



Kim Webber B.Sc. M.Sc.
Chief Executive
52 Derby Street
Ormskirk
West Lancashire
L39 2DF

Wednesday, 17 January 2018

**TO: COUNCILLORS J BULLOCK (CHAIRMAN), M MILLS (VICE-CHAIRMAN),
I ASHCROFT, MRS M BLAKE, J DAVIS, N DELANEY,
P HUDSON, F MCKENNA, P MOON, R PENDLETON, E POPE,
L SAVAGE, D WESTLEY, D WHITTINGTON AND C WYNN**

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held in the **CABINET/COMMITTEE ROOM, 52 DERBY STREET, ORMSKIRK L39 2DF** on **THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2018 at 7.00 PM** at which your attendance is requested.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kim Webber', written over a horizontal line.

Kim Webber
Chief Executive

**AGENDA
(Open to the Public)**

- 1. APOLOGIES**
- 2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**
To be apprised of any changes to the membership of the Committee in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.
- 3. URGENT BUSINESS, IF ANY, INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIRMAN**
Note: No other business is permitted unless, by reason of special circumstances, which shall be specified at the meeting, the Chairman is of the opinion that the item(s) should be considered as a matter of urgency.

- 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** 177 - 178
 If a member requires advice on Declarations of Interest, he/she is advised to contact the Borough Solicitor in advance of the meeting. (For the assistance of members a checklist for use in considering their position on any particular item is included at the end of this agenda sheet.)
- 5. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP**
 In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 16, Members must declare the existence of any Party Whip, and the nature of it, when considering any matter in the following categories:
- The review of any decision of the Cabinet or
 - The performance of any Member of the Cabinet
- N.B. The Secretary of State believes whipping is incompatible with Overview and Scrutiny.
- 6. PUBLIC SPEAKING** 179 - 182
 Residents of West Lancashire on giving notice, may address the meeting to make representations on any item on the agenda except where the public and press are to be excluded during consideration of the item. The deadline for submissions is 10.00am on Friday 19 January. A copy of the public speaking protocol and form to be completed is attached.
- 7. MINUTES** 183 - 186
 To receive as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2017.
- 8. RELEVANT MINUTES OF CABINET** 187 - 194
 To scrutinise the Minutes of Cabinet held on 9th January 2018.
- 9. CALL-IN**
 There are no items under this heading.
- 10. DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND PET POLICY** 195 - 266
 To consider the report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion.
- 11. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018-2019** 267 - 274
 To consider the report of the Borough Treasurer.
- 12. MEDIUM TERM CAPITAL PROGRAMME** 275 - 286
 To consider the report of the Borough Treasurer.
- 13. HOUSING ACCOUNT - REVENUE AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME** 287 - 306
 To consider the report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion and the Borough Treasurer.

We can provide this document, upon request, on audiotape, in large print, in Braille and in other languages.

FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE: Please see attached sheet.

MOBILE PHONES: These should be switched off or to 'silent' at all meetings.

For further information, please contact:-

Jacky Denning on 01695 585384

Or email jacky.denning@westlancs.gov.uk

**FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE FOR:
COUNCIL MEETINGS WHERE OFFICERS ARE PRESENT
(52 DERBY STREET, ORMSKIRK)**

PERSON IN CHARGE: Most Senior Officer Present
ZONE WARDEN: Member Services Officer / Lawyer
DOOR WARDEN(S) Usher / Caretaker

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE

1. Operate the nearest **FIRE CALL POINT** by breaking the glass.
2. Attack the fire with the extinguishers provided only if you have been trained and it is safe to do so. **Do not** take risks.

ON HEARING THE FIRE ALARM

1. Leave the building via the **NEAREST SAFE EXIT**. **Do not stop** to collect personal belongings.
2. Proceed to the **ASSEMBLY POINT** on the car park and report your presence to the **PERSON IN CHARGE**.
3. **Do NOT** return to the premises until authorised to do so by the **PERSON IN CHARGE**.

NOTES:

Officers are required to direct all visitors regarding these procedures i.e. exit routes and place of assembly.

The only persons not required to report to the Assembly Point are the Door Wardens.

CHECKLIST FOR PERSON IN CHARGE

1. Advise other interested parties present that you are the person in charge in the event of an evacuation.
2. Make yourself familiar with the location of the fire escape routes and inform any interested parties of the escape routes.
3. Make yourself familiar with the location of the assembly point and inform any interested parties of that location.
4. Make yourself familiar with the location of the fire alarm and detection control panel.
5. Ensure that the zone warden and door wardens are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
6. Arrange for a register of attendance to be completed (if considered appropriate / practicable).

IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE, OR THE FIRE ALARM BEING SOUNDED

1. Ensure that the room in which the meeting is being held is cleared of all persons.
2. Evacuate via the nearest safe Fire Exit and proceed to the **ASSEMBLY POINT** in the car park.
3. Delegate a person at the **ASSEMBLY POINT** who will proceed to **HOME CARE LINK** in order to ensure that a back-up call is made to the **FIRE BRIGADE**.
4. Delegate another person to ensure that **DOOR WARDENS** have been posted outside the relevant Fire Exit Doors.

5. Ensure that the **ZONE WARDEN** has reported to you on the results of his checks, **i.e.** that the rooms in use have been cleared of all persons.
6. If an Attendance Register has been taken, take a **ROLL CALL**.
7. Report the results of these checks to the Fire and Rescue Service on arrival and inform them of the location of the **FIRE ALARM CONTROL PANEL**.
8. Authorise return to the building only when it is cleared to do so by the **FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE OFFICER IN CHARGE**. Inform the **DOOR WARDENS** to allow re-entry to the building.

NOTE:

The Fire Alarm system will automatically call the Fire Brigade. The purpose of the 999 back-up call is to meet a requirement of the Fire Precautions Act to supplement the automatic call.

CHECKLIST FOR ZONE WARDEN

1. Carry out a physical check of the rooms being used for the meeting, including adjacent toilets, kitchen.
2. Ensure that **ALL PERSONS**, both officers and members of the public are made aware of the **FIRE ALERT**.
3. Ensure that **ALL PERSONS** evacuate **IMMEDIATELY**, in accordance with the **FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**.
4. Proceed to the **ASSEMBLY POINT** and report to the **PERSON IN CHARGE** that the rooms within your control have been cleared.
5. Assist the **PERSON IN CHARGE** to discharge their duties.

It is desirable that the **ZONE WARDEN** should be an **OFFICER** who is normally based in this building and is familiar with the layout of the rooms to be checked.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DOOR WARDENS

1. Stand outside the **FIRE EXIT DOOR(S)**
2. Keep the **FIRE EXIT DOOR SHUT**.
3. Ensure that **NO PERSON**, whether staff or public enters the building until **YOU** are told by the **PERSON IN CHARGE** that it is safe to do so.
4. If anyone attempts to enter the premises, report this to the **PERSON IN CHARGE**.
5. Do not leave the door **UNATTENDED**.

Agenda Item 4

MEMBERS INTERESTS 2012

A Member with a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter considered at a meeting must disclose the interest to the meeting at which they are present, except where it has been entered on the Register.

A Member with a non pecuniary or pecuniary interest in any business of the Council must disclose the existence and nature of that interest at commencement of consideration or when the interest becomes apparent.

Where sensitive information relating to an interest is not registered in the register, you must indicate that you have an interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information.

Please tick relevant boxes

Notes

	General		Notes
1.	I have a disclosable pecuniary interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>You cannot speak or vote and must withdraw unless you have also ticked 5 below</i>
2.	I have a non-pecuniary interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>You may speak and vote</i>
3.	I have a pecuniary interest because it affects my financial position or the financial position of a connected person or, a body described in 10.1(1)(i) and (ii) and the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice my judgement of the public interest or it relates to the determining of any approval consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to me or a connected person or, a body described in 10.1(1)(i) and (ii) and the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice my judgement of the public interest	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>You cannot speak or vote and must withdraw unless you have also ticked 5 or 6 below</i> <i>You cannot speak or vote and must withdraw unless you have also ticked 5 or 6 below</i>
4.	I have a disclosable pecuniary interest (Dispensation 20/09/16) or a pecuniary interest but it relates to the functions of my Council in respect of: (i) Housing where I am a tenant of the Council, and those functions do not relate particularly to my tenancy or lease. (ii) school meals, or school transport and travelling expenses where I am a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are a parent governor of a school, and it does not relate particularly to the school which the child attends. (iii) Statutory sick pay where I am in receipt or entitled to receipt of such pay. (iv) An allowance, payment or indemnity given to Members (v) Any ceremonial honour given to Members (vi) Setting Council tax or a precept under the LGFA 1992	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>You may speak and vote</i> <i>You may speak and vote</i> <i>You may speak and vote</i> <i>You may speak and vote</i> <i>You may speak and vote</i> <i>You may speak and vote</i>
5.	A Standards Committee dispensation applies (relevant lines in the budget – Dispensation 20/09/16 – 19/09/20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>See the terms of the dispensation</i>
6.	I have a pecuniary interest in the business but I can attend to make representations, answer questions or give evidence as the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>You may speak but must leave the room once you have finished and cannot vote</i>

'disclosable pecuniary interest' (DPI) means an interest of a description specified below which is your interest, your spouse's or civil partner's or the interest of somebody who you are living with as a husband or wife, or as if you were civil partners and you are aware that that other person has the interest.

Interest

Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation

Sponsorship

Prescribed description

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by M in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of M.

	This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority— (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to M's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where— (a) that body (to M's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

"body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest" means a firm in which the relevant person is a partner or a body corporate of which the relevant person is a director, or in the securities of which the relevant person has a beneficial interest; "director" includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society;

"land" excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for the relevant person (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income; "M" means a member of a relevant authority;

"member" includes a co-opted member; "relevant authority" means the authority of which M is a member;

"relevant period" means the period of 12 months ending with the day on which M gives notice to the Monitoring Officer of a DPI;

"relevant person" means M or M's spouse or civil partner, a person with whom M is living as husband or wife or a person with whom M is living as if they were civil partners;

"securities" means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

'non pecuniary interest' means interests falling within the following descriptions:

- 10.1(1)(i) Any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority;
- (ii) Any body (a) exercising functions of a public nature; (b) directed to charitable purposes; or (c) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union), of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management;
- (iii) Any easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for you (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income.
- 10.2(2) A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of a connected person to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision.

'a connected person' means

- (a) a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association, or
- (b) any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;
- (c) any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or
- (d) any body of a type described in sub-paragraph 10.1(1)(i) or (ii).

'body exercising functions of a public nature' means

Regional and local development agencies, other government agencies, other Councils, public health bodies, council-owned companies exercising public functions, arms length management organisations carrying out housing functions on behalf of your authority, school governing bodies.

A Member with a personal interest who has made an executive decision in relation to that matter must ensure any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of that interest.

NB Section 21(13) of the LGA 2000 overrides any Code provisions to oblige an executive member to attend an overview and scrutiny meeting to answer questions.

PUBLIC SPEAKING – PROTOCOL

(For meetings of Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee)

1.0 Public Speaking

1.1 Residents of West Lancashire may, on giving notice, address any of the above meetings to make representations on any item on the agenda for those meetings, except where the public and press are to be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item.

1.2 The form attached as an Appendix to this Protocol should be used for submitting requests.

2.0 Deadline for submission

2.1 The prescribed form should be received by Member Services by 10.00 am on the Friday of the week preceding the meeting. This can be submitted by e-mail to member.services@westlancs.gov.uk or by sending to:

Member Services
West Lancashire Borough Council
52 Derby Street
Ormskirk
West Lancashire
L39 2DF

2.2 Completed forms will be collated by Member Services and circulated via e-mail to relevant Members and officers and published on the Council website via Modgov. Only the name of the resident and details of the issue to be raised will be published.

2.3 Groups of persons with similar views should elect a spokesperson to speak on their behalf to avoid undue repetition of similar points. Spokespersons should identify in writing on whose behalf they are speaking.

3.0 Scope

3.1 Any matters raised must be relevant to an item on the agenda for the meeting.

3.2 The Borough Solicitor may reject a submission if it:

- (i) is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- (ii) is substantially the same as representations which have already been submitted at a previous meeting; or
- (iii) discloses or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

4.0 Number of items

- 4.1 A maximum of one form per resident will be accepted for each Agenda Item.
- 4.2 There will be a maximum of 10 speakers per meeting. Where there are more than 10 forms submitted by residents, the Borough Solicitor will prioritise the list of those allowed to speak. This will be considered having regard to all relevant matters including:
 - a. The order in which forms were received.
 - b. If one resident has asked to speak on a number of items, priority will be given to other residents who also wish to speak
 - c. Whether a request has been submitted in relation to the same issue.
- 4.3 All submissions will be circulated to Members of the relevant body and officers for information, although no amendments will be made to the list of speakers once it has been compiled (regardless of withdrawal of a request to speak).

5.0 At the Meeting

- 5.1 Speakers will be shown to their seats. At the commencement of consideration of each agenda item the Leader/Chairman will invite members of the public to make their representations. Residents will have up to 3 minutes to address the meeting. The address must reflect the issue included on the prescribed form submitted in advance.
- 5.2 Members may discuss what the speaker has said along with all other information, when all public speakers on that item have finished and will then make a decision. Speakers should not circulate any supporting documentation at the meeting and should not enter into a debate with Councillors.
- 5.4 If residents feel nervous or uncomfortable speaking in public, then they can ask someone else to do it for them. They can also bring an interpreter if they need one. They should be aware there may be others speaking as well.
- 5.5 Speakers may leave the meeting at any time, taking care not to disturb the meeting.

(Please see attached form.)



REQUEST FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING AT MEETINGS

MEETING & DATE

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

Post Code

PHONE

Email

Please indicate if you will be in attendance at the meeting

YES/NO*
*delete as applicable

Note: This page will not be published.

(P.T.O.)

Start: 7.00pm

Finish: 8.18pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: J Bullock (Chairman)

Councillors:	M Mills	I Ashcroft
	Mrs M Blake	J Davis
	N Delaney	R Pendleton
	E Pope	L Savage
	D Westley	Mrs M Westley
	Whittington	C Wynn

Officers:

- Director of Housing and Inclusion (Ms J Sinnott-Lacey)
- Deputy Director of Development and Regeneration (Mr I Gill)
- Deputy Director of Leisure and Wellbeing (Mr S Burnett)
- Deputy Borough Treasurer (Mr M Kostrzewski)
- Estates and Valuation Manager (Mrs R Kneale)
- Principal Solicitor (Mrs T Sparrow)
- Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs C A Jackson)

13 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Hudson.

14 **MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2, Members noted the termination of membership of the Committee of Councillor Moon and the appointment of Councillor Mrs Westley, for this meeting only, thereby giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

15 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business.

16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

17 **DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of a Party Whip.

18 **PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There were no items under this heading.

19 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2017 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 **RELEVANT MINUTES OF CABINET**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 November 2017.

Questions and comments were raised in respect of:

Minute 42 (Garage Strategy 2016/2020 – Update) – improved visual aspect of the estates; positive feedback of residents; continuing and future delivery / investment for the programme.

Minute 48 (Housing and Planning Act 2016: Civil Penalties & Rent Repayment Orders) – impact, if any, for tenants.

Minute 51 (Mart Lane Hall, Burscough) – explanation of Cabinet decision.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7 November 2017 be noted.

(Note: The Committee agreed to exclude the Press and Public during consideration of Minute 51 (Mart Lane Hall, Burscough) on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 (financial/business affairs) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information. At the conclusion of the discussion on Minute 51, the meeting was re-opened to the press and public.)

21 **CALL-IN**

There were no items under this heading.

22 **HRA MID-YEAR REVIEW**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion and Borough Treasurer that summarised the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Housing Capital Programme positions for 2017/2018 financial year. The report had previously been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 November 2017 and was scheduled to be considered by Council at its meeting on 13 December 2017.

The Deputy Borough Treasurer attended the meeting and provided an overview of the report referring to details as set down in the report and appendices.

RESOLVED: That the HRA and Housing Capital Programme positions be noted.

(Note: Councillor Pope left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration)

**23 HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY AND DELIVERY PLAN FOR WEST
LANCASHIRE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor that provided details of the decision of Cabinet, at its meeting on 7 November 2017, on the proposed Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Members considered the report of the Director of Leisure and Wellbeing, attached at Appendix A, the proposed Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Delivery Plan at Appendix 1 of that report and the additional information and revised recommendations that had been circulated at Cabinet, at Appendix B.

The views of the Committee were sought on the Strategy prior to consideration by Council at its meeting on 13 December 2017.

The Deputy Director of Leisure and Wellbeing attended the meeting, provided an overview, referring to details as set down in the report, provided clarification on the issues raised and responded to questions.

In discussion questions and comments were raised in relation to the Priorities and Vision for health and wellbeing; its promotion, partnerships; attracting external funding; encouraging leisure participation, particularly amongst youngsters; provision of facilities and ensuring that reference is made to the Strategy within the Local Plan currently being developed.

The participation corporately to the Strategy was acknowledged as was the excellent report and the challenges and ambitions within the Strategy to contribute to the health and wellbeing of West Lancashire residents.

The Deputy Director of Leisure and Wellbeing, on behalf of those who had been involved in bringing the strategy forward, acknowledged the thanks and positive response to the Strategy. He noted the general comments and made an undertaking to continue to seek out initiatives, through local links and sports partnerships, that could benefit, especially young people, in local schools.

RESOLVED: As a consequence of the discussion on the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021, the agreed comments to the relevant Portfolio Holders be:

- (1) That the following additional phrase (page 33, draft Strategy) be included:

“and work as appropriate with local partners such that they engage in similar actions to apply social value considerations through the procurement cycle, especially where this does not occur already.”

- (2) That reference be made to the Strategy within the Local Plan, currently being developed.

24 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 (financial/business) and paragraph 5 (legal matters) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and as, in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

25 LAND AUCTION UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Development and Regeneration which provided an update on the Land Auction pilot, following a request at the last meeting of the Committee on 28 September 2017.

The Deputy Director of Development and Regeneration attended the meeting provided an overview, clarification on the issues raised and responded to questions.

The Estates and Valuation Manager also attended and responded to questions put to her.

RESOLVED: That the current position in relation to the Land Auction Pilot be noted.

- (Notes: (i) Councillor Whittington requested that his vote AGAINST be recorded.
(ii) Councillor Savage left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.
(iii) Councillor Pope left during consideration of this item and took no further part in the meeting.)

.....
Chairman

Agenda Item 8

CABINET

HELD: Tuesday, 9 January 2018

Start: 7.00pm

Finish: 7.15pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Moran (Leader
In the Chair)

Councillors:

Portfolio

Councillor Yvonne Gagen	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Human Resources
Councillor Claire Cooper	Portfolio Holder for Communities and Older People
Councillor Jenny Forshaw	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services
Councillor John Hodson	Portfolio Holder for Planning
Councillor Kevin Wilkie	Portfolio Holder for Street Scene
Councillor Kevin Wright	Portfolio Holder for Health and Community Safety
Councillor Adam Yates	Portfolio Holder for Finance

In attendance:
Councillors Councillor A Owens

Officers:
Kim Webber, Chief Executive
Dave Tilleray, Director of Leisure and Wellbeing
Jacqui Sinnott-Lacey, Director of Housing and Inclusion
John Harrison, Director of Development and Regeneration
Terry Broderick, Borough Solicitor
Heidi McDougall, Director of Street Scene
Marc Taylor, Borough Treasurer
Chris Twomey, Deputy Director of Housing & Inclusion
Sue Griffiths, Principal Member Services Officer

54 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

55 **LEADER'S OPENING REMARKS**

The Leader announced that it was the last meeting to be attended by Dave Tilleray, Director of Leisure and Wellbeing and expressed his thanks for his service to the Council.

56 SPECIAL URGENCY (RULE 16 ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES)/URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of special urgency.

57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillor Cooper declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6(a) (Funding of Voluntary Bodies and Other Organisations Working Group) in relation to applications for revenue funding received from Learning Stars and the Burscough Community Farm due to her association with these organisations.
2. Councillors Forshaw and Wilkie (tenants of Council accommodation) and Wright (connected person tenant of Council accommodation) declared disclosable pecuniary/pecuniary interests in agenda items 6(c) (Draft Housing Allocations and Pet Policy) and 6(g) (Housing Account – Revenue and Capital Programme) but considered they were entitled to speak and vote by virtue of an exemption as nothing in the report relates particularly to the relevant tenancy or lease.
3. Councillor Moran declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6(a) (Funding of Voluntary Bodies and Other Organisations Working Group) due to his appointment on the Lancashire West CAB by the Council.

58 PUBLIC SPEAKING

It was noted that the two residents who had previously given notice to speak in relation to agenda item 6(a) – Funding of Voluntary Bodies & Other Organisations Cabinet Working Group had indicated that they would not be attending the meeting.

59 MINUTES

RESOLVED That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7 November 2017 be received as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

60 MATTERS REQUIRING DECISIONS

Consideration was given to the report relating to the following matters requiring decisions as circulated and contained on pages 913 - 1158 of the Book of Reports.

61 FUNDING OF VOLUNTARY BODIES & OTHER ORGANISATIONS CABINET WORKING GROUP

Councillor Cooper introduced the report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion which advised Cabinet of the recommendations of the Funding of Voluntary & Other Organisations Cabinet Working Group in respect of the monitoring arrangements for the current grant recipients and the applications for one year revenue funding for 2018/19.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

RESOLVED (A) That subject to (B) below, the recommendations arising from the scoring of the applications received from voluntary organisations for one year revenue funding from April 2018 by the Funding of Voluntary Bodies and Other Organisations Working Group at its meeting on 13 December 2017 be endorsed as detailed in the minutes of the meeting attached at Appendix 3 to the report.

(B) That the applicants be advised of Cabinet's recommendations and that funding is not guaranteed but will form part of considerations when the Council's budget is finalised on 28 February 2018.

62 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) FUNDING PROGRAMME 2018/19

Councillor J Hodson introduced the report of the Director of Development and Regeneration which advised on the outcome of the consultation on the options for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funding Programme 2018/19 and proposed recommendations for this Programme based on the CIL monies anticipated to have been collected by the Council by 31 March 2018.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

RESOLVED (A) That the consultation feedback report provided at Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

(B) That £125,000 of CIL monies be allocated to the delivery of the following projects in 2018/19:

- Chequer Lane Playing Fields (£60,000)
- Whittle Drive Playing Fields (£40,000)
- Mere Sands Wood Visitor Centre Phase II (£25,000)

- (C) That the remaining “strategic” CIL monies collected by 31 March 2018 (i.e. those not allocated on the projects agreed under recommendation (B)) be “saved” and allocated toward more significant strategic infrastructure projects to be drawn down from as necessary as such significant projects are identified and approved.
- (D) That £300,000 of the "strategic" CIL monies saved from previous years be allocated to the implementation of actions in the Tawd Valley Park Masterplan in order to help lever in match-funding from other sources to complete all actions in the Masterplan.
- (E) That for all CIL monies collected each financial year from 1 April 2018 onwards, up to a maximum of £100,000 be allocated through the CIL Funding Programme each financial year toward projects requiring £100,000 of CIL funding or less, and that the remainder of "strategic" CIL monies collected each financial year be saved towards more significant strategic infrastructure projects (requiring more than £100,000 of CIL funding) to be drawn down from as necessary as such significant projects are identified and approved.

63

DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND PET POLICY

Councillor Forshaw introduced the report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion which considered a draft Housing Allocations Policy and draft Pet Policy for consultation.

Minute no. 19 of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) held on 3 January 2018 was circulated at the meeting.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the Minute of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) and the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED
- (A) That the Draft Housing Allocations and Pet Policy 2017 attached to Appendix 1 & 2 of the report be approved for consultation.
 - (B) That the Director of Housing and Inclusion, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make any minor changes to the Draft Housing Allocations Policy and Pet Policy 2017 where appropriate following public consultation, and to implement and deliver the policy.
 - (C) That the call-in procedure is not appropriate for this item as the report will be submitted to the meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

64 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS Q2 2017-18

The Leader introduced the report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion which presented performance monitoring data for the quarter ended 30 September 2017.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

RESOLVED (A) That the Council's performance against the indicator set for the quarter ended 30 September 2017 be noted.

(B) That the call-in procedure is not appropriate for this item as the report was submitted to the meeting of the Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2018.

65 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018-2019

Councillor Yates introduced the report of the Borough Treasurer which provided a summary of the current General Revenue Account budget position.

Additional information from the Borough Treasurer was circulated at the meeting (pages 1157-1158 of the Book of Reports).

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the additional information and the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

RESOLVED (A) That the financial position for 2018-19 and later years be noted, and consideration given to how a balanced budget can be achieved.

(B) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the budget to be set.

(C) That call-in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

66 MEDIUM TERM CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Councillor Yates introduced the report of the Borough Treasurer which set out details on the GRA medium term capital programme position for the next 3 years.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED (A) That the medium term financial position be noted, and consideration given to how a balanced capital programme can be achieved.
- (B) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the capital programme to be set.
- (C) That call-in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

67 **HOUSING ACCOUNT - REVENUE AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Councillor Forshaw introduced the joint report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion and Borough Treasurer which provided a summary of the Housing Account's financial position.

It was reported that Appendix B to the report (draft HRA estimates) would be available for consultation purposes prior to the Council considering the matter in February 2018.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED (A) That the financial position be noted.
- (B) That the use of the Director of Housing and Inclusion's delegated authority in relation to rent and service charge changes be noted and endorsed.
- (C) That this report be used for consultation purposes prior to the Council considering this matter in February 2018.
- (D) That the Housing Portfolio Holder be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the budget to be set.
- (E) That call-in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

68 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UPDATE

Councillor Gagen introduced the report of the Borough Treasurer which provided an update on Equality and Diversity matters and sought approval for a number of changes to equality policies and objectives.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED (A) That the revised Equality Statement and Equality in Employment Statement, at Appendix A and B to the report respectively, be agreed.
- (B) That the revised Equality Objectives 2015-2018 document at Appendix C be agreed.
- (C) That progress against the Equality Objectives, that they now form part of the relevant Service Action Plans, and that the actions are recorded and monitored as part of core business, be noted.

69 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

The Leader introduced the report of the Borough Solicitor which advised on the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and sought approval for necessary actions and resources to ensure compliance with the requirements.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED (A) That the report be noted.
- (B) That the necessary actions being taken to achieve compliance with GDPR and continuing to ensure the Council maintains high standards in the processing of personal data be supported.
- (C) That a budget of £15,000 be provided to support compliance with GDPR from underspends in the current year (up to 31 March 2018) to meet the resource requirements set out at paragraph 6 of the report and it be recommended that Council give further consideration to the additional resources for 2018/19 and beyond through the budget setting process.
- (D) That the Borough Solicitor be authorised to designate a Data Protection Officer.

- (E) That call-in is not appropriate for this item as this matter is one where urgent action is required as early progress needs to be made to ensure services are prepared for the impending deadline for implementation of GDPR notwithstanding delays in issue of legislation and guidance.

.....
Leader



CABINET: 9 January 2018

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
25 January 2018**

Report of: Director of Housing and Inclusion

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Forshaw

Contact for further information: Leigh McFarlane (Ext 5233)

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SUBJECT: DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND PET POLICY 2017

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and agree the Housing Allocations Policy subject to statutory consultation.
- 1.2 To consider and agree the introduction of a Pet Policy for Council tenants.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 2.1 That the Draft Housing Allocations and Pet Policy 2017 attached to Appendix 1 & 2 of the report be approved for consultation.
- 2.2 That the Director of Housing and Inclusion, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make any minor changes to the Draft Housing Allocations Policy and Pet Policy 2017 where appropriate following public consultation, and to implement and deliver the policy.
- 2.3 That the call-in procedure is not appropriate for this item as the report will be submitted to the meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 3.1 That any agreed comments on the draft Housing Allocations Policy and Pet Policy 2017 be submitted to the Director of Housing and Inclusion.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Housing Allocations Policy was last updated in 2013. Since then the Policy has provided a fair and transparent way of allocating housing. Whilst there are no significant changes proposed in terms of assessing housing need the revised Draft Policy aims to make the best use of council housing stock, address issues of affordability and reduce the impact of hard to let sheltered housing. It will also help to address the high proportion of allocations made to council tenants who wish to transfer with no housing need.
- 4.2 The Draft Allocations Policy, attached at appendix 1, sets out the criteria for acceptance onto the Councils Housing Register and also the priority band in which applicants should be placed.
- 4.3 The Draft Policy will be subject to external consultation for a period of 12 weeks. A copy of the Draft Policy will be available on the Councils website and views will be sought from both Homefinder applicants and members of the public. Copies of the Draft Policy will also be sent to our RSL partners and other agencies such as Lancashire County Council Social Care, Liberty Centre, Birchwood Centre.

5.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN CHANGES

- 5.1 The implementation of the Welfare Reform Act, now means that prospective tenants may either be no longer entitled to welfare benefits, or are eligible only to receive housing related benefits that are not sufficient to cover their full rent liability. The Allocations Policy therefore needs to be updated to deal with these emerging challenges.

The revised Draft Policy includes the following key changes for consideration:

- Under 18s - will only be accepted onto the Councils Housing Register if they are leaving care or are statutorily homeless, (i.e. where the Council has accepted that they are homeless within the terms of the homelessness legislation, they have been found to be in priority need and not intentionally homeless and the council therefore has a duty to offer accommodation), as they will only be eligible to claim housing costs in these circumstances. In addition to the changes to housing costs eligibility this also aims to address the high risk of tenancy failure associated with under 18s and the fact that they cannot legally hold a tenancy.
- All applicants will be expected to provide information regarding their finances at the point of application. This will support an affordability assessment to be carried out with all applicants, where this indicates that a tenancy is not affordable to the applicant their application will be rejected.

- Applications and subsequent tenancy offers may be conditional on accepting tenancy support or completion of pre tenancy training where there is an identified vulnerability or following a risk assessment a high risk of tenancy failure.
- 5.2 In order to reinforce the message that tenants need to meet their obligations in terms of payment of rent, the rules on Housing Register eligibility for those former or current tenants owing housing related debts to the Council have been strengthened. The proposed criteria is also more concise and easier to interpret for both staff and customers.
- 5.3. The Draft Policy includes the following minor changes to the priority banding criteria,
- A large proportion of allocations are made to existing council tenants, and as this has a financial impact in terms of Health and Safety checks, the Draft Policy aims to limit transfers for those with no housing need. To this end an additional priority band, Band E, has been introduced and some of the categories previously listed in Band D have now been downgraded to Band E. This better reflects and prioritises the reduced security of tenure experienced by those in the private rented sector compared to social housing tenants.
 - Given the low demand for some of the Councils sheltered housing schemes, it has been possible for tenants to move to similar flats within or between schemes without there being any associated housing need. The Draft Policy aims to address this by refusing like for like moves in lower demand sheltered schemes unless there is a housing need to do so. Secure tenants would still however have the option to carry out a mutual exchange if they wished to move.
- 5.4 The Draft Policy updates the Borough/Local Connection eligibility Criteria to improve consistency and comply with the Right to Move (Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Housing Authorities in England March 2015), which have been introduced since the last Policy was updated. The changes now include
- Parent's needing to be near their young children who do not reside with them.
 - Requirement for relatives to have lived in the area for a set number of years has been increased from 2 years to 5 years to make it more consistent with personal residency criteria of 3 years out of the last 5 years.
 - In light of Right to Move Regulations 2015 those needing to move to the Borough for work will also be considered to have a Borough connection.
- 5.5 The operation of the current Local Connection criteria is complex, difficult for customers to understand and results in properties being allocated to applicants with no housing need simply because they reside or have family living in a particular area. This can disadvantage those applicants in most urgent housing need.

To address these inequalities the Draft Policy will

- Remove the current 50% local connection areas from the Local Lettings criteria.
- For applicants satisfying the 100% local connection criteria preference will still be given over those applicants in the same priority band who do not have a local connection. They would however no longer have priority over those applicants in more urgent housing need in a higher priority band.

To put this proposed change into context some historical lettings data for the Local Connection areas is shown in Appendix 5.

5.6 The Draft Policy aims to address some of the difficulties associated with letting the Councils low demand sheltered housing stock. The Draft Policy will now

- Reduce the age limit from 60 to 55 for communal sheltered housing schemes and bungalows.
- Reduce the age limit to 50 and over for sheltered flats not in communal schemes.

In addition the associated Draft Pet Policy, at Appendix 2 outlines a more relaxed approach to pet ownership in the Councils sheltered schemes, which is hoped will generate more demand and reduce the number of offers refused. This has been piloted successfully in one of the sheltered schemes in Tarleton and feedback from both customers and staff is positive.

5.7 To assist expectant parents in securing suitable accommodation prior to the birth of their child, households with an expectant mother will now be treated as though the child has been born at 30 weeks of pregnancy.

5.8 The current letting criteria has resulted in many families being registered for 2 bedroom properties than for 3 bedrooms. Given that the Council has limited 2 bedroom stock those applicants will therefore wait longer to be housed. To address this imbalance, the revised Draft Policy will allow those households with two children to now bid on both 2 and 3 bedroom properties, however all offers would subject to an affordability assessment.

5.9 At present properties on Homefinder are advertised on a weekly basis from midnight every Thursday until 23:59 on the following Tuesday. It is proposed to move to a rolling daily lettings cycle meaning properties would be advertised on any day of the week with the advertising cycle for each individual property running for 6 days. This will ensure that where properties are refused they are then re-advertised immediately and let as quickly as possible, thereby reducing rent lost.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Implementing the Draft Policy once approved will require a number of actions. Firstly the existing list of housing register applicants will need to be re-assessed in line with the new Policy as some applicants will be impacted by the changes. Additionally the existing Choice Based Lettings IT system will need changing

6.2 Subject to approval the new Policy will take effect following wider consultation and consideration of any comments received. All affected applicants will have to be informed individually of any changes to their application and would need sufficient time to exercise a right to appeal against the decision.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

7.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are some financial resource implications arising from this report in respect of updating the Choice Based Lettings software, however these will be met using existing resources.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 The actions referred to in this report are covered by the scheme of delegation to officers and any necessary changes have been made in the relevant risk registers.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix 3 to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report

Appendices

1. Draft Housing Allocations Policy
2. Draft Pet Policy
3. Equality Impact Assessment
4. Scenarios to demonstrate effect on individual applicants
5. Local Connection data
6. Minute of Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) held on 3 January 2018 (Cabinet only)
7. Minute of Cabinet 9 January 2018 (Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee only)

WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY



1 October 2017

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 This document sets out West Lancashire Borough Council's Housing Allocations Policy and contains the priorities and procedures for allocating Council homes and nominations to Private Registered Providers of Social Housing in the borough.
- 1.2 The Allocations Policy takes into account all legal requirements outlined in the Housing Act 1996, Part VI and amendments made under the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 1.3 The Director of Housing & Inclusion has the delegated authority to make amendments to this policy where there have been legislative changes.
- 1.4 This current version came into effect on the xxxxx.(Date to be added when policy is agreed)
- 2.0 Aims & Objectives
- 2.1 The Policy aims to:
- Discharge the Council's statutory duties as contained in Part VI and VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
 - Offer customers information to enable them to make informed choices about their housing options
 - To provide an easy to understand, fair and transparent system
 - Make the most effective use of the local housing stock
 - Ensure and promote equality of opportunity
 - Promote sustainable tenancies and communities
- 3.0 Principles of the Allocation Scheme
- 3.1 The Council is committed to the provision of a customer focussed and equitable allocations scheme in accordance with the following general principles:
- All those seeking an allocation of social housing from the authority (or its partner Private Registered Providers), must apply to join the housing register

- All applicants aged 18 or over who are eligible will be allowed to join the scheme unless they are disqualified
- Applicants for social housing are assessed in terms of their housing needs and are banded accordingly.
- Allocations will be made on the basis of the applicant's priority band and within each band on the basis of any economic or community contribution and the date the level of priority was awarded
- In the designated local connection areas applicants who have a local connection with a particular housing area will be given preference for an allocation in that area over applicants with the same level of housing need i.e. in the same band, who do not have a local connection.
- Applicants will be given choice and may express their preferences with regards to areas of choice.
- Nominations for allocations by partner Private Registered Providers will be made on the same basis as for the letting of Council accommodation
- Accommodation is allocated in accordance with the guidelines on household types, property size and type of property

4.0 Scope of Policy

4.1 This Policy applies to all applications for:

- An allocation of Council accommodation
- A transfer of accommodation from existing Council tenants or tenants of other social landlords
- Nominations to Private Registered Providers

5.0 Allocations excluded from the scheme

5.1 The following in particular are excluded from the allocations scheme:

- Mutual Exchanges
- Succession or assignment of tenancy.
- Tenancies granted or disposed of by a court order made under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973; Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, the Children Act 1989 or the Civil Partnership Act 2004

- Where an introductory tenancy becomes a secure tenancy
- Other special cases where it may be necessary for the authority to make an allocation outside the terms of the scheme.

6.0 Equality of Opportunity in Housing

6.1 We aim to make every effort to ensure that all sectors of the community have equal access to services offered by the council. No person will be treated less favourably on the grounds of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

7.0 Policy on Choice

7.1 The Council is committed to offering applicants a choice of accommodation and allowing them to express their preferences, through West Lancs HomeFinder, its choice based letting scheme. However, the Council may not be able to meet all requests due to the level of demand or availability of accommodation. Applicants will therefore be given advice and information to help them understand their options and make informed choices.

7.2 All vacant properties will be advertised and applicants are required to actively seek and 'bid' for properties in which they are interested. Applicants would only be considered for a property if it was a suitable size and type for their household. Applicants expressing an interest in a particular property will be shortlisted and the applicant with the highest priority (in the highest band for longest) will be made the offer and invited to view the property.

8.0 The Homefinder Scheme

8.1 Advertising

Properties which are empty or due to become empty will be openly advertised daily on a 6 day cycle, at www.westlancshomefinder.co.uk. The scheme extends to include accredited private landlords, and Private Registered Provider vacancies.

8.2 Description

Adverts will include the following information about the property:

- The location including street name
- Size and type of property
- Weekly rent and service charges
- Type of heating
- If there is a garden and whether this is communal

- Details of any disabled adaptations
- Availability of a lift
- Parking facilities

8.3 Labelling

Adverts will also detail who is eligible to bid for a property i.e.:

- Size and type of household that the property is suitable for
- Any restrictions on age e.g. over 40s only
- Whether it is sheltered accommodation
- If pets allowed
- If preference is given to applicants with a local connection to the village.

Properties will be advertised daily, with each advert running for 6 days.

8.4 Expressions of Interest.

Applicants will be able to express their interest (bid) on a property in a number of ways:

- Via the West Lancs HomeFinder website
- By automated telephone line

All applicants on the housing register can bid on a maximum of 3 properties at any one time. Applicants who have already accepted an offer of a property will be ineligible to bid.

8.5 Direct Lets

Whilst the Council aims to allocate all its empty properties via the CBL scheme, it reserves the right to direct match applicants to properties in exceptional circumstances, these would include:

- Public protection cases
- Successor tenants or those left in possession of a West Lancashire Council property who are failing to make bids
- Temporary or permanent decants
- Properties that have been significantly adapted
- Temporary accommodation
- Extra Care Sheltered accommodation
- Where a local lettings policy applies e.g. new build accommodation (see 23.2)

8.6 Available Now Properties

The council will be more flexible in its approach to allocating properties where the normal advertising system has failed to identify a suitable tenant. These 'Available Now' properties are let on a first come first served basis, irrespective of an applicant's band or bedroom requirements. However in cases where we receive more than one

expression of interest, consideration will then be given to applicants banding and best use of housing stock.

Expressions of interest may also be considered from those applicants who may not normally be considered eligible, eg elderly owner occupiers who are interested in moving to an Available Now Sheltered Property.

This means that couples without children or with grown up children who would normally not qualify would be able to be considered for a house. Applicants still need to be registered and approved on the housing register as normal.

An 'Available Now' property is any property that has been advertised via Homefinder and either received no bids or where refusals have resulted in an empty shortlist. Before designating as 'available now' the property will have been made available for bidding to all applicants who would be eligible for the property type eg a 3 bed house would have been made open to all applicants eligible for 2 or 3 bed houses.

Available now properties are advertised on the Homefinder website as normal. Applicants can express an interest by emailing the contact details on the individual advert.

8.7 Feedback

Information on all the properties let through the CBL system will be provided on the West Lancs HomeFinder website. This will include the following information:

- Lettings results – property type and neighbourhood
- The total number of bids made for the property
- The successful customer's band and effective date.

8.8 Offers

Applicants will be notified of an offer email. As many of the Councils vacancies will be advertised prior to the outgoing tenant leaving, they may not be ready to view for a few weeks. In cases where the property is not empty an offer will be made on a provisional basis only, and may need to be withdrawn.

The Allocations Team will be able to provide an estimate of when the property is likely to be ready for occupation.

Where the first applicant refuses an offer of accommodation, the Lettings Officer will go to the next highest banded applicant and so on.

8.9 Viewing

Applicants are given the opportunity to view any property offered to them with an officer from the Allocations Team. Following the viewing the applicant is expected to decide whether they wish to accept the tenancy.

In situations where a property is advertised and no bids are received it will be re-advertised in the next cycle with the bidding opened up to applicants who satisfy the lettings criteria for smaller properties, usually one bedroom less.

Choice will also be increased by allowing households with children of any age to apply for any property type they wish including above ground floor flat or maisonette accommodation.

8.10 Rent in advance

We will always request rent in advance even if the tenant intends to or is currently claiming housing benefit or housing cost support through Universal Credit.

*The agreed advance payment is the payment pattern that the tenant agrees to e.g.:

- Weekly = 1 weeks full rent
- Fortnightly = 2 weeks full rent
- 4 Weekly = 4 weeks full rent
- Monthly

Applicants will be expected to put money aside to ensure they can meet the rent in advance payment. Offers will be withdrawn if an applicant is unable to make an advance payment on day of the tenancy sign up. All new tenants will need a bank account as the rent in advance payment can only be taken from a debit or credit card.

9.0 Offering Choice to Homeless Applicants

9.1 Applicants assessed as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need who are owed the 'main housing duty', will, as far as possible, be offered choice, and are expected to actively make bids against suitable properties.

Bidding patterns will be monitored for an initial period of 8 weeks. In situations where bids are not being made or all bids are against unobtainable properties the Homelessness Officer will offer further advice. If this bidding pattern continues after the 8 week period the officer will bid on the client's behalf and the Council's duty will be discharged through the first successful bid.

Where a homeless person has been bidding on reasonable properties but has not been successful the Homelessness Officer in conjunction

with the manager will consider whether to extend the period beyond 8 weeks.

- 9.2 Consideration will be given to any representations made by the applicant as regards the suitability of certain locations. Areas will not be regarded as suitable if evidence confirms that the area is unsuitable due to the applicant being at risk of violence, threats of violence or harassment if they resided in that area.

10.0 Application Process

- 10.1 Any eligible person aged 18 or over who is not disqualified can join the housing register.

Applications should be made by completing an online application at www.westlancshomefinder.co.uk

Some applicants will require advice and assistance to complete the application form because English may not be their first language, they may have learning or reading difficulties etc. In such cases Housing Options Advisors will provide advice and assistance and will if necessary complete the form on behalf of an applicant, applicants can contact the team direct on Tel: 01695 585267.

Applicants will need to supply proof of identification e.g. a picture driving licence or passport and a reference which must be from their current or previous landlord (where this is not possible from an employer or other professional). Supporting documentation can be sent to myhousingapplication@westlancs.gov.uk ensuring the email contains the applicants name, address and Homefinder reference number. Alternatively documents can be handed in at the Councils Customer Service Points in Skelmersdale or Ormskirk.

Existing Council tenants are not required to supply a reference.

The fact that a person is an applicant for an allocation of housing accommodation shall not be divulged (without his consent) to any other member of the public.

- 10.2 The registration process will involve:

- Checking if the applicant is eligible, that the information given is correct and, if necessary, recommending that an application should not be considered for an allocation;
- Assessing if the household is in housing need and placing the application in a priority band;

- Verifying information from references with current or former landlords and others. Information will be requested about current or former tenant arrears, payment history, current or previous anti social activity and any rechargeable repair debts. Credit checks will also be carried out. Police checks may be carried out where there are grounds to do so e.g. the applicant has spent time in prison or is unable to account for any previous addresses.
- Interviewing the applicant where necessary
- Affordability Assessment
All applicants will be expected to provide up to date information and appropriate supporting evidence regarding their finances at the point of application, including their income and expenditure and details of any current savings or debts. Failure to provide this will lead to the application being rejected. An affordability assessment will be carried out with all applicants for housing. Where the affordability assessment indicates that the property is not affordable, taking benefit entitlements into account, the application will be rejected. Advice will be given to all applicants regarding the prevailing government policies regarding housing and future benefit entitlement, and how it could impact upon them as a household.

10.3 False Statements

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for anyone seeking assistance from a housing authority under Part 6 of the Act to:

- a) Knowingly or recklessly give false information; or
- b) Knowingly withhold information, which the housing authority has reasonably required the applicant to give.

A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction in a magistrates court to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, currently £5,000).

The circumstances in which an offence is committed could include:

- a) Any false information given on an application form for social housing;
- b) Any false information given during an interview;
- c) Any false information given in response to subsequent review letters or other updating mechanisms; or
- d) Any false information given or submitted by applicants during the proceedings of a review

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the 1985 Housing Act (as amended by the 1996 Act s.146) enables a housing authority to seek possession of a tenancy which they have granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

11.0 Applicants Under 18

11.1 If an applicant is under 18 years of age their application will normally not be accepted onto the housing register. We will make exceptions in the following circumstances:

- Any person leaving Local Authority care or Young people, who have previously been in care and are covered by the Leaving Care Act 2002.
- Any person accepted as statutorily homeless (if they cease to be homeless they will become ineligible for the housing register until they reach the age of 18).

Under 18s will only be considered for a tenancy on the condition that they accept a referral to a support provider to ensure that the tenancy does not fail.

A person under the age of 18 is not able to hold a legal estate in land so they will therefore require a Trustee to hold the tenancy in trust for them until the young person reaches the age of 18 when they will be given an Introductory Tenancy in line with Council policy. Any contract entered into will allow the Council to recover any unpaid rent through the courts in the normal way. This can also mean that the Council may seek an order for possession from the courts.

In cases where the decision is not to offer a tenancy, a referral for support accommodation may be considered.

11.2 Pre Tenancy Support under 25s

In situations where the council considers that a young person may be eligible to join the housing register, it may delay accepting the application until the applicant has undertaken a course of pre tenancy support or training. Only once the support provider recommends that the young person is ready to accept the responsibilities of holding a tenancy would the application be made active to bid.

12.0 Eligibility

12.1 Not all applicants applying to join the housing allocation scheme are eligible join. Section 160Z(A) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by The Localism Act 2011) sets out who is not eligible to be allocated housing;

- a) Persons subject to immigration control - such a person is not eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless he or she comes within a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State (s.160ZA(2)), and
- b) Other persons from abroad other than a person subject to immigration control regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who, although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation (s.160ZA(4)).

Where an applicant is already an existing secure, introductory or assured tenant of accommodation allocated to him or her by a local housing authority, he or she cannot be disqualified on the basis of his or her immigration status.

12.2 Persons Subject to Immigration Control & Persons from Abroad

Where an applicant is a person from abroad, their application will be assessed to determine whether they are eligible under the relevant legislation and guidance.

Each applicant will be provided with written reasons if they are assessed as being ineligible for an allocation of accommodation and will have the right to seek a review of that decision (see Appendix 4).

If any question arises which brings into question the eligibility of an applicant to join the housing register and obtain an allocation of housing accommodation, the authority reserves the right to seek further information and clarification, including from the UK Border Agency.

Applicants eligibility will be reassessed prior to any offer of accommodation as well as at the initial point of application.

12.3 Qualification

Housing Authorities may only allocate accommodation to people who are defined as 'qualifying persons'. Subject to the requirement not to allocate from persons from abroad who are ineligible, and to any regulations, a housing authority may decide the classes of people who are, or are not, qualifying persons.

12.4 Applicants will not be considered qualifying persons if;

A. Unacceptable behaviour

If an applicant or a member of his/her household is found to have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant and, in the circumstances at the time the application is considered, they are still deemed unsuitable to be a

tenant of the Authority by reason of that behaviour, they will not be a qualifying person.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour which would, if the person was either a secure tenant or a member of a secure tenant's household, entitle a landlord to a possession order under grounds 1 to 7 of the Housing Act 1985 Schedule 2. The grounds are;

- Ground 1 Rent arrears or breach of tenancy
- Ground 2 Behaviour which is a nuisance or annoyance to those in the locality of the dwelling or conviction for using the dwelling for immoral/illegal purposes or committing an indictable offence in or in the locality of the dwelling house
- Ground 2A Domestic violence causing a partner or other family member to leave the property
- Ground 3 Deterioration of the dwelling house due to waste, neglect or default
- Ground 4 Deterioration of furniture provided by the landlord due to ill-treatment
- Ground 5 Tenancy induced by false statement
- Ground 6 Premium received or paid in connection with a mutual exchange
- Ground 7 Eviction from a dwelling within the curtilage of a building held for non-housing purposes due to conduct such that given the nature of the building it would not be right for occupation to continue

The position in relation to rent arrears and anti-social behaviour specifically is considered below.

The Council will:

- Investigate the individual circumstances of an applicant's case to establish if there is evidence of unacceptable behaviour that would fall under grounds 1 to 7 above;
- Establish whether the unacceptable behaviour is considered to be serious and whether it is likely that a possession order would have been granted as a result of that behaviour;
- Decide if the applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of their behaviour at the time the application is considered, taking into account whether there have been any changes in the circumstances or behaviour of the applicant.

Where the Council is satisfied that these criteria are met, the applicant will not qualify for an allocation and therefore be excluded from the housing register. This exclusion will be in place for a period of 2 years.

When making the assessment the Council will act reasonably and will consider all relevant matters regarding health, dependants, social or other factors. Regard will also be given to the wider interests of the public.

Where the Council regards the behaviour as unacceptable but considers that the applicant should not be classed as non-qualifying, the Council may decide to accept the application but place it in Band E (reduced priority) even if the application would normally attract a higher band.

Each applicant will be provided with written reasons if they are assessed as being non-qualifying and will have the right to seek a review of that decision. The applicant will also have the right to ask the Council to review their case at any time during the exclusion period if they feel that there has been such an improvement in their behaviour that they should no longer be considered to be unsuitable.

Where the applicant has been excluded for 2 years and makes a further application but there has been no improvement in their behaviour and the conditions for finding them unacceptable to be a tenant remain, the applicant can be excluded for a further 2 years (subject to the same review process as above).

12.5 Rent Arrears and other housing related debt.

The accrual of rent arrears will be considered serious where:

- a) An applicant owes rent from a previous tenancy, which resulted in a possession order being granted; or
- b) The applicant has current rent arrears serious enough for a court to grant an outright possession order.

Where the conditions of either (a) or (b) above have been met, the Council may decide that the applicant is not a qualifying person.

Where there are insufficient grounds to determine that an applicant is not a qualifying person, the application to join the housing allocation scheme will be suspended until the debt has been cleared. Each case will be considered on its own merits taking into account the level of debt, reasons for the arrears and steps taken to resolve the problem. Suspension would not normally be lifted until the debt has been reduced by 50% and regular payments made for 3 months.

Applicants owing more than £500, will not be accepted onto the housing register. Any applicant found to have this level of arrears outstanding will have his or her application cancelled. The applicant will be able to re-apply once the arrears have been reduced to under £250 and regular agreed payments have been made for 3-months.

An applicant can make payments of arrears on a weekly or monthly basis and there is no minimum payment. The Council will usually look for the minimum payment to be the level of direct payment if the

applicant is on state benefits or a reasonable amount if they are working.

If payments are made for the required time, the application will be approved in the relevant band even if arrears are still outstanding however the applicant must continue to reduce the debt until it is cleared in full.

The account will be monitored and should payments stop, the application will be cancelled. The arrears must then be cleared in full before another application will be accepted.

Each case will be assessed on its own merits and the Tenancy Services Manager has the discretion to approve applications with rent arrears and award the relevant band where there are exceptional circumstances. This will include but will not be limited to those current tenants of the Council who under-occupy a tenancy and have accrued arrears as a direct result of the changes in Housing Benefit Regulations under Welfare Reform.

Applicants who have been assessed as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need or have been placed in Band B under homeless prevention will be considered for an allocation despite any rent arrears. An agreement to pay will still be required.

12.6 Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour includes conduct likely to cause nuisance and annoyance, harassment, violence or intimidation to others or the use of property for illegal or immoral purposes.

This behaviour will be considered serious where the evidence is such that it would entitle the authority to obtain a possession order from a court.

Any applicants found to be not qualifying on such grounds will normally be advised that they will not be considered qualifying for an allocation of housing until they have conducted themselves appropriately for a period of 2 years following the last unacceptable incident. However, each individual application will be considered on its merits in terms of the length of time the applicant will be ineligible.

Where there are insufficient grounds to determine that an applicant is ineligible for an allocation, the application to join the housing register will be accepted but not awarded any priority until the Council considers that the behaviour of the applicant has improved.

The same procedure will be applied to applicants who have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour under any of the other grounds (2A to 7 see above paragraph 12.10).

Criminal convictions

Applicants will be required to complete the declaration on the application form setting out any criminal convictions, ASBOs or any other type of injunction that relate to the applicant or any person listed on the application. Failure to disclose such information or update the Council in relation to any new convictions may result in the application being cancelled.

The Council may conclude that an applicant with convictions is eligible to join the register but choose to limit the areas or types of accommodation that an applicant may express an interest in.

12.7 B. Damage/Neglect of Council Property

Current Council Tenants who have not maintained their property in accordance with the terms of their tenancy will be considered to be not qualifying, and will be required to make good any damage before qualifying for inclusion on the Register.

12.8 C. Rechargeable Repair debt

Former tenants who owe the council a debt relating to damage clearance or unauthorized alterations to a council property.

Applications will be suspended until the debt has been cleared. Each case will be considered on its own merits taking into account the level of debt, reasons for the recharge and steps take to resolve the problem. Suspension would not normally be lifted until the debt has been reduced by 50% and regular payments made for 3 months.

In cases were an applicant has a debt in excess of £500 or is as a result of wilful damage or neglect of a property, they will be treated as not being qualifying persons; therefore an application to join the housing register will not be accepted.

12.9 D. Right to Buy

Those who previously purchased a property through the Right to Buy scheme in West Lancashire, or elsewhere within the last 10 years will not qualify, unless they are applying for sheltered housing.

12.10 E. Owner Occupiers

In line with government guidance the Council will not allocate housing to people who already own their own homes. Exceptions would apply to elderly owner occupiers who need sheltered accommodation and whose home/assets were not of sufficient value to secure such accommodation privately, those fleeing violence or suffering significant financial hardship or other exceptional circumstances. Where the Council agrees to assist with re-housing, the applicant must not sell their home before they have accepted an offer of accommodation. However, they must agree to sell the property as soon as they have been re-housed and not rent out their home or make any financial gain whilst waiting to sell.

These eligibility rules for owner occupiers will be relaxed where the applicant expresses an interest in an Available Now property.

12.12 G. Income/Assets

Applicants whose income or assets exceed the limits set by the Council. The income threshold has been set at £40,000, and is calculated on gross household income. The savings/asset threshold will be £60,000. These values will be reviewed regularly.

All households applying to the housing allocation scheme will be assessed for their ability to secure accommodation at market rent or to purchase a suitable property within West Lancashire.

Assets that may be taken into consideration include but are not limited to:

- Savings
- Property Abroad
- Commercial property
- Money received through a divorce settlement
- Residential Property
- Bonds

Lump sum payments to members of the British Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service will be disregarded.

13.0 Reduced Preference

13.1 Reduced Preference due to unacceptable behaviour

Where there is insufficient information to determine that a person does not qualify for accommodation on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour it may be decided to reduce their priority band to Band E.

Customers will be given reduced preference in Band E where the Council can be satisfied that having considered all the available evidence they (or a member of their current or prospective household) has failed to adhere to the terms of any current or previous social housing or private sector tenancy agreement.

This would include but is not limited to following examples of unacceptable behaviour:

- Failing to maintain the property within the terms of the agreement – for example deliberately or negligently causing damage to a previous or current property, accumulation of large amounts of rubbish in and around the property.
- Committing acts causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or others in the locality where they live or where they

previously lived. This would include noise nuisance, threatening or abusive behaviour.

- If anyone from the household has been a perpetrator of low level Criminal or Anti-Social behaviour.
- Criminal behaviour that was relevant to the tenancy and/or locality, for example being in possession of illegal drugs, acts of public disorder.
- Breaches of a social or private sector tenancy agreement, for example operating a business from the premises, having an unreasonable numbers of pets at the property.
- Behaving in a threatening, abusive or obstructive manner towards staff of the Council or their contractors
- Failing to allow access for compliance checks such as gas safety, legionella, fire safety and asbestos checks.

13.2 Reduced Preference due to no Borough Connection

Applicants who do not have a Borough connection with the district will still qualify for access to the housing register, however, in general they will not be given any preference and will be placed in Band E. The only exceptions to this in general are;

- Those entitled to additional preference under The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2989) or equivalent provisions.
- Those who are accepted as homeless or are residing in a refuge having fled violence or harassment from another area.
- Those who are able to provide proof of their “need” to move into the area and demonstrate why this “need” cannot be satisfied in their current location.

To qualify for a Borough connection to West Lancashire an applicant must normally:

- Have lived in the area for a period of 3 out of the last 5 years prior to the date of their application; or
- Have close family who have lived in the area for a minimum of 5 years prior to the date of application and the applicant must indicate that they want to move nearer to them. Close family includes parents, children and siblings.
- have reasonable preference because of a need to move to the local authority’s district to avoid hardship, and need to move because the tenant works in the district, or needs to move to take up an offer of work

14.0 Banding Scheme

The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 requires an allocation scheme to be framed so as to secure that reasonable preference is given to various categories of people, which represent general indicators of housing need.

West Lancashire Borough Council has adopted a banding system in line with Government guidance.

Applications for an allocation of social housing will be placed in one of four priority bands;

- A (urgent priority)
- B (high priority)
- C (medium priority)
- D (low priority)
- E (no priority)

Within each band, preference will be given to those applicants who make a Community Contribution.

15.0 Band A – Urgent Priority

15.1 The categories for Band A are as follows:

- Applicants who have made a homeless application and have been assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need as a result of being victims of violence or harassment
- Applicants applying for an allocation of accommodation who have not been assessed as homeless but need to move urgently due to being victims of violence or harassment
- Severe overcrowding
- Urgent Medical Need
- Unfitness, Disrepair, Demolition
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Left in Occupation
- Under Occupation
- British Armed Forces

- Multiple Needs
- Foster Carers

15.2 Criteria for each category

15.2a Applicants who have made a homeless application and have been assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need as a result of being:

- Victims of violence
- Victims of racial harassment amounting to violence or threats of violence
- Victims of sexual harassment amounting to violence or threats of violence
- Witnesses or victims of crime who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remained.
- Existing tenants who need alternative accommodation due to the above.

This level of priority can only be awarded by the Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team.

15.2b Applicants applying for an allocation of accommodation who have not been assessed as homeless but need to move urgently due to being:

- Victims of violence
- Victims of racial harassment amounting to violence or threats of violence
- Victims of sexual harassment amounting to violence or threats of violence
- Witnesses or victims of crime who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remained.

The decision to award this level of priority rests with the Housing Needs & Allocations Manager, or a suitably experienced Senior Officer who has been delegated this task. This priority is awarded to facilitate a move away from the current home, geographical bidding restrictions may therefore apply.

15.2c Severe overcrowding

Households that are statutorily overcrowded, or that have two or more bedrooms fewer than they require and are therefore severely overcrowded. Severe overcrowding priority will not be awarded to those applicants who are in temporary accommodation.

The government's Bedroom Standard will be used to calculate whether a property is overcrowded. Guidance can be found at Appendix 2.

15.2d Urgent Medical Need

Urgent medical priority will be awarded where:

- The applicant is at significant risk of physical injury by remaining in their current home and is requesting to move to a more suitable type of accommodation, or
- The applicant is at significant risk of a severe breakdown in their mental health by remaining in their current home.

In the case of severe risk to mental health, the applicant's environment will be taken into account, as in these cases the property type itself is not necessarily the causal problem. The applicant must be able to show that the risk will be significantly reduced by a move to their requested location.

15.2e Unfitness and Disrepair

- Where the applicants home is subject to a Demolition Order, Clearance Area or Compulsory Purchase Order.
- Council Tenants who needs to move as their home is part of a Revival Scheme, involving demolition or redevelopment.
- Permanent or temporary decants from Council property in order to carry out improvements or major repairs.

Properties inspected by the Council's Private Sector Housing Section that are unfit and are subject to a Prohibition Order. This level of priority can only be awarded based on the recommendation of the Council's Private Sector Housing Team. The Housing Health & Safety Rating System will be used as a guide to assessing whether Band A is appropriate.

Where the applicant has not been re-housed and the repair issues have been resolved to the Council's satisfaction, the application will be reviewed to determine whether Band A priority should still be awarded.

15.2f Anti-Social Behaviour

If a West Lancashire Borough Council tenant is experiencing anti-social behaviour and is requesting a transfer as a result, they may be awarded Band A priority providing the Tenancy Services Manager is satisfied that all options to resolve the situation have been exhausted. The applicant will be awarded Band A following written confirmation from the Council's Multi-Agency Problem Solving Team (MAPS) Co-

ordinator that all procedures have been exhausted and a move is recommended for the applicant's safety. West Lancashire Borough Council tenants are expected to co-operate with their respective Estate Management Team in recording and reporting incidents.

Other Council and Housing Association tenants will also be expected to have exhausted their own landlord's policy on tackling anti-social behaviour and a comprehensive report will be required from the landlord confirming what action has been taken and why they are unable to offer alternative accommodation from their own stock before this level of priority will be awarded.

Residents within the private rented sector and owner-occupiers must provide evidence of the anti-social behaviour before being assessed for this level of priority.

15.2g Left in Occupation

Those left in occupation of a West Lancashire Borough Council property, following the death of a tenant, with no succession rights to the tenancy or where the tenant has gone into residential care and the tenancy is to be terminated, will qualify for Band A priority.

The applicant must have lived at the address as their principal home for at least 12-months prior to the tenant's death or confinement to residential care to be awarded this level of priority.

Those applicants who have not lived at the address for at least 12 months will have their applications assessed to determine which of the other priority bands they qualify for.

15.2h Under Occupation

Those under occupying a West Lancashire Borough Council tenancy of a family house and who are requesting a move to a smaller property. Tenants living in flats, maisonettes or bungalows would not qualify.

Applicants who were originally offered a property larger than their needs may not be awarded this priority unless there is demand for the type of accommodation they are currently occupying.

Each case will be assessed on its own merits.

15.2i Multiple Needs

Applicants who have met the criteria for any 2 or more of the needs categories identified in Priority Band B. This includes applicants who have been assessed as homeless but also fall into another category within Band B.

15.2j British Armed Forces

Applicants who are being discharged from the British Armed Forces who have sustained serious injury, medical condition, or disability during service and can prove a Borough connection to West Lancashire through previously residing in West Lancashire, or having relatives in West Lancashire.

Members of the British Armed Forces, with a Borough connection, who have been assessed as meeting the Band B criteria for homelessness, unsatisfactory housing conditions, or on medical, welfare or hardship grounds, will be given additional preference and placed in Band A.

15.2k Foster Carers

Foster Carers approved by the County Council whose housing prevents them from being able to start, or continue, to provide foster care.

16.0 Band B – High Priority

16.1 The categories for Band B are as follows:

- Those applicants assessed as being eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need for reasons other than violence.
- Overcrowding
- Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions
- Medical
- Care
- Hardship Employment or Financial Grounds
- Care Leavers Requiring a Move to Independent Living
- Homelessness Prevention
- Applicants who no longer require the adaptations in their current home
- British Armed Forces

16.2 Criteria for each category

16.2a Those applicants assessed as being eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Applicants who have made a homeless application and have been assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need who have not been assessed as being homeless or vulnerable due to violence or threats of violence including:

- A pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- A person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- Persons who are vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, handicap or physical disability or other special reason or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- A person who is homeless as a result of an emergency e.g. flood or fire;
- A person under 21 who was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18;
- A person who is aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after or accommodated or fostered;
- Applicants who are being discharged from the British Armed Forces and can prove a Borough connection to West Lancashire through previously residing in West Lancashire, or having relatives in West Lancashire.

16.2b Overcrowding

- Those overcrowded with one bedroom fewer than they require taking into account the Bedroom Standard at Appendix 2.

16.2c Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions

- Those lacking a suitable kitchen, bathroom or WC
- Those with no supply of cold or hot water
- Households with children under 14 where there is significant or excessive dampness to the property (Housing Health & Safety Rating System)
- Those tenants in the private sector where the Landlord would be, or has been, served with a repair notice by the Private Sector Housing Team (not applicable to Council tenants).

Where the landlord rectifies the repairs to the satisfaction of the Private Sector Housing Team, the application will be re-assessed to determine whether this level of priority should still be awarded to the application.

16.2d Medical Need

- Those applicants with a serious medical condition that is made worse by the style or functionality of their current home. There must be a causal link between the property type and the deterioration or discomfort arising from the medical problem. Priority is not awarded for medical conditions alone.

Applicants must show that a move to the property type requested will help halt the deterioration in the condition and/or make the applicant more comfortable.

16.2e Care

- Those who need to move closer to family, friends or relatives to give or receive physical or emotional support or care because of a medical condition.

To qualify for this, the applicant must be moving to West Lancashire from another local authority area or if already resident in the area, be living more than 3 miles away from the family, friends or relatives who will be providing or receiving the care. There must be evidence that this support cannot be provide in current location.

16.2f Hardship, Employment or Financial Grounds

Applicants will qualify for this level of priority where:

- There is a need to move to an area or locality to avoid hardship for example to access medical treatment or specialised services that would not be available to them if they did not move to that locality
- There is a need to move for work related reasons
In determining whether a tenant needs to move to be closer to work or to take up a job offer include:
 - the distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home
 - the availability and affordability of transport, taking into account level of earnings
 - the nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home
 - other personal factors, such as medical conditions and child care, which would be affected if the tenant could not move
 - the length of the work contract
- whether failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve their employment circumstances or prospects, for example, by taking up a better job, a promotion, or an apprenticeship
- There is a financial need and the applicant is unable to afford to continue to occupy their current home (a financial assessment will be carried out to ensure the applicant cannot afford to own or rent an alternative property in the private sector).

- This will include those Council tenants (whose tenancy started prior to September 2011), who are under-occupying, and who have been negatively affected by the changes to Housing Benefit under the Welfare Reform Act.

16.2g Care Leavers Requiring a Move to Independent Living

- Care leavers who are unintentionally homeless are likely to have a priority need for re-housing under the homelessness legislation. However, in an effort to plan in advance to meet the needs of those known to be due to leave care, medium priority will be awarded to those care leavers with a Borough connection to West Lancashire. Should the applicant not be accommodated and threatened with homelessness within 28 days, a homelessness application will be processed. This award will be made by the Housing Options Team following liaison with Social Care.
- Applicants leaving the Birchwood Centre following a period of supported living.

16.2h Homeless Prevention

- Applicants who are being dealt with via the Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team who are not yet within the statutory definition of being homeless but the future homelessness cannot be prevented. Applicants will only qualify for this priority if they would be unintentionally homeless and in priority need if they made a homeless presentation.

This will assist families to be re-housed before they are homeless and need to access emergency accommodation.

This level of priority can only be awarded by the Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team.

16.2i Applicants who no longer require the disabled adaptations in their home.

Customers who release an adapted property where the tenant does not require their current home and will therefore be releasing an adapted property by moving

16.2j British Armed Forces

Those who:

- are being discharged from the British Armed Forces in the next 6 months

- formerly served in the regular forces in the 5 years preceding their application,
- have 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 who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- serving or have served in the reserve forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service.

16.2k Social/Welfare

Those applicants who have a significant need to move which is not covered elsewhere in the policy; this award will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The decision to award this level of priority rests with the Housing Needs & Allocations Manager, or a suitably experienced Senior Officer who has been delegated this task.

17.0 Band C – Medium Priority

- Applicants living with family/friends or lodging with no security of tenure but with no other housing need.
- Those renting in the private sector who have been served with notice to quit.
- Those assessed as intentionally homeless with priority need and eligible for an offer of accommodation.
- Those assessed as being homeless but with no priority need.
- Those applicants who have refused 1 reasonable offer of accommodation in the discharge of a homelessness duty.

18.0 Band D – Low Priority

- Those who occupy mobile homes on residential caravan parks and have no other housing needs.
- Private rented tenants with no other housing needs.

19.0 Band E – No Priority

- Secure Council or Housing Association tenants with no other housing need.
- Applicants who would qualify for a higher band but have the financial ability to resolve their own housing need by purchasing a suitable property, renting in the private sector or having adaptations carried out to their current home.
- Applicants who have given up a secure property within the 12-months prior to the application who did not have a good reason for doing so.
- Those applicants who were in Band A or B and have refused 3 reasonable offers of accommodation from the housing register.
- Any applicant who has been assessed as being unsuitable to be a tenant and has had 'reduced priority' awarded to their application.
- Those without a Borough connection. The only exceptions to this are:
 - Members of the British Armed Forces. Armed forces personnel without a Borough connection will be prioritised according to their housing need but not awarded additional preference under section 16.32
 - Those who are accepted as homeless having fled violence or harassment from another area.
 - Those who are able to provide proof of their "need" to move into the area and demonstrate why this "need" cannot be satisfied in their current location e.g. for employment reasons

20.0 Economic/Community Contribution Award

20.1 Increased priority for housing will be given to those applicants who demonstrate a commitment to contribute to the Borough's economic growth as working households or who make a contribution by their contribution within communities. This will be achieved by awarding a 'plus' status within each band. Therefore an applicant who is assessed as qualifying for Band B will be placed into Band B - Plus* if they also meet the economic/community contribution criteria.

During the short-listing process applicants with the enhanced 'Plus' status will appear above those applicants with the same level of housing need i.e. in the same band who cannot demonstrate an economic/community contribution.

Applicants may be eligible for the Economic/Community Contribution Award if they are working, in training, or volunteering subject to conditions.

20.2 Working households

West Lancashire Borough Council wants to support the economic strength of the Borough, and encourage people to work and raise levels of aspiration and ambition. We will therefore offer increased priority to applicants that are working and making a contribution to West Lancashire's economy. The increased priority gained by being a Working Household will apply across West Lancashire Borough's area and is not linked to a specific area.

Definition of Working Household

The definition of a working household will be where at least one adult member of the household is in employment. Employment for this scheme is described as having:

- a) A permanent contract.
- b) Working as a temporary member of staff.
- c) Self employed.

Applicants will have to have been working for 16 hours or more for 9 out of the last 12 months. Verification will be sought at the point of application, and at the point of offer. Applicants must provide payslips, P45 and P60, tax returns, bank statements and a verifying letter on headed paper from their employer in order to qualify.

The proof must be supplied at the time of application and verified at time of offer. If the applicant's employment status changes they may be allowed to retain the priority as long as there is a realistic prospect of re-employment. The decision will take into account their previous employment history, age of the applicant and other relevant factors. However, they must satisfy the employment definition at the time of the offer of accommodation.

20.3 Community Contribution

People who play a part in making their neighbourhood strong, stable and healthy – those who help make it a good place to live, work and play are valuable people. They are the backbone of their community, and they need to be recognised for the good they do.

The Community Contribution Priority Scheme is a West Lancashire Borough Council scheme which gives an applicant increased priority, in addition to any other banding they are entitled to because of housing need.

Community Contribution Awards – How they work in practice

It is important to keep in mind that a Community Contribution award is additional to the applicant's Reasonable Preference status. If an

applicant requests a Community Contribution award but turns out not to qualify for one, it won't disadvantage their application or cause it to be ineligible. It's also important to make clear that only the criteria below can be used to assess whether someone can have a Community Contribution award.

20.4 Definition of Economic/Community Contribution

If an applicant, has lived in West Lancashire for three out of the last 5 years and can demonstrate a positive tenancy history, i.e.

1. No on-going culpable involvement in anti-social behaviour or criminal activities
2. No breaches of tenancy within the last 3 years
3. No outstanding lawfully recoverable housing-related debt
4. Not have an outstanding unspent conviction

They are entitled to a Community Contribution Award provided any of the criteria below is satisfied.

20.5 Criterion 1 – Volunteers

If an applicant volunteers, a Community Contribution award will be applied. Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application, and the same at point of offer. Volunteering must be for a not-for profit organisation or a charity and must be for a minimum of 10 hours per month. N.B. Tenants and Residents Associations, which are constituted are classified as not-for-profit organisation. They must be registered with West Lancashire Borough Council, or a Registered Provider to qualify.

Evidence required for Voluntary Work

A letter from a Manager responsible for the Volunteer (applicant) confirming their involvement in a minimum of 10 hours voluntary work per month or in the area for over 6 months. This person must not be related to the applicant in any way.

20.6 Criterion 2 – Training, Education or Apprenticeships

We want to encourage people to move closer to gaining paid employment by gaining employability skills and becoming job ready. This may be achieved by attending higher or further education or by accessing a longer vocational course of study or engaging in a programme of work-related training courses. In all cases the course of study must lead to achieving accredited qualifications and / or certification by a registered awarding body.

Study or training may be undertaken at a range of recognised institutions and organisations such as: Further Education College;

registered Private Training Provider; registered Voluntary Sector Organisation or University.

A person must have been studying or training for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

All training must be a minimum of 16 hours a month

Evidence required for Training element

Further/higher education candidates must supply evidence of:

- letter from college or university confirming participation in course of study for period of 6 months

For vocational training award the following evidence must be provided:

- an agreed employment action plan developed through a recognised IAG service plus verification of steps taken towards achievement of action plan targets
- certificate or letter from a registered awarding body for the course or by a recognised training provider as evidence of gaining a recognised vocational qualification or successfully completing accredited work related training (over a continuous period of at least 6 months)

20.7 Criterion 3 - Ex service personnel

Applicants who have served in the British Armed Forces within the last 5 years will qualify for a community contribution award automatically, with the exception of those who have been dishonourably discharged.

21.0 Deliberately Worsening Housing Circumstances

Where there is clear evidence that an applicant has knowingly contributed to the worsening of their circumstances then no priority will be given. Examples of this include:

- a) Selling a property that is affordable and suitable for the applicants needs in order to qualify for a higher band.
- b) Moving from a secure tenancy to insecure or overcrowded accommodation.
- c) A family giving up an affordable and suitable private rented tenancy which they are able to maintain, to move in with other relatives, creating a situation of overcrowding and sharing of bathroom/kitchen and/or a split household.
- d) An applicant requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit.
- e) An applicant gives up settled accommodation in order to move into less settled or overcrowded accommodation.

- f) An applicant deliberately overcrowds their property by moving in friends and/or other family members who have never lived together previously and/or have not lived together for a long time, then requests re-housing to larger accommodation.

The above list is not exhaustive.

22.0 Change of Circumstances

Applicants will be considered for re-housing by priority band and each band will be ordered by the date the band was awarded. If an applicant's circumstances change or they move address, their application will be re-assessed and they will be placed in the most appropriate band by the date they were awarded the new banding. Where the banding would not change, the original date awarded will remain.

If by changing their circumstances applicants would go in to a higher priority band, then an assessment will be made to determine whether the applicant has knowingly contributed to a worsening of their housing situation. If they have then the application will remain in the band they were placed in before their circumstances changed.

23.0 Allocation Process

23.1 Lettings Criteria

Properties will be allocated based on the applicant's preference and the property type and size they are entitled to under the policy. The lettings criteria can be found at Appendix 3.

A property will not be allocated to an applicant if it would be so overcrowded that it failed the statutory overcrowding test.

Applicants may be offered properties that are larger than the household needs if there are no bids from suitable sized families. This would be subject to an assessment of affordability.

Some properties have been classified as lettings to those aged over 40. These properties will be let sensitively due to the nature of the accommodation. Each application will be considered on its own merits.

New tenants will be allowed pets in accordance with the councils Pet Policy.

Applicants in sheltered housing schemes, who are in Band E because their accommodation meets their housing needs will not be considered for offers of accommodation in the same or similar schemes.

23.2 Local Lettings Policies

The Director Housing and Inclusion may also agree to Local Lettings policies to ensure a balanced mix within Council accommodation. This can include setting minimum age limits for certain property types, adjusting the number of family homes let to families with children where there is a high concentration of children in a particular area, or giving preference to local people or those who are economically active.

Local Lettings policies may apply to new build and redevelopment schemes.

As local lettings policies are subject to frequent review and change they are not listed in this document. A copy of any current policies in place can be found on the West Lancs Homefinder website: www.westlancshomefinder.co.uk

When we advertise properties within a local lettings scheme, we will make this clear in the advert.

23.3 Direct Lets

Whilst the Council aims to allocate all of its empty properties via the CBL scheme, it reserves the right to direct match applicants to properties in exceptional circumstances, these would include;

- Public protection cases
- Successor tenants or those left in possession of a West Lancashire Council property who are failing to make bids
- Temporary or permanent decants
- Properties that have been significantly adapted
- Temporary accommodation
- Extra Care Sheltered accommodation

23.4 Allocation Decisions

The Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997, regulation 3 provides;

- 1) as regards the procedure to be followed, an authority's allocation scheme shall be framed in accordance with the principle prescribed in this regulation
- 2) a member of an authority who has been elected for the electoral division or ward in which;
 - a) the housing accommodation in relation to which an allocation decision falls to be made is situated, or

- b) the person in relation to whom that decision falls to be made has his sole or main residence, shall not, at the time the allocation decision is made, be included in the persons constituting the decision-making body

All allocations will be authorised and approved by the Tenancy Services Manager or a person delegated this authority by the Tenancy Services Manager.

All procedures under this Policy other than allocations will be carried out by a Housing Options Advisor unless otherwise stated.

Elected members will not be involved in the allocation process. This does not exclude elected members from assisting a constituent with a housing related query or providing support in making an application.

24.0 Adapted Dwellings

Where a social rented dwelling has been built or adapted for a disabled person's use it will normally be offered first to applicants from the Housing Register who have a disability and who may benefit from the particular type of adaptations made. Adapted properties will not be allocated to non-disabled persons if bids have been received from suitable applicants.

Significantly adapted properties may be allocated outside the HomeFinder scheme and offered to an applicant who requires the adaptations through direct matching. Should an applicant refuse such an offer, it will not count towards the 3 reasonable offers, which are normally made.

Applicants who are currently living in council accommodation which has been significantly adapted to meet their needs will not be considered for an offer of any property that has not already been adapted. Exceptions will apply where further adaptations are required and these cannot reasonably be done in the current home. These applicants will not normally qualify for any additional priority for underoccupation, each case will be considered on an individual basis.

25.0 Local Connection Policy

Section 166A(6) Housing Act 1996 enables housing authorities to allocate accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories.

25.1 Local Connection Preference

There is particular strain on social housing for rent in some areas of the Borough. These areas include small villages where there is little

Council accommodation. In such areas it can be difficult for people with a local connection to remain there or to move there. Low income groups are particularly affected especially where house prices and private sector rents are high making affordability of homes an issue.

The Council wishes to support and assist the development and retention of stable local communities. To aid this policy the Council wants to provide reasonable preference to applicants for accommodation that have “local connections” with a particular housing area. At the same time the Council wants to ensure that appropriate priority is given to others with housing needs that have expressed a choice or preference for accommodation in the district.

In the areas set out in Appendix 1 the Council will seek to give preference to applicants with local connections over those without a connection in the same level of housing need ie Band.

All vacancies in these areas will be advertised as normal, applicants who satisfy the Local Connection criteria for the area in which the vacancy is located, will be given preference over those applicants with the same level of housing need, i.e. the same band who cannot demonstrate a Local Connection to the area.

In areas where no preference is given to applicants with a local connection then offers will be made solely in accordance with the normal procedure.

25.2 Review of Local Lettings Procedures

In order to ensure the best use of Council accommodation, the Director of Housing & Inclusion Services is authorised to review and if necessary adjust the list of housing areas within each category as set out in Appendix 1 to reflect changes in levels of housing stock or levels of demand for homes in different areas.

This may result in general needs and sheltered accommodation within one housing area being within two different categories for local letting preference.

25.3 Local Connection Criteria

To qualify for a local connection with an allocation area an applicant must normally:

- Have lived in that area for a period of 3 out of the last 5 years prior to the date of their application; or

- Have close family who have lived in that area for a minimum of 5 years prior to the date of application and the applicant must indicate that they want to move nearer to them. Close family includes parents, children and siblings.

To satisfy the requirement of moving to be near close family, the applicant must be moving into the district from another local authority area or must currently live at least 3 miles away from the family member they are moving to be near.

An applicant can be considered to have a local connection to unlimited housing areas within the district as long as they satisfy the local connection criteria.

However, where an applicant applies to the housing register and initially satisfies the local connection criteria but subsequently falls outside of the criteria before an allocation is made, the local connection preference will be removed from the application. For example, by the time the allocation is made the applicant is no longer considered to have been resident in the district for 3 out of the last 5 years.

The Tenancy Services Manager is authorised, in exceptional circumstances and where reasonable, to assess persons who do not meet the above criteria as qualifying for a local connection.

25.4 The Right to Move Quota

The council is required to set a quota for the proportion of properties that it expects to allocate each year to transferring social tenants who need to move into their district for work related reasons ('the Right to Move quota'). Given the historically low levels of applications from those outside the borough this quota has been initially set at 1% and will be reviewed annually.

26.0 Offers of Accommodation

26.1 Short-listing

Expressions of interest will be placed in order of priority i.e. from Band A through to Band E. Applicants with the enhanced 'Plus' status for Economic/Community Contribution will appear above those applicants with the same level of housing need, i.e. in the same band who cannot demonstrate a economic/community contribution. Where the shortlist contains more than one applicant in a band, the date that the applications were placed into that band will be used to prioritise them.

Where the vacancy is in a Local Connection area, expressions of interest will be placed in order of priority i.e. from Band A through to

Band E. Applicants with the Local Connection to the area in which the property is located will appear above those without a local connection. Enhanced. Where the shortlist contains more than 1 applicant with a local connection 'Plus' status for Economic/Community Contribution and the date that the applications were placed into that band will be used to prioritise them.

In cases where no bids are received from applicants meeting the local connections criteria in the highest band on the shortlist, offers will be made in the normal manner based upon priority need and date order. Any preference for a local connection may only be given where the property advertised is of a type and size appropriate to the applicant's needs.

Where properties are targeted at specific customers, they will be given priority for that type of accommodation e.g. accessible accommodation for customers with disabilities..

If an applicant is ranked first for more than one property and provided the lettings criteria are met, they will be contacted to make a decision about which property they wish to accept subject to viewing. If the council is unable to make contact it will determine which property should be offered.

- 26.2 If an applicant on the shortlist is considered not to be eligible or qualifying, they will be 'skipped' and an offer will be made to the next applicant. Applicants may be skipped if for example,
- if they have failed to maintain regular repayments of rent, there are former tenant arrears or a recharge debt
 - if a current tenant needs to complete repairs identified as their responsibility
 - . If an applicant bids for a property that does not meet their specified health needs.
 - If an applicant's position on the shortlist is due to their employment and this status has changed;
 - If an applicant's position on the shortlist is due to their local connection with an area and this is incorrect or has changed;
 - If the applicant has already bid for another property and this has been offered to them;
 - If the property is adapted and the applicant does not need those specific adaptations;
 - If the property is not adapted and the applicant needs specific adaptations;
 - If the reason for the move is domestic abuse or harassment and the move is not far enough from the area to resolve the issues;
 - If no response has been received when the applicant has been contacted by telephone or letter, despite reasonable efforts;
 - If the applicant would be reasonably be unable to afford the rent on the property

The offer will be made first to the applicant in the highest priority band who has had that priority the longest. If the offer is not accepted the property will be offered to the next applicant in the band.

If an offer is not accepted by any of the applicants in a priority band then it will be offered to applicants in the next lower band on the same basis.

- 26.3 Properties will normally be offered on a fixed term/flexible tenancy of 5 years in accordance with our Tenure Policy. If the tenancy is new, the first year will be an Introductory Tenancy. After 12 months, the tenancy can become a flexible or fixed term tenancy if the requisite notice has been duly served.

For other household groups, including people above the state retirement age, households with a disabled person and whose property has received a Council disabled adaptation and for sheltered properties a secure lifetime tenancy will normally be offered.

26.4 Reasonable Offers

Offers will be considered reasonable if:

- The applicant has expressed an interest in the property by placing a bid;
- The property attributes were correctly detailed in the advert;
- The size of the accommodation is suitable;
- The design of the property meets the individual's medical needs;
- The household would not be at risk of violence or harassment.

27.0 Refusal of Offers

Applicants will normally be required to decide on an offer of accommodation within 2 days of being notified of the offer.

Waiting list applicants who have refused 3 reasonable offers will have their applications re-banded to Band E.

Applications will not normally be cancelled for refusal of offers. They will remain in Band E until they receive an offer that they accept. Applications will only be cancelled if an applicant fails to respond to letters asking if they wish to stay on the register or it is cancelled in the annual system review.

In exceptional circumstances where an applicant has bid on, been offered, viewed and refused number of suitable properties with no valid reason, the Tenancy Services Manager will have discretion to close the application.

In cases where a household has been accepted as unintentionally homeless with a priority need and placed in bands A or B, 1 offer will be made to discharge the Council's statutory duty. Where this offer is refused, the application will be re-banded to Band C and treated as a waiting list application.

The Council aims to provide accommodation to homeless applicants in an area that they have selected, as the tenancy is more likely to be sustained. However, owing to the low turnover in certain areas, the need to help people move on from temporary accommodation, and discharge of the homeless duty, offers of reasonable accommodation may have to be made in an area, which has not been chosen but is reasonably accessible and available at an earlier date.

28.0 Exceptional Circumstances

The Council accepts that there may be circumstances that warrant exceptions to the normal allocation policy. The Director of Housing & Inclusion is therefore authorised to assess individual cases and where appropriate and reasonable to do so decide that an exception be made to the normal allocations policy. Such cases may include exceptions to:

- The application of the local lettings policy
- The application of the local connections criteria
- The priority band applied to an application
- The offer of accommodation to an applicant

29.0 Nominations to Private Registered Providers

The Council has a number of nomination agreements with Housing Associations and will always endeavour to submit nominations for vacancies when requested. These properties will be advertised and shortlisted in accordance with the normal allocations scheme. The council will provide details of the three highest placed applicants to the Housing Association who may conduct their own pre tenancy checks prior to making any offer of accommodation.

30.0 Review of the Housing Register

The housing register will be reviewed every 12-months. Applicants will be required to confirm that they wish to remain on the register and advise the Council if their circumstances have changed. Applicants

who fail to respond to this review will be removed from the housing register. They will have to make a fresh application to rejoin the scheme if they wish to be considered for accommodation in the future.

On completion of the online application applicants will be advised of the information that they will need to provide eg photographic ID, reference, proof of child benefit. Applicants who fail to provide this evidence within 2 months will have their application cancelled and will need to reapply.

31.0 Confidentiality

We treat the information included on a housing application as strictly confidential

The Council will take disciplinary action against any employee who makes use of any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, or who passes it to others who might use it in such a way. A report to the police will be made if it appears that a criminal offence has been committed.

The information included on a housing application is also protected by the Data Protection Act 1998. This means we cannot share the personal information provided on an application form without the applicants consent, except in specific exceptional circumstances.

The disclosure of information about any housing application to a third party is prohibited except on a “need to know” basis in the following circumstances:

- To plan and provide assistance jointly with health and social services agencies in appropriate cases.
- For the purpose of fraud detection, the prevention of crime, and the promotion of community safety.
- To enable efficient administration of offers of rehousing, lettings, housing association nominations, and rent and benefit accountancy etc.
- Where disclosure is a legal requirement.

Applicants can designate a relative, friend, agency or other third party to act of their behalf. By supplying the representative's information on the Homefinder application the applicant giving consent for all aspects of their application to be discussed with their representative.

32.0 Rights to Request Information and Reviews

In accordance with s166A(9) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), applicants have the following rights:

- a) to request such general information as will enable them to assess

- how their applications are likely to be treated under this Policy (including in particular whether they are likely to be regarded as a member of a group of people who are to be given preference by virtue of s166A(3)), and
 - whether housing 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;
- b) to request to be informed of any decision about the facts of his or her case which has been or is likely to be taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation; and
- c) to request a review of a decision under (b) above or a decision that they are either ineligible or non-qualifying.

The review process can be found at Appendix 4.

33.0 Support for Vulnerable Applicants

We aim to ensure that all applicants are able to full participate in the CBL scheme and appreciate that some customers may require some additional support to do so.

At application stage applicants will be asked whether they require any additional help. This may include;

- Advice on using the system and technology involved.
- Nominating someone to bid on their behalf, this could be a family member or worker from a support agency. In exceptional circumstances where an applicant is unable to bid themselves and has no advocate, a system of automated bidding can be used.
- The West Lancs HomeFinder website will be W3C AA compliant, meeting current accessibility standards, and makes use of the Browsealoud text reader.

APPENDIX 1

LOCAL CONNECTION AREAS

Altcar
Appley Bridge
Banks
Bickerstaffe
Halsall
Haskayne
Hesketh Bank
Newburgh
Parbold
Rufford
Scarisbrick
Tarleton
Westhead
Wrightington

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APPENDIX 2

Overcrowding Assessment Guidance - The Bedroom Standard

The bedroom standard is the minimum standard against which local authorities assess overcrowding.

When assessing overcrowding, the following criteria should be taken into account:

- Married or cohabiting couples (including same sex couples) should have their own bedroom
- Each adult aged 21 years or more should have a separate bedroom
- A pair of adolescents of the same sex aged between 10 & 20 years can share a bedroom
- A pair of children aged under 10 regardless of sex can share a bedroom
- Any unpaired person aged 10-20 years is paired if possible with a child under 10 years of the same sex. If this is not possible, they should be given a separate bedroom. The same applies to any unpaired child aged under 10 years

In calculating the number of bedrooms available within properties the Council will treat every habitable room as a bedroom except kitchens, bathrooms and one room for use as a living room. The Council will normally consider additional downstairs rooms in houses for use as bedrooms in accordance with Housing Benefit regulations.

No more than 2 people are expected to share a room.

A pregnant woman will be assessed as requiring a room for the baby only once the baby is born.

Where a household is experiencing difficulties with accommodating 2 very young children i.e. under 5 in a single bedroom, an additional bedroom may be allocated. This award is discretionary and will only be made following a home visit by a Housing Options Advisor.

APPENDIX 3

Lettings Criteria

<u>Property Type</u>	<u>Qualifying Groups</u>
Bedsits	Single people & couples without children
Flats/Maisonettes	Single people, couples, families with children.
Houses	Households with children where the youngest is aged 16 or under.

Households with an expectant mother are treated as though the child has been born at 30 weeks of pregnancy as long as a copy of the MATB1 has been provided.

Sheltered housing bungalows and sheltered schemes are reserved for those over 55 years of age who need the added benefits of a safe and secure environment that supports and sustains their long term health and wellbeing. For sheltered flats not in a communal scheme, applications will be considered from households where all members are over 50.

In exceptional circumstances applicants under these age limits, with identified support needs which cannot be met in general needs accommodation, may be considered for sheltered housing. This decision will be taken in consultation with the manager responsible for the management of the Councils sheltered housing schemes

For those people with some levels of support needs the Council will work with appropriate agencies to achieve independent and sustainable tenancies.

Number of bedrooms

The number of bedrooms allocated will be dependent on the size of the household taking into account the bedroom standard.

The following criteria will be followed:

- Each married/co-habiting couple will require a bedroom
- Each adult aged 21 years or more will require a bedroom
- Each pair of children of the same sex aged between 10-20 will require a bedroom
- Each pair of children aged under 10, regardless of sex, require a bedroom (once one child reaches the age of 10, they can be paired

with another person of the same sex who is aged 20 or under. Where this is not possible, the unpaired child will require a separate bedroom).

Households with an expectant mother are treated as though the child has been born at 30 weeks of pregnancy as long as a copy of the MATB1 has been provided.

Where there is a demonstrated need for an additional room for a carer or medical equipment (as evidenced by medical information), an additional bedroom can be allocated.

Where a household is experiencing difficulties with accommodating 2 very young children i.e. under 5 in a single bedroom, an additional bedroom may be allocated. This award is discretionary and will only be made following a detailed assessment.

As the Council has limited availability of 2 bedroom houses ; those households with two children and assessed as eligible for 2 bedrooms under the above criteria will be allowed to bid on both 2 and 3 bed properties, however all offers would subject to an affordability assessment.

APPENDIX 4

The Review Process

The Original Decision

Normally within 3 working days of making a decision on a housing application, the officer dealing with the case will notify the applicant in writing of that decision.

The decision letter will state;

- The reasons for the decision;
- The right to request a review of that decision;
- The time allowed to make a request for a review (normally 21 days from the date of the decision);
- The name of the officer to whom the request for review should be made

Where the applicant requests a review, the Review Procedure should be followed.

Review Procedure

Written request for a review has been received within the timescale allowed (normally 21 days).

Within 2 working days of the written request being received, a Review Officer will be appointed (this will be a senior officer who has not taken part in the original decision).

Within 10 working days of their appointment, the Review Officer will;

- Write to the applicant stating that the review request has been received;
- Advise the applicant of the identity of the reviewing officer;
- Inform the applicant that they or someone acting on their behalf can make representations in writing in connection with the review;
- Further details of the review procedure;
- The timescale within which the review will be completed (8 weeks from the day on which the review is made)

There is no further right of appeal if the applicant is not satisfied with the decision on review.

Any further challenge would have to be through the courts by way of judicial review.

WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

PET POLICY



1 October 2017

1.0 Aim

- 1.1 To outline West Lancashire Borough Councils approach to the keeping of pets by tenants. We understand that people often enjoy the companionship of a pet, and recognise the health and well-being benefits that pet ownership can bring. Where possible we aim to accommodate request to keep pets when people are moving into council housing.
- 1.2 Being able to have or keep a pet can be a deciding factor for people when considering moving into their new home. We believe that tenants moving into our homes should not be forced to make the decision to give up a pet or risk missing out on the housing they need.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy explains how West Lancashire Borough Council will manage the ownership of pets within its homes. The policy covers the following issues:
- What type of pets can be kept and in what circumstances.
 - What types of pets will not be considered
 - Responsibilities of owning a pet in
 - The actions which the Council will take where pets are kept inappropriately or cause nuisance to neighbours.

3.0 Requesting permission to keep a pet

Applicants for accommodation will be expected to keep their Homefinder application updated in regard to pet ownership. This information will be considered and discussed with prospective new tenants as part of the offer of accommodation process.

4.0 Definitions

Any domestic animal can be a pet. Dogs and cats are the most obvious but there are also those which are kept purely indoors such as tropical and gold fish, budgies.

5.0 What type of pets can be kept and in what circumstances.

This list provides a guide to applicants and residents about the numbers and types of pets may be considered, it is not exhaustive.

Caged Pets

- Small birds

Are permitted to be kept in any property type

Tanks

- Coldwater fish
- Tropical fish
- Small reptiles

Are permitted to be kept in any property type

Un-caged Pets

- One small sized dog (e.g. small terriers, toy dogs)
- One cat

Are permitted in

- All houses
- All sheltered flats and bungalows
- Flats that do not have enclosed communal areas
- Ground floor flats only in blocks with enclosed communal areas

Assistance dogs – such as guide dogs, hearing dogs or dogs for the disabled will always be permitted.

6.0 What types of pets will not be considered

6.1 Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

According to the dangerous dogs Act 1991 it is an offence to keep specific breeds of dogs.

- Pit Bulls
- Japanese Tosas
- Dogos Argentinos
- Filas Brasileiros

Therefore, these breeds will not be accepted.

6.2 Wild or Farmyard animals

The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 prohibits individuals from keeping wild animals as pets, such as: Venimous Snakes,etc; therefore these will not be permitted.

Permission will also not be granted for farmyard animals. Exceptions may be agreed for keeping chickens in areas where this would not cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours.

7.0 Responsibilities of owning a pet in Sheltered Housing.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 states that anyone who owns a pet must care for their animal in a proper manner. In addition any tenant requesting to keep a pet has to act as a responsible pet owner and to ensure that any pet owned, does not cause a nuisance to the quiet enjoyment of other residents living within the scheme.

7.1 Responsibilities include ensuring that

- Cats/dogs are neutered
- Cats/dogs are micro-chipped
- Pets are vaccinated and treated appropriately to prevent flea infestation
- Faeces is picked up and disposed of correctly in an appropriate bin suitable for animal faeces
- Litter trays and cages should be cleaned out regularly and disposed of in an appropriate manner
- Pets are not allowed to roam in internal or external communal areas.
- Dogs must be kept on a lead when outside of the tenants' home in communal areas
- There must be a named responsible person who will take responsibility for the pet in an emergency or should the tenant become incapacitated in any way. (In the event of the tenant becoming incapacitated and the responsible named person is not able to take responsibility for the pet then the Council will arrange for the pet to be taken care of in an appropriate manner, however any costs incurred will be recharged to the tenant.)
- Where possible, tenants should always take out insurance for their pets
- Excessive noise (such as dog barking constantly) will not be tolerated. If the owner is unwilling to cooperate, then he/she will be given the option of either rehoming the pet or giving up their tenancy.
- For the consideration of other tenants, pets must not be left on their own for any length of time as this can cause excessive behaviour problems.
- Communal rooms such as lounges (residents lounges would be used for access to gardens / footpaths only where applicable), communal kitchen, laundry and other residents' apartments are out of bounds and pets are not allowed.
- If in sheltered housing tenants must advise the Sheltered Housing Team of any changes in circumstances to the details required to maintain their pet records.
- You cannot leave your pet in the property when you are away. The pet should be taken with you or boarded elsewhere. Pet owners are responsible for making arrangements to have their pet cared for in the event of ill health, hospitalisation, holidays or emergencies

If these responsibilities are not adhered to then tenancy enforcement actions will be taken.

8.0 Visiting Pets

Tenants will not be permitted to look after other pets whilst their family or friends are on holiday etc.

9.0 Withdrawing Permission

West Lancashire Borough Council reserves the right to withdraw permission for a tenant to keep a pet under the following circumstances:

- You have failed to comply with the obligations set above.
- Persistent complaints, which have been substantiated have been made about your animal's behaviour.
- There is evidence of cruelty to the animal or lack of responsibility.
- You become unable to look after the pet due to physical or mental frailty.

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Equality Impact Assessment Form



Directorate: Housing & Inclusion	Service: Housing Management
Completed by: Nicola Bradley	Date: 24.11.17
Subject Title: Housing Allocations Policy	
1. DESCRIPTION	
Is a policy or strategy being produced or revised:	Yes
Is a service being designed, redesigned or cutback:	No
Is a commissioning plan or contract specification being developed:	No
Is a budget being set or funding allocated:	No
Is a programme or project being planned:	No
Are recommendations being presented to senior managers and/or Councillors:	Yes
Does the activity contribute to meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (Eliminating unlawful discrimination/harassment, advancing equality of opportunity, fostering good relations):	Yes
Details of the matter under consideration:	Update to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy
<i>If you answered Yes to any of the above go straight to Section 3</i> <i>If you answered No to all the above please complete Section 2</i>	
2. RELEVANCE	
Does the work being carried out impact on service users, staff or Councillors (stakeholders):	Yes/No* <i>*delete as appropriate</i>
If Yes , provide details of how this impacts on service users, staff or Councillors (stakeholders): <i>If you answered Yes go to Section 3</i>	
If you answered No to both Sections 1 and 2 provide details of why there is no impact on these three groups: <i>You do not need to complete the rest of this form.</i>	
3. EVIDENCE COLLECTION	
Who does the work being carried out impact on, i.e. who is/are the stakeholder(s)?	Existing and future housing applicants
If the work being carried out relates to a universal service, who needs or uses it most? (Is there any particular group affected more than others)?	The Policy will be applied to existing and future housing applicants and will not disadvantage any one group in terms of their housing needs and our ability to meet them.

Which of the protected characteristics are most relevant to the work being carried out?	
Age	Yes
Gender	No
Disability	Yes
Race and Culture	No
Sexual Orientation	No
Religion or Belief	No
Gender Reassignment	No
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No
Pregnancy and Maternity	Yes

4. DATA ANALYSIS

In relation to the work being carried out, and the service/function in question, who is actually or currently using the service and why?	<p>The Council's Allocations Policy aims to promote equality of opportunity and allocate social housing within the borough to those applicants in most housing need.</p> <p>The following table shows the breakdown in terms of age of main applicant. This shows that there is a fairly even distribution in terms of the age groups wishing to access housing.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Number of applicants</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>16-17</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18-24</td> <td>99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-35</td> <td>261</td> </tr> <tr> <td>36-60</td> <td>366</td> </tr> <tr> <td>60+</td> <td>206</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grand Total</td> <td>933</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>5.8% of applicants have a physical disability and require and adapted property.</p>	Age	Number of applicants	16-17	1	18-24	99	25-35	261	36-60	366	60+	206	Grand Total	933
Age	Number of applicants														
16-17	1														
18-24	99														
25-35	261														
36-60	366														
60+	206														
Grand Total	933														

What will the impact of the work being carried out be on usage/the stakeholders?	<p>The proposed changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> aim to increase the number of allocations to those in most need by updating the local connection policy operation in some parts of the borough. assist expectant parents in securing suitable accommodation prior to the birth of their child, households with an expectant mother will now be treated as though the child has been born at 30 weeks of pregnancy. Improve choice for those nearing
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	<p>retirement age by allowing them to access sheltered housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve wellbeing of elderly residents by allowing pets in sheltered housing
<p>What are people's views about the services? Are some customers more satisfied than others, and if so what are the reasons? Can these be affected by the proposals?</p>	<p>Results of previous New Tenant Satisfaction surveys show a high level of satisfaction across the customer base.</p>
<p>What sources of data including consultation results have you used to analyse the impact of the work being carried out on users/stakeholders with protected characteristics?</p>	<p>Data relating to current live applications Data relating to the allocations of housing</p>
<p>If any further data/consultation is needed and is to be gathered, please specify:</p>	<p>12 week public consultation to be carried out with customers and other interested agencies and support groups.</p>
<p>5. IMPACT OF DECISIONS</p>	
<p>In what way will the changes impact on people with particular protected characteristics (either positively or negatively or in terms of disproportionate impact)?</p>	<p>There will be a positive effect on older applicants in terms of being able to move into sheltered accommodation with a pet. There will be a positive impact on those nearing retirement age and who may be disabled or have health issues as they will now be able to access sheltered accommodation. This may be particularly beneficial in some of the rural areas where there is a limited supply of general needs flats. Pregnant applicants will be considered for family housing prior to the birth of their child.</p>
<p>6. CONSIDERING THE IMPACT</p>	
<p>If there is a negative impact what action can be taken to mitigate it? (If it is not possible or desirable to take actions to reduce the impact, explain why this is the case (e.g. legislative or financial drivers etc.).</p>	<p>There is no negative impact.</p>
<p>What actions do you plan to take to address any other issues above?</p>	<p>No actions</p>
<p>7. MONITORING AND REVIEWING</p>	
<p>When will this assessment be reviewed and who will review it?</p>	<p>1 year after implementation by Tenancy Service Manager</p>

Scenarios to demonstrate effect on individual applicants

1. Mrs Buck is a Council tenant, she currently owes £654 rent arrears, she has made an arrangement to reduce her arrears by £5 per week, and has made 1 payment.

Under current policy – arrears must be under £500 and then regular agreed payments have been made for 3 months before she can be registered onto Housing Register

Under new policy – applicant will not be accepted onto the housing register. Arrears must be under £250 and regular agreed payments have been made for at least 3-months

2. Mr Joel is a Council tenant, he currently owes £94 rent arrears. His rent payment is £7 per week, he has just made an arrangement to reduce the arrears by £12 per month, but has not made any payments.

Under current policy- he would be accepted onto the housing register and allowed to bid

Under new policy – the application will be suspended the arrears have reduced by 50% and regular payments made for 3 months

3. Mr & Mrs Smith applied for housing in July 2015, they are Council tenants living in a one bed flat which meets all their housing needs. They want to move to Birch Green because they prefer the area.

Ms Jones applied for housing in Sept 2016; she is currently living in a 1 bed flat in the private rented sector whilst she can meet her rent obligations she wishes to move to a more affordable property.

Both bid on a 1 bed flat in Birch Green

Under current policy both households would be in Band D on the basis that they are adequately housed. Mr & Mrs Smith would be in a higher position as they have been on the housing register longer.

Under new policy Mr & Mrs Smith as Council tenants who are adequately housed would be in Band E. Ms Jones due to the insecurity of tenure and affordability of current tenancy would be in Band D. She would therefore be in a higher position.

4. Ms Neilson lives in Burscough in a 3 bed house in the private sector, which meets her household needs. She wishes to move closer to her mum in Banks. On the basis that her mum has lived in Banks for 6 years she would be registered in Band D but with Local connection to Banks

Miss Williams lodges with her mum in Tanhouse, with her 2 children, girl aged 2 years, and a boy aged 12 years. The property is a 2 bedroom house, Miss Williams is in Band A to reflect her overcrowding.

Both bid on a 3 bed house in Banks

Under current policy – All applicants with a Local connection are given preference despite their priority band therefore Ms Neilson would be offered the tenancy.

Under new policy – Local connection preference would operate within priority Band, therefore Miss Williams would be offered the tenancy.

Lettings by Band 2016-17

Lettings In all Areas by Band 2016-17

The table below shows the total number of properties allocated by West Lancashire Borough Council across all areas of the Borough in 2016-17. This information is broken down by allocation area and the priority bands of the successful applicants

Area	Band				Grand Total
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	
Appley Bridge		1		2	3
Ashurst	3	5	6	5	19
Aughton	3	1	1	2	7
Banks	1	1	1	5	8
Birch Green	28	31	27	25	111
Birch Green Central	4	5	7	2	18
Burscough	6	1	1	4	12
Clay Brow	2	5	7	11	25
Digmoor	5	9	20	22	56
Halsall		2			2
Haskayne		2			2
Hesketh Bank	1	1		5	7
Holland Moor	1	2		1	4
Little Digmoor	1	2	7	5	15
New Church Farm	4	3	3	3	13
Newburgh	1				1
Old Skelmersdale	11	14	24	20	69
Ormskirk	12	11	5	17	45
Parbold				1	1
Scarisbrick	1	1		1	3
Tanhouse 1&2	1	10	14	28	53
Tanhouse 4&5	6	11	6	20	43
Tarleton	2	3	1	7	13
Upholland	4	11	7	13	35
Westhead		1			1
Wrightington				2	2
Grand Total	97	133	137	201	568
%of Allocations	17%	23.5%	24%	35.5%	100%

Lettings In 50% Local Connection Areas by Band 2016-17

The table below shows the number of properties allocated in those areas designated as 50% Local Connection areas in 2016-17. This information is broken down by allocation area and the priority bands of the successful applicants. It demonstrates that 56% of allocations in these areas are currently made to those applicants with low levels of housing need, that is those in our non-priority bands C&D.

Area	Band				Grand Total
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	
Aughton	3	1	1	2	7
Burscough	6	1	1	4	12
Old Skelmersdale	11	14	24	20	69
Ormskirk	12	11	5	17	45
Upholland	4	11	7	13	35
Grand Total	36	38	38	56	168
%of Allocations	21.5%	22.5%	22.5%	33.5%	100%

Lettings In 100% Local Connection Areas by Band 2016-17

The table below shows the number of properties allocated in those areas designated as 100% Local Connection areas in 2016-17. This information is broken down by allocation area and the priority bands of the successful applicants. It demonstrates that 58% of allocations in these areas are currently made to those applicants with low levels of housing need, that is those in our non-priority bands C&D.

Area	Band				Grand Total
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	
Appley Bridge		1		2	3
Banks	1	1	1	5	8
Halsall		2			2
Haskayne		2			2
Hesketh Bank	1	1		5	7
Newburgh	1				1
Parbold				1	1
Scarisbrick	1	1		1	3
Tarleton	2	3	1	7	13
Westhead		1			1
Wrightington				2	2
Grand Total	6	12	2	23	43
%of Allocations	14%	28%	5%	53%	100%

*As there are some Allocations Areas where we do not operate a Local Connection criteria the data in the second and third tables will not total those shown in the first table.

Number of Lettings to those with Local Connection 2016-17

Number of Lettings to those with Local Connection in 50% Local Connection Areas 2016-17

The table below shows the number of allocations in the 50% Local Connection areas and how many of these applicants in each area satisfied the local connection criteria. This demonstrates that we are achieving 56% allocations to applicants with Local Connection.

Area	Total Lets	Lets to Local Applicants
Aughton	7	5
Burscough	12	9
Old Skelmersdale	69	32
Ormskirk	45	32
Upholland	35	16
Grand Total	168	94

Number of Lettings to those with Local Connection in 100% Local Connection Areas 2016-17

The table below shows the number of allocations in the 100% Local Connection areas and how many of these applicants in each area satisfied the local connection criteria. This demonstrates that whilst we aim to allocate every property to someone who has a local connection in reality because of the lack of demand from local people we only allocate 39% of properties in these areas to those with a Local Connection.

Area	Total Lets	Lets to Local Applicants
Altcar	0	0
Appley Bridge	3	2
Banks	8	3
Bickerstaff	0	0
Halsall	2	0
Haskayne	2	1
Hesketh Bank	7	2
Newburgh	1	0
Parbold	1	0
Rufford	0	0
Scarisbrick	3	2
Tarleton	13	6
Westhead	1	1
Wrightington	2	0
Grand Total	43	17

Sheltered Lettings in Local Connection Areas 2016-17

Many of the allocations in the 100% local connection areas are in our sheltered housing stock. This is because there is a greater supply and a higher turnover of sheltered housing.

Sheltered Lettings in 50% Local Connection Areas 2016-17

The table below shows the number of allocations in the 50% local connection areas broken down into general needs and sheltered properties. Of the 168 allocations for the whole year 33% were in sheltered accommodation and 67% of allocations to general needs accommodation.

Area	General Needs	Sheltered Housing	Grand Total
Aughton	5	2	7
Burscough	7	5	12
Old Skelmersdale	56	13	69
Ormskirk	20	25	45
Upholland	25	10	35
Total	113	55	168

Sheltered Lettings in 100% Local Connection Areas 2016-17

The table below shows the number of allocations in the 100% local connection areas broken down into general needs and sheltered properties. Of the 43 allocations made in the whole year 77% of allocations were made to sheltered accommodation and 23% of allocations to general needs accommodation.

Area	General Needs	Sheltered Housing	Grand Total
Appley Bridge		3	3
Banks	2	6	8
Halsall	2	0	2
Haskayne	2	0	2
Hesketh Bank	1	6	7
Newburgh		1	1
Parbold		1	1
Scarisbrick		3	3
Tarleton	1	12	13
Westhead	1	0	1
Wrightington	1	1	2
Total	10	33	43

**MINUTE OF LANDLORD SERVICES COMMITTEE (CABINET WORKING GROUP)
3 JANUARY 2018**

CONSULTATION ON RELEVANT DRAFT CABINET REPORTS

19 DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND PET POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion that proposed a draft Housing Allocations Policy and a draft Pet Policy for Council tenants.

The Housing Operations Manager attended the meeting and provided an overview of the report, clarification on the issues raised, referring to details as set down in the report and responded to questions.

In discussion comments and questions were raised in relation to the:

- Under 18 year old homeless residents (in particular 16-18 year olds)
- Impact of the proposed revisions to the local connection criteria
- Impact of the proposed reduction in the age limit for sheltered accommodation
- Confirmation that the introduction of the pet policy applied to existing and future tenants
- Impact of pets in communal areas

The Working Group noted that there were mixed views on the introduction of a pet policy.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Minute of Cabinet – 9 January 2018

63 **DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND PET POLICY**

Councillor Forshaw introduced the report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion which considered a draft Housing Allocations Policy and draft Pet Policy for consultation.

Minute no. 19 of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) held on 3 January 2018 was circulated at the meeting.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the Minute of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) and the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

RESOLVED (A) That the Draft Housing Allocations and Pet Policy 2017 attached to Appendix 1 & 2 of the report be approved for consultation.

(B) That the Director of Housing and Inclusion, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make any minor changes to the Draft Housing Allocations Policy and Pet Policy 2017 where appropriate following public consultation, and to implement and deliver the policy.

(C) That the call-in procedure is not appropriate for this item as the report will be submitted to the meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.



CABINET: 9 January 2018

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY: 25 January 2018

Report of: Borough Treasurer

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Yates

Contact: Marc Taylor (Extn. 5092)
(E-mail: Marc.Taylor@westlancs.gov.uk)

SUBJECT: DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018-19

Wards affected: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide a summary of the current General Revenue Account budget position.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

2.1 That the financial position for 2018-19 and later years be noted, and consideration given to how a balanced budget can be achieved.

2.2 That the Portfolio Holder for Finance be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28th February 2018 to enable the budget to be set.

2.3 That call in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th January 2018.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3.1 That the budget position be considered and that any comments agreed by the Committee be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance in advance of the Council meeting to be held on 28th February 2018.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council must set a budget before the start of each financial year, and this budget will set out the financial basis for the Council's corporate and service plans. The budget that is set must enable the Council's priorities to be delivered but must also be affordable. In addition it should comply with best practice requirements on budget setting, and must meet statutory and accounting regulations. The Council meeting on the 28th February will provide all Members with the opportunity to debate and agree this budget.
- 4.2 The Policy Options report to July Council estimated that there was a projected budget gap of £1.925m facing the Council in 2018-19. This budget gap figure reflects the difference between the spending that is required to maintain services at their agreed level and the resources that are expected to be available.
- 4.3 A series of policy options have been agreed at the July, October and December Council meetings to maximise income opportunities, seek efficiencies and economies, and to deliver procurement, treasury management and other savings. The total value of these measures in 2018-19 will be £0.954m. A further factor that will have an impact on the budget position will be the value of the proposed pay settlement that has been made by the Employers Organisation to the Trade Unions. This proposal is for a 2% pay increase for most staff but with higher increases for the lowest paid staff. This is higher than the 1% pay increase allowed for in the Medium Term Financial Forecast, and so consequently would add an additional £145,000 to the size of the budget gap. Taken these factors into account means that the residual budget gap for 2018-19 now stands at £1.116m.
- 4.4 It will not be possible to finalise the scale of the budget gap until the Local Government Finance Settlement has been published, and the work on producing detailed budget estimates for next year has been completed. These issues are explored in more detail in the following sections.

5.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT

- 5.1 At the time of writing this report the Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been issued. This Settlement has a key part to play in budget setting as it provides confirmation of government grant levels as well as a range of other financial matters. Details on the Settlement will be circulated to Members once it is available.

6.0 DRAFT ESTIMATES

- 6.1 Draft estimates have been prepared for next year that set out a provisional budget for the Council covering all areas of expenditure and income. These estimates cannot be finalised until the Local Government Finance Settlement has been issued, but will be circulated to Members as soon as possible once this information is available.
- 6.2 The estimates are based on rolling forward existing budgets to enable agreed service levels to be maintained. These estimates also include a number of increases to cover standard budget factors including the impact of the proposed national pay increase, contractual increments, and contract inflation in line with

contractual agreements. In addition the estimates incorporate the policy option measures that have been agreed this year at Council meetings.

- 6.3 The Medium Term Financial Forecast was based on an assumed £5 increase in the level of the Band D Council tax next year, which is equivalent to a 2.6% rise, and this has been built into the draft estimates. No changes are proposed to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, which complies with statutory requirements and continues to operate effectively. Relevant values in this scheme will though be updated to reflect changes in national benefit figures in line with our standard practices.
- 6.4 The draft estimates will be reviewed to ensure that they are robust for the purposes of the budget calculation in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, and the results of this review will be reported to the February Council meeting.

7.0 BUDGET POSITION FOR 2018-19

- 7.1 Through the budget process, Heads of Service have identified a range of new budget issues or pressures for next year that mainly relate to unavoidable cost increases or income reductions. Members will need to carefully consider these proposals and determine which items to include in the final budget to meet corporate and service objectives. In line with the approach adopted in the Medium Term Financial Forecast a provision of £125,000 has been allowed for this factor in 2018-19, but its final value will depend on Member decisions.
- 7.2 In looking at finalising the budget for next year consideration will need to be given to a number of different factors including:
- How the remaining budget gap should be addressed taking into account the Local Government Finance Settlement
 - The challenging financial position facing local authorities over the medium term where any budget increases will need to be met by savings elsewhere in the budget
 - The acceptance of budget issues and pressures identified by Heads of Service
 - Changes to fees and charges and the level of the Council Tax
 - Use of current and previous year's favourable budget variances
 - The Council's Reserves policy
- 7.3 The Group leaders and their financial spokespersons are currently examining in detail various budget options, and the Council meeting in February will provide an opportunity for each Political Group to put forward proposals that combine both expenditure and the means of funding it and to set the Council Tax.

8.0 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION

8.1 The Council currently has a healthy financial position where there is a projected favourable budget variance in the current year. However looking forward there remains a significant budget gap for 2018-19, with further savings required in subsequent years. Consequently the medium term financial picture remains very challenging, and a process will need to be put in place in 2018 to ensure that this position is addressed.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

9.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 The formal consideration and reporting of the budget estimates is part of the budgetary management and control framework that is designed to minimise the financial risks facing the Council. This process is resource intensive for both Members and Officers but ensures that a robust and achievable budget is set.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal Equality Impact Assessment will be produced when the Council agrees the budget at its meeting in February.

Appendices

1. Additional Information circulated at Cabinet
2. Minute of Cabinet (Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee only)
3. Draft GRA Estimates (To follow)

AGENDA ITEM 6(e) DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018-19

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Introduction

The draft Local Government Finance Settlement for 2018-19 was published on the afternoon of the 19th December 2017. Unfortunately the details of this Settlement were too late to be included in the budget report for Cabinet which had to be finalized on the morning of 20th December. This note now provides additional information on the details contained in the Settlement.

Background

The Government has been progressively reducing the funding provided to local authorities in recent years, and it is expected that this period of austerity will continue until 2020. The Medium Term Financial Forecast (which was produced in March 2017) had estimated that there would be a reduction in grant funding of £1.120m in 2018-19. This position was based on an estimated reduction in Revenue Support Grant of £0.435m, a fall in New Homes Bonus grant of £0.650m, and a further £0.035m being taken out of our Housing Benefit administration grant. The Forecast also assumed a rise in the Council tax level of £5 at Band D, which was equivalent to a 2.6% increase. These assumptions were built into the calculation of the budget gap that has been reported to Members during the course of the year.

Key Settlement Results

The main features of the Settlement for 2018-19 were as follows:

- The Settlement confirmed the reduction of £0.435m in Revenue Support Grant funding as expected
- Details of Housing Benefit administration grant funding will not be published until January
- New Homes Bonus grant funding will be £1.172m next year, which is a £0.551m reduction compared to the current year's grant of £1.723m. This main reason for this reduction is that the government have changed the formula used to calculate the grant. The reduction was £99,000 less than the expected as a result of a greater number of new homes being built than forecast
- The rules on council tax increases were altered to allow district councils to increase their tax levels by the greater of 3% (rather than the previous 2%) or £5 at the Band D level. The Financial Forecast had assumed an increase of £5 at Band D, equivalent to a 2.6% rise. Consequently this change gives the potential to increase the tax level by a further 0.4% (3% - 2.6%) which would generate an additional £26,000 in 2018-19. If this approach of a 3% increase was adopted over the next 3 years it would generate an additional £96,000 by 2020-21

Impact on Budget Gap

Paragraph 4.3 of the report identifies a budget gap of £1.116m for 2018-19 before taking into account the Settlement. As a result of the better than expected position on New Homes Bonus funding this gap has reduced to £1.017m. This position does not take into account the potential for a higher level of council tax increase.

MINUTE OF CABINET – 9 JANUARY 2018

65 **DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018-2019**

Councillor Yates introduced the report of the Borough Treasurer which provided a summary of the current General Revenue Account budget position.

Additional information from the Borough Treasurer was circulated at the meeting (pages 1157-1158 of the Book of Reports).

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the additional information and the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED (A) That the financial position for 2018-19 and later years be noted, and consideration given to how a balanced budget can be achieved.
- (B) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the budget to be set.
- (C) That call-in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.



CABINET: 9 January 2018

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
25 January 2018

Report of: Borough Treasurer

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor A. Yates

Contact for further information: Marc Taylor (Ext. 5092)
(E-mail: marc.taylor@westlancs.gov.uk)

SUBJECT: MEDIUM TERM CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Wards Affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To set out details on the GRA medium term capital programme position for the next 3 years.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 2.1 That the medium term financial position be noted, and consideration given to how a balanced capital programme can be achieved.
- 2.2 That the Portfolio Holder for Finance be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the capital programme to be set.
- 2.3 That call in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 3.1 That consideration be given to how a balanced capital programme can be set and that any comments agreed by the Committee be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance in advance of the Council meeting to be held on 28 February 2018.
-

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The Council has a medium term rolling capital programme, which is reviewed and updated on a regular basis. As part of the budget setting process, a programme covering the next three years will need to be agreed by Council at its meeting in February 2018. This report concentrates on the general capital programme and does not consider the HRA capital programme which is determined through a separate process.

5.0 CAPITAL RECEIPT FUNDING

5.1 The main source of Council funding available to support the general capital programme are receipts from the sale of assets, and at the start of this financial year there were £2.399m of receipts being held for this purpose. The number and value of assets sold each year can vary significantly depending on a range of factors. In particular Council House sales under Right to Buy (RTB) legislation can be volatile depending on the state of the economy and changes in government rules.

5.2 Table 1 shows details of sales by number and value in recent years. Part of the proceeds from the sale of Council Houses must be repaid to the Government, and the usable sale proceeds shown below reflect the amount available for new capital spending after taking these payments into account.

Year	Number of Sales		Usable Sale Proceeds £000	
	Council Houses	Other Assets	Council Houses	Other Assets
2008/09	27	2	326	158
2009/10	12	2	174	43
2010/11	18	2	226	97
2011/12	10	0	123	0
2012/13	25	3	240	102
2013/14	48	4	307	29
2014/15	35	4	300	273
2015/16	57	5	338	142
2016/17	81	6	329	174

5.3 Based on recent trends and projecting forward on a prudent basis it is anticipated that there will be receipts of £0.980m generated from an estimated 200 RTB Council House sales over the next 4 years, as well as £0.400m of receipts from land sales. It is also expected that a surplus of around £0.53m should be generated from the Westec site development over the next few years

5.4 In addition to the funding shown above the Council is also able to retain a further share of the proceeds from RTB sales under government regulations in relation to an "Allowable Debt" factor. Part of this funding is set aside for the repayment of Housing debt and the remaining element is then available for new capital

spending. It is estimated that this should enable new spending of £1.552m over the next 4 years in addition to the figures shown above.

- 5.5 Taking all of these factors into account, it is anticipated that there will be capital receipts of £3.462m generated over the 4 year period 2017-18 to 2020-21 that will be available to fund new capital expenditure. These projections are potentially subject to significant variation as, for example, a single large asset sale could produce a large receipt and the level of future house sales is difficult to predict. However, in looking at medium term financial plans it is best practice to use a prudent approach when estimating future available resources. The assumptions underlying these projections will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they take account of new developments.

6.0 SPENDING REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 The Council's current 3 year programme covers the period 2017/2018 to 2019/2020. Consequently, in addition to current year budgets there are also indicative spending approvals in place for the following two years. It should be recognised, however, that as we operate a medium term capital programme, approvals that have been given for future years are indicative allocations only that are potentially subject to change.
- 6.2 The current value of spending approvals to be funded from capital receipts is £3.804m which is analysed in Appendix 1. In addition to the existing scheme approvals it is our normal practice in developing the rolling medium term programme to include provisional allocations for the next year of the programme (in this case 2020/2021). Consequently, Appendix 1 also contains provisional allocations of £0.574m for ongoing capital schemes which typically receive funding each year. No funding has been allocated for the Leisure Trust scheme in 2020/21 as the current leisure contract comes to an end in March 2020.

7.0 OVERVIEW

- 7.1 Table 2 overleaf summarises the current position in terms of estimated capital receipt funding and spending requirements. The bottom line position is that there is estimated funding available of £1.483m over the programme period. This funding position is before any consideration is given to potential new capital schemes that have been identified by Heads of Service. Appendix 2 provides a summary of these budget options, which in total comes to £0.474m.
- 7.2 There is more capital receipt funding available at this time than there has been for several years. This is down to a combination of the relatively high level of capital receipts that are currently being generated, the anticipated returns from the Westec site development, and the relatively small size of the existing capital programme.

Table 2 – General Capital Receipts Funding Available	£000
Usable capital receipts held in April 2017	2,399
Estimate of receipts that will be generated between April 2017 and the end of the 2020/2021 financial year	3,462
Existing spending approvals covering period 2017/2018 – 2019/2020	-3,804
Provisional spending approvals for 2020/2021	-574
Total Funding Available for new schemes	1,483

8.0 WAY FORWARD

8.1 There are a number of options that can be considered to realign and update the programme. Members will need to carefully consider what proposals to include in the final budget to meet corporate and service objectives but also to ensure a balanced overall financial position.

8.2 There are a number of factors that can be considered or given regard through this process including:

- The Council has been very successful in attracting external capital investment over many years, and further opportunities should be considered
- The priority that is attached to the potential new capital schemes set out in Appendix 2
- The need for investment in IT to provide more effective and efficient services
- Reviewing existing spending approvals to assess whether they are still relevant and appropriate
- Prudential borrowing could be assessed as a mean of providing additional capital resources. This type of borrowing can be used to finance investment in long term fixed assets where it is prudent, affordable and sustainable. The costs associated with this borrowing would then need to be factored into the revenue budget, and this could be difficult to achieve given the GRA's challenging medium term financial position.
- The scope to develop new capital schemes funded through Section 106 Agreements or Community Infrastructure Levies which are subject to separate processes
- The potential financing requirements of the proposed new Development Company, the Skelmersdale Town Centre Vision, and the Leisure Strategy

- 8.3 Officers will work with each Political Group during the budget process to review the available options. The Council meeting will then provide an opportunity for each Political Group to put forward proposals to produce a balanced capital programme.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 9.1 The proper management of the Council's asset base enhances service delivery. Assets consume a high level of resources both in terms of capital investment and revenue maintenance and having a proper strategy in this area ensures that the capital base can shape the future direction of the Council.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The level of capital receipts generated by asset sales is a significant risk to the future development of the programme. If receipts exceed the projections contained in this report, it would enable additional schemes to be developed. However, if receipts are below the projections, it would require reductions to be made.
- 10.2 Some schemes in the Programme are dependent on external partner funding. To minimise the risk of funding not being available, such schemes will only begin once their funding details have been finalised.

Background Documents:

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision from this report does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and/or stakeholders. Therefore, no Equality impact assessment is required.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Capital Receipt Funding Approvals

Appendix 2 – Potential new capital schemes

Appendix 3 - Minute of Cabinet (Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee only)

APPENDIX 1 - CAPITAL RECEIPT FUNDING FOR INDIVIDUAL SCHEMES

SERVICE AND SCHEME	Current Allocations				Provisional
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total	2020/21
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<u>Finance & HR Services</u>					
Parish Capital Schemes	35	45	30	110	30
Environmental / Town and Village Centre Improvement Fund		10	140	150	
<u>Leisure & Wellbeing - General</u>					
Playground Improvements	30	60	30	120	30
Leisure Trust	228	228	228	684	
CCTV	28	25	25	78	
Park Pool		150		150	
Beacon Park	2			2	
Allotment Improvements	11			11	
Sports Fields	72			72	
Chapel Gallery	24			24	
Play Area Improvements	26			26	
Beacon Park Garage and Compound	25			25	
Upgrade to Northgate M3PP IT system	40			40	
<u>Leisure & Wellbeing - Private Housing</u>					
Housing Renewal Grants	50	100	100	250	100
Disabled Facilities Grants		100	100	200	100
<u>Development & Regeneration</u>					
Free Tree Scheme	3	3		6	
Preservation of Buildings at Risk	2			2	
Planning OR Recommendations	3			3	
Skelmersdale Town Centre	11			11	
Purchase of EDRM IT system	44			44	
Affordable Housing		247		247	
<u>Development & Regen - Tech Services</u>					
Appley Bridge Quarry	22			22	
Moor Street Phase 1	35			35	
Micro Drainage Software	12			12	
Mill Lane Landfill Site	75			75	
<u>Housing & Inclusion - Corporate Property</u>					
Corporate Property Investment Programme	266	164	164	594	164
Replace IT equipment - Council Chamber	10			10	
<u>Housing & Inclusion - IT investment</u>					
I C T Infrastructure	50	50	50	150	50
ICT Development Programme	219	100	100	419	100
Replacement CRM system	68	84		152	
Website Contract Management System	5			5	
Web redesign to promote customer accounts		15		15	
Investment to enable digital services		40	20	60	
Total Programme	1,296	1,421	987	3,804	574

APPENDIX 2 - POTENTIAL NEW CAPITAL SCHEMES	2018-19 £000	2019-20 £000	2020-21 £000
Development and Regeneration			
1 Moor Street (Moorgate – Railway Road) Footway / Carriageway Repaving	100	80	3
2 Planning, Building Control & Land Charges IT System Upgrades	20	0	0
Housing and Inclusion			
1 Civica ICON IT upgrade to deal with PCI DSS and other issues	31	0	0
3 Install LED lighting to office and internal communal areas with associated revenue savings	65	65	65
Leisure and Environment			
1 Robert Hodge Centre building works	28	6	6
2 Beacon Park CCTV	5	0	0
Total	249	151	74

TOTAL FUNDING REQUIREMENT OVER 3 YEARS	474
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MINUTE OF CABINET – 9 JANUARY 2018

66 **MEDIUM TERM CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Councillor Yates introduced the report of the Borough Treasurer which set out details on the GRA medium term capital programme position for the next 3 years.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED (A) That the medium term financial position be noted, and consideration given to how a balanced capital programme can be achieved.
- (B) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the capital programme to be set.
- (C) That call-in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.



CABINET: 9 January 2018

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
25 January 2018**

Report of: Director of Housing and Inclusion and Borough Treasurer

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Cllr J. Forshaw

**Contact for further information: Peter Quick (Extn. 5203)
(peter.quick@westlancs.gov.uk)**

SUBJECT: HOUSING ACCOUNT – REVENUE AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Wards Affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide a summary of the Housing Account's financial position.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

2.1 That the financial position be noted and consideration given to the budget matters set out in this report.

2.2 That the use of the Director of Housing and Inclusion's delegated authority in relation to rent and service charge changes be noted and endorsed.

2.3 That this report be used for consultation purposes prior to the Council considering this matter in February 2018.

2.4 That the Housing Portfolio Holder be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the budget to be set.

2.5 That call in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3.1 That the budget position be considered and that any comments agreed by the Committee be submitted to the Housing and Landlord Services Portfolio Holder in advance of the Council meeting to be held on 28 February 2018.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council must set a budget for its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) before the start of each financial year, and this budget will set out the financial basis for the delivery of services. The budget that is set must enable Council and tenant priorities to be delivered but must also be affordable. In addition it should comply with best practice requirements on budget setting and meet statutory and accounting regulations.
- 4.2 The financial year 2018-19 represents year three of the government's four year rent setting policy to reduce social housing rents by 1% per annum to 2020. This policy continues to progressively add pressure to the HRA over this period, however, the Policy Options agreed by Council in July 2016 and October 2016 have delivered sufficient savings and efficiencies to secure the HRA's financial position over the medium term.

5.0 RENTAL INCOME

- 5.1 As a consequence of the government policy highlighted in paragraph 4.2 and in line with our standard practice, the Director of Housing and Inclusion will use her delegated authority to reduce rent levels by 1% from April 2018 for all properties.
- 5.2 The Government have recently announced that for the five year period from 2020-21 to 2024-25 rent policy will revert to the previous approach of allowing an increase of CPI plus 1% per year. This will aid business planning in the medium term by providing more certainty, ensuring that the real value of rent levels is maintained and provides funds for further investment in the housing stock.
- 5.3 Rental income is the main funding source for the Housing Account. The 2018-19 rent reduction means that the overall level of rental income will reduce next year, although there are a number of other factors that will influence this position including:
- The number of properties within the Housing Stock which will be influenced by Right to Buy Council house sales (which is outside the Council's control), the number of homes built or purchased, and the number of homes demolished as part of revival and development projects
 - Void levels and the time it takes to re-let can have an adverse impact on income levels. It is estimated that void levels will continue at their existing 2% level into 2018-19
 - The full roll out of Universal Credit from December 2017 will affect relevant tenant's income and how their housing costs are paid, and consequently this may affect their ability to pay their rents. This is likely to have a negative

impact on collection rates and levels of bad debts, and consequently this is an area that will need to continue to be monitored closely to assess its impact.

- 5.4 Government have recently announced that the Local Housing Allowance – a cap on the total value of housing costs that can be paid by benefits – will not be applied to social housing. There are no firm details yet as to exactly what this will mean in practice but it is welcome news for council house residents and for the HRA.

6.0 OTHER CHARGES

- 6.1 A general principle is applied to service charges that they should be calculated to ensure that they are sufficient to recover the cost of service provision. In keeping with this principle it is proposed to increase the general level of service charges next year by 4.0% (based on the September CPI rate of 3.0% plus 1.0% in line with our standard practices).

- 6.2 There will be a number of exceptions to this general approach including:

- An analysis of Leaseholder service charges identified that the costs of service provision were being under-recovered. In February 2016 it was agreed to implement service charge increases in a phased manner over a 3 year period to rectify this position, and 2018-19 will be the third year of this approach. Review of leaseholder service charges is an annual activity which will continue as a matter of good practice
- Gas prices for West Lancashire BC reduced in 2017-18 by 8-10% In 2018-19 the level of heating charges to residents will therefore be reduced by 10%
- Work on the Garage Strategy has been carried out during 2017-18 and continues into 2018-19, and garage rents will therefore be increased by 3%, (CPI), after having been frozen for a number of years.

7.0 DRAFT ESTIMATES AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

- 7.1 financial basis for how HRA service objectives will be achieved in the next year. The base assumptions used in the HRA Business Plan and for the HRA Estimates are detailed in Appendix A. The HRA Business Plan sets out projections of expenditure and income over a 30 year period to enable forward planning and long term investment decisions to be made. The HRA Estimates for 2018-19 then provide more detailed information that sets out the

- 7.2 The draft estimates for 2018-19 are shown in Appendix B and provide a provisional HRA budget for 2018-19 covering all areas of revenue expenditure and income. These estimates include increases in the base budget required to roll forward agreed service levels and the budget assumptions in appendix A, but do not allow for any service improvements. They also allow for reductions in rents and changes in service charges as highlighted above.

- 7.3 The draft HRA estimates reflect the following factors:

- Savings that will be delivered as part of the staff reorganisations that have been agreed this year have been included in the estimates. In addition, a savings target of £81,000, (2% of the staff budget) has been included in the estimates to reflect natural staff turnover and the substantial favourable employee variances that have been achieved in recent years
- The budget for response repairs has been reduced by £100,000 with a matching £100,000 increase in voids repairs to better match expenditure profiles on repairs

7.4 In addition to the roll over budget in continuing services, it is also important to consider new budget issues and areas for development. Appendix C comprises a list of budget issues that Officers have identified and that should be considered as part of the budget process. Members will need to carefully consider those options, and any others that emerge through the budget process and determine which proposals to include in the final budget to meet service objectives.

7.5 The current Capital Investment Programme for the next 5 years is shown in Appendix D and includes the factors below:

- Capital budget virements and reprofiling approved in December 2017 have been built into the estimates
- Reprofiling of the five year capital programme to reflect latest information and resourcing have been built into the estimates

7.6 Work on refreshing the stock condition information – a budget issue raised in Appendix C – will provide updated information that will allow the asset investment plan to be reworked during 2018-19. As a consequence it is anticipated that the five year budget may change significantly once this work has been completed. The programme also contains a number of other schemes that reflect Member and tenant priorities including the Beechtrees Revival Project and the Westec development scheme. The total value of the proposed programme is £13,199,000 in 2018-19 and this can be funded by a combination of revenue contributions, HRA borrowing, and capital receipts.

8.0 TOWARDS A BALANCED BUDGET POSITION AND LONG TERM PROSPECTS

8.1 The draft estimates contained in the appendices identify that there are additional funds of £xxx available for investment next year, before taking into account the new budget issues included at Appendix C.

8.2 Officers will work with Members from the political groups and will consult with tenants to consider this position and how these funds can be used. In looking at finalising the budget for next year consideration will need to be given to a number of different factors including:

- Tenants comments and feedback on the budget position
- The acceptance of the new budget issues set out in Appendix C
- Potential future developments in the Welfare Reform agenda
- The profiling of capital expenditure and borrowing across future financial years
- HRA reserves and balances

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

9.1 The Council with its Tenants wants to ensure that the future business plan allows properties to be brought up to a reasonable standard and that appropriate investment can be made at the appropriate time. Business plan modelling enables a well-informed investment plan to be developed in keeping with the requirements of an effective asset management strategy. The community strategy has highlighted that local people should receive good quality homes for a fair and appropriate rent, and these issues are considered through the business plan process.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 The formal consideration and reporting of the budget estimates is part of the overall budgetary management and control framework that is designed to minimise the financial risks facing the Council. This process is resource intensive for both Members and Officers but ensures that a robust and achievable budget is set.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal Equality Impact Assessment will be produced when the Council agrees the budget at its meeting in February.

Appendices

Appendix A – HRA Business Plan Key Assumptions

Appendix B – Draft HRA Estimates

Appendix C – Budget Issues

Appendix D – Draft Capital Investment Plan

Appendix E - Minute of Cabinet (Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee only)

KEY BUSINESS PLAN ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS - 2018/19 TO 2022/23

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<u>General Factors</u>					
CPI Inflation	3.0%	2.5%	2%	2%	2%
RPI Inflation	4.0%	3.5%	3%	3%	3%
Stock numbers	-1.3%	-1.2%	-0.9%	-0.9%	-0.9%
<u>Income</u>					
Dwelling rents	-1%	-1%	3%	3%	3%
General Service Charges (CPI + 1%)	4%	3.5%	3%	3%	3%
Garage rents (CPI)	3%	2.5%	2%	2%	2%
Heating Charges	-10%	0%	3%	3%	3%
Interest income	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Other income (CPI)	3%	2.5%	2%	2%	2%
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Employee related	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Repairs, maintenance & energy (RPI)	4%	3.5%	3%	3%	3%
Bad debt provision	1.5%	1.5%	1%	1%	1%
Interest rate on new borrowing	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Other expenditure (CPI)	3%	2.5%	2%	2%	2%

Notes

- ✓ (1) As void rates, (currently budgeted at 2%), are not expected to change over the period of this forecast and their impact is built into the starting budgets they have not been included in this analysis
- ✓ (2) The average interest rate on existing borrowing of 3.47% is fixed and will not change over the forecast period and so is not shown above
- ✓ (3) The investment programme is based on long term investment profiles and has been updated to reflect latest information
- ✓ (4) For 2018/19 budgets the above assumptions have been applied but where there is a contractual obligation for a different rate, or there is local knowledge about a specific budget, then that has been used instead
- ✓ (5) No principal repayments of debt will be made over the next 2 years and then this position will be reassessed in 2020/21

AREAS OF UNCERTAINTY WITHIN THE BUSINESS PLAN

- 1) It is difficult to accurately predict future inflation rates, interest rates, and the level of right to buy sales. These will be kept under review and updated if required.
- 2) The continuing welfare reform agenda, along with the implementation of the Local Housing Allowance may potentially have a significant effect on the level of bad debts, as a consequence the underlying rate has been increased from 0.5% to 1% with 1.5% expected for 2018/19 and 2019/20 due to initial timing delays in Universal Credit being paid.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

DRAFT ESTIMATES 2018-19

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

Budget 2018-19	Employees £	Running Expenses £	External Income £	Total Cash £	Support Services & Capital Charges £	Net Budget £
General Expenses						
Premises Related Expenses		162,880		162,880		162,880
Bad Debt Provision		370,000		370,000		370,000
Capital Programme Contribution				0	8,036,000	8,036,000
Debt Charges				0	3,056,990	3,056,990
Sub-Total	0	532,880	0	532,880	11,092,990	11,625,870
Supervision, Management, Repairs & Maintenance						
Central Administration	789,270	636,500	-87,900	1,337,870	1,726,500	3,064,370
Customer Experience (HRA)	396,880	185,230	0	582,110	6,870	588,980
<u>Housing Operations</u>						
Housing Operations Management	149,720	3,500	-91,070	62,150	115,840	177,990
Income & Financial Inclusion	557,850	32,320	-9,800	580,370	142,400	722,770
Allocations	218,840	74,780	-90	293,530	14,550	308,080
Furnished Homes	32,200	74,250	-139,000	-32,550		-32,550
Tenants Expenses		26,500		26,500		26,500
Estate Management	225,660	318,800	-30	544,430	17,800	562,230
General Community Facilities		370	-6,180	-5,810		-5,810
Estate Maintenance Services	2,440	22,910		25,350		25,350
Elderly and Disabled Support	499,440	396,810	-1,115,370	-219,120	264,390	45,270
Sub-Total	1,686,150	950,240	-1,361,540	1,274,850	554,980	1,829,830
<u>Property Services</u>						
Property Services Management	617,730	114,600	-210	732,120	-228,670	503,450
Caretakers & Gardeners	260,910	141,010	-42,260	359,660	12,880	372,540
Maintenance of Grassed Areas		723,220	-41,300	681,920		681,920
District Heating Service		253,000	-253,000	0		0
Responsive and Void Repairs	400,920	3,350,960	-53,760	3,698,120	2,310	3,700,430
Planned Maintenance	469,260	758,200	-3,440	1,224,020	-350,590	873,430
Sub-Total	1,748,820	5,340,990	-393,970	6,695,840	-564,070	6,131,770
General Income						
Customer & Client Receipts			-23,552,560	-23,552,560		-23,552,560
Interest			0	0	-53,980	-53,980
Sub-Total	0	0	-23,552,560	-23,552,560	-53,980	-23,606,540
Transfers to/(from) reserves				0	-185,573	-185,573
Grand Total	4,621,120	7,645,840	-25,395,970	-13,129,010	12,577,717	-551,293

*There is also funding of up to £1.172m available in the budget & efficiency savings reserve to fund new budget issues

Notes:

1. Budgets have been presented to mirror the reorganisation of Housing and Inclusion in November 2017 and February 2018
2. Performance Improvement has been split between Central Administration and Customer Experience (HRA)
3. Customer Experience (HRA) includes part of performance improvement plus Tenant Participation
4. The Housing Operations Manager, Administration and Anti-Social Behaviour charges have been transferred from Central Administration to Housing Operations Management
5. Tenant Downsizing Payments have been moved from Central Administration to Allocations
6. Rents and Money Advice has been renamed Income & Financial Inclusion
7. Voids and Allocations Admin has been split into Allocations within Housing Operations and Responsive and Voids Repairs within Property Services
8. Estate Administration has been renamed Estate Management
9. Property Services Administration has been split between Property Services Management, Responsive and Voids Repairs and Planned Maintenance
10. Housing Repairs and Maintenance has been split into Responsive and Voids Repairs and Planned Maintenance, along with the teams managing them which have been moved from Property Services Administration
11. TV Aerial Maintenance has been included in Planned Maintenance

Commentary on Significant Changes

1. Premises Related Expenses – this budget has been increased to reflect the actual cost of council tax on empty properties
2. The bad debt provision has been increased on a prudent basis to reflect the roll out of universal credit
3. Capital Programme Contribution – this value is based on the size of the capital programme and the available borrowing
4. Employee budgets have reduced significantly, primarily as a result of the staff restructuring that has taken place this year, plus a 2% savings target for staff turnover
5. Running expenses have been uplifted in line with inflation which has had a significant impact on repairs and maintenance budgets
6. General income has reduced primarily as a result of the 1% reduction in rents and also as a result of falling stock numbers through right to buy sales

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

Budget 2017/18	£	£	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY						
General Expenses				0		0
Premises Related Expenses		96,170		96,170		96,170
Bad Debts Provision		235,000		235,000		235,000
Capital Programme Contribution				0	8,592,000	8,592,000
Debt Charges				0	3,056,990	3,056,990
Sub-Total	0	331,170	0	331,170	11,648,990	11,980,160
Supervision, Management, Repairs & Maintenance						
Central Administration	913,730	599,610	-129,910	1,383,430	1,725,670	3,109,100
Performance Improvement Tm	366,040	179,420	0	545,460	21,430	566,890
Rents and Money Advice	525,540	33,920	-2,300	557,160	242,230	799,390
Voids and Allocations	427,570	1,641,320	-173,390	1,895,500	13,950	1,909,450
Estates Management & TP	387,760	389,190	-6,030	770,920	39,960	810,880
Property Services	1,789,310	3,645,680	-347,680	5,087,310	-605,180	4,482,130
Elderly & Disabled Support	650,540	425,350	-1,106,190	-30,300	239,570	209,270
Sub-Total	5,060,490	6,914,490	-1,765,500	10,209,480	1,677,630	11,887,110
General Income						
Customer & Client Receipts			-23,910,580	-23,910,580	0	-23,910,580
Interest			-100	-100	-37,000	-37,100
Sub-Total	0	0	-23,910,680	-23,910,680	-37,000	-23,947,680
Transfers to/from Reserves				0	80,410	80,410
Grand Total	5,060,490	7,245,660	-25,676,180	-13,370,030	13,370,030	0

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

Budget 2017/18	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>SUPERVISION, MANAGEMENT, REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE</u>						
Central Administration	913,730	599,610	-129,910	1,383,430	1,725,670	3,109,100
Performance Improvement Tm	366,040	179,420	0	545,460	21,430	566,890
Rents and Money Advice	525,540	33,920	-2,300	557,160	242,230	799,390
Voids and Allocations						
Voids and Allocations Admin	396,610	68,850	-90	465,370	13,950	479,320
Furnished Homes	28,960	73,170	-133,300	-31,170		-31,170
Tenants Expenses		25,500		25,500		25,500
Housing Repairs Voids	2,000	1,473,800	-40,000	1,435,800		1,435,800
Sub-Total	427,570	1,641,320	-173,390	1,895,500	13,950	1,909,450
Estates Management and Tenant Participation						
Estates Administration	262,460	313,810	-30	576,240	17,000	593,240
General Community Facilities		360	-6,000	-5,640		-5,640
Estate Maintenance Services	2,400	22,030		24,430	0	24,430
Tenant Participation	122,900	52,990		175,890	22,960	198,850
Sub-Total	387,760	389,190	-6,030	770,920	39,960	810,880
Property Services						
Property Services Admin	1,443,310	176,320	-3,600	1,616,030	-618,060	997,970
Caretakers & Gardners	346,000	136,680	-43,680	439,000	12,880	451,880
Communal Areas				0		0
Maintenance of Grassed Areas		638,360	-7,500	630,860		630,860
TV Arial Maintenance		18,880	-2,900	15,980		15,980
District Heating Service		280,000	-280,000	0		0
Housing Repairs and Maintenance		2,395,440	-10,000	2,385,440		2,385,440
Sub-Total	1,789,310	3,645,680	-347,680	5,087,310	-605,180	4,482,130
Elderly and Disabled Support	650,540	425,350	-1,106,190	-30,300	239,570	209,270
Grand Total	5,060,490	6,914,490	-1,765,500	10,209,480	1,677,630	11,887,110

BUDGET ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Budget Issue		2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000
Capital Expenditure				
1	Communal Fire Risk Safety Works	200	450	250
2	Install carbon monoxide detectors	180		
3	Purchase Service Charge Management Software	40		
	Sub Total	420	450	250
Revenue Expenditure				
1	Purchase Service Charge Management Software	-	3	-11
2	Stock Condition Surveys	250	-	-
3	Investment Planning Implementation	50	-	-
4	Creation of Human Resources Business Partner	33	34	35
5	Update to Choice Based Lettings system	10	-	-
6	Develop an ASB Mediation Offer	4	4	4
7	Promote tenant gardening and DIY	3		
	Sub Total	350	41	28
	Total	770	491	278

CURRENT INVESTMENT PLAN UNTIL 2021/22

Scheme Description	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bathrooms	765	781	797	812	247
Electrical	847	733	800	800	746
Fencing and paving	0	0	1,160	1,360	1,218
Heating	862	971	892	910	957
Kitchen	414	423	437	473	594
Lifts	168	172	175	0	0
Roofing	2,206	2,466	1,040	1,096	1,209
Walls	1,068	1,822	385	387	412
Windows and Doors	336	406	351	405	316
Disabled Adaptations	585	656	777	792	808
Communal Areas CAT	436	262	221	259	147
Sheltered Upgrades	133	139	142	145	147
Structural Work	199	209	213	217	222
Contingency	257	263	268	273	278
Garages	124	0	0	0	0
Bins	154	0	0	0	0
LHA Initiatives	51	0	0	0	0
Digital Inclusion	21	21	0	0	0
Beech Trees Revival	3,236	0	0	0	0
Westec	640	0	0	0	0
Fees	697	713	727	741	756
Capital Investment	13,199	10,037	8,385	8,670	8,057

Notes

- (1) 2018-19 budgets include 2017-18 capital budgets reprofiled at mid year
- (2) All budgets have been inflated by RPI and adjusted for changes in stock number as assumed in Appendix A
- (3) The Communal Electrics programme has been reprofiled forward one year to 2018-19
- (4) The Communal Electrics category in the investment plan has been combined within the Electrical category
- (5) The Communal Heating category in the investment plan has been combined within the Heating category

(6) Gulleys, Gutters, Laundry Equipment and double glazing replacement have been removed as separate budgets due to being less than £20,000 each per year and will be met from existing budget resources

(7) Westec budget reflects the updated report that went to Cabinet in December 2017

(8) Walls budget originally planned for 2018-19 has been reprofiled to 2019-20 leaving the 2017-18 budget reprofiled at mid year to be delivered in 2018-19

MINUTE OF CABINET – 9 JANUARY 2018

67 **HOUSING ACCOUNT - REVENUE AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Councillor Forshaw introduced the joint report of the Director of Housing and Inclusion and Borough Treasurer which provided a summary of the Housing Account's financial position.

It was reported that Appendix B to the report (draft HRA estimates) would be available for consultation purposes prior to the Council considering the matter in February 2018.

In reaching the decision below, Cabinet considered the details as set out in the report before it and accepted the reasons contained therein.

- RESOLVED (A) That the financial position be noted.
- (B) That the use of the Director of Housing and Inclusion's delegated authority in relation to rent and service charge changes be noted and endorsed.
 - (C) That this report be used for consultation purposes prior to the Council considering this matter in February 2018.
 - (D) That the Housing Portfolio Holder be given delegated authority to submit firm proposals to Council on 28 February 2018 to enable the budget to be set.
 - (E) That call-in is not appropriate for this item as it is to be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2018.

