

## 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		YES	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Jo Rust E-mail: <a href="mailto:cldr.jo.rust@west-norfolk.gov.uk">cldr.jo.rust@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a>		Other Cabinet Members consulted:			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officer: Andy King E-mail: <a href="mailto:andy.king@west-norfolk.gov.uk">andy.king@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a> Direct Dial:01553 616422		Other Officers consulted: Nikki Patton Jeannette Hollingsworth			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications YES	Equality Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre- screening	Risk Management Implications NO	Environmental Considerations NO

Date of meeting: 24th February 2026 (for Cabinet 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026)

## PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR POLICY; TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY

### Summary

#### Recommendation

The Panel Resolves: To endorse the Temporary Accommodation Policy and Private Rented Sector policies, to be presented to Cabinet 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026.

#### Reason for Decision

The new policies fulfil the council's legal duties, align with the borough's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, align with the national Homelessness Strategy and seek to make the fairest use of a limited local resource.

## 1 Background

### 1.1 Introduction

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) and Temporary Accommodation (TA) policies have been drafted in line with the council's [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), adopted in October 2024, which aims to:

- “Ensure that people who are homeless are [...] placed into suitable, cost-effective accommodation where necessary” (p.19)

- “Avoid and reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast and nightly-paid accommodation” (p.19)
- “Develop opportunities for homeless households to find and sustain PRS accommodation” (p.25)

The policies also align with the government’s recently published Homelessness Strategy: [A National Plan To End Homelessness](#).

The policies set out our general principles for procuring and allocating PRS and temporary accommodation.

**At their core, both policies set out what we are already doing to support people into temporary and PRS accommodation.**

**As such, the policies do not represent a shift in thinking** but provide clarity to customers and partners about what they should expect from the council’s Housing Needs Service.

Nevertheless, both policies are necessary for statutory reasons.

- **The PRS policy** is necessary to enable us to discharge our homelessness duties into the private rented sector. Again, this does not represent a change of policy – we continue to seek to maximise use of social and affordable homes for homeless households – but provides us with an additional tool to support people to find safe, sustainable accommodation. The legal background is set out in section 2 of the policy.
- **The TA policy** is necessary to set out our position on the occasions where we need to place homeless households outside of the borough of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk. It sets out our firm commitment to prioritise local placements but explains our approach when this is not possible. This is in line with the government’s [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#) 17.49-17.65

For ease of reference, I have divided this report into paragraphs that relate to:

- The PRS policy
- The TA policy
- Both policies

## **1.2 Consultation Measures and Methods**

Both policies have been developed in line with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which was in turn developed in consultation with internal and external partners, residents and people with lived experience of homelessness.

Additionally:

- **PRS Policy:** Following the launch of the strategy, we developed a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (consisting of key internal and

external partners) and a subgroup focused on homelessness prevention<sup>1</sup>. This group continues to discuss and develop its approach to engaging with PRS landlords – the policy is borne out of this approach.

- **TA Policy:** We produced a survey for all current and many previous occupants of temporary accommodation. We received 13 responses (approximately one fifth of the number of households using temporary accommodation at the time of the survey) and used comments and data from these responses to inform our approach.

### 1.3 Key areas of change

#### PRS Policy

The PRS policy enables us to offer PRS accommodation as a means of *ending* our homelessness duty to a household – that is, as a final offer. This will allow us to resolve some homelessness cases where a household may be excluded under the [Homechoice allocation policy](#) – or where a PRS offer may be a more suitable and timelier offer<sup>2</sup>.

The policy outlines the steps we will take to ensure offers are suitable for homeless households: safe, affordable, available and sustainable.

Please note:

- We are *currently* able to offer PRS accommodation to homeless households and will continue to do so.
- We *continue* to prioritise the procurement of affordable and social rented properties.
- We *anticipate* that PRS offers of accommodation to discharge homelessness duty will be rare. PRS accommodation continues to be unaffordable for many low-income families<sup>3</sup>. To give an indication, **based on current trends and caseloads, the number of PRS offers to households under this policy could be in the region of five per year.**

#### TA policy

The TA policy clarifies what we are already doing under the implementation of our strategy. It confirms that:

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<sup>1</sup> Current members include representatives from: Sustainable Housing Pathway Service (SHPS), Shelter, Citizens Advice Norfolk, HM Prison and Probation Service, MAP UK, Freebridge Community Housing, King's Lynn Foodbank and Norfolk County Council, plus the council's Housing Needs, Housing Standards and Community Safety teams.

<sup>2</sup> An example of this could be where a household needs a large property that is not readily available on the register. In the last three months, just four 4-bed properties were let through the register, with 20 households with a 4-bed need in 'high band'.

<sup>3</sup> As a snapshot: at the time of writing, there were no two-bedroom or four-bedroom properties, and there was just one three-bedroom property, within a 5-mile radius of King's Lynn within £50 of the monthly Local Housing Allowance rate (source: Rightmove).

- We will always prioritise the procurement of TA within our district – utilising out-of-area placements only where there is a clear and unavoidable need.<sup>4</sup>
- We will work actively towards ending the use of nightly-paid and Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- We will take a risk-based approach to accommodating people sleeping rough as outlined in section 5 of the policy.
- We will take particular care when placing people who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse, as well as people who have left care, prison and hospital settings. Wherever possible, we will adopt a ‘prevention first’ approach.

## **1.4 Implementation**

**For both policies**, implementation will commence immediately after adoption. As part of the implementation, we will use the structure of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Partnership to communicate our approach to partners. We will also refresh the relevant sections of the council’s website. There is a wider piece of work being carried out to refresh our advice letters and other key communications, which aligns with this approach.

## **2 Options Considered**

### **PRS Policy**

There is no duty for a local authority to have a written PRS policy – so one option considered was to not have one. However, without a PRS policy, we are unable to make a final offer of accommodation to a household excluded from the housing register. This means that such a household could continue to refuse offers of accommodation, our homeless duty could continue indefinitely, and the cost to the council of temporary accommodation could continue unchecked.

We would recommend that Cabinet adopts a PRS policy.

### **TA Policy**

Our options are:

- a) To proceed with adopting a policy. In doing so, we would:
  - Provide a clearer rationale to customers and stakeholders for the work we do
  - Set out clearly the circumstances under which we will offer temporary accommodation and the steps we will take to support homeless households
  - Set out clearly our direction of travel in terms of the procurement of TA, in line with our strategy.
- b) To continue as we currently are, without a written policy in place. However, this risks:

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<sup>4</sup> We continue to bid into the Local Authority Housing Fund to improve the supply of interim accommodation – any successful bids will be submitted to members for consideration.

- Potential legal challenge if we had no choice but to place a household outside of borough
- Potential reputational damage if we do not align our practices and policies with the content of our published Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Potential additional scrutiny from central government if our policies and practices do not align with its strategy (noting that “Families in B&B” forms one of its key performance indicators for local authorities).

We would recommend that Cabinet adopts a TA policy (option a).

We have sought an approach that balances the financial impact of offering temporary accommodation with the human impact of providing safe, sustainable accommodation for people who need it. This is in line with the Government’s Homelessness Code of Guidance, its new [Homelessness Strategy](#) and the council’s own Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

**Both policies** align with the value of “transparency” as set out in our strategy: “we will make it clear why we are doing things [and] what we’re doing” (p.10). Although there is some technical detail in both policies, I have attempted to write it in a plain, accessible way for its intended audiences. We will produce flowcharts to accompany the approved policies.

### **3 Policy Implications**

#### **PRS policy**

As set out above, the policy enables the council to discharge its homelessness duties into the private rented sector.

#### **TA policy**

As set out above, the policy clarifies our approach to procuring temporary accommodation as well as clarifying the circumstances under which we will make an offer of accommodation.

As stated above, **neither policy represents a shift in thinking** – they aim to provide clarity to customers and partners about what they should expect from the council’s Housing Needs Service.

### **4 Financial Implications**

#### **PRS Policy**

The policy outlines the circumstances under which we will support homeless households with a grant towards their rent deposit or rent in advance. The policy represents a slight shift in thinking, in that we will provide grants as a default (unless an interest-free loan is clearly affordable).

Please note, though, that all loans and grants are financed from a ringfenced central government grant – the Homelessness Prevention Grant – so there is no direct financial implication to the council

## **TA Policy**

There are no direct financial implications under this policy – however, an approach that minimises B&B and nightly paid accommodation will achieve savings for the council.

A forthcoming report to the Environment and Communities Panel will summarise the work of the council and its partners towards delivering on the aims of its homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. A summary of the work already taken towards reducing TA spend will be included in this report.

## **5 Personnel Implications**

None

## **6 Environmental Considerations**

None

## **7 Statutory Considerations**

**For both policies**, the legal background is laid out in section 2

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

(Pre screening report template attached)

## **9 Risk Management Implications**

**The PRS policy** reduces the risk of the council being unable to discharge its legal duties to homeless households, as described above – which includes the possibility of legal challenge and reputational risk.

**The TA policy** reduces the risk of challenge to the suitability (or refusal) of TA offers, as well as reducing the reputational risk inherent in the overuse of B&B and nightly paid accommodation.

**Both policies** seek to reduce the risk of not fulfilling the objectives set out in our strategy to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping.

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

None

## **11 Background Papers**

- [A National Plan To End Homelessness](#). - GOV.UK

- The King's Lynn and West Norfolk [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029](#) – BCKLWN
- [Homechoice allocation policy](#) – BCKLWN
- [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#) – GOV.UK

## 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	Temporary Accommodation Policy Private Rented Sector Policy				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? ( <i>tick as appropriate</i> )	New	YES	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.	<p>The Private Rented Sector (PRS) and Temporary Accommodation (TA) policies have been drafted in line with the council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, adopted in October 2024, which aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Ensure that people who are homeless are [...] placed into suitable, cost-effective accommodation where necessary" (p.19)</li> <li>• "Avoid and reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast and nightly-paid accommodation" (p.19)</li> <li>• "Develop opportunities for homeless households to find and sustain PRS accommodation" (p.25)</li> </ul>				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only ( <i>identify stakeholders consulted with</i> )	<p>Sustainable Housing Pathway Service (SHPS), Shelter, Citizens Advice Norfolk, HM Prison and Probation Service, MAP UK, Freebridge Community Housing, King's Lynn Foodbank and Norfolk County Council, plus the council's Housing Needs, Housing Standards and Community Safety teams.</p> <p>People with lived experience: 13 respondents to survey re: Temporary Accommodation – plus 27 people who contributed towards the creation of the overarching homelessness and rough sleeping strategy</p>				
<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>		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	

<i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit <a href="#">The King's Fund</a></i>	Armed forces community				
	Care leavers	x			
	Health inequalities*	x			
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)	x			

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

The policy sets out our position in terms of assisting people to access temporary and PRS accommodation. It sits underneath the council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which aims to 'end homelessness, person by person'. The policy aims to have a particular positive impact on the following groups of people, who are statistically more likely to experience homelessness:

- People with disabilities
- People leaving care
- People leaving other institutional settings such as prisons and hospitals
- People with enduring health conditions
- Low-income households.

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	Although we anticipate that the policy will have a positive impact on certain groups, the policy is the same irrespective of household characteristic.	
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	As above. Whilst we will seek to procure accommodation that has good transport links and community facilities, this will not be limited to particular wards.	
<p><b>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 3 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</b></p> <p><b>Decision agreed by EWG member: .....</b></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	Yes / No	<b>Actions:</b>  n/a	
		<b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b> .....	
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> <b>Name</b>	Andy King		
<b>Job title</b>	Senior Housing Manager		
<b>Date completed</b>	21 January 2026		
<b>Reviewed by EWG member</b>	C. Mariott 	<b>Date</b>	16.02.26

✓ 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))