage people from these protected groups to apply for vacancies, e.g., disabled people are guaranteed an interview if they meet all the essential criteria.

2.5 EQUALITY OF OUTCOME

Refers to an effort to ensure, whatever the level of opportunity, the outcome is roughly the same. For example, this means that some people will need a language translator when speaking to us and others will not. It wouldn't be fair to just provide Spanish translators just because it is the language most people speak. A Spanish translator would not allow a Polish speaker the same access to opportunities. Actions taken to treat someone equally is dependent on their need(s).

2.6 DISCRIMINATION BY ASSOCIATION

This is the form of discrimination which occurs when one person has a protected characteristic, but another person is treated negatively from knowing them. For example, you could be discriminated against because you have a family member or a friend who has a disability. For example, May works as a project manager and is looking forward to a promised promotion. However, after she tells her boss that her mother, who lives at home, has had a stroke, the promotion is withdrawn. This may be discrimination against May because of her association with a disabled person.

2.7 DISCRIMINATION BY PERCEPTION

This refers to discrimination because you believe a person has a protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually have that characteristic. For example, Tom is 45 but looks much younger. Many people assume he is in his mid-20s. He is not allowed to represent his company at an international meeting because the managing director thinks he is too young. Tom has been discriminated against on the perception of a protected characteristic.

2.8 HUMAN RIGHTS

Every person in the world has basic human rights and freedoms. Human rights are based on core principles such as dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence. They are relevant to day-to-day life and protect people's freedom to control their own lives, effectively take part in decisions made by public authorities which impact upon their rights and get fair and equal services from public authorities.

2.9 COMMUNITY COHESION

A cohesive community can be described as one in which strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances and one where different groups of people get on well together. Effective and lasting community cohesion involves appreciating, respecting and positively valuing the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances.

2.10 STEREOTYPE

A simplified idea of what people with certain characteristics are like such as, all French people wear berets and striped T-shirts. Stereotypes can be positive or negative.

3. APPROACH

Research shows that no one is completely free from prejudice. Prejudices manifest themselves during the early years and are influenced by family, the community and the media. We understand this and as such all our staff will undertake bespoke equality training to help them recognise their prejudices and overcome them, as we are aware that prejudice can lead to discrimination.

Although the Equality Act 2010 details nine protected characteristics, the Council understands that our employees and residents do not have to disclose that they hold a specific characteristic. The Council also understand that people who share the same characteristic often have very different needs, and as such our training also covers asking open questions and offering support if required, without assuming the type of support that may be needed.

The Council is also aware that prejudice can lead to acts of hate. Hate incidents and crimes have no place within our district and as such we include Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion within this policy to ensure our approach to equality and diversity is echoed throughout the district.

3.1 EQUALITY STATEMENT

The Equality Statement has been revised to help us promote and advance equality, diversity and community cohesion as part of everything we do. Over the next 4 years, the Council will:

Carry out an equality analysis in relation to: access to services, the effect of services, proposed policies and changes to existing policies, in respect of the nine protected characteristics. To enable us to fully understand our service users and ensure we have paid 'due regard' to those with protected characteristics. The Council will also ensure all members of staff receive face to face equality training which will also form part of staff induction.

The Council will also work towards ensuring:

1. Council services are fair, reasonable and accessible to all our customers, especially those with protected characteristics.
2. Equality and diversity is at the heart of service planning, management and service delivery.
3. Information about our services is offered in suitable formats on request.
4. The council's commissioning, purchasing and grants provisions, policies and procedures are fair and treat all customers equitably.
5. The council understands our employees so we can take actions that ensure fairness and equality of opportunity for all.
6. Elected members are trained through induction, specific training sessions and opportunities to ensure they are aware of this Policy and their own responsibilities and are able to apply it to their own area of work.
7. Information is regularly published on the council website regarding the work the Council is doing to embed and promote equality and diversity in the workplace and for our communities.

3.1 OUR ROLES AS LEADERS

This Policy assists the Corporate Leadership Team, Team (CLT) Managers and Team Leaders, to fully meet the aims set out in the Equality Statement (see 3.1) and to fully realise the equality objectives of the council. All supporting documents, codes of practice, legislative information, monitoring and training will be aimed at helping all employees, to implement the policy effectively, in terms of service delivery and employment practice. These responsibilities are:-

- To provide leadership through CLT who will work with the political leadership in creating an equality and diversity culture within the council.
- For all employees to embrace the principles of equality of opportunity and apply these to their everyday activities.
- Not to harass, abuse or bully any other employee or customer, on the grounds of a protected characteristics.
- For the Equality and Diversity Lead to provide guidance to staff on equality and diversity law, and be pro-active in promoting equality and diversity. The Equalities Coordinator will advise staff on training, monitoring, service and policy reviews, engaging with the community as needed.

3.2 ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS

We want to encourage communication with people from different communities and make sure we do this in a way that prevents exclusion.

The council will:-

- Talk to people and listen to people in the way they find the easiest and best. We will also help others to do the same.
- Look at ways to raise the profile of equality and diversity through targeted positive communications, equality and diversity events, either as a council, or working in partnership with other organisations and government bodies. Invitations and publicity for events will clearly state the appropriate booking systems to request any facilities or services required.
- Continue to provide information upon request in a number of different formats or community languages and offer to go through a document personally with someone to help them understand it. Alternative formats which may include large print, Braille and audio will be available on request. We will produce a version of this document in Easy Read by the end of March 2019.
- Continue to ensure, where possible that public meetings and events are accessible. This includes providing, upon request, alternative formats for written documents, help with using the hearing system, level access, accessible toilets, where possible assist with the provision with transport to and from the venue, and adequate emergency exit procedures.
- All equality and diversity documents are being reviewed and updated, and will be available on our website by the end of July 2019.

3.3.1 TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION SERVICE

Translation and Interpretation guidance is available to assist officers and our customers in delivering our services. The Council Translation and Interpretation Guidance can be found [online](#).

Interpreters (including sign language interpreters) can be provided where we receive prior notification that they are required. Information about our services can be provided in different formats/languages with advanced notice.

3.3.2 COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Comments and complaints are encouraged from our customers in any form of communication – by email, telephone, in writing or face-to-face.

The Council has formal processes for the management of complaints to ensure customers receive informed and considered responses in circumstances where they are unhappy with our services. The Council recognises that information from complaints can help us to improve services in the future.

The councils' mission is to put customers at the heart of what is done and how it is done, regardless of how they chose to contact us. We will respond positively to customers' views and actively seek to promote opportunities for customers to tell us what they think and for them to influence future service development and delivery.

4. EQUALITY MONITORING

Equality monitoring is looking at the information that is collected about different services and groups of people. This will tell us how well equality and diversity is embedded in the work we do. It is something we think is very important for understanding our customers. Information about the people who work for us is collected and monitored for the same reason.

The Council's Equality Monitoring Policy tells staff how they can collect information for the protected characteristics. This information will be used to:-

- Understand how many people from different protected characteristics are employed by the council
- Understand how many people from different protected characteristics use our services, or are not using those services.
- Help understand what different groups think about our services and about what can be improved to meet their needs.
- Support service provision, monitor inequalities and demonstrate compliance with legislation.

We have produced a generic equality monitoring form in order to collect equality and diversity information of service users, residents and partners, etc. The equality monitoring form and Policy will be available on our intranet for staff and externally on The Councils website.

5. EMBEDDING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN ALL WE DO

5.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND WHAT THE LAW SAYS

As a Council we need to show how we meet relevant legislation by publishing specified data on a public facing platform. This law is called the Equality Act 2010, and can be found [online](#).

5.2 THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 and connected Public Sector Equality Duty are the main equalities legislation, which sets out unlawful ways to treat someone. The law protects people from unfair discrimination on the grounds of nine protected characteristics:-

- 1 Age: relates to a person belonging to a particular age group (e.g. 32 year olds) or a range of ages (e.g. 18 – 30 year olds).
- 2 Disability: defined as having a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative impact on your ability to do normal daily activities.
- 3 Gender: covers the 'characteristic' of being a man or of being a woman.
- 4 Gender Reassignment: the process of changing from one gender to another. This characteristic covers a person who is intending to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their gender by changing physiological or other traits of gender.
- 5 Marriage and Civil Partnership: currently, marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters. Legislation on marriage changed from 13th March 2014 and same-sex marriages started taking place on 29th March 2014.
- 6 Pregnancy and Maternity: pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- 7 Race: refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

- 8 Religion or Belief: religion refers to any religion or lack of religion and belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g., Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- 9 Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of any of these nine 'protected characteristics'.

5.3 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY [PSED]

The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) consists of a general duty which is supported by specific duties. The general duty requires public sector organisations to have due regard to the need to:-

1. **Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.**
This means the Council must stop people from being treated unfairly or differently because of one of the 'protected characteristics', listed in the Equality Act 2010. The council also has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, to also publish our Gender Pay Gap report annually.
2. **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
This means the Council must do its best to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and stop any unfair treatment suffered by people because of their protected characteristic(s).
3. **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
This means the Council must help people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it, to get on together.

Having 'due regard' means consciously thinking about the aim of the equality duty as part of decision-making processes. This means consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies, such as, how they act as employers; how they form, evaluate and review policy; how they design, deliver and evaluate services; and how they appoint and procure or obtain goods and services from others.

5.4 SOCIAL COMMUNITY INCLUSION

This Policy includes community cohesion as it is crucial to fostering good relations, which creates a fairer and more equal society and thus tackles Hate. All communities are linked in different ways. No individual community is so different from the rest of society that its particular needs cannot be understood and it is simply about how well everyone gets on and achieves benefits which are desirable for both the communities and within the district and the Council. An emphasis on shared futures rather than different histories will help bring communities together.

To bring about social inclusion and community cohesion we need to improve how services respond to communities and how we engage with people. By working to meet the different needs of those with protected characteristics, we can tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people from different backgrounds. To achieve this, our aim will be to:-

- Ensure access to services for isolated rural communities and for people from priority neighbourhoods and groups at risk of social exclusion.
- Increase the number of people from priority neighbourhoods and priority groups who have the confidence, knowledge and skills to take part in community activity, particularly where taking part by such people is disproportionately low.
- Increase resident participation by enhancing the role of community groups, and to strengthen and develop local leadership.
- Reduce or prevent the impact of harassment (or Hate) suffered by those with protected characteristics, within the wider community or within the workplace.

5.5 EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EFLG)

The Council is committed to using the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) as a tool to support us in meeting our legal obligations and to measure the progress we are making towards embedding equality and diversity practice across our organisation. The framework has 3 stages of improvement:-



The Council will ensure the equality principles and legal requirements are embedded within the organisation, progressing the work around equality and diversity, ensuring equity and respect is promoted in all that we do.

Details of the Equality Framework can be found [online](#).

5.6 ASSESSING EQUALITY IMPACT

The Public Sector Equality Duty states there is a duty to analyse our services, policies and procedures to assess how appropriate and accessible they are for people with a protected characteristic and that they do not, without knowing or by mistake, disadvantage or discriminate against any protected group.

5.7 WHAT WE WILL DO

- Use the new Equality Impact Matrix form to do a risk-based equality analysis, to assess services, functions and policies, for their likely or actual effect on people in respect of the protected characteristics. The Equality Impact Matrix form and guidance for completing them will be available upon request on the intranet and website.
- Ensure the equality impact process is robust and supported with a guidance document, which meets the legal requirements and ensure staff and members are trained on how to complete the new Equality Impact Matrix form.
- Equality Impact Assessments that have already been completed for key services, will be made available in summary format via the Council's web site, and made available for formal inspection as required.
- Actions arising from equality analysis and assessments will be reflected in Service Team Plans.

5.8 EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

The Council is committed to all aspects of equal opportunities in employment, including fair employment and equal pay policy.

The Council:

- Promotes opportunities to ensure its workforce is diverse and representative of the local community.
- Ensures council jobs are accessible to people from all sections of the community.
- Ensures all applicants for posts are aware of our equalities policies and of their right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Ensures employees are treated equitably in all areas of employment, including career development, pay, training and promotion.
- Addresses harassment and bullying in the workplace.
- Will seek to improve consultation with staff from the protected groups.
- Continually reviews human resource policies to assess their impact on the protected groups covered by the policy.
- Monitors recruitment, promotion, training, grievances, disciplinary procedures and exit interviews from employment.
- Works with our Trade Union partners in addressing the Council's goals in equalities.

5.9 EMPLOYMENT MONITORING

Information is collected and published on the Council website about the people who work for us: covering age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This includes information about levels of pay, information on applications for jobs and how successful different groups of people have been, staff who started and left the organisation and staff complaints and training.

The information is used to check if any group sharing a protected characteristic is being disadvantaged by any of the council's employment policies or procedures. If this is the case, we try and do things to reduce or prevent this disadvantage.

5.10 EQUALITIES LINKED TO EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

There are a wide range of policies to support people who work for us and future employees. These policies let staff know what is expected from them as employees and what they can expect from the Council as an employer. Equality monitoring starts at the point of application and continues through to minimise any unconscious bias and to help us achieve a workforce that is representative of the district.

The Council staff are active in promoting and supporting diversity in the workforce. This includes:

- Making sure we are fair in what we pay people, through having a non-discriminatory job evaluation scheme;
- Making sure bullying and harassment doesn't happen in the workplace;
- Supporting employees in making sure they have a good balance of work life and home life (work-life balance).

The Council understands the law in respect of reasonable adjustments and our duty as an employer to take such steps as are reasonable to prevent any practice, policy, physical feature of the workplace or any other arrangements being made, which places a disabled employee or applicant at a disadvantage compared to a non-disabled employee or applicant.

5.11 TRAINING

The Council will ensure Elected Members and staff, undertake regular training (e.g. every 3 years, mandatory as part of the induction process) on equality and diversity so they understand what their responsibilities are and how best to prevent discrimination.

5.12 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN PROCUREMENT

The Council's procurement processes include promotion of social benefits and equality of opportunity for service users, businesses and council staff alike. For each procurement process the procurement team will endeavour to understand the equality impact of the proposed purchase or contract, so that the process being used ensures that the supplier understands and is capable of delivering their duties in respect of equality.

Exactly what is undertaken will be specific to the activity but may include evaluation of supplier policy, understanding of how that policy is implemented and communicated, and how a supplier measures its demographics against the communities it serves.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission provides further information on our procurement role and meeting our equality duty requirements under the Equality Act and PSED.

5.13 ENGAGING AND CONSULTING WITH COMMUNITIES

The Equality Act 2010 requires local authorities to be transparent in their engagement processes and be able to demonstrate this through publishing information about the consultation it has undertaken.

It is important to talk to people/residents in our communities to understand what they need from our services. In order to provide the right services, which better meet the needs of the people using them, the council will:-

- Help people who may be disadvantaged due to a protected characteristic or social exclusion, to take part in activities in their community, and to have their say in consultations about the decisions the council makes about its services and how they are affected. This could be through: surveys, questionnaires, focus groups or open meetings.
- Represent communities at meetings to make sure the views of the community are heard.
- Listen to the opinions and complaints of individuals, local forums, community groups and partners to ensure feedback is taken into account in service provision and policy development.
- Working with other public sector organisations and keeping abreast of new developments in assistive technology that could help us achieve our aims.
- Feedback the results of engagement and consultation to all involved.

The Council's Engagement Strategy is another key document for promoting equality and diversity. It outlines how we will work together to inform, consult and involve local people and our stakeholders in decision making and improving public services in North West Leicestershire.

5.14 EQUALITY GROUPS TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

A number of groups have been set up within Leicestershire which work on equality issues across organisations and communities, and help embed equality and diversity in everything we do.

LeicesterShire Equalities Forum (LSEF): This is a group with representatives from across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, made up of: Local Authorities, Police, De Montfort University, Fire Service, NHS, equality groups who are interested in equality and diversity, and staff who are responsible for equality and diversity as part of their job. These meetings focus on issues relating to equality, diversity, community cohesion and human rights and good practice is shared. This group reports to the Leicestershire County Council, Corporate Equalities Board. Our Equality and Diversity Lead attends and works with this group.

Staff Workers Groups: These groups play an important role in shaping policies and employment initiatives, whilst supporting and responding to issues raised by their group.

- The Councils Equalities and Access Group: This group commenced in July 2017 and includes members and staff who discuss and monitor all aspects of Equality and Diversity, ensuring the Council support those with any of the protected characteristics as listed in the Equalities Act 2010.
- The Council Staff Support Forum: This group is due to be set up in 2019 and is an online informal group of The Council staff who work together to report equality and diversity issues or potential issues. Moderated by the Equalities Lead this enables all staff to have a voice and share best practice.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 POLICY SUMMARY

The Policy recognises the constant diversity changes happening within our community and our organisation, and as such the Council is committed to continually reviewing and improving existing structures and practices. There is a firm commitment to provide equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination, harassment, hate and disadvantage and to fostering good relations. We are also committed to achieving the highest equality standards in service delivery, decision-making and employment practice.

The focus of all aspects of Equalities is the ability to achieve our Equality Statement by 2021.

6.2 PUBLISHING THE RESULTS

We recognise the importance of not only communicating our clear commitment to equality, diversity and social inclusion but also the importance of keeping local people regularly informed of the progress being made and the outcomes being achieved. This includes opportunities for local people to take part in this work and help contribute to the improvements the council is seeking. To help keep local people informed we will:-

- Share results with selected consultation groups.
- Report to the Policy Development Group annually on progress with the action of this Policy.
- We will publish information on our intranet.

- Produce a yearly report of our progress against the Equality themes which are contained within the Equality and Diversity Action Plan and make this available on the council website and in council owned buildings.
- Publish information on the Council website about the Council's work to progress its overall equalities agenda.
- Ensure our reception centres are able to provide leaflets, documents on Council services and information on new initiatives in community languages upon request.

6.3 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan will be developed from the actions and commitments detailed in this Policy with a view to achieving our Equality Statement.

The purpose of the plan is to:-

- Ensure the Council maintains and improves its standards in delivering fair and equitable services to its customers.
- Ensure the Council maintains its focus on our general duty to give 'due regard' to:-
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

END OF POLICY DOCUMENT

Copies of this document are available upon request and can be obtained in large print or translated into other languages, if required.

2019 – 2022 Equality and Diversity Action Plan

Recommendation	Action required	Responsible officer	Date
1. To promote and advance equality, diversity and community cohesion as part of everything we do.			
1.1 Ensure we know our communities.	1) Gather and publish information and data on the profile of our communities and the extent of inequality and disadvantage by developing systems to review soft and hard data/intelligence about communities, their needs and aspirations.	Head of Community Services	May 2019
	2) Have plans in place to collect, share and use equality information with partners.	Equality Lead	June 2019
	3) Have systems to collect, analyse and measure data on how all sections of the community are able to access services.	Head of Customer Services	May 2019
	4) Have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that Human Rights considerations are identified when planning services and that customers and residents are treated with dignity and respect.	Equality Lead Extended Leadership Team	May 2019
1.2 Ensure a united approach to Equality and Diversity across the organisation.	1) The Equality & Diversity Lead to provide guidance to staff on equality and diversity law, and be pro-active in promoting equality and diversity through the creation of Equality Champions within each team. The Equality and Diversity Lead will support Equality Champions with training, monitoring, service and policy reviews, engaging with the community and the use of Equality Impact Assessments.	Equality Lead	April 2019
1.3 Ensure committed leadership, partnerships and show good organisational commitment.	1) The political and executive leadership have publicly committed to reducing inequality, fostering good relations and challenging discrimination.	Corporate Leadership Team	April 2019
	2) The Corporate leadership team to provide leadership in creating an equality and diversity culture within the council.	Corporate Leadership Team	April 2019
	3) Decision makers understand what 'equality' means and why it matters locally. Partnership working arrangements are being reviewed with the voluntary and community sector	Chief Executive Extended Leadership Team	April 2019

Recommendation	Action required	Responsible officer	Date
	and the wider community to ensure local priorities are addressed. 4) Equality objectives for the organisation have been set and published in accordance with the requirements of the specific duties to support the public sector Equality Duty. 5) Appropriate structures are in place to ensure delivery and review of equality objectives.	Equality Lead Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	April 2019 April 2019
1.4 Responsive services and customer care.	1) Have an agreed approach to conducting equality analysis/impact assessment of policy and service decisions. 2) Structures are in place to ensure equality outcomes are integrated into business objectives.	Equalities Lead Extended Leadership Team	May 2019 June 2019
1.5.Ensure council services are fair, reasonable and accessible, to all our customers, especially those with protected characteristics.	1) Establish links to hard to reach communities and residents/groups with a protected characteristic. 2) Work with Communications Team and Team Managers to promote the work and value of those service areas in the harder to reach communities. 3) Review access to engagement events and monitor throughout the period of this action plan.	Head of Community Services All Teams Head of Community Services	December 2019 On Going On Going
1.6.Ensure equality and diversity is part of service planning and policies, management and service delivery. All supporting documents, codes of practice, legislative information, monitoring and training should be aimed at helping all employees, to implement the policy effectively, in terms of service delivery and employment practice.	1) All employees to embrace the principles of equality of opportunity and apply these to their daily work. 2) Not to harass, abuse or bully any other employee or customer, on the grounds of a protected characteristics. 3) Refer to the Equality Framework for local government which will support us in meeting our legal obligations and measure the progress we are making towards embedding equality and diversity practice. 4) Respond positively to customers views, and actively seek to promote opportunities for customers to tell us what they think, and for them to influence future service development and delivery. Publish the results of such contact.	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Equality Lead Head of Customer Services	May 2019 On Going On Going On Going
1.7.Ensure information about our services is	1) Upon request, provide interpreters (includes sign language interpreters)	Head of Customer Services	On Going

Recommendation	Action required	Responsible officer	Date
available in suitable formats and languages.	<p>where we receive prior notice that they are required.</p> <p>2) Offer information in different formats and languages on request, including easy read and large print.</p> <p>3) Monitor and report yearly (on our website) on the costs of our translation and interpretation service.</p>	<p>Head of Customer Services</p> <p>Head of Customer Services</p>	<p>On Going</p> <p>Annually</p>
1.8 Ensure the council's commissioning, purchasing and grants provisions, policies and procedures are fair, and treats everyone equitably.	<p>1) Embed greater awareness of equality & diversity issues and embed equality & diversity policies and procedures across all council's functions, e.g., through training (to ensure positive impacts).</p> <p>2) Ensure the procurement processes and system incorporates equality and diversity factors and responsibilities, for how projects are developed and delivered; and creates an 'equal playing field' for smaller, local businesses, and covers the 'Buy it Local' scheme.</p> <p>3) The organisation ensures that procurement and commissioning processes and practice take account of the diverse needs of clients and that providers understand the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.</p> <p>4) Monitor the work of contractors (via procurement).</p>	<p>All Teams via Equality Champions</p> <p>Head of Finance</p> <p>Head of Finance</p> <p>Head of Finance</p>	<p>May 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p>
1.9 Develop a skilled committed workforce	<p>1) Understand our local labour market, the barriers faced by those from vulnerable or marginalized individuals and groups and the impact these have on achieving a diverse workforce.</p> <p>2) Design a workforce strategy to include priority equality considerations and objectives. Specific and measurable employment targets will be set to improve workforce diversity.</p> <p>3) Put systems in place to collect and analyse employment data across a range of practices (recruitment, training, leavers, grievance and disciplinaries etc.)</p> <p>4) Ensure all employment policies and procedures comply with equality legislation and employment codes of</p>	<p>Head of Economic Regeneration</p> <p>Head of Human Resources and Operational Development</p> <p>Head of Human Resources and Operational Development</p> <p>Head of Human Resources and</p>	<p>September 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>August 2019</p>

Recommendation	Action required	Responsible officer	Date
	practice and assess new/changing policies for impact on people with protected characteristics.	Operational Development	September 2019
	5) Review and publish employee data in compliance with our public sector equality duty, e.g., levels of pay, jobs applications information for different groups of people and how successful they have been.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	August 2019
	6) Ensure applicants for posts are aware of our equalities policies, and when requested make applications packs accessible in suitable formats, to encourage applicants from underrepresented communities.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	June 2019
	7) Ensure a range of inclusive structures are in place to engage and involve more staff.	Head of Economic Regeneration	August 2019
	8) Assess all aspects of the working environment to ensure that the needs of all its employees are met.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	September 2019
	9) Maintain equal pay implementation.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	July 2019
	10) Ensure policies and systems are in place to identify, prevent and deal effectively with bullying and harassment at work.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	August 2019
	11) Ensure equality consideration for individuals are integrated into appraisal systems.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	July 2019
	12) Carry out a regular assessment of training and learning and development needs required to ensure our members and officers are equipped to understand their equality duties and take action to deliver equality outcomes.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	
		Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	
		Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	
		Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	
1.10 Train all staff through induction, specific training sessions and opportunities to ensure they are aware of this policy and their own responsibilities, and are able to apply it to their own area of work.	1) All staff to initially receive face to face training using a top down approach, allowing the Councils equalities ethos to be imparted and a thorough understanding of individual's responsibilities.	Head of Human Resources and Operational Development	May 2019
	2) Deliver face to face equalities training as part of new staff induction.	Equalities Lead	May 2019
	3) Team managers to ensure their staff have corporate training, and equality	Extended Leadership Team	May 2019

Recommendation	Action required	Responsible officer	Date
	and diversity training needs are discussed at yearly appraisals.		
1.11 Train Elected Members through induction, specific training sessions and opportunities to ensure they are aware of this policy and their own responsibilities	1) Train all members at the start of their term of office in the Councils approach to Equality and Diversity and their responsibilities as Elected Members.	Equalities Lead	May 2019
1.12 Regularly publish information on the council website showing the councils progress in embedding and promoting equality and diversity in the workplace and for our communities.	1) Raise the profile of equality and diversity through targeted positive communications and events, as a council, working in partnership with other agencies, e.g., annual Equality and Diversity week (November).	Equalities Lead Communications Team	March 2019
	2) Share results with selected consultation groups.	Equalities Lead	July 2019
	3) Report to the Policy and Performance Committee every six months on progress on this Action Plan.	Equalities Lead	On Going
	4) Produce a yearly report of our progress against the Equality themes which are contained within the Equality and Diversity Action Plan and make this available on the council website and in council owned buildings.	Equalities Lead	Annually
	5) Ensure other equality and diversity documents, are still relevant to current Equality Act legislation, etc. The Disability Equality Scheme and Race Equality Scheme need to be updated when necessary and put on our website. Complete the consultation process and seek approval from Corporate Leadership Team for implementation.	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	September 2019
2. Community Engagement and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)			
2.1 Enhance community engagement to: tackle discrimination, prejudice, meet the needs between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, foster good relations, and promote understanding between people from different backgrounds.	1) The organisation has a clear understanding of the level of participation in public life by different communities/protected characteristics.	Head of Community Services	May 2019
	2) Establish and reduce potential barriers to engagement.		August 2019
	3) Ensure structures are in place within the organisation and across partnerships to understand community relationships and map community tensions.	Head of Community Services	September 2019
		Extended Leadership Team	August 2019

Recommendation	Action required	Responsible officer	Date
	4) Help people who may be disadvantaged to have their say in consultations about the decisions the council makes about its services and how they are affected. Use surveys, questionnaires, focus groups or open meetings.	Extended Leadership Team	August 2019
	5) Consult on policies, services, needs, etc., with existing equality groups, e.g., LeicesterShire Equality Forum (County Hall), NWL Equality and Access Group; LCC groups: Disabled Workers Group, BME group and Mind. Ensuring we share engagement structures/mechanisms with our partners so as to avoid 'consultation overload'.	Strategic Director of Place Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services	May 2019
		Extended Leadership Team	June 2019
	6) Seek to implement a transport provision as and when required to ensure participation in meetings and consultation events by residents with protected characteristics.	Extended Leadership Team	October 2019
	7) Represent communities at meetings to make sure the views of the community are heard. Listen to the opinions and complaints of individuals, local forums, community groups and partners to ensure feedback is taken into account in service and policy development.	Extended Leadership Team	On Going
	8) Feedback the results of engagement and consultation to all involved.	Extended Leadership Team	On Going
	9) Ensure communications promote a clear commitment to advancing equality and fostering good relations across all local communities.	Equalities Lead Business Focus Team	
	10) Raise awareness of those with protected characteristics as a valuable part of the workforce to businesses in our District.	Communications Team	
2.2 Encourage communication with people from different communities in a way that helps them to take part in consultations, give confidence, knowledge and skills to take part in community activities.	1) Talk to people and listen to people in the way they find the easiest and best. 2) Help staff to produce literature and documents in accessible formats, e.g., easy read, plain English. 3) Continue to ensure public meetings and events are accessible. This includes providing, upon request, alternative formats for written	Extended Leadership Team Equalities Lead Extended Leadership Team	May 2019 May 2019

Recommendation	Action required	Responsible officer	Date
	<p>documents, and personally going through a document to help them understand it, using the induction hearing loop system, level access, accessible toilets, where possible, transport to and from the venue, and adequate emergency exit procedures.</p> <p>4) Encourage comments, complaints and compliments from customers and residents, as this will help us collect and monitor opinions about our services and staff, as well as help us understand the diversity of our residents.</p>	Extended Leadership Team	<p>April 2019</p> <p>September 2019</p>
3. Achieve the Local Government Association Equality Framework at the developing level.	<p>1) Completion of the above action plan and mock peer review for LGA Framework.</p> <p>2) Submission for LGA peer review.</p>	<p>Equalities Lead</p> <p>Equalities Lead</p>	<p>December 2019</p> <p>February 2020</p>

End

EXTRACT of the MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2019

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors R Ashman, N Clarke, T Eynon, G Houlst, P Purver, V Richichi, A C Saffell and S Sheahan

In Attendance: Councillors J G Coxon, R Johnson and J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R D Bayliss

Officers: Mr G Jones, Mr C Lambert, Mr M Murphy, Mr D Scruton, Mr L Sebastian and Mrs R Wallace

53. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

The Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development presented the report to Members and thanked the Equalities Officer for the work undertaken on developing the policy. He drew attention to the action plan within the report and informed Members that the actions for February would be changed to March due to the Cabinet meeting timelines.

Councillor S Sheahan commented that it was essential to be a leader on this subject within the community and it was important to put out the right message as part of the next steps.

Councillor T Eynon concurred with Councillor S Sheahan and believed it was a great policy, but only the beginning of a long process. She asked that regular updates, which would be supported by the Equality and Access Group, be provided to the community.

It was moved by Councillor T Eynon, seconded by Councillor S Sheahan and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The report be noted.
- b) Comments made by the Committee be presented to Cabinet when considering the report at its meeting on 6 March 2019.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.25 pm

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2019

Title of report	DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes b) Community Yes
Contacts	<p>Councillor Nick Rushton 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services 01530 454819 glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Customer Services 01530 454753 tom.shardlow@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p>
Purpose of report	To present to members the budgetary position on the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund and seek member approval around the future options.
Reason for decision	To ensure effective budget management of the Discretionary Housing Payment fund.
Council priorities	Spend Money Wisely
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	DHP is used to support those in financial hardship with their housing rent costs. It does not support mortgage payments. DHP expenditure will be contained within the existing Department for Work and Pensions grant.
Risk Management	N/A
Equalities Impact Screening	DHP is a is used to support those who are in financial hardship with housing rent costs.
Human Rights	N/A
Transformational Government	N/A

Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory
Consultees	Report has been drafted in conjunction with the Management Team of the Leicestershire Revenues and Benefits Partnership.
Background papers	Discretionary Housing Payment Guidelines (Enc) Cabinet Report 'Changes to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)' – March 2016 Cabinet Report 'Changes to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)' – October 2016
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NOTE THE BUDGETARY POSITION ON THE DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT BUDGET. 2. SUPPORT THE USE OF DIMINISHING TAPERS IN THE AWARD OF DHP TO PREVENT BUDGETARY OVERSPEND FOR FUTURE YEARS. 3. DELEGATE POWERS TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES TO MAKE DECISIONS ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT DIMINISHING TAPERS IN FUTURE YEARS IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CORPORATE PORTFOLIO HOLDER.

1.0. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) provide extra help to claimants in receipt of Housing Benefit who need further financial assistance with housing rent costs. This will be usually because there is a shortfall between the amount of Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) that they receive and their rent liability.
- 1.2. To qualify claimants, need to meet certain conditions:
 - They must be receiving HB or in receipt of UC that includes a housing element.
 - There must be a shortfall between the amount of HB / Housing Element of UC that they receive and their rent liability.
 - They must demonstrate that they need extra help to meet their housing costs.
- 1.3. The guidelines are enclosed with this report.

- 1.4. Funding for DHP comes primarily from a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) grant, which for 2018/19 was £145,351. This grant is determined annually and decreased from £173,364 in 2017/18. The funding for 2019/20 has been confirmed as £126,679. This funding is ring fenced and any underspend must be returned to the DWP at year end.

2.0. CURRENT AWARD LEVELS

- 2.1. As at January 2019, we have made a total of 352 awards of DHP, of which 186 (52.84%) are Council tenants and 166 (47.16%) are private sector tenants. The average weekly award for cases in this financial year currently stands at £23.98.

Award breakdown (by reason for award):

Benefit Cap	£24,053
Under occupancy	£27,765
Local Housing Allowance reforms	£3,573
Combination of reforms	£17,692
Legislation change	£3,216
Rent restrictions	£22,956
Income tapers	£5,130
Disability	£15,413
Baby due	£38
Reduction in Housing Benefit	£1,696
Other	£28,160
Rent in Advance	£91
Non Dependant Deduction	£1,047
Total	£150,830

- 2.2. It is important to note that the scheme is a discretionary one and each case must be considered on its own merit rather than on a set of rigid pre-defined criteria.
- 2.3. A policy that is too rigid would prevent proper use of discretion. It is important that cases are considered on individual merit and with a level of human decision making. The absence of discretion would leave decisions vulnerable to challenge by judicial review.

3.0. BUDGETARY POSITION

- 3.1. Any underspent funding must be returned to the DWP at the end of the financial year and any spend above the funding levels is met by the local authority. The predicted spend at the current rate of expenditure for 2019/20 is £195,000, which is an overspend of the DWP Grant (£145,351) of £49,649. This will be met through the utilisation of DWP 'new burdens funding'. New burdens funding is provided to support any additional administration expenses arising from the migration to UC and implementation of the welfare reform changes. There is unspent 'new burdens funding' funding of £52,932 available.

- 3.2. Current DHP awards are based on the actual spend of claimants on essential expenditure and the DHP budget spend is monitored weekly.

Historic DHP Expenditure Against Funding

Financial Year	DWP Grant (£)	Spend (£)	(Grant exceeded)/Returned
2015/2016	£103,678	£117,842	(£14,164)
2016/2017	£114,966	£89,947	£25,019
2017/2018	£173,364	£117,846	£55,518
2018/2019	£145,351	£195,000	(£50,000)

4.0 UNIVERSAL CREDIT

- 4.1. Local Authorities are responsible for the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments for those who have a Housing Cost Element within their Universal Credit awards.
- 4.2 With Universal Credit extending for postcodes in the North West Leicestershire District from February and July 2018, this has resulted in a marked increase in the number of these claims being received and processed. Notably as at January 2019, a total of 87 Universal Credit DHPs had been processed, with an expenditure totalling £40,379 (26% of the total spend to date) as opposed to 30 cases received in 2017-2018 at a cost of £14,296 (11.9% of the total spend for the full financial year)

5.0. FUTURE DEMAND

- 5.1 Forecasting future spend is notoriously difficult because of the unpredictability of future demand. Therefore, a default scheme was created when the Revenues and Benefits Partnership came together, which retained the ability to modify in-year awards when too much or too little of the budget was being spent.
- 5.2 Because of the volatility of demand, it is not always feasible to apply rigid guidelines before the beginning of the financial year. This is evidenced by the fact that in March 2016 revised guidelines were implemented (after an overspend in 2015/16) for the following financial year following a Cabinet decision.

These were:

- 100% of the DHP award to be paid for 6 months
- 50% of the DHP award to be paid for 3 months
- 50% or 0% paid for 3 months depending on the claimant's circumstances.

However, the guidelines were changed again in October 2016 when it was realised that the Council would have to return a proportion of the grant due to underspend of the DWP grant.

This revised decision meant that DHP would now be paid:

- 100% of the DHP award to be paid for 9 months
- 50% or 100% paid for 3 months depending on the available funding.

Thereafter the budget has afforded DHP to be paid at 100% for the full 12 months, with no further adjustments of the scheme proving necessary until now.

6.0. MANAGING FUTURE BUDGETS

- 6.1. To ensure that the level of DHP award remains within budget (which has been reduced for 2019/20) and there is continued flexibility to ensure that the appropriate level of support is given, it is recommended that in-year diminishing tapers of award of DHP may be used, as granted in 2016, such as the example below (assuming the circumstances of the claimant remain unchanged):
 - 6 months full award
 - 3 months 50% award
 - 3 months 0% award
- 6.2. As it is not possible to predict the future level of applications and subsequent awards, a decision on how and when to apply any taper decision should not be made proactively in advance. Therefore, it is recommended that members delegate the power to the Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services, in conjunction with the Corporate Portfolio Holder, to apply appropriate tapers in year for future years to ensure the budget remains viable.
- 6.3. Where budget affords, including utilisation of any new burdens funding available, the council will continue to seek to award the maximum amounts viable. However, the flexibility will ensure that the awards can continue to be made to those in genuine financial hardship, whilst not placing increased pressure on other council budgets.

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DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS: GUIDELINES

Introduction

This document sets out the procedure for discretionary housing payments (DHPs) that are intended to provide claimants with further financial assistance, in addition to any welfare benefits, when an authority considers that help with housing costs is required. DHPs are made at the discretion of the authority and their purpose is to ensure that those who claim universal credit (UC) and/or housing benefit (HB) do not suffer high levels of hardship where there is a shortfall between the amount of rent due and the amount of benefit being paid.

Following the abolition of CTB from April 2013, DHPs are no longer made towards council tax liability.

Background

DHP can be awarded to private tenants, council tenants and housing association tenants.

The use of DHP is directed by government guidance and a local policy. The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 ('the regulations') provide the legal framework that allows DHPs to be made.

What is meant by 'housing costs'?

Housing costs are not defined in the regulations and this gives the Leicestershire Partnership authorities a broad discretion to interpret the term as they wish. If the customer is getting Housing Benefit (HB) housing costs mean rent (subject to certain exclusions). However, housing costs can be interpreted more widely to include:

- rent in advance
- deposits
- other lump sum costs associated with a housing need such as removal costs.

The use of discretion in making DHP decisions

The regulations provide a very broad discretion in DHP decision making. The local authorities within the Leicestershire Partnership are committed to transparency and consistency of approach in its decision making around DHP. They will make their decisions in accordance with ordinary principles about good decision making and in line with the duty to act fairly, reasonably and consistently. Each case will be decided on its own merits and the decision making will be consistent throughout the year.

Support for all tenancy types

DHP will be used by the Partnership authorities to manage the impact of welfare reform on private sector, council and other social housing tenants.

Support for specific groups affected by welfare reform changes

The Partnership authorities have limited 'baseline' funding to provide support for customer's unspecified circumstances. Following recent welfare reforms the Government funding contribution has been increased to support specific groups of people, as follows:

- those affected by local housing allowance reductions;
- those affected by the benefit cap; and
- those affected by the size criteria in social rented sector

The awards application process for funding under any of these headings will be the same; the Partnership authorities will consider the responses to a range of DHP criteria questions to establish whether the applicant is eligible for DHP support, after which the level of financial assistance will be determined by the financial calculation statement. The expectation is that those in receipt of Disabled Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment will incur additional housing costs to accommodate their individual needs.

General 'baseline' funding

The Partnership authorities have general discretion to make awards from this funding stream. The funding is not limited to any specific groups of people.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) restrictions

Major changes have come into effect for Housing Benefit. They signal the start of a radical transformation of Welfare Benefits leading up to the introduction of Universal Credit.

Recent changes include:

- setting LHA at the 30th percentile of rents in each Broad Rental Market Area, rather than the median as was previously used;
- increases in the amount deducted in non-dependant deductions;
- an absolute upper limit on the amount of Housing Benefit that can be paid out for any family receiving LHA;
- freezing LHA rates for the year from April 2012, in advance of new annual uprating from April 2013; and
- an increase from 25 years to 35 years in the relevant age for the LHA shared room rate.

The Partnership authorities are receiving an increase in demand for DHPs as a result of these changes. It may not be possible to meet the demand in full from the funds available. Awards will be made on a discretionary basis. Each case will be decided on its own merits and the decision making will be consistent throughout the year.

The Benefit Cap

From July 2013 total household benefit payments for working-age claimants have been capped so that workless households will no longer be entitled to receive more in benefit than the average weekly wage, after tax and national insurance. Initially the cap will be administered by local authorities through housing benefit payments. From October 2013 the cap will be applied through Universal Credit, starting with all claimants setting up a Universal Credit account including those migrated from existing benefits. Total entitlement to benefit payments will be capped at £500 per week for couples and lone parent households. The level of entitlement for single adults will be capped at £350 per week.

Changes to DHP funding are intended to provide short-term, temporary relief to families who may face a variety of challenges which prevent them from being able to move immediately or to help manage families move into more appropriate accommodation. It is specifically aimed at a number of groups who are likely to be particularly affected by the benefit cap. These include (but are not limited to):

- Those in supported, exempt or temporary accommodation;
- Individuals or families fleeing domestic violence;
- Those with kinship care responsibilities;
- Individuals or families who cannot move immediately for reasons of health, education or child protection;

- Households moving to more appropriate accommodation.

The size criteria in the social rented sector

From April 2013 the Government introduced size criteria for new and existing working age Housing Benefit claimants living in the social rented sector. The size criteria has replicated the size criteria that applies to Housing Benefit claimants in the private rented sector and whose claims are assessed using the local housing allowance rules. The applicable maximum rent will be reduced by a national percentage rate depending on the number of spare bedrooms in the household.

This additional resource is intended for those affected by this measure who are unlikely to be able to meet the shortfall and for whom moving to a smaller property may be inappropriate. It is aimed specifically at - disabled people living in significantly adapted accommodation (including any adaptations made for disabled children); to allow for an extra bedroom for a foster child or children of an approved foster carer and to ensure that the parents of armed forces personnel who are away from home on active duty.

Additional funding has been included in the DWP DHP allocation to cover 'size criteria' which is being made available for two years effective from April 2013.

Spending the full Government DHP allocations

During the course of a financial year the Partnership authorities will aim to spend as a minimum the full allocation of government DHP funding in respect of these relevant groups. The authorities may also decide to contribute an additional amount up to a cash limit of two and a half times the government's baseline funding contribution; but they are not bound to do so.

Objectives to be considered when deciding DHP awards

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have identified certain objectives that authorities may wish to bear in mind when considering whether to make an award of DHP. These include:

- The alleviation of poverty
- Encouraging and sustaining people in employment
- Homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment
- Safeguarding residents in their homes
- Helping those who are helping themselves
- Keeping families together
- Supporting domestic violence victims who are trying to move to a place of safety
- Supporting the vulnerable or the elderly in the local community
- Helping customers through personal and difficult events
- Supporting young people in the transition to adult life
- Promoting good educational outcomes for children and young people

The Partnership authorities have adopted these broad objectives as their base objectives for considering DHP awards.

The Leicestershire Partnership Authorities' strategy to take account of increased demand for DHP

Given the numbers of people affected by the welfare reform changes relating to benefit capping, size criteria in the social rented sector and reductions in local housing allowance, awarding DHPs to meet all shortfalls will not be a viable option.

The Partnership authorities will each consider how best to target the funding within their priority groups, whilst also ensuring that each case is considered on its own individual merits.

The Partnership authorities have identified that the following groups should be regarded as prioritised groups that could be offered assistance to stay in their home:

- families with children at a critical point in their education;
- young people leaving local authority care;
- foster carers, including those between placements;
- People going through the approval process to become foster carers who may need to show that they have a spare room to be approved;
- families with kinship care arrangements;
- families with a child temporarily in care but who is expected to return home;
- families with a social services intervention, for example highly dependent adults, children at risk or involvement in a family intervention project;
- people who have had to flee domestic violence or have moved because of the threat of violence in another area;
- where someone in the household is expecting a baby (including those currently in shared accommodation or subject to an under-occupation reduction);
- ex-homeless people being supported to settle in the community;
- people with health or medical problems who need access to local medical services or support that might not be available elsewhere;
- people with disabilities who need, or have had, significant adaptations made to their property, or where they are living in a property particularly suited to their needs.
- where the claimant or someone in their household has a disability which requires them to have a larger property than would usually be the case for the size of their household;
- people with disabilities who receive informal care and support in their current neighbourhood from family and friends which would not be available in a new area;
- households with disabled children who require an overnight carer;
- the elderly frail who have lived in the area for a long time and would find it difficult to establish support networks in a new area;
- people who need to live near their jobs because they work unsocial hours or split shifts; or where moving home may mean living in an area where public transport would be inadequate to enable them to sustain their current job.
- Single under 35's, with priority being given to the following households:
 - where the claimant is in receipt of any element of DLA
 - any history of rehabilitation from drug or alcohol related dependency
 - cases placed through the Homeless Teams
 - those who have exhausted their options through the Homeless Prevention Fund
 - those within 6 months of their 35th birthday

How a claim is made

Applications will be received, processed and determined by the Benefits Section in the partnership. Applications can be received in writing, electronically, in person; and it can be accepted from anyone who is acting on the customer's behalf. It will be necessary however for the financial calculation statement included in the DHP application form to be completed for the application to be considered. This must be signed by the claimant.

Criteria to be applied in deciding DHP awards

In order to meet the stated objectives through the DHP award process, the authorities will consider the application under a range of criteria that fall under the broad headings of:

- financial circumstances,
- prevention of homelessness,
- sustaining tenancies,
- the household's medical circumstances and
- other general circumstances

Financial circumstances criteria

The points to be considered will include but not be limited to the following:

- Does the customer have other debts to pay?
- Have they sought advice on how to clear their debts and are they actively following that advice?
- Can the customer re-negotiate non-priority debts, such as credit card agreements?
- Is the customer entitled to other welfare benefits and not claiming them?
- Do they have any capital or disregarded income that they could use to make up the shortfall (bearing in mind its intended purpose)?
- Can the claimant cut back on spending on non-essential items
- Is the customer taking long-term action to help problems in meeting their housing costs?
- Can the customer increase their hours or do any overtime?
- Is the customer in work but with high travel costs, because of split shifts for example?
- Does the application relate to anyone in receipt of any element of DLA/PIP?

Prevention of homelessness criteria

Homelessness can have a negative impact for the household concerned in terms of health, education and employment prospects. Also, temporary accommodation used to house the homeless can be expensive. Therefore, early intervention to prevent homelessness is a key issue for the Partnership authorities.

The Partnership authorities will take into account whether or not the DHP:

- Would prevent the household from being evicted and thus becoming homeless
- Would be central to the person being able to access or maintain employment, education or training and thus be less likely to become homeless;
- help to increase the long-term sustainability of accommodation occupied by households who have previously been homeless;
- relates to a case placed through the Homeless Teams
- relates to a case in which options through the Homeless Prevention Fund have been exhausted?

Sustaining tenancies criteria

There are a number of challenges to enabling people to access and sustain accommodation in the private rented sector. As at mid-2012, the housing department in one Partnership authority reported that an increasing number of landlords are choosing to end tenancies, for example because they wish to sell the property. This has been identified as one of the main reasons for homelessness in the district.

The current welfare reform measures are expected to reduce benefit paid to those living in the sector. Housing benefit claimants currently occupy about 40% of the 3.6m homes in Great Britain's private rented sector (PRS) and the Government's own equality impact

assessment shows that the measures are likely to reduce payments to virtually all private tenants who claim Local Housing Allowance, with an average cut of £12 a week per claimant.

The Partnership authorities will take into account:

- whether or not the DHP would enable the accommodation to become affordable in the interim, allowing the tenant time to find alternative accommodation
- Whether the tenant could leave the tenancy without incurring a financial penalty
- Whether the tenant could afford the tenancy before they took it on.

As part of linked work to sustain tenancies, the Partnership authorities will work to develop sustainable tenancy strategies between their housing advice, landlord services and homelessness sections, and local homelessness organisations and those operating rent deposit schemes in the local area. They will also provide help to customers to negotiate a lower rent if the customer feels unable to attempt to do so themselves.

Household medical circumstances criteria

The Partnership authorities will determine whether any of a range of points applies, including the following:

- Does the household have health or support needs which require them to remain in a particular property?
- Does the household have a health problem which means that the choice of housing is restricted either temporarily or permanently?
- Does the customer require an extra room because of a health problem that affects them or a member of their household?
- Does the household have to live where they do because of the need for access to medical or support services – for example a particular hospital?
- Does the household have extra health-related expenses, such as the need for therapeutic classes or non-prescription medicine?
- Does the application relate to anyone having a history of rehabilitation from drug or alcohol related dependency?

'Other circumstances' criteria

When deciding whether to award DHP, the Partnership authorities will determine whether any of a range of points apply, including the following:

- Is the customer fleeing domestic violence so they do not have time to shop around for a reasonably priced property?
- Does the household have to live in a particular area because the community gives them support or helps them contribute to the district?
- Is the customer expecting a child and had her HB restricted to that of smaller accommodation until the child is born?
- Is the customer a single person living in an area where there is a shortage of shared accommodation?
- Is the customer a care leaver who has a reduction in their LHA rate after becoming 22 years old?
- Is there is a particular reason that the customer chose to live in this accommodation?
- Is the property the cheapest available in the area for the household's needs?
- Does living in the area mean a better chance of employment?
- Would it be helpful to pay DHPs when a training scheme is almost, but not yet complete?
- Would it be helpful to pay DHP where the household contains children at a critical point in their education?
- Is someone in the household undertaking care duties for relatives in the neighbourhood?

- Is the person under 35 expecting a baby?

Financial calculation statement

To ensure that a consistent approach to applications is maintained, a DHP financial calculation statement must be completed. This will provide information regarding the customer's income from all sources, which will be compared against expenditure to determine if there is a shortfall of income against expenditure. Items of non-essential spending may be disregarded.

The Council will consider if the amounts of expenditure for specific items seem accurate and realistic, taking into account the size and circumstances of the household. Further explanation or evidence of expenditure may be requested and if no suitable evidence or explanation is provided, a more reasonable figure for the item in question may be used instead.

The application will then be processed, taking into consideration the level of the shortfall between expenses and income.

Items of expenditure that may be deemed to be non-essential include: social and entertainment expenditure; pocket money for children; Gym membership; Sports and club membership; alcohol; cigarettes and tobacco; private medical or dental healthcare

The Partnership authorities will include all income which will also include that from disability related benefits. They will also take into account all reasonable costs suitable for the circumstances of the household.

Overpayments of HB

Regard will be had to any outstanding overpayments, as reducing the rate of recovery may be a better approach than a DHP award. DHP cannot be used to repay an overpayment. .

The level of a DHP

The DHP will not exceed the weekly eligible rent.

Deciding the period of payment

The length of time over which an award of DHPs will be paid will depend upon the circumstances of the individual case. The Partnership authorities will consider:

- whether the need is likely to be short-term;
- whether the customer is likely to require assistance in meeting their housing costs for as long as they remain in the property;
- whether it could be paid until the earliest opportunity that cheaper accommodation could reasonably be sought;
- whether it could be paid until a particular milestone, such as the end of training, first possible break clause in a tenancy, etc.

Anticipated changes of circumstances which affect the customer's income or benefit entitlement must be taken into consideration when determining the period of time over which the award is to be made. Where this is likely a review must be undertaken following the change of circumstances to determine if the amount of DHP is still appropriate.

A previous award of DHP or a refusal of an award will not affect any subsequent application.

When a DHP payment can start

A payment can only be considered for a period where there is a linked entitlement to HB or UC.

What DHPs cannot cover

Ineligible charges: service charges that are ineligible for HB cannot be covered by a DHP. These are as specified in Schedule 1 to the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and Schedule 1 to the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006. Nor can DHPs cover charges for water, sewerage, and environmental services – as defined and calculated under the HB provisions.

Increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears: Regulation 11(3) of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and Regulation 11(2) of the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006 refer. This refers to those cases where a claimant's rent is increased on account of outstanding arrears which are owed by the claimant in respect of their current or former property.

Sanctions and reductions in benefit: DHPs cannot meet these because to do so would undermine the effectiveness of the sanctions or reduction in benefit. These are:

- any reduction in Income Support (IS) or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)) due to a Reduced Benefit Direction (RBD) for failure to comply with the Child Support Agency in arranging maintenance. The RBD is a reduction in benefit of 40% of the personal allowance and only applies to IS or JSA(IB)
- any reduction in benefit as a result of non-attendance at a work-focused interview. This applies both where the person's HB/CTB is reduced and when any other benefit that the person is receiving, such as IS is subject to a sanction
- any reduction or loss of benefit due to a JSA employment sanction. JSA is not payable for the period of sanction if they have contributed towards their unemployed status, for example, by leaving employment voluntarily or failing to attend a prescribed training scheme. In such cases, it may be possible for a reduced rate of JSA to be paid under the JSA hardship provisions
- any reduction in benefit due to a JSA sanction for 16/17 year olds – for certain young people who receive JSA under a Severe Hardship Direction. JSA is not payable for the period of the sanction if they have contributed towards their unemployed status, for example, by leaving unemployment voluntarily or failing to attend a prescribed training scheme, or
- any restriction in benefit due to a breach of a community service order

Benefit suspensions: HB can be suspended either because there is a general doubt about entitlement or because a claimant has failed to supply information pertinent to their claim. In such cases, it would not be permissible to pay DHPs instead. One of the intentions of the suspension provisions is to act as a lever to ensure that the claimant takes the necessary steps to provide the authority with the necessary information/evidence - paying DHPs could reduce the effectiveness of this lever.

Shortfalls caused by HB overpayment recovery: When recovery of an HB overpayment is taking place, such shortfalls should not be considered for a DHP.

Disputes Process

A Benefits Team Leader will consider the DHP application and advise the claimant of the decision in writing as soon as is reasonably practical, stating the reasons for a negative decision.

The customer can request a reconsideration of the decision, or of a cancellation or recovery of DHP. Details about the process for requesting a reconsideration and the timescale to be followed will be provided to the customer when the negative decision is communicated to the customer. The decision will be examined again in the light of any new representations made by the customer.

This request for reconsideration should be made within a calendar month of the initial decision. The reconsideration will be made in line with the normal reconsideration and appeals process and will be undertaken by a different Benefits Team leader.

If a further dispute is received following the reconsideration, the case will be passed to the Senior Management team for review. The next stages in a dispute would be going to Judicial Review, or to the local government ombudsman if there is an allegation of maladministration.

Stopping the payment of a DHP

There are instances other than a change of circumstances when DHPs can be stopped.

The Partnership authorities will stop making any further DHPs:

- if it is decided that DHPs are being, and/or have been, made because someone has misrepresented or failed to disclose a material fact, fraudulently or otherwise
- when they have been paid as a result of an error.

Overpaid DHPs

The Partnership authorities will recover DHPs if they decide that payment has been made as a result of misrepresentation or failure to disclose a material fact, either fraudulently or otherwise. The authorities may also recover DHPs if it is decided they have been paid as a result of an error made when the claim was determined.

DHPs cannot be recovered from on-going HB, nor from other prescribed benefits. Therefore the only method of recovery if a DHP is overpaid is to request repayment of the debt from the claimant. The Partnership authorities may choose to pursue recovery via the courts and debt collection agencies.

Monitoring and reviewing how DHP is being used

DWP will monitor how DHPs are being used to support customers affected by the welfare reforms. In addition to the annual DHP claim form, LAs will need to provide a broad breakdown of their expenditure. Following a successful application for DHPs, the Partnership authorities will record the main reason for the award, as detailed below:

- to support customer affected by benefit cap
- to support customer affected by social sector size criteria
- to support customer affected by LHA reforms
- any other reason

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2019

Title of report	HOMELESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community Yes
Contacts	<p>Councillor Roger Bayliss Tel: 01530 411055 Roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services Tel: 01530 454819 Glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Housing and Property Tel: 01530 454780 chris.lambert@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p>
Purpose of report	To allow Cabnet to consider the draft Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024
Reason for decision	The Council has a statutory duty to produce a Homelessness Review and Strategy every five years. Recent guidance has extended this to include rough sleepers
Council priorities	The Strategy addresses a number of elements of the Homes and Communities priority
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	This strategy sets out the priorities for the Homelessness Service and will be delivered within existing budgets
Risk Management	None
Equalities Impact Screening	The Strategy has undergone an Equalities Impact Screening. An EIA is not required
Human Rights	None
Transformational Government	None

Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory
Consultees	Partner Organisations Stakeholders Members General Public
Background papers	None
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. APPROVE THE HOMELESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2. GRANT DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO UPDATE THE STRATEGY AS REQUIRED TO ADDRESS SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATIVE OR OTHER CHANGES 3. APPROVE THE INDICATIVE ACTION PLAN FOR YEAR ONE SUBJECT TO ANY MINOR ALTERATIONS REQUIRED TO ENSURE DELIVERABILITY 4. GRANT DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal obligation on all Local Housing Authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their areas in consultation with local partners and stakeholders and to develop a strategy for tackling and preventing homelessness. The last strategy approved by Cabinet in December 2013 covering the period 2013-18 set out a central priority of “Better integration of services.” This was then supported by six sub-priorities intended to demonstrate delivery of the Government’s Gold Standard for Homelessness (which was subsequently withdrawn by Government.)
- 1.2 These were:
- Preventing youth Homelessness
 - Developing the Role of the Private Rented Sector
 - Up-skilling homeless households
 - Alternative temporary accommodation

- Support for those with Complex Issues
- Support for Domestic Abuse victims.

1.3 Since the adoption of the strategy there have been some significant changes nationally that have impacted upon homelessness and required us to reappraise our approach to services. These include but are not limited to,

- The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018
- Further roll out of welfare reform including Universal Credit locally
- The 1% rent reduction and changes to funding for affordable rented homes impacting on the deliverability of affordable housing
- A review of revenue funding for supported accommodation.

1.4 As we have now reached the end of the third quarter working with the new legislation, badged by some as the biggest change in homelessness legislation for 40 years, it is a timely opportunity to review our existing services and identify our priorities for the future.

1.5 Furthermore on 10 December 2018 the Government released their Rough Sleeper Strategy Delivery Plan. This included the requirement that by winter 2019 “all local authorities (will) update their strategies and rebadge them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies.” This strategy therefore responds to this requirement by providing additional focus on rough sleeping.

1.6 The draft Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy is attached at Appendix 1 of this report.

2.0 CONSULTATION

2.1 The strategy development process provides an opportunity for us to seek the views of a wide range of partners and stakeholders with an interest in services within North West Leicestershire.

2.2 In the development of this strategy we held a consultation event attended by 20 key partners where, through a range of activities we developed the proposed strategy priorities and identified emerging areas to focus our resources.

2.3 We enhanced this information with three surveys, a call for evidence from partners, a text survey to service users and a wider community consultation that was promoted across a range of platforms including the members bulletin.

2.4 We received 23 responses and these confirmed the priorities as identified at the workshop and reiterated the need for services for people with complex needs and the benefits of working together.

2.5 The strategy was considered by Policy Development Group at its meeting of 6 February 2019. There were no recommendations for amendments to the strategy arising from the meeting. The draft minute of Policy Development Group are attached as Appendix 2.

- 2.6 Feedback across these activities has been captured and has directly influenced the contents of the strategy and informed the development of the associated action plan.

3.0 DELIVERY SINCE THE LAST STRATEGY

- 3.1 Since the last strategy was approved in 2013, there have been a number of achievements in relation to homelessness. These included being the only Council in Leicestershire to achieve the Bronze standard in homelessness and over the summer we introduced a new CBL allocations policy and software system.
- 3.2 Since the last strategy a number of partnership projects have come on line including
- a Countywide Rough Sleeper Outreach Service,
 - the Homelessness Trailblazer Coaching Service
 - an advice mobile phone “app” across City and County
 - a Cold Weather Service across five districts in conjunction with Action Homeless Leicester.
- 3.3 Whilst there have been a number of service improvement over the lifetime of the strategy the landscape around Homelessness remains challenging and further service development is still required to ensure we are meeting the needs in the most effective manner. These changes are incorporated into the new strategy.

4.0 SUMMARY OF HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

- 4.1 The Homelessness Review allows us to understand the nature and scale of Homelessness within the District before agreeing priorities for the coming years.
- 4.2 The Council’s three biggest causes of homelessness continue to be
- End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy
 - Relationship Breakdown
 - Family and Friends asking people to leave,

This reflects the national position.

- 4.3 We complete an annual rough sleeping estimate on one night, as a national statistical return, and we returned an estimate of 1 rough sleeper in the district and over the last year we have continued to investigate reports of rough sleeping as soon as they are received. Whilst rough sleeping remains isolated in the district, the seriously negative impact sleeping rough can have on those concerned ensures that an appropriate response remains a priority for the service.
- 4.4 In the first nine months of the Homelessness Reduction Act we have assisted 78 households who were threatened with homelessness through the prevention duty and 71 households who were homeless through the relief duty. We have had successful outcomes in 79% of cases and only 6 have gone through to the full homeless duty.

5.0 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

5.1 The Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy has identified five strategic priorities

- Putting the customer at the Heart of everything we do
- Collaborative Working
- Accessing the right support
- Increasing housing options
- Tackling rough sleeping and its causes/impacts

5.2 This closely aligns with the 3 priorities of the current housing strategy, Supply, Standards and Support. It also recognises that homelessness is often more complex than a singular housing issue and so collaborative working across disciplines/organisations and taking a person centred approach is crucial to successful outcomes.

6.0 INDICATIVE ACTION PLAN

6.1 In line with best practice the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan will be an annually updated document, established in conjunction with partner organisations and with delivery monitored through the local Homelessness Prevention Forum.

6.2 An indicative year one action plan is included within the draft strategy which will be subject to further discussion with partners prior to sign off.

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North West Leicestershire District Council

Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024



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Foreword

by Councillor Bayliss, Housing portfolio holder

Homelessness has a serious negative impact on families and individuals, and as a District Council we take our responsibilities in this very seriously. This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 is our 4th document in a series, and sets out how we intend to address the challenges of homelessness in North West Leicestershire in the coming years.

Homelessness and rough sleeping have risen up the national agenda recently and as a local authority committed to tackling these issues we are in a prime position to coordinate the response, working with our partners, neighbouring Councils and local communities.

We have developed this strategy with a range of partners and other stakeholders and it identifies our priorities for the coming years, whilst creating a framework to ensure that all involved work together to improve services and experiences for customers through 5 new key aims –

- FOCUS ON PREVENTION
- PUT CUSTOMERS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO
- MAINTAIN AND WIDEN OUR HOUSING OPTIONS
- WORK TOGETHER AND WORK SMARTER
- TACKLING ROUGH SLEEPING AND ITS CAUSES/IMPACTS?

We will never solve the problem of homelessness alone, but by working together with others, using documents like this strategy to focus our efforts, we can minimise the impact on those affected, and ensure they receive the support they need when they need it most. Working together is critical to improving outcomes and that is why the Homelessness Prevention Forum will be responsible for overseeing delivery of the strategy and setting the annual action plan.

Roger Bayliss

Housing Portfolio Holder

Introduction

The Homeless Act 2002 requires that all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of homelessness in their district. The strategy must set out the authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

Furthermore, the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in August 2018 identified the need to ensure that Local Authority homelessness strategies were now homelessness *and* rough sleeping strategies, and this requirement has been incorporated into this document.

What is homelessness

There are a variety of circumstances that can lead to someone becoming homeless; for example:

- They have nowhere to live
- They only have a temporary place to live such as sleeping on a friends sofa or having a short-term bed in a hostel
- They have no legal right to stay where they are
- They are at risk of violence or abuse in their current home
- They have nowhere suitable to live. For example a home which is in poor condition and affecting their health

What is Rough Sleeping

The official definition for the purposes of rough sleeper counts is -

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes" which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of boxes).

Evaluating the Extent of Rough Sleeping, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010

This Strategy has been informed by a homeless review which was carried out in Quarter 3 of 2018. The review included collecting data and evidence and consulting with organisations and individuals involved with delivering local services, as well as consultation with service users and local people.

This is North West Leicestershire's fourth five-year Homeless Prevention Strategy. Significant achievements have been made over this time to build partnerships, and coordinate the services and working practices necessary to successfully address homelessness in the District.

North West Leicestershire has adopted an early intervention approach to homelessness and is committed to providing a comprehensive housing advice service, which is available and accessible to all and focused on prevention.

Each year the Council invests over £275,000 in services which support those who are homeless, threatened with homelessness and early intervention work.

This Strategy will build on previous successes and also position us to adapt our approach to deal with the changing national and local context, and address the future challenges that we have identified with our partners.

Successes 2013-2018

Over the lifetime of the strategy there have been a number of successful projects and service improvements. Some of these have been a direct response to priorities identified in the last strategy whilst others have responded to emerging issues or opportunities. Our successes include:

Revised Housing Allocations Policy

In the summer of 2018 we introduced the first major review of our allocations policy since the introduction of Choice Based Lettings. The end of the Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme allowed us greater flexibility to adapt our policy to meet local needs. Changes were made so that the policy could support us to work effectively with those owed duties under the new homeless legislation with revised housing need bandings, greater discretion for mitigating circumstances and greater recognition of vulnerable groups such as ex-servicemen.

Homelessness Gold Standard

In the 2013 Strategy the Council committed to working towards the Homelessness Gold Standard. In April 2017 the Council undertook its peer review and at the National Practitioners Support Service (NPSS) conference in July 2017 was awarded the Bronze Standard for homelessness for successfully achieving the Corporate Commitment challenge.

Engaging young People

In 2017 the Housing Choices team began working with Zest Theatre group and local schools to raise awareness amongst year 10 and 11 pupils about the implications of homelessness. Zest performed their hard hitting but entertaining performance and follow up workshop, "Until It's Gone," in schools in Ashby, Ibstock, Coalville and Castle Donington.

Fast Tracked Money Advice

Recognising the impact that debt can have on people's housing circumstances the Housing Choices Team in partnership with Citizen's Advice have introduced a fast track route to money advice for those at risk of homelessness.

Dedicated Temporary Accommodation

The Council has allocated a bungalow from its stock to be used as temporary accommodation. The bungalow is fully equipped so that those who are likely to require longer-term temporary accommodation can live in high quality affordable accommodation with access to necessities such as cooking and laundry facilities.

Leicestershire Wide "No Second Night Out" Service

In December 2016 the Leicestershire sub-regional authorities secured funding from Dept. for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to extend the "No Second Night Out" provision in Leicester and Leicestershire. Alongside emergency hostel beds the extended service included the first dedicated rough sleeping outreach service in the County.

Cold Weather Provision

In 2018 we worked with Action Homeless and 4 other Leicestershire Authorities to secure funding for a Cold Weather Service over the winter months. The service provided additional accommodation options

between December and March for those at risk of rough sleeping as well as additional support and access to move on options building on our previous Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

Homelessness Trailblazer Funding

A successful funding bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2017 resulted in a partnership project to develop a housing advice “app” for smart devices alongside an innovative coaching based support service to support those faced with or at risk of homelessness in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Tenant Support Service

Since October 2015 the Council has been supporting tenants in receipt of Universal Credit with personal budgeting via a funding agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions. The service has been very successful in securing rent payments and releasing backdated benefit or grant entitlement.

Over this time 100% of customers rated the service as good or very good and only 19% of cases were closed due to customers not engaging or wanting to cease accessing the service.

Context

This Strategy takes into account the local picture with regard to households approaching services for support with housing issues, and also the national context for homeless prevention and support, in particular the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act in 2017 which introduced new duties for Local Housing Authorities and new obligations for other key public organisations.

Infographics – to be inserted

Infographics are being prepared to provide a visual representation of our local homeless statistics over the previous strategy period and from the last six months Apr – Dec 2018. A comparison with national, regional and Leicestershire authorities will be given where most appropriate.

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017

The Homeless Reduction Act came into force on the 3rd April 2018 and introduced significant changes to national homeless legislation, including new homeless duties for housing authorities.

The new provisions include:

Requiring Local Authorities to provide an enhanced advice and information service including the need to design advice to meet the needs of specific vulnerable groups such as care leavers and those suffering from mental health conditions.

Extending the period where someone is determined to be “threatened” with homelessness from 28 to 56 days

Introducing new statutory duties to provide assistance to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people regardless of priority need, intentionally or local connection.

Specifically the Act introduces two new duties. The Prevention Duty for households threatened with homelessness within 56 days and The Relief Duty for households who are already homeless. These duties include the introduction of a requirement to produce personalised housing plans based on the specific needs of the household.

The Act also extends the duty to provide interim accommodation to all those who are homeless and in priority need regardless of intentionality for at least 56 days from the point that they present as homeless.

North West Leicestershire District Council has prepared for the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act by training and informing Housing Choices staff and key partners and by introducing new systems of work including procuring a new recording and monitoring system and putting in place a triage system. Further work will be required over the life of this Strategy to monitor and respond to the implications of the new legislation.

Key Challenges

In order to continue to be effective in preventing homelessness we must prepare our services so they are in a positive position to respond to the challenges we will face over the next five years as well as maintaining flexibility to adapt to new challenges as they emerge.

With our partners we have identified the following key challenges

Welfare Reform

The challenge of adapting to welfare reform is key and impacts on a number of the other challenges identified below. In order to be effective in achieving our homeless prevention aims we will need to ensure that we work together to understand and adjust to the new environment that we are operating within.

A number of changes to benefit entitlement have been implemented over the last 5 years following the Welfare Act 2013 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. Changes such as the lowering of the benefit cap mean that a significant number of households will have experienced a reduction in the income they receive from benefits potentially reducing their ability to pay their housing costs. In order to prevent households becoming at risk of homelessness we will need to ensure that support continues to be available in order to provide money advice, affordable housing options and routes into employment.

A key element of the government's Welfare Reform package includes the move over to Universal Credit for the payment of benefits. Universal Credit replaces the six existing benefits with a single monthly payment for people who are out of work or on a low income. Universal Credit full service was introduced into the Coalville Job Centre in February 2018 as part of the national roll-out. All new claimants now automatically receive Universal Credit with existing benefit claimants to be migrated over to Universal Credit by 2023.

Universal Credit represents a significant change in how housing benefit is paid, transferring the responsibility for paying housing costs to the household and providing payments on a monthly basis. Some households will require support to budget appropriately and cope with the digital nature of the new system. The early identification and resolution of issues will be key to ensuring that the move to universal credit does not increase the number of people at risk of losing their home through rent arrears.

We are already seeing the effects of the introduction of Universal Credit on the already limited private rental market. Housing payments are no longer paid directly to landlords and this combined with poor understanding of the new system means that landlords are increasingly unwilling to accept households on benefits. Landlords will need to be positively engaged and innovative solutions found to keep private sector options open.

Maintain positive outcomes despite increased pressures on services

A strong emphasis on prevention work over the term of the last Strategy alongside a healthy housing register has meant that we have been successful in assisting those in need before they reached crisis point. This has meant that the trend in the number of people approaching as statutory homeless in the District has fallen since 2013 despite some fluctuations in certain years. We are however not in a position to be complacent as homelessness is growing nationally and the new homelessness duties mean our support will need to stretch further than ever before. In order to maintain our current low levels of homelessness we will put in place new ways of working and we will seek out opportunities to work in partnership with both neighbouring Local Authorities and with our local partners.

Meeting the needs of younger people who are at risk of homelessness

Young people aged 16-25 now make up a third of all approaches to the service, reflected in a shift in the most frequent reason for approach towards “friends and family no longer willing to accommodate”. We also see a higher instance of multiple or complex support needs being recorded in the 16-25 age group making it more difficult to address their housing issues. In order to deal with the rise in approaches amongst this group we will strengthen our specialist accommodation and support offer, particularly with regard to complex needs, and also review our family mediation provision.

Provision of Temporary Accommodation

The Homeless Reduction Act extends the duty to provide temporary accommodation to a wider number of households. We have limited dedicated temporary accommodation options available to us. At present we have a single bedsit bungalow from within the Council's housing stock which is used for cases where a longer than normal stay is expected. Outside this provision the Council uses a range of local Bed & Breakfast accommodation to meet temporary accommodation needs. We are already exploring options that will extend our provision through working with accommodation providers and neighbouring local authorities.

Private renting

The average monthly rent for a 2 bed privately rented house in the District is £504 with the Local Housing Allowance Rate available to cover this rent £437 (Leicester Housing Area). Additionally North West Leicestershire has less housing in private rent than the national average and low levels of shared-type accommodation. This means that finding affordable private rented accommodation, particularly for certain groups such as single people, is problematic.

The changes brought about by the introduction of Universal Credit and the increasing tightening of landlord insurance policies to exclude people on benefits mean that options in the private rental market are limited and insecure. This trend is seen in the approaches to the housing service where the ending of private rented fixed term tenancies continues year on year to be one of the top three reasons people approach the service for help.

The Council has a long standing rent deposit and rent bond scheme and a good relationship with many landlords and letting agents. However, with the increasing difficulty in accessing this sector and with private sector evictions still high we will seek new and innovative strategies in order to keep this option open to our clients and we will continue to work proactively with landlords.

Meeting the needs of individuals with complex / multiple support needs

Many homeless households have complex needs which can only be resolved through the co-operation of multiple agencies. Over 40% of service users who were owed a homeless duty in the first 6 months of 2018-19 had some form of support need with a fifth having more than one support need. Successful working relationships already exist between many of the key agencies and the Housing Advice service, however our consultation revealed a strong need to consolidate this partnership working and connect together services even better, particularly with regard to tackling underlying support needs such as mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse.

The review also highlighted opportunities to better pool and share information in order that trends and gaps can be more clearly understood and that a shared understanding of local services can be developed. This work will be important in defining and maximising the use of existing services to help find long term housing solutions for people with complex needs. A priority moving forward therefore will be to formalise our relationships with amongst others; Adult Social Care; Turning Point;

United Against Violence and Abuse; Supporting Leicestershire Families; Youth Offending; Probation; and the Community Rehabilitation Company.

Repeat homelessness

Repeat approaches to the homeless service are not uncommon and are most often amongst singles and couples, particularly those who have support needs. In order to break this cycle we need to ensure we are able to intervene early and to engage suitable support services and access the right supported accommodation options. We also need to look at strengthening and developing our move on arrangements and our tenancy support provision to ensure that long term positive outcomes are sustained. The recent launch of a Leicestershire Coaching Services will help us to explore new ways of providing support and helping to build self-reliance.

Ensure social rented pipeline remains healthy

Around 60% of our positive outcomes are found via an offer of socially rented accommodation by means of the Council's Housing Register. We are in a fortuitous position in North West Leicestershire having a supply of affordable social rented housing which in most cases is able to meet demand. The Council revised the Allocation Policy in 2017 with consideration to new duties under the Homeless Reduction Act. This is helping to ensure that homeless and at risk households have the correct preference within the Choice Based Lettings scheme and are able to find suitable housing in a timely manner.

As social housing is such an important channel for homelessness, we will

continue to ensure that the pipeline of available social housing is maintained through strong partnership working with Registered Providers and the Councils Landlord Services. We will also seek to use the information and influence we have to ensure that the right housing is available to meet the identified needs of those on the register.

Economic pressures

Whilst North West Leicestershire performs strongly both in terms of economic activity and levels of employment of working age adults compared to sub-regional, regional and national average, debt and arrears remain a significant factor affecting homelessness with Citizen's Advice approaches showing an increase in the amount of housing related debts above and beyond personal debt.

A significant buffer against the impact of welfare reform has been the availability of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). In recent years DHPs have increasingly been used in cases involving the bedroom occupancy rules and benefit cap. Increases to demand coupled with changes to the budget allocation mean that there was a noticeable shortfall in available funds in 2018-19 and this is likely to add pressure to our Housing Choices service as people are forced to seek alternative accommodation.

Since October 2015 the Council has been supporting tenants in receipt of Universal Credit with personal budget support, in part funded by DWP. From April 2018 this service will be provided nationally via Citizen's Advice. In light of the positive impact of the Council's local support service we will consider how a District focussed service can be

maintained to complement the new national service.

In order to continue to maximise the income of households in the District to combat economic pressures we will continue to work pro-actively to support people to access the money they are entitled to and to increase their employment opportunities.

Reduction in capacity of local support services

There continues to be year on year budget cuts amongst local authority and health services leading to impacts in service provision and increased pressure on remaining services. For example In April 2019 there will be a merger of four of the County Council's key family and young people's services into one family wellbeing service. This will include the closure of 4 Children's Centres in the District. To combat reduced budgets and more streamlined services it will be necessary to maximise partnership working opportunities, fully engage with the voluntary sector and target services where they are most needed.

Rough Sleeping

Traditionally North West Leicestershire has low numbers of isolated instances of rough sleeping, with the Housing Advice Service recording 15 incidents over the last 2 years. In recent years this has focused around migrant workers or individuals who have chosen not to engage with services. Most often rough sleeping takes the form of camping out in woodlands or disused buildings or people sleeping in vehicles. This makes identification of instances and engagement of those rough sleeping problematic.

There are limited district-level services that are dedicated to rough sleepers

however the Council has been successful in co-commissioning services with neighbouring local authorities such as the current Rough Sleeping Project, which reaches the end of its funding in April 2019 and the government funded Cold Weather Provision launched in winter 2018. Additionally the sub-region is implementing a rough sleeper database which allows the sharing of intelligence across local authority boundaries and will increase the quality of data held locally about rough sleepers.

Access to these wider services has been key in keeping rough sleeping numbers low and addressing the specific needs of these individuals. We will continue to work in partnership to unlock funding for specialist accommodation, outreach and support. The government recently announced the requirement for all Local Authorities to produce rough sleeping strategies by winter 2019, which set out how they plan to provide specialist support and accommodation for vulnerable people on the street. We will work with our partners and neighbouring Local Authorities to put in place the appropriate services for our District.

[Rough Sleeping amongst the ex-armed forces](#)

Nationally it has been estimated that between 3 and 10% of rough sleepers are ex-armed forces. Whilst locally there is currently no up to date data, it is recognised that those leaving the armed forces have traditionally faced barriers to securing housing and so were particularly vulnerable to homelessness. As part of our response to the Homelessness Reduction Act a countywide pathway for those leaving the armed forces is being developed and within North West Leicestershire we have tailored our allocations policy to support former members of the armed forces seeking housing. We will continue to recognise and support the specific needs of veterans.

[Rough Sleeping and Community Safety](#)

The focus of this strategy is to support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There will however be occasions where rough sleeping may cause actual or perceived community safety issues. To ensure successful long term outcomes for rough sleepers the Housing Choices team will take a customer focussed approach, however where appropriate we will work closely with enforcement colleagues in community safety to ensure a co-ordinated response that does not undermine either teams work.

Our Strategic Aims

In analysing the key challenges facing us the following aims have been identified and will form the foundation of our work over the next 5 years.

Over the next 5 years we will:

- **FOCUS ON PREVENTION**
Develop our early identification and intervention work to reduce the number of people approaching at the point of crisis
- **PUT CUSTOMERS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO**
Ensure anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness has easy access to the support and advice they need to resolve their housing issues.
- **MAINTAIN AND WIDEN OUR HOUSING OPTIONS**
Provide a range of accommodation and support options that meet the needs of those seeking our help
- **WORK TOGETHER AND WORK SMARTER**
Seek out new opportunities for collaborative working that deliver innovative solutions to the needs that we jointly identify with our partners
- **TACKLING ROUGH SLEEPING AND ITS CAUSES/IMPACTS**
Ensure we have the right services in place to ensure a rapid and robust response when anyone is at risk of rough sleeping



How we will monitor success

In order to achieve these aims we will agree an annual action plan with our partners which will be monitored quarterly via the Homeless Prevention Forum. The initial action plan is attached as Appendix A to this Strategy.

North West Leicestershire Homeless Prevention Forum

North West Leicestershire District Council's Homeless Prevention Forum brings together a wide range of public services representatives, health professionals, accommodation providers, support services and community and voluntary sector representatives in order to share information and identify and deliver activity to address homelessness in the District. The Forum is managed by the District Council's Strategic Housing Team and normally meets on a quarterly basis.

Indicators of Success

In addition to monitoring progress against agreed actions we will also monitor and provide feedback on the key performance indicators of homelessness in Appendix B. This information will be shared with the Homeless Prevention Forum, with the Council's Senior Management Team and with the Portfolio Holder for Housing on a quarterly basis to support a shared understanding of the Districts' homeless situation and to identify trends.

Appendix A: North West Leicestershire Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan



April 2019 – March 2020

These actions will help us achieve our strategic aims for homeless prevention which are:

1. EARLY INTERVENTION

Reduce the number of people approaching at the point of crisis and reduce repeat homelessness

2. EASY ACCESS TO SERVICES

Provide easy access to support and advice for anyone homeless or at risk of homelessness and ensure referral pathways are used to provide the best outcomes for people accessing our services

3. THE RIGHT MIX OF HOUSING OPTIONS

Provide a range of accommodation and support options that meet the needs of those seeking our help

4. COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Seek out new opportunities for collaborative working that deliver innovative solutions to the needs that we jointly identify with our partners

5. TACKLING ROUGH SLEEPING

Ensure we have the right services in place to ensure a rapid and robust response when anyone is at risk of sleeping rough

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1.	Priority One – Early Intervention						
1.1	Deliver schools education programme to KS4 students at minimum 4 schools	Number young people reached Evaluation report		Initial approach to schools	Delivery of workshop sessions	Delivery of workshop sessions	NWLDC Community Safety Partnership Schools
1.2	Put in place Adult Learning offer to build skills, confidence and resilience	Number of people accessing offer Learning outcomes	3 people complete Adult Learning Courses	3 people complete Adult Learning Courses	3 people complete Adult Learning Courses	3 people complete Adult Learning Courses	NWLDC Adult Learning
1.3	Secure funding for extension of tenancy support services for private tenants	Service in place Quarterly data on number of households supported	Service in place 12 people supported	12 people supported	12 people supported	12 people supported	NWLDC Homeless Delivery Group
1.4	Develop mediation offer for individuals asked to leave by friends and family	Mediation offer in place Number of households supported to stay through mediation	Mediation offer in place 9 people receive mediation support	9 people receive mediation support	9 people receive mediation support	9 people receive mediation support	NWLDC

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2.	Priority two – Easy Access to Services						
2.1	Promote Housing Advice referral pathway and MyHome App to customers and key organisations	Quarterly data (number users and number referrals)	Promotion of referral pathway 10 new users 4 referrals	Go-live of customer online form 10 new users 2 referrals	10 new users 12 referrals	10 new users 12 referrals	NWLDC Homeless Delivery Group
2.2	Attend GP forum to raise awareness of Housing Advice services and improve access to healthcare for homeless households (in particular rough sleepers)	Meeting held and actions agreed	Initial meeting	Follow up and put in place any agreed actions	Follow up and put in place any agreed actions	Follow up and put in place any agreed actions	NWLDC Health Improvement Partnership Other key health partners as needed
3.	Priority three – The Right Mix of Housing Options						
3.1	Put in place Domestic Violence Link Worker to provide specialist advice	Number DV cases supported by link worker	5 cases 80% positive outcomes	5 cases 80% positive outcomes	5 cases 80% positive outcomes	5 cases 80% positive outcomes	NWLDC Women’s Aid Leicestershire

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	and support for DV cases	Positive outcomes for DV cases					
3.2	Review options for complex needs clients and commission additional services if necessary	Number of clients supported Positive move on outcomes	Review and recommendations	6 people supported 60% positive outcomes	6 people supported 60% positive outcomes	6 people supported 60% positive outcomes	NWLDC Chosen Provider
3.3	Develop a stronger private Rented Sector Offer	Offer in place and tested with private sector landlords Number households with a positive private sector housing outcome (6mths +)	Private Sector Passport in place 6 households supported into private rented accommodation	6 households supported into private rent	6 households supported into private rent	6 households supported into private rent	NWLDC CAB Clockwise
3.4	Review existing TA provision and investigate alternative options. if necessary expand temporary	Review completed Additional temporary accommodation made available	Review complete and recommendations made	New TA available (if necessary) Number people accommodated	Cost savings	Review of new TA	NWLDC Homeless Prevention Forum

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	accommodation options in line with demand and household type	Number of people accommodated in TA and cost savings against B&B		Cost savings			
4.	Priority four – Collaborative working						
4.1	Hold quarterly Homeless Prevention Forum inviting a range of partners and a programme of guest speakers	Forums held	Q1 Forum	Q2 Forum	Q3 Forum	Q4 Forum	NWLDC Homeless Prevention Forum
4.2	Review Move-on agreements and pathways with supported housing providers	Number successful referrals into supported accommodation Percentage of individuals successfully moving on from supported housing into long term accommodation	Meetings held with all supported housing providers Move on agreements revised and agreed				NWLDC EMH Care and Support Adullum Falcon Centre Exaireo NACRO

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
4.3	Put in place regular meetings with social services colleagues to initiate closer working relationships	Review success after 12 months through feedback and case studies	Meeting held	Meeting held	Meeting held	Meeting held Review success and determine structure of meetings for 2020-21	NWLDC LCC
4.4	Set up Housing Advice hubs in outreach location to offer signposting and identification of “at-risk” households	Number of households accessing advice via the hub	Identify and agree location partner 10 people access advice	15 people access advice Review success	15 people access advice	15 people access advice Review success	P3 Homeless Prevention Partnership NWLDC
5.	Priority five – Tackling Rough Sleeping						
5.1	Implement EMTHINK rough sleeper database	Database in place and officers trained Number rough sleepers recorded	Review number recorded	Review number recorded	Review number recorded		NWLDC Action Homeless Homeless Delivery Group

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
5.2	Review SWEP procedure and contact list	Revised information and contact list Number activations and number people accommodated		Review procedure and contact list	Information to key partners ahead of SWEP cold weather period	Review effectiveness of SWEP	NWLDC Homeless Prevention Partnership Community Safety Partnership
5.3	Undertake mapping exercise of rough sleeping services	Exercise complete and distributed to key partners		Mapping complete and gaps identified			NWLDC The Bridge Local Area Coordinators
5.4	Seek funding or alternative delivery routes to maintain Countywide rough sleeper outreach and No Second Night Out service	Continuation of service Number of people “at risk” of rough sleeping supported	Service in place 5 people supported	5 people supported	5 people supported	5 people supported	NWLDC Homeless Delivery Group The Bridge
5.5	Undertake annual rough sleepers estimate	Participation from all key partners			Conduct estimate and		

Ref No	Action	Performance monitoring	Quarterly Milestones				who
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
					review findings with partners		

Appendix B: Housing Choices Key Indicators

1. Approaches		Frequency
1.1	Total number of approaches	Monthly
1.2	Number found to be not eligible	Quarterly
1.3	Number found to be <u>not</u> homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days	Quarterly
1.4	Number owed a prevention duty	Monthly
1.5	Number owed a relief duty	Monthly
1.6	Number repeat approaches (regardless of duty owed)	Annual
1.7	Top 3 reasons for approach	Annual
1.8	Top 3 support needs	Annual

2. Prevention Duty		Frequency
2.1	Number prevention duty outcomes	Quarterly
2.2	Number and % positive	Quarterly
2.3	Number and % unsuccessful outcomes where applicant has become homeless	Quarterly
2.4	Top outcome and % where applicant has remained in home	Annual
2.5	Top outcome and % where applicant has found alternative accommodation	Annual
2.6	Most frequent reason for unsuccessful outcome	Annual

3. Relief Duty		Frequency
3.1	Number relief duty outcomes	Quarterly
3.2	Number and % positive	Quarterly
3.3	Number and % where 56 days reached and duty ended	Quarterly
3.4	Number and % where 56 days reached and main duty owed	Quarterly
3.5	Most frequent reason for unsuccessful outcome	Annual
3.6	Number Main Duty decisions (intentional/not in priority need/full duty)	Annual

4. Rough Sleeping		
4.1	Number new rough sleeping cases recorded (all sources; broken down by reason)	Quarterly
4.2	Annual verified rough sleeping estimate	Annual

5. Temporary Accommodation		Frequency
5.1	Number TA placements (breakdown to indicate where Out of Hours/Out of area)	Monthly
5.2	Average length of time in TA for those leaving TA in quarter	Quarterly
5.3	Total number households in TA (end of quarter snapshot)	Quarterly
5.4	Number families in B&B (end of quarter snapshot) and any over 6 weeks	Quarterly

6. Referrals		Frequency
6.1	Number Local Connection referrals and location	Annual
6.2	Number of incoming referrals via Duty to Refer	Annual

7. Efficiency of Service		Frequency
7.1	Average number of working days from application to initial decision	Monthly
7.2	Average number of working days from application to Personalised Housing Plan	Monthly

8. Housing Indicators		Frequency
8.1	Average house price (2 bed)	Annual
8.2	Average private rent (2 bed)	Annual
8.3	Average social rent (2 bed)	Annual
8.4	Average Affordable rent (2 bed)	Annual
8.5	No. reposessions (mortgage)	Annual
8.6	No. reposessions (landlord)	Annual
8.7	Average household earnings	Annual
8.8	Benefit Claimant Count	Annual

9. Housing Register		Frequency
9.1	Number on housing register (break down by band, age, bed need, homeless cases)	Monthly
9.2	Average wait time by banding and bedroom need	Monthly

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MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2019

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors R Ashman, N Clarke, T Eynon, G Houlst, P Purver, V Richichi, A C Saffell and S Sheahan

In Attendance: Councillors J G Coxon, R Johnson and J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R D Bayliss

Officers: Mr G Jones, Mr C Lambert, Mr M Murphy, Mr D Scruton, Mr L Sebastian and Mrs R Wallace

52. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2018 - 2022

The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager presented the report to Members.

The Chairman asked how many cases of Homelessness there was currently in the district. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager reported that the service dealt with approximately 200 cases per year and the levels were relatively low compared to neighbouring authorities. As he did not have the information at hand, it was agreed to provide the current number of cases outside of the meeting.

Councillor R Ashman felt that homelessness was being dealt with well in the area and he was aware of the support being provided by the Salvation Army. He thanked officers for a good comprehensive report that covered all types of homelessness.

In response to a question from Councillor V Richichi regarding rough sleepers, the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager explained that there was an annual check undertaken in association with other authorities and support services to assess the number of rough sleepers in the district. He confirmed that there was one case identified last year and that person had since been found a home. He explained that the service was very proactive in identifying vulnerable people in the district but circumstances did change on a daily basis, therefore he was constantly trying to develop new ways to work with those at risk of homelessness and that was the aim of the strategy.

Councillor V Richichi asked if parish councils were aware of the support available. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager stated that all organisations, including Parish Councils that worked with vulnerable people were aware of what support was available and the team worked proactively with them.

In relation to the authority gaining the bronze homelessness standard in 2017, the Chairman asked for the figures for the different categories for a clearer understanding. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager agreed to provide the information outside of the meeting.

Councillor S Sheahan commented on the recent increase in rough sleeping nationally in the cities due to people traveling in from smaller towns. He asked if information was shared between authorities to try to stop people going into the cities. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager confirmed that there were links between authorities and rough sleepers were referred back to their home towns wherever possible. He added that the team did everything they could to stop people moving towards the cities but if they did leave the area, they were ready to accept them back when required. Councillor S

Sheahan felt it would be useful to have a log for these cases so that rough sleepers' movements could be monitored. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager reported that the authority had signed up to an agreement to contribute to a national database to track people's movements and therefore a better provision of support.

Councillor T Eynon was aware that local landlords were unwilling to accept tenants in receipt of benefits and one of the reasons for this was the difficulty in obtaining insurance policies. She asked if the council was willing to look into insurance indemnity options to support landlords when accepting tenants in receipt of benefits. The Head of Housing and Property reported that there was a rent deposit scheme available for private landlords and officers would continue to promote it. He agreed to look into insurance options for private landlords.

In response to a request from Councillor G Hoult, the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager gave an overview of the legislation surrounding the prevention of homelessness and outlined the council's timeline for dealing with people who were homeless.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor G Hoult and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Committee be presented to Cabinet when considering the report at its meeting on 5 March 2019.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.25 pm

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2019

Title of report	TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT ON ESTATE MANAGEMENT SERVICES
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes/No b) Community Yes/No
	<p>Councillor Roger Bayliss 01530 411055 roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services 01530 454819 glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Housing and Asset Management Tel: 01530 454780 chris.lambert@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p>
Purpose of report	To seek approval to implement the action plan developed by the Housing Service in response to the recommendations put forward by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel in respect of Estate Management.
Reason for decision	The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has concluded their inspection of Estate Management.
Council priorities	Value for Money Homes and Communities.
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	The recommendations put forward by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel can be met by existing resources within the Housing Revenue Account budget.
Risk Management	The recommendations and any associated risks will be monitored by the Housing Service and Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
Equalities Impact Screening	No implications apparent.
Human Rights	No implications apparent
Transformational Government	This report reflects the second outcome from the introduction of the Social Housing Regulatory regime established by the Localism Act 2011.

Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	Tenants & Leaseholders Consultation Forum Housing and Property Services Senior Management Team
Background papers	None
Recommendations	THAT CABINET APPROVES THE ACTION PLAN PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL'S INSPECTION OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT.

1.0 CONTEXT

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) on 13 March 2012 in response to introduction of the Localism Act 2011. The Act heralded the focus for Housing regulation moving towards a culture of local co-regulation, with greater emphasis on locally determining standards and priorities.
- 1.2 The reforms have also provided social housing tenants with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account through tenant panels, or similar bodies, in order to give tenants the opportunity to carefully examine the services being offered and form judgements about the cost and quality of the services they receive.
- 1.3 Panel members were formally recruited in December 2012 and have undertaken six inspections and all recommendations accepted and actions to implement undertaken.
- 1.4 The latest report issued by the Panel in respect of Estate Management is a product of the Panel's work during the 2018/2019 financial year. This is the seventh report issued by the Panel.
- 1.5 The Panel will next be inspecting Repair services within Housing, specifically Right First Time performance, with a report detailing their findings and proposed recommendations due to be considered by Cabinet later in the 2019/20 financial year.

2.0 INSPECTION OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT

- 2.1 The Panel's full report, including nine recommendations can be found in Appendix A. The list of recommendations can be found specifically under section 9. All recommendations have been accepted by the Housing Senior Management Team (SMT).

- 2.2 It is important to note that the report attached has been produced by the Scrutiny Panel themselves, in their own words.

3.0 RESOURCE COMMITMENTS

- 3.1 Recommendations will be implemented through an action plan which will address the issues raised. The action plan has been approved by the Panel and SMT. All actions can be undertaken and implemented within existing resources. The action plan can be found in Appendix B.



Tenant Scrutiny Panel Inspection Report on: Estate Management November 2018

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Appendix 6 – Tenant Questionnaire	
Appendix 7 – Budget information	

1. **Acknowledgements**

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) gratefully acknowledges the support, guidance and assistance provided by the members of the Housing Team, including Glyn Jones, Amanda Harper, Andy Wallace and the Resident Involvement team – Justin O'Brien, Peter Warren and Laura Smythe, and Cllr Roger Bayliss.

2. **Strengths:**

- 2.1. The TSP consists of a group of volunteers who are also tenants of NWLDC, each of whom has different skill sets and seeks to improve their skills and value to the group by identifying development needs and attending relevant training.
- 2.2. Each TSP member knows the importance of keeping an open mind and adopting a flexible attitude. Our members also display a high level of commitment to their voluntary involvement in working with NWLDC to improve and streamline Housing services to tenants.
- 2.3. The TSP mission is to be a “critical friend” to the Council, facilitating service improvements for Council tenants. This can only be done through developing a mutual relationship based on trust and respect.
- 2.4. The TSP uses different methodologies to inform their work – including data analysis through desktop reviews, collecting and reviewing evidence, meetings with NWLDC officers etc., TSP working meetings, tenant surveys, etc. Ultimately we report on our findings and outcomes and make recommendations to NWLDC to enable changes and improvements to be implemented.

3. **Vision and Strategy:**

The TSP long term strategy is to build an even stronger relationship with NWLDC and continue to inspect areas where it is evidenced that services are not performing to targets. This will fulfil our vision – improved Housing services achieved by tenants for tenants and in partnership with NWLDC.

4. **Report**

The TSP has reported on its findings as factually as possible and without any bias. Our inspection has, on occasion, increased awareness of the complexity of the work done by NWLDC and other agencies. However our findings and subsequent recommendations have led us to be critical of certain parts of the process of reporting/investigating Estate Management and the fundamental policies and procedures in place.

5. **Choice of Topic**

This particular topic was initially chosen as a result of TSP identifying that customer satisfaction levels in respect of Estate Management, as recorded in the STAR Survey (appendix 1), were lower than anticipated. This prompted discussions with relevant managers and analysis of NWLDC policy, procedures and other documentary evidence.

6. Methodology

- 7.1 Desktop Review of relevant documents
 - a. Star survey report
 - b. Service Level Agreements (appendix 2)
 - c. Parking Strategy (appendix 3)
 - d. Tenancy agreement (appendix 4)
 - e. Neighbourhood and Community Standard (appendix 5)
- 7.2 Meeting with Amanda Harper and Andy Wallace
- 7.3 Meeting with Holly Bryan (Housing Officer) to discuss the role of HOs with regard to Estate Management
- 7.4 Tenant Surveys sent to all households across three areas - Greenhill (Coalville), Riverview (Measham) and Westfields (Ashby de la Zouch). (appendix 6)
- 7.5 Analysis of tenant responses.
- 7.6 Examine relevant budgets. (appendix 7)
- 7.7 Walkabouts on each of these estates were undertaken. In the case of Measham this was done in conjunction with Colin Manifold of Measham Parish Council as Riverview seems to prompt negativity about the look of the estate and Colin knows the area and people particularly well.
- 7.8 Discussion with Andy Wallace in respect of split of responsibilities between Leicestershire County Council and NWLDC, including relevant budgets.
- 7.9 Review of budget allocations between Housing Management and Asset Management to check the budget for Estate Management was sufficient to make noticeable improvements.
- 7.10 Review of NWLDC 5 Year Parking Strategy and its plans to tackle lack of parking across the district.

7. Aim of the Exercise

To investigate why customers were reporting low satisfaction levels in respect of Estate Management Services and present recommendations to improve how NWLDC deal with the particular services that make up delivery of the various elements provided – i.e.

- a) Parking
- b) Litter
- c) Refuse Collection
- d) Grass Cutting
- e) Fly Tipping
- f) Anti-Social Behaviour
- g) Footpaths (majority of pavements are maintained by Leicestershire County Council but NWLDC is responsible for some local public footpaths on housing estates)

8. Findings

The following findings were common to all three areas surveyed (Riverview, Measham / Greenhill, Coalville and Westfields, Ashby).

a) Parking:

- i. The biggest single concern to tenants from all areas is lack of sufficient parking spaces. In general this means that tenants have no other option but to park on the road or, as mentioned by tenants responding to the TSP questionnaire, on the grass verges or other grass areas.

- ii. There is concern that roadside parking will inevitably result in accidents. This could be damage to vehicles (e.g. broken wing mirrors or sideswiping) or – much worse – injuries that could even be fatal to people emerging from between vehicles.
- iii. Some tenants and residents have provided their own dropped kerbs and parking spaces on their property. However, this is expensive and therefore not an option that every tenant can afford.
- iv. On the positive side responses to the question “What three things do you like about the area where you live” brought forth similar responses – i.e.:
 - i. Affordable rents
 - ii. Not much crime or ASB
 - iii. Nice green spaces and trees
 - iv. Good neighbours
 - v. Good local amenities

b) Litter:

- i. Without exception, lack of public waste bins was raised as an issue by tenants.
- ii. There are also insufficient receptacles for dog waste.
- iii. There were also areas where there was a need for additional waste receptacles to take larger household items.

c) Refuse Collections:

- i. Tenants’ views indicated that there was generally some litter left after each collection. In some cases this may have been because of high winds blowing items out of red bins or simply that some refuse falls out of them when they are being emptied.
- ii. Whatever is blown out of containers or falls during bin emptying is just left, which makes estates look a mess.

d) Grass cutting:

- i. When the grass on NWLDC housing estates is cut there is no collection of the cut grass. Obviously the grass dies in situ once cut and adds to the opinion that the estate looks a mess.
- ii. It would appear that the housing service has no contract management procedure in place to ensure that grass is cut on housing land in line with the Service Agreement.

e) Fly Tipping: Generally all three estates are viewed by tenants as being reasonable places to live with good local amenities, low crime and ASB rates. Fly tipping does not appear to be much of a problem in any of the areas under scrutiny.

f) Anti-Social Behaviour: Again, there does not appear to be too much concern over anti-social behaviour and this particular topic has only recently been the topic of a TSP inspection.

g) Footpaths: Some of the footpaths in the areas visited do appear to require some work.

h) Riverview: seemed to be viewed as not such a nice place to live and the number of responses to questionnaires was very low. During a walkabout accompanied by Colin Manifold, the TSP noticed the following:

- i. When turning into Widgeon Drive the houses on the left hand side (which are now mainly privately owned) still retain the original open plan to the front gardens,

which are well kept and very pleasant to look at. This was obviously how the estate was originally meant to be maintained.

- ii. Many of the other properties are now fenced both front and back, mainly to a height of 6 ft or more, mainly with solid wooden fencing of no standard type. Gardens are not visible at many of the homes and this makes the whole estate look messy and unwelcoming with roads appearing more like wide alleys between the properties and giving a 'ghetto' like appearance.
 - iii. Many of these houses have larger front than back gardens, which may be the reason for fencing both areas in this way.
 - iv. Quite a number of these homes have access gates for vehicles to be parked on the properties.
- i) **Estate Inspections:** No existing formal estate inspections have been undertaken in recent years, although these were previously the responsibility of Housing Officers. However the TSP are aware that a new initiative of Tenant Estate Evaluators has been developed by the housing service, which in our opinion is a good way to reinstate regular inspections and improve the local environment.
- j) **The Neighbourhood and Community Standard (2012):** The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has reviewed this standard and congratulates NWLDC on actively working towards the expectations of items 2, 2.1 and 2.2
- k) **Budgets:** Having examined 2018/19 budgets the TSP finds that some of these are woefully underspent to date, for example:

	2018/19 Budget	Actual Spend to Period 5	Variance
Painting (cyclical)	275,680	1,680	-112,730
Environmental repairs and improvements	60,000	47,435	-21,945
Non-reactive repairs	50,000	2,910	-18,240
Totals:	375,680	52,225	152,915

9. Recommendations:

With parking seen as being a high priority for estate improvement (as per NWLDC Car Parking Strategy (V3 June 2017) the TSP suggests the following:

1. NWLDC considers the possibility of assisting as many tenants and residents as possible to ease lack of parking by encouraging provision of space to park within the boundaries of their own homes where possible.
2. The TSP suggests the following:
 - 2.1 For tenants the ongoing property rental would be increased to take into account any rise in the value of the property; therefore the current and all subsequent tenants would pay for this work long term.

2.2 To limit costs involved in land purchase we recommend that NWLDC sympathetically use existing green spaces to provide additional parking spaces, retaining trees etc. where possible, as well as transforming parts of front gardens of properties to provide tenants' own parking spaces.

2.4 That NWLDC negotiate a favourable and cost effective contract through economies of scale to install individual parking spaces on council properties. Private homeowners could be offered the opportunity to take advantage of the contract prices to get the same work done themselves, paying the contractors direct.

3. With regard to the fencing issues on Riverview the TSP recommends that NWLDC conducts an estate wide consultation with tenants with a view to seeking their views and suggestions in respect of this issue. We suggest the following option is included the consultation:

When a property on Riverview area becomes vacant the fence or hedge at the front of the property is removed – thus returning the appearance of the property to that of an open plan.

4. Given the significant underspending on budgets the TSP feels that funds allocated to improving properties and the local environment should be properly planned and projects identified before the beginning of each financial year so that the money available is used accordingly. The TSP believes it is unacceptable to have underspent budgets for improving neighbourhoods when neighbourhoods need improving.
5. Additionally the TSP recommends that a procedure is developed to allow Housing Management to access relevant underspent Asset Management budgets to allow them to tackle environmental elements of estate improvements.
6. The TSP also feels that cyclical elements of budgets should be reviewed to determine if the periods of time allowed is adhered to.
7. The TSP recommend that Refuse Collection Teams are reminded to ensure that any litter that is dropped or blown out of the recycling bins on the streets is picked up by the relevant team as they are working and before leaving the area.
8. The TSP also recommend that NWLDC review the number and locations of bins across their area as a whole, including dog waste receptacles.
9. The TSP recommend that the housing service ensures that the service level agreement with the Parks Department with regards to grass cutting is adhered to and properly managed – i.e. grass to be cut 14 occasions per annum where cut grass is not collected and 1 time per annum where cut grass is collected. The TSP are not confident this is currently happening. Additionally we recommend a review of the grass cutting contract which at present does **not** require collection of grass cuttings and question whether this should be changed to call for collection and composting of cuttings.

Janet Higgins, Chair, On behalf of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

NWLDC/TSP/2018/Reports/ Estate Management Services V6

Action Plan in response to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel report on Estate Management Services (2018)

Recommendation 1: NWLDC considers the possibility of assisting as many tenants and residents as possible to ease lack of parking by encouraging provision of space to park within the boundaries of their own homes where possible.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 1	SMT to consider the possibility of developing a parking project to identify what NWLDC properties can accommodate a hard standing for parking. Then to assess the costs for the installation of said hard standings.	Housing Asset Manager	Q2 2019/20	
Recommendation 2: The TSP suggests the following:				
2.1	For tenants the ongoing property rental would be increased to take into account any rise in the value of the property; therefore the current and all subsequent tenants would pay for this work long term.			
2.2	To limit costs involved in land purchase we recommend that NWLDC sympathetically use existing green spaces to provide additional parking spaces, retaining trees etc. where possible, as well as transforming parts of front gardens of properties to provide tenants' own parking spaces.			
2.3	That NWLDC negotiate a favourable and cost effective contract through economies of scale to install individual parking spaces on council properties. Private homeowners could be offered the opportunity to take advantage of the contract prices to get the same work done themselves, paying the contractors direct.			
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 2	If the parking project can go ahead costs can be off sent using various methods as recommended by the TSP. Rent can be increased to take into the account the increased value of the property as a result of a hard standing being installed. Ensure the current parking strategy is communicated widely and review the strategy to see if the above recommendations can be included.	Housing Asset Manager/Housing Management Team Manager	Q2 2019/20	
Recommendation 3: With regard to the fencing issues on Riverview, Measham the TSP recommends that NWLDC conducts an estate wide consultation with tenants with a view to seeking their views and suggestions in respect of this issue. We suggest the following option is included the consultation:				
When a property on Riverview area becomes vacant the fence or hedge at the front of the property is removed – thus returning the appearance of the property to that of an open plan.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 3	To conduct an estate wide consultation on the Riverview estate to ask local residents if they would like to see changes to the look of the estate by removing any fencing above 4 feet high from the front of properties.	Resident Involvement Team Leader/Housing Officer	Q1 2019/20	
TSPEMS 4	Consider the removal of any fence/hedge above four feet high as part of empty homes work (pending the outcome of the consultation).	Commercial Services Team Manager		

Recommendation 4: Given the significant underspending on budgets the TSP feels that funds allocated to improving properties and the local environment should be properly planned and projects identified before the beginning of each financial year so that the money available is used accordingly. The TSP believes it is unacceptable to have underspent budgets for improving neighbourhoods when neighbourhoods need improving.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 5	Develop an improvement plan for local communities to plan spending of improvement budgets.	Commercial Services Team Manager/ Housing Management Team Manager	Q2 2019/20	
TSPEMS 6	Develop a campaign for Housing staff, this campaign should inform staff there are budgets available for environmental improvement and encourage staff to identify improvement needed and to report these and these should feed into the improvement plan.			
Recommendation 5: Additionally the TSP recommends that a procedure is developed to allow Housing Management to access relevant underspent Asset Management budgets to allow them to tackle environmental elements of estate improvements.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 7	Develop a procedure whereby Housing Management can easily access environmental improvement budget codes when an issue has been identified.	Housing Management Team Manager	Q1 2019/20	
Recommendation 6: The TSP also feels that cyclical elements of budgets should be reviewed to determine if the periods of time allowed is adhered to.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 8	This recommendation can be linked to TMSEMS 5 ensuring the improvement plan sets out time frames for expenditure.	Housing Management Team Manager	Q2 2019/20	
Recommendation 7: The TSP recommend that Refuse Collection Teams are reminded to ensure that any litter that is dropped or blown out of the recycling bins on the streets is picked up by the relevant team as they are working and before leaving the area.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 9	Communicate the TSP recommendation to colleagues in waste services.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	Q1 2019/20	
Recommendation 8: The TSP also recommend that NWLDC review the number and locations of bins across their area as a whole, including dog waste receptacles.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 10	Communicate the TSP recommendation to colleagues in waste services.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	Q1 2019/20	
Recommendation 9: The TSP recommend that the housing service ensures that the service level agreement (SLA) with the Parks Department with regards to grass cutting is adhered to and properly managed – i.e. grass to be cut 14 occasions per annum where cut grass is not collected and 1 time per annum where cut grass is collected. The TSP are not confident this is currently happening. Additionally we recommend a review of the grass cutting contract which at present does not require collection of grass cuttings and question whether this should be changed to call for collection and composting of cuttings.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
TSPEMS 11	Review the SLA with Parks and ensure the agreement is managed.	Housing Management Team Manager	Q1 2019/20	

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2019

Title of report	COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes/No b) Community Yes/No
Contacts	<p>Councillor Tony Gillard Tel. 01530 452930 tony.gillard@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Place Tel. 01530 454555 james.arnold@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Economic Regeneration Tel: 01530 454752 mark.fiander@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p>
Purpose of report	To inform Cabinet of the midpoint review of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme, and seek Cabinet approval for the prioritisation of existing funds to buildings on Marlborough Square and other key buildings for a limited time.
Reason for decision	To progress the relaunch of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme.
Council priorities	Building confidence in Coalville Business and jobs
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	There are no financial implications from this report as it refers to funding which has been previously approved, and no staff implications.
Risk Management	N/A
Equalities Impact Screening	N/A
Human Rights	N/A
Transformational Government	N/A
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.

Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	None
Background papers	Provisional Outturn - report to Cabinet – 29 July 2014 Local Development Order - report to Cabinet – 21 July 2015 Report to Cabinet – 26 July 2016 Report to Cabinet – 6 March 2018
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CONSIDERS THE COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME MIDPOINT REVIEW AND NOTES THE PROGRESS MADE TO DATE. 2. NOTES THE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME AS SET OUT IN THE MIDPOINT REVIEW (APPENDIX A) AND APPROVES THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. 3. APPROVES THE PRIORITISATION OF £150,000 OF EXISTING FUNDS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME TO BUILDINGS ON MARLBOROUGH SQUARE FOR A PERIOD OF 18 MONTHS AND TO PRIORITISE 50% OF THE REMAINING FUNDING FOR KEY PROPERTIES FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS. 4. DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF PLACE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS TO IDENTIFY KEY PROPERTIES AND TO REVIEW THE SCHEME ANNUALLY AND MAKE ANY REQUIRED CHANGES.

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the progress made on the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme.
- 1.2 To inform Cabinet of the recommendations to improve the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme as set out in the Midpoint Review (Appendix A) .
- 1.3 To request Cabinet approval to prioritise £150,000 of the existing funding available through the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme to buildings on Marlborough Square, for a period of 18 months and to prioritise 50% of the remaining funding for key properties for the first year of what is expected to be a three year scheme.

- 1.4 To seek Cabinet approval to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business to identify key properties and to review the scheme annually and make changes as necessary to maximize the effectiveness of the improvement scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME

- 2.1 The Prince's Foundation's Coalville Regeneration Strategy (2009) identified the importance of making improvements to shop fronts in Coalville town centre.
- 2.2 To this end, the Coalville frontages scheme was launched in July 2015 offering grant funding to improve the frontages of eligible properties along Hotel Street and High Street.
- 2.3 In July 2016, Cabinet approved extending the scheme for Phase 2 to include properties on parts of Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road.
- 2.4 To date, the scheme has approved grant intervention for 16 eligible applications. Grants have been paid out for 14 completed projects. Please see Appendix 2 of the Midpoint Review for further information.
- 2.5 The positive impacts of the scheme to date includes improved shop appearance and security as well as positive feedback from shopkeepers. Extending the monitoring (as described in section 4) will illustrate these benefits more clearly. However officers managing the project have encountered a series of difficulties administering the scheme that have resulted in delays and frustration for applicants, contractors and council officers.
- 2.5 Acknowledging these difficulties, it was decided to pause the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme project to complete a midpoint review. The review has allowed officers to reflect on the outputs of the scheme, and propose changes to improve the future administration to ensure the scheme runs effectively and value for money is being achieved.
- 2.6 The Midpoint Review sets out a series recommendations to improve the scheme which is expected to continue for up to a further 3 years.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SCHEME

- 3.1 Due to the importance of making improvements to Marlborough Square it is recommended that £150,000 of the existing funding available through the Frontage Improvement Scheme is prioritised for this area, for a period of 18 months. This will enable the remainder of the uncommitted funding, £231,770, to be allocated to the other previously approved areas which comprises of parts of Belvoir Road, Jackson Street, Ashby Road, Hotel Street and High Street and for half of this amount to be prioritised for key buildings on these roads.
- 3.2 The Midpoint Review makes a series of further recommendations with regard to improvements to the administration of the Frontage Improvement Scheme:
- A two stage process is adopted for the administration of the Frontage Improvement Scheme, to replace the current single stage process. At Stage 1, the design drawings and specification would need to be approved by the grant panel. At Stage 2, the applicant would source quotes on the basis of the design and specification agreed at Stage 1.

- An architectural consultant is appointed by the Council as the professional adviser to support the design and delivery of the two stage process. They would replace the service currently provided to the Council by the Principal Historic Buildings Officer for Leicestershire County Council and also support grant applicants in sourcing quotes and managing contractors.
- Develop more detailed criteria for awarding grants in excess of the standard cap of £25,000.
- Widen the pool of contractors used to provide quotes for works.
- To increase due diligence checks in respect of the status of applicants, as well as greater input from relevant council teams prior to consideration of applications by the grant panel.
- Officers to review all documentation and content associated with the grant scheme.
- Officers to consider how to integrate best practice from other similar frontage improvement schemes to enhance the terms and conditions and associated processes.
- To give the Business Focus team manager authority to approve additional costs of up to 10% above the grant offer. For additional costs above 10% of the grant offer, approval would be required from the grant panel.
- The project officer to invite Coalville Heritage Society to supply historic photographs on request to aid the development of frontage designs.
- A communications plan is developed to promote the Frontage Improvement Scheme to improve the level of media coverage.
- Consideration is to be given to options for leveraging match funding from external funding programmes to increase the scope and extent of the scheme.

4.0 MONITORING CRITERIA

4.1 It is proposed to extend the monitoring criteria for reporting the outputs of the scheme. The following potential monitoring criteria has been developed. These comprise of a range of quantitative and qualitative measures.

4.2 Quantitative measures

- Number of shops supported
- Grant funding awarded
- Private investment levered
- Metres of shop front refurbished
- Total retail floor space supported

4.3 Qualitative measures

- Public survey to understand perception of the impact of improved shop fronts on the attractiveness and physical appearance of the town centre.

- Grant recipient survey for businesses, including profitability and turnover (increased/stayed the same/decreased) and general feedback, including comments received from customers.
- Grant recipient survey for property owners.

5.0 RESOURCE COMMITMENTS

- 5.1 The Business Focus team will continue to provide overall management and administration of Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme. Business Focus also provides ongoing record keeping, administrative responsibilities and oversees the preparation of applications presented to the grant panel for determination.
- 5.2 Frontage grant applications will continue to be determined by a panel of three council officers. Currently, they are the Strategic Director of Place, the Head of Economic Regeneration, and the Head of Planning and Infrastructure (or substitute).
- 5.3 Business Focus currently manages the Leicestershire County Council Principal Historic Buildings Officer who, through a Shared Officer Agreement, has performed the role of the professional adviser to the scheme to date.
- 5.4 The Midpoint Review makes recommendations to make changes to the role and responsibilities of the professional adviser to better support the scheme and grant applicants.
- 5.5 With input from the council's procurement officer, Business Focus will undertake a procurement process to appoint a new professional adviser to the scheme who will provide both specialist conservation experience and the necessary architectural skills.
- 5.6 The Business Focus team will coordinate the implementation of recommended improvements to the administration of the Frontage Improvement Scheme. A letter will be sent to the relevant businesses and landlords to advise of the restructure of the grant scheme and the plan to reopen to applications.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 To date, the Council has committed £650,000 general fund reserves to the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme. This comprises of an initial allocation of £350,000 for properties on Hotel Street and High Street (Phase 1) and a subsequent contribution of £300,000 into the scheme that saw the area of eligibility increase to include properties on parts of Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road (Phase 2).
- 6.2 A further £94,723 has been allocated to support frontage improvement works to the Emporium in Marlborough Square and the former Arriva bus depot on Ashby Road, increasing the total scheme pot to £744,723.
- 6.3 £362,953 of the scheme pot has been committed to grant approvals and £381,770 remains for further grant applications.
- 6.4 The cost of the professional adviser will continue to be funded from the existing £15,000 per annum allocation in the Business Focus budget.

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2019

Title of report	FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS, CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS, COUNCIL TAX, NON DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE OFFS
Key Decision	<p>a) Financial No</p> <p>b) Community No</p>
Contacts	<p>Councillor Nick Rushton 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Housing & Customer Services 01530 454819 glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Customer Services 01530 454753 tom.shardlow@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance 01530 454707 tracy.bingham@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p>
Purpose of report	To agree write-offs over £10,000 and receive details of debts written off under delegated powers.
Reason for decision	To comply with proper accounting practices.
Council priorities	Value for Money
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	There is no additional financial effect as all the debts are met from the Authority's bad debt provision for previous years arrears or from in year income if the debts relate to the current financial year.
Risk Management	Regular reviews of debts for write off mitigates the risk that the Council's accounts do not reflect the true level of recoverable income. It is also part of an effective arrears management strategy.
Equalities Impact Screening	Not applicable.
Human Rights	None discernible.

Transformational Government	Not applicable.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	None.
Background papers	All papers used in compiling the report contain exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 to Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972
Recommendations	THAT CABINET APPROVES THE NON DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBT WRITE OFFS THAT ARE OVER £10,000 AND NOTES THE AMOUNTS WRITTEN OFF UNDER DELEGATED POWERS.

1.0 WRITE OFFS

1.1 Write offs relating to prior years against Bad Debt Provision:

	Provision as at 1 April 2018	Write offs to date (under delegated powers)	Amounts written off over £10,000 approved by Members	Balance Available
Council Tax	£2,171,722.74	£134,450.21	£0.00	£2,037,272.53
Non Domestic Rates	£273,111.56	£26,662.62	£17,274.00	£229,174.94
Housing Rents	£582,403.98	£22,650.38	£0.00	£559,753.60
Sundry Debtors/Housing Benefit Overpayments	£1,638,123.39	£26,640.75	£0.00	£1,611,482.64

1.2 Write offs relating to 2018/19

	Write offs to date (under delegated powers)	Amounts written off over £10,000 approved by Members
Council Tax	£10,640.34	£0.00
Non Domestic Rates	£7,906.15	£302,623.50
Housing Rents	£11,359.67	£0.00
Sundry Debtors/Housing Benefit Overpayments	£546.31	£0.00

2.0 FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS

- 2.1 There are no former tenancy write-offs written off under delegated powers./
- 2.2 There are no former tenancy arrears write-offs over £10,000 for which we seek approval.

3.0 CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS

- 3.1 The amounts written off under delegated powers, in accordance with the policy, are as follows: eleven cases under £1,000 which amount to £4,965.19. Of these four cases are deceased with no estate (£1,965.72) and seven are uneconomical to pursue (£2,999.47). There are three cases between £1,000 and £10,000 amounting to £5,291.98. Of these, one is deceased with no estate (£2,863.86), and two are uneconomical to pursue (£2,428.12).

4.0 COUNCIL TAX

- 4.1 There are currently no council tax debts over £10,000 for which Cabinet's approval for write off is sought.
- 4.2 The amounts written off under delegated powers, in accordance with the thresholds outlined in the write off policy, are as follows: Six cases under £100 which amount to £202.22. Of these, one case has absconded (£76.31), two cases are uneconomical to collect (£44.12), one case is deceased with no assets (£10.31) and two cases are insolvent (£71.48). There are 47 cases between £100 and £1,000, which amount to £19,053.39. Of these, 23 have absconded (£11,634.46), eight cases are insolvent (£4,246.61), two are deceased with no assets (£643.20) and one is statute barred (£354.09). There are 31 cases between £1,000 and £10,000 which amount to £57,911.59. Of these, 12 cases are insolvent (£28,109.62), one case has a debt relief order (£1,021.58), 15 have absconded (£23,239.08) and three are due to severe hardship (£5,541.31).

4.3 The full list of reasons for writing off debt includes:

- Bankruptcy or a Debt Relief Order is in place
- Deceased – No assets in the estate.
- Debtor Absconded / No Trace
- Company in liquidation/dissolved or ceased trading with no assets
- Severe Hardship and/or Serious health Issues
- Statute barred i.e. we cannot legally pursue the debt as there has been six years since the debt fell due and no action has been taken to collect the debt.
- Uneconomical to collect i.e. it is not financially viable to take further action for recovery e.g. due to the low level of the debt, they have gone abroad etc.

4.4 Writing off debts is only considered where all appropriate recovery and enforcement measures have been taken, or where the council is legally prohibited from pursuing the debt.

4.5 Each year the council produces a recovery timetable which details the dates on which the Statutory Reminders, Final Notices and Summonses are to be despatched. The letters issued are designed to maximise collection by prompting tax payers to pay their missed instalments in a timely manner, thereby avoiding further enforcement action taking place. Information is provided on the website to explain what happens next should payment not be made.

4.6 For all outstanding debt, the council takes the recovery action outlined in the bullet points below:

- If payment is not received by the instalment due date shown on the bill, a reminder notice is issued.
- If payment is received within seven days the tax payer may continue with their original instalment plan. If they default again within the year, then one further reminder notice is issued. If they do not pay, the following steps are taken.
- If payment is not received by the date on the reminder notice, a Court Summons is issued. The Summons advises them of the date and time that the Council will attend a Magistrates Court hearing to apply for the award of a Liability Order against them.
- Once a Liability Order is obtained, the Council has a number of enforcement options open to them in order to secure payment of the debt.

4.7 Liability Order Action

Once a Liability Order has been obtained each debt is looked at and a decision is made as to the most appropriate course of action to take from the list of available options below. It is only after all of these have been considered and/or pursued that the debt is put forward for write off.

1. Apply to the debtor's employer for an Attachment of Earnings.
2. Apply to the DWP for a deduction from the debtor's benefits.
3. Instruct an external enforcement company (bailiffs) to collect the debt on the council's behalf.
4. If the enforcement company are unsuccessful, the Council could commence committal proceedings against the debtor.

5. If the debtor owns their own home a Charging Order could be made against the property.
6. If the debt is over £5,000, bankruptcy proceedings could be commenced against the debtor.

When considering the final three options on the above list, the Council must always be mindful of the individual circumstances of the debtor and the financial impact on the Council of pursuing each option. Additional costs will be incurred when utilising any of these options.

5.0 NON DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR)

- 5.1 There is one Non Domestic Rate debt over £10,000 for which Cabinet approval is sought amounting to £17,754.36. The case has been considered by the section 151 officer and Discretionary Rates Relief has been awarded in line with the Council's criteria for Discretionary Rates Relief. The outstanding amount of £17,754.36 is recommended for write off since Discretionary Relief cannot be backdated.
- 5.2 The amounts written off under delegated powers in accordance with the policy thresholds are as follows: There are five cases between £1,000 and £10,000 amounting to £16,800.56. Of these, two cases are insolvent (£9,800.25), two cases have absconded (£5,934.86) and one case in outside our area of enforcement (1,065.45). There is one case between £100 and £1,000 amounting to £593.81 which is insolvent.
- 5.3 As with the recovery of Council Tax, for Business Rates, writing off debt is only ever considered as a last resort. Often companies, sole traders or partnerships become insolvent and the Council is prohibited from taking any further action as all of their outstanding debts are included within the Administration, Liquidation or personal bankruptcy.
- 5.4 The Council follows the same recovery process for Business Rates as for Council Tax. However, once the Council has obtained a Liability Order there are only a limited number of enforcement actions that can legally be pursued. In most cases, where a payment arrangement or contact cannot be made, the Council refers the case to external Enforcement Agents. If they are unsuccessful, the Council then has three further options to consider before putting the debt for write off. These options are:
 - Committal (For sole traders and partnerships only).
 - Security for Unpaid Rate (this is the equivalent of a Charging Order on a property but this can only be done with the ratepayers agreement).
 - Insolvency Proceedings.

6.0 SUNDRY DEBTORS (INCLUDES NON CURRENT HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS PRE 2011)

- 6.1 There are no sundry debtor cases over £10,000 for which Cabinet's approval for write off is sought.
- 6.2 There were no cases that have been written off under the Deputy S151 Officer delegated powers.
- 6.3 The recovery process varies dependant on the type of debt. Generally the debtor will receive a minimum of two reminder letters the final stating that recovery through the county court will take place in the event of non payment. Once judgement is obtained the normal recovery methods are available such as attachment of earnings / benefit etc.

7.0 CURRENT HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS

- 7.1 There are currently no housing benefit cases over £10,000 for which Cabinet's approval for write off is sought.
- 7.2 The amounts written off under delegated powers, in accordance with the thresholds outlined in the write off policy, are as follows: There are three cases under £100 amounting to £82.47. Two cases are uneconomical to collect (£0.47) and one case has a debt relief order (£82.00). There is one case between £100 and £1000 amounting to £245.14 where the amount is uneconomical to collect. There are two cases under £10,000 amounting to £9,296.69 which are insolvent.
- 7.3 For all outstanding benefit overpayment debt, the council takes the recovery action outlined in the bullet points below:
 - An invoice is issued giving 14 days to make payment, or to contact the council.
 - If payment is not received a first Reminder is issued, followed by a second reminder two to three weeks later.
 - If judgement is obtained in the County Court, the following enforcement options are available to consider:
 1. Warrants of Control (the use of County Court Bailiff, or High Court Sheriff)
 2. Third Party Debt Orders (Utilises the customer's bank account to extract payment)
 3. Charging Order (the debt is secured on the customer's house)
 4. Insolvency (petition for bankruptcy)

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