

**BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**

**ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL**

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Environment and Community Panel held on  
Tuesday, 4th July, 2017 at 6.00 pm in the Education Room - Town Hall,  
Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

**PRESENT:** Councillors C Sampson (Chairman),  
Miss L Bambridge, A Bubb, Mrs S Collop, Mrs S Fraser, G Hipperson, T Parish  
(substitute for J Moriarty), T Smith, Mrs J Westrop, D Whitby and  
Mrs M Wilkinson

**Portfolio Holders**

Councillor I Devereux - Portfolio Holder for Environment  
Councillor A Lawrence – Portfolio Holder for Community

**Officers:**

Sheila Farley – Housing Services Operations Manager  
Richard Fisher – Arboricultural Officer  
Duncan Hall – Housing Services Manager  
Ray Harding – Chief Executive  
Honor Howell – Assistant Director

EC16: **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Moriarty.

EC17: **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** The Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EC18: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

EC19: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

EC20: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh – EC23  
Councillor Devereux – EC23

EC21: **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

EC22: **REPORT OF THE INFORMAL WORKING GROUP - OPERATION OF THE WEST NORFOLK DISABILITY FORUM**

The Panel was reminded that in March 2017 the Environment and Community Panel had established an Informal Working Group to look at the future operation of the West Norfolk Disability Forum. Members of the Informal Working Group, Councillors Bubb, Fraser and Westrop, presented the report, which had been circulated with the agenda and set out the recommendations from the Informal Working Group.

Members were informed that attendance at meetings had been decreasing over the past few years and it was felt that this could be because there were many other routes for individuals and organisations to go through to raise issues or find out information. Members of the Working Group commented that they felt that their recommendations would result in an improvement to the service as individuals and organisations would have a direct contact route, through the proposed Disabilities Champion.

The Chairman thanked Members of Informal Working Group for their report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Mrs Collop asked if other Members of the West Norfolk Disability Forum had been involved in the work of the Informal Working Group. She was informed that, at this stage, the proposals were those of the Informal Working Group which was established by the Environment and Community Panel. The proposals would have to be considered by the Environment and Community Panel and any recommendations would then be presented to Cabinet. Members were reminded that any Member of the Council could attend any meeting under Standing Order 34.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge commented that she was previously a Member of the West Norfolk Disability Forum and she supported the recommendations put forward by the Informal Working Group.

Councillor Smith made reference to the proposal for Cabinet to appoint a Disabilities and Equalities Champion. He was concerned with the title and suggested that consideration be given to ensuring that all relevant groups and vulnerable people were included in the role of the Champion.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson commented that it was a shame that the West Norfolk Disability Forum no longer delivered its objectives. She asked if the Disability Champion role would be remunerated. The Chairman

felt that it would not be a paid position, but it would ultimately be up to Cabinet to decide. Councillor Bubb commented that he anticipated that the role would be a central point for individuals and organisations to contact if they had any issues or concerns. The Disabilities Champion could then monitor all ongoing issues and delegate them to the relevant officers for investigation. The report also proposed that the Champion provide an update to the Environment and Community Panel on an annual basis, however the Panel could decide on more frequent updates if they felt it appropriate.

Members were informed that the Champion's contact details would be made available to the public, so that if people did not have internet access they could contact the Champion over the phone, or a meeting could be arranged if required.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Councillor Lawrence, commented that he supported the recommendations put forward by the Informal Working Group. He was a Member of the West Norfolk Disability Forum and agreed with the comments of the Informal Working Group in that the Forum was not productive in its current format. He explained that he would take forward any recommendations from the Environment and Community Panel to Cabinet as appropriate. He thanked the Informal Working Group and officers for the report.

Councillor Mrs Collop asked who would be the Disabilities Champion, and she was informed that it would be a decision for Cabinet, however Councillor Mrs Fraser did indicate that she would be interested in the position.

The Assistant Director explained that there could be the opportunity for the Disability Champion to become involved in other projects, such as Lily.

The Chairman explained that the recommendations put forward by the Environment and Community Panel would be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

**RESOLVED:** The Environment and Community Panel make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. Disband the West Norfolk Disability Forum.
2. Cabinet to give consideration to appointing a Disabilities/Equalities Champion.
3. That the Environment and Community Panel be given the opportunity to look at the Borough Council's Equalities Policy which is due for review and give consideration to establishing an Informal Working Group to input into the review if necessary.
4. That the Environment and Community panel receive an update on the Equalities Policy on an annual basis.
5. That ways to promote Equality on the Corporate Agenda be investigated.

6. That a page be created on the website to promote the Equalities and Disabilities Champion. An e-form to be created so that members of the public could report issues direct to the Champion.
7. An e-learning package on disability awareness be made available to staff and Members.
8. The Disabilities Champion to hold open forums as required, which will be open to all.
9. The Disabilities Champion to report to the Environment and Community Panel on an annual basis.
10. That the Opportunity Awards and other events hosted by the Forum be incorporated into other events already organised by the Borough Council.

EC23: **INITIAL DRAFT TREE STRATEGY**

The Arboricultural Officer presented the Draft Tree Strategy, which had been circulated with the Agenda in advance of the meeting. He explained that the Strategy covered the stock in the Borough's control.

The Chairman thanked the Arboricultural Officer for his report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, and Members of the Regeneration and Development Panel, who had been invited for this item of business, as summarised below.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge, thanked the Arboricultural Officer for his report and commented that it was very easy to read and understand. She commented that it was important that work at the Walks was carried out in a phased way and disturbance to residents was minimised. She commented that Southgates Park was not specified in the Strategy and she felt that work was required in the area to make it more attractive, and that the addition of trees could help with air quality in the area. The Arboricultural Officer explained that a separate initiative for tree planting at Southgates had been suggested and was part of the wider tree planting scheme.

Councillor Smith referred to page 6 of the Strategy which showed the ages of trees in the Borough and asked why there were less semi-mature trees. It was explained that the majority of older trees were in parks and were planted in Victorian times and there could have been a lull in planting once the trees had matured

Councillor Parish felt that there was a lack of trees in rural West Norfolk and suggested that work be carried out to increase planting on verges and small parcels of land around the Borough, including play areas. He also commented that he would like to see changes to the Tree Preservation process to make it easier to place an order on a tree, as he felt that important trees were often removed before an order was put on them. Councillor Parish further asked how the Tree Strategy would

be incorporated into the planning. The Arboricultural Officer explained that the Tree Preservation Order process was outside of this strategy and the strategy dealt with the Borough Council's stock, however this was something that could be looked at in the future. The Panel was informed that the Council did have some parcels of land in the Borough and consideration would need to be given to if and what sort of planting was appropriate. It was explained that not many of the verges in the Borough were owned by the Borough Council.

Councillor Hipperson requested that information be made available to Parish Councils on suitable planting and what trees were appropriate in what areas. The Arboricultural Officer agreed to look at sending out information as appropriate.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson referred to Centre Point at Fairstead and the trees that had been removed from the Car Park. She asked if these were to be replaced. The Arboricultural Officer explained that this was a hostile area for trees and there was not much room, however replacements could be looked at if appropriate.

Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh, who had been invited to the meeting as a Member of the Regeneration and Development Panel, addressed the Panel. He asked if anything could be done about the Horse Chestnut which was going brown and it was explained that this was because of leaf mite, which was brought into the Country about eight years ago from the Balkans. It was explained that native predators were now realising that the mites could be a source of food so the mite was being seen less and less.

Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh requested that consideration be given to the Mistletoe present in some trees and to ensure that this was not eradicated if trees needed to be felled.

Councillor Devereux addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He stated that he was pleased that a Strategy was being produced and asked how the Strategy would be incorporated into the Planning Process. The Arboricultural Officer explained that the Strategy would have to be adopted by the Council and could then be considered as part of the Planning process and provided to developers. The Chairman asked if the Strategy could tie in with CIL and Section 106's and the Arboricultural Officer agreed to investigate if this was possible. The Arboricultural Officer confirmed that he was consulted on Planning Applications.

Councillor Parish explained that some Parish Council's had appointed Tree Wardens and he requested the consideration be given to their role and relationship with the Borough Council.

The Arboricultural Officer explained that the next stage in the process would be to send the draft Strategy to Parish Councils and other

relevant groups for comments and feedback. A final version of the Strategy would then be presented to the Panel.

**RESOLVED:** (i) The Environment and Community Panel supported the Draft Tree Strategy.

(ii) The Environment and Community Panel consider the final version of the Strategy, once available.

EC24: **PRESENTATION ON THE HOUSING REGISTER AND HOW TO BID FOR PROPERTIES**

The Housing Services Operations Manager provided a presentation on the Housing Register and the process that customers went through to bid for a Property. A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Chairman thanked the Housing Services Operations Manager for her report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Smith asked if statistics were available on how long customers were on the register for under each band and if the form was in plain English. The Housing Services Operations Manager explained that a new system had recently been installed which made it easier to provide statistics reports and meaningful figures. She also explained that the form was simple to use and comments and feedback could be submitted and the form amended if required. She explained that the majority of customers completed the online form without any problems, but the form could be completed over the phone if required.

Councillor Mrs Collop referred to the requirement to provide five years' worth of Council Tax Bills and asked what customers could do if they did not have the information. The Housing Services Operations Manager explained that customers had to provide proof of where they had been living for the past five years and other sources of proof could be provided if available. The Assistant Director informed those present that replacement Council Tax bills dating back to 1993 could be provided by the Council if required. The Housing Services Operation Manager explained that customers had a personal responsibility to provide the information but assistance was available from the team.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge explained that she received queries from constituents on how to bid for properties and the presentation had provided the necessary information that she could pass on as required. She asked how many people were in each Housing band and Councillor Lawrence, the Portfolio Holder for Community explained that this information was contained in his Cabinet Members report to Council on a regular basis.

Councillor Fraser asked how people were informed that inclusion on the register did not guarantee housing. She asked if this was made

clear on the form. The Housing Services Operations Manager explained that there was additional information on the website to explain this and customers were informed during telephone calls and other contact methods.

**EC25: HOMELESSNESS REVIEW**

The Housing Services Manager and Housing Services Operations Manager presented the Homelessness Review which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The review showed a significant rise in homelessness acceptances and a rise in the number of people rough sleeping. The Report provided detail of issues dealt with and future challenges.

The Chairman thanked the Housing Services Manager and Housing Services Operations Manager for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to questions from Councillor Smith, it was explained that Universal Credit would have a big impact on the service and lessons were being learnt from areas where it had already been introduced. An action plan on how to deal with the roll out would be produced. It was explained that emergency direct access beds were available to people sleeping rough, and the number of beds available was increased during periods of cold weather. It was noted, however, that sometimes people who were sleeping rough did not want help or assistance and may refuse the offer of an emergency access bed.

Councillor Westrop asked what the criteria was to bring in a specialist outreach service as she felt that this was necessary in the Borough, especially if the amount of people sleeping rough continued to increase. The Housing Services Manager explained that the Council worked with partner organisations to assist rough sleepers and investigations were ongoing to see if an outreach service could be commissioned. The Housing Services Manager explained that the service would be subject to some drastic changes in the future including the introduction of Universal Credit, the Homelessness Reduction Act and this would require a fundamental review of the Homelessness Strategy within the next 12 months.

**RESOLVED:** (i) The Panel to be kept up to date on progress

**EC26: WORK PROGRAMME**

Members of the Panel were reminded that an eform was available on the Intranet which could be completed and submitted if Members had items which they would like to be considered for addition to the Work Programme.

Councillor Smith explained that the Principal of the College of West Anglia had offered to come along to a future meeting to answer questions about the Ofsted Report and this would be added to the Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC27: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017 at 6.00pm in the Education Room, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.**

**The meeting closed at 7.50 pm**





# Applying and bidding for a home West Norfolk Homechoice

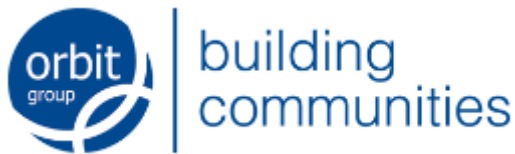
Presentation to  
Environment and  
Community Panel  
4 July 2017



# West Norfolk Homechoice is

- the route into social housing in the Borough
- a partnership of 13 Housing Associations and the Council
- a choice based lettings scheme
- applications on Housing Register are able to 'bid' for vacant homes each week
- scheme administered by Council Officers





housing&care21



# Background

- Applications are assessed against the Council's Social Housing Allocations Policy agreed by the Council
- Not open register
- 923 households are on the Housing Register (end June 2017)
- 9125 bids last financial year
- approx 200 applications submitted/amended per month
- 571 lettings last year (2016/17)
- Costs of running the scheme are shared with partners



# Applying to join Housing Register

- All applications and bidding is done 'on line'
- Applicants unable to access or use the internet can
  - Ask family, friends or support agencies to help
  - Come into any of 3 council offices and use self service computers
  - Receive assistance to make application in offices with assistance
  - If unable to do any of above, a telephone application can be made
- Log in and password should always kept secure and should only be used by the applicant



# Starting the application

West Norfolk  
*Homechoice*

Text size: Increase / Decrease

Page 1 of 10(10%)

**SECTION LIST**

- Start Section
- Applicant Validation**
- Eligibility
- Security
- Household member details
- Current Housing Information
- Financial information
- Reasons and Medical
- Medical Details
- Preferences
- Declaration
- Finish Section

## Housing Registration

### Applicant Validation

\*Please do not use the browser back button, only use the Back button at the bottom of the page.  
Fields marked with an # must be filled in

**# \* Please enter details to Validate**

Forename #

Surname #

Date of Birth #

Nino #

Fields marked with an # must be filled in

**NEXT** →



## Can the applicant join the Housing Register

West Norfolk  
*Homechoice*

Page 2 of 10(20%)

SECTION LIST

- Start Section
- Applicant Validation
- Eligibility**
- Security
- Household member details
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- Declaration
- Finish Section

### Housing Registration

#### Eligibility

\*Please do not use the browser back button, only use the Back button at the bottom of the page.  
Fields marked with an # must be filled in

# Have you resided in West Norfolk continuously for a period of the last 3 years?

--Please Select--

# Are you or a member of your household a serving member of the regular forces, or have you served in the regular forces in the last 5 years?

--Please Select--

# Are you a UK citizen?

--Please Select--

Fields marked with an # must be filled in

NEXT →

If first answers suggest application cannot be accepted, link to policy. The applicant can amend their answer if they have made a mistake.



# Sections in a housing application

Section	Questions
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local connection including close family</li> <li>Armed forces service</li> <li>Relocation due to work</li> <li>Hardship if not living in the borough</li> </ul>
Household member details	<p><b>For each family member :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person details</li> <li>Contact details</li> <li>6 year address history</li> <li>Previous landlord/ occupancy details</li> </ul>
Current Housing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current housing size/layout</li> <li>Any legal notices served on the applicants</li> <li>Details of any other housing available to them</li> <li>Details regarding pets</li> <li>Former tenant arrears</li> </ul>
Financial information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any household members currently working</li> <li>Any benefits currently claimed</li> <li>Any savings within the household</li> <li>Any outstanding debts</li> </ul>
Reasons and medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main reason for requiring to move</li> <li>Details of any harassment/crimes at the current address</li> <li>Basic information about any medical conditions</li> </ul>
Medical (only if applicant has stated Somebody has medical issues)	<p><b>For each family member who has medical issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details of the medical issues</li> <li>What medication is being taken</li> <li>Mobility requirements indoors/outdoors</li> <li>What support they currently receive</li> <li>GP/other medical professional details</li> </ul>
Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What area /size of property they would prefer</li> </ul>
Declaration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any previous breach of tenancy</li> <li>Any previous convictions</li> <li>Any previous evictions</li> <li>Relationships with council members /workers</li> <li>Permission to discuss case with a nominated person</li> </ul>





## Supporting documents evidence

Some questions will request supporting documents to be uploaded before an application can be assessed

# Do you have a close family member living in West Norfolk, who has lived here for at least the last 5 years?

Close family members are considered to be parent, siblings or children. Evidence will need to be provided of the relationship (full birth certificates for you and your relative) any documentation showing change of name if relevant ( marriage certificate, Deed poll documentation etc ) and evidence that your relative has lived in West Norfolk area for the previous 5 years ( Council Tax bills, utility bills etc for the full 5 years )

Yes

Please upload proof

Please provide proof as shown above of relationship to your close family member and evidence they have lived within the borough for the previous 5 years. You can provide this information at a later date but your application will be suspended until all supporting documents are provided

Name  \*

Description

Classification  \*

Is Sensitive

Upload  No file chosen

Maximum file size permitted is 10MB



## Supporting documents

Applicants will need to provide:

- Proof of ID for all members of the household (Photo ID, Birth Cert)
- Proof of income for all members of the household (Wage Slip, Bank Statement, Benefit letter)
- Proof of previous 6 year housing history (Council Tax confirmation, utilities bill, any other bill, bank statement)

Applicants may also be required to provide:

- Proof of local connection (Close family member)
- Supporting medical information
- Previous armed services information
- Supporting information from family members/ Support worker
- Documents relating to ownership of any property within the last 6 years
- Evidence of previous rent arrears or court action against any member of the household
- Any other supporting information as required



## Assessment of applications

- ✓ application is fully completed
- ✓ all supporting documents have been provided

Consider application against Council policy including

- Any previous reports of anti social behaviour
- Any outstanding housing debt (for which no affordable repayment plan has been agreed and adhered to)
- Unacceptable behaviour

Then

- placed in High, Medium or Low banding depending on need.
- mobility category depending on their mobility need.
- bedroom need, only household members who will be permanently residing at the property



## Bidding for a property

- Applicants can visit [www.homechoice.west-norfolk.gov.uk/](http://www.homechoice.west-norfolk.gov.uk/)
- New property adverts are available online weekly from 00:01 Wednesday through to Monday 12:00 noon.
- Only people accepted onto the register are able to place bid for properties
- Applicants need to log into **their** account to place a bid
- If an applicant does not log into their account for 6 months, their application will be cancelled
- Applicants can view available properties without logging into their account. This is currently under review and may change.



Once applicants are logged into their account, they can manage bids and make changes to their application.

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Account Details	Bid preference	My Current Bids	My Previous Bids	Manage applications
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See All Properties

Basic Filters

Bedrooms: 1

Area: Select Area

Property Type: Select Property Type (All)

Accessible Housing Category: Select Housing Category

More Filters

Filter Reset

There are 9 properties matching your criteria.

Available

**KING S LYNN**

Florence Road, King's Lynn, PE30 5EF  
Advert No: WK33/17/023 | Type: Maisonette

Newly refurbished. New kitchen and bathroom. No dogs or cats, other pets with permission only. Rent is approximate and subject to change. Maximum of 1 month's rent in advance depending on financial circumstances. Ready to let early 2017. Local Lettings Plan applies [CLICK HERE](#) for full details of Hillington Square Lettings Plan. Families with a minimum of 1 child. Preference to those in employment.

More Details

2B



Adverts will show the properties the applicant can bid on based on their housing need.

Account Details	Bid preference	My Current Bids	My Previous Bids	Manage applications
See All Properties				

Basic Filters

Bedrooms: 1  
Area: Select Area  
Property Type: Select Property Type (All)  
Accessible Housing Category: Select Housing Category

More Filters

Filter Reset

There are 9 properties matching your criteria.

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More Details

2B



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Each advert will have pictures (if provided), information about the property, location of the property on a map and link to google street view

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Back

● Available



View On Map

### FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING

Place A Bid

Wellington House - Downham Market  
 Bedrooms : 1 | Bedspaces: 2

Storage heaters. Communal gardens. On street parking. No dogs, other pets with permission only. Regular bus routes. Maximum of 1 month's rent in advance depending on financial circumstances. Single/couple

Area	Downham Market	Landlord	Freebridge Community Housing
Type	Flat	Floor Level	Ground Floor
Opening Date	19/06/2017	Closing Date	26/06/2017
Heating Type	Electric Nighttime Storage Heaters	Energy Efficiency	NA
Parking	N	Lift	N
Garden	N	Pets Allowed	N
Rent Amount	76.8	Rent Frequency	Weekly
Accessible Housing Category	General Needs	Sheltered	N
AgeRestrictions	N		



## After the advert/bidding cycle closes

Homechoice officers will assess each property bidding list

Assessments is made according to housing need (band) then by how long the applicant has been in that band

There may be instructions (including age restrictions) from the landlord and any rural exception rules or lettings plans

Homechoice contact applicant if they are nominated for the property via email/letter

The landlord will then contact the nominee to assess their suitability for the property according to their own policy

Applicants could be refused by the landlord if they do not meet their policy requirements





# Any questions?

