



# Cabinet

## Agenda

Monday, 21st July, 2025  
at 6.00 pm

in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday  
Market Place, King's Lynn and available for the  
public to view on [WestNorfolkBC on You Tube](#)



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**CABINET AGENDA**

**DATE: CABINET - MONDAY, 21ST JULY, 2025**

**VENUE: COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, SATURDAY  
MARKET PLACE, KING'S LYNN PE30 5DQ**

**TIME: 6.00 pm**

As required by Regulations 5 (4) and (5) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 - Item 17 below will be considered in private if required.

Should you wish to make any representations in relation to the meeting being held in private for the consideration of the above item, you should contact [democratic.services@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@west-norfolk.gov.uk)

**1. APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for absence.

**2. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 17)**

To approve the Minutes of the Meetings held on 10<sup>th</sup> June and 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

**3. URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any business, which by reason of special circumstances, the Chair proposes to accept, under Section 100(b)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Page 18)**

Please indicate if there are any interests which should be declared. A declaration of an interest should indicate the nature of the interest (if not already declared on the Register of Interests) and the agenda item to which it relates. If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared, the member should withdraw from the room whilst the matter is discussed.

These declarations apply to all Members present, whether the Member is part of the meeting, attending to speak as a local Member on an item or simply observing the meeting from the public seating area.

**5. CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

To receive any Chair's correspondence.

**6. MEMBERS PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34**

To note the names of any Councillors who wish to address the meeting under Standing Order 34.

**7. CALLED IN MATTERS**

To report on any Cabinet Decisions called in.

**8. FORWARD DECISIONS (Pages 19 - 22)**

A copy of the Forward Decisions List is attached.

**9. MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET FROM OTHER BODIES (Pages 23 - 27)**

To receive any comments and recommendations from other Council bodies.

Recommendations from Corporate Performance Panel held on 2 July:

- Leisure Facilities Feasibility Study
- 2025 Staff Cost of Living Pay Award

Recommendations from the Environment and Community Panel held on 8 July.

- Social Housing Allocations Policy

**10. 2025 STAFF COST OF LIVING PAY AWARD (Pages 28 - 34)**

**11. CHANGES TO SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY (Pages 35 - 82)**

**12. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW (Pages 83 - 97)**

**13. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUMS RESOLUTION (Pages 98 - 136)**

**14. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND - ADDITIONAL ROUND 3 FUNDING (Pages 137 - 159)**

**15. LEISURE FACILITIES FEASIBILITY STUDY (Pages 160 - 168)**

**16. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Cabinet is asked to consider excluding the public from the meeting under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the items below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**PRIVATE ITEM**

Details of any representations received about why the following reports should be considered in public will be reported at the meeting.

**17. EXEMPT - LEISURE FACILITIES FEASIBILITY STUDY EXEMPT APPENDICES (Pages 169 - 371)**

To: Members of the Cabinet

Councillors A Beales (Chair), P Bland, M de Whalley, S Lintern, J Moriarty, C Morley, S Ring (Vice-Chair), J Rust and S Squire

For Further information, please contact [democratic.services@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@west-norfolk.gov.uk).



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

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 10th June, 2025  
at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place,  
King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ring (Chair), de Whalley, Lintern, Moriarty, Morley and  
Rust and Squire.

**OFFICERS:**

Kate Blakemore – Chief Executive  
Alexa Baker – Monitoring Officer  
Duncan Hall – Assistant Director  
Carl Holland – Deputy Section 151 Officer  
Barry Brandford – Waste and Recycling Manager  
James Arrandale – Deputy Monitoring Officer

**CAB1     MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** The Minutes from the Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025  
were agreed as a correct record.

**CAB2     APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Beales.

**CAB3     URGENT BUSINESS**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME SPEND COMMENCEMENT**

The Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel has given agreement that this decision could be considered and that if agreed, the decision could proceed immediately without being called-in to the Corporate Performance Panel.

The Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report and explained the tier system for spend which had been introduced in the previous financial year as part of the budget and meant that tier changes required Cabinet approval, although budget had already been approved.

Councillor Rust commented that it was reassuring that the Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel had agreed to consider the decision as urgent as the vehicles were required to carry out core services.

The Chair, Councillor Ring, thanked the Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel and suggested that the process for tier movement be reviewed.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. Cabinet approved the movement of the following budget item within the capital programme from tier three to two: Grounds Maintenance Vehicles £436,730.
2. Cabinet authorised the spend of £732,610 for vehicle replacements in accordance with Tier 2 of the Capital Programme as reported in section 1 of this report.

### **REASON FOR DECISION**

Recent inspections have seen the need to urgently replace four cage trucks, one general van, three specialist vehicles and two tractors necessary for day-to-day operations. The specific detail surrounding the requirements only became fully available in the week commencing 2 June 2025. These vehicles are vital for the Operations functions and would lead to the inability to carry out core services if not urgently acquired.

In the circumstances, the Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel has given agreement that the decision can be considered notwithstanding 5 days' notice of the proposed decision has not been given and if made the decision can proceed immediately without being called-in to the Corporate Performance Panel.

#### **CAB4     DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **CAB5     CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

#### **CAB6     MEMBERS PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Kemp – CAB15: King's Lynn Masterplan.

#### **CAB7     CALLED IN MATTERS**

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The Chair informed the Cabinet that the Corporate Performance Panel were considering a call-in of the Cabinet Members Delegated Decision relating to Styleman Court Hunstanton at a meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

CAB8 **FORWARD DECISIONS**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

The forward decisions list was noted.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing notified Cabinet that the CIL Governance Review was ongoing, with the consultants report being considered, prior to it being considered at a meeting by the CIL Spending Panel. The report was likely to come to Cabinet in September and the Forward Decisions List would be amended accordingly.

Councillor Morley informed Cabinet that the Council Tax Support Scheme and the Council Tax Discounts and Premiums were being brought forward to the July meeting for consideration.

CAB9 **MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET FROM OTHER BODIES**

The Panels had considered the following items and made comments which were taken into account by Cabinet during consideration of each item:

King's Lynn Masterplan  
Full Year Performance Management Report  
Corporate Debt Recovery Policy

CAB10 **CORPORATE DEBT RECOVERY POLICY**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

The Corporate Performance Panel had considered this Policy and supported the Cabinet Recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reminded the Cabinet that this Policy was being introduced following internal audit recommendations. He explained that published procedures would also sit alongside the Policy and asked the Deputy Monitoring Officer to circulate the associated procedures to Cabinet Members for information.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that legislation set out the requirements of how certain payments were collected and this policy dealt with those not bound by legislation to ensure consistency. He explained that cases would be considered dependant on individual

circumstances and provisions made for those that were genuinely vulnerable.

Cabinet discussed debt levels and it was noted that the scale of debt being pursued was quite small. The Chair, Councillor Ring explained that public money needed protecting therefore it was essential that the Council collected debt, and this Policy ensured that it was done in a correct way.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that he had assurance from the debt recovery team that they did not stop pursuing debt at the end of year and made every effort to collect.

**RECOMMENDED:** That Council adopt the Debt Recovery Policy as presented.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure the Council's policies are comprehensive and consistent with current regulation and best practice.

#### CAB11 **2024-2025 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

The Corporate Performance Officer presented the report, outlined the performance against the Corporate Strategy and provided an overview of Key Performance Indicators which had and had not met target.

The Cabinet was reminded that the Corporate Performance Panel had considered the report and received an update from the Deputy Chief Executive on Indicators which had not met target.

The Corporate Performance Officer explained that, going forward, targets would be reviewed in line with the 2025-2027 Action Plan and a quarterly update on the Transformation Programme would be included.

Councillor Rust referred to the Indicator relating to Housing Adaptations and noted that performance was continuing to improve, however the team were dealing with a considerable backlog following the Covid Pandemic.

Councillor Squire referred to the targets relating to food waste collection and explained that this had been impacted by the food caddy liner trial which had been pushed back to later in the year. She also commented that recycling tonnages could be affected by factors such as a decrease in packaging.

Councillor Moriarty referred to Indicator 1.9 and explained that it was out of the Council's control, but had improved despite pressure on the industry and he thanked the Planning Officers for their hard work.

Councillor Morley referred to the discussion held at the Corporate Performance Panel relating to the indicator on housing development and noted that this was a monitor only target as was out of the Council's control.

The Chair, Councillor Ring commented that Key Performance Indicators needed to be about what the Council could control and should be targeted and relevant. He encouraged all Councillors to raise enquiries through the Members Enquiries function should they have any concerns relating to performance. Councillor Moriarty also reminded Members that they had the right to ask questions at Full Council meetings.

**RESOLVED:** Cabinet reviewed and commented on the Performance Management Report and commented on the delivery against the Corporate Strategy.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** Cabinet should use the information within the Management Report to review progress on the agreed actions and indicators and satisfy themselves that performance is at an acceptable level. Where progress is behind schedule members can seek additional information to explain variances.

#### CAB12 **APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMAN**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

Cabinet supported this proposal, felt that it was well deserved and were pleased that Mrs Margaret Wilkinson's hard work was being recognised.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the Council places on record its deep appreciation of the eminent services to the Borough and the Council rendered by former Councillor Mrs Margaret Wilkinson.
2. That an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Mrs Margaret Wilkinson is to be held after the Council meeting on 17 July 2025, and the engrossment of the recommendation above and an Aldermanic badge be presented to Mrs Margaret Wilkinson at that Council Meeting.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To award Honorary Alderman status.

#### CAB13 **2025-2026 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SERVE ON CABINET SUB-COMMITTEES AND TASK GROUPS**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

It was noted that this was the annual report to Cabinet to determine Membership of Cabinet sub-committee's and Task Groups.

Cabinet were informed that proportionality was currently under review following the recent by-elections and would be presented to Council on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025 for approval. This would impact some of the Task Groups established by Cabinet and Cabinet agreed that the proportionality of the Cabinet Task Groups should be amended following the decision of Full Council.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That officers be instructed to seek membership from Group Leaders for the Cabinet Committees and Task Groups for 2025/2026 and proportionality of Cabinet Task Groups be amended accordingly following consideration of proportionality at the Full Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025. That the Membership of the Joint Safety and Welfare Committee and Joint Employee Committee for 2025/2026 be appointed at the meeting.
2. That in accordance with Standing Order 29.4, if any of the Task Groups are not appointed having regard to Political Balance that the Leaders of each Political Group be asked to agree that this rule be disapplied.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To allow the business of the Council to continue into 2025/26.

CAB14 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB15 **EXEMPT - KING'S LYNN MASTERPLAN**

The Chair, Councillor Ring presented the report and officers responded to questions and comments from Cabinet relating to finances, projects to be considered, the opportunities that Devolution would bring, and the relationship with the Neighbourhood Board.

Councillor Kemp addressed Cabinet under Standing Order 34 and made comments relating to the Ferry and designation of Village Greens.

**RESOLVED:**

1. Cabinet endorsed the creation of a new King's Lynn Masterplan in line with the brief outlined in appendix 1.
2. Cabinet agreed that the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resources to incorporate the budget and administer funding as detailed in the report.
3. Cabinet delegated the decision to the Chief Executive and Deputy Leader of the Council to authorise officers to complete the procurement and appointment of a multidisciplinary team for the masterplanning project through the Homes England Development and Regeneration Technical Services Framework.

#### **REASON FOR DECISION:**

To set out a clear vision and blueprint for King's Lynn as the primary centre and economic driver for growth in West Norfolk as set out in the West Norfolk Economic Strategy. The creation of a new masterplan for King's Lynn, combining all existing strategies and plans in one cohesive masterplan will inform future planning policy and further development of schemes in line with the town's vision.

This masterplan will provide a clear and deliverable pipeline of investment priorities within a spatial plan that will support the economic growth and regeneration of King's Lynn for the next 20 years. This will ensure King's Lynn is in the best possible position to respond to opportunities created through the proposed Devolution in Norfolk and Suffolk and inform the development of the Regeneration Plan and Investment Plan for the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme.

**The meeting closed at 7.15 pm**

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

**CABINET**

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 7th July, 2025 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

**PRESENT:** Councillor A Beales (Chair), P Bland, M de Whalley, S Lintern, J Moriarty, S Ring (Vice-Chair), J Rust and S Squire

**OFFICERS PRESENT:**

Kate Blakemore - Chief Executive

Alexa Baker – Monitoring Officer

Carl Holland – Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Duncan Hall – Assistant Director for Housing, Place and Regeneration

Jemma Curtis – Regeneration Programmes Manager

Robin Lewis – Project Officer

Tim Fitzhigham – Cultural Officer

Jason Birch - Assistant Director for Property and Projects

**CAB16 APOLOGIES**

An apology of absence was received from Councillor Morley.

**CAB17 URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**CAB18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**CAB19 CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no chair's correspondence.

**CAB20 MEMBERS PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor T Parish attended under Standing Order 34.

**CAB21 CALLED IN MATTERS**

There were no matters called in.



**CAB22    MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET FROM OTHER BODIES**

The Regeneration and Development Panel at its meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 made comments and recommendations on the Guildhall and Creative Hub Report which were taken into account by Cabinet during consideration of the item.

**CAB23    GUILDHALL AND CREATIVE HUB**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.](#)

The Vice-Chair and Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ring introduced the report.

The Assistant Director for Housing, Place and Regeneration provided Cabinet Members with history of the project.

The Chair invited Councillor Parish to address the Cabinet under Standing Order 34. Councillor Parish explained to Cabinet Members this was debated and questioned at the Regeneration and Development Panel. He highlighted the concerns of the Panel which included fundraising and footfall.

Councillor Parish highlighted that the Panel supported the recommendations and an additional recommendation was put forward to ensure the Regeneration and Development Panel were provided with updates and progress on the Project.

The Project Officer highlighted that in relation to footfall, the business plan, specifically 5.3 onwards provided detail of the level of scrutiny in the type of market, attractions and relevant comparison resulting in confidence in the figures being realistic.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Ring highlighted the importance of marketing which was key to ensure success of the project.

The Assistant Director for Housing, Place and Regeneration explained the funding strategy would be pursued for the next two years: government grants, agencies and charitable organisations to invest and support the project. He provided assurance there was a clear plan of work to pursue additional funding sources

Councillor de Whalley provided information on other leading visitor attractions for 2024 as a comparison, including attractions in Norfolk to provide further context that if marketed well the figures were realistic.

The Chair, Councillor Beales sought clarification on what £3.7 million covered in relation to the 'reinstate and re open' option and it was clarified that this was the total amount for renovating the theatre and other buildings, the restaurant and other areas were not included.. He confirmed this figure did not include any disabled access. The Cultural

Officer confirmed £2.6 million was spent to develop and investigate the project to date.

The Project Officer added further this figures was provisional due to uncertainty until building control were consulted. He advised there was a risk £3.7 million could be too minimal for the works.

Councillor Squire commented that this project was special and unique and would be successful. She added she hoped this would engage West Norfolk students studying Shakespeare.

Councillor Lintern questioned if there was enough space in King's Lynn for coach parking and hotels. She sought clarification the Car Parking Strategy would be developed in line with the project.

The Regeneration Programmes Manager advised when the project was providing certainty and confidence to the private sector there would be attraction in investment in King's Lynn. She provided assurance the Car Parking Strategy was to be presented to Members later in the year.

Councillor Rust expressed her confidence in the project from the level of information given by Officers. Councillor Beales echoed the comments on the level and detail of briefing from Officers on the project throughout.

The Chair, Councillor Beales sought clarification and reassurance on affordability and risk mitigation.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Ring explained funding opportunities included grants and funding within the Council by capital assets. He added there may be an element of borrowing.

Councillor Moriarty agreed with the recommendation from Regeneration and Development Panel and asked they be provided with clear timescales.

The Chair, Councillor Beales expressed his thanks to Officers and Councillor Ring as Portfolio Holder.

Cabinet Members expressed thanks to all Officers for their hard work on this project so far and indicated their support for the recommendations.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Ring summed up by thanking Officers for all their hard work and commented the journey would continue after full Council on the 17<sup>th</sup> July. He highlighted the benefit the project would have on the community.

**RESOLVED:**

Cabinet resolves, subject to approval of recommendation 6 below:

0. The Regeneration and Development Panel are kept up to date on progress and receive regular updates on the project.
1. To proceed with the St George's Guildhall & Creative Hub ("the Major Scheme") based on the RIBA Stage 4 design.
2. The total spend of up to £30.5m to deliver the Major Scheme is authorised, to be financed in accordance with the Finance Strategy at Appendix 6 (Exempt), which includes up to £16.0m of borrowing in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.
3. The award of the contract to deliver the Major Scheme ("the Main Contract") to 'Bidder A' is approved.
4. Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business to approve material changes to the scope of the Major Scheme and/or variations to the Main Contract that are within the approved budget and in accordance with the Local Assurance Framework for this project.
5. Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to apply for and accept external funding, whether via grants or donations, for the Major Scheme, which, when received, shall be applied towards the Major Scheme and to reduce capital borrowing where outstanding.

Recommendations to Full Council:

6. To amend the Capital Programme for the Major Scheme up to £30.5m and to amend the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in accordance with the Finance Strategy at Appendix 6 (Exempt)

**Reason for Decision:**

To deliver the transformational St George's Guildhall and Creative Hub Major Scheme, supporting the Council's commitment to heritage, culture, and economic growth. The Major Scheme aims to help grow local businesses, revitalise the town centre, and enhance the leisure offer in the historic heart of King's Lynn, in line with:

- West Norfolk Economic Strategy (2024),
- Cultural & Heritage Strategy (2025),
- Corporate Strategy (2023), and
- Town Investment Plan (2021).

The Major Scheme will meet the agreed outputs and outcomes of the Towns Fund Programme, as endorsed by the King's Lynn Neighbourhood Board (formerly the Town Board) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Major Scheme will deliver a long-term, sustainable operation to this nationally significant cultural heritage site in addition to addressing the long-term

costs liability that the site already represents to the Council. According to the updated Business Plan and Economic Impact Assessment, the Major Scheme is expected to generate circa £30.8 million in economic benefit and create 117 jobs over the initial 15 years period and following this payback period, the Major Scheme will continue to generate income and attract interest and visitors, for many decades to come.

**CAB24    EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

**CAB25    EXEMPT - GUILDHALL AND CREATIVE HUB**

Cabinet did not consider this item in exempt session.

**CAB26    EXEMPT - SALE OF INDUSTRIAL LAND**

The Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel had given agreement that this decision could be considered without being advertised on the Forward Decision List for the full 28 days.

The Vice- Chair, Councillor Ring and the Assistant Director for Property and Projects presented the report to Cabinet and responded to questions and comments from Cabinet Members  
The Monitoring Officer responded to questions on the report from a legal aspect.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1 To sell the land identified in the report for £575,000 plus VAT.
- 2 To delegate authority to the Assistant Director Property and Projects to finalise all terms of the proposed disposal.
- 3 To authorise Legal Services Manager to complete all necessary sale documentation in respect of the site.

**Reason for Decision**

The site was recognised as surplus following an asset review in 2007, and the capital receipt will support the Council's budget. Officers have validated through independent valuation that the sale price meets best consideration.

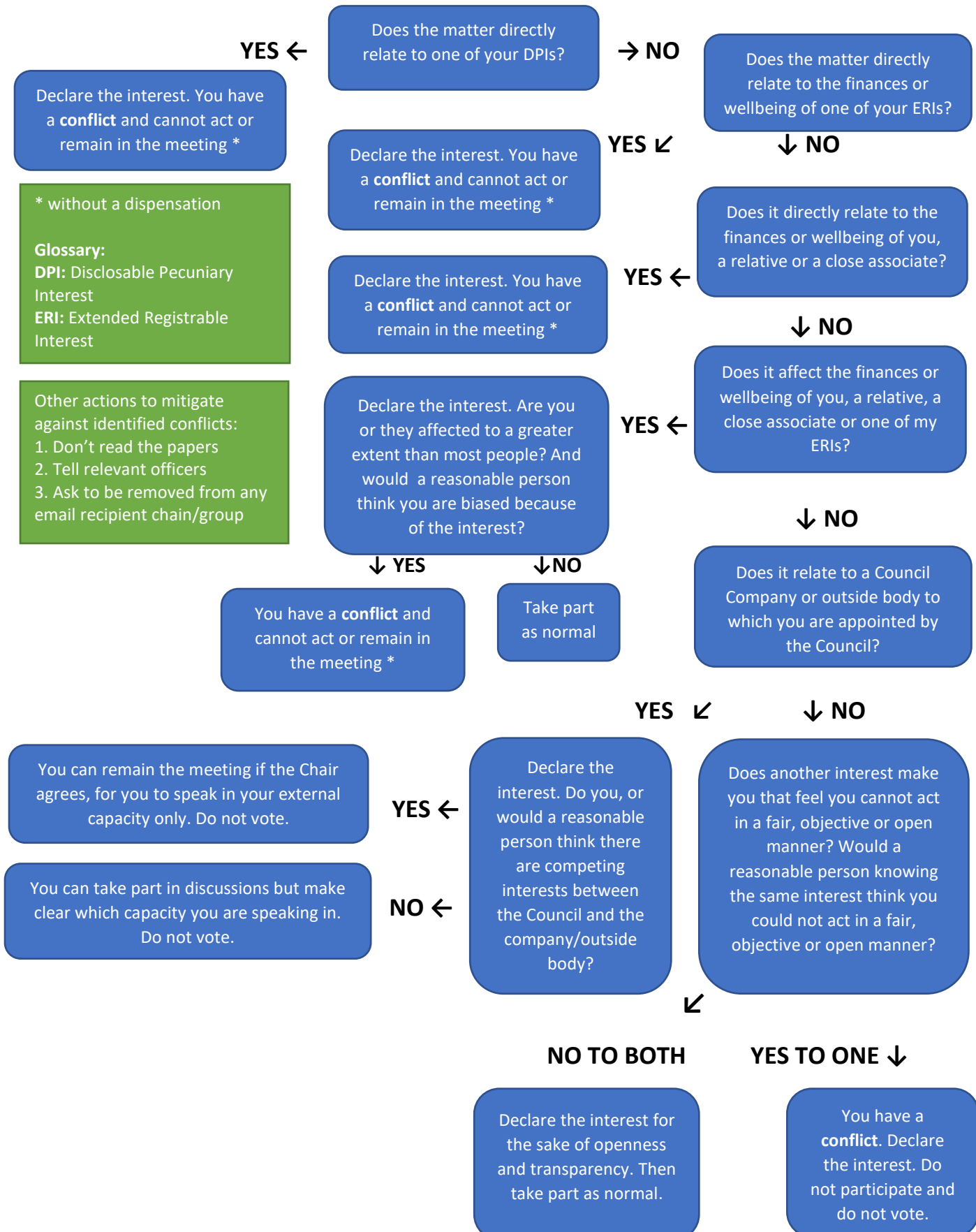
**The meeting closed at 7.14 pm**



# DECLARING AN INTEREST AND MANAGING ANY CONFLICTS FLOWCHART



## START



11-Jul-25

## FORWARD DECISIONS LIST

Date of meeting	Report title	Key or Non Key Decision	Decision Maker	Cabinet Member and Lead Officer	List of Background Papers	Public or Private Meeting
21 July 2025	Changes to Social Housing Allocations Policy	Key	Council	People and Communities Asst Dir - D Hall		Public
	Hilgay and Burnham Market Community Governance Reviews	Non	Council	Monitoring Officer		Public
	Council Tax Discounts and Premiums – Resolution for 2026-27	Key	Council	Finance Deputy Chief Executive		Public
	Leisure Facilities Feasibility Studies	Key	Council	Business Assistant Director – H Howell		Public
19	2025 Staff cost of living pay award	Key	Council	Deputy Leader		Public
	Local Authority Housing Fund Grant	Key	Cabinet	Assistant Director Duncan Hall		Public

Date of meeting	Report title	Key or Non Key Decision	Decision Maker	Cabinet Member and Lead Officer	List of Background Papers	Public or Private Meeting
24 July 2025 – Additional Meeting	MRF Extension Contract	Key	Cabinet	Environment and Coastal Asst Dir – M Chisholm		Public
	Sale of Land, Southend Road, Hunstanton	Key	Cabinet	Business Assistant Director J Birch		Exempt
	Microsoft Enterprise License	Key	Cabinet	Finance Assistant Director – Corporate Services		Exempt
	Revenue Outturn 2024/2025	Key	Cabinet	Finance Portfolio Holder Assistant Director – Finance	Council Financial Plan 2023 – 2028 Monthly Monitoring Reports 2023/2024	Public

11-Jul-25

	Capital Outturn 2024/2025	Key	Cabinet	Finance Portfolio Holder Assistant Director – Finance	Cabinet Reports Approved Financial Plan 2023/2028 Council Approved Financial Plan 2023/2028 Capital Strategy 2024/2025 Monthly Monitoring Reports 2024/2025	Both
	Outside Body Appointments	Non	Cabinet	Leader Monitoring Officer		Public
	Action Plan 2025-2027	Key	Cabinet	Leader Chief Executive		Public

Date of meeting	Report title	Key or Non Key Decision	Decision Maker	Cabinet Member and Lead Officer	List of Background Papers	Public or Private Meeting
96 September 2025						
	King's Lynn Enterprise Park	Non	Cabinet	Business and Culture Asst Dir – D Hall		Public
	CIL Governance	Non	Cabinet	Planning and Licensing Asst Dir – S Ashworth		Public
	Padel Tennis	Non	Council	Deputy Leader and Business Asst Dir – R Allan		Public
	Review of Constitution	Non	Council	Leader Monitoring Officer		Public
	Cemeteries	Key	Cabinet	Operational & Commercial		Private
	Recommendations from the Regeneration and Development Panel – Transport Informal Working	Non	Cabinet	Planning and Licensing and Leader of the Council Assistant Director Duncan Hall		Public



11-Jul-25

	Group					
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Date of meeting	Report title	Key or Non Key Decision	Decision Maker	Cabinet Member and Lead Officer	List of Background Papers	Public or Private Meeting
11 November 2025						
	Plan for Neighbourhoods Fund	Non	Council	Leader Asst Director – Regeneration, Housing and Place		Public
	Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Adoption)	Non	Council	Climate Change and Bio Diversity Asst Dir – S Ashworth		Public
	Safeguarding Policy	Non	Council	Corporate Services People & Communities		Public

Date of meeting	Report title	Key or Non Key Decision	Decision Maker	Cabinet Member and Lead Officer	List of Background Papers	Public or Private Meeting
9 December 2025						

**Items to be scheduled**

	King's Lynn Transport Strategy – to go on 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2026	Key	Council	Planning and Licensing Asst Dir D Hall		Public
	Custom and Self Build Site – Stoke Ferry	Non	Cabinet	Regeneration and Development Assistant Director - D Hall		Public
	Overnight Campervan parking in Hunstanton	Non	Cabinet	Leader Asst Director – M Chisholm		Public

	Florence Fields – Tenure Mix	Non	Council	Deputy Leader		Part Public and part Private- Contains exempt Information under para 3 – information relating to the business affairs of any person (including the authority)
	Article 4 Direction	Non	Cabinet	Regeneration and Development Assistant Director – S Ashworth		Public
	Empty Homes Strategy Review	Key	Council	People and Communities Asst Dir M Whitmore		Public
22	King's Lynn Town Football Club	Non	Cabinet	Property		Private- Contains exempt Information under para 3 – information relating to the business affairs of any person (including the authority)
	Housing Assurance Strategy	Non	Council	People and Communities Asst Dir M Whitmore		Public
	Domestic Abuse Tenants/Residents Policy and Domestic Abuse Intersectionality Policy	Non	Council	People and Communities Asst Dir - D Hall		Public
	IT Hardware Refresh	Key	Cabinet	Finance Assistant Director - Corporate Services		Private

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 21 JUNE 2025 FROM THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2025**

**CP34: CABINET REPORT – LEISURE FACILITIES FEASIBILITY STUDY**

The Assistant Director presented the report which asked Members to consider progressing the option of relocating St James Pool to Lynnsport and a wider refurbishment of this site to RIBA stage 3.

The Assistant Director reminded Members that in 2024 Cabinet had resolved to award funding to carry out a feasibility study and as part of the study a range of options had been considered and preferred options were set out in the report.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the report and invited questions and comments from Members as summarised below.

In response to a question from the Vice Chair, Councillor Spikings, the Assistant Director agreed to provide information on insurance of the facilities via email. It was also confirmed that costs of demolition and remedial costs would be included in the final scheme. The costs to take forward the feasibility study included architects, design work, planning application fees and ground surveys to achieve cost certainty.

In response to questions from Councillor Ryves, officers provided information on the cost of similar schemes and officers explained that in terms of operating the facilities, a range of options would be considered to achieve best value.

In response to a question from Councillor Bearshaw it was explained that the work would involve improvements to Lynnsport as a whole, including improvements to the current layout and more detail would be available in the RIBA Stage 3 report.

In terms of timescales, officers highlighted that they were aware of the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution.

Councillor Dickinson raised concern that the Oasis scheme was not being progressed and there was no timeline for the Hunstanton Masterplan to come forward. She commented that Hunstanton residents contributed to the economy and felt that there was disparity between Hunstanton and King's Lynn.

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Ring commented that the Oasis was costly to maintain and in need of repair or rebuild, however the Masterplan would regenerate Hunstanton and the Oasis was an integral part of this. He also referred to the Promenade and the work required to repair this.

Councillor Ring provided information on the type of pool that could be installed at Lynnsport to provide a greater offer and how the site would be looked at overall.

The Assistant Director explained that the conclusion of the study relating to the Oasis had concluded that the best location for the facility would be to remain on the promenade, therefore it would form part of the Hunstanton Masterplan area.

Councillor Spikings commented that work to the promenade and Oasis should take place at the same time to minimise disruption. She commented that the Oasis was an important facility in Hunstanton and needed an uplift.

Councillor Collingham commented that a systematic approach was needed, but hoped that work would be carried out as soon as possible for the benefits of tourists and residents.

The Assistant Director reminded the Panel of the need to provide swimming facilities for schools.

In response to a question from Councillor Ryves, it was explained that a timetable would be drawn up and this would have regard to Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below, but wished the Cabinet to note that they were disappointed with delaying delivery of improvements to the Oasis, but understood the reasoning behind this.

That Cabinet recommend to Full Council:

- Note x 2 RIBA stage 2 reports (not full Council)
- Recommendation to progress to RIBA 3 for Lynnsport (not full Council)
- Cabinet recommends to Council an amendment to the capital programme of £1,462,184 to progress to RIBA Stage 3.
- Cabinet and council note that a further report at the end of RIBA stage 3 for Lynnsport will be brought forward in December 2025.

### **CAB37: CABINET REPORT – 2025 STAFF COST OF LIVING PAY AWARD**

The Panel received the report which recommended the approach to the 2025 award and the way forward from 2026 onwards which was to match the national settlement. It was noted that Trade Unions had been consulted and many other Local Authorities followed the national pay settlement.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Dickinson it was confirmed that this proposal would have no impact on Terms and Conditions, it was just relating to the pay award.

In response to a question from Councillor Spikings, it was confirmed that Performance Related Pay was a separate scheme and would not be impacted by these proposals.

Councillor Spikings raised concern if the national settlement was lower than what would normally be awarded.

In response to a question from Councillor Ryves, it was confirmed that this proposal would have no impact on the current pay scales and structures.

RESOLVED: That the Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

1. That with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026, the Council agrees to adopt the National Joint Council for Local Government Services annual cost of living pay award, as determined by the national pay bargaining process on an ongoing basis.
2. That the Council agrees that its 2025 cost of living pay award should match the award agreed via the NJC national pay bargaining process.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 21 JULY 2025 FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 8 JULY 2025**

### **EC19: CABINET REPORT - CHANGES TO SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

The Senior Housing Manager gave a presentation on the report.

The Chair, Councillor Collop thanked the Senior Housing Manager for the presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel as summarised below.

In response to questions and comments from Councillor Kemp, the Senior Housing Manager commented that he agreed families with children on the first floor or above needed priority. He explained that just under 700 people were on a low band and that they anticipated half of those people were adequately housed but advised they would drop down, therefore, those people who were on the first floor or above would still have some priority and would not be competing against those people who were adequately housed. He added that it had been a difficult recommendation to make. In terms of children in care placed outside of Norfolk not necessarily having priority, the Senior Housing Officer advised he would check this with the Housing Needs Manager and come back to Councillor Kemp with a response. The Senior Housing Manager explained that the law was due to change for people that experienced domestic abuse and confirmed they would ensure the policy was revised to reflect the change in law. He added people that experienced domestic abuse would not need to demonstrate local connection order to access social housing.

In response to a further question from Councillor Kemp, the Senior Housing Manager explained that if somebody approached the council fleeing domestic abuse who had full duty owed to them, they would be placed in a high band.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust commented that the Policy stated the council still provided accommodation to people leaving care and moving out of the area before the age of 16.

Councillor Ratcliffe referred to family carers and sought clarification whether the Policy considered households where there was a grown child caring for an elderly parent as the policy stated couples and the wording around this was not clear. The Senior Housing Manager confirmed he was happy to amend the wording to reflect that and explained each household was treated dependant on its circumstances.

Councillor Ratcliffe asked if there had been any consideration given to an age rule in the Policy which she raised at the last informal meeting of the Homelessness and Housing Delivery Task Group. The Senior Housing Manager confirmed it had been considered and explained the Policy did not exclude people over the age of 60 in bidding for properties but confirmed he was happy to amend the wording in the Policy to reflect that.

Councillor Heneghan commented that the Policy seemed fair and was in support of it. Councillor Heneghan asked what the timescales were for successfully bidding on accommodation, in relation to the different priority bands. The Senior Housing

Manager explained it all depended on how people bid and there was no set timescale for each band.

Councillor Bullen sought clarification on the structure of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group. The Senior Housing Manager explained the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group was a Steering Group for implementing the Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy and was made up of senior staff including the Chief Executives from Shelter Norfolk, Norfolk Citizens Advice, Purfleet Trust, the Director of the Night Shelter and members of staff from the council and other statutory services.

Councillor Bullen asked whether individual cases could be discussed within the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group. The Senior Housing Manager confirmed individual cases could not be discussed at the Steering Group level and that these discussions were best held by a “by-name” group, relating to individuals who were the furthest from having their housing needs met. The Senior Housing Manager added that enquiries relating to individual cases came through the Member Enquiries channel.

Councillor Parish addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34 and referred to the third bullet point under the options considered on page 16 of the report and commented that people in work did need a place to live and urged the Panel to leave that option in place. Councillor Parish commented that it would be a useful and fair way of encouraging people to work and enabling those in work to have a house slightly more easily.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust commented that elected Members had worked with the operational team to ensure that questions had been asked about employment and that the Equalities Group were best placed to determine how that would impact on fairness and the legality of putting one group above another. Councillor Rust explained there was a government policy which was further going to help people get into work and added that Cabinet Members were determined to look at the number of empty properties which could potentially be brought back in to use.

Councillor Kemp proposed a further recommendation to the Policy to prioritise younger families higher with a view to keeping them at least in a medium band.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust commented that overcrowding had to take priority over adequate accommodations.

The Panel voted on the further recommendation proposed by Councillor Kemp which was lost (2 For and 4 Against).

**RESOLVED:** The Environment and Community Panel supported the following recommendation to Cabinet:

Cabinet resolves:

To recommend that the revised HomeChoice Allocations Policy (with changes as set out in paragraph 1.3) is adopted by Full Council.

Recommendations to Full Council:

To adopt the HomeChoice Allocations Policy.

### REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :  Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide      YES Need to be recommendations to Council      YES  Is it a Key Decision      YES			
Any especially affected Wards	Discretionary /				
	Operational				
Lead Member: Leader E-mail: <a href="mailto:Cllr.Alistair.Beales@west-norfolk.gov.uk">Cllr.Alistair.Beales@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a>		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Simon Ring			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officer: Paul Lowes Paul.lowes@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Officers consulted: Management Team Trade Unions			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications YES	Environmental Considerations NO

Date of meeting: 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025

### COST OF LIVING PAY AWARD

#### Summary

The Council's annual pay increase (cost of living award) for employees has been locally determined since 1991. A review of the current approach to determining the award has resulted in a recommendation for change with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. An agreed approach for the 2025 award has also been proposed as part of this review.

#### Recommendation

1. That with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 the Council agrees to adopt the National Joint Council for Local Government Services annual cost of living pay award, as determined by the national pay bargaining process on an ongoing basis.
2. That the Council agrees that it's 2025 cost of living pay award should match the award agreed via the NJC national pay bargaining process.

#### Reason for Decision

To implement an annual cost of living pay increase for employees which is consistent with the outcomes of the national pay bargaining processes undertaken by the National Joint Council for local government.



# 1 Background

1.1 The Council's annual pay increase for all employees has been locally determined since 1991.

1.2 The process to determine the annual pay increase has involved researching and considering a range of data, including RPI and CPI figures, other public sector pay settlements, reviewing national living wage rates and increasingly tracking progress with the national pay bargaining process to develop proposals for discussion with the Leader and other relevant portfolio holders before consulting with trade unions on our proposals.

1.3 Locally determined pay increases over the past 5 years have been as follows:

2020/21	2.5% and a minimum wage of £9.25 per hour
2021/22	2.5% and a minimum wage of £9.50 per hour
2022/23	£1925 or 4% and a minimum wage of £10.50 per hour
2023/24	£1925 or 5% and a minimum wage of £11.59 per hour
2024/25	£1290 for all staff earning less than or equal to the equivalent of the national spinal column point 43, or 2.5% for all employees earning over this point, and a minimum wage of £12.26 per hour

1.4 The context for determining the cost of living pay award has become increasingly challenging in recent years, influenced by changes in inflation levels, wider public sector pay negotiations and delays with agreeing the national pay settlement for local government employees. As a result, over the past ten years the Council's locally determined pay award has been consistent with the national pay settlement.

1.5 The position of having a locally determined pay award, but in effect matching the national settlement, creates uncertainty for employees and additional work for all those involved in the local pay determining process.

1.6 Informal discussions over the past two to three years have indicated that an alternative way forward could be to agree to re-join the national pay bargaining process and adopt the national pay settlement on an ongoing basis. As it seems likely that the national pay negotiations for 2025 will again become protracted, the opportunity has been taken to formalise these discussions and undertake formal consultation with Unions on a proposal to move to adopting the national pay settlement.

1.7 As part of this work, it has also been agreed to bring forward a proposal to agree to apply the national pay settlement for 2025 as our locally determined cost of living award for the current year. This increase would be effective backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 when agreed. A decision to adopt this approach will enable a speedier implication of the award when it is agreed (the alternative being to bring forward a proposal through the democratic process once the national award has been agreed, which will add delay to the implementation of this year's cost of living award).

## **2 Options Considered**

- 2.1 Option 1 – no change – continue to develop proposals locally, taking into account relevant information including the national pay settlement.
- 2.2 Option 2 - agree to formally agree to adopt the pay settlement negotiated by the National Joint Council for local government services with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. If option 2 is supported, it is also proposed to agree to adopt the national pay settlement for 2025 as our locally determined cost of living pay award for 2025.

## **3 Proposal**

- 3.1 Based on our practice over recent years, it is proposed that the Council determines to match the national settlement for its annual cost of living pay award for 2025 and to formally agree to adopt the national settlement on an ongoing basis with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.
- 3.2 Adopting the national pay settlement will bring clarity to the process followed for all involved and ensure that our employees are paid a cost of living award consistent with that determined by national pay negotiations for local government. Whilst it would remove the potential for the Council to award a different amount to the national settlement, in reality this option has not been exercised for some years and it could now be difficult to justify paying an alternative amount.
- 3.3 Adopting the national settlement also removes flexibility around timescales for determining the pay award, but again in recent years the Council has waited until the national settlement has been reached before bringing forward its own proposals, so in practice the option to exercise this flexibility has not been used.
- 3.4 A formal decision to adopt the national pay settlement going forward would also remove the need for proposals to be brought through the democratic process in future years as once agreed the national pay settlement would be automatically implemented for Council employees.
- 3.5 This approach is supported by our trade unions as set out in the feedback provided as part of our formal consultation process with them (see section 4).
- 3.6 It has been noted that the majority of other Norfolk authorities adopt the national pay settlement. This proposal would therefore re-align this element of our terms and conditions of employment with those of other authorities ahead of local government reorganisaiton.

## **4 Consultation and Trade Union Comments**

Unison and GMB have been consulted regarding the proposals outlined in this report, their comments are as follows:

UNISON:

UNISON West Norfolk consulted members by email and at four face-to-face or hybrid meetings at King's Court and satellite offices. In addition, a survey was sent to members asking for opinions on the consultation on matching the NJC pay award and how they are coping financially.

A summary of the result of the survey is below:

Should the BCKLWN April 2025 local cost of living pay award match the NJC national settlement?

YES 97%

NO 3%

Would you be prepared to wait to see what is agreed for national cost of living pay award before pay is agreed at BCKLWN so that the employer can match the NJC settlement?

YES 90%

NO 10%

Do you want the employer to officially adopt the NJC cost of living pay award from April 2026 so that you can be involved in the national pay bargaining process?

YES 98%

NO 2%

Therefore, the majority of Unison members who engaged with the consultation support the proposed changes and agree that employees in West Norfolk should have the cost of living pay award determined in line with the NJC process.

The majority supported the proposals:

- To match the 2025 NJC national settlement via our local process in 2025
- To re-join the national pay bargaining process and adopt the NJC cost of living award with effect from 1st April 2026

GMB:

No response to the consultation was received

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as agreed at Council in February 2025 includes budget provision to meet the costs of a pay award up

to the equivalent of a 2.5% increase across all pay grades. A contingency budget of £350k was also set aside to provide for the option of a flat rate offer for the lower grades which fall above 2.5%. This is in line with the structure of recent pay awards.

- 7.2 The proposed pay offer for 2025/26 of 3.2% is currently being consulted on with trade unions. Whilst this is above the 2.5% built into budget, it can be met within the total budget including the contingency amount. It is currently estimated that circa £250k budget will be remaining. This allows some provision should the final pay offer settlement be higher than 3.2%. Any additional funds needed will need to be identified from the general fund reserves and built into the budget going forward. Should the settlement be within budget then any underspend can be paid back to the general fund reserves to support the council's budget position going forward.
- 7.3 The above financial implications also take into account the transfer of Alive West Norfolk staff into the council from 1 April 2025.
- 7.5 The budget provision for future years pay award will be considered as part of the budget setting process each year in the lead up to setting the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## **8 Statutory Considerations**

There are no statutory considerations, other than the requirement to pay the National Living Wage.

## **9 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

An Equality Impact Assessment pre-screening form has been completed and is attached to this report.

## **10 Risk Management Implications**

- 10.1 As set out in Section 7 above, the recommendations can be met from within current budget provision.
- 10.2 The recommendation ensures that employees will receive an annual cost of living award that has been negotiated nationally, rather than one which has been determined locally and so removes the risk of being out of kilter with other local authorities.

## **11 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted**

None.

## **12 Background Papers**

None.



## Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Cost of Living Pay Award				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	New		Existing	√	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.  Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	Proposal is to move from our current local process for determining an annual cost of living pay award for employees to adopting the national pay settlement agreed by the NJC for local government employees				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>	Portfolio Holder, Unions, Chief Executive				
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><b><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></b></p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			√	
	Disability			√	
	Sex			√	
	Gender Re-assignment			√	
	Marriage/civil partnership			√	
	Pregnancy & maternity			√	
	Race			√	
	Religion or belief			√	
	Sexual orientation			√	
	Armed forces community			√	
	Care leavers			√	
Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			√		
<p><b>Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:</b></p> <p>The arrangements will be applied equally to all staff, irrespective of grade, working hours, working location or job role. The proposal does not give additional certainty as to when the cost of living pay award will be agreed (which could potentially be a positive impact for those on a low income), as this will be dependant on national negotiations, but it will ensure the amount payable is consistent with that paid</p>					



to the majority of local government employees, particularly the majority of local government employees in Norfolk. The process for implementation will be quicker as any award agreed nationally will only require ratification by the local Trade Union office and not need to be negotiated further.

Question	Answer	Comments	
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No		
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No		
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?  If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	No	<b>Actions:</b>  <b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b> .....	
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p>           <p><b>Decision agreed by EWG member:</b> .....</p>			
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	No	<b>Please provide brief summary:</b>	
<b>Assessment completed by:</b>	Becky Box		
<b>Name</b>			
<b>Job title</b>	Assistant Director Central Services		
<b>Date completed</b>	14th April 2025		
<b>Reviewed by EWG member</b>	Charlotte Marriott	<b>Date</b>	15.04.25

✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy ([corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk))

### REPORT TO CABINET

<b>Open</b>		Would any decisions proposed:			
<b>Any especially affected Wards</b>	Mandatory	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		NO	
		Need to be recommendations to Council		YES	
		Is it a Key Decision		NO	
None					
Lead Member: Cllr Rust E-mail: <a href="mailto:cllr.jo.rust@west-norfolk.gov.uk">cllr.jo.rust@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a>			Other Cabinet Members consulted:		
			Other Members consulted:		
<b>Lead Officer: Andy King</b> <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:andy.king@west-norfolk.gov.uk">andy.king@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a> <b>Direct Dial:</b> 01553 616422			Other Officers consulted: Duncan Hall, Assistant Director of Regeneration, Housing & Place Nikki Patton, Housing Services Manager		
Financial Implications NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications YES	Equality Impact Assessment YES If YES: Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications NO	Environmental Considerations NO

Date of meeting: 21 July 2025

### REVISION OF HOMECHOICE POLICY FOR THE ALLOCATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

#### Summary

The council's Housing Needs Service ('the service') manages HomeChoice – a register of households who are looking for social and/or affordable housing in the borough.

Households who are eligible to join the register are placed in different bands, depending on the urgency of their need, and in accordance with the HomeChoice Allocations Policy.

The service is proposing changes to how households are prioritised, because of:

- Changes in legislation.
- Changes in demand for social and affordable accommodation, which make it necessary to differentiate between households with certain levels of need.
- Changes in the borough's overall approach to homelessness, as reflected in its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (adopted by Council in November 2024).
- Feedback from staff, customers, and internal/external partners regarding the fairness of aspects of the policy.

A draft of the new policy is attached. Changes are summarised in this report.

## **Recommendation**

### Cabinet Resolves:

To recommend that the revised HomeChoice Allocations Policy (with changes as set out in paragraph 1.3) is adopted by Full Council.

### Recommendations to Full Council:

To adopt the HomeChoice Allocations Policy.

## **Reason for Decision**

The new policy fulfils the council's legal responsibilities, aligns with the borough's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and seeks to make the fairest use of a limited local resource.

# **1 Background**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Every Council which is a housing authority must publish a policy for determining the priorities and procedures to be followed in allocating social<sup>1</sup> housing in their area. In King's Lynn and West Norfolk, this process is managed by HomeChoice, part of the council's Housing Needs Service.

HomeChoice is an online Housing Register. The council and partners provide telephone and face-to-face support to people who may struggle to complete an online form.

The Social Housing Allocations Policy ('the policy') explains the rules HomeChoice will follow in maintaining a Housing Register and the allocating of social housing to housing applicants from the Housing Register.

The policy has been in place since 2004, with its last major revision in 2013. Since its inception, patterns of homelessness and housing need have changed significantly, and there have been changes to legislative and strategic priorities. The new policy seeks to address these changes.

## **1.2 Consultation measures and methods**

The service collaborated with members of the council's Communications Team, other departments, and partners to ensure the needs and wishes of stakeholders were considered. 261 people contributed to the development of the policy, including 212 survey respondents and at least 99 people with current or former lived experience of homelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> NB – references to "social" housing include accommodation let by registered providers of social housing on both social and affordable rents.



Senior members of the service developed the policy document, with oversight from the Housing Services Manager and regular discussions with the Cabinet Member for People and Communities.

Consultation events with stakeholders included:

- a drop-in session at the Purfleet Trust for people with lived experience of homelessness (face to face).
- A group session with seven residents and two staff members of a supported housing scheme run by Sanctuary Supported Living (face to face)<sup>2</sup>.
- A drop-in session at Right Tracks, accommodation for homeless young people (face to face).
- A Teams briefing and discussion session for housing providers and members of the existing HomeChoice partnership, with all local housing providers invited (Teams).
- A section of the meeting of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Partnership (in person and Teams).

The council conducted a public survey, promoting it through

- A press release
- Social media posts
- Banners and 'pinned posts' on council and HomeChoice websites
- Targeted emails to current HomeChoice users
- Direct promotion to people with lived experience of homelessness, through partner agencies such as Shelter<sup>3</sup>, the Purfleet Trust and housing providers (word of mouth, one-to-one meetings, posters).

The survey questions can be found at the end of the report. Note that the survey excluded areas of change that the service *had* to introduce because of legislation. Key points of note:

- The survey was successful in canvassing the opinions of people with lived experience of homelessness (43% of respondents) and people with long-term physical and mental health conditions and disabilities (33%).
- The survey also covered a wide spread of ages, though responses were skewed towards female respondents (73%).
- The changes were supported by most respondents for six out of the seven changes.
- For the other change ("Remove priority for people in employment"), 103 respondents voted to keep things as they are now, with 80 respondents voting to make the change and 29 being unsure. However, this change was strongly supported by people with lived experience (during a group session) and was either supported or unopposed by members of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group – a group of senior staff members from organisations

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<sup>2</sup> This session was particularly useful for shaping the final policy document. Whilst the policy retains change six (supported accommodation), the service will use feedback to deliver it fairly – with residents retaining the opportunity to obtain a high banding, based on their circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> We received positive feedback from Shelter relating to the survey: "found it very well explained and easy to follow – congratulations to whoever put that together."

with a key role in preventing and relieving homelessness in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

### 1.3 Key areas of change

The table below sets out the key areas of change within the new policy:

Current policy	Revised policy	Rationale
1. There are currently four allocation bands: low, medium, high and emergency	A fifth band – no priority – will be added to the existing four bands	<b>Fairness and strategy:</b> Presently, some households on the register are “adequately housed” – they have a desire to move but no need to do so. Individuals in this band are categorized alongside those who have some welfare or medical needs. This change would mean people who do have a housing need, even if it is low, will be in a better place than people who do not have a housing need.
2. Every 10 <sup>th</sup> family-type vacancy is advertised with preference given to applicants in the High and Medium housing need bands that are working	This preference will be removed.	<b>Fairness:</b> The current policy was introduced with the (good) intention of incentivising work amongst people living in and seeking work. However, it fails to recognise that residents may be unable to work because of disability, because they have caring responsibilities, or for other reasons. This change would mean that people who are unable to work are no worse off on the housing register than those who can.
3. Homeless prevention cases to be placed in low band	Will remain in low band but above those who are adequately housed	<b>Fairness and legislation:</b> The service owes a legal duty – a “prevention duty” – to certain people who are at risk of homelessness. The law requires the service to award some priority to people owed a prevention duty. Note that some authorities award a higher banding for those owed a prevention duty, but this can sometimes result in delays in rehousing people who are actually homeless (because those at risk are prioritised above them).
4. Welfare and medical needs are assessed separately.	Welfare and medical needs will be considered together	<b>Fairness:</b> Putting welfare and medical priorities together will mean the service can give a wider range of priority on these grounds and means the service can be more flexible about giving priority according to how urgent someone's overall need is, not just one or the other.
5. Applicants with children lacking a bedroom <b>or</b> in a first floor flat with a child under 12 <b>or</b> a flat with no garden are	Applicants with children lacking a bedroom will remain in medium priority. Applicants in a first floor flat with a child	<b>Fairness:</b> Living in a first-floor flat or not having a garden not ideal for some people with children, but currently they have the same priority on the housing register as people who are overcrowded. The plan is to give such households some priority, but people who are

all given medium priority	under 12 <b>or</b> a flat with no garden will be given low priority	overcrowded will have higher priority, due to the greater impact on most households of overcrowding.
6. Applicants in supported hostel accommodation given high band when ready to move on	High band to be retained if supported accommodation residents can demonstrate their only move-on option is through social housing	<p><b>Fairness and Strategy:</b> Currently, all hostel residents who are ready for move on are automatically placed into a high band, regardless of their need for social housing. Conversely, all residents of shared accommodation (HMOs) are placed on medium band unless there are specific circumstances that warrant a higher banding. The amendment seeks to redress this balance and remove the potential incentive for individuals to access hostel accommodation that they may not need. This in turn will encourage hostel providers to explore a wider range of options for people entering hostel accommodation, whilst acknowledging that many residents will require social housing as their only realistic move on option.</p> <p>The process will be handled sensitively and will be developed alongside people with lived experience of homelessness. Hostel residents will remain high priority unless there is a clear indication that they do not need social housing to move on sustainably.</p>
7. Current serving members and veterans of the regular armed forces are considered to have local connection for 5 years after leaving the military	Current serving members and veterans of the regular armed forces are considered to have local connection regardless of the length of time since they left the military.	<p><b>Legislation:</b> The change is being made to adhere with legal requirements. The rules also apply to other members of the armed forces community such as some bereaved spouses and former partners of Service personnel. The change is in line with the council's commitments to the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>

Additionally, the new policy formalises interim arrangements made to support care leavers under Section 23C of the Children Act 1989, and under the council's commitments under the Care Leavers Covenant. In brief, young people leaving care anywhere in Norfolk will have a local connection to the borough. They will be awarded a high band, subject to conditions outlined in the policy.

## 1.4 Implementation

If adopted, the service will implement the new policy in September 2025, with existing households re-assessed and re-banded where appropriate. The service will inform all households of the impact of the new policy on their banding.

**NOTE:** the service will also revise the HomeChoice pages of the council's website and introduce an "in-brief" guide to completing applications, as well as details of where to go if applicants need help with the form.

## 2 Options Considered

Alternative options included:

- **Not making changes to the policy:** in doing so, the service would leave itself open to legal challenge and would face additional challenges in terms of preventing homelessness and tackling rough sleeping. The proposed changes would put the service in the strongest possible position as it prepares to navigate Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- **Making much more widespread changes:** there were changes that were omitted from the policy (such as enabling some residents of bordering districts to join the register). This was because the cost of administration would outweigh the benefits of the change, particularly given that district boundaries will change post-LGR.
- **Adopting all changes except “Remove priority for people in employment”:** this would bring the changes in line with the results of an online survey. This change was discussed in detail by members of the council’s Corporate Equalities Working Group, with the recommendation that the change is adopted. Further details of this discussion can be found in section 9 of the full Equality Impact Assessment.

The new policy fulfils the council's legal responsibilities, aligns with the borough's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and seeks to make the fairest use of a limited local resource – but it also seeks to minimise the disruption to council staff and customers through its implementation.

## 3 Policy Implications

The recommendation comprises a change to the council’s social housing allocation policy, as set out above.

## 4 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications for making this change. However, the change will require 200-250 hours of council officer time to manually review and amend applicants’ banding.

## 5 Personnel Implications

As above – no direct personnel implications.

## 6 Environmental Considerations

None

## 7 Statutory Considerations

Housing authorities are required by the Housing Act 1996 s166A (as amended by the Homelessness Act (1996) and the Localism Act (2011) to have an allocation scheme for determining the priorities and defining the procedures to be followed in allocating affordable housing accommodation.

The Allocation Policy sets out who can access the housing register and how accommodation is allocated in the borough, considering reasonable preference criteria laid out in legislation.

Further information on this can be found at [www.gov.uk/guidance/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-4-framing-an-allocation-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-4-framing-an-allocation-scheme)

This policy has also had regard to the following (this list is not exclusive):

- Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England
- The Public Sector Equalities Duty
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act
- Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

## 8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

A pre-screening report and a full EIA are attached below this report.

## 9 Risk Management Implications

As outlined above, the proposal reduces risk to the council and its customers by creating an allocation policy that is:

- **Fairer:** reducing the risk of complaints and reputational damage (as well as reducing the cost arising from MPs' and members' enquiries).
- **More strategic:** improving the prospects of achieving the aims of the borough's [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Ending Homelessness, Person by Person](#).
- **In line with legislation and guidance:** reducing the risk of legal challenge to the decisions made by officers:

Known risks include:

Risk	Mitigation
Enquiries/complaints generated by individuals' change in banding	Consultation work at pre-implementation stage to ensure that those on the register are aware of the changes and have an opportunity to express their concerns / suggest alternatives
Lack of buy-in from partner landlords – risk that landlords	Consultation work at pre-implementation stage to ensure that partners are aligned with the changes and continue to adopt them. Ongoing relationship management between the service and partners.

could pull out of partnership agreement	
Backlog in 'business as usual' enquiries because of processing changes.	The change has been timed to coincide with the overlap between one senior member of staff joining the team and another retiring – thus increasing the resource available. The service could also draft in help from elsewhere in the team or recruit staff temporarily, using ringfenced Homelessness Prevention Grant monies.
"Silted" of hostel system (and increase in temporary accommodation if people are "stuck" on medium band)	Introduction of Supported Accommodation Panel to ensure people are not placed into hostel accommodation inappropriately. <a href="#">SHPS service</a> commissioned to help people access private sector housing. Fair and well-managed gateway to preserve high band for people who need it.
The work is carried out, but has to be re-done post-LGR (once local authority boundaries merge)	Strong work at development stage to ensure the service's policy is in the best possible state and is thus adopted as good practice once local housing registers are merged.

## 10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

There are no declarations of interest.

## 11 Background Papers

- Draft Allocations Policy
- Housing Allocations Survey – Spring 2025 – questions
- Housing Allocations Survey – Spring 2025 – results
- Equality Impact Assessment – full

## Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	HomeChoice Allocations Policy			
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	New		<b>Existing</b>	Yes
<p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations and identify relevant legislation.</p>	<p>Changes to the Allocations Policy, summarized as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of bandings from 4 to 5</li> <li>• Removal of priority for every 10<sup>th</sup> vacancy for those in employment</li> <li>• Introduction of “no priority” band so that people owed a homelessness prevention duty have greater priority over those adequately housed</li> <li>• Amalgamation of welfare and medical criteria to give greater flexibility for people with both welfare and medical grounds for priority</li> <li>• Reduction in banding from medium to low for people with children under 12 who either (a) lack a garden or (b) live above the ground floor</li> <li>• Reduction in banding from high to medium for people in supported hostel accommodation who would be able to access Private Sector accommodation when moving on. (Retention of high band for all others ready to move on from hostel accommodation)</li> <li>• Removal of time limit for joining the register for armed forces veterans (and their spouses / ex-spouses)</li> <li>• Confirmation of high band for care leavers (previously an interim arrangement)</li> </ul>			
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public</b> – via online and paper survey</li> <li>• <b>Partners:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HomeChoice partner landlords</li> <li>• Members of Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group</li> </ul> </li> <li>• People with <b>lived experience</b> of homelessness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purfleet Trust service users</li> <li>• Sanctuary Supported Living service users</li> <li>• Right Tracks (Benjamin Foundation) service users</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Internal partners – senior members of council's housing options service.</li> </ul>			
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>			
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they		Positive	Negative	Neutral
				Unsure

<p>have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><b><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></b></p> <p><i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit <a href="#">The King's Fund</a></i></p>	Age			X	
	Disability	X			
	Sex			X	
	Gender Re-assignment			X	
	Marriage/civil partnership			X	
	Pregnancy & maternity				X
	Race			X	
	Religion or belief			X	
	Sexual orientation			X	
	Armed forces community	X			
	Care leavers	X			
	Health inequalities*	X			
	Other (caring responsibilities)				X

**Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:**

Positive impacts on:

- People with disabilities – who are more likely to have combined welfare and medical grounds for moving
- Members of the armed forces community – whose local connection rights have been extended
- Care leavers – confirming interim arrangements to prioritise care leavers for social housing
- Health inequalities – particularly those who are more likely to have combined welfare and medical grounds for moving. But also: providing fairer access to social housing, which is a key determinant of health

I have ticked unsure for “pregnancy and maternity” and “caring responsibilities” because of the reclassification from medium to low band for households with children living in a first floor flat or above. Whilst this may have a negative impact on some households, we expect the overall impact to be positive – accounting for the impact on people who are in overcrowded conditions or who have significant welfare or medical needs for accessing social housing.

Question	Answer	Comments
<b>2.</b> Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No	I have answered no, but the allocation of social housing can be a sensitive subject. Whilst every effort has been made to develop a policy that is fair and transparent (and that challenges perceptions about social housing allocations), there is a risk that the policy may be perceived differently by customers and partners.
<b>3.</b> Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	No, but as above



<b>4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?</b> If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	Yes / No	<b>Actions:</b>	
		<b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b> .....	
<b>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</b>  Full EQIA required, as discussed with Charlotte Marriott 12 June 2025  <b>Decision agreed by EWG member: .....12 June 2025.....</b>			
<b>5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?</b>	Yes	<b>Please provide brief summary:</b>  The policy aims to allocate social housing in the fairest way, accounting for the needs of applicants.	
<b>Assessment completed by:</b>	<b>Andy King</b>		
<b>Name</b>			
<b>Job title</b>	<b>Senior Housing Manager</b>		
<b>Date completed</b>	<b>12 June 2025</b>		
<b>Reviewed by EWG member</b>	<b>Charlotte Marriott</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>12 June 2025</b>

✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy ([corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk))



## Stage 2 – Full Equality Impact Assessment Form

**Title of the Equality Impact Assessment report:**

**REVISION OF HOMECHOICE POLICY FOR THE ALLOCATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING**

### **1. What is the service area(s) and who is the lead officer?**

- Service area – Housing Services (Regeneration, Housing and Place)
- Lead officers – Duncan Hall, Nikki Patton, Andy King
- The current policy can be found on the [HomeChoice website](#).

This assessment was completed with support from members of the Corporate Equalities Working Group (referred to as 'the group' in this document).



The change is to amend the existing policy in several ways as follows. A full rationale behind each change is outlined in 1.3 of the report

Current policy	Revised policy
1. There are currently four allocation bands: low, medium, high and emergency	A fifth band – no priority – will be added to the existing four bands
2. Every 10th family-type vacancy is advertised with preference given to applicants in the High and Medium housing need bands that are working	This preference will be removed.
3. Homeless prevention cases to be placed in low band	These cases will remain in low band but will be above those who are adequately housed
4. Welfare and medical needs are assessed separately.	Welfare and medical needs will be considered together (so that a combination of welfare and medical needs could result in a higher band)
5. Applicants with children lacking a bedroom or in a first floor flat with a child under 12 or a flat with no garden are all given medium priority	Applicants with children lacking a bedroom will remain in medium priority. Applicants in a first floor flat with a child under 12 or a flat with no garden will be given low priority
6. Applicants in supported hostel accommodation are automatically given high band when ready to move on	The high band will be retained if supported accommodation residents can demonstrate their only move-on option is through social housing. Otherwise, they will be banded medium
7. Current serving members and veterans of the regular armed forces are considered to have local connection for 5 years after leaving the military	The time limit will be removed

Additionally, the new policy formalises arrangements to support care leavers, awarding them a high band, subject to conditions.

The changes are because of:

- Changes in legislation
- Changes in demand for social and affordable accommodation
- Changes in the borough's overall approach to homelessness
- Feedback from staff, customers and internal/external partners

The changes will result in a decision by Members – the draft policy will be taken through Cabinet and full Council.



### **3. How will this change help the Council achieve its Corporate Strategy priorities (and therefore your Directorate/service objectives)?**

The changes help support the following Corporate Priorities:

#### **Support our communities**

- To support the health and wellbeing of our communities, help prevent homelessness, assist people with access to benefits advice and ensure there is equal access to opportunities.
- improve access to affordable homes

The changes also support the borough's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, adopted by members in November 2024

### **4. What is your evidence of need for change?**

The changes are because of:

- Changes in the [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#)
- Feedback identified during the [Homelessness Review](#) and the creation of the council's [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)
- Strategic direction driven by the Strategy, which was adopted by councillors in November 2024.

### **5. Does this change deliver improved value for money and/or release efficiency savings?**

The changes will achieve improved value for money by:

- Strengthening the council's ability to prevent homelessness.
- Encouraging appropriate use of good-quality private sector accommodation (in partnership with commissioned services) whilst retaining social housing as an option for people who need it the most.
- Improving the level of flexibility officers have when determining applicants' need.
- Improving housing outcomes for vulnerable groups such as care leavers, homeless households, people with disabilities and those in overcrowded situations.

This will result in the following potential savings:

- Reduction in numbers of families in temporary accommodation
- Improved 'flow' of people through supported hostel accommodation
- Reduced level of MPs' and member enquiries due to a fairer process
- Reduced risk of legal challenges to decisions



## 6. What geographical area does this proposal cover?

The policy is borough-wide but has a particular impact on areas with higher concentrations of social and affordable housing.

## 7. What is the impact of your proposal?

As outlined above, the proposals reduce risk to the council and its customers by creating an allocation policy that is:

- **Fairer:** reducing the risk of complaints and reputational damage (as well as reducing the cost arising from MPs' and members' enquiries)
- **More strategic:** improving the prospects of achieving the aims of the borough's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Ending Homelessness, Person by Person
- **In line with legislation and guidance:** reducing the risk of legal challenge to the decisions made by officers:

The proposals aim to contribute towards the overall aim of **supporting our communities** by improving access to housing, which is a key determinant of health outcomes.

The proposals therefore fall in line with the council's work towards establishing West Norfolk as a Marmot Place.

## 8. What data have you used to support your assessment of the impact of your proposal?

It is difficult to quantify the impact of the proposal; however, the Housing Needs Service and the council's Communications team has carried out extensive consultation work to gauge public and partner opinion, to ensure that any 'unintended consequences' are mitigated.



## 9. What consultation has been undertaken/will need to be undertaken will stakeholders/groups directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals and how do you intend to use this information to inform the decision?

As laid out in section 1.2 of the report to Cabinet, the service worked alongside members of the council's Communications Team, other departments and partners to ensure that the needs and wishes of stakeholders were considered. A total of 261 people were involved in the development of the policy, including 212 survey respondents and at least 99 people with current or former lived experience of homelessness.

Methods included drop-in sessions, Teams briefings, Homelessness Strategy partnership meetings and a public survey:

- The survey was successful in canvassing the opinions of people with lived experience of homelessness (43% of respondents) and people with long-term physical and mental health conditions and disabilities (33%).
- The survey also covered a wide spread of ages, though responses were skewed towards female respondents (73%).
- The changes were supported by most respondents for six out of the seven changes.
- For change 6 (move-on from hostel accommodation), there was some concern expressed by partners and by people with lived experience of homelessness relating to the impact on their ability to access social housing. The service will mitigate this by designing the application process in partnership with local partners and people with lived experience of homelessness. We will also ensure that eligible hostel residents will still be put into a high priority unless there is a clear indication that they do not need social housing.

For the change 2 ("Remove priority for people in employment"), 103 respondents voted to keep things as they are now, with 80 respondents voting to make the change and 29 being unsure. Members of the Corporate Equalities Working Group discussed this change in greater depth. Key points of discussion were as follows:

- **Government guidance:** Para 4.7 of the [Allocation of Accommodation Guidance for Local Authorities](#) states: "Local authorities are urged to consider how they can use their allocation policies to support those households who want to work." However, the current scheme only benefits those who are in work, at the expense of those who (for example) are unable to work due to disabilities, or who may have recently been made redundant through no fault of their own.
- **Caselaw:** In the case of [R\(H\) v Southwark LBC \[2017\] EHC 736](#) a judicial review held that, whilst the policy [of incentivising employment] had legitimate aim, the effect of the scheme was "indirectly to discriminate against those with disabilities and against women"
- **Lived experience:** although the change was not supported by a public survey, the change was strongly supported by a group of people with lived experience of homelessness, during a consultation meeting (Sanctuary Supported Living, 15<sup>th</sup> May). This added weight to the argument for removing the restriction.
- **Partners:** the change was unopposed or supported by members of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group – a group of senior staff members from organisations with a key role in preventing and relieving homelessness in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. This also added weight to the argument for removing the restriction.
- **Disincentivising work:** the group considered whether the change might disincentivise work and therefore have a knock-on effect on wellbeing. However, the group felt that the change simply opened the register up so that there was no differentiation between those in work and those who (through no fault of their own) may be unable to do so.

Whilst the decision was not taken lightly, the group's assessment is that the change is justified due to its overall positive impact on different groups of the population, as laid out in section 11 of this assessment.



## 10. Are there any implications for other service areas?

There are no direct implications – though the change may generate additional calls to the council's customer information centre from people on the housing register.

## 11. What impact (either positive or negative will this change have on different groups of the population?

The group considered the impact on the following protected characteristics:

- **Age:** a slight positive impact on older households who may be less able to work (change 2) (change from neutral on pre-screening)
- **Disability:** a significant positive impact on people with disabilities – who are more likely to have combined welfare and medical grounds for moving (change 4). Also a slight positive impact on those who are unable to work because of their disability (change 2)
- **Gender reassignment:** no significant impact
- **Marriage and civil partnership:** no significant impact
- **Pregnancy and maternity (also, caring responsibilities):** The group considered this and assessed as an overall positive impact (changed from unsure). The reclassification from medium to low band for households with children living in a first floor flat or above (change 5) may have a negative impact on some households with children. However, the group expects the overall impact to be positive – accounting for the impact on people who are in overcrowded conditions or who have significant welfare or medical needs for accessing social housing. Also, a slight positive impact on those who may be less likely to work because of maternity and caring responsibilities (change 2)
- **Race:** no significant impact
- **Religion or belief:** no significant impact
- **Sex:** no significant impact
- **Sexual Orientation:** no significant impact
- **Other:**
  - **Armed Forces Community:** a positive impact for those whose local connection eligibility has been extended (change 7). This also falls in line with the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.
  - **Health Inequalities:** a positive impact - particularly those who are more likely to have combined welfare and medical grounds for moving (change 2). But also: providing fairer access to social housing, which is a key determinant of health.
  - **Care Leavers:** a positive impact - confirming interim arrangements to prioritise care leavers for social housing



**12. Other staff involved in Assessment (including Corporate Equality Group Representatives), and comments from Equality Working Group reps**

Ashley Easter – Policy Assistant

Laura Randall – Information Governance Officer

Alison Demonty – Senior Community Safety and Neighbourhood Nuisance Officer





## Full EIA Action Plan

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<b>Risk/adverse impact identified (Q11)</b>	<b>Action to be taken to mitigate</b>	<b>By who</b> <i>Include a lead officer for implementing the actions</i>	<b>By when</b> <i>Deadlines/timescales for implementing the actions</i>	<b>Monitoring mechanism</b> <i>What indicators will you use to track the impact of the change when implemented?</i>  <i>How will you review its implementation?</i>  <i>How do you intend to monitor service take-up?</i>
Some changes may be perceived as having a negative impact (e.g. on working households)	Strong communications including: press release; use of existing Homelessness Strategy network; HomeChoice partner network	Comms – Phil Sillis  Partners – Andy King	Early July  Mid July to end September	Feedback through:  Homelessness Strategy Implementation Partnership inc. co-production group  HomeChoice partnership network  Homelessness and Housing Delivery Task Group
Some changes may be misunderstood by members of the public				
Changes may cause concern to those on the housing register or looking to apply	Clear guidance provided to people on the register and Homelessness / HomeChoice partners	Andy King	September 2025	

**Assessment Completed By: Andy King**

**Job Title: Senior Housing Manager**

**Date: 26 June 2025**

# **Social Housing Allocations Policy** **Borough Council Kings Lynn and West Norfolk**

## **Guide to West Norfolk HomeChoice**

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### **Appendix**

- A. [HomeChoice Partners](#)
- B. [Legal background](#)

## **1. Introduction**

Every Council which is a housing authority must publish a policy for determining the priorities and procedures to be followed in allocating social housing in their area.

This social housing allocations policy explains the rules West Norfolk HomeChoice will follow in maintaining a Housing Register and the allocating of social housing to housing applicants from the Housing Register.

More detail on the legal background can be found in Appendix B.

West Norfolk HomeChoice is administered by the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk on behalf of Registered Provider (Housing Associations) partners. If you are successful in bidding for a property, West Norfolk HomeChoice will pass your details to the relevant Housing Association who will consider your circumstances, your income and housing history in accordance with their own housing policies.

Details of all the partners are included at Appendix A.

The Council's Social Housing Allocation policy (West Norfolk HomeChoice policy) is kept under review to ensure it is both lawful and equitable. Necessary amendments have recently been identified to keep this up to date with amendments to statutory guidance and to clarify queries regarding procedures carried out by staff.

## 2. Who can be accepted to the Housing Register?

Not everyone can join the Housing Register. Applicants will only be accepted onto the West Norfolk HomeChoice Housing Register if:

- They are eligible within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act (1996) and
- They have a local connection to the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk as set out in this Policy and
- Their annual earned income, savings and equity in any property totals less than one third of the average suitable property price in West Norfolk unless there is an overwhelming welfare need.

**The next section explains more about local connection to the Borough of King's Lynn & West Norfolk under West Norfolk HomeChoice policy.**

You will have a local connection if:

- you have been living in the Borough of King's Lynn & West Norfolk for at least 3 out of the last 5 years or,
- you have close family (parents, children, brothers or sisters) who have been living in the Borough for at least 5 years (any priority due will be one band lower than those with their own residential connection).

**You will also be considered as having a local connection as follows:**

### Homeless and in priority need

The Council owes you a duty to secure alternative accommodation because you are homeless, you have a priority need and a local connection in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (amended), associated legislation and guidance.

### Armed forces personnel

Certain members of the Armed Forces community are exempt from any residency requirements, by virtue of regulations made under section 160ZA(8) which prevent local authorities from applying a local connection test to disqualify such applicants. These are:

1. Those who are currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces or who were serving in the Regular Forces at any time
2. Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where:
  - the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their Service spouse or civil partner, and
  - the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.
3. Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
4. Divorced, separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel required to move out of service accommodation where they have previous residence in the borough

These provisions recognise the special position of members of the Armed Forces whose employment requires them to be mobile and who are likely therefore to be particularly disadvantaged by local connection requirements.

	The provisions extend to bereaved spouses and civil partners of Service personnel recognising that they are likely to experience similar issues. Reservists are included, recognising, for example, that those who have been seriously injured because of their service may need to move to another local authority district to access treatment, care or support.
<b>Separated Spouses / Civil Partners of Armed Forces Personnel</b>	This includes separated spouses or civil partners of a member of the Armed forces who have had to leave service accommodation due to relationship breakdown within the last five years. Evidence will need to be provided.
<b>Care leavers</b>	<p>In line with <a href="#">government guidance</a>, the following people will be considered as having a local connection:</p> <p>(a) eligible children as set out in paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989. These are child who are: (a) currently being looked-after; (b) aged 16 or 17; and (c) have been looked after by a local authority in England or Wales for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, since the age of 14, at least one day of which must have been since attaining age 16</p> <p>(b) relevant children as set out by section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989. These are children who are: (a) no longer a looked-after-child; (b) aged 16 or 17; and (c) a former eligible child</p> <p>(c) former relevant children aged under 25 as set out by section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989. These are children who are: (a) aged 18 to 24; and (b) either a former relevant child or a former eligible child.</p>
<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	In line with <a href="#">government guidance</a> , this policy commits to providing victim-survivors of domestic abuse (as defined in section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021) “as much support and assistance as possible so that they are able to re-build their lives away from abuse and harm”. Therefore, where there is evidence that a victim needs to move because of domestic abuse, then they will be considered to have a local connection.
<b>Other circumstances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are special circumstances (for example severe social or medical needs) why you need to live in the area. Evidence that extreme hardship would otherwise occur must be provided.</li> <li>• You are an existing social housing tenant in another local authority district, and you have a need to move to West Norfolk because you already have genuine and effective work in the district or wish to take up an approved offer of such work here and failing to secure housing in West Norfolk would cause hardship. (Right to Move)</li> </ul>

## Those in prison

People currently in prison will not be active on the Housing Register. Anyone leaving prison can contact the Housing Options Team for more advice a minimum of 8 weeks prior to release. Applicants will also be considered to have a local connection with King’s Lynn and West Norfolk if they had a local connection prior to their sentence.

## **Further rules: age, rent arrears, behaviour**

### **Age limits: 16- and 17-year-olds**

Applicants should be aged 18 years or over. Anyone aged 16 or over can apply for housing if they are eligible. However, this does not guarantee housing under the scheme and until the applicant reaches 18 years old.

Any offer of accommodation will be subject to appropriate trustee arrangements being in place and show that they will be supported in the tenancy and that the level of support is appropriate for their needs. The trustee could be a family member, adult friend, or a professional body e.g. Norfolk County Council's Leaving Care Services.

Applicants under 18 years old will be referred to the council's Housing Needs Service for advice regarding their housing rights and options and may be offered semi-independent accommodation with support. If you are homeless or if safeguarding concerns are raised, then you will be referred to Children's Services for an assessment.

### **Rent arrears**

If you have a housing debt to your current or former landlord, you must make an affordable arrangement to make payments against the debt. Without evidence of an established record of payments and / or a significantly reduced debt your application will not be made active, and you will not be able to bid for properties.

Tenants of partner Housing Associations accruing rent arrears due to a reduction in their Housing Benefit arising from the 'room rate' will still be considered for a move to smaller, more affordable accommodation. If your property is deemed to be unaffordable following a housing assessment you may be allowed to bid and be nominated for a property.

If rent arrears have accrued either in the private or social sector as a direct result of circumstances outside of your control, further assessment of these will be made and you may be allowed to bid and be nominated for a property.

### **Unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour**

A record of unacceptable behaviour by you or members of your household may result in you being ineligible to join or remain on the Housing Register.

The council has the power to determine whether, in its opinion, applicants or members of their household have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to determine that they should be disqualified from West Norfolk HomeChoice.

Some examples of the type of behaviour that could mean that an applicant does not qualify for inclusion on West Norfolk HomeChoice are:

- Serious rent arrears which, in the council's view, would entitle the landlord to a possession order.
- Causing deliberate damage to a property.
- Causing anti-social behaviour such as nuisance to neighbours, discriminatory behaviour or harassment, violence or intimidation to the community or to council staff.

- Providing false information to the council or contriving circumstances to improve banding.
- Conviction for using or allowing a property to be used for illegal or immoral purposes, including offences involving illegal drugs.
- Perpetrating domestic abuse.
- Conviction for an offence in the property or near the property.
- Eviction from hostel or temporary accommodation.

Unacceptable behaviour may relate to any former or current tenancies. Checks are made with all previous landlords to determine whether any unacceptable behaviour occurred during a tenancy.

When making any decision we will consider when the unacceptable behaviour took place and whether there is any evidence that your behaviour has changed.

If you make an application and a decision is made not to include you on the Housing Register, then you will be informed of the reasons and you will be advised of your right to have the decision reviewed.

### 3. How West Norfolk HomeChoice Works

The West Norfolk HomeChoice allocations scheme is the way for eligible applicants to be included on the housing register and their housing circumstances prioritised according to the allocations policy. They are then able to choose to place 'bids' on suitable social housing properties advertised by our partner landlords across the borough that would meet their needs.

**However, being accepted onto the Housing Register does not guarantee an offer of accommodation.**

To apply you will need to complete an online application form and provide supporting documents as proof of residence in the last 6 years (e.g. council tax or utility bills) for all members of your household. You can provide any other information you feel may support your application which will be taken into consideration. However, if more information is needed to assess your eligibility for the register West Norfolk HomeChoice will advise you.

**However, please note that your application will not be assessed if you have not provided ID, income details and evidence of 6 years' address history for everyone on your application.**

#### Your Circumstances and your HomeChoice Application

**If you are, or have been a tenant**

Your landlord(s) will be asked to complete a tenancy check about any breaches of your tenancy agreement. This will include any rent arrears, breaches of tenancy or anti-social behaviour.

**If you are pregnant**

Your priority will not be re-assessed until we receive a copy of the birth certificate.

**If you have a disability, health and a housing need**

If you have provided information on your medical circumstances that are affected by your current home, a housing assessment panel will then look at your application. Its decision will be based on your condition, the effect of your current home on your health and how your condition would be helped or improved if you moved to another home.

**If you have staying contact with children**

A child or children living between parents at separate addresses will only be considered as having one main home. Due to the high demand for accommodation, if a child's main home is not with you then they cannot be included when determining if you are overcrowded or be considered when determining the size of property that you are eligible to bid for.

**Notice to leave or harassment**

If you have already been given written notice to leave your home or where harassment is given as the reason for needing to move, then you may be referred for an assessment with the council's Housing Needs Service or asked to complete an online housing advice request form. Your circumstances will be assessed, and advice / assistance will be offered to you.



### **Lacking facilities or disrepair**

If you are lacking a kitchen, bathroom / shower, toilet or your home is in serious disrepair you may be referred for an assessment of your home by the council's Housing Standards team.

West Norfolk HomeChoice will then consider your application and the information that you have supplied to see whether you qualify to be included on the Housing Register. If you are registered, you will receive confirmation of

- The priority band you are in,
- The relevant date you are placed in that band,
- Your registration number.

### **Important: If your circumstances change**

You will need to go online to update your application and provide more information as requested. **Your application will not be reassessed until you update your application form.**

### **Bidding for accommodation**

All available properties are advertised on the [HomeChoice website](#). Properties are advertised weekly on a Wednesday and bids must be placed by noon on the following Monday.

You can bid for available properties online. Your bid will not be considered if your circumstances do not match that given for the property. Some properties may be advertised giving preference for households with special circumstances e.g. applicants with medical needs or local connection to a particular Parish.

You will be unable to make a bid for a particular property if your circumstances do not meet those advertised, for example if a flat is advertised for those aged over 60 and you are 25. You will not be able to bid for a bungalow if you are aged under 60 and have no proven medical need for ground floor accommodation.

You may bid for all properties whose descriptions or criteria you meet. Each partner landlord will provide the descriptions and photos of the properties that are available each week. If you have made a successful bid, you will be unable to make any new bids until West Norfolk HomeChoice has been informed by the landlord that you wish to refuse the property.

**If you are successful in bidding for a property but do not respond when the landlord contacts you regarding the offer then, it is likely to be assumed that you are no longer interested in housing and your application will be cancelled.**

Minimum family sizes rather than maximum family sizes may also apply to advertised properties.

West Norfolk HomeChoice will undertake regular reviews of applicants who are not accessing their applications. Your application will be cancelled if you do not log in using your User ID and PIN / Password to view or bid for properties within a period of 6 months.

## 4. Priority For an Allocation of Social Housing

West Norfolk HomeChoice uses a banding system – High, Medium, Low and No Priority on the Housing Register to identify need and award priority. In extreme circumstances an 'Emergency Band' may be awarded.

### Emergency Band

Sometimes applicants find themselves in such severe living conditions that they have no option but to move straight away. Examples of extreme circumstances are

- witness protection cases
- some hospital discharges or
- a combination of factors from the High Band.

In these extreme circumstances an Emergency Band may be awarded.

The decision as to whether an Emergency Band will be awarded will be taken by the West Norfolk HomeChoice Panel. The panel consists of representatives of the Borough Council and of partner Housing Associations.

If Emergency Band is granted, this will give you priority over all other banded applicants of similar household size for a period of three months. You may bid for any property suitable for your family size and circumstances. If you do not bid during this time, then your application will be reassessed, and a decision will be taken as to whether to allow you more time to bid or whether the Emergency Band is to be withdrawn.

If the Emergency Band is withdrawn, then your application would be allocated the priority band that your housing need dictates.

### High Band

**To be included in this band an applicant must meet at least one of the following conditions:**

#### **Homeless and owed a 'main' duty**

The council consider that you are in priority need, homeless through no fault of your own and are owed the main homelessness duty (s.193 Housing Act 1996 part 7 as amended).

#### **Overcrowding (2+ bedrooms)**

Your family needs at least 2 or more bedrooms than it has now, or you are sharing a bedroom with your child aged 6 months or over and West Norfolk HomeChoice considers that you have no alternative but to share that room.

#### **Under-occupation (2+ bedrooms)**

You're already a tenant of a Housing Association within West Norfolk and live in a property that has 2 bedrooms or more than you need. You must wish to move to a smaller more suitable home.

<b>Combination of factors of housing need</b>	You have been awarded medium medical priority and medium priority for overcrowding.
<b>Medical/ Welfare/ Support/ Hardship</b>	<p>Your current accommodation is totally unsuitable, and a move is essential to give you some quality of life. High medical priority may be given where:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A medical condition is terminal, and rehousing will give some quality of life.</li> <li>2. A medical condition is life threatening, and the existing accommodation is making the condition worse.</li> <li>3. Your current housing is so severely affecting their health that it could become life threatening.</li> <li>4. Your accommodation is so unsuitable that it cannot be adapted or otherwise used in such a way to meet their needs.</li> <li>5. You have a proven need to move to suitable accommodation within a particular locality of the Borough. Evidence that extreme hardship would otherwise occur must be provided.</li> </ol>
<b>Severe disrepair or insanitary conditions</b>	You have been living for more than 12 months in a private sector property in West Norfolk where continued occupation is due to be prohibited by the Council or where the property is due to be demolished.
<b>Supported Housing</b>	<p>If you have a local connection to King's Lynn and West Norfolk and have been living in one of our partner Supported Housing Schemes for more than 3 months, then you may be awarded a high band. You will need to demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are ready to move to independent accommodation (evidenced by written confirmation from the Supported Scheme Manager)</li> <li>• You are unable to move on from the Scheme through any other way than the housing register – in other words, you are unable to find and sustain privately rented or other suitable accommodation.</li> </ul> <p>An application form will be available from the council's Housing Options Team and from Supported Housing Schemes.</p> <p>If you do not make a successful bid for suitable accommodation within 3 months or refuse a suitable offer, your housing need band may be reassessed.</p>

### High band: right to move for work

West Norfolk HomeChoice would need to be satisfied that you need to move to a particular locality in King's Lynn & West Norfolk for work and if you were unable to do so, it would cause you or another member of your household hardship. This category does not apply to short-term or marginal work in nature, nor ancillary to work in another district. Voluntary work is also excluded.

West Norfolk HomeChoice must be satisfied that you need, rather than wish, to move for work related reasons.

The factors that we would consider in determining whether your need to move to be closer to

work or to take up a job offer include:

- the distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home.
- the availability and affordability of transport, considering level of earnings.
- the nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home.
- other personal factors, such as medical conditions and childcare, which would be affected if the tenant could not move.
- the length of the work contract.
- whether failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve their employment circumstances or prospects, for example, by taking up a better job, a promotion, or an apprenticeship.

Where you have been offered a job and need to move to take it up, you must be able to demonstrate to our satisfaction that you have a genuine intention to take up the offer. We may wish to ask to see a letter of acceptance and may wish to contact your employer to verify the position. We may also seek clarification from you by interviewing you over the telephone or in person. Appropriate evidence could include:

- a contract of employment.
- wage/salary slips covering a certain period, or bank statements (this is particularly relevant in the case of zero-hours contracts).
- tax and benefits information
- a formal offer letter.

If we accept that you have a valid reason to move for work, then you will be awarded High Band for a period of 6 weeks. If you have not made a successful bid for accommodation, then you will be made one direct offer of suitable accommodation. If the direct offer is refused without good reason, then your application may be cancelled.

### **High band: Care leavers**

Where an applicant is leaving local authority care and is assessed as needing to move on (as determined by a Housing Options senior officer or Housing Needs manager following the required evidence and risk assessment being submitted from Children's Services), where the applicant has completed a tenancy awareness course, support plan outcomes have been met and there is a suitable support package in place so that the council is satisfied that the applicant is able to successfully manage their own tenancy.

Referrals can be accepted a minimum of eight weeks before the applicant leaves care. Applicants will have completed and kept to a personalised housing plan made with a housing options officer, will place bids with the guidance of their housing options officer and / or leaving care worker and will be entitled to one suitable offer of accommodation.

Refusal of the offer will mean that your banding will be removed.

### **Medium Band**

**To be included in this band, you must meet at least one of the following conditions:**

<b>Duty to relieve homelessness</b>	The council has accepted a 'relief' duty to assist you to relieve your homelessness and you have a local connection to King's Lynn and West Norfolk in accordance with HomeChoice policy (s.189 b (2) Housing Act 1996 part 7 as amended).
<b>Overcrowding</b>	Your family needs one more bedroom than it has now.
<b>Under-occupation</b>	You are already a tenant of a Housing Association within West Norfolk and live in a property that has one more bedroom than you need. You must wish to move to a smaller more suitable home.
<b>Medical/ welfare, support or hardship</b>	<p>This may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your current accommodation affects your medical condition to some degree and there is a demonstrable link between your housing, medical condition. The need for re-housing is significant but not overriding.</li> <li>• You are generally coping with your current situation but with some degree of difficulty and have no alternative ways to improve your situation.</li> <li>• There are special circumstances (for example severe social or medical needs) why you need to move to suitable accommodation in the Borough or, you (or member of your household) are being seriously and adversely affected by your current accommodation and there is a significant need to move for welfare reasons. Evidence that hardship would otherwise occur must be provided to West Norfolk HomeChoice.</li> <li>• You are a carer / young carer who needs to move to facilitate your independence, or to provide support to a relative.</li> </ul>
<b>Sharing facilities</b>	You are living in a property where you share facilities (bathroom, kitchen or toilet) with people you're not related to. This includes people living in Supporting Housing Schemes who would not otherwise qualify for a high band. This does not apply to joint tenants.

## Low Band

**You will be in this band if one of the following circumstances applies:**

<b>Duty to prevent homelessness</b>	The council has accepted a 'prevention' duty to assist you to prevent your homelessness and you have a local connection to King's Lynn and West Norfolk in accordance with HomeChoice policy (s.195 Housing Act 1996 part 7 as amended).
<b>Homeless with financial ability to secure own accommodation</b>	The Council owes or will owe you a 'main' duty as homeless, but you have the financial means to purchase or privately rent accommodation in accordance with HomeChoice policy.
<b>Lacking a garden</b>	You have a child or children under the age of 12 living in a property with no garden / yard.

<b>Children in flats / maisonettes</b>	You have a child or children under the age of 12 living in a first-floor dwelling or above.
<b>Intentionally homeless</b>	You have been found intentionally homeless by the Council's Housing Options Service. You will remain in Low band for a period of 12 months.
<b>Medical/Welfare/ support/hardship</b>	You have some medical or welfare needs but there is no significant impact from living in your current home. A move to a more suitable property or location would be of some benefit but there is no overwhelming need.

## No Priority on Housing Register

You be in this band if one of the following circumstances applies:

<b>Adequately housed</b>	You live in a property which is adequate for your needs. This applies if you are a tenant of a Housing Association, private landlord or if you own a property. You are adequately housed in the home of a family member.
<b>Voluntarily worsened circumstances</b>	Your housing circumstances have worsened because of your own actions. You will remain in this band for a period of 12 months.

## Additional priority considerations

### Existing tenants of partner landlords

Existing tenants of partner landlords will be given additional priority for some vacancies advertised via West Norfolk HomeChoice. Tenants of partner landlords in High, Medium or Low Bands will be given preference over other applicants for each landlord's tenth advertised vacancy. These will be marked as TEN in the advert.

### Grouped homes or sheltered schemes

Existing tenants of a Grouped Home or Sheltered Schemes will be given preference over other applicants for every fourth vacancy arising within that scheme. These will be marked as FOUR in the advert.

### Right to move for work

An annual quota of 1% of lettings is available for those qualifying under the Right to Move in line with the statutory guidance.

### Reduced priority

If your local connection is solely through family residence, the band awarded will be one band less than that which would be awarded to applicants with similar housing needs meeting any of the other local connection criteria.

Although all applications will be considered on their own merits, those in breach of their tenancy agreement may be placed in the band lower than would normally be appropriate, until West Norfolk HomeChoice is satisfied that the tenant is meeting the conditions of their tenancy and evidence is provided.

Applicants with a history of inappropriate behaviour that is not serious enough to justify exclusion from the housing register may be placed in a lower band than which they would normally be entitled. For instance, a history of rent arrears may result in an applicant being placed in a lower band even if payments are being made.

If you bid successfully for three properties and turn down all three offers of accommodation, then this may trigger a review of your priority band. If it is considered that three refusals of accommodation have been made without good cause, your housing need band may be reduced to 'No Priority' for a period of 12 months.

If you are already in the 'No Priority' band your relevant date of application will be changed to the date you refused your last offer of accommodation.

### **Prospective Adopters and Foster Carers**

If a prospective foster carer or adopter needs an extra bedroom to accommodate a foster or adoptive child, the Operations Manager for Adoptions and Fostering Services of Norfolk County Council may request that the Housing Needs Manager for West Norfolk HomeChoice consider awarding additional priority to the housing application. Those families considered to be lacking one bedroom will be eligible for the Medium band and those lacking two bedrooms, for the High band.

### **Split Families**

Applicants who are unable to live with partners due to inappropriate accommodation to meet their needs (for instance, due to size or accessibility) will be assessed for priority taking both properties they live in into consideration.

### **Staying Contact with Children**

A child, or children, living between parents at separate addresses will only be considered as having one main home unless there are exceptional circumstances that mean that both parents should provide a home. A Court Order allowing access to children or confirming residence between separated parents does not mean that the council must consider that the child is part of an applicant's household for the purposes of a housing register application.

The receipt of Child Benefit and other allowances will be used when making an assessment on this ground.

### **Direct Lets**

Most properties will be advertised through West Norfolk HomeChoice. However, in certain circumstances some properties may be let directly to applicants and these properties will be let outside of the allocation scheme.

Where you are identified as requiring a direct let, the case will be referred to a senior officer for



approval or referred to the West Norfolk HomeChoice panel for consideration. The list below gives some examples of where this may happen:

- Where the council has accepted a Homelessness duty towards you, but you have not found suitable accommodation during a period of choice through the West Norfolk HomeChoice scheme.
- Where you and your household require a specific size, type or adapted property and you have not been able to find suitable accommodation through the West Norfolk HomeChoice scheme.
- Where an existing social housing tenant is required to move to make the best use of stock, including where their home is to be demolished, and they have not been successful in finding a suitable property through the West Norfolk HomeChoice scheme.
- Where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency or to provide temporary accommodation for a homeless family.
- Where a property is required for a tenant of the West Norfolk Housing First Project.
- Where an allocation is required to ensure protection of the public, for example, following a decision made by a Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel meeting or to fulfil agreements made with offender management services, or where a customer has been referred as part of the witness protection scheme.
- Where you have been accepted onto the register under the Right to move for work criteria but have not placed any successful bids within 6 weeks of acceptance onto the register in High band.

### **West Norfolk HomeChoice Panel**

The West Norfolk HomeChoice partnership agreement has a panel of representatives of the Borough Council and partner Housing Associations. The panel has the authority to make certain decisions on cases with extraordinary housing need which fall outside normal HomeChoice policy, for example awarding Emergency Priority, and withholding properties from the advert.

### **Selection of successful applicants**

If there is more than one applicant for an advertised home, we select the one in the highest band, who has the earliest 'relevant date'.

The 'relevant date' is normally the date of your first application to join the housing register. In cases where your circumstances alter and you are placed in a higher band, the 'relevant date' will be the date from which you entered that higher band (unless the Council has accepted a full homeless duty to a priority need homeless applicant, when the relevant date will remain the date the relief duty was accepted).

In cases where a change of circumstances leads to you being placed in a lower band, the 'relevant date' will be the date when you first joined the housing register.

Following successful selection within the HomeChoice policy, your details will be referred to the relevant Housing Association who will check to ensure that

- your circumstances are the same as those you have declared on your application
- the property you have been chosen is not inappropriate in any way



- there are no problems with a current or former rent account
- you can afford to pay the rent of the property

Each housing association will decide whether to offer a property based on their own policies.

#### **IMPORTANT: OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION**

**If you are offered a property, you should think carefully if you wish to refuse it as it could affect your ability to bid for other properties and / or your priority.**

**This is especially true for homeless people who should contact their Housing Options case worker if they are considering refusing a property, so that they are aware of the potential consequences.**

## 5. Size and type of properties

When properties are advertised, they indicate what type of household may register a bid. Examples of properties and the household types that will normally be eligible for them are as follows (please note that these examples are not exhaustive, and we will assess each application individually):

<b>Studio flat/bedsit</b>	Single people - usually under 60
<b>1-bed flats</b>	Childless couples and single people - usually under 60 (including those with access to children)
<b>2-bed flats and maisonettes</b>	Families with 1 or 2 children
<b>3-bed maisonettes</b>	Families with a minimum of 2 children
<b>2-bed houses</b>	Families with 1 or 2 children
<b>3-bed houses</b>	Families with a minimum of 2 children
<b>4 and 5 bed houses</b>	Families with 4 or more children
<b>1-bed bungalows</b>	Single people and couples over 60 or those with a proven medical need for ground floor accommodation. If the dwelling has a level access shower, preference is normally given to those needing it in high and medium bands.
<b>2-bed bungalows</b>	Single people, families and couples over 60 or with a proven medical need for ground floor accommodation. Preference is normally given to families then couples. If the dwelling has a level access shower, preference is given to those needing it in high and medium bands.
<b>3-bed bungalows</b>	Families with 2 or more children with a proven medical need for ground floor accommodation
<b>1 and 2 bed flats and bungalows in sheltered schemes</b>	Single people and couples over 60, those aged over 55 with a medical need for sheltered accommodation accepted by the landlord of the scheme. Preference for 2 beds is normally given to couples.
<b>Specially adapted properties (dwellings with stair climbers, level access showers etc)</b>	Those applicants with a proven need for the adaptation.

## 6. Allocation policies for specific schemes

### Local connection to a village within the district of West Norfolk

To be considered for preference for vacancies that arise in some housing schemes in villages you must first meet the local connection criteria for the Borough as shown above. You may have a local connection to a village if you live there now, you previously lived there, your family live there or you work there. A full description of the connection criteria applicable to village schemes can be seen on the West Norfolk HomeChoice page of the Council's website [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk) under 'Village Homes'.

### Lettings Plans

West Norfolk HomeChoice panel will also agree lettings plans for certain schemes, where a need has been identified by the landlord, to resolve specific housing management issues. Lettings plans will be agreed for a limited period only and are subject to review.

### Housing with care – specific schemes

Homes at Lisbon Court, Kings Lynn and Oakes Court, Downham Market are not advertised by HomeChoice as applicants will have been formally assessed as having care needs. Please see [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk) for further information on criteria and how to apply for these properties.

### Returning from abroad

Applicants whose immigration status makes them ineligible for the housing register will be notified in writing of the decision and the reason for the decision.

### 'Safe Surrender' for Offenders in Custody and Care Leavers

If a prisoner or care leaver who is a partner Housing Association tenant and ineligible for housing benefit due to their time in custody or, agrees to voluntarily surrender their tenancy, they will be awarded High band on their release from prison or, if a care leaver when they are ready for independent accommodation.

In respect of offenders, their banding will be subject to their offence **not having been connected** to their previous home and there being no other concerns regarding the conduct of their tenancy.

## 7. Your Right to Review / Appeal

If you are not accepted onto the Housing Register or disagree with the banding, you are given you will be advised of your right to a review of the decision.

Your request for a review should be made within 21 days of the decision.

Reviews will be undertaken by a senior officer who was not involved in the original decision and who is senior to the decision-making officer. The review should be undertaken within 12 weeks of it being made.

If you are dissatisfied with the management of their application, other than where a review can be made, you should follow the council's corporate complaints procedure, which can be found on the council's website.

## **8. Consent and Declaration**

When you complete an online application form, you will sign an electronic declaration to confirm that:

- a. The information you have provided is true, accurate and complete.
- b. You will promptly inform the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk of any change in circumstances.
- c. You understand that information will be shared with other agencies.
- d. You consent to the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct including previous or current landlords and other local authorities.
- e. You consent to the release of any relevant information either to the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk held by third parties, or by the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk to third parties.
- f. The information provided may be used to help in the detection and prevention of fraud.

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk may take legal action against applicants who withhold or provide false information regarding their housing application. Where an applicant has been let a property because of providing false information, their landlord may take court action to obtain possession of the property.

## **9. Housing Register Review of West Norfolk HomeChoice Applications**

Applicants are expected to log into their bidding account at least once every six months to demonstrate that they are still actively wishing to remain on the register. HomeChoice will review applications where there has been no activity for 6 months and these applications will be cancelled. If an applicant reappplies once this has been done their application will be considered as new and their priority and relevant date of application will start again.

## **10. Cancelling an application**

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

- a. At the applicant's request.
- b. If the applicant becomes ineligible for housing by way of their immigration status.
- c. When the applicant has accepted an offer of accommodation
- d. Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the review process.
- e. When an applicant fails to bid in a 6-month period and provides no justifiable reason for not bidding
- f. Where the applicant is longer resident at the address provided on their application.

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

## **11. Applications by staff, elected members or their family members**

Members of staff and elected members or members of their family may apply for housing. This must be declared on the declaration page of the online application form. However, any application or allocation of accommodation must be approved by the Housing Needs Manager (or an equivalent or higher manager in their absence).

## **12. Equal Opportunities and Diversity**

The allocations policy will be responsive, accessible and sensitive to the needs of all, having regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In addition, the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk is committed to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011):

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

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk also has due regard to the commitments made in Article 14 of the Human Rights Act (1998) as it relates to the service provided.

### **The Welfare of Children**

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk will ensure that decisions made under this allocations policy will have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, considering Section 11 of The Children's Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk will also have regard to the Children & Social Work Act 2017 as relates to the local arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children.

### **The Welfare of Adults**

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk will also have regard to the Care Act 2014, which includes provisions for adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

### **Monitoring and Reviewing the Allocations Policy**

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk will monitor the operation of the allocations policy by regularly reviewing the policy to ensure that the policy meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.

### **13. Data Protection**

When an applicant applies for housing, the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk will only seek information that they require to assess the application and the applicant's housing needs. Information supplied by the applicant may be shared amongst participating officers, landlords and support agencies. The applicant will confirm their consent to this via the declaration when registering on the scheme.

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk's policy on Data Protection is available on request and can be found on [the relevant page of the council's website](#).

## **Appendix A – West Norfolk HomeChoice Partners**

- Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
- Broadland Housing Association
- Cotman Housing Association
- Flagship Housing Group Ltd
- Freebridge Community Housing
- Hastoe Housing Association
- Housing 21
- Amplus
- Metropolitan Housing Trust Ltd
- Orbit Housing Association
- Sanctuary Housing Association
- Victory Housing Trust

## **Appendix B – Legal Background**

Housing authorities are required by the Housing Act 1996 s166A (as amended by the Homelessness Act (1996) and the Localism Act (2011)) to have an allocation scheme for determining the priorities and defining the procedures to be followed in allocating affordable housing accommodation.

The Allocation Policy must set out who can access the housing register and how accommodation is allocated in the Borough, considering reasonable preference criteria laid out in legislation.

Further information on this can be found at [www.gov.uk/guidance/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-4-framing-an-allocation-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-4-framing-an-allocation-scheme)

This policy has also had regard to the following (this list is not exclusive):

- Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England
- The Public Sector Equalities Duty
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act
- Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

### **Assessment of applications and allocations**

Decisions in relation to acceptance onto the Register, priority to be awarded, bidding and selection are undertaken only by the West Norfolk HomeChoice team of officers within the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk.

Members of Parliament cannot influence any assessment or allocation and can only seek information where appropriate on behalf of an applicant.

Councillors are not allowed to take part in any decisions on accommodation in their ward or where the resident has a residence in their ward. Councillors approve the West Norfolk Allocation Policy which officers must follow in considering individual cases. Councillors can seek and obtain information on behalf of their constituents if they have been authorised to do so by the individual involved.

## HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SURVEY – TEXT

### INTRODUCTION

The housing register is the list of people who have asked us to help with affordable housing. People waiting on that list are put in different 'bands', depending on how urgent their need is. We're planning to make some changes to the way we manage the housing register, and we want to know what you think of our plans.

For each change we're thinking of making, we set out what the change is and why we want to make it, and then we will ask if you

- agree with the change,
- don't have a strong opinion either way, or
- want to keep things the same as they are now.

There are a couple of changes that we're making which we have not included in the survey – the reason we haven't included them is that we are required by law to make these changes, even if people don't agree.

#### Change 1: Have more levels of priority

Now	In future
Four bands 1. Emergency 2. High 3. Medium 4. Low	Five bands 1. Emergency 2. High 3. Medium 4. Low 5. No priority

At the moment, everyone who goes on the housing register is given some priority. Even if they have no housing need they will still go in the low priority group. This change would mean people who do have a housing need, even if it is low, will be in a better place than people who don't have a housing need.

*Response:* I think the council should

Make the change	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure	Keep things as they are now
-----------------	---	-----------------------------

#### Change 2: Remove priority for people in employment

Now	In future
People with a job are given higher priority.	Removing preference for those in employment

This is a difficult one for the council because we recognise that having a job is a good thing in many ways. Previously those in employment and in housing need were given preference for 1 in 10 properties. However, the council now recognises that this may discriminate against those who are unable to work.

*Response:* I think the council should

Make the change	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure	Keep things as they are now
-----------------	---	-----------------------------

#### Change 3: Give more help with prevention

Now	In future
-----	-----------



If a person is at risk of homelessness without our help, we may owe them a 'prevention duty'. Currently those owed a prevention homelessness duty are given the same priority as those with no housing need.	Those with no housing need will have no priority. Those owed a prevention duty will have more priority in low band.
--	---

This will help us to do more preventative work to avoid people becoming homeless, but it also acknowledges that people in immediate crisis need a higher priority. We need to give some priority to people owed a prevention duty, by law.

*Response:* I think the council should

Make the change	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure	Keep things as they are now
-----------------	---	-----------------------------

#### **Change 4: Putting welfare and medical priorities together**

Now	In future
Welfare and medical priorities are separate.	Welfare and medical priorities will be considered together.

Putting welfare and medical priorities together will mean we can give wider range of priority on these grounds and means we can be more flexible about giving priority according to how urgent someone's overall need is, not just one or the other.

*Response:* I think the council should

Make the change	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure	Keep things as they are now
-----------------	---	-----------------------------

#### **Change 5: Changing the level of priority for lacking a bedroom**

Now	In future
People with children who lack a bedroom have the same priority as people in a first-floor flat and/or lacking a garden.	People with children who lack a bedroom to be given higher priority than people with children who are in a first-floor flat and/or lacking a garden.

Living in a first-floor flat or not having a garden isn't great for some people with children, but at the moment they have the same priority on the housing register as people who are overcrowded. Our plan is that we will still give them some priority but people who are overcrowded will have higher priority.

*Response:* I think the council should

Make the change	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure	Keep things as they are now
-----------------	---	-----------------------------

#### **Change 6: Moving on from hostel (supported) accommodation**

Now	In future
People who have been in hostel accommodation for three months or more are given high priority if they are ready for moving on.	The high priority will remain, but only if their only realistic method of moving on is through the housing register. Otherwise, they will be given medium priority.

Some people who have been in supported accommodation need more support than others to move on. If people need more support, they will continue to have high priority but if they are able to take on a private sector tenancy (either self-contained or shared) they will be given medium priority. This

change will put people in this situation on the same banding as people in other forms of shared accommodation such as shared houses (HMOs).

*Response:* I think the council should




Make the change	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure	Keep things as they are now
-----------------	---	-----------------------------

Thank you for your time. Please press submit and then read the message on the next page to find out how you can send us your ideas for change.




That's all the changes we are thinking of making for now but we will review the manage the register again in future. If there are any other changes you'd like us to consider, please email us on [housinghomechoice@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:housinghomechoice@west-norfolk.gov.uk).

# Housing Allocations Survey – Spring 2025 – results.




## Change one: Have more levels of priority

I think the council should:				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Make the change		58.96%	125
2	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure		12.26%	26
3	Keep things as they are now		28.77%	61
			answered	212
			skipped	0




## Change two: Remove priority for people in employment

I think the council should:				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Make the change		37.74%	80
2	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure		13.68%	29
3	Keep things as they are now		48.58%	103
			answered	212
			skipped	0




## Change three: Give more help with prevention

I think the council should:				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Make the change		61.32%	130
2	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure		21.23%	45
3	Keep things as they are now		17.45%	37
			answered	212
			skipped	0




## Change four: Putting welfare and medical priorities together

I think the council should:				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Make the change		73.11%	155
2	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure		10.38%	22
3	Keep things as they are now		16.51%	35
			answered	212
			skipped	0





## Change five: Changing the level of priority for lacking a bedroom








I think the council should:				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Make the change		70.28%	149
2	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure		9.91%	21
3	Keep things as they are now		19.81%	42
			answered	212
			skipped	0




## Change six: Moving on from hostel (supported) accommodation

I think the council should:				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Make the change		55.66%	118
2	I don't have a strong opinion or I'm not sure		22.64%	48
3	Keep things as they are now		21.70%	46
			answered	212
			skipped	0





## About you

Gender				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		23.70%	50
2	Female		73.46%	155
3	Non-binary		0.00%	0
4	Prefer to self-describe		0.47%	1
5	Prefer not to say		2.37%	5
			answered	211
			skipped	1

Age				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Under 18		0.00%	0
2	18-24		5.19%	11
3	25-34		18.40%	39
4	35-44		23.58%	50
5	45-54		16.51%	35
6	55-64		16.51%	35
7	65 and over		16.51%	35
8	Prefer not to say		3.30%	7
			answered	212
			skipped	0

Do you have a long-term physical or mental illness, impairment or disability?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		33.02%	70
2	No		54.72%	116
3	Prefer not to say		12.26%	26
			answered	212
			skipped	0

## Have you experienced homelessness, or been at risk of homelessness?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	No		44.81%	95
2	Yes currently		7.55%	16
3	Yes in the past		35.38%	75
4	Prefer not to say		12.26%	26
			answered	212
			skipped	0

**REPORT TO CABINET**

<b>Open/Exempt - OPEN</b>		Would any decisions proposed:			
<b>Any especially affected Wards - NO</b>	Mandatory	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide? NO Need to be recommendations to Council? YES  Is it a Key Decision? NO			
Lead Member: Cllr Alistair Beales		Other Cabinet Members consulted: -			
		Other Members consulted: Cllr Collop, Chair of E&C			
Lead Officer: James Arrandale		Other Officers consulted: Alexa Baker; Andrew Barrett and Anthony Drown, Electoral Services			
Financial Implications: NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications: YES	Statutory Implications: NO	Equality Impact Assessment Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications: NO	Environmental Considerations: NONE

Date of meeting: 21 July 2025

**TITLE – COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW****Summary**

This paper recommends changes to the internal governance of the Council's procedure for assessing Community Governance Reviews (**CGR's**).

**Recommendation**Recommendations to Full Council:

1. To amend the Terms of Reference for the Hilgay and Burnham Market CGRs.
2. To amend the Constitution to enable all Council bodies to create Informal Working Groups.
3. To note the creation of a Governance Framework for the administration of CGR processes.

**Reason for Decision**

To enhance the Council's governance for CGR's, better reflecting the non-executive nature of this function, consistent with wider local government practice.

To facilitate the conduct of business by Council Bodies (recommendation 2).

**1. BACKGROUND**

The Council is currently carrying out two CGR exercises, relating to Burnham Market and Hilgay Parish Councils. Terms of Reference for these CGR's were approved by Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> February and Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

Cabinet is referred to the Reports for the 4<sup>th</sup> February meeting for a summary of the CGR process as currently approved.

The Terms of Reference for both CGR's anticipate that Cabinet shall be responsible for considering proposals following the public consultation periods, and making recommendations on those proposals to Council. The Terms of Reference have also anticipated - consistent with the arrangements last used by the Council in a CGR in 2012/2013<sup>1</sup> - that these Cabinet papers would be scrutinized by the Environment and Community Panel.

This process has been given further consideration, and it is now proposed that to revise it so that the above Cabinet tasks are given to new Informal Working Groups of Full Council. This will require a consequential change to the Constitution explained further below.

Further Informal Working Groups would then be established for any future CGR exercises. In particular, one would be established in the event that a CGR is undertaken for the unparished area of King's Lynn.

## **2. RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE HILGAY AND BURNHAM MARKET CGR'S**

### Comparison with Practice at other Local Authorities

From a review of CGR exercises conducted by other local authorities, the common practice is to use an Informal Working Group of Full Council to review consultation responses, and with officer support, to prepare draft recommendations directly to Full Council. This is consistent with the non-executive nature of the function.

Other examples have not been identified in which Cabinet is responsible for reviewing consultation responses or preparing draft recommendations.

### Establishment of Informal Working Groups

The use of an Informal Working Group, established by Full Council for each CGR and reporting directly to Full Council, is therefore recommended to preserve the non-executive nature of the CGR function.

Consequently it is recommended to revise the current Terms of Reference for the two ongoing CGR exercises to provide for the Cabinet tasks to be carried out by Informal Working Groups. A Governance Framework for any future exercises has been produced (Section 4 below).

### Revised Terms of Reference

Draft amendments to the Terms of Reference are at **Appendices A and B**.

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<sup>1</sup> South Wooton, Castle Rising/Congham/North Wooton, and Terrington St Clement/Walpole Cross Keys



### **3. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

Currently, Article 9 of the Constitution provides that only the Council's scrutiny panels can create Informal Working Groups. The potential benefits of Informal Working Groups are set out in Article 9, and include speed of working, reduced demands on time and resource, potential to involve third parties and less bureaucracy.

A change is therefore required to the Constitution is required in order to enable Full Council to create the proposed Informal Working Groups.

In the interests of wider Council business, it is proposed that all Council bodies (rather than just Full Council and scrutiny panels) should be able to create Informal Working Groups where they deem this appropriate.

This would involve minor changes to Article 9.04 and a consequential change to Standing Order 29.8. A copy of the proposed changes is at **Appendix C**.

### **4. NEW CGR FRAMEWORK**

A Governance Framework for CGR's has been produced to record this proposed change to the procedure.

This is an operational document which will be kept up to date by the Monitoring Officer and Electoral Services. A copy is produced for Cabinet to note at **Appendix D**.

### **5. OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Continue under the current arrangements. This is not recommended for the reasons set out in this Report.

Some other authorities instead:

- a. use an Informal Working Group that reports to a Governance/Standards Committee and then on to Full Council. It is considered that this would add an unnecessary additional layer to the process.
- b. use a Standards or General Purposes Committee to discharge the Cabinet's current role. This would lack the other time and efficiency advantages of an Informal Working Group as set out above.

### **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendations are made in the interests of streamlining the internal governance process (corporate strategy: efficient and effective delivery of services).

**7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

**8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendations would reduce demand on officer resource, as against the current arrangements.

**9. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

None.

**10. STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

Under the 2007 Act, the CGR for Hilgay should be completed within 12 months of the petition, i.e. by 14 November 2025. The revised process will involve a short delay beyond this deadline. However, there is no sanction imposed by statute for this, and it is proposed that the justification for change outweighs this delay.

Otherwise, all of the options under consideration are compatible with the legal requirements for CGR.

For completeness, the relevant legislation and guidance provides that Terms of Reference may be modified during the CGR process.

**11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

To follow.

**12. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

None

**13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / DISPENSATIONS GRANTED**

N/A

**14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

APPENDIX A – REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HILGAY CGR

APPENDIX B – REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BURNHAM MARKET CGR

APPENDIX C – DRAFT REVISED CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

## APPENDIX D – GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

## **APPENDIX A - REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HILGAY CGR**

See Separate Document

## **APPENDIX B – REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BURNHAM MARKET CGR**

See separate document

## APPENDIX C – DRAFT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

### Article 9.04

#### Informal Working Groups (~~Scrutiny and Overview Function~~)

Instead of introducing an additional formal body to the process, through setting up a Task Group (with its accompanying demands on time and valuable resources), ~~Policy Review and Development Panels~~ **Council bodies** may find it expeditious to carry out ~~basic research~~ (evidence gathering and preliminary analysis) through the use of what are termed Informal Working Groups:

(a) these Working Groups are not formal Council Bodies but are simply subsets of **the Council Body that created them** ~~a Policy Review and Development Panel~~ (including other invitees as the **Council Body** ~~Panel~~ sees fit) which will work quickly and informally, within tight terms of reference defined by their respective **Council Body** ~~Panel~~, to effect evidence gathering and preliminary analysis. The responsible **Council Body** ~~Panel~~ will then formally consider these findings and **may** develop them (with further research as necessary) into a full report and recommendations.

(b) The use of Informal Working Groups should simply be seen as a semi-structured means of quickly moving review-type work forward. They present **Council Bodies** ~~Panels~~ with an opportunity to: [i] make the most of Councillors' interests and experience; [ii] draw in other interested/experienced Councillors; and, [iii] invite in external experts or possibly other members of the public with a direct stake or experience in the subject matter. Members and those outside of the authority may be more inclined to be involved in an apparently less bureaucratic approach.

#### Standing Orders

##### 29.8 Informal Working Groups (~~scrutiny and overview function~~)

For the avoidance of doubt, Informal Working Groups are not formal Council Bodies or Task Groups. They are solely chosen, controlled by, and report directly back to their respective **Council Body** ~~Policy Review and Development Panels~~. Political proportionality or issues of vacancies and substitutions should not be an issue.

Any work undertaken through Informal Working Groups should only be regarded as approved duties, with respect to traveling expenses, with the prior approval of the respective **Body's** ~~Panel's~~ Chair.

29.9 Any formal meeting of a Council Body, including Task Groups and Informal Working Groups, shall be attended, supported and recorded by a proper Officer of the Council

## **APPENDIX D – GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

See separate document

## Community Governance Review (CGR): BCKLWN Governance Framework

### What is a Community Governance Review?

A Community Governance Review (**CGR**) is a legal process to consider changes to governance arrangements for parish and town councils. These can include:

- Creating new parish or town councils (e.g. making a previously unparished area a parish)
- Changing parish boundaries
- Merging or splitting parishes/areas
- Renaming parishes or wards
- Changing the number of parish councillors
- Changing electoral arrangements (election year, number of councillors to be elected)

CGRs enable citizens and community groups to address issues of democracy by providing the opportunity to engage in community governance, for example where there have been changes to the number or makeup of a population, or to address boundary issues / anomalies following development.

The Borough Council is the body responsible for carrying out CGR's in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

### Legal Background and Requirements for Consideration

CGRs are governed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as well as Government Guidance<sup>1</sup> and guidance issued from time to time by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (**LGBCE**).

When making any decisions to change governance arrangements, the Borough Council has to be mindful that those changes should:

- reflect the identities and interests of the community, and
- be effective and convenient, and
- take account of any other arrangements for community representation or engagement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Community governance reviews: guidance - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>2</sup> S.93, Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007



## How is a CGR Started?

A CGR can be started in four scenarios:

- At the request of the Borough Council;
- In response to a 'reasonable request' i.e. from a parish council (the Borough Council can decide whether to agree to this request);
- In response to a valid Community Governance Application from a "Neighbourhood Forum"<sup>3</sup> (in which case a CGR must take place); or
- In response to a valid Community Governance Petition (in which case a CGR must take place).

For a Community Governance Petition to be valid, it must specify a change that it wants the CGR to make. It must also be signed by a minimum proportion of electors within the petition area:

Petition Area	Minimum Electors signing petition
<500 electors	At least 37.5% of electors
500 – 2,499 electors	At least 187 electors
>2,500 electors	At least 7.5% of electors

The Borough Council is **not** required to conduct a review if:

- a petition is received at the same time as a CGR is underway which covers all or a significant part of relevant area;
- a CGR has already been completed within the past 2 years which covered all or a significant part of relevant area (but the Council may still choose to do so); or
- the Council determines that it would not be reasonable to agree to the request (e.g. it would cause disruption to community cohesion, or would be detrimental to local governance).

## Outline Process for Community Governance Reviews

The process for CGR's may vary depending on the issues under consideration (in particular, whether one or two rounds of public consultation are appropriate). An outline of the process is as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> These are defined by s.61F of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

### 1. Decision to undertake a CGR

For Community Governance Applications and Petitions, Borough Council Officers will review the submission to confirm it is valid (e.g. it has sufficient valid signatures, and contains necessary information).

For discretionary CGR's, Full Council must decide whether to carry out a CGR, either by resolution or under delegated powers.

### 2. Terms of Reference (ToR)

The Borough Council will need to publish Terms of Reference for the CGR. These should include matters such as:

- Purpose and scope of review
- Information on the affected area and electorate, including electoral forecasts, structure of parishes and boundaries, councillor numbers etc.
- Information on the proposals for governance changes (e.g. boundaries, councillor numbers).

If the CGR is in response to a petition or application, the ToR must state the relevant proposals. This does not limit the scope of the CGR to include other matters or areas.

The ToR must be approved by Full Council and published.

### 3. Consultation

Depending on the issues under consideration, the Borough Council may carry out either one or two stages of consultation.

- In simple consultation exercises, only one consultation period may be required, and final recommendations can be made to Full Council after this.
- However, in more complex CGR's, the first consultation exercise may produce additional or different proposals for governance (e.g. different boundaries) which need a further round of consultation to assess.

For second round consultations it will often be appropriate to ask the respondents to the previous consultation to comment on specifics, and therefore questionnaires or specific response forms may be produced.

The Borough Council must ask the local public, parish councils, and other stakeholders (e.g. local businesses and charities, and schools) to give their views,<sup>4</sup> and people can suggest changes to boundaries, governance, names, etc.

There is no fixed period for consultation, but the Borough Council has to ensure it is “reasonable”. For example, a full review of all parish areas and electoral arrangements will require a longer consultation period with a wider range of consultees. A review in response to reducing councillor numbers in a specific parish may require a shorter timeframe and targeted consultation.

In most cases, the consultation periods will be at least six weeks.

#### 4. Recommendations

An Informal Member Working Group of Full Council (see below) will review the feedback from consultation processes and other relevant matters of consideration under the legislation and guidance.

The Informal Member Working Group will then produce recommendations on any revisions to governance which will be recommended to Full Council for consideration.

As noted above, in simple consultation exercises, only one consultation period may be required, and “Final” recommendations can be made to Full Council after this.

In more complex CGR’s, the first consultation exercise may produce additional questions which need a further round of consultation to assess. These will be produced as “Draft” Recommendations which will be the subject of the second round of consultation.

Recommendations in all cases should include:

- Vital statistics including precept, electoral, electoral forecasts (5 years)
- Present area arrangements (boundaries) and electoral arrangements.
- Publication of all representations received, including any explanatory notes.
- Arguments and justifications for making any recommendations, which should:
  - reflect the identifies and interests of the area under review;
  - provide / support effective convenient local government; and
  - take account of any other arrangements for community representation and engagements.

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<sup>4</sup> S.93 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

As soon as is practicable, the Borough Council must publish its recommendations and inform persons interested in them.

The final recommendations must be published, and a period for final public comments should be allowed.

#### 5. Council Decision and Implementation

Full Council makes the final decision and may approve, reject, or modify the recommendations.

If approved, Full Council makes a “Reorganisation Order” in accordance with government guidance.<sup>5</sup> The Order must be published, and must include a map.

Changes take effect at the next scheduled elections, or as set in the Order.

### Timeframes

Councils should complete a CGR within 12 months of publishing the Terms of Reference, or within 12 months of receiving a petition.

### Creating a New Parish or Town Council

Where a CGR is required to recommend whether a new or existing parish has a parish council, the following automatic requirements apply on recommendations:

- 150 or fewer electors and no council currently exists:- no parish council should be created (it should be or remain a Parish meeting).
- 150 or fewer electors and a council currently exists:- the recommendation may be either to create a council or not.
- 151 to 999 electors: the recommendation may be either to create a council or not.
- 1,000+ electors: the recommendation should be to have a parish council.

### Who Makes the Decisions?

**Full Council** is responsible for:

- deciding whether to carry out a CGR;
- approving the Terms of Reference;

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<sup>5</sup> [Community governance reviews: guidance - GOV.UK](#)

- appointing an Informal Working Group (see below)
- approving draft and final recommendations; and
- making any Reorganisation Order.

Where Full Council decides to carry out a CGR, or is informed that a CGR is required, it will constitute a **CGR Informal Working Group** as part of the Terms of Reference. This will be a body of between 3 and 11 Councillors (with fewer members needed in cases where the issue(s) under review are not complex or contentious). The Working Group will be supported by Borough Council officers.

Membership will be determined by Full Council taking into account of the political make-up of the area and the nature of the issues, and will follow one of three models:

- Politically proportionality, with ward members excluded from membership (but not excluded from attending meetings) in the interests of neutrality  
  
(**NB:** Working Groups are not legally required to be proportionate, so Full Council does not have to achieve exact proportionality in each case),
- Ward/neighbouring councillor membership in the interests of local representation, or
- A bespoke approach taking account of specific circumstances.

Where a proportionality approach is taken, Group Leaders will be invited to nominate members to their group's allocated places.

In the event ward or neighbouring members are not formal members of the Working Group, they will still be entitled to participate in Working Group business under Standing Orders.

The **CGR Informal Working Group** will review consultation responses and prepare recommendations to Full Council.

**Borough Council Officers** will support with research, legal work, and managing consultations. They may be invited to join the CGR Informal Working Group.

**Residents and Parishes** may submit Community Governance Applications or Petitions, and play a critical role in providing responses to the during consultation stages.

## Transparency and Review

All reports, maps, and decisions will be published on the Borough Council's website.

A summary report is published at the end of the process.

# REPORT TO CABINET

<b>Open</b>		Would any decisions proposed:			
<b>Any especially affected Wards</b> All – Northern Parishes for 2 <sup>nd</sup> Homes	Discretionary	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		NO	
		Need to be recommendations to Council		YES	
		Is it a Key Decision		YES	
Lead Members: <a href="mailto:cllr.chris.morley@west-norfolk.gov.uk">cllr.chris.morley@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a>		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Alistair Beales			
		Other Members consulted: Cllr Chris Morley			
Lead Officer: Jo Stanton, Revenues and Benefits Manager E-mail: <a href="mailto:joanne.stanton@west-norfolk.gov.uk">joanne.stanton@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a> Direct Dial: 6349		Other Officers consulted: Michelle Drewery, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer Alexa Baker, Assistant Director, Legal, Governance and Licensing			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications NO	Environmental Considerations NO
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s): NA					

Date of meeting: 21 July 2025

## COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUMS FOR EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES: RESOLUTION FOR 2026/2027

### Summary

Councils have discretionary powers to vary the discounts for empty properties, uninhabitable properties and second homes, and to charge additional premiums (levies) for long-term empty properties and second homes. This report summarises the current position and makes recommendations for the discounts and premiums for these types of property for 2026/2027.

### Recommendations

- The following discounts and premiums are recommended to Council for 2026/2027:

Class A Second Homes Discount for 2026/2027:

- No reduction, i.e. a 0% discount;

Class B Second Homes Discount for 2026/2027:

- No reduction i.e. a 0% discount, plus
- An additional premium of 100%, which will only be applied subject to agreement being reached with Norfolk County Council by no later than 30 November 2025 to return a share of their additional revenue raised from the Second Home Premium of no less than the percentage allocation for 2025/2026

Class C Empty / Unfurnished Discount 2026/2027:

- 0% for both the initial and follow on periods

Long-Term Empty Property Premiums (Levy) for 2026/2027:

- 100% for properties empty between one and five years,
- 200% for properties empty longer than five years, and
- 300% for properties empty longer than ten years.

Class D Uninhabitable Properties for 2026/2027:

- 25% for 12 months starting on the day the property becomes uninhabitable; then:
- 0% once the 12 month period has expired;

2. Cabinet and Council note and consider the government guidance of November 2024 as included at Appendix D.

**Reason for Decision**

To ensure the discounts, premiums and exceptions policy for Second Homes and Long-Term Empty properties are agreed for 2026/2027.

**1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report outlines the proposed council tax discounts and premiums for second homes, long-term empty properties, and uninhabitable properties for the year 2026/2027. The proposed discounts and premiums aim to incentivise the use of empty properties and generate additional income for local services.

**2. Background**

- 2.1. Councils have powers to vary the nationally set council tax discounts for second homes, long-term empty properties and uninhabitable properties, and to charge premiums (levies) for long-term empty properties and second homes. These powers are discretionary and decisions in respect of these discounts and premiums must be ratified annually by full Council.
- 2.2. Allowing councils to vary the discounts and charge premiums for empty homes is intended incentivise bringing empty properties back into use by increasing the council tax charge for these properties. Allowing a higher charge for second homes aims to help local councils whose income (and ability to deliver services) is affected by the number of second homes in their area and allows them to raise extra income to fund their services.
- 2.3. The discretionary powers do not include changing the reduction for any property which is exempt from payment of council tax, for example where a resident has gone into care or where the owner has passed away and probate has not yet been granted. These properties continue to benefit from a full council tax reduction.
- 2.4. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 extends council's discretionary powers allowing a premium of up to 100% to be charged for second homes in a council's area. We introduced the 100% premium for second homes from 1 April 2025. The premium was applied to over 3,000 second homes with an initial letter sent to customers in October 2024 followed by council tax bills in March 2025. Alongside this we included comprehensive information including links to meeting papers and recordings,

Frequently Asked Questions and Exceptions on our website at [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/secondhomes](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/secondhomes).

- 2.5. We received large volumes of customer queries regarding the premium, although the initial contact in October 2024 meant we were able to deal with many enquiries in advance of the council tax bills being sent. Queries ranged from applications for exceptions, questions regarding the regulations and requests for more information regarding the decision to charge the premium. The volumes of enquiries have now settled down and can be managed as part of the normal workload.
- 2.6. Section 3 of this paper sets out the recommended levels of council tax discounts and premiums for 2026/2027 which are a continuation of the amounts for 2025/2026. However the recommendation for the 100% Second Homes Premium is subject to an agreement being reached with Norfolk County Council to return to the borough a proportion of the extra income they receive from the premium to the borough, and on the borough's ability to set a balanced budget. More details are in section 6.
- 2.7. In November 2024 the government produced guidance on the implementation of the second homes premium (included at Appendix D) which Members should review, covering:
  - Numbers and proportion of long-term empty dwellings and second homes in the area,
  - Circumstances which may affect whether the dwelling can be used as a main residence,
  - Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry,
  - Potential impact on the local community,
  - Potential impact on local services, and
  - Other measures that are available to councils to help bring empty dwellings back into use.
- 2.8. Section 4 and Appendix C set out the Policy for Exceptions to the premiums for long-term empty properties and second homes.
- 2.9. Section 5 considers the financial implications of charging the premiums and the impact on the council's taxbase and income.

### **3. Council Tax Discounts for Second Homes, Long-Term Empty Properties and Uninhabitable Properties**

The current discounts and premiums for long-term empty properties and second homes are shown at Appendix B. The recommendations for 2026/2027 are shown below and are a continuation of these discounts and premiums.



Property Type	Definition	Proposed Discount	Proposed Premium	Number on 1 June 2025
All Properties	All domestic properties on the Council Tax list			76,063
Class A and Class B  Furnished properties which are no-one's main home (commonly referred to as Second Homes).	<p>Class A properties have a restriction on occupancy for at least 28 days a year.</p> <p>Class B properties have no occupancy restriction.</p> <p>There are a number of exceptions to the Second Home Premium as shown in the table at 4.2.</p> <p><b>The premium is agreed subject to certain conditions being met</b></p>	0%	100%	<p>2,806</p> <p>Plus 480 properties subject to an exception</p> <p><b>Total second homes = 3,286</b></p>
Class C  Empty and unfurnished properties	Properties where there is no occupier and no furniture in the property. The charge depends on how long the property has been empty			
	Properties which are empty for under 12 months	0%	0%	1,118
	Properties which are empty and unfurnished for between 12 months and five years.	0%	100%	583
	Properties which are empty and unfurnished for between five and ten years.	0%	200%	107
	Properties which are empty and unfurnished for over ten years.	0%	300%	23
	<p>Empty and unfurnished properties</p> <p><i>These exclude any empty property which qualifies for an exemption from payment of council tax, including those where the resident is now in a care home or where the council tax payer has</i></p>			<p>1,901</p> <p>Plus 35 properties subject to an exception</p> <p><b>Total empty and unfurnished properties 1,936</b></p>

	<i>passed away and probate has not yet been granted.</i>			
Class D Uninhabitable Properties	Properties which are uninhabitable as they require, or are undergoing, work to their structure such as the roof, walls, floors, ceilings and foundations.  Once the 12 month discount expires these properties are treated as empty and unfurnished properties.	25% for 12 months	0%	81

#### 4. Exceptions Policy

4.1. Government published the regulations, guidance and further information relating the exceptions to the premiums at the start of November 2024. Delegated authority is in place for the Revenues and Benefits Manager, in consultation with the s151 Officer and Council Leader, to agree the technical guidelines for any exceptions to the premiums and the Exceptions Policy is included at Appendix C for information.

4.2. The exceptions apply to both the second homes premium and to the long-term empty levy from 1 April 2025. We have included further information and an application form on our website at [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/premiumexceptions](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/premiumexceptions). 515 properties currently benefit from an exception and the breakdown is shown below:

Exception	Details	Number of second home exceptions awarded on 1 June 2025	Number of long-term empty exceptions awarded on 1 June 2025
Second homes with an occupancy restriction:	These do not have to pay the second home premium.	327	NA
Properties where probate has been granted but the property remains empty:	These properties will benefit from a six-month exemption after probate is granted and the second home or long-term empty premium will not apply until 12 months after probate is granted.	8	3
Properties for sale or let:	These do not have to pay the second home or long-term empty premium for 12 months from the date they are first marketed for sale or let.	104 (81 for sale and 21 for let)	21 (17 for sale and 4 for let)
Certain Job-Related properties including	These do not have to pay the second home or long-term empty	26	NA

Armed Forces accommodation:	premium if they are a second home because the council tax payer is living in Armed Forces accommodation. They also do not pay the second home premium if the council tax payer is required to live in another property as a condition of their employment contract.		
Caravan Pitches and Mooring	These do not pay the premium at any time	6	0
Discretionary Exceptions	Cases considered on an individual basis for removal of the Premium	9	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>480</b>	<b>35</b>

## 5. Financial Implications

### 5.1. Council Tax Base and Budget

5.1.1. The taxbase is a measure of how much council tax can be raised in our area and forms part of the budget setting process. Our taxbase includes the taxbases for the Parish and Town Councils, and forms part of the taxbase for Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Police.

5.1.2. The levels of council tax discounts and premiums affect our taxbase calculation. Any council tax discounts reduce our taxbase, as less council tax is being charged. The premiums increase our taxbase as more council tax is raised. The taxbase cannot be finalised until the discounts and premiums for the coming year, including the Council Tax Support scheme, have been agreed. Changes to the proposed taxbase will impact on the Financial Plan and the certainty of the budget setting process.

### 5.2. The Impact of the Long-Term Empty Levy and Second Homes Premiums

5.2.1. On 1 June 2025 there are 713 properties liable to pay the long-term empty premium (levy), adding 577 band D equivalent properties to the taxbase.

5.2.2. On the same date there are 2,806 second homes liable to pay the second home premium, adding 2,804 band D properties to the taxbase.

5.2.3. As 2025/2026 was the first year of the new second home premium a 30% sensitivity reduction was built into the taxbase calculation to allow for behaviour change and properties qualifying for an exception. The actual impact has been much lower and only **14.6% of second homes qualify for an exception**.

5.2.4. It is not possible to accurately calculate how many holiday let properties have moved from council tax to business rates. Owners of holiday accommodation cannot choose whether they pay council tax or business rates and must now meet stricter criteria to appear in the business rates list (more information is available here <https://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates/self-catering-and->

[holiday-let-accommodation](#)). The Valuation Office Agency are still reviewing properties to validate whether they meet the new rules which impacts on numbers, and there is also still natural movement between council tax and business rates.

5.2.5. On 1 April 2025 there were 1,076 self-catering properties in business rates, and on 1 June 2025 there are 1,075 properties.

5.2.6. The figures are monitored monthly and appear to have stabilised. **The estimated additional taxbase for 2026/2027, and therefore the extra income, is predicted to be in line with 2025/2026.** The figures and the sensitivity reduction will be reviewed when the taxbase is calculated for 2026/2027 in October 2025 when we have more data on the actual numbers of exceptions.

5.2.7. Both the long-term empty levy and second home premium numbers exceed the figure used for the 2025/2026 council taxbase and the Financial Plan. Any excess income creates a surplus on the Collection Fund to be realised in 2026/2027.

<b>Taxbase Implications</b>	<b>Long-Term Empty Properties</b>	<b>Second Homes</b>
Total Properties	713	2,806
Band D equivalents	577	2,804
Band D used in Taxbase and Financial Plan	535	2,161
Difference to Taxbase	+42	+643

<b>Financial Implications</b>	<b>Long-Term Empty Properties</b>	<b>Second Homes</b>
Band D equivalents	577	2,804
Council Tax Band D	£2,318.63	£2,318.63
<b>Income Raised</b>	<b>£1,337,850</b>	<b>£6,501,436</b>
Income raised based on Taxbase	£1,240,467	£5,010,559
Difference to Estimates	+£97,383	+£1,490,877

<b>Shares of Total Income</b>	<b>Long-Term Empty Properties</b>	<b>Second Homes</b>
	<b>£1,337,850</b>	<b>£6,501,436</b>
Norfolk County Council (75.7%)	£1,012,999	£4,922,787
Norfolk Police (14.2%)	£190,323	£924,899
Borough Council (6.6%)	£88,206	£428,647
Parish / Town Councils (3.5%)	£46,322	£225,105

## 6. Negotiations for the return of income from Norfolk County Council

6.1. The recommendation to charge an additional premium for second homes is subject to agreement being reached with Norfolk County Council by no later than 30 November 2025 to return a share of their additional revenue raised from the Second Home Premium of no less than the percentage allocation for 2025/2026.

6.2. Norfolk County Council receive over three-quarters of the additional income raised by the Second Homes Premium. An agreement is in place for 2025/2026 only for Norfolk County Council to return 25% of this income to us. The Council Leader and

s151 / Deputy s151 Officers will continue to press for a further agreement for 2026/2027.

- 6.3. If an agreement cannot be reached by 30 November 2025 the premium will not be charged.

## **7. Hardship Applications**

- 7.1. We can consider reducing or remitting a council tax bill on the grounds of hardship and delegated authority already exists to deal with these applications under our existing Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy:

*Delegated authority be given for individual hardship applications made under s13a Local Government Finance Act 1992 be determined by the Revenues and Benefits Manager in consultation with the Council Leader and the relevant Ward Member/s where appropriate.*

- 7.2. Any customer experiencing hardship due to our decisions to vary the council tax discounts or charge a premium can make an application for their council tax charge to be reviewed. We have allowed 20 discretionary exceptions for 2025/2026.

## **8. Other Statutory Requirements:**

- 8.1. The following statutory requirements are also noted as part of the Council Tax Discounts Resolution:

8.1.1. That any period of occupation of fewer than six weeks shall be disregarded when calculating the maximum period of a reduction or the start date of a premium – this is a statutory requirement and prevents a fresh discount being claimed or the premium being removed if a property is only occupied for a short period of time.

8.1.2. In accordance with Section 11A(6) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as enacted by Section 75 of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012, these determinations shall be published in at least one newspaper circulating in West Norfolk before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date of the determinations. This is a statutory requirement for us to publish a Public Notice once the decision is made.

## **9. Policy Implications**

- 9.1. This is a continuation of an existing policy and confirms the existing levels of discount and premiums for second homes and long-term empty properties for 2026/2027.

## **10. Personnel Implications**

- 10.1. None

## **11. Environmental Considerations**

- 11.1. None

## **12. Statutory Considerations**

12.1. The powers to reduce and remove the nationally set discounts for long-term empty properties, second homes and uninhabitable properties are laid out in the Regulations, however any decision is at the discretion of the Council. Any decision to vary these discounts must be ratified annual by full Council.

12.2. The powers are contained in the following Legislation and Regulations:

- Sections 79 and 80 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023,
- The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018,
- The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003, the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012,
- Sections 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and
- Section 75 of the Local Government Act 2003

## **13. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

13.1. The Pre-screening Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix A.

## **14. Risk Management Implications**

14.1. None

## **15. Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted**

15.1. None

## **16. Background Papers**

16.1. None.

## Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Council Tax Discounts and Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes: Resolution for 2026/2027				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	New		Existing	√	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.  Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	The policy sets the level of discounts and premiums (levies) for empty properties and second homes for 2026/2027  The powers to vary the discount are contained in regulations, but the decision to do so is at the discretion of the council.				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>	N/A – Existing Policy				
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><b><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></b></p> <p><i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit <a href="#">The King's Fund</a></i></p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			√	
	Disability			√	
	Sex			√	
	Gender Re-assignment			√	
	Marriage/civil partnership			√	
	Pregnancy & maternity			√	
	Race			√	
	Religion or belief			√	
	Sexual orientation			√	
	Armed forces community			√	
	Care leavers			√	
	Health inequalities*			√	
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			√	
<p><b>Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:</b> The Policy does not affect Equality Communities</p>					

Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No	The policy will not affect equality communities
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	Yes	<p>It will apply more to communities where there are higher numbers of empty properties and second homes but will not impact communities because of any equality issues or protected characteristics.</p> <p>It will have a positive impact on people on a low income as the additional income contributes towards the council's budgets and provision of local services, including housing and homelessness prevention.</p>
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	No	<p><b>Actions:</b></p> <p>There is no impact on any equality community or any specific group with a protected characteristic. The council has a Discretionary Relief Policy and can reduce a council tax charge in exceptional circumstances or if a person is suffering financial hardship.</p> <p>In addition there are exceptions for certain Armed Forces Accommodation supporting the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>
		<p><b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b></p> <p><b>Alison Demonty</b></p>
<p><b>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</b></p> <p>The policy is intended to encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use, and to raise additional income to help fund local services. It and will affect communities more where there are significant numbers of second home and empty properties.</p> <p>The policy will therefore impact on communities, rather than individuals, and is not linked to any equality issues or protected characteristics.</p> <p><b>Decision agreed by EWG member: A Demonty 08.07.25</b></p>		



5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	No	Please provide brief summary:	
Assessment completed by: Name	Jo Stanton		
Job title	Revenues and Benefits Manager		
Date completed	9 June 2025		
Reviewed by EWG member		Date	08.07.25

✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy ([corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk))

## Appendix B

### Council Tax Discounts and Premiums where local decisions on discounts apply

Class	Start	End	Discount / (Premium)	Council Tax Charge	Time Limit
Second Homes	<b>Nationally set discount</b>		<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>None</b>
	01/04/1993	31/03/2004	50%	50%	None
	01/04/2004	31/03/2013	10%	90%	None
	01/04/2013	31/03/2016	5%	95%	None
	01/04/2016	31/03/2025	0%	100%	None
	01/04/2025*		(100%)	200%	None
Empty and Unfurnished properties	<b>Initial Empty Period</b>				
	<b>Nationally set discount</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6 months</b>
	01/04/1993	31/03/2013	100%	0%	6 months
	01/04/2013	31/03/2017	100%	0%	3 months
	01/04/2017	31/03/2019	100%	0%	1 month
	01/04/2019		0%	100%	None
	<b>Follow On Period</b>				
	<b>Nationally set discount</b>		<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
	01/04/1993	31/03/2008	50%	50%	Ongoing
	01/04/2008	31/03/2009	10%	90%	Ongoing
	01/04/2009	31/03/2013	50%	50%	Ongoing
	01/04/2013		0%	100%	Until LT Empty
Uninhabitable Properties	<b>Nationally set discount</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>12 months</b>
	01/04/1993	31/03/2013	100%	0%	12 months
	01/04/2013	31/03/2017	50%	50%	12 months
	01/04/2017		25%	75%	12 months
Long Term Empty Properties	<b>Nationally set discount</b>		<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>-</b>
	01/04/2013	31/03/2019	(50%)	150%	After 2 years
	01/04/2019	31/03/2024	(100%)	200%	After 2 years
	01/04/2024		(100%)	200%	After 1 year
	01/04/2020		(200%)	300%	After 5 years
	01/04/2021		(300%)	400%	After 10 years

\*Excluding certain classes of property where the premium does not apply



**Policy for Exceptions to the  
Council Tax Premiums for  
Second Homes and Long-Term  
Empty Dwellings  
Coming into force 1 April 2025**

## **1. Executive Summary**

The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 gives councils powers to charge a council tax premium (or levy) for certain types of property (dwelling) in its area. The properties are those which are furnished but no-one's main home, commonly referred to as Second Homes, and properties which are unfurnished and unoccupied, known as Empty Properties.

The government has also introduced regulations laying out certain circumstances where the premium or levy does not apply. This Policy includes these statutory exceptions along with further locally agreed exceptions.

The exceptions apply from 1 April 2025.

The power to decide the guidelines for the exceptions to the premiums is given under Delegated Authority as below:

### **CAB89 – Cabinet 15 Jan 2024, Council 31 Jan 2024**

Cabinet Report para 4.1.5:

Delegate authority to the Revenues and Benefits Manager, in consultation with the s151 Officer and Council Leader, to agree the technical guidelines for any exceptions to the premiums imposed by central government.

## 2. Definitions

Dwelling	Residential property which is the subject of the council tax charge
Empty Dwelling	<p>Any dwelling shown in the Council Tax Valuation List which is unfurnished and unoccupied.</p> <p>A Long-Term Empty Dwelling is one which is unfurnished and unoccupied for six months or more.</p> <p>A Long-Term Empty Dwelling will pay the additional Levy once it has been unfurnished and unoccupied for 12 months or more.</p>
Exempt Dwelling	Any dwelling which qualifies for an exemption from payment of council tax under the provisions of the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 (as amended)
Liable Person	The person(s) who is responsible for paying the council tax under the council tax regulations; normally the person(s) whose name appears on the council tax bill
Long Term Empty Dwelling Levy	An additional charge of 100%, 200% or 300% of the amount of council tax payable for the period where the property meets the definition of a Long-Term Empty Dwelling and has been unoccupied for 12 months or more. The actual amount of the Levy depends on how long the dwelling has remained empty.
Relevant Transaction	Transfer on sale of the freehold, or of the leasehold for a term of seven years or more
Second Home	Any dwelling shown in the Council Tax Valuation List which is furnished but is unoccupied and no-one's main home
Second Home Premium	An additional charge of 100% of the amount of council tax payable for the period where the dwelling meets the definition of a Second Home.

### **3. Exceptions to the Council Tax Second Homes Premium and Long-Term Empty Dwelling Levy**

The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 include the circumstances in which the second home premium or empty dwelling levy does not apply.

The premium and levy will not apply to any dwelling which is classed as an Exempt Dwelling.

The exceptions are summarised below and the table should be read in conjunction with the detailed criteria in the regulations.

Class	Reason	Premium this Applies To	Period of Exception	Qualifying Conditions	Evidence Required
E	The liable person lives elsewhere in Armed Forces Accommodation	Second Homes Empty Dwellings	Whilst the qualifying conditions are met	The dwelling would be the sole or main residence of the liable person if they did not live elsewhere in Armed Forces accommodation.	Proof of address and residence in Armed Forces Accommodation
F	The dwelling is an annexe which forms part of a single dwelling, and is used by the resident as part of their sole or main residence	Second Homes Empty Dwellings	Whilst the qualifying conditions are met	The dwelling is an annexe which forms part of the liable person's sole or main residence and is being used as part of their main residence. This does not include any annexe used as a second home, or where the other part of the property is a second home.	Proof of use and site visit if necessary.

G	The dwelling is being actively marketed for Sale	Second Homes Empty Dwellings	12 months from the date the dwelling is first placed on the market	<p>The dwelling must be marketed for sale at a price that is reasonable for the sale of the dwelling, or an offer has been accepted and the sale is awaiting completion.</p> <p>A further exception will not apply unless there has been a Relevant Transaction.</p>	<p>A current contract with an Estate Agent for the sale of the dwelling.</p> <p>Marketing information, including Sales Particulars and online listings.</p> <p>A current Energy Performance Certificate (or proof of a recent application for one).</p> <p>Details of any viewings or offers in respect of the dwelling.</p> <p>Comparable sales prices achieved for similar properties to demonstrate the asking price is reasonable.</p> <p>Information regarding any sale agreed for the dwelling.</p>
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H	The dwelling is being actively marketed for Let	Second Homes Empty Dwellings	12 months from the date the dwelling is first marketed for let	<p>The tenancy terms, conditions and rent must be reasonable for the letting of the dwelling, or an offer to rent has been accepted but the tenancy has not yet started.</p> <p>A further exception will not apply unless the dwelling has been let on a tenancy granted for a term of six months or more.</p>	<p>A current contract with a Lettings Agent for arranging the rental of the dwelling.</p> <p>Details of the type of tenancy the dwelling will be let under.</p> <p>Comparable rental prices for similar properties to demonstrate the rent is reasonable.</p> <p>Details of where the dwelling is advertised for let.</p> <p>Information regarding any agreed letting to a tenant.</p>
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I	Probate has been granted but the dwelling remains empty	Second Homes Empty Dwellings	12 months from the date probate is granted	<p>The dwelling fell into exemption Class F (Empty Awaiting Probate), remains empty after a grant of probate has been made, and the estate remains the liable party for council tax.</p> <p>The dwelling will receive an exemption from payment of council tax for six months after probate is granted.</p> <p>A further exception will not apply unless there has been a Relevant Transaction.</p>	<p>Copy of the grant of Probate.</p> <p>Confirmation that the estate is the liable party for council tax and that the property has not been assented or passed over to another person.</p>
J	The dwelling is a Job-Related Dwelling	Second Homes	Whilst the qualifying conditions are met.	The liable party must also be liable for council tax at the occupied rate for another dwelling, and be required to occupy that property as a condition of their employment.	<p>Address of second property.</p> <p>Contract of employment confirming the requirement to live elsewhere.</p>
K	The dwelling is a Caravan Pitch or a Boat Mooring	Second Homes	Whilst the qualifying conditions are met	The dwelling is a pitch occupied by a caravan, or a mooring occupied by a boat.	Site visit if required

L	The dwelling is subject to a Planning Condition preventing occupancy	Second Homes	Whilst the qualifying conditions are met	<p>The dwelling must have an occupancy restriction imposed by a planning condition for one of the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in one year,</li> <li>• Specifying it may only be used as a holiday let, or</li> <li>• Preventing it being occupied as someone's sole or main residence.</li> </ul>	Copy of the Planning Permission containing the restriction on occupancy or specifying the dwelling cannot be used as a main home or must be used as a holiday let.
M	Uninhabitable Dwellings	Empty Dwellings	12 months from the date the property becomes uninhabitable	<p>The dwelling is one which falls in Class D – i.e. it is one which qualifies for a reduction as it is uninhabitable.</p> <p><i>Note – this council currently awards a 25% discount for 12 months to uninhabitable dwellings and they will not be subject to the long-term empty property levy during the qualifying period.</i></p>	Evidence that the dwelling requires or is undergoing work to its structure to render it habitable, including work to the walls, floors, ceilings, foundations or roof.
Z	Unoccupied Furnished Residential Lets	Second Homes	Whilst the qualifying conditions are met	The dwelling is one which is furnished and is let on an assured shorthold tenancy (or equivalent) to occupants who occupy the dwelling as their main home. The exception applies for the days when the property is unoccupied.	Evidence that the former tenant used the property as their main home, and proof that the property is being marketed for let on an assured shorthold tenancy (or equivalent).

- 4. Other Circumstances**  
The discretionary powers to reduce or remit council tax liability under s13(a) Local Government Act 1992 still apply and are contained in the council's Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy.
- 5. Applications**  
The liable person may be required to complete an application form to apply for an exception to the premium or levy, unless we decide we are able to apply the exception without one.
- 6. Evidence**  
We may ask for any reasonable evidence to support an application for an exception to the premium or levy. Failure to provide this is likely to result in an application being unsuccessful.
- 7. False Information and Fraudulent Applications**  
Any attempts to commit fraud through false statements and fraudulent applications for an exception are taken extremely serious and we may take further action against anyone attempting to defraud the council tax system.  
  
Sanctions include a penalty of £70 for first offence, and £280 for each second and subsequent offence, and prosecution under the Fraud Act 2006.
- 8. Appeals**  
The decision not to apply an exception can be appealed. In the first instance an appeal should be made in writing or by email to the Revenues and Benefits Manager, clearly stating why the appeal is being made, and providing evidence.
- 9. Equalities Implications**  
A Pre-Screening Equalities Impact Assessment is included at Appendix A.
- 10. Reference Documents**  
The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023  
  
The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments)(England) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/1007)  
  
Cabinet Report of 15 January 2024 and minutes of the Council Meeting 31 January 2024

## 11. Version Control

Policy name	Second Homes Premiums and Long-Term Empty Levies– Policy for Exceptions			
Policy description	Policy detailing the exceptions to the additional premiums for certain council tax properties			
Responsible Officer	Jo Stanton, Revenues and Benefits Manager			
Version number	Date formally approved	Reason for update	Author	Review date
1.0		Policy Creation	Jo Stanton	1 January 2026

## **Appendix D: Government Guidance on the implementation of the Premiums**

(attached as a separate document for Dem Services to insert)



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

Guidance

# **Guidance on the implementation of the council tax premiums on long-term empty homes and second homes**

Published 1 November 2024

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<b>Applies to England</b>
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Contents

Introduction

1. Implementation of the council tax premiums on long-term empty homes and second homes
2. Exceptions to the council tax premiums for long-term empty homes and second homes
3. Monitoring and appeals



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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-term-empty-homes-and-second-homes-council-tax-premiums-and-exceptions/guidance-on-the-implementation-of-the-council-tax-premiums-on-long-term-empty-homes-and-second-homes>



# Introduction

Since 2013, councils<sup>[footnote 1]</sup> in England have had the power to charge additional council tax on long-term empty homes. For the purpose of council tax, long-term empty homes are dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period. In April 2024, the empty homes council tax premium was strengthened so that councils can charge the premium on homes that have been empty for 1 or more years (rather than the previous 2 years).

Additionally, from April 2025, councils will be able to use new powers to charge a premium of up to 100% additional council tax on second homes in their area, or parts of their area. For the purpose of council tax, second homes are dwellings which are substantially furnished but have no resident (i.e. it is not someone's sole or main residence).

The powers to charge the empty homes or second homes premium (or both) is discretionary, and it is for councils to decide whether to charge the premiums in their local area and at what rate, up to the statutory maximum.

This guidance has been published to set out the circumstances where a premium can be charged, the discretion available to councils in doing this, the administration of premiums and the application of the exceptions. This guidance is also intended to enable taxpayers to identify the circumstances where their dwelling may be excepted from a premium.

This guidance is issued under powers in section 11B(1D) and 11C (4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/14/contents>) ("the 1992 Act") as inserted by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. It applies to all councils in England. This does not apply to councils in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

This guidance should not be treated as an interpretation of the legislation. Councils should make their decisions based on the legislation and their specific local circumstances.

## 1. Implementation of the council tax premiums on long-term empty homes and second homes

# Legal framework for the council tax premiums

## Sections 11B and 11C of the 1992 Act

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/14/contents>) enables councils in England to disapply the section 11(2)(a) discount which may otherwise apply to long-term empty homes and second homes and apply additional council tax (commonly called a premium).

The 1992 Act was amended through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (“the 2023 Act”) so that councils can apply a premium on homes which have been empty for 1 or more years from 1 April 2024. The 2023 Act also introduced new powers for councils to charge premiums on second homes from 1 April 2025 (provided that the conditions set out in section 11C of the 1992 Act apply).

Councils have the discretion to decide whether to introduce a premium in their local area or parts of the area on long-term empty homes and second homes. They also have the discretion to decide on the level of the premium, up to the maximum statutory threshold.

A council must make its first determination to charge a second homes premium at least 1 year before the financial year to which it will apply. This is to provide owners of these dwellings sufficient notice to make any appropriate changes. Councils may vary or revoke a determination under these same powers but only before the beginning of the financial year to which this will apply. When using these powers, councils can determine the long-term empty homes or second homes to which they will apply a premium. This enables each council to tailor its determination to local circumstances.

Where a determination to charge a premium is made, councils must publish a notice of the determination in at least 1 newspaper circulating in its area within 21 days of the date of the determination<sup>[footnote 2]</sup>.

The Secretary of State has powers under section 11B(2)-(3) and 11D(1)-(2) of the 1992 Act to prescribe through regulations certain classes of dwelling which may not be made subject to a premium. The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/1007/contents/made>) prescribe these exceptions, and these are detailed later in this guidance.

The council tax system already provides a number of specific exemptions from council tax. The exempt classes are set out in the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1992/558/contents/made>). There are a number of exemptions in place for unoccupied dwellings, including:

- where the resident has died for up to 6 months after grant of probate or letters of administration)

- where the resident is in long-term residential care or hospital
- where the resident is living elsewhere to provide personal care

A dwelling that is exempt from council tax is not liable for a premium. Where a dwelling is no longer eligible for an exemption but remains no one's sole or main residence, it may become liable for a premium. In the case of an empty home, it may become liable for a premium after it has been empty for a continuous period of 1 year. This time frame begins when the dwelling first becomes empty rather than when an exemption ends. A second home may become liable for the premium as soon as the exemption ends.

## **Section 11B: Higher amount for long-term empty dwellings**

A long-term empty home is defined as a home which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least 1 year. The dwelling must be occupied, or substantially furnished, for a continuous period of at least 6 weeks in order for it to reset the length of time it has been empty for, and its liability for a premium.

Where a council makes a determination to charge a premium on long-term empty dwellings, it may specify different percentages for dwellings based on the length of time for which they have been empty. This enables councils to take a stepped approach, with increases over time. These include:

- up to 100% for homes empty between 1 and 5 years
- up to 200% for homes empty between 5 and 10 years
- up to 300% for homes empty for over 10 years

Councils are able to choose the level of the premium, up to the applicable statutory maximum. For example, they may apply a 50% premium for dwellings empty between 1 and 2 years and a premium of 100% of dwellings empty for 2 to 5 years.

## **Section 11C and 11D: Higher amount for dwellings occupied periodically**

Dwellings occupied periodically (commonly referred to as "second homes") are defined as dwellings which are substantially furnished and have no resident (i.e., not a person's sole or main home).

When introducing the premium in the local area or parts of the area for the first time, a council must make its first determination under section 11C at least 1 year before the beginning of the financial year to which the determination to apply the premium relates.

Where individuals own multiple homes, but the homes are let out or occupied by someone as their main home, it will not be considered as a “second home” for the purposes of the premiums and as such will not be liable for the premium. It is for councils to determine whether a dwelling is a “second home” in accordance with the legislation and their local statutory determination to apply the premium.

## **Making a determination to charge the council tax premiums on long-term empty homes and/or second homes**

Councils have the discretion whether to apply the premium in their local areas and will determine how best to use this in combination with other measures to bring dwellings back into use or how the additional flexibilities may be used to improve the sustainability of local services.

The decision to make a determination under section 11B and 11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 is for councils to make. However, the government expects councils to have due consideration of local circumstances. Councils can choose to apply either or both of the council tax premiums; they can also choose to apply the premium to parts of the local area rather than to the whole of their local area. This flexibility allows councils to tailor the premiums to best address local concerns or priorities.

Councils should carefully consider whether to charge a premium and make an assessment of possible impacts, including on the local population, its communities, and the local economy. Examples of factors that councils may wish to consider are set out below. Whilst some factors will be specific to either long-term empty dwellings or second homes, others will be common to both. The list is not exhaustive, and councils will want to consider all factors they think are relevant before making a decision.

- numbers and proportion of long-term empty dwellings and/or second homes in the local area
- circumstances which may affect whether the dwelling can be used as a main residence
- potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry
- potential impact on the local community
- potential impact on local services

- other measures that are available to councils to help bring empty dwellings back into use

Councils should consider the reasons why dwellings are unoccupied in deciding whether they want such dwellings to be included in their determination. Examples of issues councils may want to take account of in making their determination include:

- on average, how long dwellings in their area are available for sale or rent before completion/occupation
- the average price/rent in the local area
- whether there are circumstances which make the dwelling unsuitable for use as main residence
- whether there are circumstances which make the dwelling difficult to sell/let
- whether the dwelling is empty so that improvements can be made between sale/let

Any decision to vary or revoke a determination to apply a premium must be made before the beginning of the financial year to which it applies. This enables councils to take any changes into account when calculating their taxbase for the following year as well as giving local taxpayers advance notice of the changes.

Councils should consider how it might engage and consult with key stakeholders, including the local electorate and second homeowners, before taking a decision to charge a premium. If councils decide to introduce or vary a premium, they should consider how this is communicated, particularly to those who might be directly affected. For instance, through publication of press notices, providing information on website pages or direct communication with council taxpayers who are likely to be liable for the premium. Councils should also consider how they advise or inform those who may be affected but may reside outside the local area.

## **2. Exceptions to the council tax premiums for long-term empty homes and second homes**

The government recognises that there may be instances where it may be inappropriate for the council tax premiums to apply. Section 11B and 11D of the 1992 Act enables the government to make regulations to prescribe classes of dwellings in relation to which councils may not make a determination to apply a premium. 129

The government has made regulations to provide exceptions to these premiums, in line with the published [consultation response](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposals-to-exempt-categories-of-dwellings-from-the-council-tax-premiums/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-governments-response-to-the-consultation-on-proposals-to-exempt-categories-of-dwellings-from-the-council-tax-premiums-in-eng) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposals-to-exempt-categories-of-dwellings-from-the-council-tax-premiums/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-governments-response-to-the-consultation-on-proposals-to-exempt-categories-of-dwellings-from-the-council-tax-premiums-in-eng>). These exceptions to the premium are mandatory and councils may not disapply any exceptions. These exceptions will come into effect from 1 April 2025.

The regulations prescribe 9 classes of dwellings which are excluded from the council tax premiums. Classes E, F, G, H and I apply to both long-term empty homes and second homes. Classes J, K and L only apply to second homes. Class M only applies to long-term empty homes.

The classes of dwelling are outlined in the table below and are detailed further in the guidance. These exceptions only exclude these dwellings from premiums, these do not affect the standard rate of council tax they may be liable for. Exceptions may apply in succession where the dwelling meets the necessary criteria. Councils may add extensions to exceptions as a part of their determination or may provide support through discretionary reductions using powers under [section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/14/section/13A) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/14/section/13A>).

Where a person believes they may meet the criteria for an exception from the premium they may wish to contact their council directly. The council will be best placed to assess whether an exception would apply in these circumstances. Furthermore, councils have discretionary powers to provide additional exceptions from premiums where they consider this appropriate.

<b>Classes of Dwellings</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Class E	Long-term empty homes and second homes	Dwelling which is or would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in job-related armed forces accommodation
Class F	Long-term empty homes and second homes	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling
Class G	Long-term empty homes and second homes	Dwellings being actively marketed for sale (12 months limit)

<b>Classes of Dwellings</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Class H	Long-term empty homes and second homes	Dwellings being actively marketed for let (12 months limit)
Class I	Long-term empty homes and second homes	Unoccupied dwellings which fell within exempt Class F and where probate has recently been granted (12 months from grant of probate/letters of administration)
Class J	Second homes only	Job-related dwellings
Class K	Second homes only	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings.
Class L	Second homes only	Seasonal homes where year-round, permanent occupation is prohibited, specified for use as holiday accommodation or planning condition preventing occupancy for more than 28 days continuously
Class M	Long-term empty home only	Empty dwellings requiring or undergoing major repairs or structural alterations (12 months limit)

## **Annexes and military accommodation (Class E and Class F)**

Two mandatory exceptions from the empty home premium already exist:

- a dwelling which is or would be the sole or main residence of a member of the armed services, who has been provided with a dwelling as a result of such service
- a dwelling which forms part of a single property with one or more other dwellings that is being used by a resident of one of the other dwellings as part of their sole or main residence

These exceptions will continue to apply for empty homes and will also be applied in the case of the second homes premium.

## **Job related dwellings and caravan pitches/boat moorings (Class K and Class L)**

The council tax system already contains provisions which ensure that in certain circumstances these dwellings receive a 50% council tax discount. The government does not intend to change the discounts which these dwellings receive. The exceptions mirror the provisions of these discounts to ensure these dwellings continue to receive these discounts.

Generally, a dwelling would be classed as a job-related dwelling where it is a dwelling provided by a person's employer for the purposes of performing their work. The definition of a job-related dwelling for the purposes of this exception is set out in the Schedule to the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/3011/schedule/made>). Examples include headteachers for boarding schools who are required to live in school accommodation, or certain care workers who need to live on site to carry out their role.

Certain households may fall outside the definition of a job-related dwelling; however, the council may determine that it would still not be appropriate for the premium to apply. Councils have the discretionary power to exclude any dwellings from the premium where they consider this appropriate.

## **Probate (Class I)**

There is an existing Class F council tax exemption for dwellings undergoing probate. When a dwelling has been left empty following the death of its owner or occupant, it is exempt from council tax for as long as it remains unoccupied and until probate is granted. Following a grant of probate (or the issue of letters of administration), a further 6 months exemption is possible, so long as the dwelling remains unoccupied and has not been transferred by the executors or administrators to the beneficiaries or sold to anyone else.

Following a grant of probate the owners of the dwelling may require further time to decide how they will manage the home or sell it. The Regulations provide for a 12-month exception to the premium for both second and empty homes. The 12-month period begins from the point probate is granted or letters of administration have been issued. This runs concurrently with the 6-month exemption.

This exception will run for 12 months or until the dwelling has changed owner by being sold. Councils may wish to consider the specific



circumstances of the dwelling's owners at the end of the period and whether to use their discretionary power to extend this exception.

## **Actively marketed for sale or let (Class G and Class H)**

The government has been clear that its intention is not to penalise those who are genuinely trying to bring their dwelling back into use as a sole/main residence.

This exception can apply for up to 12 months from the point from which the dwelling has first been marketed for sale or let. The exception will end either when the 12-month period has ended, when the dwelling has been sold or let or when the dwelling is no longer actively marketed for sale or let. The following conditions will apply to this exception:

- the same owner may only make use of the exception for a particular dwelling marketed for sale once
- the exception may be used again for the same dwelling if it has been sold and has a new owner
- the same owner may make use of the exception for dwellings marketed for let multiple times, however, only after the dwellings has been let for a continuous period of at least 6 months since the exception last applied

There are a number of factors which councils may take into consideration when assessing whether a dwelling is being actively marketed for sale or let. These may include:

- whether the dwelling is clearly advertised for sale or let
- whether the dwelling is being marketed at a fair market value
- whether there are any artificial barriers on the dwelling preventing sale/let
- whether the dwelling has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)  
[\[footnote 3\]](#)
- whether the owner is taking any other reasonable steps to market the dwelling for sale or let

When considering whether a second or empty home is actively marketed, councils should consider these factors holistically. Whether a home may not meet one of the described factors it may still overall be considered to be actively marketed. Councils may wish to consider further factors in determining whether a dwelling is actively marketed for sale or let.

At the end of the 12-month period, councils may wish to consider the specific circumstances of the owners and whether to use their discretionary powers to extend the exception.

## **Major repairs (Class M)**

The government appreciates in some cases a dwelling may require major repair work before it can be occupied. Where a dwelling requires or is undergoing major repairs or is undergoing structural alteration it may be excepted from the empty home premium for up to 12 months. Where major repairs are completed in less than 12 months, the exception will still apply to the dwelling for up to 6 months or until the end of the 12 months whichever is sooner.

This exception only applies on empty homes. This exception cannot apply again unless the dwelling has been sold. If the dwelling is substantially furnished and becomes a second home without a resident, then this exception will end.

Councils may wish to consider the specific circumstances of the dwelling at the end of this 12 months and whether to use their discretionary power to extend this exception in certain scenarios.

## **Seasonal homes (Class L)**

The government recognises in some cases certain dwellings may have restrictions on them which means that the dwelling could not reasonably be occupied as a permanent residence. The government's position is that it is right that these dwellings should not be subject to a premium when these dwellings could not be used as a permanent residence.

In applying this exception, councils should consider whether there are any planning restrictions which explicitly set out that the dwelling cannot be used as a main residence. For example, where this is purpose-built holiday accommodation which can only be used as holiday accommodation.

In addition, this exception provides for dwellings which have planning restrictions whereby they cannot be occupied for at least 28 continuous days in a year. In some cases, a council may assess a dwelling with this restriction as being a person's sole or main residence. Where this is the case, the dwelling would not be liable for the premium since this cannot apply to a main residence.

## **Powers to identify and exclude certain dwellings**

The government recognises there may be specific local issues relating to second homes and empty homes which are not covered by mandatory exceptions. Councils have discretionary powers to exclude dwellings from the premium in their area through their determination. The government encourages councils to make use of their local expertise to consider which other dwellings should not be charged a premium.

There may be cases where despite best endeavours, an owner may not have the ability to bring an empty or second home back to productive use in a reasonable time. An example of this is where occupation of a dwelling is restricted to a specific group of people and cannot be used in any other way. Where a dwelling has been actively marketed for sale or let but there are mitigating circumstances which mean the dwelling may take longer to sell or let, the council may wish to consider using their discretionary powers.

In some cases, there may be no specific planning restriction preventing dwellings from being used as a main residence but conditions around the dwelling may make it impractical to be used as a main residence. For example, where the dwelling may be located on land which cannot be accessed for significant parts of the year. Councils should consider whether any dwellings in their area could not be used for any purpose other than as a second home when making their determinations.

The scenarios set out above are not exhaustive and there may be specific local circumstances which impact the exceptions a council may apply. Ultimately councils should rely on their expertise of their local area when deciding which exceptions may apply.

Councils cannot amend their determinations in year to include further exceptions. However, councils do have powers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/14/section/13A>) to offer a discretionary discount for households where they consider this appropriate.

### **3. Monitoring and appeals**

As with all council tax income, income received by council tax premiums is fully retained by councils and their precepting authorities. This income is unringfenced and it is for local councils to determine how best to use the income raised to address issues within their local areas.

The government trusts council to apply premiums taking into account their local circumstances. The government encourages councils to be transparent in how they apply the premium, making the following information available for residents:

- the level of premium charged by the council
- which areas this applies to
- the number of dwellings charged the premium
- the amount which has been raised by the premium
- how funding from the premium has been used locally

If an individual believes they have been inappropriately charged a premium on their dwelling, they should in the first instance contact their council. Councils are best placed to advise how they have determined a premium should apply in these circumstances. Additionally, they will be able to make any necessary amendments where there is evidence to show a premium should not be applied.

If the individuals have discussed the issue with their local council, but they are not satisfied with the council's response, they may be able to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal (<https://valuationtribunal.gov.uk/council-tax-appeals/>).

- 
1. Specifically, it is for billing authorities to make a determination whether to charge a premium. Billing authorities are responsible for the billing and collection of council tax.
  2. A determination will not be invalid where this has not been done.
  3. A valid EPC is necessary to be able to sell or let any dwelling - Selling a home: Energy Performance Certificates (<https://www.gov.uk/selling-a-home/energy-performance-certificates>).

**REPORT TO CABINET**

Open		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Discretionary	Be entirely within Cabinet’s powers to decide		YES	
		Need to be recommendations to Council		NO	
		Is it a Key Decision		YES	
Lead Member: Cllr Rust E-mail: <i>cllr.jo.rust@west-norfolk.gov.uk</i>		Other Cabinet Members consulted: None			
		Other Members consulted: None			
Lead Officer: Karl Patterson E-mail: karl.patterson@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 616847		Other Officers consulted: Duncan Hall Assistant Director of Regeneration, Housing & Place Carl Holland Assistant Director Finance & S151			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications YES	Equal Impact Assessment YES If YES: Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES	Environmental Considerations YES

Date of meeting: 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025

**LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND – ADDITIONAL ROUND 3 FUNDING****Summary**

Further to Cabinet's previous decision in September 2024 to accept £1.7m grant funding to deliver 12 affordable homes, 4 homes for eligible Afghan households and 8 homes for use as temporary accommodation, this report provides information on additional funding offered to BCKLWN in June 2025 through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Round 3.

The programme has been established by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support Local Authorities to acquire homes to accommodate households with housing needs who have arrived in the UK as part of the Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes and provide better quality temporary homes for homeless households.

The Council has been offered additional grant to acquire 3 homes to be used for temporary accommodation for homeless households and 1 property for Afghan households (Total 4). This is subject to acceptance of terms by the Council through a Memorandum of Understanding. The purpose of the report is to seek approval to accept the grant and inform the Cabinet of the requirements of the grant funding and potential delivery options.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that:-

1. The Council will enter a Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG based on the prospectus for the Local Authority Housing Fund available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local->

[authority-housing-fund-round-3/local-authority-housing-fund-round-3-prospectus-and-guidance#contact-and-documents](#). Authority is

delegated to the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities to agree the final terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG

2. The Council will accept the total sum of £568,000 offered to the Council by MHCLG under the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver the programme, understanding the external match funding requirements as set out in the report and attached prospectus.
3. Cabinet agrees that, subject to agreement from West Norfolk Housing Company, the properties will be acquired by West Norfolk Housing Company, funded by the grant, debt financing and other available funding.
4. Authority is delegated to Assistant Director Finance/Deputy S151 in consultation to agree terms for deferred consideration (if necessary) with West Norfolk Housing Company in relation to the transfer of properties on the Council's developments.
5. The Council requests that West Norfolk Housing Company works with the Council to deliver the properties through the fund.
6. That delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Leader for the acceptance of further funding offered to the Council under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) or successor programme.

### **Reason for Decision**

The recommendations will ensure that the opportunity presented by the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver affordable housing in the borough will be fully realised and will help to relieve pressures on the council's homelessness services.

## **1 Background**

1.1 MHCLG released details of Round 3 of the Local Authority Housing Fund in August 2024. Cabinet agreed in September 2024 to accept £1.7m grant funding to deliver 12 affordable homes, 4 homes for eligible Afghan households and 8 homes for use as temporary accommodation. The 12 homes will be delivered on the Council's Florence Fields site by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

1.2 Following submission of an Expression of Interest in January 2025, The Council have been allocated additional grant funding of £568,000 for the delivery of 4 new build homes, 3 for use as temporary accommodation to meet the Council's wider housing needs and 1 for eligible Afghan households. This would result in a total allocation of £2,262,876 to deliver 16 affordable homes. Local authorities accepting the funding are expected to deliver on both elements of the funding.

1.3 The objectives of LAHF R3 are to:

- Reduce local housing pressures and use of expensive and unsuitable accommodation, by providing better quality temporary accommodation to those owed homelessness duties by local authorities
- Reduce temporary accommodation costs
- Provide sustainable settled housing to those on ACRS and ARAP so that they can build new lives in the UK, find employment and integrate into communities.
- Support local housing markets by assisting the delivery of new housing stock or new developments to grow overall housing supply.

1.4 This additional funding will complement the existing Afghan resettlement scheme delivered by Norfolk County Council

1.5 Afghan households leaving Home Office accommodation without securing suitable alternative housing are likely to seek assistance from local authorities. Since they may not have a local connection to any specific area, they are entitled to submit a homelessness application to any local authority of their choice, which would then have a duty to support them. Some of these households may choose to approach the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN). In such cases, they could be accommodated through housing provided under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) scheme.

1.6 The main principle behind the funding is to alleviate pressures on existing homelessness systems.

1.7 In 2022 all local authorities received a letter from the Home Office, asking all local authorities in England to support the resettlement efforts of asylum seekers including Afghans to ensure that the responsibility does not fall disproportionately on a small number of local authorities.

1.8 The final target date for delivery of homes is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, in line with the original Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 allocation. There is an expectation that contracts to acquire homes will be exchanged by the final target date. The Council has the opportunity to use the funding to provide homes via its own developments, which includes the Florence Fields development currently under construction. This includes properties earmarked to be sold on the open market. Rather than this, some of these homes could be acquired at open market value provided as affordable housing through the fund. This option mitigates the risk of not meeting the delivery timescales of the fund i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

1.9 The homes will be of a type and price to ensure they can be delivered as affordable housing. In order to meet the housing needs of those eligible, the homes should be within the borough's towns. The additional funding allocation is based on the expectation that the 3 homes for use as temporary accommodation will be 2-4 bed units and the 1 resettlement home will be 2-3 bed unit.

1.10 The aspirations of the Fund in relation to future longer-term use of the homes is for them to become part of the wider affordable housing stock. The type and locations therefore need to be suitable to meet the wider housing needs of the

borough. Consideration also needs to be given to the ongoing maintenance costs and energy efficiency of properties.

- 1.11 The approach will be to assess the suitability of properties available on the open market on the Council's developments taking into account the above factors. If sufficient open market properties cannot be identified, consideration could be given to properties at Florence Field currently earmarked for the private rented sector. This approach will add an additional 4 properties to the affordable housing stock.
- 1.12 In order to accept the funding, the Council is required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). MHCLG has indicated that the Memorandum of Understanding had to be signed by 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025. However, it has now been confirmed that the full allocation will be made available if the MOU is agreed shortly after the 21<sup>st</sup> July.
- 1.13 The Council has previously accepted funding from Central Government to deliver at least 42 affordable homes through rounds 1, 2 and 3 of the Local Authority Housing Fund. Further background on the fund can be found within the cabinet reports from 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 and 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and an update on delivery is contained within section 3 of this report.

## **2. Tenure**

- 2.1 The homes delivered through this fund will be affordable/low-cost housing to support wider local authority housing and homelessness responsibilities for the remainder of their lifetime.
- 2.2 Tenancies for resettlement properties will be assured (lifetime) tenancies or fixed term tenancies. Temporary Accommodation properties will be let on licenses.
- 2.3 Although 1 of the 4 properties will have to be used for the defined cohort, in the long run they could be used by the wider community. The funding will increase the stock of affordable housing in the borough and assist with meeting housing pressures.

## **3. LAHF Rounds 1, 2 and 3 update**

- 3.1 The Council has previously accepted funding to deliver at least 42 affordable homes through rounds 1, 2 & 3 of the Local Authority Housing Fund. These homes are intended to meet the needs of Ukrainian households fleeing conflict, Afghan households on resettlement schemes and temporary accommodation.
- 3.2 Under rounds 1 & 2 of the Local Authority Housing Fund all 29 properties have been identified, 28 have been acquired and occupied and terms have been agreed on the remaining property. 8 homes are for eligible Afghan households, 14 homes are for Ukrainian households and 7 homes are for use as temporary accommodation.



- 3.3 As part of rounds 1 & 2 of the scheme, 14 Ukrainian Households at risk of homelessness have been housed although it is likely that these would have been housed through the housing register in any case.
- 3.4 Working closely with Norfolk County Council's Persons From Abroad Team, 4 eligible Afghan families have been housed with a further nomination received for the remaining LAHF 2 property
- 3.5 Due to a lack of nominations from the Home Office initially, MHCLG agreed the Council could use homes acquired for Afghan Households for general needs purposes on the basis that properties from the general needs stock will be provided if required. Therefore 3 properties acquired for eligible Afghan households have now been used for general needs.
- 3.6 The Council accepted funding to deliver 12 properties through round 3 of the Local Authority Housing Fund. All 12 homes have been identified and terms and conditions have been agreed on the properties. 4 of the properties are for eligible Afghan households and 8 properties are for use as temporary accommodation. The properties will be delivered by the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.
- 3.7 Working closely with Norfolk County Council's Persons From Abroad Team, nominations have been received for 2 of the 4 LAHF 3 properties for eligible Afghan households.
- 3.8 As part of the Spending Review in June 25, the Government announced a further £950 million for the fourth round of LAHF. Further details are yet to be announced of how this funding will be allocated.

#### **4. Options Considered**

- 4.1 The following 3 options were considered as part of the September 24 Cabinet report and remain appropriate now:
- Option 1 – Accept the funding and deliver the properties in partnership with the Council's wholly owned Registered Provider, West Norfolk Housing Company
  - Option 2 – Accept the funding and seek to work with an alternative Registered Provider
  - Option 3 – Turn down the funding
- 4.2 **Option 1** – The Council can choose to accept the additional grant from MHCLG and work with West Norfolk Housing to provide the additional 4 homes under the terms set out above or reject the grant. Subject to the agreement of West Norfolk Housing Company, homes could be acquired using grant funding from this fund along with debt financing and any other appropriate funding streams. This aligns with West Norfolk Housing Company's Business Plan.
- 4.3 The potential to work with West Norfolk Housing Company to acquire homes from the Council's developments provides a high level of certainty and control

and gives confidence that the timescales can be met along with greater control over the future use of the units.

- 4.4 West Norfolk Housing Company have a track record of providing temporary accommodation and are committed to assisting the Council to meet its priorities in relation to homelessness and the provision of suitable temporary accommodation.
- 4.5 **Option 2** - Whilst there are a small number of Registered Providers operating in the borough which could potentially deliver the properties, the timescales and type of accommodation to be delivered under the fund are challenging. Additionally, this option would not provide the same level of certainty and control as working with West Norfolk Housing.
- 4.6 **Option 3** - If the Council chose to reject the funding due to the required terms including the timescales, it could endeavour to provide additional accommodation without this funding to respond to the increased housing pressures that are being experienced. This would have greater capital funding implications for the Council and reduce deliverability.
- 4.7 Option 1 is recommended as it provides the greatest certainty and control over delivery and being able to comply with the terms of the grant funding. It also secures above average levels of central government grant funding to increase the provision of affordable housing in the borough and help relieve homelessness pressures. This supports key objectives in the Councils Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 ie increasing supply of affordable accommodation and reducing the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for homeless households.

## **5 Policy Implications**

- 5.1 Due to the eligibility criteria for the fund, 1 of the homes must be allocated to eligible homeless Afghan households. On 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Cabinet endorsed a Local Lettings Plan to be used to allocate homes acquired through LAHF Round 1, including 2 homes for Afghan families.
- 5.2 This lettings plan will be extended to cover the homes for Afghans funded through future LAHF funding. In accordance with the Council's Social Housing Allocations Policy, this will need to be approved by the West Norfolk Homechoice panel. The remaining 3 temporary accommodation properties will be used to accommodate homelessness households in accordance with Homelessness legislation.

## **6 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Based on an indicative mix of units, It is estimated that the total cost of acquiring the 4 homes on the Florence Fields development will be £990,000. Based on this,

match funding of £422,000 will be required. Unlike previous rounds of the fund, there are no limits on the percentage of costs which can be covered by the grant.

6.2 The Affordable Housing Value of the 4 homes based on the indicative mix is estimated to be around £444,000 indicating that the scheme will provide good value for money as the affordable housing value is broadly in line with the match funding required.

6.3 Match funding could come from various sources including the following;

- Borrowing by West Norfolk Housing Company covered by the rental income from the properties.
- Other available sources of capital funding
- Other funding sources related to Afghan resettlement.

6.4 West Norfolk Housing are in the process of agreeing financing arrangements with the Council which would enable to company to pay the market value of the properties using a mix of the grant and borrowing. If these arrangements are not in place prior to the delivery of the properties to be identified, the Council will consider deferring an element of the market value on the basis that the net rent received by the company is transferred to the council until full payment is made. Whilst this would result in a delay to the council receiving capital receipts for the properties, it is anticipated that the rental income would cover the Council's borrowing costs.

6.5 The 3 properties acquired for temporary accommodation will be used by the Council to help meet statutory homelessness duties. This will help reduce the council's need for inappropriate Bed and Breakfast accommodation. An additional 3 units of temporary accommodation for families would provide more appropriate accommodation for homeless families and could save the council up to £52,500 per year in bed and breakfast costs. This supports one of the key objectives of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 (to reduce use of bed and breakfast accommodation).

6.6 The recommended option (Option 1) will not have a negative financial impact on the council's capital programme. As the units will either be purchased by West Norfolk Housing Company at open market values or in the event that West Norfolk Housing Company finance arrangements are not in place as set out in paragraph 6.4, the net rent received will cover the Councils borrowing costs until full payment is made.

6.7 There are no additional revenue expenditure implications for the Council.

## **7 Personnel Implications**

7.1 None

## **8 Environmental Considerations**

8.1 Due to forthcoming regulations relating to energy efficiency, it is essential that homes acquired have EPC rating of C or above.

## **9 Statutory Considerations**

9.1 The fund will provide accommodation which will assist the Council to meet its statutory homeless duties

## **10 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

(Pre screening report template attached)

## **11 Risk Management Implications**

11.1.1 The potential risks and implications associated with the grant are discussed below:

11.1.2 The target date for completion is challenging and failure to deliver homes may lead to funding being clawed back. This can be mitigated by delivered homes through the councils' development.

11.2 The following are associated risks of not taking the funding:

11.2.1 Risk of losing opportunity to add to affordable housing stock

11.2.2 Risk of not meeting the housing needs of the funds eligible households and fulfilling statutory functions.

11.2.3 Risk of not meeting wider housing and homelessness pressures

11.2.4 These would risk the increasing use of inappropriate and expensive temporary accommodation in particular bed and breakfast.

11.2.5 These associated risks both risk the increasing use of inappropriate and expensive temporary accommodation in particular bed and breakfast.

## **12 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted**

Duncan Hall, Director of West Norfolk Housing Company

## **13 Background Papers**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-housing-fund-round-3/local-authority-housing-fund-round-3-prospectus-and-guidance#contact-and-documents>

## Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Delivery of Affordable Homes through further allocation to Round 3 of the Local Authority Housing Fund				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	New		Existing	X	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.  Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	Delivery of 4 homes using additional grant allocation from Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 to provide 3 properties for use as temporary accommodation and 1 property for eligible Afghan households in line with eligibility criteria set by fund. The homes will help the council respond to increased homelessness pressures and will be used to meet the wider housing needs of the borough in the longer-term. Delivery of homes must be in accordance with the prospectus for the fund.				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>					
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>				
<p><b>1.</b> Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><b><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></b></p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			Y	
	Disability			Y	
	Sex			Y	
	Gender Re-assignment			Y	
	Marriage/civil partnership			Y	
	Pregnancy & maternity			Y	
	Race	Y			
	Religion or belief			Y	
	Sexual orientation			Y	
	Armed forces community			Y	
	Care leavers			Y	
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)	Y			
<b>Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:</b>					

Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	Yes	The delivery of 1 home through the fund for eligible Afghan households could be seen as favoring these households over established local communities.
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	Yes	Perception that this could negatively impact on established communities although not the case as homes would be delivered as affordable housing without the funding
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	Yes / No	<b>Actions:</b>
		<b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b> .....
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p><b>Full EIA completed</b></p> <p><b>Decision agreed by EWG member: .....Louise Gayton.....</b></p>		
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes / No	<b>Please provide brief summary:</b>
<b>Assessment completed by:</b>	<b>Karl Patterson</b>	
<b>Name</b>		
<b>Job title</b>	<b>Housing Development Manager</b>	
<b>Date completed</b>	<b>8/7/2025</b>	
<b>Reviewed by EWG member</b>	<b>Louise Gayton</b>	<div>Date</div> <div>11<sup>th</sup> July 2025</div>

☐ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy ([corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk))

# Equality Impact Assessments

Borough Council of  
**King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk**



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## Full Impact Assessment Form

### 1. What is the service area(s) and who is the lead officer?

Service Area – Strategic Housing  
Assistant Director – Duncan Hall  
Lead Officer – Karl Patterson  
Assisted By – Clare Cobby

## 2. What change are you proposing?

The acceptance of capital grant funding offered to BCKLWN through the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 for the acquisition of a further 4 new affordable homes. This is an extension to the scheme agreed by Cabinet in September 2024.

One of these homes would be to provide longer-term sustainable accommodation for households from Afghanistan who have arrived or are soon to arrive in the UK via resettlement schemes and are now at risk of homelessness or are currently housed in unsuitable accommodation. The remaining 3 will be provided as temporary accommodation for homelessness households.

The homes will assist the council to respond to increased pressures from these arrivals on the existing housing and homelessness systems, particularly as accommodation arrangements provided by the Home Office come to an end. The homes will also add to the borough's affordable housing stock and will be used to meet wider housing needs in the longer term.

It is envisaged that the homes will be acquired by the council's wholly owned Registered Provider of Social Housing, West Norfolk Housing Company Ltd.

The decision regarding acceptance of the funding will be made by Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025 and a Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG must be signed in August.

On 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Cabinet endorsed a Local Lettings Plan to be used to allocate homes acquired through LAHF Round 1, including 2 homes for Afghan families.

It is proposed to extend this letting plan to cover homes for Afghans funded through LAHF Round 3. In accordance with the Council's Social Housing Allocations Policy, this will need to be approved by the West Norfolk Homechoice panel. The remaining 3 temporary accommodation properties will be used to accommodate homelessness households in accordance with Homelessness legislation.



**3. How will this change help the council achieve its corporate business plan objectives (and therefore your Directorate/service objectives)?**

The funding will enable new affordable housing to be delivered which will help to achieve the following Corporate Business Plan Objectives.

**Promote growth and prosperity to benefit West Norfolk. To create job opportunities, support economic growth, develop skills needed locally, encourage housing development and infrastructure that meets local need and promote West Norfolk as a destination,**

- The homes will be new build affordable housing therefore increasing affordable housing stock in the borough .

**Support our communities- To support the health and wellbeing of our communities, help prevent homelessness, assist people with access to benefits advice and ensure there is equal access to opportunities.**

- The homes will enable those from Afghanistan arriving in the UK having fled war torn countries to access longer-term sustainable and appropriate accommodation.
- The homes will provide good quality temporary accommodation for any households facing homelessness and therefore reducing the Borough Council's use of inappropriate and expensive B&B as temporary accommodation. This is a key objective of the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029.

#### 4. What is your evidence of need for change?

- Funding has been allocated by MHCLG to local authorities and supports the Government's commitment to supporting those who have fled conflict and the need to ensure the effective resettlement and integration of refugees into local communities. The funding available is specifically to address this need – which has been identified nationally. The funding has also been made available to reduce local housing pressures and use of expensive and unsuitable accommodation, by providing better quality temporary accommodation to those owed homelessness duties by local authorities and increase and support local housing markets by assisting the delivery of new housing stock or new developments to grow overall housing supply.
- The acceptance of the funding is discretionary but comes with specific terms including the use of the homes to accommodate 4 eligible households from Afghanistan. The new homes will respond to increasing pressures on the council's Housing Services
- Many of these households will face barriers to entering the private rental sector due to requirements for references, credit checks and guarantors that they may be unable to provide due to their recent arrival in the UK. Therefore, a proportion are likely to require housing assistance from the Council. This modest number of additional affordable homes will help to accommodate those in the highest need. Without the new affordable homes, the housing needs of these households would have to be met in other ways. This is likely to be through the existing affordable housing stock. This would increase pressures on the existing stock and disadvantage existing communities.

**5. How will this change deliver improved value for money and/or release efficiency savings?**

- The properties will enable sustainable accommodation to be offered to households at risk of homelessness or currently in unsuitable accommodation. These needs would otherwise have to be met by the existing housing stock. Pressures on the existing housing stock may mean that without these homes, households would have to be placed in inappropriate and expensive temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfast.
- The homes will add to the long-term stock of affordable housing in the borough
- The options under consideration will not have a negative financial impact on the council's capital programme.

**6. What geographical area does this proposal cover?**

- Homes are expected to be acquired within King's Lynn in order to provide access to services such as schools, GPs, transport links etc
- There is an expectation that the homes will be acquired on the Florence Fields Development, a Borough Council development currently under construction but this will depend on property availability and price
- There are no cross-boundary implications

## 7. What is the impact of your proposal?

- An additional 4 affordable homes will be acquired
- 4 households at risk of homelessness or housed in unsuitable accommodation, who will require housing assistance from the council, will be housed in either long term accommodation or good quality temporary accommodation
- Wider housing needs will be met by the homes in the longer term

In considering our proposals we have been mindful of our legal responsibilities, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, which seeks to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. This particular funding is targeted at specific potentially disadvantaged groups in our local community, and it has therefore been necessary to consider how we fulfil our role with regards equalities, as a community leader and as service provider in west Norfolk.

The Equality Act places a requirement on all Local Authorities to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard for the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act
- 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

Having 'due regard' means giving consideration to:

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

There is a risk that this proposal could impact on the relationships between residents who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. However, the proposals have due regard to minimising disadvantage and taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups due to the specific circumstances of those who will benefit from them. The risk is greater if the specific purpose and limitations of the funding are not clearly explained and communicated. Therefore, steps to mitigate potential negative impacts are critical.

**8. What data have you used to support your assessment of the impact of your proposal?**

We are aware that nationally there are Afghan households residing in Home Office Accommodation and require longer term sustainable housing. None of these are currently in the borough.

There are currently 58 households in total in temporary accommodation, 25 of which are in nightly paid accommodation. A key objective of Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is to have no need for B&B accommodation.

**9. What consultation has been undertaken/will need to be undertaken with stakeholders/ groups directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals and how do you intend to use this information to inform the decision?**

Persons from Abroad team at Norfolk County Council will be consulted in relation to the type and location of the 1 homes to be acquired for Afghan households.

Ward members will be notified if homes are acquired in their areas via member briefings.

Wider services such as Police and other statutory services will be made aware of the scheme at a strategic level via the Persons From Abroad Strategic Meetings

## **10. Are there any implications for other service areas?**

Implications of the scheme on other services will be minimal except for the following teams

- New homes will help to relieve pressures on the Housing Needs service area.
- Allocation of homes to Afghan households may increase perception that Allocations Policy is unfair. This may impact on the Housing Needs team and CIC in terms of enquiries.
- Communications team are aware of the scheme and will be kept up to date with any developments to enable proactive communications
- Property Services may assist with the acquisition of homes for the scheme
- The properties are likely to be acquired via the Council's own developments which would have implications for the Corporate Projects team

**11. What impact (either positive or negative) will this change have on different groups of the population?**

It should be noted that the Council will have the responsibility for addressing these housing needs with or without the additional funding. Accessing the additional funding therefore enables existing funding to address other housing pressures within the wider community

- Positive impact based on Race/Nationality – The 1 new home will increase access to sustainable housing for eligible Afghan households at risk of homelessness. The remaining 3 homes will increase access to sustainable for housing for any eligible household requiring temporary accommodation regardless of race or nationality.
- The Afghan households are disadvantaged by barriers to accessing private rented accommodation due to requirements for references, credit checks and guarantors that they may be unable to provide due to their recent arrival in the UK.
- If there are perceptions that Afghan households are gaining favourable treatment ahead of existing communities are allowed to develop, this may lead to increased community tensions. It is possible that this could result in hate crimes against Afghan households.
- The allocation of the new homes to eligible households from Afghanistan is a requirement of the grant funding which will be used to acquire the homes.
- Without the new affordable homes, the housing needs of these households would have to be met in other ways. This is likely to be through the existing affordable housing stock. This would increase pressures on the existing stock and disadvantage existing communities.
- Longer term, the additional housing will become available to support the wider community, increasing the stock of affordable housing in the borough, supporting local families on low income.
- This policy will not impact significantly on the general local housing market
- The policy will not negatively impact on local services as the numbers are small ie 1 household and will be supported by the Persons From Abroad Team to support community integration.

**12. What actions could be taken to mitigate the adverse impacts identified in question 11? Please clearly state if any actions cannot be mitigated.**

Effective communications regarding the scheme to highlight benefits to the wider population of additional affordable housing stock and dispel perceptions of negative effect on existing communities could help to minimise any increase in community tensions.

The Communications team will play a key role and does this by supporting the dissemination of positive stories about how new communities are settling in. For example, how they are supporting themselves, getting jobs, contributing to society. Continuing to highlight the plight that these communities may face in the countries from which they have come can help to foster a sense of community spirit and duty towards new communities. In the case of the LAHF, the communications team is not seeking to publicise the scheme, only to be prepared to answer questions about it as they arise

The Communications team will also monitor social media to gather intelligence on public perceptions



**13. How will you monitor the impact of this change?**

The Strategic Housing Team will complete monitoring returns bimonthly for MHCLG. These can also be used to monitor the impact internally; this is likely to include

- Offers accepted, including bedroom size and whether these are part of the Afghan element or temporary accommodation element.
- Number of properties where contracts exchanged, including bedroom size;
- Number of properties occupied, including bedroom size; •
- Number of families housed, including which resettlement programme they belong to; •
- Number of individuals housed, including which resettlement programme they belong to.
- Total expenditure (including grant and other funding).
- Total committed spend (including grant and other funding); #
- Government grant used

**14. Other Staff Involved in Assessment (including Corporate Equality Group Representatives), and comments from Equality Work Group Reps**

Consultation with and input from the Equalities Working Group have been incorporated into the assessment.

**Assessment Completed By: Karl Patterson**

**Job Title: Housing Development Manager**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

Comments:

Supporting this application for Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 will allow the Borough Council to provide high-quality, affordable housing for Afghan households displaced from their homes, without affecting the current housing support available to those already on the homelessness register. It also extends housing provision to non-Afghan individuals and helps reduce dependence on Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The overall outcome will be beneficial for all members of our communities

L Gayton

## GENERAL EXCEPTION NOTICE TO THE CHAIR OF THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL OF A KEY DECISION TO BE MADE BY THE CABINET NOT PREVIOUSLY INCLUDED ON THE PUBLISHED FORWARD PLAN

Under Regulation 9 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, local authorities are required to publish a Forward Plan of key decisions to be made by the Executive at least 28 clear days before the date of the meeting at which the decision is to be taken.

In the event that the publication of the intention to make a key decision at least 28 days before the meeting is impracticable, the local authority must inform the Chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee (Corporate Performance Panel) of “*the matter about which the decision is to be made*”, in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

The following notice is hereby provided:

Matter about which the decision is to be made
<p><u>Cabinet may make the following key decision at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025:</u></p> <p><i>To accept the additional Local Authority Housing Fund grant of £568,000 and deliver the scheme for provision of housing based on the prospectus for the Local Authority Housing Fund issued by MHCLG.</i></p> <p>For reference, the proposed recommendations are set out below:</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Council will enter a Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG based on the attached prospectus for the Local Authority Housing Fund (see appendix 2). Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities to agree the final terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG</li> <li>2. The Council will accept the total sum of £568,000 offered to the Council by MHCLG under the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver the programme, understanding the external match funding requirements as set out in the report and attached prospectus.</li> <li>3. Cabinet agrees that, subject to agreement from West Norfolk Housing Company, the properties will be acquired by West Norfolk Housing Company, funded by the grant, debt financing and other available funding.</li> <li>4. The Council requests that West Norfolk Housing Company works with the Council to deliver the properties through the fund.</li> <li>5. Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Leader for the acceptance of further funding offered to the Council under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) or successor programme.</li> </ol> <p><b>Reason for Decision</b></p> <p>The recommendations will ensure that the opportunity presented by the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver affordable housing in the borough will be fully realised and will help to relieve pressures on the council’s homelessness services.</p>

#### Reasons why compliance with Regulation 9 was impracticable

The Council's constitution defines a key decision as follows:

*an executive decision which is likely –*

*(a) to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or*

*(b) to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in the area comprising two or more wards and electoral divisions in the Council's areas where significant under a) above is £500,000 or more and significant under b) above is one third of the resident population in a ward.*

MHCLG contacted Strategic Housing in June offering the Council additional LAHF R3 grant of £568,000 for the delivery of 4 extra homes. The relevant acceptance documents for the scheme have to be entered by 29 July 2025, which mean that in the cycle of meetings, this needs to be considered by Cabinet at its 21 July 2025 meeting, accounting for the time taken to deal with any valid call-in. This means that insufficient notice of a key decision has been provided if this decision is made by Cabinet on 21 July 2025.

This notice is to be published 5 clear days before the identified key decision may be taken by Cabinet on 21 July 2025.

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Name                                      Alexa Baker, Monitoring Officer

Date:    11 July 2025

# REPORT TO CABINET

<b>Open/Exempt</b>		Would any decisions proposed :			
<b>Any especially affected Wards</b>	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		<del>YES</del> /NO	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES/ <del>NO</del>	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES/ <del>NO</del>	
Lead Member: Cllr Simon Ring E-mail: <a href="mailto:cllr.simon.ring@west-norfolk.gov.uk">cllr.simon.ring@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a>			Other Cabinet Members consulted: Leader		
			Other Members consulted: Leisure Working Group Corporate Performance Panel		
Lead Officer: Honor Howell Assistant Director Transformation and Change E-mail: <a href="mailto:honor.howell@west-norfolk.gov.uk">honor.howell@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a>			Other Officers consulted: Michelle Drewery – DCEX and S.151 Kate Blakemore – CEX Richard Allen – AD Leisure and Culture Siobhan Cleave – Head of Leisure		
Financial Implications YES/ <del>NO</del>	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES/NO	Statutory Implications YES/NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES/NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES/ <del>NO</del>	Environmental Considerations YES/ <del>NO</del>
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					

Date of meeting: 21 JULY 2025

## RENEWAL PLAN FOR ST JAMES AND OASIS SWIMMING POOLS

### Summary

On 10 December 2024, Cabinet resolved to provide funding to engage consultants to carry out RIBA stage 2 for St James Swimming Pool in King's Lynn and the Oasis in Hunstanton.

Work has since been undertaken to complete RIBA stage 2 for both St James Pool and Oasis, in terms of St James RIBA stage 2 this has included the exploration of where the swimming pool at St James could be relocated to, concluding that Lynnsport is the preferred option.

This report therefore asks Members to consider progressing the option of relocating St James Pool to Lynnsport and a wider refurbishment of this site to RIBA stage 3.

Members are not being asked to consider progressing Oasis at this time to enable essential repair work on the promenade in Hunstanton to be considered by Cabinet and Council later this year alongside the wider Hunstanton Masterplan due to be completed in 2026.

## **Recommendations**

### Cabinet Resolves:

### Recommendations to Full Council:

- Note x2 RIBA stage 2 reports (not full Council)
- Recommendation to progress to RIBA 3 for Lynnsport (not full Council)
- Cabinet recommends to council an amendment to the capital programme of **£1,462,184** to progress to RIBA Stage 3
- Cabinet and council note that a further report at the end of RIBA stage 3 for Lynnsport will be brought forward in December 2025.

### **Reason for Decision**

To progress the design and survey work to support the completion of the business case for a major upgrade of Lynnsport, incorporating a swimming pool to replace St James Swimming Pool which is at the end of its economic life, ensuring continuity of provision of sports, swimming and leisure facilities for the residents of West Norfolk residents but also significantly enhancing the social value and positive impact on resident wellbeing within the community.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 On 10 December 2024, Cabinet resolved to provide funding to engage consultants to carry out RIBA stage 2 for St James Swimming Pool in King's Lynn and the Oasis in Hunstanton, as both facilities are at the coming to end of their economic life and will require significant capital investment to remain open and operating. The swimming pools currently require a subsidy of circa £1.4m which is expected to increase over the next two years.
- 1.2 Against the backdrop of Local Government Reorganisation, it is vital that West Norfolk continue to conduct 'business as usual' and provide health and wellbeing services and facilities to ensure the residents of West Norfolk have access to affordable, modern and fit for purpose facilities which will contribute to increasing activity levels in the borough. Swimming and leisure centres play a vital role in creating active and healthy communities, ensuring the continuation of essential provision for our local health providers and social services, acting as key partners in promoting public health and community welfare, as well as teaching children and adults to swim, a lifesaving skill for residents living in a coastal area.

## **2.0 St James Pool**

- 2.1 In developing the proposals for St James, a feasibility study was undertaken exploring the suitability of various sites both within Kings Lynn Town Centre and Lynnsport.
- 2.2 In evaluating the potential sites for St James the following criteria was considered:
- Whether the site would accommodate a small, medium or large pool
  - If there was parking provision on-site or nearby
  - If the location was suitable for service/delivery access
  - The potential for delivery at pace
  - The likelihood of an approved planning application
  - Council ownership of land/council control/lease arrangement
- 2.3 The study concluded there were no suitable alternative sites for a swimming pool/leisure facility in King's Lynn town centre and that relocating St James Swimming Pool to Lynnsport provided the most viable option. Consideration has been given whether to build the new swimming pool at Lynnsport as an additional 'bolt on' to the existing building or to incorporate the construction of the swimming pool into a major re-build of Lynnsport which is now over 40 years old and requires significant capital investment to modernise the building.

Whilst Lynnsport is a large site, the following factors needed to be considered including:

- The ongoing house building programme at Lynnsport (Lynnsport One is currently underway)
- The development of the Adapted Sports Hub which has been granted planning permission and when built, will be located by the existing hockey pitches
- The Lynnsport playing field is a dedicated 'Field in Trust' and is an important outdoor green space for local residents
- There are existing rights of way and a historic bridlepath on the Lynnsport site
- The age of Lynnsport and the need for modernisation of the facilities
- The stakeholder/partner organisations who are also located at Lynnsport such as the College of West Anglia, the various clubs including the Pelicans Hockey Club. The needs of the local demographics noting that 58% of pupils from disadvantaged areas cannot swim
- Strategic consideration of the latent demand of our area, including a review of facility demand and mix based on population growth and activity trends

- 2.4 It has been concluded that a re-build of Lynnsport on its existing footprint would be the most economical and beneficial option for the council and would provide the most significant return on investment with an uplift in the use of the facilities.

### **3. Oasis, Hunstanton**

In evaluating the potential sites for Oasis the following criteria was considered:

- Whether the site would accommodate a small, medium or large pool
- If there was parking provision on-site or nearby
- If the location was suitable for service/delivery access
- The potential for delivery at pace
- The likelihood of an approved planning application
- Council ownership of land/council control/lease arrangement

- 3.1 As a result various potential site options were investigated as alternatives to the current location of Oasis. The current conclusion is that the existing location of the Oasis presented the best opportunity to re-provide a sport and leisure centre in Hunstanton. However, this is pre-emptive of the completion of the Hunstanton Masterplan as the Oasis is likely to be a material and integral aspect of the masterplan as it continues to be developed.

- 3.2 The Hunstanton promenade, on which Oasis is currently located, is itself the subject of a future cabinet report as essential repair work to the promenade and sea defences are needed. Considering these works, together with the continuing development of the Hunstanton Masterplan due in 2026, it is a unique opportunity to reflect on the options for the Oasis, the wider economy and leisure provision in Hunstanton and ensure any decisions taken support the final strategic vision for the area. It therefore is prudent to await the outcome of the masterplan before committing to further development of the business plan for the Oasis.

- 3.3 It therefore feels sensible to pause the work on Oasis until the promenade works are better understood and the Masterplan for Hunstanton is completed.

- 3.4 Members are asked to note that the planned capital programme for the Oasis, i.e. new lockers and ongoing maintenance will continue in the intervening period.

### **4.0 Next Steps**

- 4.1 The original Cabinet decision agreed to fund the feasibility studies for St James Swimming Pool and Oasis to RIBA Stage Two. This work has now been completed with potential designs produced for consultation

with stakeholders as the project progresses. Please see attached the two RIBA stage 2 reports (Appendix 1 & Appendix 2.)

- 4.2 To continue develop the proposal around moving the swimming water currently provided for at St James to Lynnsport, further surveys and design works are required which will, in turn, give the council more detail to enable it to make an informed decision on whether to progress to the final pre-construction gateway (RIBA stage 4). A Stage 3 report, leading into Stage 4 will provide an interim step before committing to full 'cost certainty' which includes detailed design/surveys/costs and additional fees.

- 4.3 At the completion of Stage 3 for Lynnsport, the Council will receive:

- Indicative layouts / designs (informed by surveys)
- Itemised build cost plan
- Total project costs
- Essential survey reports
- Equipment designs and visuals
- Outline Strategy
- Wider public and stakeholder engagement and responding to local need
- Business case to support the proposals

This will give the council the level of information required to make an informed decision on whether to progress to the final pre-construction gateway.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The cost to progress to RIBA Stage 3 for Lynnsport is **£1,462,184**. This cost will form part of the overall estimated cost for the construction works at Lynnsport. These costs have been based on Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) sqm costs for building the facilities designed. This cost may be funded from a review of the Council's existing earmarked reserves to be undertaken early in 2025/2026, to follow the closedown of the previous financial year. This will require the re-prioritisation of the existing earmarked reserves to identify where there is no planned commitment for reserves or adverse risk to the Council of diverting lower priority funds to this project.

- 5.2 **The overall cost of the project is currently estimated to be £46m.**

- 5.3 During the next phase, the funding options and affordability will be considered. This work will include modelling the financial business case for Lynnsport if the pool water is moved there alongside wider renovations, work is also underway to identify potential sources of funding



## **6. Personnel Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct personnel implications identifiable at this stage. Project management will be undertaken by the consultants and overseen by the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Executive in consultation with the Member Working Group.
- 6.2 The council has a significant number of projects in progress, both capital and operational as well as Local Government Reorganisation which will impact of the resources available to deliver further projects. As the council moves forward with the feasibility of the leisure facilities investment, further consideration of the resource capacity available will need to take place. In this respect the projects will need to be phased, and it is unlikely they can both be taken forward simultaneously.

## **7. Environmental Considerations**

- 7.1 The design of Lynnsport will incorporate improved energy efficiency, renewable energy and general reductions in our carbon footprint. There are no specific environmental considerations within this report.

## **8 Statutory Considerations**

- 8.1 There are no statutory considerations.

## **9. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1 Pre-screening form is attached.

## **9 Risk Management Implications**

- 9.1 Both St James and Oasis are nearing the end of their economic life. Not taking action to invest in capital works to the existing facilities or consider alternative provision could result in the closure of either facility.
- 9.2 For Oasis this risk will be mitigated while the project is paused by continuing with planned capital programme maintenance work to ensure the facility remains open and operating.

## **10. Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted**

- 10.1 None

## **11 Background Papers**

- 11.1 [Cabinet Report 10.12.2024](#)

## Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Leisure Facilities Capital Investment Plan				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	New		Existing		
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.  Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	Capital investment in the potential relocation and rebuild of St James Swimming Pool to Lynnsport and major improvement works to Oasis.				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>	Portfolio Lead, Leader of the Council, Member Working Group, Corporate Leadership Team. Initial consultation with stakeholders at each location.				
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>				
<p><b>1.</b> Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><b><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></b></p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			x	
	Disability			x	
	Sex			x	
	Gender Re-assignment			x	
	Marriage/civil partnership			x	
	Pregnancy & maternity			x	
	Race			x	
	Religion or belief			x	
	Sexual orientation			x	
	Armed forces community			x	
	Care leavers			x	
	Health inequalities*			x	
Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			x		

*For more information on health inequalities please visit <a href="#">The King's Fund</a>					
Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:					
<b>Question</b>		<b>Answer</b>	<b>Comments</b>		
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?		Yes / No			
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?		Yes / No			
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?  If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section		Yes / No	<b>Actions:</b>  <b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b> .....		
If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:  <b>Decision agreed by EWG member:</b> .....					
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?		Yes / No	<b>Please provide brief summary:</b>		
<b>Assessment completed by:</b>  <b>Name</b>		<b>Honor Howell</b>			

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Assistant Director, Transformation and Change</b>		
<b>Date completed</b>	<b>19.06.25</b>		
<b>Reviewed by EWG member</b>		<b>Date</b>	

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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