

## NOTICE OF MEETING

**Meeting:** HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

**Date and Time:** WEDNESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2018, AT 6.00 PM\*

**Place:** THE BRADBURY ROOM, APPLETREE COURT,  
LYNDHURST

**Telephone enquiries to:** Lyndhurst (023) 8028 5000  
023 8028 5588 - Ask for Karen Wardle  
Email: karen.wardle@nfdc.gov.uk

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

**\*Members of the public may speak in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme:**

- (a) immediately before the meeting starts, on items within the Panel's terms of reference which are not on the public agenda; and/or**
  - (b) on individual items on the public agenda, when the Chairman calls that item.**
- Speeches may not exceed three minutes. Anyone wishing to speak should contact the name and number shown above.**

**Bob Jackson**  
**Chief Executive**

Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7PA  
[www.newforest.gov.uk](http://www.newforest.gov.uk)

**This Agenda is also available on audio tape, in Braille, large print and digital format**

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## AGENDA

### **Apologies**

#### **1. MINUTES**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018 as a correct record.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To note any declarations of interest made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interest must also be specified.

Members are asked to discuss any possible interests with Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

To note any issues raised during the public participation period.

**4. HOMELESSNESS TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT (Pages 1 - 14)**

To consider the report of the Chairman of the Homelessness Task and Finish Group.

**5. HOUSING STRATEGY (Pages 15 - 32)**

To consider the draft Housing Strategy.

**6. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2019 - 2023**

(Pages 33 - 54)

To consider the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

**7. HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY (Pages 55 - 122)**

To consider the draft Housing Allocation Policy.

**8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE**

An opportunity for the Portfolio Holders to provide an update to the Panel on any issues.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 123 - 124)**

To consider the Panel's future work programme, and make changes where necessary.

**10. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

To:

**Councillors**

**Councillors**

S P Davies (Chairman)  
D M S Poole (Vice-  
Chairman)  
Mrs L D Cerasoli  
Ms K V Crisell  
Mrs P J Lovelace

N S Penman  
Miss A Sevier  
M A Steele  
Mrs C V Ward  
Mrs P A Wyeth

# **HOMELESSNESS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

## **REPORT – NOVEMBER 2018**

**By Cllr Jill Cleary  
Portfolio Holder, Housing Services  
and  
Chairman of Task & Finish Group**



## **Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Task and Finish Group Membership and Terms of Reference
3. The work of the Task and Finish Group
4. Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group
5. Summary

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is on the increase, both nationally and locally. Despite being in one of the most beautiful parts of the country, the District has a significant and increasing number of homeless households. It is fundamentally important for us, as a Council, to do all that we can to improve the housing circumstances of homeless households.



Homelessness isn't just about people sleeping on the streets. There are many people in our District, whilst not rough sleeping, who do not have a home of their own or who have lost their home through no fault of their own.

Homelessness isn't just a housing problem. Not having a decent home adversely affects all areas of life, from your health, to your achievement at school if you are a child, and your ability to get work if you are an adult.

People end up homeless for a wide variety of reasons:-

- When family relationships break down, often one person is forced to move out without anywhere to go.
- Private tenancies frequently last for only 6 months or a year, and can come to an end because they become unaffordable through loss of employment.
- Domestic violence victims can find themselves homeless when having to flee from danger.
- Vulnerability through health issues can result in a person not being able to keep a roof over their heads.

Every homeless person's situation is unique and is usually complex. The District Council is determined to do what it can to help improve the lives of homeless households in our District. In my role as Housing Services Portfolio Holder, I have observed at first hand the distress and suffering that is so often brought about by someone finding themselves homeless. I have made it my mission to improve the lives of those in this situation and by seeing what more the Council can do to help. In order to do this, we, as a Council, need to understand the issues and problems associated with being homeless and therefore I called for a Task and Finish Group to be set up to lay the foundation for this very important work and to come up with recommendations to help improve the lives of those who find themselves without a home.

**Jill Cleary**  
**Portfolio Holder for Housing Services**

## **2. TASK AND FINISH GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

The Task and Finish Group's members are:

**Cllr Mrs J Cleary (Chairman)**  
**Cllr Mrs S Bennison**  
**Cllr S Clarke**  
**Cllr Ms K Crisell**  
**Cllr D Harrison**  
**Cllr D Poole**  
**Cllr Miss A Sevier**  
**Cllr M Steele**  
**Cllr S Davies**  
**Cllr S Rippon-Swaine**

The Group is supported by the following officers:-

**Grainne O'Rourke, Executive Head for Housing**  
**Richard Knott, Service Manager – Housing Options**  
**Brian Byrne, Service Manager – Housing Estates, Management and Support**  
**Kevin Green, Principal Accountant**  
**Dambu Tenner, Solicitor**  
**Karen Wardle, Committee Administrator**

**The Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group are as follows:-**

- To gain an appreciation of the reasons for homelessness within the District, the support services available and the effectiveness of these.
- To identify and develop measures to address the current increasing levels of homelessness within the District.
- To make recommendations to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Cabinet as required.

### 3. THE WORK OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Group met on a regular basis between March and September 2018, as set out in the table below. The topics discussed at each meeting are shown.

Date	Subject
23 March 2018	Terms of Reference agreed, context setting (through officer presentations on facts and figures of homelessness) and establishment of a work programme.
5 April 2018	Site visit to 6 emergency temporary accommodation premises in the District (B&Bs and hostels).
1 May 2018	Feedback on site visits, consider how Council allocates its Council properties and feedback from the first Multi-Agency Forum for Homelessness.
8 June 2018	Review of Allocation Policy involving case studies showing practical examples of how properties are allocated, waiting list and facts and figures of temporary accommodation. Also discussed scope for the Council to source more of its own emergency temporary accommodation and current cost of provision of B&B accommodation.
10 July 2018	Consultation from HCC on reducing budget for Homelessness support across Hampshire and implications for NFDC. Discussion about the emerging Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy.
7 September 2018	Statistical update on Homelessness. Case study on a Day in the Life of the Homelessness Team, emerging draft Allocation Policy, Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy.

As can be seen from the above table, the Group met 6 times between March and September 2018. The Group's work covered the following topics:-

- Definition of when a person is statutorily homeless; facts and figures of homeless households in the New Forest District Council area
- Duty of local authorities, including under the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Processes and procedures when dealing with homelessness
- The cost of homelessness
- Use of bed and breakfast and other accommodation
- The Council's responsibilities towards rough sleepers

- New ways of working
- Allocation Policy/How to allocate housing to those most in need
- Emerging Housing Strategy, Allocation Policy and Homelessness Strategy



## **4. KEY AREAS LOOKED AT BY THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

### **Key Area 1 - Statistical facts and figures of homeless households in the District**

A great deal of information was provided to the Task and Finish Group on the facts and figures of homeless households in our District.

Between April 2018, when the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force, and the start of September 2018, 909 new 'homeless' cases had been opened by the Housing Options Team. Whilst not all of these cases will require full support and ultimately housing provided by the Council, the numbers of homeless households presenting to the Council are increasing year on year.

In the past the Council had a legal responsibility to rehouse approximately 100 or so homeless households per year. However, it was envisaged that this figure was likely to be nearer 200 per year as we go into the future. The figure of 909 mentioned in the paragraph above is significantly higher than our expectations. Homelessness, both nationally and locally, is on the increase.

Since new management arrangements were put in place in Housing, there is now accurate recording of all information. A new computer system was introduced in April 2018, which has been a significant benefit in ensuring that proper records are kept of numbers of homeless households and the Council's work with those households.

The Homelessness Reduction Act requires the Council to prepare a personal housing plan and to identify reasonable steps to help homeless households to resolve their housing situation. Under the Act, there is a real emphasis on prevention in the first instance to see what can be done to avoid a person from becoming homeless. If that is not possible, there are a series of steps to be taken by the Council before a 'full duty to rehouse' applies. Ultimately, the Council has a legal duty to secure housing for those local households who are homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless.

The Task and Finish Group was appraised of the implications of the Government's ongoing welfare reform and the 'go live' in the New Forest of "Full Service Universal Credit" in September, with migration of existing claimants due to begin in 2020. This could increase the numbers of households presenting to the Council as homeless due to problems with rent payments and affordability of accommodation.

The Group was pleased to see the positive and proactive approach of the Housing Options Team which has a newly appointed Service Manager. New systems, procedures and processes have been put in place to ensure the Council discharges its legal responsibilities to homeless households to a high standard. Staffing resources need to be kept under review and the Group is aware of the significant extra resources already provided to the existing Team to ensure they are able to cope with the rising demand for homelessness services.

### **Recommendation 1 from the Task and Finish Group**

**That the resources required by the Housing Options Team are kept under review to ensure that the Council is able to meet its obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.**

## **Key Area 2 – The use of temporary and emergency temporary accommodation**

On 5 April the Group visited various locations both within and outside the District to view a number of hostels (owned by the Council) and bed & breakfast accommodation (provided by private external providers), used as temporary and emergency temporary accommodation..

The Council makes significant use of B&B accommodation to temporarily house homeless households (in priority need) when they have nowhere else to go. The Council's use and cost of B&B accommodation is rising every year. In 2017/18, the Council spent £800,000 on B&B accommodation for homeless households. Whilst some of this spend was recouped in benefit, the overall cost of emergency temporary accommodation is significant.

The prolonged use of B&B accommodation, for families in particular, is unsatisfactory. Significant efforts are being made to reduce the length of time families have to stay in such accommodation. Often, particular problems arise because the accommodation may not be close to schools (where children are involved), or may be far away from services required by a member of the homeless household, for example, Inclusion Services (for those affected by substance or alcohol misuse).

The Group also looked at some of the Council's hostels where households were placed following a stay in B&B accommodation pending a longer term housing solution. The hostels owned by the Council (21 units in total) were occupied by homeless households who had been there for many years, some approaching nearly 10 years. This in itself created a problem because once a hostel place was filled, it was unlikely to become free for a significant number of years, because of the long wait until more settled accommodation became available through the Council's waiting list.

In light of this, it was clear to the Group that it required a thorough understanding and consideration of how the Council allocates its Council stock. At the same time, the Group questioned whether the Council could provide its own emergency temporary accommodation throughout the District rather than relying solely on private B&B accommodation. This was an area under active consideration by officers.

### **Recommendation 2 from the Task and Finish Group**

**That the Council seeks to provide more of its own emergency temporary accommodation rather than relying solely on private B&B accommodation and that a thorough review of how the Council undertakes its allocation to Council housing is carried out.**

### **Key Area 3 – Allocation Policy – how the Council allocates its Council stock**

The Council's current Allocation Policy was last reviewed in 2011. The Task and Finish Group were in agreement that a review is required to ensure it is fit for purpose and recognises the duties the Council is under to rehouse a significant number of homeless families every year.

Across the District Council's area, 300 to 400 properties become available for allocation every year, whilst there are over 3,000 people on the waiting list for council housing.

At the present time, essentially all applicants wishing to apply for council housing enter the waiting list at Band 3 level, which is referred to as 'Priority' level. The Group considered that the description of 'Priority' was rather misleading, as many of those individuals could be waiting for up to 10 years for a council property.

The Group considered it was unsustainable for the current rules of allocation to remain for a number of reasons:-

1. There was a significant number of homeless households spending too long in temporary accommodation, whilst waiting for more settled accommodation. This meant that the temporary units they were in were not freed up for other homeless families who were presenting themselves to the Council.
2. With everyone being put into essentially one band – 'Priority', the factor which determined who is successful in obtaining a Council property is the time spent on the waiting list. The Group considered this needed to change and greater emphasis given to those most in housing need.
3. The term 'Priority' was confusing as it seemed to suggest a faster route to securing Council housing when, in reality, a significant wait, sometimes for up to 10 years, was likely to be involved.
4. The current banding, where essentially everyone was placed in Band 3 – Priority, does not address sufficiently the increasing numbers of homeless households to whom the Council owes a duty to secure suitable accommodation.

### **Recommendation 3 from the Task and Finish Group**

**To review the Council's Allocation Policy to ensure a banding system with clear criteria attached to each band recognising that priority should be given to those most in housing need in the District.**

## **Key Area 4 – Emerging Housing Strategy**

The Group was very interested in being appraised of the Council's emerging Housing Strategy. Whilst not directly concerned with the Group's specific Terms of Reference (which centred around homelessness), the Council's strategic approach was of real interest to the Group. The Group was pleased to see a desire to accelerate the Council's build and acquisition of additional Council properties. This would have positive implications for those households most in need as more houses would be available to meet that need.

The Group recognised that the loss of nearly 5000 Council homes since the 1980's through Right to Buy had created a huge reduction in the supply of rented homes in our District. Such rented homes were desperately needed for those families who could not afford to buy a home of their own on the open market.

The Group was also pleased to see that the Council would be working with partners, including developers, to maximise the number of affordable homes in the District. As Housing Authority, the Council has to look outwards and support the Local Plan ambition to build over 10,500 homes over the next 20 years. This was an objective strongly supported by the Task and Finish Group.

## **Recommendation 4 from the Task and Finish Group**

**To support the emerging Housing Strategy and welcome, in particular, the Council's acceleration of its new build/acquisition programme to create greater numbers of affordable houses in the District**

## **Key Area 5 – Homelessness Strategy**

The Task and Finish Group was mindful that the last Homelessness Strategy was agreed in 2003. The homeless situation between 2003 and the current day was very different. It was vitally important that the Council had an up to date Homelessness Strategy to deal with all aspects of homelessness, including prevention strategies to prevent a person from becoming homeless in the first place and to deal with rough sleeping. The homelessness situation, both nationally and locally, was increasing and it is important that the Council looks at all aspects of homelessness, including finding innovative solutions to help some of the most vulnerable in our society.

The emerging Homelessness Strategy will build on the work of the Task and Finish Group and will form an important link with the new Housing Strategy to tackle wider housing issues.

The Group considered it important that the new Homelessness Strategy set out clearly what homeless applicants can expect from the Council and how the Council will improve outcomes for homeless households. It should also cover how the Council will prevent homelessness in the first place and, if that is not possible, how we will discharge our responsibilities to a high standard.

The Strategy should also cover how the Council aims to reduce its reliance on external B&B accommodation and how we will provide more of our own accommodation. It will also cover our ambition to increase our stock levels and achieve better access to the private sector.

The Group was also very keen to ensure that the emerging Homelessness Strategy set out the Council's approach to partnership working to include the newly set up Homelessness Multi-Agency Forum.

## **Recommendation 5 from the Task and Finish Group**

**That the Council develops a new 'fit for purpose' Homelessness Strategy which recognises that the homelessness situation today is very different to 2003 when the last Homelessness Strategy was approved.**

## **Key Area 6 – Partnership Working**

At the start of our work on homelessness, the Task and Finish Group was very mindful that partnership working was key to achieving positive outcomes for homeless households. Often homeless people had a number of issues and problems, and a multi-agency approach was required to enable them to get back on their feet.

Whilst there are many bodies that come together to help homeless households in the Forest, it was recognised that the support was not always joined up. Sometimes, one body was not aware of the help that the homeless household was receiving from another body, which could cause confusion and wasted resources. It was this desire to see a better 'joined up' approach to homelessness that promoted the establishment of the Homelessness Multi-Agency Forum.

The Group was very pleased that the new Homelessness Multi-Agency Forum had now met 3 times since its inception in March 2018. All meetings have been very well attended. The attendees were made up of public sector bodies, volunteers, church groups and other advisory services. For the first time, the right people have been brought together to collectively tackle the issues of homelessness in the Forest.

Some members of the Task and Finish Group had also attended the Homelessness Multi-Agency Forum and had found the various presentations extremely helpful. To date, there have been presentations from various volunteer groups and other bodies on the following:

- The use of foodbanks in the District
- The role of Two Saints in the District (as homeless support through Community care workers and drop in sessions)
- The role of Nightstop – a charity run voluntary scheme where homeless people were offered a bed for the night

The Group was also keen to see a Landlords' Forum established to forge better relations between the Council and private landlords. Private landlords are an important group which play a significant role in assisting the Council with its 'prevention' duties. Whilst relationships with a number of private landlords are good, the Group considered that a wider, more inclusive approach through a structured forum would be beneficial in building better relationships with landlords.

## **Recommendation 6 from the Task and Finish Group**

**To continue the work of the Homelessness Multi-Agency Forum and to set up a new Landlords' Forum**

## **5. SUMMARY**

I consider that the Task and Finish Group has gained an invaluable insight into the plight of the homeless and the difficulties they face when finding themselves without a home. The recommendations of this Task and Finish Group will, I believe, make a real difference and I hope they will be accepted.

I would like to finish my report by thanking Members of the Task and Finish Group who have dedicated a great deal of time over the last 6 months to this important work. My thanks also to the officers who have helped us understand the issues and who provide the necessary information to enable us to do our work.

**Jill Cleary**  
**Portfolio Holder for Housing Services**

**12 November 2018**

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## **HOUSING STRATEGY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report proposes a new Housing Strategy to cover all aspects of housing in the District from the Council's role in facilitating the delivery of over 10,000 new homes to 2036 (as per the draft Local Plan), to its own build and acquisitions programme and plans to accelerate the increased supply of much needed affordable housing.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 An earlier draft of the proposed Housing Strategy was subject to consultation between September and November 2017. The new proposed Housing Strategy takes into account the findings of the consultation and reflects changes in national guidance and housing legislation during the intervening period including the emerging policies and targets that are now contained within the draft submission local plan (2016 – 2036).

### **3. THE NEW PROPOSED HOUSING STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The new proposed Housing Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The aim of the Housing Strategy is to create balanced communities for residents of the New Forest District, providing a range of housing options that are affordable and sustainable. The strategy considers all aspects of the Council's involvement with market and affordable housing.
- 3.3 The Housing Strategy identifies four key priorities:
- 3.3.1 To accelerate and maximise future housing development that meets local need and leads to sustainable growth;
  - 3.3.2 To increase the supply of high quality affordable homes through an ambitious council house building and acquisitions programme;
  - 3.3.3 To improve the housing circumstances of those within our communities most in housing need;
  - 3.3.4 To make the best use of housing to meet the housing needs of local people, including supporting a strong and quality private rented sector.
- 3.4 The Housing Strategy sets out the various housing challenges that are being faced within the New Forest district and the importance of achieving future housing growth that delivers the right homes in the right places. Direct connections are made to the council's corporate plan objectives, economic development and the draft local plan with its target of 10,500 new homes by 2036.

- 3.5 High priority is given to council house building and the expansion of the current development program to include homes for social rent, affordable rent and shared-ownership. A mixed tenure program will not only enable the council to address a broader range of housing needs and aspirations; it will also enable the council to effectively compete in the market alongside other Registered Providers and to extend financial capacity. As stated in the proposed Housing Strategy, a mixed tenure program will make it possible to fund up to 600 new affordable homes up to 2026 - a figure that could be increased as a result of additional government funding and optimized borrowing.
- 3.6 Plans are in place to review all council owned land and property with residential development potential (including housing and non-housing assets) however it is generally recognized that the Council has a very limited supply of land suitable for affordable housing development. To achieve the delivery objectives, the Council will therefore need to identify all opportunities to acquire additional development land, undertake development on its own land, transact with third party developers and project manage new developments. This substantial and important work will lead to a step change in the Council's existing affordable housing delivery program and will require additional resources.
- 3.7 Through its various key priorities the Housing Strategy highlights the council's commitment to supporting different types and tenures of market and affordable housing from the growth of the private rented sector to self-builders, and the needs of older people seeking to downsize. For those who cannot buy on the open market and who are unlikely to be a priority for secure social housing, the council is proposing to introduce new-build shared-ownership, enabling buyers to purchase a share-interest with a mortgage (typically 40%) whilst paying a subsidised rent on the remainder. Other genuinely affordable and accessible intermediate housing models are to be considered and piloted where appropriate for lower income households who can afford to rent but are struggling to save a deposit (e.g. Rent to Buy). Designing, implementing, and managing these new initiatives and activities will require additional resources.
- 3.8 Progress of the Housing Strategy will monitored through annual reports to the Housing Scrutiny and Overview Panel.

#### **4. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 To scale-up the development program and optimise affordable housing delivery as set out in the Housing Strategy, it is anticipated that three additional posts will be required within the Housing Development and Strategy Team:-
- a) a 'New Business' Development Manager/Surveyor to identify, secure, promote and deliver new sites;
  - b) a Project Manager to oversee and manage the construction and delivery of new dwellings;
  - c) a Development post to implement new initiatives, e.g. to develop and manage all aspects of shared ownership delivery and Rent to Buy schemes.
- 4.2 These resources will enable the development objectives of the Strategy to be achieved, recognising that a step-change in delivery in terms of greater numbers of affordable housing will be the result.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The delivery of this Strategy will seek to ensure ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resources are maximised to their full potential. The recent removal of the borrowing cap gives Local Authorities enhanced flexibilities in terms of playing a key part in the delivery of new affordable homes across the Country. Whilst modelling suggests that limited borrowing may be required to achieve the objectives set out within the strategy, it will be necessary to monitor progress over time. The Council should be prepared to consider any opportunities that arise, and the potential should be there to fund the delivery of new homes through borrowing as long as a sound financial viability appraisal confirms it is suitable to do so. The Council has a sound financial platform to build upon and the delivery of the Housing Strategy will seek to further enhance the financial performance of the existing HRA. By venturing into new tenures, the financial performance of the HRA will improve, as additional rental income is made available for the essential maintenance and management of the Council's overall Portfolio and to fund more new affordable homes.
- 5.2 The cost of the three additional posts referred to in paragraph 4.1 amount to £143,000 and will be met from the Housing Revenue Account.

## **6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS**

- 6.1 The new draft Housing Strategy provides a concise summary of the many housing challenges we face within the New Forest, whilst providing a positive vision for the future supported by cross-cutting actions and priority objectives. I commend the document and look forward to seeing the results being delivered on the ground, working alongside our own officers and partners in the private and public sectors.

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are none.

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Housing Strategy is for the benefit of all of the Council's residents and will have a positive impact by increasing the availability of housing and affordable housing within the Council's district. Consideration has been given to the needs of those who identify with the protected characteristic groups of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, who may find it difficult to access the housing market. However, this strategy must be red alongside the Council's other key housing initiatives including the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Tenancy Strategy and the new Allocations Policy which will all provide a means to meet the housing needs of those within these protected characteristic groups. It is recognized that the way in which the strategy is implemented and the impact on those with a protected characteristic will need to be regularly monitored to ensure that those residents are able to take advantage of the strategy's key objectives.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the Housing Strategy.

### Further Information:

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### Background Papers:

Public documents

# DRAFT

## Housing Strategy

December 2018



# Contents

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- 3** Foreword
- 4** Introduction
- 5** Vision and Corporate Context
- 7** National Policy Context
- 8** Local Challenges
- 10** **Strategic Priority: Future Housing Development**  
  
To **accelerate and maximise** future housing development that meets local need and leads to sustainable growth
- 11** **Strategic Priority: Council House provision**  
  
To **increase** the supply of high quality affordable homes through an ambitious Council house building and acquisitions programme
- 12** **Strategic Priority: Meeting our greatest needs**  
  
To **improve** the housing circumstances of those within our communities most in need
- 13** **Strategic Priority: Best use of the existing stock**  
  
To **enable** the best use of housing to meet local needs, including support for a strong high quality private rented sector

# Foreword

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## **Providing more homes for local people is one of the council's key priorities.**

Our draft Local Plan will deliver a significant increase in house building over the next 20 years. With over 10,000 new homes planned up to 2036, this represents a very significant increase in local housebuilding. Whilst many of these new homes will be delivered by developers and housing associations, the council will also deliver significant numbers of new affordable housing to help our residents get a home.

This strategy deals with the wider housing market and the need to build more homes across our district as well as identifying what the council will do, as housing authority, to increase the number of new affordable homes for those in housing need within our communities.

We know that housing is becoming more and more unaffordable for many of our residents.

We want to be proactive in helping to provide a range of housing options of all tenures and at the same time, increase the supply and quality of housing that we, as a Housing Authority, directly control.

Good quality housing is vitally important to the health and well-being of individuals and contributes to the social, environmental and economic sustainability of our communities. With high house prices in our area, the council has a special role to play in helping to provide much needed affordable housing, directly building such homes in addition to those that are required of private developers under planning policies. Current proposals will see these being provided in a range of tenures including social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership.

The council wishes to be ambitious in terms of delivery and facilitating greater numbers of houses for local people. In recent years we have begun to lay the foundation for a

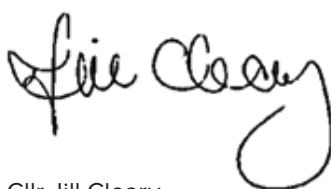
new direction of travel however our area still faces many major housing challenges.

Economic prosperity should mean that everyone has access to decent housing. Unfortunately, there is a significant number within our communities who do not have a home and have little prospect of ever being able to afford one. Homelessness within our district is at an all-time high. Whilst there will always be challenges, we must strive to ensure there is a range of available housing that meets the needs of those in housing need within our communities.

With over 3,300 people on the Homesearch Register, the council is determined to do what it can to increase the supply of affordable houses across our area. Developers will also be expected to play their part in delivering greater numbers of affordable homes.

This new Strategy sets out the council's strategic housing priorities. It looks at how the council can address the delivery of housing within our district and sets out what the council will provide in its own right as housing authority.

Through this strategy, the council will accelerate new council house building and acquisitions to provide much needed social rented, affordable rented and shared ownership schemes. Based on current estimates we can fund up to 600 new affordable homes by March 2026 but we have the capacity for many more, if our borrowing ability is optimised and we can secure additional government support.



Cllr Jill Cleary  
Portfolio Holder for  
Housing Services

## **Recent achievements**

- Exceeded 2009 Core Strategy housing objective.
- Over 1,000 housing completions during the last five years including 186 new build affordable homes.
- 172 council buy-backs acquired for social rent (2012/13 - 2017/18).
- 55 new-build council homes under construction.
- Increased Private Sector Leased homes to 117.
- Completed North Milton regeneration scheme including 21 new homes.
- New financial assistance policy for disabled adaptations and home repairs.
- Partnership working with New Forest Disability Information Services to assist hospital discharge (Private sector housing).



# Introduction

The New Forest District covers an area of 290 square miles, of which 209 square miles is within the New Forest National Park.

Located between Southampton and Bournemouth/Poole and with good connections to London, it is a beautiful and sought after place to live; yet it is an area with some exceptional and conflicting challenges.

Of a total population of around 179,200 people, 32,000 residents live within the National Park.

In addition to the protected status of the National Park, development within the district is also constrained by an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (26 square miles), Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protected Areas, Green Belt and areas of countryside and coast of national and international importance for nature conservation. Significant landscape and habitat designations limit the extent to which housing demand can be accommodated.

## A strong local economy

The district benefits from a resilient and diverse local economy. However an ageing workforce, an under-representation of high value added sectors, and a high proportion of unskilled residents, limit the capacity for future growth.

Housing related risks to economic growth are also evident within commuting patterns. Of the 50,000 people who travel into and out of the New Forest for work, higher paid managerial sectors can afford to live within the district and out-commute, whilst many lower earning households are restricted to more affordable areas outside the district.

## Significant housing issues

In contrast with those parts of the district that can be characterised as affluent with house prices and rentals above the UK average, pockets of deprivation and a number of significant housing challenges exist:

- Acute income/housing affordability disparity.
- High proportion of high value detached homes with a dearth of smaller homes.
- High numbers of second homes in the National Park and the southern coastal sub-area.
- 27% of households earn less than £20,000.
- 13 to 1 house price to income ratio.
- 9,000 households supported with Housing Benefit and/or council tax reductions.
- 28% of the population over 65 years' old.
- Homelessness in the district is increasing; during 2017/18 the council accepted homelessness duties in respect of 115 households, and currently has over 400 households in temporary accommodation.

The council remains the largest provider of housing within the district, managing a stock of over 5,000 socially rented homes and is committed to ensuring that it gives continued support to its residents in addressing their housing needs. In excess of 3,300 households are currently listed on the Homesearch Register.

## Economic and workforce key facts of the district

- One of the largest economies in Hampshire (£4.4bn GVA).
- Over 9,000 businesses - more than Southampton and Portsmouth, albeit through small scale employers.
- A diverse economy: over 50% working in wholesale and retail trade, human health and social work, manufacturing, education and construction.





# Vision and corporate context

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## Housing Strategy Vision

‘To create balanced communities for the residents of the New Forest District; providing a range of housing options that are affordable and sustainable.’

**The core of the Council’s Housing Strategy is to create balanced communities for the residents of New Forest District, providing a range of housing options that are affordable and sustainable.**

Working in tandem with related plans, policies and duties to deliver the vision, this Housing Strategy sets out why and how New Forest District Council intends to use its powers, resources and influence to address four key priorities:

### Strategic housing priorities

- To **accelerate and maximise** future housing development that meets local need and leads to sustainable growth.
- To **increase** the supply of high quality affordable homes through an ambitious Council house building and acquisitions programme.
- To **improve** the housing circumstances of those within our communities most in housing need.
- To **enable** the best use of housing to meet the needs of local people, including support for a strong high quality private rented sector.

In defining our priorities, the council has looked at the many factors that drive, shape and constrain our local housing market and determine current and future housing needs.

The council has listened to the concerns and aspirations of communities and those with housing related interests across the district and has aligned its priorities with those of the adopted corporate plan having regard for the various statutory and discretionary housing and planning functions that the council and partner organisations deliver.

Addressing local and national priorities the council will facilitate the increased supply of homes to meet objectively assessed housing needs in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

As required by the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) new statutory duties will be addressed through this strategy and a renewed Homelessness Strategy, to help those in housing need including some of the most vulnerable in our community.

The council is determined to address the housing challenges that the district presents and forge a new approach to the delivery of housing through innovation, and by remaining focused on the vision and priorities that create balanced and sustainable communities.

By using reserves, receipts from the sale of council homes and new borrowing capacity, the council intends to maximise the delivery of affordable housing during the first 10 years of the Local Plan period (to 2026\*). It will do so through the optimisation of planning policies, developing its own land, acquisitions from developers working in the district and working with other partners and stakeholders including the National Park Authority, town and parish councils, Registered Providers, developers and communities.

This strategy addresses housing issues within the New Forest District and the majority of the National Park, as the District Council is the Housing Authority for both. The successful implementation of this strategy therefore relies upon close collaborative working arrangements with the National Park Authority and our joint partners and agencies who serve the whole of area.

\* Based on the draft Local Plan housing trajectory approximately 3,400 homes should be built in the district by 2026 including a target of around 1,200 affordable homes required under Planning Policy. With Government help and optimised borrowing ability, the Council is aiming to secure the maximum number of newly completed dwellings for affordable housing through its own development programme.

**Connections with the council's corporate plan**

The priorities of the New Forest District Council Corporate Plan not only recognise the importance of delivering more homes for local people (both market and affordable) but the need for our actions and influence to improve health and well-being, to contribute to economic growth, to protect the character of our place, and to optimise our effectiveness by working closely with others.

Our strategic housing priorities also align with those of central government and the aspirations of the 2017 Housing White Paper ("Fixing our Broken Housing Market") and the subsequent consultation paper "Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places". Over the long term these national policies are aiming to create a more efficient housing market whose outcomes more closely match the needs and aspirations of all households and which support wider economic prosperity.

Sitting alongside the Local Plan Review (2016 to 2036), the Housing Strategy contains high level objectives supported by a suite of



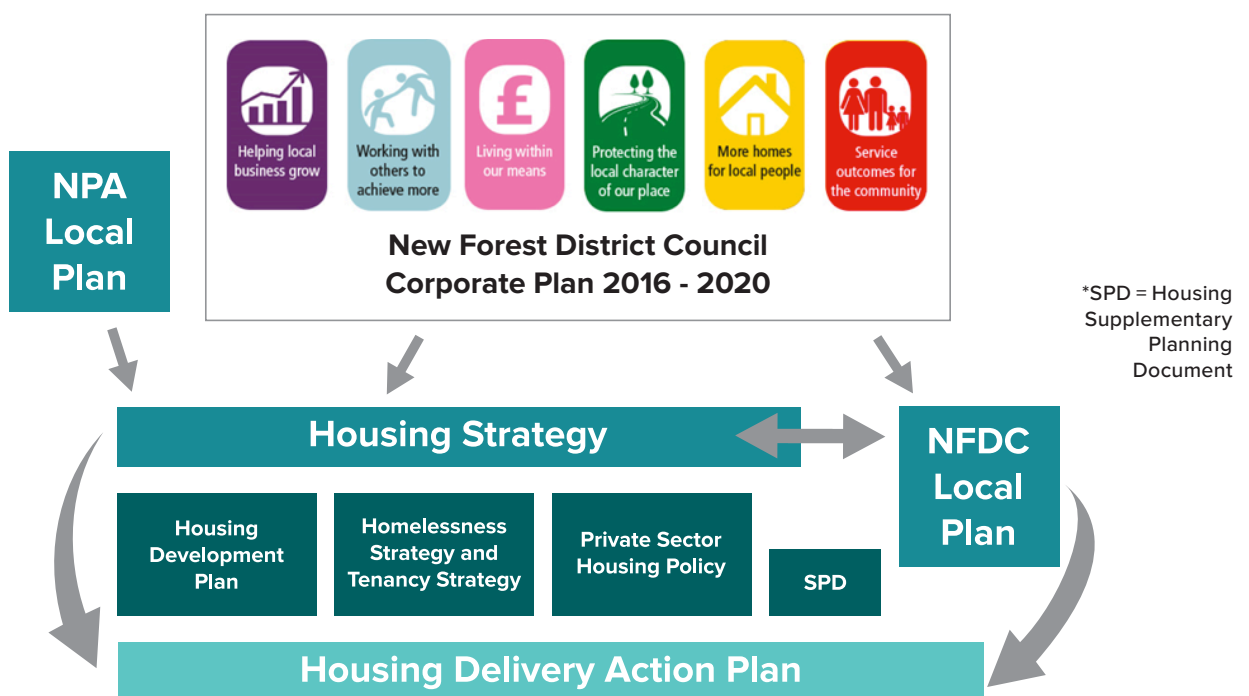
New Forest District Council homes in Ringwood (2018),

operational policies and related strategies.

The relationships within and between the various policies and documents will ensure that a comprehensive approach is taken to local authority housing interests, whether they are related to new-build, the existing stock or duties and services to those who are vulnerable or facing homelessness.

**Monitoring performance**

Progress of the Housing Strategy will be reported to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.



# National policy context

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## **The statutory and discretionary housing services provided by New Forest District Council, and the housing needs of our residents are directly affected by national housing and fiscal policy and legislative requirements.**

Responding to both national and local factors, the last decade has seen major changes in relevant legislation and guidance. Central government has sought to tackle the short and long-term effects of the credit crunch on the housing and financial markets, to manage a period of austerity, to introduce various reforms to social and welfare systems, and to kick-start the housing market.

The following section summarises the key policy and legislative changes that have taken place during the last decade, with their varying consequences on housing and housing-related services at local level.

### **Welfare reform**

The Welfare Reform Act (2012) has led to dramatic changes in the amount of financial support that is available to households in housing need and the way in which it is paid. The Act has led to the introduction of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit restrictions affecting eligible households who under-occupy social housing (Spare Room Subsidy) whilst the previous “Disability Living Allowance” has been replaced with Personal Independence Payments. However not all reforms have been implemented, e.g. proposed restrictions for all single social housing tenants under 35 to be limited to Local Housing Allowance room rates.

### **Private rented sector**

A diversity of new duties and enforcement powers introduced through recent Regulations and Acts have sought to address weaknesses and failings within the private rented sector, to improve energy efficiency, tackle rogue landlords and to extend the licensing of Housing in Multiple Occupation (and the living space standards within them).

### **Housing growth, planning and new development**

As a national policy priority, the need to increase new housing delivery and to address the failings of the wider housing market is being addressed through a variety of means including the Housing and Planning Act (2016), White Papers and Consultation Papers and new National Planning Guidance (2018).

With targets and measures that are already being implemented, the 2017 Housing White Paper set out central government’s intentions under the four themes of “Building Homes Faster”, “Diversifying the market”, “Right Homes, Right Places” and “Helping people Now”. Considering all aspects of the housing development process – from land-owners to planners, and construction methodology to self-build and custom-build - the proposals will continue to affect all of those with market and affordable housing interests.

### **Statutory duties and social housing policy**

The last seven years have seen dramatic changes of direction within the social housing sector.

Following the introduction of greater freedoms and flexibilities for social housing providers and those with statutory housing duties in 2011/12, policy and legislative changes saw a move away from social housing support to solutions that favoured home-ownership.

But with the wider housing market showing no sign of improvement, and with downward pressures continuing to affect those most in need, the pendulum has swung back. Alongside increased duties on Local Housing Authorities to assist and prevent homelessness, central government has recognised the importance of the wider affordable housing sector as well as home-ownership, and is creating an environment that favours new provision and seeks to support those who live within it. (Social Housing Green Paper 2018).

### **Affordable housing and council house-building**

Since 2008 national housing policy has sought to increase new affordable housing opportunities and delivery – which require subsidy by definition, whilst seeking to recover from an era of austerity. Introduced in 2011 the National Affordable Rent model (up to 80% of market rent) promised to create added capacity, while Council Housing Finance Reform in 2012, paved the way for a new generation of council house building. National housing policy then swung towards affordable home ownership, seeing a four-year period of rent cuts imposed on social housing providers, with government funding being restricted to forms of home-ownership and the creation of Starter Homes (in the Housing and Planning Act 2016). As evidenced by the Housing White Paper (2017), the Housing Green Paper (2018), and recent announcements on council borrowing caps, the balance is swinging back with government recognising the importance of achieving growth within all sectors along with adequate sources of subsidy.

# Local challenges

In determining our strategic priorities four key challenges have been identified which our actions and influence must address if current and future housing market pressures are to be reduced throughout the district.

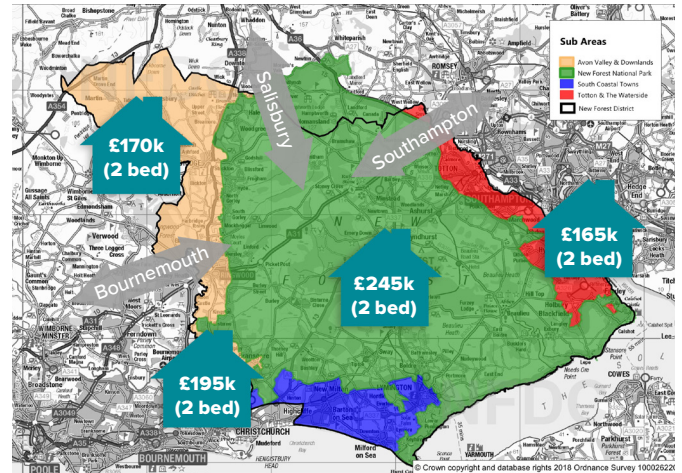
## The local housing market

- In March 2017, with an average purchase price of £322,000, the New Forest District was recognised as having a higher than average price not only for Hampshire but for the rest of the South East.
- Data provided by the National Park suggested that at £550,000 the New Forest had the highest average house price of any National Park.
- Between 2011 and 2017 private rents increased by 20%, marginally more than the national average.
- Current estimates indicate that over 10,000 New Forest households live in the private rented sector.

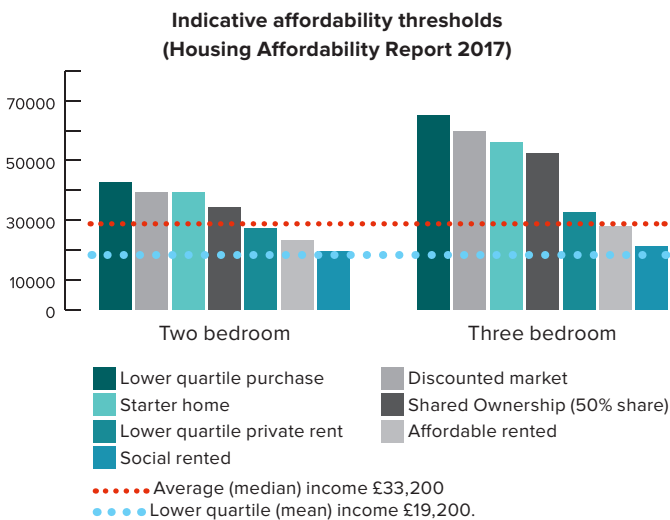
Whilst these headline statistics help to make sense of high residential development land values, they conceal a number of significant characteristics that both define and constrain the local market:

- 46% are detached dwellings (compared with 22% across England) and 29% are smaller homes (compared with 46% across England).
- the high number of second homes in some parts of the New Forest.
- the push and pull factors of commutable neighbouring market areas and conurbations (Bournemouth, Salisbury and Southampton).

land reserve for the Port of Southampton at Dibden Bay, and around 470 hectares are allocated for development in this Local Plan. The majority of the remaining area without significant constraints is in relatively remote rural locations.



Map of the New Forest showing adjoining housing market areas, sub-markets and lower quartile purchase prices (two bedroom homes, 2017).



Only 19% of the undeveloped land in the Draft Local Plan Area is not directly affected by a significantly constraining national policy, safety or environmental constraint. Of the remainder (approximately 4,500 hectares of greenfield land) around 950 hectares have locally identified habitat or wildlife value, around 210 hectares are within the strategic

## Affordability

Given the demand for housing and the constrained nature of supply, severe access and affordability issues exist for a high proportion of households on lower incomes. 60% of district households earn less than £40,000 and 27% earn less than £20,000.

Private rented accommodation may not reflect the tenure of choice for many households but the sector has become the housing solution for many on lower incomes. And where it is available and affordable landlords and agents now apply strict income/affordability tests, require substantial deposits and fees, and few accept tenants on Housing Benefit.

- 24% of households cannot afford to buy but can afford private rent.
- 18% of households can only afford to rent with support (i.e. Housing Benefit).
- 7% can afford “Affordable Rent” .
- 12% of households can afford “Social Rent” without support.

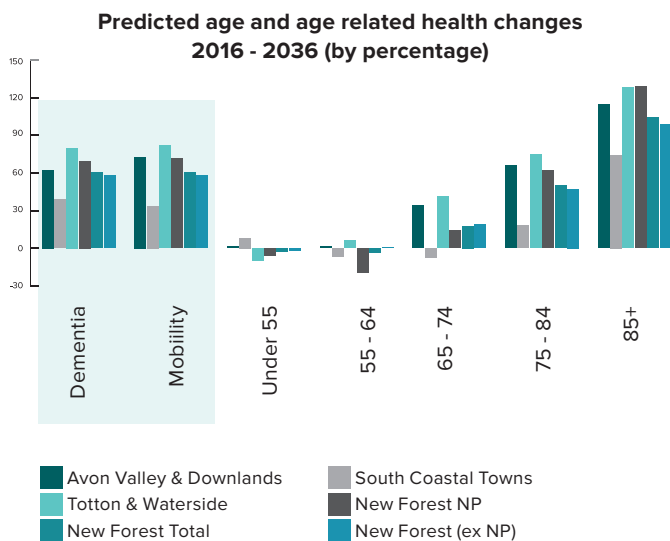
## Future housing need and demand

In 2017 the Government’s Housing White Paper “Fixing our Broken Housing Market” highlighted the need for up to 275,000 new homes or more each year to keep up with population growth and to tackle years of under-supply.

Within the New Forest district up to date projections have

indicated that the population will grow by 10% between 2016 and 2036, reflecting a need to plan for an additional 11,680 households in the New Forest District, including the New Forest National Park area.

Social and demographic projections show a growth in smaller households and an ageing population. Housing provision needs to address the impact of these changes in the type of housing these households will require. Annually increasing demands for disability adaptations is one example of such changes in the district.



### Support for those in great need

As supply and demand pressures have fuelled higher prices and private rents - worsening income and affordability ratios - downward forces and external factors have reduced choice and opportunity for those in greatest need and for those requiring social rented housing, with or without financial support and assistance.

At the same time a series of measures and welfare reforms have impacted upon single people, families and vulnerable households, imposing greater limitations on renting from private and social landlords, creating additional demands for smaller homes in the affordable rented sector and widening gaps between increased private rents and the levels of financial support.

Balanced arguments justify the need for new national welfare systems and reforms, for encouraging work and for the optimisation of resources for those in greatest need. However in an area where there is a need to counteract the impact of the Right to Buy and where housing options and opportunities do not align with housing needs, pressures have converged on local housing authority duties.

As a result the number of homelessness applications and acceptances continue to rise with increasingly

### Homelessness key statistics

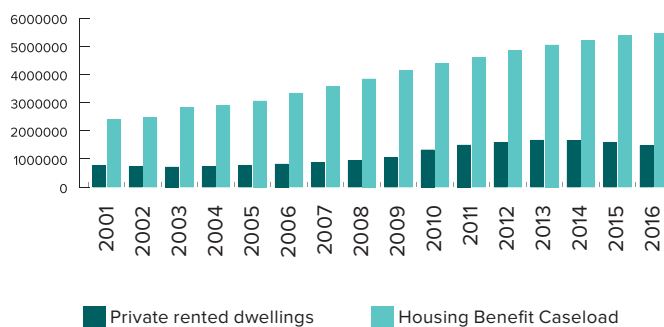
- 23% of approaches are single males.
- 13% of approaches are single females.
- 57% of approaches have dependent children.
- 15% of main duty homeless acceptances had a priority need due to mental health issues and 9% due to physical disabilities.
- social housing lettings continue to fall year on year, with 295 Council stock lettings in 2016/17 and 345 in 2015/16, representing a 30% reduction in the last year.
- There are currently 3,350 households on the Housing Register.

complex and sensitive cases. In turn the demand and the associated costs of temporary and emergency accommodation have risen, along with annual net increases of applicants listed on the Homesearch register.

The Council has limited access to supported accommodation and dedicated support services for vulnerable people are largely based around community support provided at drop in venues or mental health centres, with the Council responsible for adequately meeting the accommodation needs of complex households.

The County Council has announced a reduction in support provision for its social inclusion services (homelessness support) from 2019 at a time when further welfare reforms also hit as the area rolls into a Universal Credit live service from September 2018.

### Consistent growth of the private rented sector since 2004 but a falling number of private tenancies supported by Housing Benefit since 2012/13 (Source)



Source: Housing Benefit Caseload data (DWP) MHCLG for stock data

# Strategic priority

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## Future Housing Development

To accelerate and maximise future housing development that meets local need and leads to sustainable growth

### Actions

#### Through our Local Plan, we will:

- Allocate land through the local plan for the provision of 10,500 new dwellings between 2016 and 2036.
- Support the creation of cohesive communities, ensuring a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures that meet the needs of households on moderate and lower incomes, families with children, couples, single person, and homes designed to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities.
- Seek to ensure that strategic site allocations and other developments of 100+ homes include elements of discounted 'market' starter homes; serviced plots for self-builders; homes for private rent; homes for downsizing older households (e.g. bungalows, sheltered or extra care housing).
- On eligible developments in Totton and Waterside, require 35% of new homes to be affordable housing to meet local needs and elsewhere the requirement will be for 50% affordable housing to meet local needs.
- Require 70% of the affordable homes for forms of social rent, split equally between social and affordable rent models, and 30% intermediate or affordable home ownership tenures including shared-ownership.
- Permit rural housing exception sites and community-led housing schemes where they meet an identified need for local people which cannot be provided in any other way.
- Take a positive and flexible approach to the adaptation of homes where doing so would enable the occupier to continue living independently.
- Ensure that new homes are built to standards that are capable of adaptation to meet the future needs of older people and others with care needs, and that strategic site allocations in particular, include housing types designed to be suitable for older people.
- Meet the need for gypsy and traveller pitches and plots for travelling show-people, who continue to live a travelling lifestyle, by existing planning permissions and as defined in the local plan.

#### We will also:

- Prepare a Housing Delivery Action Plan identifying actions we will take to maximise the delivery of planned housing development.
- Work positively with developers and landowners to bring forward allocated housing land in a timely way, whilst being willing to employ appropriate powers where necessary.
- Work closely with Registered Providers and Homes England to increase the supply of high quality affordable homes to meet the diverse needs of our communities with priority being given to rent.
- Develop and adopt supplementary planning guidance to support the requirements of the local plan
- Work collaboratively with the National Park Authority and the HARAH partnership to encourage and optimise the provision of affordable and community-led housing throughout town and rural communities.
- Establish a housing company to support development of private rented homes.



# Strategic priority

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## Council housing provision

To increase the supply of high quality affordable homes through an ambitious Council house building and acquisitions programme

### Actions

#### We will:

- Seek to provide 600 new council homes for the period to 2026 with social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership tenures.
- Adopt an innovative approach to new affordable housing provision including implementing shared ownership and affordable rented models in addition to social rent to increase the range of products the council has to offer its residents.
- Identify and optimise council house building capacity through partnerships with Registered Providers and private developers.
- Identify opportunities for the development of council owned land for affordable housing purposes.
- Continue to finance the buy-back programme, to offset stock losses through the Right to Buy.
- Advance the development of council owned temporary accommodation provision.
- Undertake a detailed review of current council housing stock and assets, identify opportunities for conversions and remodelling, whilst making best use of under-used land and garage forecourts.
- Advance and implement a housing development plan to provide a framework for future investment and define principles.
- Seek to optimise Central Government and Homes England funding to augment our programme and accelerate delivery.



Affordable homes in Lymington



New Forest District Council homes under construction (2018).

# Strategic priority

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## Meeting our greatest needs

To improve the housing circumstances of those within our communities most in need

### Actions

#### We will:

- Adopt a new fit-for-purpose Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- Review and adopt a new Social Housing Allocation Policy to better respond to housing need.
- Review and optimise internal processes to progress households through our frontline homeless services to move on and independent living.
- Prevent and reduce homelessness, sustain tenancies and protect health and safety of tenants through use of enforcement powers against landlords for unlicensed HMOs or properties in poor condition.
- Minimise the use of Bed & Breakfast and privately owned emergency and temporary accommodation.
- Review the current allocation of staffing resources against the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, emerging demand trends, client support requirements, Rough Sleeper engagement, move on of temporary accommodation and Landlord liaison.
- Build close working partnerships with private, public and third sector agencies to optimise the prevention of homelessness, to implement joint protocols and solutions, build effective communication and provide efficient services.
- Aim to end Rough Sleeping in the District through a multi-agency approach and designing a pathway to achieve long term accommodation sustainability.
- Create and support independent living through maximising access and provision of disabled adaptation funding to eligible vulnerable groups.
- Continue to support and work alongside County Council and NHS commissioned services which provide vital support for vulnerable people in the district with regard to Mental Health, Addictions, Accommodation support and access to services.
- Build effective relationships with private rented sector landlords and agents to maintain confidence in the sector and improve access to our clients.
- Effectively communicate housing options to those in housing need and provide good access to affordable housing options across the whole range of tenures.



New Milton regeneration scheme.



# Strategic priority

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## Best use of the existing stock

To enable the best use of housing to meet local needs, including support for a strong high quality private rented sector

### Actions

#### We will:

- Improve the effective occupation and allocation of the existing social housing stock (Council and Registered Provider) through a comprehensive review of the Housing Allocation Policy & Housing Register.
- Implement a Tenancy Strategy that enables tenancies to be offered that support the objective of creating cohesive communities; providing tenants with an appropriate level of security while creating flexibility in the affordable housing stock.
- Develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy outlining the Council's role in increasing access to and standards in the private rented sector, protecting tenants health and safety and promoting energy efficiency and fuel poverty schemes.
- Administer and enforce the mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing regime.
- Through the new Housing Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy, ensure the best use of available stock.
- Provide the opportunity for residents to continue living in their own home through greater access to disabled adaptation funding.
- Review of the Council's Strategy on Empty Properties to bring them back into use.
- Review existing tenant engagement and participation to achieve wider community representation.
- Engage with, educate and support private landlords in the provision of rented accommodation.



New Forest District Council homes in New Milton (2018).

**New Forest District Council**

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## HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL – 21 NOVEMBER 2018 CABINET – 5 DECEMBER 2018

### PORTFOLIO - HOUSING

## HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2019 - 2023

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report proposes a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to respond to the current homelessness situation in the district, new legislation and Central Government Policy. The strategy provides a statistical review of the current housing and homelessness situation in the district and sets out the key priorities the Council will action to reduce homelessness and the use of external temporary accommodation.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 all local authorities are required to publish a homelessness strategy. As the last homelessness strategy was approved in 2003, it is important that an up to date strategy is in place. A strategic approach to tackling homelessness is required to ensure the service is focussed on early intervention and has the tools and resources to try and prevent homelessness in the first place.
- 2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed new duties on local authorities to provide effective advice and assistance to all applicants who approach whether they are vulnerable or not. It also introduced new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness by helping applicants to secure their accommodation through a set of steps agreed with the applicant.
- 2.3 Approaches to the homelessness service are increasing in both numbers and their complexity. Many applicants have multiple needs to resolve as well as housing in order for them to locate and sustain accommodation. The use of external temporary accommodation is increasing along with associated costs to the Council in funding this accommodation.
- 2.4 In August 2018 the Government published its new Rough Sleeping Strategy which declared an intention to end rough sleeping by 2027. In doing so it requires local authorities to amend existing homelessness strategies by the end of 2019 to include specific measures to address rough sleeping.

### 3. NEW HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

- 3.1 The new proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The aim of the strategy is to put in place specific measures to reduce homelessness and implement early intervention practices with our partners to prevent homelessness. The strategy is part of an over-arching strategic approach to tackling housing issues in the district; led by the Housing Strategy, and alongside the proposed social housing Allocation Policy, which will help maximise the outcomes achieved by the Housing Service over the next few years.

- 3.3 The strategy identifies four key priorities:
  - 3.3.1 Invest in and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of front line services to prevent homelessness.
  - 3.3.2 Work with partners and stakeholders to identify issues early on and prevent homelessness by working together.
  - 3.3.3 Ending the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation through investing in and facilitating the development and use of good quality affordable housing and temporary accommodation.
  - 3.3.4 Bring rough sleeping to an end.
- 3.4 The strategy summarises the key challenges faced in the New Forest against the backdrop of the national situation. The strategy demonstrates how the national policy and legislative framework has placed a large focus on the local authority response to homelessness with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which places new duties on local authorities to provide effective and consistent service offerings to all those who approach for assistance.
- 3.5 Locally, the strategy demonstrates how the numbers of households becoming homeless and placed in temporary accommodation has increased over the last few years, bringing about an even greater demand for social housing. The impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is also shown as officers are now able to accurately record all approaches for assistance to the service for the first time. Based on actual figures to date, projected figures for the first 12 months of the Act show that over 2,100 households are likely to approach the service for help. Many of these households have complex needs such as mental health conditions and drug and alcohol abuse.
- 3.6 Through its key priorities the strategy will respond to such demand and the complexities of the caseload through a series of key actions designed to increase support and accommodation provision and create joined up responses with our partners, both statutory and voluntary, to effectively respond in preventing homelessness.
- 3.7 The priorities recognise the need to increase the provision of Council owned emergency accommodation across the district to minimise the disruption to households at their most vulnerable time and to reduce the costs currently borne by the council in providing this through external providers.
- 3.8 These key priorities include a response to end rough sleeping. This will require an enhanced approach involving a pathway of accommodation with support to ensure rough sleepers with complex needs have the opportunity to address health and welfare issues and sustain tenancies in the long term.
- 3.9 The Executive Head of Governance & Regulation and Service Manager – Housing Options will lead the delivery of the strategy which will be reviewed by the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel annually.
- 3.10 Before adopting a new strategy, the Council needs to consult with authorities and organisations it deems appropriate. It is intended that the proposed Strategy is published on the Council's website for four weeks and appropriate organisations are made aware of the consultation.

- 3.11 Responses to the consultation will be reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2019.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 An increased focus on early intervention and partnership working resulting from the actions in both the homelessness and housing strategies, along with the Council sourcing more of its own emergency temporary accommodation should bring about a more efficient use of the current homelessness budget including a reduction in external Bed & Breakfast spend.
- 4.2 To achieve a number of the key actions contained within the strategy there is a requirement to complement the existing Homelessness and Advice Officer Team with Support Officers who will provide more dedicated welfare support to guide applicants along a pathway to sustaining accommodation and to support rough sleepers through accommodation pathways. These additional resources are likely to be met from within the overall homelessness budget which will be kept under careful review.

#### **5. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Ensuring that the right support is provided to homeless people at the right time will reduce any real or perceived crime and disorder issues that may arise from time to time.

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are none.

#### **7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This strategy is for the benefit of all of the Council's residents as set out in the key objectives above and will have a positive impact by focusing the Council's resources to take a more proactive approach to the prevention of homelessness. Consideration has been given to the needs of those who identify with protected characteristic groups; in particular those with disabilities (both physical and mental health) who may find it difficult to access the Council's services. However, the Council has implemented partnership working with other agencies through the Multi-Agency Homelessness Forum and will develop further pathways which seek to identify and work with those who require support and assistance to prevent or relieve their homelessness.
- 7.2 This strategy must be read alongside the Council's other key housing initiatives including the Housing Strategy, the Tenancy Strategy and the new Allocations Policy which will all provide a means to meet the housing needs of those within these protected characteristic groups. It is recognised that the way in which the strategy is implemented and the impact on those with a protected characteristic will need to be regularly monitored to ensure that those residents are able to take advantage of the strategy's key objectives.

## **8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 8.1 In leading the Homelessness Task and Finish group over the last year I have understood first-hand the huge impact homelessness has on the people of the New Forest and on the Council in responding to the issue. I have called for measures to be put in place to address this impact and I welcome the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy; with a set of key priorities that aim to end rough sleeping, increase access to suitable accommodation and which review frontline services to the betterment of those who approach for assistance.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

### **For further information contact:**

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### **Background Papers:**

Public documents

# DRAFT

## Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2019 - 2023



# Contents

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- 3** Foreword
- 4** National Context
- 6** Corporate Context
- 7** Local Context
- 11** Local Services
- 12** Actions to date and our future direction of travel
- 13** **Strategic Priority 1:**  
Invest in and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of front line services to prevent homelessness
- 14** **Strategic Priority 2:**  
Work with partners and stakeholders to identify issues early on and prevent homelessness by working together
- 15** **Strategic Priority 3:**  
Ending the use of B&B accommodation through investing in and facilitating the development and use of good quality affordable housing and temporary accommodation
- 16** **Strategic Priority 4:**  
Bring rough sleeping to an end
- 17** Monitoring & Review



# Foreword

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## **I am proud to introduce this strategy which sets out our vision for the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping in the New Forest.**

Whilst this strategy demonstrates our key priorities in responding to and preventing homelessness, it is very much linked to our overall strategic vision for housing and the wider housing market in the New Forest, combining with the launch of our new Housing Strategy and our new Allocation Policy.

We recognise that for many people in the New Forest access to secure, good quality affordable housing at a time of economic uncertainty and welfare reforms is extremely challenging. We also recognise the serious impact homelessness has on people's lives and how vulnerable people are adversely affected and are at greater risk of homelessness.

Prevention of homelessness is very much at the forefront of national initiatives and policies to improve peoples' lives. This council is equally committed to early intervention and has fully embraced the principles of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in its service delivery, with access to advice and assistance for all who approach, no matter whether they are vulnerable or not.

We welcome other national initiatives, such as the drive to end rough sleeping and will play our part in tackling this issue locally.

We recognise that early intervention at a local level is extremely important as there is far greater impact on the health and well-being of households once they become homeless.

Responding to individual cases of homelessness crisis is also far more costly for the wider public sector than prevention and we must demonstrate value for money in our approach.

In response to these challenges this new homelessness strategy reflects our strong commitment to tackling homelessness and develops the vision for our frontline services. In the

last year we have made great strides forward with a task and finish member led group scrutinising our response to homelessness.

The strategy looks very much to the future and sets out the actions we intend to take to help us reach our goals and how the council, and its partners, will work together to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years.

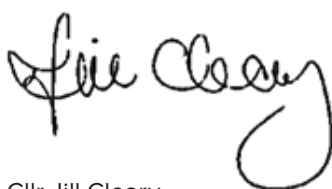
In setting our priorities we will embed specific initiatives aimed to stop people sleeping rough and provide a pathway for those that already find themselves in this situation.

Working in partnership is key to the success of the strategy. This year we have established a multi-agency forum of statutory agencies and local organisations to assist us in our efforts to tackle homelessness. We will continue to engage with, maintain and develop relationships with these organisations and agencies to develop a more cohesive set of priorities.

The strategy aims to develop these priorities in recognition of national, regional and local policy and proposes a vision for the benefit of all our residents, stakeholders and partners.

Our response to homelessness will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure our initiatives are having the desired outcomes, so that we can stay ahead of emerging trends and so that we can seize opportunities to benefit the people of the New Forest.

I look forward to continuing to work with all people involved in preventing and tackling homelessness in the New Forest.



Cllr Jill Cleary  
Portfolio Holder for  
Housing Services

## **Strategic Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Priorities 2019-2023**

- Continue to invest in and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of front line services to prevent homelessness.
- Work with partners and stakeholders to identify issues early on and prevent homelessness by working together.
- Invest in and facilitate the development of good quality affordable housing and temporary accommodation.
- Bring Rough Sleeping to an end.



# National context

**Nationally, incidents of homelessness have been increasing for a number of years and the increased use of, often unsuitable, temporary accommodation has been a direct consequence.**

Homelessness acceptance rates and use of temporary accommodation have gone up nationally in recent years. At nearly 57,000, annual homelessness acceptances were nearly 17,000 higher across England in 2016/17 than in 2009/10. Main housing duty acceptances now stand at 42% above their 2009/10 low point.

At the end of March 2018 the most common reasons for loss of last settled homes nationally were:

- Parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (28%).
- Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy (25%).
- Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner (12%).
- Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad) (7%).
- Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner (6%).
- Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy (6%).

On 31 March 2018, the total number of households in temporary accommodation arranged by local authorities under homelessness legislation was 79,880, up 66% on the low of 48,010 on 31 December 2010.

In addition, homelessness services across the country had an inconsistent approach. Some local authorities assisted only those people it owed a statutory duty and those without a 'priority need', particularly single homeless, were not receiving effective and consistent assistance across the country to relieve their homelessness.

With rising homelessness and temporary accommodation costs MPs within Government sought to redress the situation and proposed improvements to the legal framework to prevent and tackle single homelessness more effectively.

A new Homelessness Reduction Framework was proposed and began as a Private Member's Bill introduced to parliament in June 2016 by Bob Blackman, MP for Harrow East. It was published following a homelessness inquiry conducted by a cross-party Select Committee.

## In its Homelessness Monitor 2018 report Crisis identified that:

- Since 2010/11, homeless placements in temporary accommodation have risen at twice the rate of homelessness acceptances.
- The national total rose by 8% in the year to 31st March 2017, up 61% on the low point six years earlier.
- A continuation of this trend would see placements topping 100,000 by 2020.
- Bed and breakfast placements now stand 250% higher than in 2009.
- The National Audit Office has drawn attention to a 39% real terms increase in local authority spending on temporary accommodation in the five years to 2015/16.

Summary of Homelessness Statistics	2009/10	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	% change 2009/10-2017/18
Rough sleeping in England – snapshot	1,768	2,744	3,569	4,134	4,751	169
Local authority statutory homelessness cases	89,120	112,350	114,780	115,580	109,380	23
Local authority statutory homelessness acceptances	40,020	54,430	57,740	59,120	56,630	42

.....

The framework was given Royal Assent as The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and commenced on 3rd April 2018. The Act amends the legislative framework laid out in the Housing Act 1996 and places new duties on Councils to:

- intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas as the period a household is threatened with homelessness is extended from 28 days to 56.
- provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'.
- identify reasonable steps to help secure accommodation to either prevent or relieve the homelessness of applicants who approach for assistance.

The Act also places a duty of specified public bodies to refer those clients they are working with and are homeless or threatened with homelessness, to a local authority homelessness service. This duty commenced on 1st October 2018.

Recent Central Government policy and initiatives have been focussed on reducing the impact on vulnerable households and to ensure local housing authorities are providing effective prevention activities and consistent frontline services, for all those who approach.

It is part of a continuing national agenda to tackle the root causes of homelessness and drive through change in the housing sector.

Future regulation, policy change and subsequent impacts in the wider housing sector are likely to be driven by:

- Housing White Paper (2017).
- Social Housing Green Paper (2018).
- Licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation (2018).

- Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018).
- Tenant Fees Bill 2017-2019.
- Private Landlords (Registration) Bill 2017-19.
- Lifting of council borrowing caps to encourage council house building.

The Government also continues to evaluate and review access to the private rented sector with the Tenant Fees and Landlord Registration Bills proceeding through Parliamentary process in an effort to redress access to the sector for low income households.

The Government aims to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. It launched its new Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018 and requests that all homelessness strategies are reviewed and rebadged by the end of 2019 to include a specific focus on addressing rough sleeping.

The annual count of those sleeping rough in the autumn of 2017 showed a 169% increase on the figures for the same count in 2009/10, with a further 617 people sleeping rough than in 2016. The figure of 4,751 represented an increase of 15% on the previous year.

The Government recognises that there is not one single solution to end rough sleeping and a strategic approach to tackling the causes of homelessness and the health and well-being of rough sleepers is as important as the supply of affordable homes and supported housing.

With the lifting of Council borrowing caps to facilitate increased building of social housing, grant funding for tackling Rough Sleeping and new legislation across the social sector Councils must respond to the challenge and co-ordinate effective response to tackling the housing issues in their area.

### The profiles of people who currently sleep rough

People who sleep rough in England tend to be:

- Male.
- between 25 and 55 years old.
- Predominantly white.

In the 2017 counts and estimates:

- 83% of people found sleeping rough were men.
- 14% were women (gender for the remaining 3% was unknown).

It is estimated to cost the public purse £21,200 per person per year if rough sleeping occurred alongside substance misuse and offending.

### Contributory factors leading to homelessness nationally:

- High demand for housing leading to high house prices & private rents with greater shortfalls between rents and LHA Levels.
- Shortage of social housing for rent.
- Increasing household bills.
- Welfare benefits cuts and reform.
- Cuts in funding for statutory and voluntary services offering support to vulnerable people.

# Corporate context

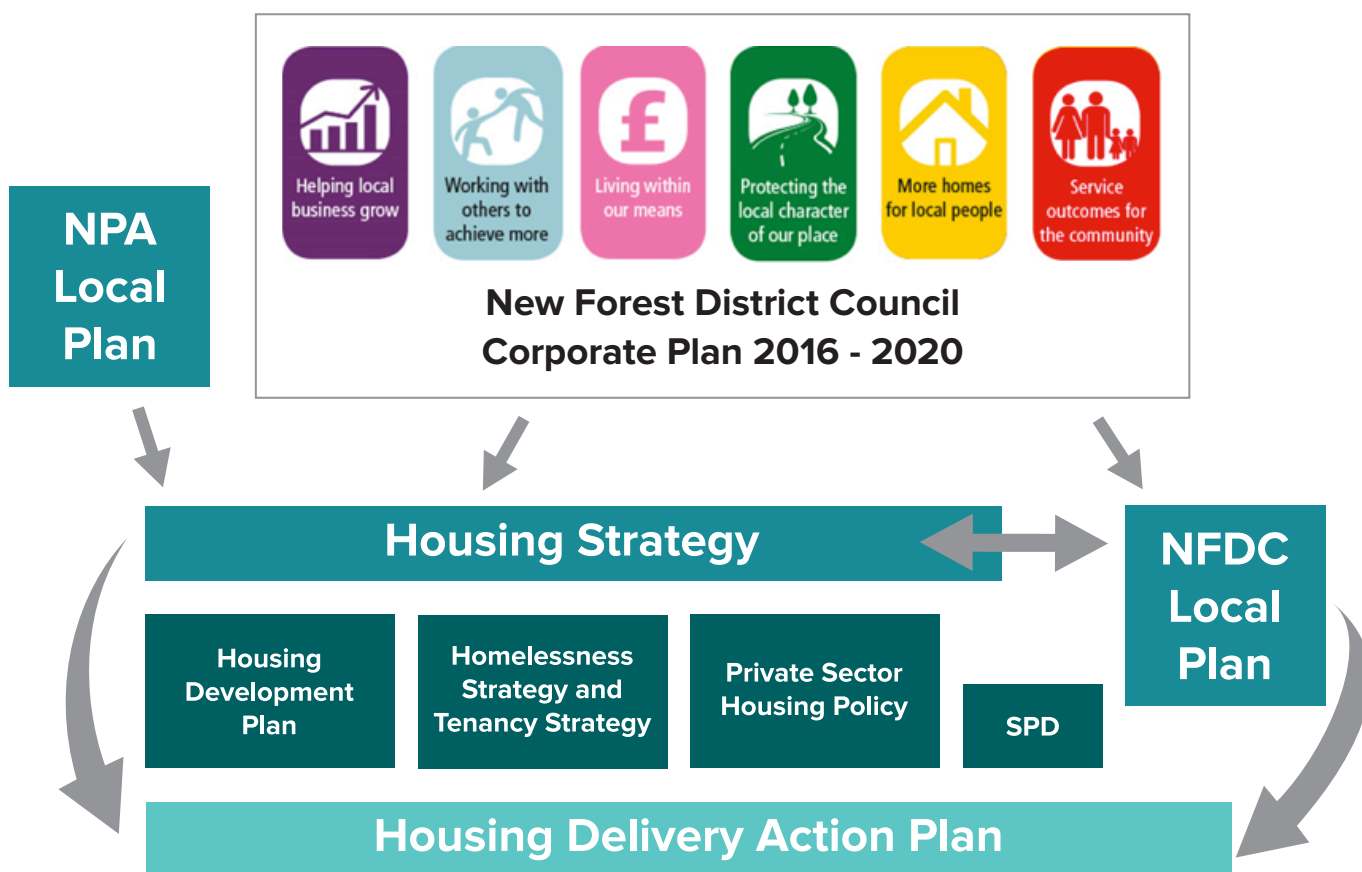
**The priorities of the New Forest District Council Corporate Plan not only recognise the importance of delivering more homes for local people (both market and affordable) but the need for our actions and influence to contribute to economic growth, to protect the character of our place, and to optimise our effectiveness by working closely with others.**

Sitting alongside the recently published draft local plan - and its 20 year target of 10,500 new dwellings across the New Forest district - the new Housing Strategy contains high level objectives supported by a suite of new operational policies and related strategies, including this

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which is also driving through a review of the Allocations Policy for social housing lettings.

The relationships within and between the various policies and documents will ensure that a composite approach is taken to housing interests in the district, be they related to new-build, the existing stock or duties and services to those who are vulnerable or facing homelessness.

Alongside this strategy the Council's new Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy and Allocation Policy brings about a joined up strategic approach to provide maximum benefit and support overall aims and objectives.



\*SPD = Housing Supplementary Planning Document

# Local context

**The district is one of the most populated non-unitary authorities in England with 179,236 residents.**

Located between the largely urban areas of Southampton and Bournemouth/Christchurch/Poole the district has unique characteristics with a large National Park area covering the majority of the district.

There are significant housing issues in the district. In contrast with those parts of the district that can be characterised as affluent with house prices and rentals above the UK average, areas of deprivation and a number of significant housing challenges exist, which include:

- Acute income/housing affordability disparity.
- High proportion of high value detached homes with a dearth of smaller homes.
- High numbers of second homes in some parts of the District.
- 60% of households earn less than the UK average.
- 9,000 households supported with Housing Benefit and/or Council tax reductions.
- 28% of the population over 65 years' old.

Low average incomes and high average house prices, results in significant cross commuting between those who work in the forest but can't afford to live here and those who can afford to live within the district but work elsewhere.

Under the pre Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) legislation the number of homeless applications increased from the lows of 2011, with the numbers of households accepted as being owed a full duty to secure accommodation by the Council at their highest in 2017/18.

As the Council largely concentrated efforts on those households who met statutory duties the figures are considered an under representation of the homelessness issues within

Homeless applications and decisions by year		
	Total applications taken	Homeless acceptances
2017/18	165	115
2016/17	194	108
2015/16	196	115
2014/15	185	95
2013/14	160	83
2012/13	124	55
2011/12	112	42

the district, when compared with the scope of the new duties under the new Act from 2018.

In 2017/18 115 households were accepted as homeless and owed the main housing duty. This figure has increased year on year and we project the figures for those owed the new legislative duties and subsequently the main housing duty, to be much higher for 2018/19, as the number of approaches to the service continues to rise.

The urban areas of the New Forest district are naturally shown as having the highest levels of homeless applications with the eastern strip of the district representing the source of 49% of all homelessness applications from 2012 to 2018.

All approaches to the service from April 2018 are now recorded. The first 6 months shows consistently high demand, with 1073 new cases opened and 399 new duties for the council to take reasonable steps to help secure accommodation. 121 cases which have come to the end of their new duties (47% of all duty ended cases) have been successfully discharged by securing accommodation.

The Council has accepted 42 main housing duties in the first 6 months of the HRA. Without further policy

intervention these are expected to increase exponentially as more of the new duties come to an end.

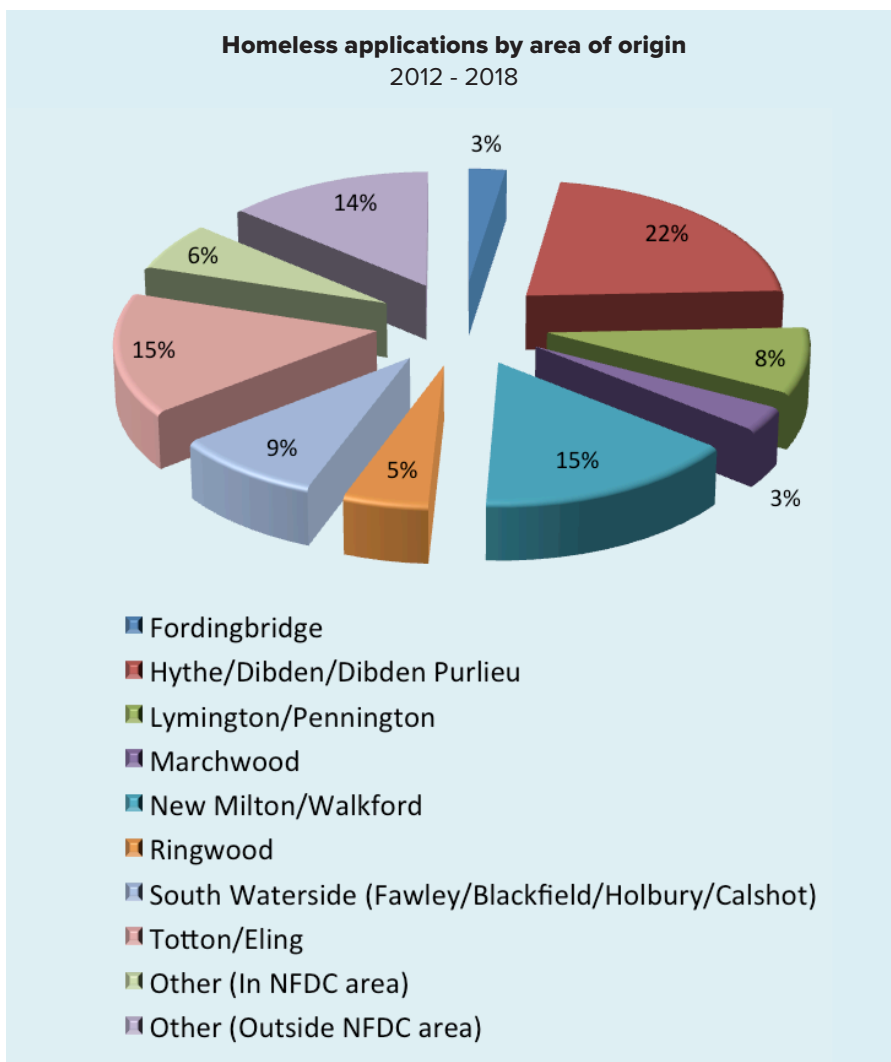
Approaches from April 2018 show the following key features:

- 56% of approaches have dependent children or are pregnant.
- 23% of approaches are single males.
- 14% of approaches are single females.
- 93% of approaches are of white British background with no discernible ethnic group in the remaining 7%.

Although not a determining factor in the award of duty the 'Priority Need' of Relief Duty Cases is recorded to determine temporary accommodation duties and shows:

- 46% of duty cases had a priority need due to dependent children.
- 9% of duty cases had a priority need due to mental health issues.
- 6% of duty homeless had a priority need due to physical disabilities.
- 5% of duty homeless had a priority need due to experiencing domestic abuse.

Mental health issues are not just experienced by the 9% above. In fact, 355 applicants and/or household members stated they needed support with their mental health. Many of these applicants have acute needs where holistic partnership working with specialist agencies is required to resolve their housing issues and ability to sustain accommodation in the future. Others will require low level support but it is clear the Council must ensure these services are on offer and there is a route to obtaining such services.



Approaches for assistance under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 post 3 April 2018			
Month	New cases opened	Prevention duty accepted	Relief duty accepted
April	181	44	20
May	174	61	14
June	199	59	30
July	175	41	23
August	179	26	20
September	165	33	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>1073</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>135</b>

The main reasons for homelessness follow national trends. The main cause as shown to the right continues to be family and friends no longer willing to accommodate other households within their properties. This is indicative of these households struggling to obtain or sustain their own affordable housing in either the private rented or owner occupied sectors. Moving in with family is often as a result of having to give up or having lost settled accommodation in the past.

The end of private rented tenancies remains the second most common reason and the council aims to target these areas within its priorities.

The Council aims to increase the provision of affordable housing in the district whilst working with landlords and tenants in precarious housing situations to help sustain accommodation.

Numbers of rough sleepers remains low but is no less important in our efforts to reduce homelessness. These figures represent a core group of rough sleepers with multiple complex needs such as drug and alcohol addictions, mental and physical health issues.

The Council is committed to finding solutions to rough sleeping issues within the district and will include these in its priorities. It is also important that these solutions create long term sustainability to prevent clients returning to the streets.

Main reason for loss of last settled home	2012 - 2018 total of duty acceptances	April 2018 - 30 Sept. 2018 total of new duty acceptances
Parents, other relatives or friends no longer able/willing to accommodate	189	127
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	185	114
Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	72	29
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	62	35

Rough sleeper counts						
Year	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Number	4	3	9	2	4	7

There is high demand for social housing in the area whilst social housing lettings continue to fall year on year, with the number of Council stock lettings being:

- 242 in 2017/18.
- 295 in 2016/17.
- 345 in 2015/16, representing a 30% reduction in 2017/18.

The Right to Buy scheme continues to offset new build additions to the stock. 34 Council properties were sold under the scheme in 2017/18.

Excluding the Council stock, Sovereign are the main social housing provider in the district with nearly 1800 properties. Several other registered provider landlords including Radian, Stonewater, Aster and Vivid provide smaller numbers of units throughout the district.

The New Forest became a full service area for Universal Credit from 26th September 2018. There are 1,462 working age housing benefit claimants in the Council stock and 1,440 in the housing association and private rented stock.

Migration of nearly 2,900 housing benefit claimants to Universal Credit is estimated to begin in 2020. New tenants or those facing a change of circumstances will now be required to claim Universal Credit. The Council will monitor this situation and put in place measures to manage the transition and any concern in the housing market.

Two Saints are commissioned by Hampshire County Council to provide Community Support to vulnerable people, including families and single people in the district. They provide tenancy sustainment, help claiming welfare benefits and help to access services and appointments in relation to health needs.

In the first 6 months of 2018/19 Two Saints supported 191 clients through its drop in sessions alone. The scale of the contract is due to be reduced post August 2019 to single complex people only. It is likely to have a detrimental effect upon support provision to vulnerable households. The Council will include measures to address this shortfall in its priorities.

# 5,056

Number of council properties

# 3,354

Number of households on the New Forest Homesearch Housing Register

Emergency Accommodation (EA) Placements post 3 April 2018			
Month	EA placements	Left EA	Households in EA at month end
March			59
April	19	16	62
May	6	23	45
June	15	20	40
July	18	17	41
August	16	21	36
September	17	20	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>/</b>

Social Housing Lettings 2017/18		
	General needs	Age restricted
Council Stock	201	41
Registered Provider Stock	101	42
Total	302	83
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>385</b>	



# Local services

**The Council has access to the following principal functions and activities with the New Forest to assist in the prevention of homelessness:**

- Community Support for single complex homeless clients provided by Two Saints (From August 2019).
- Community based Inclusion Services to address drug & alcohol addiction needs.
- Three Supported Accommodation projects for residents suffering with mental health conditions.
- NHS Mental Health Services in Totton and New Milton.
- Wellbeing Centres in Hythe and New Milton.
- Supported Housing & Community Support provided by Together who help people deal with the personal and practical impacts of mental health issues.
- Young Person Supported Accommodation with support provided by You First and Two Saints.
- Support for youth homelessness through It's Your Choice who offer information and advice about many issues that affect young people including drug and alcohol abuse, sexual health, homelessness, employment & education and mental health issues.
- Supporting Families Programme through the internal Community Safety Team.
- Domestic Abuse support and response through MARAC and You First.
- Tenancy Management and Rent Officers for Council owned stock.
- Housing Benefit visiting officers
- Job Centre Plus in Hythe and Lymington.

- Hampshire County Council Adult and Children Services.

The Voluntary Sector provides additional resources and support and includes:

- Benefits advice and advocacy.
- Foodbanks across the district.
- Faith and other voluntary groups providing befriending, practical and mentor support.
- Services for young people.



Hampshire County Council



# Actions to date & future direction of travel

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**In late 2017 the Council recognised that its approach to homelessness and housing would require new impetus and vision to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and housing demand in the district. Full corporate backing was provided to implement a number of changes to lay the foundations for effective future service delivery which will continue beyond the publication of this strategy.**

Since the start of 2018 the Council has:

- Allocated a new Executive Head to drive through change across the Housing Service.
  - Appointed three new Housing Service Managers including a new Housing Options Service Manager.
  - Set up a Task & Finish Member group, led by the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services to establish the priorities for change.
  - Reported position statements and priorities for change to the Member led Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel.
  - Utilised grant funding to create three additional Homelessness & Housing Advisor roles and a Service Support role.
  - Procured additional temporary accommodation.
  - Increased its portfolio of Private Sector Lease (PSL) properties by 12 properties.
  - Carried out viability assessments to convert existing communal facilities to emergency accommodation.
  - Procured, installed and tailored a Homelessness IT Management System to embed its approach to delivering the Homelessness Reduction Act and produced effective statistics to support initiatives and meet new statutory reporting requirements.
- Participated as a leading development group member in the development of Locata's Homelessness Reduction Act IT system.
  - Set up and held three meetings of the Multi-Agency Forum involving statutory and voluntary groups in the district.
  - Reduced the numbers of households living in emergency accommodation.
  - Continued to accommodate rough sleepers past the provision of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) in order to co-ordinate work with agencies to end their rough sleeping.
  - Acquired 11 properties as part of its 'Buy-Back Scheme'.
  - In 2018/19 the Council has budgeted to spend £19m on increasing the council housing stock through development and acquisitions.
  - In 2017/18 the Council provided financial assistance to 245 households to secure private rented accommodation.



New build Council properties in Lyminster, 2018

# Strategic priority 1

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## Invest in and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of front line services to prevent homelessness

### We will:

- Ensure the principles of the Homeless Reduction Act are fully embedded and all applicants receive a Personal Housing Plan (PHP) and reasonable steps are identified to help resolve their housing situation.
- Develop housing pathways and discharge protocols, create and provide accessible self-help guides and information for the following vulnerable groups in line with the homelessness code of guidance:
  - people released from prison or youth detention accommodation;
  - care leavers;
  - former members of the regular armed forces;
  - victims of domestic abuse;
  - people leaving hospital;
  - people suffering from a mental illness or impairment; and,
  - other groups we deem at particular risk of homelessness in the district.
- Review and adopt a new Social Housing Allocation Policy to better respond to housing need and homelessness.
- Increase access to homelessness services and housing assessments in satellite and remote locations with the availability of face to face appointments, homelessness referral portal and the expansion of IT facilities, website content and self-help guides.
- Ensure clients have access to Council facilities and dedicated support in order to claim Universal Credit and other benefits online.
- Provide annual training to Homeless and Housing Advice Officers on legislation and welfare benefits plus periodic training to enhance mediation and negotiation skills to help tackle family and landlord evictions.
- Review and optimise internal processes to progress households through our frontline homeless services to move on and independent living.
- Review the current allocation of staffing resources against the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, emerging demand trends, client support requirements, rough sleeper engagement, move on of temporary accommodation and landlord liaison.
- Produce support and resource directories of agencies providing services within the district.
- Monitor the impact of Welfare reforms and the go live of Universal Credit full service post September 2018. Work alongside the Council's Housing Benefit department to action further initiatives.
- Establish a working protocol with the New Forest Supporting Families programme to provide support to vulnerable families in place of the reduced Community Support contract.



# Strategic priority 2

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## Work with partners and stakeholders to identify issues early on and prevent homelessness by working together

### We will:

- Continue to develop the Multi-Agency Forum and its outcomes.
- Establish a Landlord Forum to improve relationships with landlords and letting agents to:
  - Improve access to the Private Rented Sector;
  - Maintain Landlord confidence in the sector;
  - Promote early intervention to resolve tenancy issues;
  - Consult on the review of rent in advance and rent guarantee schemes;
  - Promote the Council's Private Sector Lease Scheme;
  - Help create a Private Rented Sector Offer to discharge homeless duties.
- Work with Registered Providers to prevent evictions through joint working arrangements and establish an eviction protocol.
- Promote the duty to refer and develop specific protocols and referral pathways with external agencies.
- Attend and actively participate in strategic and operational groups across Hampshire to protect and enhance services in the New Forest.
- Attend team meetings of partner agencies to promote the service and early intervention.
- Establish a protocol with Hampshire Social Services for homeless 16-17 year olds and an effective approach to clients with an assessed care need.
- Establish positive working relationships with The Council's Private Sector Enforcement Team, Disabled Facilities Grants Team and link to the Private Sector Housing Strategy.
- Establish local support networks with Support providers, Advocates, Voluntary Agencies, Community and faith groups to include:
  - Appropriate support to sustain tenancies;
  - Furniture and home start packs;
  - Access to Foodbanks if required;
  - Befriending and support;
  - Help with budgeting, money management, benefits advice and claiming benefits.
- Establish links with the Credit Union to offer financial products where required.



# Strategic priority 3

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## Ending the use of B&B accommodation through investing in and facilitating the development and use of good quality affordable housing and temporary accommodation

### We will:

- Develop in-house emergency accommodation through remodelling of existing stock and property acquisitions as an alternative to Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
- Develop support and processes to successfully move on households to long term accommodation to free up existing temporary accommodation.
- Develop an incentive scheme/ package to encourage households under-occupying in Council housing stock to move to smaller properties.
- Continue with the 'buy back' of ex-council housing stock.
- Adopt an innovative approach to new affordable housing provision, including implementing shared ownership, in addition to social rent to increase the range of products the Council has to offer its residents.
- Identify and optimise council house building capacity through partnerships with Registered Providers and private developers.
- Identify opportunities for the development of Council owned land and garage sites for affordable housing purposes..
- Develop a landlord incentive scheme to attract landlords to work with the Council in providing access to their properties.



# Strategic priority 4

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## Bring rough sleeping to an end

### We will:

- Respond to reports of rough sleeping within 24 hours and ensure this response adequately engages with rough sleepers.
- Establish a pathway response to incidents of rough sleeping which incorporates a multi-agency and voluntary sector response.
- Explore the viability of launching a Housing First model of support to the most complex and vulnerable to sustain tenancies.
- Ensure a targeted support approach can be called upon for rough sleepers who have been provided with accommodation to prevent them returning to the streets. This will require 'Navigators' to co-ordinate support services, and provide support, encouragement and advocacy.
- Develop closer links with voluntary and community agencies, such as foodbanks and faith based organisations to promote effective local responses and consistency in tackling homelessness across the New Forest.
- Commit to accommodating people rough sleeping beyond incidents of the severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) to ensure a multi-agency approach can be called upon to end their street homelessness.
- Ensure those considered not in 'priority need' receive the same level of advice and assistance as those who trigger the statutory definition.



# Monitoring and review

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**Performance and progress against each of the actions within this strategy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with members and stakeholders.**

A transparent annual position statement will be produced to highlight our progress and how effective these measures have been in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.

As we implement the Homelessness Reduction Act new trends and learning will emerge. We are keen to understand the ongoing impact on our residents and our annual review will incorporate a full statistical analysis of approaches to the service. This will enable us to be responsive in tackling any emerging issues.

New actions and targets may be agreed if further changes are made to national legislation and policy. It is expected the Government will regularly review the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act and will seek to work more closely with Councils to implement its Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, working with the Executive Head of Governance & Regulation and Service Manager – Housing Options will lead the review of the delivery plan.

In reviewing its strategy annually this council remains committed to embracing amended policy direction and incorporating it within annual updates.

**New Forest District Council**

Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst. Hampshire. SO43 7PN

**Email** [homeless@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:homeless@nfdc.gov.uk) • **Web** [newforest.gov.uk/housing](http://newforest.gov.uk/housing) • **Phone** 023 8028 5234

**Self-Referral website including Duty to Refer information**

<https://hpa2.org/refer/NEWF> • [newforest.gov.uk/housing](http://newforest.gov.uk/housing)



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## HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL – 21 NOVEMBER 2018 CABINET – 5 DECEMBER 2018

### PORTFOLIO - HOUSING

## NEW HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council is responsible for the allocation of all social housing accommodation in the District (including Council properties and those owned by registered providers of social housing). Under the Housing Act 1996 (“the Act”), the Council has a duty to publish an allocation scheme that sets out how applications for social housing will be assessed, processed and decisions made.
- 1.2 The current allocation policy was adopted in November 2012.
- 1.3 As the Council last updated its allocation policy in 2012, a review of the policy has been undertaken. The Council needs to ensure its housing allocation policy adequately reflects the prevailing housing conditions in its district in order to make the most effective use of social housing that becomes available for allocation.
- 1.4 Further, in accordance with the Secretary of State’s guidance, the Council needs to review its allocation policy to take into account of the new duties to homeless households brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 1.5 This report sets out the proposed changes to the Council’s housing allocation policy following this review.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Act as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011, states that when drafting an allocations scheme, the Council must give reasonable preference to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The Act has determined that the following class of individuals should be given a reasonable preference, people who:
  - are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Act). This will include those who have been found to be homeless but not in priority need, who are owed the “Relief Duty” and who have been found to be intentionally homeless;
  - those to whom the Council is providing accommodation under the Act or to whom the Council owes the “Prevention Duty” under the Act;
  - are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
  - need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to disability); and
  - need to move to a particular locality of the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).
- 2.2 This group is collectively known as the “Reasonable Preference Group”.

2.3 The Act also allows the Council to set its own qualifying criteria; including criteria related to local connection and behaviour in order to determine who should be considered for an allocation of housing.

2.4 The Current Allocation Policy:

2.4.1 The current policy has 4 bands:

- Band 1: High Priority (Urgent)
- Band 2: High Priority
- Band 3: Priority
- Band 4: No Priority

2.4.2 All applicants save for exceptional cases are placed in Band 3: Priority. The only determining factor thereafter is the length of time the applicant has been on the housing register<sup>1</sup>.

<b>Bands</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>
Band 1: High Priority (Urgent)	24
Band 2: High Priority	51
Band 3: Priority	3,120
Band 4: No Priority	207

2.4.3 10 out of 11 applicants on the Council's housing register are in Band 3: Priority. On average there are 300 properties per year that become available for allocation; applicants can wait up to 10 years for an allocation of housing. The current policy does not adequately allow for the allocation of housing on the basis of need. Furthermore, it does not take into account that there are certain groups that the Council has a statutory responsibility for securing accommodation, for example, statutory homeless applicants who are owed the full housing duty.

2.4.4 The proposed changes to New Forest District Council's allocation policy have been developed with regard to the new duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, but have also been influenced by:

- the prevailing housing needs and conditions within the Council's district;
- the results of the work of the Homelessness Task and Finish Group and the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
- the desire to ensure that applicants on the Council's housing register are being given appropriate priority to enable the Council to make the most effective use of limited social housing within the District.

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<sup>1</sup> As at the 13 September 2018

### 3. THE DRAFT NEW ALLOCATION POLICY

3.1 A draft of the Council's new allocation policy is attached as Appendix 1:

3.2 The key changes to the policy are:

(a) Banding:

The new allocation policy will have 4 new Bands; these will now reflect housing need and clear criteria will be attached to each Band. A summary of the new Bandings is below:

<b>Band 1: Emergency Need for Housing</b> - Urgent health needs; - Property in dangerous state; - Risk of violence
<b>Band 2: Serious Need for Housing</b> - Full homelessness duty; - Under occupying by 2 bedrooms and severely overcrowded; - High health needs
<b>Band 3: Need for Housing</b> - Medium health needs; - Under occupying by 1 bedroom and overcrowded; - Other homeless cases (i.e. not owed full homelessness duty); - Military
<b>Band 4: Lower Need for Housing</b> - Lower health needs; - Sharing and lacking facilities; - Assured shorthold tenants

(b) Qualifying and Non-Qualifying Criteria:

Applicants will still need to be aged 16 or over and to have a local connection as defined under the current policy, but will also need to:

- have a housing need; in that their need for housing falls within one of the Council's Bands;
- be assessed as lacking the financial means to resolve their housing need;

Applicants who do not satisfy the above criteria will not qualify to join the housing register; further any applicant who falls within any of the categories below will be classed as non-qualifying to join the housing register:

- owner-occupiers (with the exception of those with a housing and assessed care need and who have a need for extra care or sheltered accommodation);
- those who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to enable them to qualify onto the register; or

- those that are deemed to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to make them unsuitable as tenants.

(c) Bedroom Need Assessment:

The number of bedrooms that an applicant will be eligible for will be set in line with the current regulations covering bedroom entitlement for the purposes of local housing allowance.

This will avoid issues relating to affordability and also with partner landlords who set their bedroom entitlement with reference to the current regulations.

(d) Suspension and Removal:

For the effective management of applications on the housing register, circumstances where applications will be suspended or removed have been clearly set out in the allocation policy.

3.3 The provisions relating to Rural Parishes will remain unchanged as it is considered necessary to prioritise those who have a local connection to a Rural Parish for an allocation of accommodation in those areas.

3.4 In addition to the main proposed changes above, a number of minor amendments have been made to provide greater detail and guidance to allocation officers working under the new allocations policy, so that there is consistency of approach and clarity when decisions are being made on individual cases.

#### **4. PROCESS TO CHANGING THE ALLOCATION POLICY**

4.1 As a matter of law, the Council needs to consult on any changes to the Allocation Policy. It is intended that the proposed Allocation Policy is published on the Council's website for four weeks and existing applicants and private registered providers of social housing operating in our District are made aware of the consultation.

4.2 Responses to the consultation will be reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2019.

#### **5. DELEGATIONS**

5.1 Section 7.1 of the new proposed policy sets out who will make decisions under the proposed Allocation Policy.

#### **6. CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 The Council's new housing allocation policy will assist the Council in ensuring the most effective use of social housing within its district by allocating housing with reference to housing need.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 In order to better manage the allocation of social housing, the Council will be procuring a new case management system to replace what is currently largely a paper based system. This will result in more efficient working, quicker allocations and a corresponding reduction in rent loss as properties will be let faster. The costs are likely to be in the region of £35,000 for year 1 and £8,000 ongoing annually thereafter and are likely to be met from existing budgets (but this will be kept under review).

## **8. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The proposed Allocation Policy aims to promote good tenancy management by tenants and prospective tenants to assist in tackling anti-social behaviour.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are none.

## **10. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Please refer to Appendix 2: Equality Analysis.

## **11. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 11.1 To follow.

## **12. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the Housing Allocation Policy.

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### **Background Papers**

Published documents

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# **ALLOCATION POLICY (DRAFT)**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Part 1:</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	4
1.	Purpose	4
2.	Aims and Objectives	5
3.	Statement of Choice	6
<b>Part 2</b>	<b>The Scheme</b>	6
4.	Joining the Register	6
	4.3 Eligibility	6
	4.4 Qualifying Applicants	6
	4.5 Non Qualifying Applicants	7
	4.6 Decisions Following Assessment of Eligibility and Qualification	7
5.	Processing Applications	7
	5.1 Housing Need Assessment	7
	5.2 Household	11
	5.3 Bedroom Need Assessment	11
	5.4 Band Start Date	13
	5.5 Rural Connection Band	13
	5.6 Areas of Choice	15
	5.7 Acceptance onto the Register	16
6.	Choice Based Allocations Process	16
	6.1 Managing Vacancies	16
	6.2 Allocating Properties	20
	6.3 Exceptions to the Choice Based Allocations Process	24
	6.4 Other Allocation Processes	26
<b>Part 3:</b>	<b>Scheme Administration</b>	29
7.	Managing the Scheme	29
	7.1 Decision Making	29
	7.2 Health and Wellbeing Panel	30
	7.3 Updating Application Details	30
	7.4 Suspension and Renewal	31
	7.5 Right to Request a Review	34
	7.6 Exercise of Discretion	35
	7.7 Equality and Fair Allocations	35
	7.8 Changes to the Scheme	35
	7.9 Right to Information	36



	7.10 False Statements and Withholding Information	36
	<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Part 3 (continued)</b>	<b>Scheme Administration</b>	29
7.	Managing the Scheme	29
	7.11 Data Protection	36
	7.12 Contacting Housing Options	37
Appendices	Appendix 1: Definitions	38
	Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification	40
	Appendix 3: Scheme Bands	45
	Appendix 4: Health and Welfare Assessment	52
	Appendix 5: Housing Conditions	55
	Appendix 6: Allocation of Garages	57
	Appendix 7: Brief Summary of Statutory Provisions	58

# NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL: HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

1.1 The Housing Act 1996 (“the Act”) Part VI as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011, requires all local authorities to have an allocation policy to determine the priorities and define the procedures that will be followed when allocating housing accommodation. This document sets out New Forest District Council’s (“the Council”) policy for the allocation of housing accommodation in its district (“the Scheme”). The Scheme sets out details on how Applications will be assessed, processed and how decisions will be made.

1.2 In drafting the Scheme the Council has had regard to the following:

#### A. Statutes:

- (i) The Act;
- (ii) The Homelessness Act 2002
- (iii) The Housing Act 2004;
- (iv) The Equalities Act 2010;
- (v) The Localism Act 2011;
- (vi) Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

#### B. Regulations:

- Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulation 1997, SI 199/483;
- Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002; SI 2002/3264;
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294;
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012; SI 2012/1869;
- Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012; SI 2012/2989
- Allocation for Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 SI 2015/967
- The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2018 SI 2018/730.

C. Codes of Guidance:

- (i) Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities for Local Housing Authorities in England (DCLG, 2012);
- (ii) Providing Social Housing for Local People: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013);
- (iii) Right to Move: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Housing Authorities in England (DCLG, March 2015);
- (iv) Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

D. Consultation outcome with Applicants, residents in the Council's district and all Private Registered Providers of Social Housing ("PRPSH") and registered social landlords ("RSL") with whom the Council has nomination rights.

E. the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy

1.3 When drafting an allocation policy the Act requires that local authorities give reasonable preference to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The Act has determined that the following class of individuals should be given a reasonable preference. People who:

- are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Act). This will include those who have been found to be homeless but not in priority need, who are owed the "Relief Duty" and who have been found to be intentionally homeless;
- are owed a duty by any local housing authority under s.190(2), 193(2) or 195(2);
- are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating disability); and
- need to move to a particular locality of the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

This group is collectively known as the "Reasonable Preference Group".

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME**

2.1 The Council will allocate housing in a fair and transparent manner with the aim of using its scarce housing resources appropriately, and in particular to enable it to meet:

- a. Its prevention and homelessness statutory duties;
- b. the housing needs of those that are most vulnerable;
- c. its statutory obligations as set out in Part VI of the Act

2.2 The Council also aims to operate the Scheme so that it:

- (a) Gives Applicants as much choice as possible and helps to create and maintain sustainable local communities;
- (b) Promotes good standards of tenancy and financial management by tenants and prospective tenants and to assist in tackling anti-social behaviour; and
- (c) To provide incentives for residents in the Council's district to undertake paid work and make a positive contribution to the local community.

### **3 STATEMENT OF CHOICE**

3.1 The Council and its partner landlords are committed to giving Applicants for housing as much choice as possible as to where they wish to live. Under the Scheme, Applicants are normally able to apply for vacancies of individual properties which are advertised each week.

## **PART 2: THE SCHEME**

### **4 JOINING THE HOUSING REGISTER**

4.1 The Council operates a housing register ("the Register") which contains a list of people who have applied to the Council for housing. Anyone seeking social housing within the Council's district must make an Application to join the Register. This will normally be done by making an online Application on the Council's website. Only Applicants who are eligible and qualify for allocation of social housing will be able to join the Register.

4.2 All Applications to join the Register will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme as set out in the paragraphs below.

#### **4.3 Eligibility**

4.3.1 Certain people from abroad, including some subject to immigration control, are not eligible for an allocation of social housing. These are known as Restricted Persons. The government has set out those who are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation. For further details on eligibility, please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40.

#### **4.4 Qualifying Applicants**

4.4.1 Under the Act, the Council is entitled to set its own qualifying criteria to determine who should be considered for an allocation of housing.

4.4.2 Applicants will qualify to join the Register if they satisfy all 4 of the criteria listed below.

They:

- (a) Are Over 16 years of age<sup>1</sup>;
- (b) Are in Housing Need; in that the Applicant's housing circumstances fall within one of the Scheme's Bands (see paragraph 5.1 Housing Need Assessment )
- (c) Have been assessed as lacking the financial means to enable them to resolve their housing need; and
- (d) Have a local connection to the Council's district.

#### 4.5 Non Qualifying Applicants

4.5.1 Applicants who fall within the description of people below will not qualify to join the Register:

Applicants who:

- (a) Fail to meet the qualifying criteria at paragraph 4.4.2 above;
- (b) Are an owner-occupier (with the exception of those with a housing and assessed care need, who cannot resolve their own housing situation and have a need for extra-care or sheltered accommodation);
- (c) Have deliberately worsened their circumstances to enable them to qualify onto the Register; or
- (d) Are deemed to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to make them unsuitable as tenants.

For further details of the qualifying criteria and non-qualifying Applicants, please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40.

#### 4.6 Decisions Following Assessment of Eligibility and Qualification

4.6.1 Where a decision is made that an Applicant is either not eligible or non-qualifying they will be notified in writing of that decision and of their right to request a review. (See paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process.)

## 5. PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

### 5.1 HOUSING NEED ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 The Council uses a banding system to prioritise Applications on the Register. The Scheme has 4 bands. With the exception as set out at paragraph 5.1.2 below, in order to qualify to join the Register an Applicant's housing need will have to fall within one of the Scheme's Bands.

5.1.2 Applicants, who satisfy a Rural Connection Band for a Rural Parish, will be assessed as being in housing need and are exempt from having to satisfy paragraph 5.1.1 above. Please refer to paragraph 5.5 Rural Connection Band.

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst Applicants aged 16 -17 will be able to join the Register, they will not be made an allocation of a property under the Scheme until they attain the age of 18.

### 5.1.3 The Scheme Bands:

The table below outlines in summary the criteria for each band:

<b>BAND</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>
<b>Band 1 – Emergency Need for Housing</b>	Applicants:  (a) Who require a management move: where the applicant has been assessed as having an exceptional need to move by a Senior Officer.  (b) Who have been assessed as having an urgent health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances;  (c) Whose accommodation has been assessed as being in a state of emergency disrepair and the hazards cannot be rectified within a reasonable timescale; or  (d) Who need to move to escape violence or threats of violence, harassment or a traumatic event in the home.

<p><b>Band 2. Serious Need for Housing</b></p>	<p>Applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Who have been accepted as being owed the full housing duty under the Act and where discharge of duty cannot be achieved by a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation;</li> <li>(b) Who are existing social housing tenants under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms;</li> <li>(c) Who are severely overcrowded (e.g they lack 2 or more bedrooms, or have 2 children who lack a bedroom, such as a single parent with 2 children, where at least one of the children is over the age of 1 in a 1 bed home);</li> <li>(d) Who have been assessed as having a high health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstance;</li> <li>(e) Who live in a home assessed as being in a state of high disrepair and the disrepair cannot be rectified within reasonable timescales; or</li> <li>(f) Who have been assessed as ready to move on from supported housing in the Council's district area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Band 3 – Need for Housing</b></p>	<p>Applicants who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Are overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom;</li> <li>(b) Have been assessed as having medium health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances;</li> <li>(c) Are certain serving, or former serving members of the regular forces, or their spouse or civil partner;</li> <li>(d) Are homeless, to whom the Council owes a Relief or Prevention Duty under Part VII of the Act;</li> <li>(e) Who need to move under the Right to Move provisions;</li> <li>(f) Are existing social landlord tenants under-occupying their accommodation by 1 bedroom;</li> </ul>

<p><b>Band 3 – Need for Housing (continued)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(g) Have been assessed as not having a permanent home, or are at risk of becoming homeless and are not owed a duty under (d) above;</li> <li>(h) Have been accepted as being owed the full housing duty under Part VII of the Act and where it is possible to discharge duty with a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation; or</li> <li>(i) Are key workers where the Council identifies that there is a critical need for the key worker to be rehoused to ensure the availability of an essential public service for the New Forest community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Band 4 – Lower Need for Housing</b></p>	<p>Applicants who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Have been assessed as having a lower health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances;</li> <li>(b) Share essential facilities such as a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen with other households or lack essential facilities;</li> <li>(c) Are households sharing with relatives or friends;</li> <li>(d) Are occupants living in supported accommodation who have not been assessed as ready for move on from supported housing in the Council's area.</li> <li>(j) Are assured shorthold tenants who do not have the financial means to purchase a property (see Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification); or</li> <li>(k) Have been assessed under Part VII of the Act as not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and are still statutory homeless at the point of offer.</li> </ul>

Further details of the Housing Need Assessment can be found at Appendix 3: Scheme Bands on page 45.



## **5.2 HOUSEHOLD**

5.2.1 The following individuals will form part of an Applicant's Household under the Scheme:

- The Applicant's Partner;
- The Applicant's children/dependants aged 35 and under with whom the Applicant resides or with whom the Applicant might reasonably be expected to reside.

5.2.2 In determining whether children/dependants can reasonably be expected to reside with the Applicant the Council will take into consideration the following factors:

- Access to other suitable accommodation;
- Previous, current and likely future living arrangements;
- Evidence of membership to the Household (including whether the Applicant is in receipt of relevant benefits for the child/dependant);
- The impact on scarce housing resources on providing the Applicant with additional bedrooms.

Whilst court orders will be taken into consideration, they will not be determinative.

5.2.3 Applicants, who the Council has accepted require a carer to live with them will be allowed to include the carer as a member of their Household. In deciding whether a carer is required to live with an Applicant, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- Whether there is an established need for live-in 24 hour care;
- The availability of supported or extra-care housing which may meet the Applicant's care needs;
- The Applicant's current, and likely future, living arrangements;
- The impact on scarce housing resources on providing an additional bedroom to the Applicant.

## **5.3 THE BEDROOM NEED ASSESSMENT**

5.3.1 Following the Housing Need Assessment the Council will assess the number of bedrooms that an Applicant is entitled to by looking at the size and structure of the Applicant's Household as set out at paragraph 5.2 above. This will establish the Applicant's Bedroom Need and the size of property that the Applicant will be able to bid for.

5.3.2 The Council's Bedroom Need Assessment has been set with reference to the current regulations affecting bedroom entitlement for the purposes of the Local Housing Allowance and Housing Benefit. It also reflects the bedroom entitlement that will be used for the purpose of assessing the housing component associated with rental liability within Universal Credit.

5.3.3 The Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment is set as follows:

<b>PROPERTY TYPE/SIZE</b>	<b>HOUSEHOLD</b>
Bedsit	Single Applicant
1 Bedroom	Single Applicant or Applicants living as a couple with no children
2 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 1 child; or Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 2 children of: (a) The same sex under 16 (b) Opposite sex under 10
3 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple with 2 children, with at least 1 of opposite sex over 10;  Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 3 children or 4 children: (a) of the same sex under 16; or (b) Two children of each sex under 16
4 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants with 5 or more children  Single Applicant or Applicants with 4 children where at least one of them is aged 10 and is of the opposite sex of the others or one of them is aged 16 or over.

5.3.4 Pregnant Applicants or those Households with a pregnant member will not have their bedroom requirement reviewed until the baby is born and a copy of the birth certificate for the child has been received.

5.3.5 The Council reserves the right to assess an Applicant as being entitled to more or less bedrooms, provided this does not result in an overcrowding hazard, where this will lead to the effective management of its housing stock or where the circumstances justify the adjustment. This may apply where an Applicant cannot share a bedroom with their Partner due to their disability.

5.3.6 If an Applicant has been recommended by Children's Services as suitable to foster or adopt one or more children, but requires additional bedroom(s) in order to be able to adopt or foster, the Applicant will be considered for an additional bedroom. When conducting the Bedroom Need Assessment for prospective foster carers or adopters who state that they need additional bedrooms for their application to foster or adopt to be successful, the Council will consider the risk that the application to foster or

adopt may not be successful against the wider benefits which would be realised if a placement was successful. This may mean contacting Children’s Services to determine how the lack of the additional bedroom will affect the prospective carer’s or adopter’s application to foster or adopt.

## 5.4 BAND START DATE

5.4.1 The Band Start Date records the date that an Applicant is deemed to have joined the Register. The Band Start Date will be determined as follows:

(a) New Applications:

The Band Start Date will be the date that the Application is processed and placed into a Band.

(b) Existing Applicants:

(i) If an existing Applicant’s Housing Need has been re-assessed due to a change in circumstance, their Band Start Date will be as follows:

<b>REASSESSMENT OUTCOME</b>	<b>BAND START DATE</b>
Move into a higher band	Date of Re-assessment
Moved into a lower band	Retain original Band Start Date
Remain in same band (including for a different housing need)	Retain original Band Start Date

(ii) Transitional Arrangement: Applicants who were registered on the Council’s Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2 prior to the adoption of the Scheme will be able to keep as their Band Start Date the date of their application under the Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2. Where there has been a change in their Housing Need since their original application under the Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2, their Housing Need will be re-assessed and a new Band Start Date given in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (b)(i) above.

5.4.2 Homeless Applicants who are owed the Full Housing Duty under the Act and are placed in Band 2 following the Housing Need Assessment will have the date the Council made the decision on the duty owed to them as their Band Start Date.

## 5.5 RURAL CONNECTION BAND

5.5.1 Some of the Council’s social housing is located in Rural Parishes. The Council believes these properties should be allocated so as to ensure that:

- Rural communities are supported in a sustainable way wherever possible; and

- People that are deemed to satisfy a Rural Connection Band to the Rural Parish are given priority in the allocation of vacancies.

5.5.2 Accordingly, Applicants who wish to be considered for an allocation of a property in a Rural Parish will need to satisfy one of the Rural Connection Band criteria as set out below. For a list of the Rural Parishes please refer to paragraph 5.6 Areas of Choice.

<b>RURAL CONNECTION BAND</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>
Band A	Applicants who live or are in Employment in the Rural Parish and have been so for longer than 10 years or who have lived in the Rural Parish for longer than 10 years previously or a designated key-worker performing an essential service for the Rural Parish community where there is an established need for the Applicant to be rehoused to maintain the service.
Band B	Applicants who live or are in Employment in the Rural Parish and have done so for longer than 5 years, or who have lived in the Rural Parish for more than 5 years within the last 15 years, or whose parents, siblings or adult children live in the Rural Parish and have done so for 10 years or longer.
Band C	Applicants who live or are in Employment in the Rural Parish and have done so for longer than 2 years, or who have lived in the Rural Parish for more than 2 years within the last 15 years or whose parents, siblings or adult children live in the Rural Parish and have done so for 5 years or more.

5.5.3 Applicants who do not satisfy any of the Rural Connection Band criteria will only be eligible for an allocation of a property in a Rural Parish in the circumstances set out at paragraph 6.2.1.4 (d).

5.5.4 Where an Applicant has been placed in temporary accommodation situated in a Rural Parish the time spent in the Rural Parish will not count towards satisfying a Rural Connection Band. However, if the Applicant has established a longstanding connection with the Rural Parish during their occupation and has made a significant contribution to the local community, then they may be considered to have a Rural Connection Band. Any decision to allow the time spent in temporary accommodation to be taken into consideration when assessing Rural Connection Band is reserved to a Senior Officer.

## 5.6 AREAS OF CHOICE

5.6.1 For administrative and management purposes, when Applicants join the Register they will be asked to stipulate which areas they would like to be housed in.

5.6.2 The areas listed below are available for selection by all Applicants on the Register:

<b>AREA</b>
Ashley
Blackfield and Langley
Calmore
Calshot
Dibden and Dibden Purlieu
Eling
Fawley
Fordingbridge
Holbury and Hardley
Hythe
Lymington
Marchwood
New Milton
Pennington
Ringwood
Totton
Walkford

5.6.3 The areas listed below are Rural Parishes. Please refer to paragraph 5.5 Rural Connection Band at page 13 – 14.

<b>RURAL PARISH</b>	<b>RURAL PARISH</b>
Ashurst/Colbury	Sway
Beaulieu	Whitsbury
Boldre/Pilley/Norley Wood	Woodgreen
Brangore/Sopley	Rockbourne
Brook/Bramshaw	Sandleheath
Burley	
Copythorne/Bartley	
Damerham	
Denny Lodge	
East Boldre/East End	
Ellingham/Harbridge/Ibsley	
Exbury/Lepe	
Godshill	
Hale	
Hordle	
Hyde	
Lyndhurst	
Martin	
Milford	
Minstead	
Netley Marsh/Woodlands	

## **5.7 ACCEPTANCE ONTO THE REGISTER**

5.7.1 Once all information has been received from an Applicant, and where appropriate supporting agencies, the Applicant will be notified in writing of the following:

- Their Band Start Date;
- The Band in which their Application has been placed;
- Their reference number to be used for bidding;
- Their assessed Bedroom Need;
- A summary of the Scheme

5.7.2 If further information is required, the Applicant will be contacted in writing and will be asked to provide the information necessary to assess their Application. Any Applicant who does not provide the requested information within 28 days, or where the Application was made on-line, who fails to submit supporting documents within 28 days, will be assumed to no longer require housing and their Application will be treated as abandoned. Their Application will not be processed further.

## **6. THE CHOICE BASED ALLOCATION PROCESS**

### **6.1 MANAGING VACANCIES**

6.1.1 All vacancies will be let under the following choice-based allocation process unless they have specifically been excluded, please see paragraph 6.3 below.

6.1.2 Labelling Properties

6.1.2.1 The Council will set parameters on which type of Households can apply for vacancies. As part of the labelling process full details of each vacancy will be provided and will include the following:

- Type of property;
- Street location;
- Rent, and if appropriate, service charge payable;
- Access to the property (including wheelchair adapted);
- Landlord;
- Number of bedrooms and permitted numbers of occupants (with reference to the Bedroom Need Assessment);
- Specific requirements as specified by the landlord;
- Where appropriate, the Household type that will be given preference;
- Whether or not pets are allowed.

6.1.2.2 In addition to the above, other circumstances may apply which require particular labelling of properties, schemes or estates. The examples below are for illustrative purposes only and are not exhaustive:

- Where the Council is able to create vacancies within the affordable stock in its district which could increase the number of available homes, then properties may be labelled so that preference is given to Transfer Applicants.
- Where a property is adapted for disabled use or where it has been provided for a specific purpose, such as supported accommodation, it will be labelled for Applicants who require adapted or supported accommodation.
- Where a property is situated in an Age Restricted Scheme, it will be labelled for Applicants that satisfy the age restriction of the scheme.
- If there is a planning requirement for a scheme (ie s.106 agreements), vacancies in that scheme will be labelled according to the planning requirements. Similarly, if a scheme has been developed with a specific Applicant group then the labelling will reflect this.
- Where the vacancy is in a Rural Parish the labelling will require that the Applicant has been awarded a Rural Connection Band to the Rural Parish.
- If there is an established need for designated key-workers to be re-housed to ensure the availability of a critical public service within the Council's district area and a Senior Officer has determined that this need takes priority over other housing needs within the Council's district, the vacancy will be labelled to give key-workers who are able to provide that service a preference.
- If it is known that there are a large number of Applicants who are in Bands 1-2 or with a particular need for a vacancy, the labelling of the property may be more specific to reduce the number of Applicants who can bid for the vacancy.
- Where the Council is seeking to reduce the numbers of homeless Households in temporary accommodation, a vacancy may be labelled with a preference for those Households who have been accepted as homeless.
- Where sensitive allocations are required because of the needs of other vulnerable or elderly tenants, labelling may stipulate that the successful Applicant needs to be able to demonstrate that they will be able to manage a tenancy successfully.

### 6.1.3 Advertising

6.1.3.1 Unless excluded from the lettings process, all properties will be advertised to provide Applicants with the best possible chance of exercising choice. Applicants will find vacancies advertised on the Council's website. Where a property is for a specific Applicant group who require support contact may be made (as far as resources allow) to ensure that this group are able to bid for the vacancy.

6.1.3.2 The advert will be labelled as set out at paragraphs 6.1.2.1 and 6.1.2.2 above.

6.1.3.3 Each property will normally be advertised for a period of 5 days. Where a property has not attracted any bids and/or bids from Applicants that satisfy the labelling criteria for the vacancy, it may be re-advertised to increase the number of Applicants who can bid for the vacancy.

#### 6.1.4 Applying for Vacancies

6.1.4.1 Interested Applicants will be able to bid for a vacancy electronically by placing a bid via the Council's website account before the advert expiry date. Applicants are entitled to bid for a maximum of 3 vacancies each week.

#### 6.1.5 Assisted Bidding

6.1.5.1 Where an Applicant requires assistance in bidding for vacancies, because the Applicant is vulnerable or where there is a language barrier, then the Housing Options team may assist the Applicant to bid for vacancies or refer the Applicant to an agency that will be able to assist the Applicant to do so. Applicants will be asked during the application process if they require assistance and if they wish the Housing Options team to manage their bids on their behalf. The Housing Options team will assess whether the Applicant meets the criteria for Assisted Bidding.

6.1.5.2 Where an Applicant qualifies for Assisted Bidding, the Housing Options team will only make bids on behalf of the Applicant if the vacancy meets the Applicant's preferences and Bedroom Need. Applicants can also ask for assistance with bidding at any time by contacting the Housing Options team or through contact from an agency. Where appropriate the Housing Options team may also enquire whether an Applicant requires assistance following a review of an Applicant's bidding history.

6.1.5.3 An Applicant will only be assisted with making their bids if they are unable to do so because of vulnerability or because there is a language barrier. Where appropriate, Applicants will be encouraged to access facilities at the Council's offices, use family/friends or the library to access the website to place bids.

#### 6.1.6 Automatic Bidding

6.1.6.1 To increase the prospects of re-housing Applicants, the Council may make bids on behalf of some Applicants on the Register.

6.1.6.2 The Housing Options team will only bid on vacancies that are suitable for the Applicant's Household and that the Applicant has the best chance of securing. Whilst consideration will be given to the Applicants preferences, the overriding consideration will be the effective management of the Council's housing stock, or where appropriate, the duty to move on Homeless Applicants to more settled housing solutions. In some cases the Housing Options team may encourage an Applicant to increase their preferences to maximise their prospects of being rehoused.

6.1.6.3 The Housing Options team will normally bid on behalf of the following Applicants:

- Applicants in Band 1;
- Homeless Applicants in Band 2 or in Band 3 who are owed the Relief or Prevention Duty;



- Band 2: Under-occupying by 2 bedrooms;
- Band 3: Under-occupying by 1 bedroom

6.1.6.4 The Housing Options team will bid on behalf of an Applicant if the Applicant has failed to bid for suitable properties that have become available in a 6 month period and/or where the bidding history of the Applicant shows they have not made sufficient bids for properties having regard to the number of suitable properties that have become available in a 6 month period. The Housing Options team may also bid on properties where it would assist in the effective management of the Council's housing stock.

6.1.6.5 Where a bid made on behalf of an Applicant is successful, the Applicant will be made an offer of the accommodation secured by the automatic bid.

6.1.6.6 Homeless Applicants:

- The Applicant will be advised that the offer is made in discharge of the duty owed to them as a Homeless Applicant and the consequences of refusal. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer.
- If the Applicant refuses the offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or fails to lodge a review request at all, their Application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. The Council will discharge the homeless duty. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.1.6.7 Other Applicants

- The Applicant will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that they can request a review whether or not they accept the offer. If within a 12 month period, an Applicant refuses two offers of accommodation that are deemed suitable following a review, or where no suitability review was lodged, their Application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. Applicants who fail to respond to an offer will be treated as though they had refused the offer. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.1.6.8 If the Applicant accepts the offer but lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or does not lodge a suitability review at all, their Application will be removed from the Register.

6.1.6.9 An Applicant whose Application has been suspended, has been placed in a lower Band or removed from the Register, will be notified of this decision and of their right to request a review of it; please see paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process. The Applicant will be entitled to re-apply to join the Register or seek higher banding if their circumstances change, or have changed, since the decision was made.

## 6.2 ALLOCATING PROPERTIES

### 6.2.1 Selection Procedure

6.2.1.1 Once the time limit for placing bids on an advert has expired, the bids for a vacancy will be considered. Any bids placed after the time limit has expired will be excluded from consideration.

6.2.1.2 Applicants who do not meet the labelling criteria of the vacancy will be excluded from consideration. Where the advert for the vacancy specified Households who would be given a preference for the vacancy, the Applicants who satisfy the preferences will be considered before those Applicants who do not. Applications will then be prioritised.

#### 6.2.1.3 Prioritisation Generally

- a) First, by their Band, for example all Applicants in Band 1 will be listed above all Applicants in Bands 2, those in Band 2 will be listed above all those in Band 3 and so on.
- b) Then, by the Band Start date; with the Applicant with the earliest Band Start Date and highest Band at the top.

The vacancy will be allocated to the Applicant who is at the top following the above prioritisation.

#### 6.2.1.4 Prioritisation – Rural Parishes

- a) Applicants will be prioritised with reference to the strength of their connection with the Rural Parish and Band as follows:

Order of Prioritisation	Rural Connection Band (RCB) and Housing Need Band
1.	RCB A with a Band 1 Housing Need
2.	RCB A with a Band 2 Housing Need
3.	RCB A or RCB A with Bands 3 or 4 Housing Need
4.	RCB B with a Band 1 Housing Need
5.	RCB B with a Band 2 Housing Need
6.	RCB B or RCB with Bands 3 or 4 Housing Need
7.	RCB C with a Band 1 Housing Need
8.	RCB C with a Band 2 Housing Need
9.	RCB C or RCB C with Bands 3 or Band 4 Housing Need

- b) Applicants who fall within 3, 6 and 9 in the table above will be treated equally within their grouping. Applicants will then be prioritised by Band Start Date. The vacancy will be allocated to the Applicant with the earliest Band Start Date following prioritisation in accordance with the table at 6.2.1.4 (a) above.
- c) Where the vacancy is in a Rural Parish and no bids are received from an Applicant with a Rural Connection Band for that Rural Parish, the Council will re-advertise the vacancy and set new labelling criteria to increase the prospects of the vacancy going to an Applicant with a Rural Connection Band for the Rural Parish. In re-advertising the vacancy the Council may change the labelling criteria to allow under or over-occupation. However, the Council will only allocate a vacancy to an under-occupier if affordability will not be an issue and to an over occupier where it will not result in a Category 1 Hazard. If the vacancy can still not be filled, the Council will increase the geographical area to allow bids from nearby Rural Parishes and will also consider labelling the vacancy to allow for over or under-occupation (subject to affordability and avoiding Category 1 Hazard).
- d) If a vacancy in a Rural Parish is still not filled after re-advertising it as above, the vacancy will be made available to the whole district.

#### 6.2.1.5 Following Prioritisation

- a) If after the Applications have been prioritised as set out in paragraphs 6.2.1.3 or 6.2.1.4, there are two or more Applicants at the top of the list, the Council will carry out an assessment of the Applicants' circumstances to determine who has the greatest Housing Need for the particular vacancy. This may include taking into consideration whether an Applicant has more than one Housing Need, the size of the Household and its make-up to ensure the best use of the property.
- b) If an Applicant confirms that they wish to be considered for a vacancy they will not be able to bid on any other vacancies whilst they are being considered. Any open bids that the Applicant has for other vacancies will be ignored during the period of consideration.
- c) If an Applicant is the successful bidder for more than one vacancy they will have to choose which vacancy they want to be considered for. In order to ensure effective management of the Scheme, Applicants will not be able to be considered for more than one vacancy at any one time.
- d) If an Applicant is made an offer of a vacancy they will normally have 24 hours in which to make a decision. If the Applicant needs more time and/or support to make the decision, they will need to notify the Housing Options team within 24 hours of the offer being made. Subject to consent having been given and/or appropriate data sharing agreements being in place, if the Council is aware that the Applicant is receiving support from a support agency, the support agency will be notified when the Applicant is made an offer of a vacancy.

## 6.2.2 Special Allocations

### 6.2.2.1 Sensitive Lettings

- a) Occasionally, there will be a need to assist in dealing with issues that impact on a small, specific location to reduce the concentration of certain needs groups which is impacting on housing management; or to promote a more balanced community by seeking to select or exclude certain Households with particular characteristics.
- b) Where appropriate, this may be requested by a partner landlord; for example where a previous tenant had caused anti-social behaviour and it was deemed important to get the right mix of tenants in the area having regard to the needs of existing vulnerable or elderly tenants.
- c) The Council, and if appropriate, the partner landlord, may agree that an Applicant who has come top following prioritisation is not the most suitable and reserves the right to overlook the Applicant and make the offer to the next suitable Applicant.
- d) As indicated above, where a vacancy is a sensitive let, it will be clearly labelled as such. Where there is more than one property in an area that is affected this will be set out in an agreed Local Lettings Policy.

### 6.2.2.2 Age Restricted Schemes

- a) Some of the Council's vacancies are situated in Age Restricted Schemes. Applicants will only be able to bid for these vacancies if they meet the age restriction of the Scheme. Any such vacancy will be clearly labelled as an Age Restricted Scheme.
- b) To ensure the effective management of the Council's housing stock, the Council reserves the right to increase or reduce the number of Age Restricted Schemes or alter the age restrictions as may be deemed appropriate; the decision to do so is reserved to a Senior Officer.

### 6.2.2.3 Incentive to Work

- a) Local authorities are encouraged to consider how they can support those Households who want to work, as well as those who, while unable to engage in paid work, are contributing to their communities in other ways, for example voluntary work.<sup>2</sup>
- b) In order to provide incentives for Applicants to work or make a positive contribution to the local community, a percentage of all general needs housing will be advertised so that a preference is given to Applicants, who are in Employment or who are making a contribution to their community, for example by voluntary work. A decision as to whether

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<sup>2</sup>Paragraph 4.27 of the Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England.

an Applicant is making a contribution to their community, for example by voluntary work, is reserved to a Senior Officer. The annual percentage will be set between 10 – 20%.

- c) The incentive to work provisions will be regularly monitored to ensure that the Council is complying with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

#### 6.2.2.4 Local Letting Policies

- a) The Act allows the Council to adopt Local Letting Policies. This allows the Council to allocate housing to a specific group of people, whether or not they come within the Reasonable Preference Group. In setting Local Lettings Policies, the Council has to ensure it complies with its duty under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any groups who have a protected characteristic and it needs to ensure that overall it has regard to its statutory duties to those in the Reasonable Preference Group.
- b) Local Lettings Policies will be used to ensure a mixed and balanced community. When agreed, these Local Lettings Policies will have their own specific allocation criteria. Properties that are subject to a Local Lettings Policy will be clearly labelled in the advert.
- c) A Local Lettings Policy may be applied in addition to any local planning restrictions that may be contained in an agreement made under s.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

#### 6.2.3 Verification of Applications

6.2.3.1 The Council will undertake verification of all the relevant information provided by the Applicant. The verification of information includes obtaining evidence to confirm details given about the Applicant's family and housing situation.

6.2.3.2 The verification of information may be undertaken when the Application is received and will always be undertaken at the point of allocation.

6.2.3.3 Where the vacancy is with a partner landlord, for example a housing association, further verification, in accordance with the landlord's own verification processes and policy may be undertaken by the landlord. The landlord may also have additional qualifying criteria; particularly around affordability. Applicants will have to satisfy both the partner landlord and the Scheme's qualification criteria at verification to be made an allocation of the vacancy.

6.2.3.4 Verification will also include the gathering of information on suitability to be a tenant. If it becomes clear at the verification stage that an Applicant has demonstrated behaviour which may make them unsuitable to be a tenant (please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40 for further details) then they will not be offered the tenancy. The Applicant's banding and/or qualification to be on the Register will be re-assessed due to information obtained during the verification process. This may result in an Applicant being moved into a lower Band or being removed from the Register. If an Applicant is overlooked for an allocation at the

verification stage, the Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be considered for the vacancy.

6.2.3.5 If following verification it is established that the property is not suitable for the Applicant, the Council reserves the right to prevent an offer of a property being progressed. If this happens, the Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be considered for the vacancy.

6.2.3.6 The local ward member will be notified of an allocation of a vacancy in their Rural Parish.<sup>3</sup>

6.2.3.7 If it is not possible to complete verification of the Application within a reasonable period of time due to the Applicant's refusal to co-operate or because the Applicant is unable to provide the information needed to complete the verification process, the Applicant may be overlooked and the Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be contacted.

6.2.3.8 Where following the verification process, An Applicant has been moved into another Band or has been removed from the Register, they will be advised of the reasons in writing. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the decision; please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

6.2.3.9 Once the verification process has been completed, the Council, or the landlord, will contact the successful Applicant to make a provisional offer of a tenancy to them.

## 6.2.4 Publishing Details of the Allocation

6.2.4.1 Feedback on allocations provides Applicants with information to exercise choice and to gain information on the likely waiting time for re-housing. Details of the allocation will be published on the Council's website as soon as possible. Whilst the successful Applicant's name will not be published, their Band and the length of time they have been on the Register will be published.

## 6.3 EXCEPTIONS TO THE CHOICE BASED ALLOCATIONS PROCESS

### 6.3.1 Allocations Excluded From the Choice Based Allocations Process

6.3.1.1 Whilst most allocations will be managed through the choice based allocations process, there will be some circumstances when it will be necessary to exclude certain vacancies.

6.3.1.2 Examples of the allocations that will be excluded from the choice based allocations process are:

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<sup>3</sup> In accordance with Regulation 3 of the Allocations of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997 SI 483, elected members of the Council may not be involved in allocation decisions where the accommodation to be allocated, or the Applicant's sole or main residence, is in the member's ward.

- Management moves (carried out by the Council or housing association to assist in the good management of tenancies and its stock);
- Vacancies in Age Restricted Schemes, adapted properties or sensitive lets where no bids have been received from Applicants that satisfy the labelling criteria.
- For community safety, for example re-housing under the Multi-Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) or Witness Protection scheme;
- Where supported housing or extra care housing is being allocated;
- Where a homeless Applicant is occupying a Council property on a non-secure basis and the property they are occupying is suitable for their needs and they wish to remain in the property.
- Where arrangements are in place for partner landlords to provide less than 100% of their properties for allocation.

6.3.1.3 Where an allocation has been excluded from the choice based allocations process, the Council will make an allocation of the vacancy to an Applicant who has not bid for it. This is known as a direct offer.

### 6.3.2 Direct Offers

6.3.2.1 The Council may make direct offers to the following:

- Applicants in Bands 1 and 2;
- Applicants being discharged from hospital or needing to go into supported or sheltered housing;
- Flexible tenants whose tenancy is due to, or has, expired and they have been assessed as having a continuing housing need but for alternative accommodation;
- Successors under-occupying their property or Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation where a decision has been made to allow them to remain in the property or to give them a tenancy of an alternative property;
- Remaining Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation on termination of a joint tenancy where a decision has been made to allow them to remain in that property or to give them a tenancy of an alternative property;
- Applicants needing specially adapted properties, properties in an Age Restricted Scheme or sensitive lets;
- Applicants requiring a management move or who require rehousing under MAPPA or Witness Protection scheme.

6.3.2.2 Any direct offer will meet the Applicant's assessed needs and should be suitable for the Applicant's Household.

6.3.2.3 Homeless Applicants:

- The Applicant will be advised that the offer is made in discharge of the duty owed to them as a homeless applicant and the consequences of refusal. They will be

notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer.

- If an Applicant refuses the offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or fails to lodge a review request at all, their Application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. The Council will discharge the homeless duty. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

#### 6.3.2.4 Other Applicants:

- When Applicants are made an offer, they will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer. If an Applicant refuses 2 offers of accommodation that are deemed suitable following a review, or where no suitability review is lodged, within a 12 month period, their Application will be suspended for 6 months. Applicants who fail to respond to an offer will be treated as though they had refused the offer. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Applicant will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.3.2.5 If an Applicant accepts an offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or does not lodge a suitability review at all, their Application will be removed from the Register.

6.3.2.6 An Applicant whose Application has been suspended, moved to a lower Band or been removed from the Register will be notified of this decision and of their right to request a review of it, please see paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process.

6.3.2.7 To ensure transparency and fairness, decisions to exclude allocations from the choice based allocations process and make a direct offer will be monitored to ensure that the decisions to do so are being properly exercised within limited boundaries.

## 6.4 OTHER ALLOCATION PROCESSES

6.4.1 A number of allocation processes take place which are outside of the normal allocation processes of the Scheme. This includes vacancies being let as temporary accommodation to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness or decants whilst repairs are undertaken.

### 6.4.2 Allocation of Temporary Housing

6.4.2.1 For allocations of temporary housing to homeless people or to prevent homelessness direct allocations will be made by the Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers.



6.4.2.2 The main aims of allocating temporary housing are to resolve homelessness, meet statutory requirements and to minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

6.4.2.3 There are a number of situations in which homeless applicants can be waiting for temporary housing. The most common ones are:

- Accepted homeless applicants who have been placed in bed and breakfast;
- Accepted homeless applicants in other forms of emergency housing (refuge, staying with friends/relatives)
- Households already in temporary housing where the accommodation is going back to the owner;
- Households already in temporary accommodation where the accommodation is not suitable for their needs.

6.4.2.4 Allocations of temporary housing are a question of judgment for each individual vacancy, as the Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer will have to balance the needs and requirements of a number of different individuals in different circumstances. The matters which the Homelessness and Advice Officer must take into account include:

- Length of time a homeless applicant has been in bed and breakfast. Bed and breakfast is not suitable accommodation for homeless applicants with family commitments (including those who are pregnant) unless used in an emergency and then for a maximum of 6 weeks;
- The length of time homeless applicants have been in other forms of emergency housing awaiting temporary accommodation. Whilst refuge and other forms of emergency accommodation are normally more suitable than bed and breakfast, lengthy waits in emergency housing should be avoided where possible.
- Where temporary accommodation is going back to the owner and delays may cause families to be placed in bed and breakfast or significant difficulties to the landlord.
- The length of time that a homeless applicant has been in unsuitable temporary housing and has been waiting for suitable temporary accommodation and the difficulties that the homeless applicant is experiencing in their current accommodation.
- The areas of choice of each homeless applicant and the availability of accommodation close to those areas of choice.

#### 6.4.3 Allocations of Extra Care Housing

6.4.3.1 Allocations of extra-care housing will normally be managed outside of the choice based allocations process due to the vulnerability of Applicants for extra-care schemes and the required partnership working with Hampshire County Council and care and support providers.

6.4.3.2 A separate agreement with Hampshire County Council will be entered into to set out the allocations processes for extra care, so the paragraphs below only summarise the broad principles.

6.4.3.3 Extra-care housing will be advertised on the website but on a non-specific basis to ensure awareness of the availability of the extra-care accommodation.

6.4.3.4 The Housing Options team will assess housing needs in accordance with the Scheme. An Extra-Care Assessment and Allocation Panel (ECAP) will assess support and care needs.

6.4.3.5 For each vacancy the ECAP will determine whether it is a vacancy for an Applicant with high, medium or low care needs. This decision will depend on an understanding of the profile of the Applicant within the extra care scheme (to ensure a balanced extra care scheme) and the details of the particular vacancy (for example, a fully adapted property may suggest higher care needs).

6.4.3.6 Each vacancy will be allocated to the most suitable Applicant. When allocating, the following principles will apply:

- A vacancy of a high/medium or low care need will normally be offered to the Applicant with the equivalent level of care who is top on the list for that particular level need.
- Other factors may be taken into consideration as well as the level of housing need. These will include the needs and preferences of individuals (eg wheelchair needs, preferences for floor level and scheme preferences etc).
- In line with the Scheme, normally, Applicants will need to satisfy the local connection criteria.
- If there is a double flat, consideration will be given to giving preference to couples.
- Where there are no suitable Applicants, consideration will be given to Applicants with a different level of assessed care need for the vacancy, if appropriate.
- Where it is still not possible to allocate a vacancy, the vacancy may be individually advertised on the website as a vacancy of older persons' housing within an extra care scheme and allocated by the Housing Options team in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme.

#### 6.4.4 Hard to Let

6.4.4.1 Hard to let properties are those which the Council finds difficult to let due to low demand. The Council may allocate such properties by making a direct offer or allowing Applicants who would not ordinarily meet the properties labelling criteria to bid on the property.

## **PART 3: SCHEME ADMINISTRATION**

### **7. MANAGING THE SCHEME**

#### **7.1 DECISION MAKING**

7.1.1 The following decisions will be the responsibility of the named positions (or positions at an equivalent or higher level) within the Council; the list is not exhaustive and a Senior Officer has the discretion to delegate the decision-making responsibility of any decision to another position as may be deemed appropriate by the Senior Officer:

<b>DECISIONS</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
Eligibility of Applicants	Allocations Assistant/Allocations Officer
Qualifying Applicants (including Local Connection)	Allocations Assistant/Allocations Officer
Household and Bedroom Need Assessment	Allocations Assistant/Allocations Officer
Housing Need Assessment (Banding decision)	Allocations Assistant/Allocations Officer
Renewal Request/Change of Circumstance–re- assessment	Allocations Assistant/Allocations Officer
Lowering an Applicant’s Band, Suspension or Removal from the Register	Allocations Officer
Prioritisation of Applications and successful bids	Allocations Officer
Properties excluded from Choice Based Process	Allocations Officer
Adverts for properties: including labelling, setting preferences and property description	Allocations Officer
Reviews	Allocations Manager
Banding for Vulnerable Occupant or selection of an Applicant for Auto-Bidding	Allocations Manager
Health and Wellbeing Assessment	Allocations Manager (following assessment by the Medical and Welfare Panel)
Decision on community contribution issues (including Incentive to Work and Rural Connection Band)	Senior Officer
Exercise of discretion <sup>4</sup>	Senior Officer
Rural Connection Band	Senior Officer
Management moves or direct offers	Senior Officer
Local Lettings Plans and Sensitive Lettings	Senior Officers (in consultation Portfolio Holder for Housing)
Decision on key-worker status <sup>5</sup>	Senior Officers (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing)

#### **7.2 MEDICAL AND WELFARE PANEL**

<sup>4</sup> Including in relation to whether exceptional circumstances apply for failure to complete a Renewal Request within 3 months.

<sup>5</sup> Including qualification for Band 3

- 7.2.1 Decisions relating an Applicant's health and wellbeing will be made by the Allocation's Manager following the assessment of the Applicant's health and wellbeing by the Medical and Welfare Panel.
- 7.2.2 The Medical and Welfare Panel will meet as required, but normally at intervals of no less than fortnightly. It will be quorate with two or more officers present. The Medical and Welfare is for professionals only and Applicants may not attend.
- 7.2.3 The Medical and Welfare Panel will be chaired by the Allocation's Manager and other members of the Medical and Welfare Panel may be:
- Allocations Officer;
  - Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer;
  - Housing Assistants;
  - Tenancy Management Officers or Tenancy Management Assistants;
  - Representatives from Social or Children's Services;
  - An Occupational therapist;
  - Support Workers;
  - Representatives from the Locality Mental Health Teams;
  - Other professionals
- 7.2.4 In assessing an Applicant's health and wellbeing need the Medical and Welfare Panel will have particular regard to the matters set out in Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment on page 52. Where necessary the Medical and Welfare Panel may seek medical advice.
- 7.2.5 Medical and Welfare Panel members should not be involved in decisions they are presenting or in which they have a declared interest.
- 7.2.6 The Medical and Welfare Panel may make decisions setting the limits and parameters of the properties that the Applicant can bid for; including bedroom entitlement, property type and property location.
- 7.2.7 Applicants will be notified of the decision of the Medical and Welfare Panel after the panel meeting. An Applicant who is not happy with the decision of the Health and Wellbeing Panel will be notified of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

### **7.3 UPDATING APPLICATION DETAILS**

#### **7.3.1 Rolling Reviews**

- 7.3.1.1 A rolling review of Applications will take place so that the Register is kept up to date. Each Application will be reviewed on the anniversary of the Band Start Date; although the Council may review Applications at different intervals if there is a reason to do so. An Applicant will be asked to complete a Renewal Request. If the Applicant fails to respond to the Renewal Request within 28 days of it being sent, the

Application will be suspended. If no contact is made within 3 months of the Renewal Request being sent, the Application will be removed from the Register. An Applicant who has had their Application removed will be notified and will be advised of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

7.3.1.2 If an Applicant has not responded to a Renewal Request within 28 days, but has done so within 3 months, the Application will be reinstated with the original Band Start Date. Applicants who respond after 3 months will only be reinstated with the original Band Start Date if exceptional circumstances apply. Whilst each case will be determined on its individual facts, exceptional circumstances will apply if there is evidence of incapacity (physical or mental) for the period of delay which resulted in the failure to complete the renewal request within the 3 month deadline. A decision as to whether exceptional circumstances apply is reserved to a Senior Officer.

7.3.1.3 Where an Applicant responds to a Renewal Request after having already been removed from the Register for failure to respond, they will have to re-apply to join the Register and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

7.3.1.4 Where an Applicant's circumstances are found to have changed during the rolling review process, their Application will be suspended to allow for re-assessment of their Application. An Applicant who has had their Application suspended will be notified and will be advised of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

### 7.3.2 Change of Circumstance

7.3.2.1 Applicants must inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances as soon as possible after they occur. This includes any change that may affect the Band that has been given to their Application.

7.3.2.2 Applicants have the right to request that their Application be reconsidered following a change in their circumstance. An Application will be re-assessed and given a Band Start Date as set out at paragraph 5.4

7.3.2.3 If a person successfully bids for a vacancy and it is later found that the Applicant's housing situation is different from the details provided when they made their Application, the offer will be withdrawn. Please see paragraph 6.2.3 Verification of Applications.

## 7.4 SUSPENSION AND REMOVAL

### 7.4.1 Suspension

7.4.1.1 An Application may be suspended from the Register in the following circumstances:

Where the:

- Applicant has failed to bid on any properties within a 12 month period;
- Applicant has refused 2 offers (automatic bid, direct offer or successful bid) of accommodation in a 12 month period where the offers have been deemed suitable following review, or where no review was lodged. This includes Applicants who are treated as having refused an offer because they failed to respond;
- Applicant is owed a homeless duty and refuses a suitable offer of accommodation made in discharge of duty owed;
- Council becomes aware of a change of circumstance which requires re-assessment of the Application;
- Applicant has failed to complete a Renewal Request within 28 days of it being sent out;
- Council receives information that the Applicant is no longer eligible or qualifying to be on the Register;
- Council receives information that the Applicant has provided false, or withheld, information.

#### 7.4.1.2 Period of Suspension

<b>REASON FOR SUSPENSION</b>	<b>PERIOD OF SUSPENSION</b>
Refusing 2 suitable offers of accommodation in a 12 month period, or homeless Applicant who refuses a suitable offer of accommodation resulting in discharge of duty.	6 months
Failure to bid in a 12 months period	6 months
Failure to complete a Renewal Request within 28 days	Until the Renewal Request is completed or 3 months; whichever is earlier
The Council becomes aware or is notified of a change of circumstance	Pending re-assessment
The Council becomes aware of, or is notified that:  The Applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is no longer qualifying or eligible; or</li> <li>• has provided false information or has withheld information</li> </ul>	Pending investigations

7.4.1.3 If an Applicant who has been suspended for refusing offers of accommodation or failing to bid, wants to remain on the Register after the period of suspension, their Application will be re-instated with the same Band Start Date; unless there has been a change in circumstance in which case the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above. If following

re-instatement, the Application is suspended again within a 12 month period, the Application will be removed from the Register.

7.4.1.4 Where an Application is suspended pending a re-assessment following a change in circumstance, the Application will be re-instated once the re-assessment has been completed. The Application will be given a Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above. If following re-assessment the Applicant is found to no longer be qualifying or eligible, their Application will be removed from the Register.

7.4.1.5 Where an Application was suspended pending investigations of an allegation that the Applicant is no longer qualifying, eligible or has provided false, or has withheld, information, the Application will be re-instated with the original Band Start Date if the allegations are unfounded. The Application will be removed from the Register if the allegations are founded.

7.4.1.6 An Applicant who has had their Application suspended from the Register has the right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 below for details of the review process.

#### 7.4.2 Removal

7.4.2.1 An Application will be removed from the Register for the following reasons:

- Where the Applicant requests that their Application be removed;
- Where the Applicant has died;
- Where the Applicant has been rehoused; including where the Applicant has accepted an offer of accommodation and lodged an unsuccessful review of its suitability;
- Where an Applicant has failed to complete a Renewal Request within 3 months of it being sent out;
- If an allegation that an Applicant is no longer eligible, qualifying or has provided false, or has withheld, information is made out (including following the verification stage);
- If following re-instatement from suspension the Application is suspended again within a 12 month period.

7.4.2.2 Where the Council is aware that an Applicant may be vulnerable or suffer from a disability, it may try to contact the Applicant, or where there are appropriate consents or data sharing agreements, any agency that it is aware is working with the Applicant, before removing the Application from the Register.

7.4.2.3 Applicants can apply to re-join the Register at any time. Where an Applicant considers that they have become eligible or qualifying since being removed from the Register, they may also reapply to join the Register, but must provide evidence of a change of circumstance. Applicants who apply to re-join the Register will be treated as new Applicants and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

7.4.2.4 An Applicant who has had their Application removed from the Register has the right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 below for details of the review process.

## **7.5 RIGHT TO REQUEST A REVIEW**

7.5.1 An Applicant has the right to request a review of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing to them; and in particular any of the following decisions:

- Whether the Applicant is eligible or qualifying (including following the verification stage);
- The Scheme Band in which their Application has been placed;
- Their Rural Connection Band;
- The Band Start Date given to their Application;
- Their Bedroom Need Assessment;
- Decision of the Health and Wellbeing Panel;
- The suitability of an offer of accommodation (whether direct let, autobid or from a successful bid);
- Their Application has been moved to a lower Band;
- Suspending their Application;
- Removing their Application from the Register.

7.5.2 Once an Applicant has been notified in writing of any of the above decisions they will have 21 days from the date of the decision to request a review. The review must be in writing and needs to include full details of why the Applicant does not agree with the decision made. Where appropriate the Applicant should provide evidence to support the review request.

7.5.3 Reviews should be sent by email to [housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk) or by post to:

Allocations – Review  
New Forest District Council  
Appletree Court  
Beaulieu Road  
Lyndhurst  
SO43 7PA

7.5.4 The Council will acknowledge a review within 10 working days. The Allocation Manager, or where necessary a Senior Officer, who did not take part in making the decision, will carry out a review of the case. A response in writing will be provided within 56 days of receipt of the review request. The response will set out the outcome of the review request and the reasons.



- 7.5.5 An Applicant who needs support in making their review request can contact the Council at [housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk). Where the Council is aware that an Applicant is vulnerable or has disability issues, it will try to make direct contact with the Applicant, or if appropriate consents or data sharing agreements are in place, the agency providing support to the Applicant to ensure that the Applicant is aware that they have the right to request a review of the decision made. Where necessary, a vulnerable or disabled Applicant will be afforded alternative means of making their review.

## **7.6 EXERCISE OF DISCRETION**

- 7.6.1 In exceptional circumstances, so as not to fetter its discretion, the Council reserves the right to depart from any aspect of the Scheme; including but not limited to: qualification criteria, Bedroom Need Assessment, Household membership or the allocation of a vacancy. Any decision to depart from the Scheme will be taken by the Officer in the appropriate position as set out at paragraph 7.1 above.
- 7.6.2 The Council will exercise its discretion specifically in circumstances where it is necessary to ensure compliance with duties that are imposed on it by other statutes; including but not limited to the Equality Act 2010. The exercise of discretion will be monitored to ensure that it is properly exercised within extremely limited boundaries.
- 7.6.3 When exercising discretion the Council will always consider the circumstances of the Applicant against the prevailing housing conditions within its district.

## **7.7 EQUALITY AND FAIR ALLOCATIONS**

- 7.7.1 The Council is subject to the general public sector equality duty as set out at s.149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Council and its partner landlords are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all individuals who apply for re-housing. Monitoring of Applications and allocations may take place to ensure that everyone is being treated fairly.
- 7.7.2 All Applicants may be asked to provide details of age, gender, ethnic origin, religion and sexual orientation. This is to allow the Council to monitor who is applying and being allocated housing and to ensure that properties are being offered and allocated fairly.

## **7.8 CHANGES TO THE SCHEME**

- 7.8.1 The Scheme will be reviewed every two years and will be amended, if necessary. Minor changes will be agreed by Senior Officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing. This will assist in ensuring that the Scheme continues to meet legislative and best practice requirements as well as ensuring the effective use of the social housing within the Council's district. Before adopting any changes to the Scheme that relate to a major change of policy, the Council will comply with the procedures as set out in the Act

## **7.9 RIGHT TO INFORMATION**

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

- How their Application will be treated under the Scheme (including in particular whether they are likely to be regarded as a person who will be given reasonable preference); and
- Whether housing accommodation appropriate for their needs is likely to be made available to them, and if so, how long it is likely to be before such accommodation becomes available for allocation to them.

Where appropriate the Council will publish such information on its website.

7.9.2 Applicants have the right to ask the Council to inform them of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to them.

## **7.10 FALSE STATEMENTS OR WITHOLDING INFORMATION**

7.10.1 Applicants who knowingly or recklessly make a statement which is false, or knowingly withhold information in connection with their Application, are guilty of a criminal offence. Anyone who is found to have committed such an offence may:

- Have their application refused or removed from the Register;
- Have an offer of accommodation withdrawn; and/or
- Be prosecuted by the Council. This could lead to a large fine or imprisonment, and may also lead to legal action for the possession of any accommodation found to have been obtained following false information having been given.

## **7.11 DATA PROTECTION**

7.11.2 In accordance with the Council's statutory obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations, all Applicants will be made aware of how their personal information will be processed. Information recorded on the Council's system and on the Applicant's file will be shared with partner landlords and other agencies as necessary. Consent from the Applicant for information sharing will be sought in all cases. For a copy of the Council's Housing Services Privacy Notice please visit: <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/18331/Housing-Services-privacy-notice>

7.11.3 Applicants have a right to see what information is kept about them on written records (please note that a fee may be charged). As far as possible, the Council will make

this available subject to certain restrictions. Applicants wishing to view their records should contact the Council at:

Housing Options  
Appletree Court  
Beaulieu Road  
Lyndhurst  
SO43 7PA

## 7.12 CONTACTING HOUSING OPTIONS

- Telephone: 023 8028 5588
- Email: [housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk)
- Website: <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/17971/Waiting-list-and-applying-for-housing>
- Postal Address:

Housing Options  
Appletree Court  
Beaulieu Road  
Lyndhurst  
SO43 7PA

## APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

**Applicant:** A person who has applied to join, or who is waiting for an allocation of housing, from the Council's housing register. Generally, the term should also be read to refer to all members of the Applicant's Household.

**Application:** An application to join, or to be allocated housing, from the Council's housing register.

**Assisted Bidding:** where the Housing Options team has assessed that an Applicant needs assistance to bid on vacancies.

**Band:** One of the four bands used to prioritise Applicants on the Council's housing register.

**Bedroom Need:** the number of bedrooms that an Applicant is entitled to having regard to the Applicant's Household make-up (see paragraph 5.3).

**Employment:** is work where an Applicant or member of their Household holds a contract (written or oral) which gives them a remuneration for the work undertaken that is declared for tax purposes, or self-employment which generates a source of income for an Applicant which is declared for tax purposes. In establishing whether an Applicant is in employment, evidence may be required including a written contract, tax return, letter from the employer, payslips or a statement from an accountant.

**Full Housing Duty:** the duty owed to a homeless applicant who the Council accepts is eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (for post 3 April 2018 applies only after the Relief Duty has expired).

**Homeless Applicant:** an Applicant who the Council accepts is statutory homeless and is owed a duty under Part VII of the Act.

**Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2:** the allocation scheme that was adopted by the Council in 2012 and which was in operation up until the adoption of the Scheme.

**Household:** The individuals that an Applicant is expected to reside with and who can be included on their Application for housing (see paragraph 5.2).

**Housing Need:** The assessed level of need which determines which of the Scheme's Bands an Application will be placed (see paragraph 5.1).

**Partner:** the spouse or civil partner of an Applicant; including a cohabitant who is living with the Applicant as a spouse or civil partner.

**Prevention Duty:** the duty owed (for a minimum period of 56 days) to those who the Council accepts are eligible and threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

**Private Rented Sector Offer:** an offer of an assured shorthold tenancy in discharge of a duty owed under Part VII of the Act.

**Register:** The Council's housing register which contains the list of all those who have applied to the Council for social housing.

**Relief Duty:** the duty owed (for a minimum period of 56 days) to those who the Council accepts are eligible and homeless.

**Renewal Request:** the request sent by the Council to Applicants, normally on the anniversary of their Band Start Date, asking for updated details of their circumstances (see paragraph 7.3.1.)

**Restricted Person:** A person who is subject to immigration control and who is not eligible for an allocation of housing because they do not have leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom or have leave that is subject to a “no recourse to public funds” condition.

**Regular Forces:** the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force.

**Reserve Forces:** the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Regular Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

**Senior Officer (s):** The Housing Options Service Manager or any other officer of an equivalent or higher position.

**Transfer Applicant:** an Applicant who is already accommodated in social housing but who has a Housing Need and has applied for an allocation of alternative social housing.

**Vulnerable Occupant:** an occupant of Council accommodation left following the death of, or the departure of, a Council tenant, but who has no legal rights to remain and where the Council has deemed the occupier vulnerable due to their personal circumstances. An Applicant will be deemed vulnerable if they have a disability or other health (physical or mental) issues that make them unable to secure and/or sustain alternative accommodation in the private sector or who the Council would have a duty to secure permanent accommodation under s.193(2) of the Act if they were evicted and who, due to their Household circumstances, a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge would not be available. In assessing whether a person can secure and sustain a tenancy, the Council will have regard to any support or assistance that can be given to the person to facilitate their ability to do so. Such occupants may be occupiers with no succession rights or tenants whose joint tenancy has been terminated by the other tenant but who remain in occupation. The Council will always assess the occupant’s circumstances against the prevailing housing conditions within its district.

## APPENDIX 2: ELIGIBILITY AND QUALIFICATION

### (A) Eligibility

1. The Council is not able to make an allocation of property to anyone who has been classed as a Restricted Person by the government. The Council is not able make an allocation to the following:
  - i. A person from abroad who is subject to immigration control unless s/he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State, or is currently a tenant of the Council or a private registered provider of social housing or a registered social landlord;
  - ii. Two or more people jointly if any one of them falls within the above category of people; or
  - iii. Other classes of persons from abroad specified by the Secretary of State.
2. The Council will disregard any Restricted Person when assessing whether an Applicant falls into the Reasonable Preference Group.
3. Most persons from abroad who are not subject to immigration control (including British Citizens) must also be *habitually resident* in the Common Travel Area and/or have the right to reside in the Common Travel Area in order to be eligible to join the Register. This is known as the habitual residence test. The Common Travel Area consists of:
  - i. United Kingdom;
  - ii. The Channel Islands;
  - iii. The Isle of Man; and
  - iv. The Republic of Ireland
4. In order to pass the habitual residence test the Council will need to be satisfied that an Applicant is ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the test normally looks at whether someone has been in the United Kingdom for an appreciable period of time and whether they have a settled intention to remain. Some British Citizens who are returning from a period abroad will only have to show that they are returning with a settled intention to remain in the United Kingdom.

### (B) Local Connection

1. Local connection will be established if:
  - i. Residency Criteria:
    - o An Applicant or their Partner has been resident in the Council's district for a continuous period of 2 years at the time of the Application; or

- An Applicant has resided in the Council's district area for 10 years or more in the past;
- Applicants who fall within one of the groups below will be exempt from having to satisfy the local connection criteria:
  - Those owed a s.193(2) and s.189B( 2) duty by the Council under Part VII of the Act;
  - A person the Council is required by law to exempt from having to satisfy the local connection criteria, including the following:
    - Anyone who the Council is satisfied meets the criteria for a Right to Move as set out at paragraph 3(e) of Appendix 3: Scheme Bands 49.
    - Anyone who is serving in the Regular Forces or who has served in the Regular Forces within 5 years of the date of making their Application to join the Scheme;
    - Anyone who has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where:
      - The spouse or civil partner served in the regular forces; and
      - Their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
    - Anyone serving or who has served in the Reserve Forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service
  - A "looked after child" as defined by Children's Services in another region and as approved by a Senior Officer; or
  - An Applicant who satisfies a Rural Connection Band.

or

ii. Employment:

An Applicant or their Partner has been employed (whether it is for a fixed or permanent term or it is self-employment) for a period of at least 5 years within the Council's district.

2. As part of the Council's verification process, Applicants will be required to submit documentary evidence to support local connection.

**(C) Financial Assessment**

1. All Applicants seeking to join the Register will be subject to a financial assessment. Only Applicants who have been assessed as lacking the income and/or assets to resolve their housing need will qualify to join the Register.

2. Applicants who have an assessed extra care need who are seeking to join the Register, will be assessed as being able to resolve their own housing need if their level of income/assets would enable them to secure, or make arrangements, that would meet their assessed care needs (including in privately funded accommodation).
3. Each case will be assessed on its own merits; however, an Applicant will be assessed as having the income and/or assets to enable them to resolve their own housing need if the level of income/assets which they have enables them to purchase a property on the open market.
4. In assessing whether an Applicant will be able to purchase a property on the open market, the following additional factors will be taken into consideration:
  - a. The likely ability of the Applicants to qualify for and sustain a mortgage; consideration will be given to:
    - i. The Applicant's age
    - ii. The Applicant's credit rating;
    - iii. Whether the Applicant has savings of at least the deposit needed for a property that meets their Household's needs;
    - iv. Whether their income is at a level to enable them to qualify for a mortgage.
  - b. The property type needed for the Applicant and their Household;
  - c. Whether assets can be realised within a reasonable period of time.
5. In considering whether an Applicant can afford to purchase a home on the open market, the housing market of the Council's district as a whole will be considered and not only the Applicant's area of choice.
6. In assessing an Applicant's income and assets, the Council will have regard to the Applicants gross income and total assets save for the disregards listed at paragraph 6 below.
7. In assessing whether an Applicant has the income and/or capital assets to resolve their own housing need the following income and capital assets will be ignored:
  - a. Any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces where this is evidenced as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service; and
  - b. The following benefit income:
    - i. Disability Living Allowance,
    - ii. Personal Independence Payments; and
    - iii. Attendance Allowance



#### **(D) Deliberately Worsening Own Circumstances to Qualify onto the Register**

1. An Applicant who has deliberately worsened their circumstances to be able to join the Register will be treated as a “non-qualifying” Applicant and will be unable to join the Register.
2. Each case will be determined on its individual facts; however, an Applicant will be deemed to have deliberately worsened their circumstances if they have acted in any of the following ways:

The Applicant has:

- i. moved into accommodation which at the date of moving in was unsuitable for their Household’s needs. In deciding whether the property was unsuitable at the point the Applicant moved in, the Council will take into consideration the property’s condition (including disrepair and overcrowding issues), affordability and its location;
  - ii. voluntarily given up accommodation that it was reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy without first securing suitable alternative accommodation;
  - iii. taken deliberate action to cause accommodation to no longer be reasonable for them and their Household to continue to occupy; for example causing damage to accommodation that results in accommodation becoming a risk to health.
3. In considering whether accommodation was reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy, the Council will take into consideration the guidance of the Secretary of State as set out in Chapter 6 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018

#### **(E) Unreasonable Behaviour Resulting in Being Unsuitable to be a Tenant**

1. An Applicant whose unreasonable behaviour makes them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council will be treated as a “non-qualifying” Applicant and will be unable to join the Register.
2. The Council will assess whether an Applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant because of their, or a member of their Households’ behavioural issues; including anti-social behaviour or poor tenancy management.
3. An Applicant will normally be considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant if:
  - i. They have housing related debts:
    - o rent arrears of at least 8 weeks at their current or former address;

- court costs owed to the Council, or a former landlord, for possession or injunction proceedings that were issued against the Applicant;
- recharges owed to the Council for damage caused to one of the Council's properties, rent deposit payment or rent in advance.

Where an Applicant has made and sustained a repayment plan to settle the debt for a continuous period of 6 months the Applicant will not be treated as unsuitable to be a tenant.

Applicants who can demonstrate that they can manage their tenancies with support from an agency with whom they are engaging will not be treated as unsuitable to be tenants. Applicants will need to demonstrate this by providing supporting evidence from the support agency;

or

ii. Are guilty of Anti-Social Behaviour:

Where the Applicant:

- Has been found to have behaved in an anti-social manner by their current or former landlord, or by the Courts within 2 years of them submitting their Application.

Anti-social behaviour will include any acts that interfere with a landlord's ability to carry out its management functions, nuisance, annoyance, violence against others and using a property for immoral purposes.

4. Each case will be determined on its individual facts and the Council will take into consideration the full circumstances of an Applicant's case when deciding whether an Applicant should be non-qualifying due to their behaviour; including, but not limited to, the reasons for the Applicant's behaviour and/or any steps that the Applicant has taken to address their issues.

## **APPENDIX 3: SCHEME BANDS**

### **1. Band 1: Emergency Need to Move**

Applicants will satisfy the criteria for Band 1 if they need to move on an emergency basis. There are very few cases that are likely to be placed in Band 1.

#### **(a) Management Move:**

Where a Senior Officer has assessed an Applicant as having an exceptional need to move to ensure the best management of the Council or other landlord's housing stock. Applicants will be assessed as having an exceptional need to move if their need for housing is so urgent that they should take priority over all other Applicants. Each case will be determined on its own merits; however, the following will be placed in Band 1:

Those:

- Who need to move for community safety, for example re-housing under the Multi-Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) or Witness Protection scheme.
- Whose accommodation is unsuitable for their assessed medical needs and they are being discharged from hospital or who need to go into supported or sheltered housing;
- Major works, where a social housing tenant requires permanent rehousing because major works need to be carried out on their property.
- Are occupying a "high need" property, for example an adapted property where the Applicant no longer has a need for that type of accommodation.
- Where the Council has an urgent need to re-house an Applicant to meet statutory or other time limits, for example flexible tenants whose tenancy is due to expire and who need to be secured re-housing in alternative accommodation, under-occupying successors or Vulnerable Occupants in Council accommodation where the Council is rehousing them.

(b) Urgent health and/or wellbeing: Please refer to: 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.

(c) Emergency Disrepair: Please refer to: Appendix 5: Housing Conditions at page 55.

#### **(d) Violence or Threats of Violence:**

Where a Household, including existing social housing tenants, need to move because they are at risk of violence or serious harassment. An Applicant will only be placed in Band 1 for violence or threats of violence where a Senior Officer has assessed there is no

other housing available (ie temporary accommodation, Sanctuary scheme, refuge) and where the risk can be managed in the Applicant's current accommodation. Applicants who are at imminent risk of violence or threats of violence may be referred to the Council's homelessness team for assessment under the Part VII of the Act

A management move will only be made for neighbour problems or issues of anti-social behaviour, if there is a serious risk of physical or psychological harm to the Applicant due to anti-social behaviour. The Applicant will need to provide supporting evidence from appropriate agencies. It will also need to be shown that the landlord, or another appropriate agency, has tried all approaches to prevent such behaviour within their anti-social behaviour policy.

When an Application has been placed in Band 1, the Housing Options team may take decisions on which property is suitable for them to bid for. The Housing Options team may also make bids on behalf of the Applicant or make a direct offer to increase the prospects of the Applicant securing rehousing; please refer to Automatic Bidding at paragraph 6.1.6 and Direct Offers at paragraph 6.3.2.

As Applicants who have been placed in Band 1 are in need of urgent re-housing, their circumstances will be kept under review to ensure that the Applicant is still entitled to Band 1. Applicants who fail to make bids where there has been a vacancy that meets their assessed needs may have their Application moved into a lower Band. The Council will move an Applicant into a lower Band if the Applicant's reasons for failing to bid on a vacancy demonstrates that the Applicant does not have a genuine emergency need for re-housing.

## **2. Band 2: Serious Need to Move**

### **(a) Accepted Full Housing Duty:**

- Where an Applicant has been accepted as being owed the Full Housing Duty under Part VII of the Act and the Council has been assessed that discharge cannot be achieved by a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation.
- The Council will not be able to achieve a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge if the Applicant's circumstances prevent them from being able to sustain a tenancy in the private sector due to vulnerability, property size required, affordability and/or where there is a lack of suitable private rented accommodation available with tenancies of at least 12 months.
- In considering whether a discharge with a Private Rented Sector Offer is achievable the Council will also take into consideration whether the Applicant would be able to sustain a tenancy with appropriate support and/or whether the Applicant's circumstances are likely to change within a reasonable period of time.

### **(b) Under-Occupying Social Housing by 2 or more bedrooms:**

This will include Applicants who have had a change in Household membership or successors to a tenancy.

(c) Severely Overcrowded

- Where, in accordance with the Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment, an Applicant lacks 2 or more bedrooms given the size of their Household; or
- lacks 1 bedroom but has 2 children who lack a bedroom. This will include a single parent with 2 children where one is over 1 in a 1 bedroom house or a couple with 4 same sex children in a 2 bedroom house.
- Where the Council's has assessed the Household as a Category 1 hazard under the Housing Act 2004 due to overcrowding.

In assessing overcrowding the Council will treat a second lounge or dining room that is situated in the accommodation as a bedroom.

(d) High Health and/or Wellbeing: Please refer to Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.

(e) High State of Disrepair: Please refer to Appendix 5 Housing Conditions at page 55.

(f) Assessed Move On

Where an Applicant is in supported housing within the Council's district area and has been assessed as ready to move on. This will include young people leaving care who have been assessed by Children's Services as ready for independent living.

There is no standard definition of supported accommodation. The Council will determine whether accommodation is to be treated as supported accommodation for the purposes of the Scheme.

Applicants who are not assessed as ready to move on will not qualify for this Band, but may qualify for another Band depending on their Housing Need. Applicants whose supported accommodation is being decommissioned will only have their Application placed in Band 2 if they have been assessed as ready to move on.

As Applicants who have been placed in Band 2 have a serious need for re-housing, their circumstances will be kept under review to ensure that the Applicant is still entitled to Band 2. Applicants who fail to make bids where there has been a vacancy that meets their assessed needs may have their Application moved into a lower Band. The Council will move an Applicant into a lower Band if the Applicant's reasons for failing to bid on a vacancy demonstrates that the Applicant does not have a serious need for re-housing.

### 3. **Band 3: Need to Move**

(a) Overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom

Where in accordance with the Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment, an Applicant lacks 1 bedroom given the size of their Household.

In assessing overcrowding the Council will treat a second lounge or dining room that is situated in the accommodation as a bedroom.

- (b) Applicants that have been assessed as having medium health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances: Please refer to Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.
- (c) Any serving or former serving members of the regular forces, or their spouse or civil partner, stated below will have their Application placed in Band 3:

An Applicant who:

- Is a serving member in the regular forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service;
- Is a formerly serving member in the regular forces,
- has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of the Applicant's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's services.

Any Applicant who satisfies the criteria listed above and who has an urgent need for rehousing will be given additional priority under the Scheme in Bands 1 or 2 as may be appropriate.

- (d) Applicants that are homeless, to whom the Council owes a Relief or Prevention Duty under Part VII of the Act;
- An Applicant will be owed the Relief duty if the Council is satisfied that they are homeless and eligible for assistance as defined under Part VII of the Act. The duty will last for a minimum of 56 days; thereafter an Applicant whose homelessness has not been relieved will be able to remain in Band 3. However, if an Applicant is found to be owed the Full Housing Duty, they will be moved into Band 2 if a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge cannot be achieved or will remain in Band 3 if it can. An Applicant who is no longer homeless will be removed from the Register.
  - An Applicant will be owed the Prevention Duty if the Council is satisfied that the Applicant is eligible for assistance and is threatened with homelessness within 56 days as defined under Part VII of the Act. If an Applicant's homelessness is not prevented within the 56 days, they may be owed the Relief Duty and will remain in Band 3. If however, their homelessness is prevented; their Application will be removed from the Register.
  - If an Applicant who was owed either the Prevention or Relief Duty ceases to be threatened with homelessness or is no longer homeless, they will be removed

from the Register, unless they have another Housing Need that qualifies them to remain on the Register. If this is the case the Applicant's circumstances will be re-assessed and they will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

(e) Applicants who need to move under the Right to Move provisions:

This applies to existing social tenants who the Council is satisfied are seeking a transfer from another local authority district in England and who need to move because they:

- work in the Council's district; or
- have been made an offer of work in the Council's district and the Council is satisfied that the Applicant has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work.

and they would suffer hardship if they were not able to move to the Council's district.

In order to qualify under this heading, the Council must be satisfied that the work is not ancillary to work in another district, voluntary (in that it is undertaken for expenses only or no remuneration at all) or short-term or marginal in nature.

In determining whether an Applicant qualifies under this heading, the Council will take into consideration the following:

i. Hardship:

- The distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home;
- The availability and affordability of transport, taking into account levels of earning;
- The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home;
- Other personal circumstances relating to the Applicant including: medical conditions or child care, which would be affected if the Applicant could not move.

ii. Qualifying work:

- Whether the work is regular or intermittent;
- The period of employment (for example a contract that is intended to last for less than 12 months will be considered short term);
- The number of hours worked (less than 16 hours per week will be considered marginal);
- Where the Applicant's main place of work is (if the Applicant main place of work is in a different local authority, even if the pattern of work in the Council's district is regular, the Applicant's work is to be considered ancillary to work in another district.);

(f) Are existing social landlord tenants under-occupying their accommodation by 1 bedroom

This will include Applicants who have had a change in Household membership or successors to a tenancy

(g) Have been assessed as not having a permanent home, or are at risk of becoming homeless and are not owed a duty under Part VII of the Act:

- This will include any Applicant who does not have a permanent address; including those who are staying with friend/relatives where it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation, homeless Applicants that are not owed any duties under Part VII of the Act, those in hostels or occupying accommodation under a licence and Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation;
- Applicants occupying temporary accommodation within the Council's stock (other than under s.193(2) of the Act).

(h) Have been accepted as being owed the Full Housing Duty under Part VII of the Act and where it is possible to discharge duty with a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation:

This refers to any Applicant who is owed the Full Housing Duty but who has been assessed as being able to secure and sustain a tenancy in the private sector; including in relation to affordability and where there is suitable private sector accommodation available with at least a 12 month tenancy.

(i) Are key workers where the Council identifies that there is a critical need for the key worker to be rehoused to ensure the availability of an essential public service for the New Forest community. Decisions as to whether a key-worker should be placed in this Band is reserved to a Senior Officer.

#### **4. Band 4: Lower Need to Move**

(a) Where an Applicant has been assessed as having a lower health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; Please refer to Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.

(b) Where an Applicant has to share essential facilities with other Households or lack essential facilities in their accommodation.

- Essential facilities include: a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen.
- An Applicant's Household will be defined as set out at paragraph 5.2.

This will include Applicants who are lodging or renting a room in a shared house with communal facilities.

(c) Where an Applicant is sharing with relatives or friends and it is reasonable for the Applicant to continue to occupy the accommodation; otherwise they will be placed in Band 3.

In considering whether accommodation is reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy, the Council will take into consideration the guidance of the Secretary of State as set out in Chapter 6 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.



- (d) Where an Applicant is living in supported accommodation where the Applicant has not been assessed as ready for move on from supported housing in the Council's district area.

There is no standard definition of supported accommodation. The Council will determine whether accommodation is to be treated as supported accommodation for the purposes of the Scheme.

- (j) Applicants that are assured shorthold tenants in the private sector who do not have the financial means to purchase a property. Please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification on page 40.
- (k) Applicants that have been assessed by the Council under Part VII of the Act as not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and are still statutory homeless at the point of offer.

The Applicant will need to be statutory homeless at the point of any offer being made otherwise their Application will be removed from the Register unless they have another Housing Need that qualifies them to remain on the Register. In which case their Application will be re-assessed and given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4.

## APPENDIX 4: HEALTH AND WELLBEING ASSESSMENT

1. An Applicant who needs to move because their health and/or wellbeing is being affected by their home circumstances will need to complete a Health and Wellbeing Assessment form. This can be obtained from the Housing Options team by emailing [housing.options@nfdc.gov.u](mailto:housing.options@nfdc.gov.u) or telephoning 023 8028 5234.
2. An Applicant will only be assessed as needing to move after the Medical and Welfare Panel has considered their Health and Wellbeing Assessment form and any supporting evidence submitted with it and determined that an Applicant has a need to move on a health and/or wellbeing ground. Please see paragraph 7.2 Health and Wellbeing Panel for further details.
3. Health and wellbeing grounds **will not** be awarded in the following circumstances:
  - a. Health problems that are not affected by housing or cannot be improved by housing;
  - b. Housing defects that can be rectified (see also Housing Conditions);
  - c. Neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour (if the issue cannot be resolved, the Applicant may be eligible for a management move, see paragraph 5.1 and Appendix: 3 Scheme Bands, paragraph 1(a) at page 45).
  - d. Homeless Households who have been provided with temporary accommodation (if an Applicant's temporary accommodation is affecting their health or wellbeing, they should seek a suitability review);
  - e. The disability or health issues of someone who is not a member of the Applicant's Household under the Scheme;
  - f. Time related medical issues (such as pregnancy related problems or a broken leg).
4. An Applicant who has been assessed as having a need to move on health and/or wellbeing grounds, will be placed in one of the 4 Bands (see paragraphs 5.1 above) depending on the assessed level of need. Applicants will normally only be placed in Band 1: Emergency or Band 2: Serious Need to Move if there is supporting evidence from a relevant health professional.
5. Applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of their health and/or wellbeing assessment, and reasons explaining why the decision was made. If they disagree with the outcome, they have a right of review. Please refer to Request for a Review at 7.5 for the reviews process.
6. Each individual in an Applicant's Household will be assessed if they have a health or wellbeing issue. If more than 1 member of the household is affected by their housing, the Application will be assessed with reference to the Household member with the severest problem. Where an Applicant (or a Household member) has more than 1 health and wellbeing need (for example both mental

and physical), an assessment will be made of whether the combination of these factors should result in the Application being placed in a higher band.

7. When considering whether to place an Applicant into one of the Bands for health and wellbeing, the Allocations Panel will take into consideration the following factors:

(a) Band 1: Urgent Health or Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's accommodation is so unsuitable that should the Applicant remain or return to it the effect on their health would be critical. The only solution would be a move to alternative accommodation in the shortest time possible.

Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 1 include:

- Where there is a significant threat to life;
- Where there is a significant risk of serious and permanent disability;
- Where someone cannot be discharged from hospital because their home is, and will remain permanently impossible to live in;
- Where the Applicant requires essential equipment such as respiratory, which they are prevented from having due to the housing circumstances.

(b) Band 2: High Health or Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's accommodation is so unsuitable that it has resulted in the Applicant being completely housebound, at risk of injury, relapse or unable to live independently. Alternative housing is required to prevent serious risks to the Applicant's health and wellbeing. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 2 include:

- Someone whose housing has rendered them housebound and where they have no support in place;
- Where it is impossible for an Applicant to use essential facilities in the home and adaptation is not possible;
- An inability to cope is solely and directly linked to the housing situation and is causing relationship breakdown or the need for mental health intervention.

(c) Band 3: Medium Health or Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's accommodation is unsuitable and it is having an unacceptable impact on the Applicant's ability to live independently. Alternative housing is needed to prevent a deterioration in the Applicant's health and wellbeing. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 3 include:

- Someone who without the support that is in place would be housebound;
- Is able to access their home but is unable to access essential normal day-to-day facilities within it without significant difficulty, pain or discomfort;
- They suffer from a mental health issue which is exacerbated by their housing situation; normally there will be a need for not only GP but also secondary mental health intervention.

(d) Band 4: Lower Health and Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's housing is unsuitable and is having a negative impact on the Applicant's health and wellbeing but is not causing serious deterioration to their a health or ability to live independently. Alternative housing is desirable but not necessary. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 4 include:

- Mobility issues where the current housing is suitable but the location means the Applicant can access but with some difficulty, public transport and other services;
  - Mental health where the location, environment around the home is a contributory factor. They may have been prescribed medication but are not be in receipt of on-going support from their GP.
8. The above are examples of how assessments will be made and do not form an exhaustive list. A reference to the impact of health or wellbeing on an Applicant should be read as also referring to any member of the Applicant's Household. Each Application will be considered on a case by case basis.
9. Applicants who need to move to receive support or where a family member/carer needs to move to provide support to them will also be able to apply for a health and/or wellbeing need to move. If a family member/carer needs to move, they will have to join the Register and complete the Health and Wellbeing Assessment form. Their application will be placed in one of the 4 bands depending on the assessed need to move.

## APPENDIX 5: HOUSING CONDITION

1. The Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or an Environmental Health Officer may be asked to investigate the defects that are reported by an Applicant where the problem might lead to an award of Band 1 or Band 2 for housing condition.
2. Where housing defects exists Applicants are expected to have already raised the problem with their landlord. This will have given the Applicant's landlord the opportunity to carry out the necessary improvements before involving the Council to take possible enforcement action. Applicants should be made fully aware that if an officer of the Council visits and identifies emergency or high disrepair it will be under an obligation to notify the landlord and where appropriate to take enforcement action under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 ("the 2004 Act).
3. Applicants will be awarded Band 1 or Band 2 depending on the assessment carried out by the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or if appropriate, Environmental Health Officer following an inspection of the Applicant's property. Applicants will not be placed in Band 1 or Band 2 if remedial action is planned to rectify the issues. In such circumstances, and if it is necessary and appropriate, Applicants may be re-housed temporarily until any works are complete.
4. Applicants will only be placed in Band 1 or Band 2 if the housing condition inspection results in one of the actions stated in the table below being taken and where the Council's Home Health and Safety or Environmental Health Officer states that remedial action is not possible, or if possible, that it cannot be undertaken within a reasonable period of time.
5. In considering whether remedial action is possible within a reasonable period of time, the Council will take into consideration the time scales involved in having to take any enforcement action against a landlord who is failing to co-operate or undertake necessary works.
6. The table below sets out when emergency and high disrepair will be awarded:

BAND	HOUSING CONDITION ASSESSMENT
Band 1:Emergency Disrepair	Where the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or where appropriate, an Environmental Health Officer, determines that the Council should serve a Demolition Order, Prohibition Order, Emergency Prohibition Order or carry out emergency remedial works under the 2004 Act.

<b>BAND</b>	<b>HOUSING CONDITION ASSESSMENT</b>
Band 2: High Disrepair	Where the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or where appropriate an Environmental Health Officer, has assessed a property as suffering from either a Category 1 or 2 hazard as set out under Part 1 of the 2004 Act and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

7. An Applicant's who has been awarded emergency or high Disrepair will have their Application periodically reviewed. An Applicant's Emergency or High Disrepair Banding will be removed if the disrepair is rectified. The Applicant's Emergency or High Disrepair Banding will also be removed if the Applicant is preventing the landlord from undertaking necessary works. An Applicant who is found to be behaving in this way may be removed from the Register, as no longer qualifying as they will be deemed to be someone who is deliberately worsening their circumstances to be able to join the Register (please see paragraph 4.5.1 and Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification above).
8. Any Applicant who has had their Application removed or placed into a lower Band will be notified and will be able to seek a review of the decision. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for the reviews process.

## **APPENDIX 6: ALLOCATION OF GARAGES**

1. To be considered for a Council garage, applicants must be 18 years or older and submit an application to the Council on the appropriate form.
2. Garages are normally allocated on a date order basis from when the application form is received; however,
  - Preferences may be given to applicants living in the same street as the void garage.
  - Preference will be given to applicants who do not currently hold a Council garage tenancy over an applicant who already has a tenancy of 2 or more garages.
3. Applicants may not be allocated a garage if the applicant:
  - Owes former or current arrears on a Council property or garage;
  - Owes former or current recharges on a Council property or garage;
  - Owes any other housing related debt (ie court costs);
  - Has previously been evicted or has poor past payment history of a garage tenancy.
4. A review of the garage waiting list will be carried out at least once a year.
5. Succession of a garage may take place depending on a number of factors:
  - Demand in the area;
  - The successor tenant's address;
  - Payment history
6. Charities or non-profitable organisations are able to apply for a garage to be held on a free of charge basis. Only hard-to-let garages may be let free of charge (ie where there are 2 or more garages available to let in the same street and where there are no eligible applicants on the garage waiting list for them).

## **APPENDIX 7: BRIEF SUMMARY OF STATUTORY PROVISIONS**

1. The Act states an allocation of housing takes place when:
  - A person is selected to be a secure or introductory tenant of the Council or is nominated by the Council to be an assured tenant (including assured shorthold) of a private registered provider of social housing in the Council's district; or
  - When there is a transfer of housing accommodation where a Council or a private registered provider of social housing tenant is in a Reasonable Preference Group and the transfer was made on the tenant's Application.
  
2. The following do not constitute an allocation of housing:
  - A succession under the Housing Act 1985 (including for an introductory succession);
  - An assignment in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 or to an introductory tenant;
  - A mutual exchange in accordance with the Housing Act 1985;
  - A transfer in accordance with s.158 of the Localism Act 2011;
  - A transfer of an existing social housing tenant where the tenant does not fall within the Reasonable Preference Group and the transfer is not instigated by the tenant's application;
  - An introductory tenant becoming a secure tenant.
  
3. The Act prohibits the Council from allocating housing accommodation other than in accordance with the provisions of its allocations policy.



## Equality Analysis

### Relevant Data, Research and Consultation

The Council has used the data available from its current housing register as set out in the table below to assess the impact of the proposed changes to the Council's Allocation's Policy on those with a protected characteristic.

As at the 20th September 2018, there were 3262 households were registered on the Council's housing register. Of those the following information is known:

Age Groups	Numbers
40+	70
45+	266
55+	153
60+	175
65+	398

Ethnic Groups	Numbers
African	13
Asian	10
White Anglo	3131
Caribbean	4
European	60
Irish	3
Middle Eastern	4
Mixed	3
Oriental	7
Non White (Other)	19

Household Make Up	Numbers
Families (Not Single Parent)	1624
Single Parent Families	703

The Council is committed to ensuring that it continues to monitors its compliance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010; in particular, it notes that there is a need to ensure that data is collected to enable the Council to identify how the provisions within its allocation policy is impacting on certain protected characteristic groups, particularly by gender, those with disabilities and specific BME categories not restricted to colour.

### Equality Analysis

In assessing the potential equality implications, the Council will consider the impacts (both positive and negative) on the groups with protected characteristics and any mitigating actions to be taken, or where appropriate, the reason why a provision is the most proportionate means of achieving the Council's objectives.

# Equality Analysis

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The aims and objectives of the Council's housing allocation policy is:

To ensure the allocation of social housing in a fair and transparent manner, with the aim of using the Council's scarce housing resources appropriately, and in particular, to enable the Council to meet:

- a. Its prevention and homelessness statutory duties;
- b. the housing needs of those that are most vulnerable;
- c. the need to allocate housing with reference to the prevailing housing conditions and needs within its district; and
- d. its statutory obligations as set out in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996

This strategy is for the benefit of all of the Council's residents as set out in the key objectives above but will need to be regularly monitored to ensure that those residents are able to take advantage of the strategy's key policies.

Consideration has been given to the following:

## **Online Application Process:**

Age (elderly) and disability (mental health Issues)

The Council's objective in this provision is to provide for the efficient processing of applications for housing within its district area. There is an indication that elderly applicants who are aged 75+ will likely have the least access to internet facilities; however, the Council notes that this age group will likely be seeking extra care housing and will have support in place to ensure that online applications can be made. Furthermore, the Council has installed computers in both its main and satellite offices to provide for greater access to internet facilities. There are also free internet facilities in libraries and most elderly applicants will likely to have family or other support in place to assist them in making applications. The Council Housing Options teams contact details are accessible to members of the public and on the Allocation Policy and can be contacted for support or referral to a support agency, such as Age UK who provide significant support to elderly applicants. Finally, the Council recognises the need to monitor applications being made, and if necessary, will ensure that appropriate steps are taken if there is evidence of a decline in representation of applications from those in these age groups as compared to the current representation.

Whilst there is likely to be a neutral impact on those with a physical health disability (as they will still be able to access internet facilities at home and in public spaces (library and at the Council offices) it is likely that there will be a negative impact on those with mental health disabilities.

## **Incentive to Work**

On women, those with a disability and age (elderly and young)

The government has made clear that it wishes local authorities to provide incentives for applicants to work or make a positive contribution to the local community. The Council has introduced this provision to achieve this objective and whilst it recognises that there might be

## Equality Analysis

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a negative impact on those with a disability, women and the elderly and young applicants, it is considered that by ensuring that this provision can be satisfied by those who are making a community contribution, for example by voluntary work, it is striking a proportionate balance between its identified objective and minimising the adverse impact on those with this protected characteristic. The Council also recognises that it will need to monitor the number of applicants on its housing register who are disabled and who qualify for this provision.

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## HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

ITEM	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	LEAD OFFICER
16 January 2019			
Housing Fire Safety Policy (Landlord Services)	To consider the fire safety policy for landlord services	Report to Panel	Ritchie Thomson / Brian Byrne
HRA Report (new item)	To consider the annual report	Report to Panel	Kevin Green
Housing Maintenance Policy	To receive a presentation on a revised Housing Maintenance Policy	Presentation to Panel	Ritchie Thomson
Update on property acquisition and remodelling of properties	To receive a presentation on new properties the Council had purchased and those which had been remodelled in order to create more properties	Presentation to Panel	Ritchie Thomson
20 March 2019			
Feedback on the consultation on the Housing Allocation Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Tenancy Strategy	To consider the consultation responses and any amendments to the housing strategies, prior to submission to Cabinet and Council for approval	Report to Panel	Grainne O'Rourke / Richard Knott

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