



Meeting	Business and Housing Policy Committee
Date and Time	Tuesday, 11th February, 2020 at 6.30 pm.
Venue	King Charles Hall, Guildhall, Winchester

AGENDA

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

- 1. Apologies and Deputy Members**
To note the names of apologies given and Deputy Members who are attending the meeting in place of appointed Members.
- 2. Disclosures of Interests**
To receive any disclosure of interests from Members and Officers in matters to be discussed.

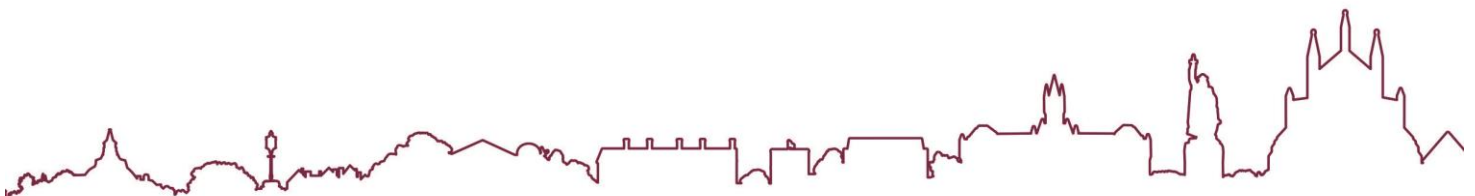
Note: Councillors are reminded of their obligations to declare disclosable pecuniary interests, and non disclosable interests in accordance with legislation and the Council's Code of Conduct.

If you require advice, please contact the appropriate Democratic Services Officer, prior to the meeting.

- 3. Chairperson's Announcements**
- 4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 October 2019** (Pages 5 - 10)
- 5. To note the Work Programme for 2019/20** (Pages 11 - 14)

BUSINESS ITEMS

- 6. Public Participation**
To receive and note questions asked and statements made from members of the public on matters which fall within the remit of the Committee.



7. **Procurement Strategy BHP009** (Pages 15 - 26)
8. **Revision and update of Discretionary Housing Payments Policy BHP012**
(Pages 27 - 56)
9. **Review of downsizing incentive scheme - Presentation (to follow)**
10. **Hampshire Home Choice Policy - Presentation** (Pages 57 - 68)
11. **Fire Safety in Council Housing Strategy - Presentation** (Pages 69 - 76)

Lisa Kirkman
Strategic Director: Resources and Monitoring Officer

Members of the public are able to easily access all of the papers for this meeting by opening the QR Code reader on your phone or tablet. Hold your device over the QR Code below so that it's clearly visible within your screen and you will be redirected to the agenda pack.



3 February 2020

Agenda Contact: Dave Shaw, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01962 848 221 Email: dshaw@winchester.gov.uk

**With the exception of exempt items, Agenda, reports and previous minutes are available on the Council's Website www.winchester.gov.uk*

MEMBERSHIP

Chairperson: Hiscock (Liberal Democrats)

Vice-Chairperson: Rutter (Liberal Democrats)

Conservatives
Humby
Lumby
Scott

Liberal Democrats
Craske
Gottlieb

Deputy Members

Godfrey and Horrill

Bronk and Clear

Quorum = 3 members

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A public question and comment session is available at 6.30pm for a 15 minute period. There are few limitations on the questions you can ask. These relate to current applications, personal cases and confidential matters. Please contact Democratic Services on 01962 848 264 in advance of the meeting for further details. If there are no members of the public present at 6.30pm who wish to ask questions or make statements, then the meeting will commence.

FILMING AND BROADCAST NOTIFICATION

This meeting may be recorded and broadcast live on the Council's website. The meeting may also be recorded and broadcast by the press and members of the public – please see the Access to Information Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution for further information, which is available to view on the [Council's website](#).

DISABLED ACCESS:

Disabled access is normally available, but please phone Democratic Services on 01962 848 264 or email democracy@winchester.gov.uk to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place.

This page is intentionally left blank

BUSINESS AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

7 October 2019

Attendance:

Councillors

Hiscock (Chairperson)

Craske
Gottlieb

Rutter

Deputy Members:

Councillor Godfrey (Standing Deputy for Councillor Scott)

Councillor Horrill (Standing Deputy for Councillor Lumby)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Learney (Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management) and Thompson (Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications).

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Bronk and Weir (Cabinet Member for Local Economy)

Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Humby, Lumby and Scott

1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Gottlieb declared an interest in any matters that might relate to the St Clement Street Surgery and the regeneration of central Winchester under the item relating to the new Council Strategy. There were no direct references to these matters during consideration of this item and he spoke and voted on this item.

2. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting TACT representatives: Mrs M Gill and Mr M Fawcitt.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2019 be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Representations from the public are set out under the respective item where the Chairperson invited contributions from the TACT representatives.

5. **TENANT SURVEY RESULTS – PRESENTATION**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management and the Housing Policy and Projects Manager gave a presentation on the results of the Tenant Survey.

During Public Participation, in summary, the representatives of TACT asked questions and raised comments, which were responded to where appropriate:

- Residents of sheltered housing were reluctant to be kept in a long queue on the telephone to access Housing Services.
- There were continued challenges in engaging young tenants to become involved with TACT.
- The views of those undertaking the survey would be analysed in depth.
- In answer to a question on Social Housing Green Paper: A New Deal for Social Housing it was commented by the Strategic Director: Services (Interim) that the Government was rethinking its housing policy.

Members raised questions and also commented regarding the following:

Stanmore

- There were lower levels of tenant satisfaction in Stanmore and could these results be attributed to the demographics of the area, for example tenants being younger and not on benefits.
- In depth analysis was required to establish why Stanmore delivered lower results of tenant satisfaction as this area contained a high number of council houses and the figures from Stanmore affected the overall total results.

Internet and WiFi

- It was established that WiFi was directly provided at all sheltered schemes by the Council and that general needs tenants self provided. An outcome of the survey might be to identify take up of the Internet at the sheltered housing schemes.
- It was enquired whether access to the Internet also had a link to the take up of benefits.

- It was asked if the Council encouraged tenants that were not on the Internet to take up this provision to enhance their access to Council services and was there a range of other methods of communication including paper form?
- It was requested that the results for the reporting of faults online through the customer portal be circulated to Members.

General

- It was asked how the demographic makeup of tenants was changing across the District over time and what the trend for those receiving benefits was.
- It was commented that other registered housing providers had comparatively higher rates of dissatisfaction from tenants. There was evidence of demand from tenants of other registered housing providers wishing to become council tenants which could impact on the Council's future strategy.
- It was commented that the public's understanding of the difference in the level of care provided between extra care and sheltered housing should be improved so that provision could be matched with tenant expectation.
- It was noted that tenants that received benefits were more satisfied than those that did not receive benefits and it was enquired whether the changes to universal credit had impacted on this result.
- Following the Grenfell fire it was asked whether future risks to housing were scanned for.
- It was asked how improvements to repairs and maintenance would be delivered as this was a top service priority.
- It was commented that including Leaseholders in future surveys be considered and it was noted that they were included in the fire safety survey.

At the conclusion of debate the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management stated that consideration would be given to the channels of contact between tenants and the Council and whether they were effective and how they could be improved, including by Internet and telephone contact. Further consideration would also be given to the Stanmore area to improve tenant satisfaction.

The Strategic Director: Services (Interim) added that the results would be analysed to feed into the emerging business plan which would be brought to this Policy Committee later in the year.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management and the Housing Policy and Projects Manager thanked Members and TACT representatives for their input.

RESOLVED:

That the Presentation be noted.

6. NEW COUNCIL STRATEGY – PRESENTATION

The meeting received a presentation from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications and Transformation and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management on the new Council Strategy.

Members raised questions or commented regarding the following:

Challenges We Face

- In reply to questions asking how the challenges listed on page 6 of the presentation were defined (for example, how was it known that young people were not retained in the District and that Winchester had inequality in mental health wellbeing over and above those the other surrounding towns and also questions related to the changes in technology and its impact on the economy and how the Council would address these), the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management stated that the evidence was available to support their inclusion and would be contained in an annexe to the strategy.
- It was asked how the Council would work in partnership to address issues such as public transport (with Hampshire County Council) and mental health wellbeing.
- It was suggested that the strategy should be developed through a method plan to be very clear on how the challenges would be responded to. For example, to address the changing pattern of employment within Winchester from the effects of technological change and virtually working (with home working reducing the number commuter of trips per week from Winchester station to London) and also considering the provision of start-up businesses.

Retaining young people in the District

- It was suggested that the strategy needed to define the methods that would be undertaken to attract and retain younger people to the District.
- It was suggested that the strategy required more emphasis on the need for affordable business spaces to retain young people in the area.

Key Projects

- It was suggested that the strategy include reference to key projects such as the Carfax and the Cattle Market sites as part of the Council's consideration of the wider use of town centre properties and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management stated that this would be given consideration.
- It was suggested that the future of the former River Park Leisure Centre site be the subject of wide consultation and not just with the residents of the

Winchester Town area. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications and Transformation responded that this would be achieved through the Local Plan process which would be run separately to the consultation on the Council's Strategy.

Other

- It was suggested that acknowledgment should be made in the strategy of non operational Council resources, such as its offices, landholdings and the Guildhall.
- It was suggested that mention should be included in the strategy of the Council's staff and this inclusion was agreed by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications and Transformation and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management.
- It was commented that the five week period for consultation was too short a period.
- It was commented that the District should be recognised in the strategy as well as the town area.
- That the terminologies of transformation programme and carbon neutral should be defined.

The representatives of TACT commented on:

- The need to take action to balance the Council's finances in view of challenging budget forecasts.
- The effects of retaining young people in the area on the provision of Council housing, and;
- Economic planning and the allocation of employment land in the Local Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Presentation be noted.

7. **THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20**

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for 2019/20 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6:30 pm and concluded at 8:35 pm

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

BUSINESS & HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20

18 JUNE 2019					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/COMMENT
			Original	Revised	
	Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	Kenna-Sian Young	18 June 2019	18 June 2019	BHP004
	Mutual Exchange Policy	Amber Russell	18 June 2019	18 June 2019	BHP005
	Estate Improvement programme	Amber Russell	18 June 2019	18 June 2019	BHP007
	Housing Company	Richard Burden	18 June 2019	18 June 2019	Presentation
	Work Programme 2019/20	Dave Shaw	18 June 2019	18 June 2019	BHP001
	Economic Strategy	Susan Robbins	18 June 2019	18 June 2019	Presentation
17 SEPTEMBER 2019 – Revised date 7 OCTOBER 2019					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/ COMMENT
			Original	Revised	
	Tenant Survey (STAR) Results	Gillian Knight	17 September 2019	7 October 2019	
	New Council Strategy	Simon Howson	17 September 2019	7 October 2019	
12 NOVEMBER 2019 – meeting cancelled due to the General Election purdah period.					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/COMMENT
	Housing Revenue Account Budget Options 2020/21	Richard Botham	12 November 2019	N/A	Now to be considered at The Scrutiny Committee on 5 February 2020

	Procurement Strategy	Amy Tranah	12 November 2019	11 February 2020	
11 FEBRUARY 2020 – Reports below to be allocated in due course					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/COMMENT
	Review of downsizing incentive scheme	Gillian Knight	11 February 2020		
	Hampshire Home Choice Policy	Gillian Knight	11 February 2020		
	Revision and update of Discretionary Housing Payments Policy	Terri Horner	11 February 2020		
	Procurement Strategy	Amy Tranah	12 November 2019	11 February 2020	
	Fire Safety in Council Housing Strategy	Gillian Knight / Janette Palmer	11 February 2020		

Page 12

Other reports due to come forward to the Business and Housing Policy Committee later in 2019/20 are as follows: (Meeting date to be confirmed)

	Review of the Tenant Offer	Now 2020/21
	Housing Tenancy Support Service/Decent Homes Standard Policy	Now 2020/21
	Community and Wellbeing Strategy	Now 2020/21 (First meeting)
	Destination Management Plan (to include culture, arts and tourism)	Now 2020/21 (First meeting)
	Housing Development Strategy	Now 2020/21 (First meeting)

	Winnall – review of planning framework & future	Now 2020/21
	Economic Development Strategy	Now 2020/21

Updated 29 January 2020

This page is intentionally left blank

REPORT TITLE: DRAFT PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2020 - 2025

11 FEBRUARY 2020

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Neil Cutler, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk

Contact Officer: Amy Tranah - Service Lead Transformation and Procurement
Tel No: 01962 848390 Email atranah@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

To present the draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2020-2025 to the Policy Committee and to seek comments for input prior to consideration by Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Policy Committee comment on the draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2020-2025.

1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

1.1 None.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

2.1 The Council's procurement activity is governed by Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR2015). While these set out the rules and legislation that must be followed when conducting procurement exercises, they do not set the strategy and vision of what we want to achieve from our procurements and contract management arrangements.

2.2 As part of the organisational restructure earlier this year, the Council now has internal procurement resource to support and provide professional guidance to officers. This is an opportune time to review the need for a strategy and accompanying action plan.

2.3 The proposed strategy sets out aims and four guiding principles to support the delivery of best value through planned and responsive procurement and contract management that contributes to achieving the Council Plan priorities and meets the needs of our customers and local businesses.

2.4 Our Procurement and Contract Management Strategy aims to:

- Understand our spend profile in order to identify savings and mitigate risk in terms of non compliance
- Develop and embed effective end-to-end procurement and contract management
- Operate within the legal framework
- Support the Climate Change Emergency by requiring social and environmental factors to be considered in all procurements
- Encourage local and small to medium businesses to bid for contract opportunities
- Ensure fairness and clarity in the sourcing of suppliers

2.5 The four guiding principles are:

- Value
- Compliance
- Fairness
- Social and Environmental impacts

2.6 The accompanying Action Plan to the strategy will be reviewed and updated annually.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 3.1 It is not a statutory requirement to have a strategy but to do so provides a clear link to Council Plan priorities and contributes towards meeting these and also provides direction to officers in the procurement and contract management lifecycle.
- 3.2 The Council could decide not to have its own strategy and adopt the LGA's National Procurement Strategy 2018, but this would not reflect our own local priorities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

None.

Other Background Documents:-

None.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2020-2025

Appendix 2 - Draft Action Plan

APPENDIX 1



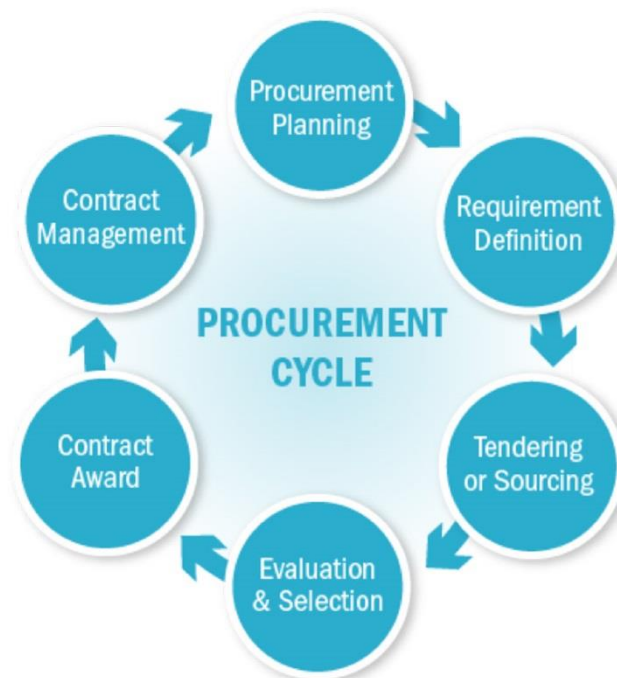
**DRAFT Procurement and Contract
Management Strategy 2020 – 2025**

1. Introduction

Procurement is about making effective commercial choices in the process of acquiring works, goods and services. Contract management is the process of systematically and efficiently managing contract creation, execution and analysis for maximising operational and financial performance and minimising risk.

In this strategy, the term procurement and contract management has the widest possible meaning, covering all aspects of securing services, products or works on a whole life basis. This is from the identification of need through to the end of a service contract or the end of the useful life of an asset and its disposal.

Effective contract management is a necessary condition for successful end-to-end procurement and supplier performance. It is therefore critical that the procurement stage includes full consideration of how the contract will be managed and that performance management mechanisms proportionate to the size and risk of each contract are established and contract conditions determined.



The strategy sets out the principles and commitments by which we will conduct our procurement and contract management activity throughout the contract lifecycle. This will support the delivery of best value through planned and responsive procurement and contract management that contributes to achieving the Council Plan and meets the needs of our customers and local businesses.

Best value is a statutory duty under s3(1) LGA 1999 – to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Under Best value authorities should consider overall value which includes economic, environmental and social provision.

The Council Plan priorities are:

- Tackling the climate emergency and creating a greener district
- Homes for all
- Vibrant local economy
- Living well
- Your services, Your Voice

In June 2019 Winchester City Council declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to a carbon neutral Winchester City Council by 2024 and a carbon neutral District by 2030. Suppliers to the Council and the supply chain have an impact on carbon usage and we will work with and challenge suppliers to minimise this impact.

The Council's priorities are key factors in determining procurement approaches and specifications.

The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR2015) principles of Openness, Fairness, Transparency and Equity in public sector procurement are fundamental to how we operate and underpin this strategy.

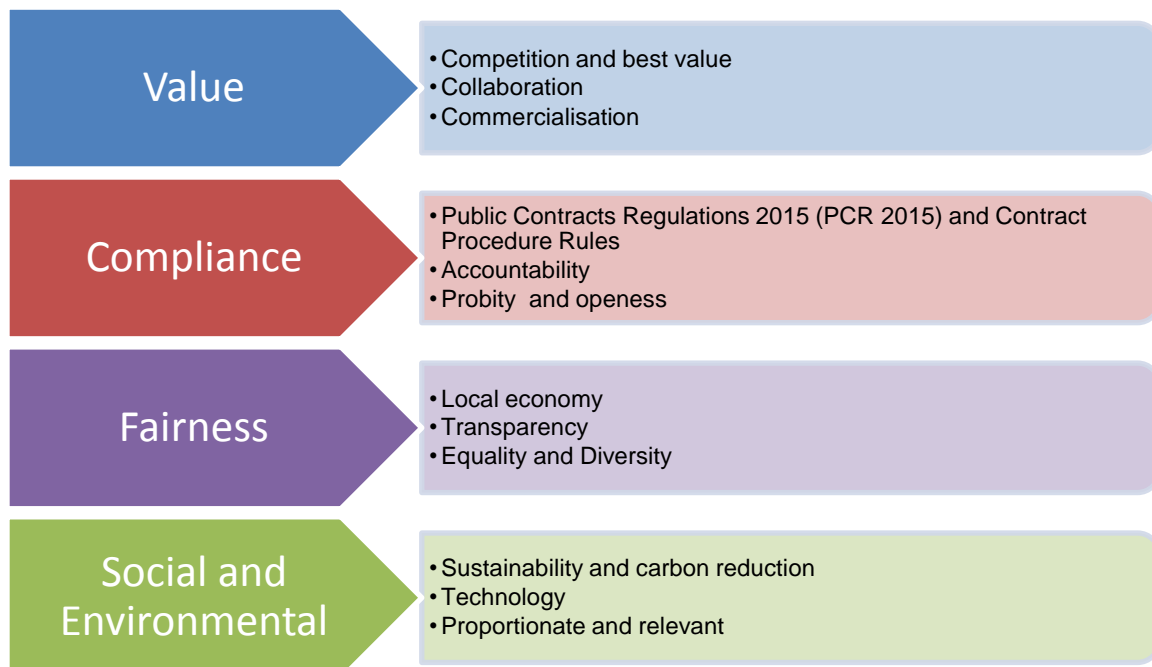
The accompanying Action Plan to this strategy will be reviewed and updated annually.

2. Our Procurement and Contract Management Principles

Our Procurement and Contract Management Strategy aims to:

- Understand our spend profile in order to identify savings and mitigate risk in terms of non compliance
- Develop and embed effective end-to-end procurement and contract management
- Operate within the legal framework
- Support the Climate Change emergency by requiring social and environmental factors to be considered in all procurements
- Encourage local and small businesses to bid for contract opportunities
- Ensure fairness and clarity in the sourcing of suppliers

There are four guiding principles which form the key elements of our approach to procurement and contract management activity:



3. Our Commitments

In implementing the above principles into our procurement and contract management practice, we commit to:

Value

- Better understand our supply base and spend profile to help identify areas for smarter procurement
- Explore opportunities for collaborative procurement with partners and use frameworks where appropriate
- Adopt clear, consistent and streamlined processes and documentation to encourage competition and utilise e-procurement
- Use pre market engagement to test assumptions with the supply market and to seek their ideas on achieving better outcomes from contracts including contributing towards reducing carbon usage in the District
- Adopt a risk based, proportionate approach to procurement and contract management and ensure that contracts are delivering value and innovation throughout their life cycle
- Identify our strategic suppliers and working in partnership approach to strive for continuous improvement in the contract lifecycle

Compliance

- All procurements being carried out in accordance with PCR 2015, our Contract Procedure Notes and best practice
- Ensure our contract opportunities are widely advertised in accordance with the requirements of PCR 2015 and in line with the thresholds set by our own Contract Procedure Rules
- Maintain and publish a comprehensive and up-to-date Contracts Register
- Make appropriate resources available to meet our principles, including provision of guidance, awareness raising and training for employees and suppliers

Fairness

- Work with local businesses and partners such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to improve their and their members' understanding of the Council's procurement process and how they can access opportunities
- Provide tendering opportunities that are suitable for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) as appropriate

- Consider whether non advertised opportunities would be of interest to local suppliers and/or third sector organisations and, if so ensure that at least one of the suppliers invited to quote is local and/or a third sector organisation
- Publish a 12 – 18 month procurement pipeline on our website to better inform potential suppliers
- Promote and endorse the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 through our procurement activity and contractual arrangements
- Treat suppliers fairly and equally at all times and act impartially and objectively and with integrity and honesty throughout the procurement process

Social and Environmental

- Promote delivery of social value (The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012) through our supply chain to support the community. For example in delivering skills training, apprenticeship opportunities and graduate programmes, broader community support, improved environmental outcomes and generating benefits to the local economy
- In all procurements where the evaluation is based on most economically advantageous tender to include a minimum of 10% to Environmental and Social Value evaluation criteria
- Encourage suppliers to actively contribute to offer solutions for delivering requirements innovatively that have a positive and measurable impact on the environment and the community
- Using pre-market engagement to consider the costs and benefits of environmentally preferable materials, systems or services

Principle	Action	Owner	Target Date:
1. Value			
a)	Full Spend Analysis and contract landscape exercise to identify strategic suppliers and inform the team work plan of potential areas for smarter procurement, collaboration and / or savings	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2020
b)	Deliver against the annual work plan	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2021
c)	Monitor spend and the number of local SME/ 3rd sector organisations the Council contracts with and establish a baseline target to increase spend and engagement year on year	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	Q1 2020
d)	Review how we currently provide support to local SMEs and third sector organisations	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	September - 2020
e)	Set targets for i) Local ii) SME and iii) VCS spend monitoring progress on a quarterly basis	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	Q1 2021
f)	Commence use of e-procurement system	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2020
g)	Review current contract management arrangements with strategic suppliers and work collaboratively with Service Leads to ensure contracts are delivering best value	SLT	Q1 2020
h)	Develop and embed Contract Management guidance	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	September - 2021
i)	Encourage and promote early supplier engagement, soft market testing and challenge the 'status quo'	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2020

j)	Embed a corporate approach to measuring the benefits achieved through procurement of what has been achieved – in cash savings and non-financial terms	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2020
k)	Develop a risk model to assess each procurement project and subsequent contract the result of which will determine the procurement process and contract management approach		April - 2020
2. Compliance			
a)	Contracts Register – update quarterly with details of contracts over £5k	SLT	On-going quarterly
b)	Internally promote the use of Contracts Finder and the Council's website to advertise contract opportunities and resulting contracts to improve transparency	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2020
c)	Procurement and Contract Management Training (Officers and Elected Members)	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	December - 2020
d)	Develop template documents and guidance based on end-to-end procurement and contract management and publish on SharePoint	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	June - 2020
3. Fairness			
a)	Publish a 12 – 18 month Procurement Pipeline on the website and promote to potential suppliers	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	September - 2020
b)	Review the external website to ensure clear and concise supplier guidance	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2020
c)	To further develop the external website to improve accessibility and customer experience	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	September - 2020

d)	Strengthen links with the Federation of small businesses (FSB) and other organisations representing small, local business	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	September - 2020 onwards
4. Social and Environmental			
a)	Develop clear guidance on including Social Value in tender documents and evaluations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting clear, measurable targets • Creating apprenticeships • Employing local people • Providing training opportunities • Supporting the local economy • Paying Living Wage as a minimum 	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April - 2020
b)	Develop clear guidance on including environmental and sustainability criteria in tender documents and evaluations to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting clear measurable targets • Consideration of electric vehicles • Use of recycled and/or environmentally friendly products • All Council facilities run by external providers to have a 'no single use' plastics policy 	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	April -2020
c)	Work with client areas to identify existing contracts that have a large impact on carbon usage and meet with suppliers to discuss how this could be positively impacted	Service Lead – Transformation and Procurement	December - 2020

REPORT TITLE: REVISION AND UPDATE OF DISCRETIONARY HOUSING
PAYMENT POLICY

11 FEBRUARY 2020

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Neil Cutler, Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member of Finance and Risk

Contact Officer: Terri Horner Tel No: 01962 848160

Email thorner@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) are awarded to people who are entitled to either Housing Benefit, or the housing cost element of Universal Credit, when they require further financial assistance with their housing costs.

The current policy restricts payment on some claims despite legislation allowing for those payments. The revised policy removes restrictions, and some unnecessary criteria, which are not required for the determination of a DHP. Also, the payment of DHP to help with rent arrears is clarified.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Policy Committee makes any comments for consideration to the Cabinet Member on the proposed Discretionary Housing Payment policy (2020).

IMPLICATIONS:**1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME**

- 1.1 This report supports the Council Plan priority of “Homes for all”. DHPs provide additional support to Housing Benefit claimants, or those claiming the housing cost element of Universal Credit, who require further financial assistance to secure or maintain affordable accommodation.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 DHP is funded by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). The DHP budget is carefully monitored throughout the year to ensure the funding is used in the most effective way.

	DHP granted £	WCC top-up available £	DHP spent * £	HB caseload	DHPs awarded	DHP ** applicants
2018/19	138,880	100,000	173,061	4388	280	231
2019/20 (to date)	133,087	50,000	112,239	3886	173	151

* includes DHP spent from the top-up

** applicants can receive multiple awards and these figures do not include refusals.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Where a claimant is eligible for Housing Benefit or Housing Element of Universal Credit but experiences a shortfall between the rent due and the benefit payable e.g. because they live in a property that is deemed to be too large for their needs, or the rent charged is higher than the Local Housing Allowance rate, they can apply to the local authority for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).
- 3.2 The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001, as amended, provide local authorities with the power and framework to make discretionary payments to benefit recipients that need further financial assistance. There is no obligation on authorities to pay DHPs. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has issued guidance for authorities updated in March 2018 but the method of allocation adopted and decision making process lies with local authorities.
- 3.3 The policy setting out how the council will consider applications for DHP will ensure transparency and consistency of decision making.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 DHP is administered by the Benefits & Welfare team without the requirement of further resources.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member of Finance and Risk has been consulted on the changes in this policy.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 None

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSEMENT

- 8.1 The council, in the exercise of all its functions, must have due regard to the public sector equality duty in section 149 Equality Act 2010. When making a decision on the recommendation in this report, it is important to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, (b) to advance equality of opportunity and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- 8.2 The changes made in this policy are designed to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly, reasonably and consistently. One of the enhancements to the revised policy was to add an equalities statement to this effect.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 None required.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 Any risk connected to the changes in the revised policy has been considered and detailed below:

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<i>Property</i>		
<i>Community Support</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Timescales</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Project capacity</i>	N/A	N/A

<i>Financial / VfM</i>	It is proposed that the Council will manage the DHP spend with an additional top-up from the Council's budget. Regular monitoring of spend and top-up is carried out.	The legislation provides for the utilisation of other funding from the Council which is designed to support residents vulnerable to housing or financial pressures.
<i>Legal</i>	The Policy enables greater transparency and clarity around the application of legislation designed to assist residents.	The council has the ability through the policy to make use of flexible legislation and provide real assistance.
<i>Innovation</i>	N/A	
<i>Reputation</i>	The Council reporting will ensure that those most vulnerable to welfare change are prioritised and supported.	The Council has the ability through the Policy to deliver real change outcomes for vulnerable residents.
<i>Other</i>	N/A	N/A

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

11.1 Background

DHPs are made from a cash limited budget provided by the DWP on an annual basis. This budget can be topped up by the council using its own funds.

There is a range of financial and welfare support available to meet a variety of different circumstances and the needs of low-income households. The DHP fund is designed to provide support to secure affordable accommodation in exceptional circumstances affecting a claimant's ability to meet their rent liability. The majority of the awards are short-term to allow time for the household to obtain further advice and make changes to their circumstances which will achieve longer term financial sustainability. This can be at their current home or assist them to find alternative accommodation which is affordable within the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit schemes.

The policy also acknowledges that there are some circumstances, for example, where a property has undergone disabled adaptations, which are longer term and financial support with housing costs is required for those households.

DHPs can be awarded where an applicant has an ongoing shortfall between their Housing Benefit, or their housing cost element of Universal Credit, and their rent. Also, lump sum DHPs can be awarded to help with one-off housing costs. For example, rent deposit, rent in advance, removal costs or other

lump sum expenditure for household items that are essential to enable the property to be used as a home, such as carpets, beds, fridges, freezers etc.

The DHP policy is based on legislative requirements and takes into consideration the DWPs 'Guidance Manual and Good Practice Guide'.

Each DHP case will be treated strictly on its own merits and all customers will be treated fairly, reasonably and consistently.

11.2 **Details of Proposal**

The new policy has been re-written and reordered. There are numerous small changes that have been made to correct typos, grammatical errors and small points of clarification. The most significant changes which have been made are listed as follows:

1. Qualifying criteria has been reduced which will improve on the currently restrictive nature of the policy. Applicants will only be required to meet the legislative criteria of being entitled to Housing Benefit, or the housing cost element of Universal Credit, and need further financial assistance with their housing costs. Previously, applicants were also required to meet other criteria, such as:
 - a. Primary qualifying criteria
 - i. Currently, where an applicant has previously received a DHP, specifically for rent in advance, deposits or removal costs, then this would be taken into consideration in any future claims. However, the revised policy will no longer have a 2 year restriction on reclaiming DHP. This has been removed to allow more flexibility in awarding DHP, dependant on individual circumstances.
 - ii. The criteria that 'Households must not be able to obtain funds from elsewhere' has been replaced with 'applications for DHP should only be made as a last resort'. Awards will be made where the household demonstrates exceptional circumstances which can only be alleviated by additional financial support from the fund and no alternative solution exists.
 - iii. Advice to applicants/partner that they must be willing to adhere to opportunities for support, including engagement with the Council's Housing Needs Services, the Winchester Supporting Families programme and the back-to-work initiatives has been amended to suggest that all claimants should seek independent guidance from the Citizens Advice, or other similar agencies, to assist with improving their personal circumstances and maximising their income.

- b. Secondary qualifying criteria has been removed as it was superfluous to the DWP's Guidance Manual which already provides a list of circumstances for the Council to consider when dealing with a DHP application.
- c. The current policy describes all rent arrears as ineligible. This has been clarified to confirm that DHP can not be used to pay rent arrears for periods where there is no entitlement to Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit. DHP can be paid for a previous period in order to top up the difference between the eligible rent and Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit.
- d. The new policy will allow the council, to top up the DHP budget up to a maximum of 2.5 times the government contribution. At present the council has agreed £50,000 can be used to top up the 2019/20 DHP fund if required.
- e. The requirement to purchase goods through the council procurement process has been removed. Where the procurement process applies officers will always follow the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. However, in most circumstances purchases are small, one-off costs.
- f. The requirement to pay removal costs directly to a removal company has been deleted. The chosen method of payment will be based on the individual's circumstances and payment will be made to the most appropriate person in the best interests of the applicant.
- g. The policy has been revised to emphasise that where fraud may have occurred, the matter will be investigated as appropriate and this may lead to legal action being taken against the person who made the claim for DHP.
- h. The disputes process has been updated to align with the current structure of the Benefits and Welfare team. An equalities statement has been introduced ensuring that all people are treated with respect and dignity.

11.3 **Conclusion**

The regulations give Local Authorities broad discretion on awarding DHPs. In order to act "fairly, reasonably and consistently" in considering a DHP application, and make a decision in each case based on its own merits, a flexible policy is required. This report seeks to simplify and improve on the previous policy from an operational point of view and will ensure the Council's decisions in this area are not open to criticism or complaint.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 To retain the existing DHP Policy. This was rejected in order to streamline the criteria necessary for considering an award in the DHP administration process. The current policy contains the requirement to meet unnecessary criteria and prevents the Council from topping up the DHP fund, despite legislation allowing this.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

CAB2909, Discretionary Housing Payment Policy, 26 April 2017

Other Background Documents:-

DHP Legislation

DHP Guidance Manual & Good Practice Guide

APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Proposed DHP Policy (2020)

Appendix B - Previous DHP Policy (2017)

This page is intentionally left blank

Winchester City Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Introduction

The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme provides all Local Authorities discretion to provide additional support for people who are entitled to Housing Benefit (HB) or the Housing Cost Element of Universal Credit (UC). The legislation governing the DHP scheme can be found in the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 (SI 2001 / 1167) and subsequent amendment regulations.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has produced a good practice guide for the administration of DHP. This policy takes note of this guidance.

For the purpose of this policy, any reference to UC is where the claimant is entitled to UC with housing costs element towards a rental liability.

The main features of the scheme are that:

- The scheme is purely discretionary. A claimant does not have a statutory right to a payment.
- The amount that can be paid out in any financial year is cash limited by the Secretary of State. Each council receives a grant from the government that funds part of this amount and has the option to pay over and above this amount but the funding must be made from the council's own finances.
- DHP is not a payment of HB or UC. There must be entitlement to HB or UC.
- There must be a requirement for further financial assistance (in addition to HB or UC) to meet their housing costs.
- The administration of the scheme is for the council to determine with a few specific exceptions detailed in appendix A.

DHP funding is made up of four elements to reflect legislative changes to the HB and UC schemes;

1. Core Funding
2. Local Housing Allowance
3. Social Sector Size Criteria
4. Benefit Cap

Although the funding is on the basis of four separate elements it is not ring-fenced to people affected by these reforms.

Appendix B sets out DHP funding.

There is a range of financial and welfare support available to meet a variety of different circumstances and needs for low-income households. The DHP fund is

designed to provide support to secure affordable accommodation. It provides short-term support for exceptional circumstances affecting a claimant's ability to meet their rent liability.

The short-term nature of the fund is to provide time for the household to get further advice and make changes to their circumstances which will achieve longer term financial sustainability of their current home or find alternative accommodation which is affordable within the HB and UC schemes.

The policy also acknowledges that there are some circumstances which are longer term and financial support with housing costs is required for those households.

1.0 Statement of Objectives

The DHP budget is targeted to provide support to those who most need it. Each DHP case will be treated strictly on its own merits and all customers will be treated fairly, reasonably and consistently. We are committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties in the local area to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits and this is reflected in the administration of the DHP scheme.

The primary objectives of the scheme are;

- Preventing homelessness
- Enabling people to secure new affordable tenancies
- Safeguard residents of the district in their homes
- Provide short-term assistance for those who are trying to help themselves
- Provide long term assistance where a household's circumstances are deemed to be such that financial independence is not an option, for example due to disability

In achieving these aims it is anticipated that the scheme will also help to;

- alleviate poverty
- encourage people into finding and maintaining employment.

Applications for DHP should only be made as a last resort. Awards will be made where the household demonstrates exceptional circumstances which can only be alleviated by additional financial support from the fund where no other alternatives exist.

It is recommended that all claimants seek independent guidance from the Citizens Advice, or other similar agencies, to assist with improving their personal circumstances and maximising their income.

The budget will be carefully monitored throughout the year to ensure the funding is used in the most effective way.

2.0 Housing Costs

There is no legal definition of the term 'housing costs'. For the purposes of this policy, 'housing costs' will be deemed to be:

- rent liability
- rent deposit
- rent in advance
- removal costs
- lump sum expenditure for household items that are essential to enable the property to be used as a home

3.0 Lump sum payments for Housing Costs

A DHP can be awarded for a rent deposit or rent in advance for a property that the claimant is yet to move into if they are already entitled to HB or UC at their present home.

Rent in advance, deposit payments and removal costs are a significant cost to those moving home. Assistance may be provided by DHP where it will assist the applicant to secure long-term affordable accommodation where there is a significant risk of homelessness or ongoing financial hardship.

The council must be satisfied there is a genuine need to move and there are no other means available to pay the required rent in advance or deposit to secure the tenancy. It is expected that applicants would usually be engaged and supported by the Housing Options team in order to access support under this part of the scheme.

The weekly/monthly limit does not apply to lump sum payments as they are being awarded to meet an immediate housing need. It is not made in respect of a period, the claimant must be entitled to HB or UC at the point the award is made.

DHP can not be used to pay rent arrears for periods where there is no entitlement to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. DHP can be paid for a past period to top up the difference between the eligible rent and Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

4.0 Relevant Time for Claiming

Applications for DHP should be made as soon as possible where the household falls into difficulty and is unable to manage to meet its rent liability. Awards of DHP will normally be made from the date of the application. It is possible to pay DHP for past periods however this is at the discretion of the officer who makes the decision.

Applications for rent in advance or deposits must be made prior to the commencement of the tenancy.

A DHP cannot be awarded for any period the customer has no entitlement to HB or UC.

A DHP can only be awarded after the end of the first UC assessment period where the award includes a payment of housing costs element.

5.0 Making a Claim

A claim can be made by a person entitled to HB, UC or from a person acting on their behalf. The DHP claim must be made on the prescribed form available on the council's website. The form is designed specifically to gather all relevant information to enable an officer to make a decision. The form incorporates a standard income and expenditure sheet and questions designed to provide a consistency of detail to support decision making. Where possible the council will obtain information internally or from the DWP, the council may require the applicant to provide further information, if this information is not provided within one month, the claim will be defective and no further action taken.

Applicants requiring a lump sum payment to help towards a one off housing cost will complete a different application form which is available on the council's website.

6.0 Making an Award

DHP decisions will be made by Benefit Officers within the Benefits & Welfare Service.

7.0 Notification

The outcome of the application will be notified within 14 days of receipt of the claim and any subsequent information requested. Where an application is unsuccessful, the reasons why this decision was made will be set out and the right of review explained.

Where the application is successful, the award notification will set out

- the weekly, monthly or total amount of DHP awarded;
- the period of the award;
- how, when and to whom the payment will be made;
- the requirement to report a change in circumstances.

The council may provide recommended actions for the applicant to consider which may help to improve the household circumstances. It is expected that this advice is followed before any future award is made.

8.0 Period of payment

Each case will be decided on its own merits and there is no minimum period an award will be made for. The period of the award is at the discretion of the officer making the decision based on the individual circumstances of the case. DHP awards are designed primarily to meet short term requirements and provide time for customers to make necessary changes to their circumstances to ensure they are able to live within their means in the longer term.

All awards will have an end date.

9.0 Maximum amount of a DHP award

The maximum amount of DHP payable on an ongoing basis is prescribed within the Discretionary Financial Regulations:

- For a person entitled to HB the maximum amount of DHP is limited to the difference between the HB award and the eligible contractual rent after deduction of any ineligible service charges as defined in appendix A. This is known as the “shortfall”
- For a person entitled to UC the maximum award is equal to the level of the housing cost element allowed in the UC assessment for each calendar month assessment period

10.0 Method of payment

The chosen method of payment will be based on the individual’s circumstances and payment will be made to the most appropriate person in the best interests of the applicant.

Payments of DHP are usually made where there is a risk of someone being evicted or to help secure a new tenancy by way of rent in advance or deposit and therefore usually the landlord or their agent will be the person whom DHP is paid to.

Payment would only be made to the claimant or their nominated appointee where there is evidence the rent has already been paid or paying the landlord could threaten the tenancy. The method of payment will usually be by BACs transfer or crediting the rent account where this is possible. The frequency of payment will normally be made in line with how the HB or UC is paid.

10.0 Change of circumstances

If a claimant fails to meet the eligibility requirements for HB or UC and is not entitled to either benefit any award of DHP made under this scheme will be terminated.

An award of DHP may also be revised where there has been a change in the customer’s financial household circumstances. It is the customer’s responsibility to notify the council as soon as any change occurs. Any amendment to the DHP award may result in an overpayment of DHP which may be recovered. Section 15 provides further details of how an overpayment of DHP will be recovered.

11.0 Disputes and Appeals

A DHP is not a payment of HB or UC and therefore it is not subject to the statutory appeals process. The independent Tribunal Service cannot hear appeals relating to DHP.

If there is a dispute with the decision this must be notified within one calendar month of the date of the decision letter. This must be made in writing and clearly set out the reasons for the dispute and provide any additional information which needs to be considered.

The dispute will be considered by a different officer from within the service who made the original decision.

A further dispute can be made in writing to the Benefits and Welfare Manager. The outcome of the dispute will be notified in writing.

There is no further right of internal appeal should the decision be disagreed with.

The route of judicial review is available, and the local government ombudsman if there is an allegation of maladministration.

15.0 Overpayments and Recovery of DHP

Careful consideration will be given on recovery of any overpayment and it may be decided not to recover an overpayment.

DHP cannot be recovered from on-going HB, UC or from other prescribed benefits.

An invoice will be issued to the claimant or the person to whom the award was paid. If this is not paid further recovery action will be taken, for example using debt collection agencies or offsetting overpaid DHPs if further DHPs are granted at a later date.

16.0 Fraud

Most applications for DHP are genuine. Some applications are made with the deliberate intention to obtain money to which the applicant is not entitled. The application for DHP should be a true representation of the applicant's circumstances.

It is an offence to misrepresent or fail to disclose relevant information in an application for DHP. Where facts are misrepresented or where there is a failure to disclose relevant information in support of their application, this may constitute an offence under the Theft Act 1968. Where it is suspected that such a fraud may have occurred, the matter will be investigated as appropriate and this may lead to legal action being taken against the person who made the claim.

17.0 Equalities Statement

We are committed to delivering a service that is accessible and fair to all of the communities that we serve and ensure that all people are treated with respect and dignity. The Equality Act 2010 sets out an 'Equality Duty' to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- promote equality of opportunity between different groups in the community and
- foster good relations within the local community.

We give careful consideration to equality issues in our new and existing policies, strategies and services to see what effect they will have on different groups within our communities, including those with protected characteristics.

The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

18.0 Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or in line with any major changes to the HB, UC or Financial Assistance regulations to ensure it remains valid, relevant and effective in achieving the policy objectives.

Appendix A

Housing Costs Excluded by Legislation from the DHP Scheme

The following elements are specifically excluded by legislation from eligibility for support by the DHP scheme:

- 1) Ineligible charges. Service charges that are not eligible for HB or UC as specified by legislation cannot be covered by a DHP.
- 2) To help with Council Tax
- 3) Increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears. A rental liability may be increased to recover arrears of rent. This increase does not form part of the rental liability that can be considered eligible for DHP award.
- 4) Sanctions and reductions in any welfare benefits. DHPs cannot meet these because to do so would undermine the effectiveness of the sanctions or reduction in benefit.
- 5) Benefit suspensions. HB or UC can be suspended because there is doubt about entitlement or because a customer has failed to supply information. In such cases DHP can not be paid instead. One of the intentions of the suspension provisions is to act as a lever to ensure that the customer takes the necessary steps to provide the authority with the necessary information/evidence - paying DHPs could reduce the effectiveness of this lever.
- 6) Shortfalls caused by benefit overpayment recovery. When recovery of an overpayment is taking place, shortfalls cannot be considered for a DHP.

Appendix B

DHP Funding

The DHP funding	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Amount Funded by the Government	£96,253	£112,253	£171,871	£138,880	£133,087

Winchester Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Introduction

This document sets out Winchester Council's Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) policy for the financial year 2017/18 and for future years until amended.

DHP is a centrally funded, ring-fenced grant which supports local authorities in providing additional financial assistance for housing costs to Housing Benefit (HB) households and households in receipt of Universal Credit Housing Costs (UCHC).

The DHP fund is allocated to local authorities by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The grant distribution formula is calculated on local authority HB caseload, previous DHP spend and forecast impacts from the following welfare reforms:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reforms;
- Social Sector Size Criteria
- Benefit Cap

Appendix B shows the level of funding received by Winchester City Council in the past 5 years.

While the remit of DHP is restricted by statute, the local authority retains discretion on how to target spend within the legislative framework. This document defines Winchester Council's local policy for the administration of DHP under the discretionary element of the scheme.

The Council is committed to ensuring the customer journey is simple and effective and as such discretionary funding pots are aligned to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform wherever possible. The DHP policy adheres to this vision.

Principles of Winchester's Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme

The principles of the DHP scheme are to support residents into long term, sustainable, financially independent living. These are aligned to the Community Strategy as part of delivering an entrepreneurial approach to public services and to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Hardship Fund and other council funds as appropriate, by. The policy acknowledges that for some households long term financial support with housing costs is required and addresses such scenarios.

The principles of Winchester's Discretionary Housing Payment scheme are:

- To ensure a financial sustainable approach to supporting residents
- To provide short-term support to assist long-term, sustainable, financial independence
- To provide long term support where a household's circumstances are deemed to be such that sustainable financial independence is not an option, e.g. due to disability

- To align with the HRA Hardship Fund and other council funds as appropriate To support the Homelessness Strategy and help reduce poverty in the borough To help support residents into work
- To reduce the risk to health and safety of households
- To support safeguarding of children and adults and promoting family

Primary Qualifying Criteria

To enable these principles to be maintained, the following primary criteria will be considered for all applications

- Sufficient funds must be available within the DHP pot allocated to the local authority
- Household must not be able to obtain funds from elsewhere to meet the housing need they are applying for DHP to assist with
- Household must not have received funds elsewhere for the rent/household item they are applying for
- Applicant/partner must be willing to adhere to opportunities for support to assist in becoming financially independent, including engaging with Council's Housing Needs Services and the Winchester Supporting Families programme and back to work initiatives
- Applicant/partner must not have received a DHP payment for a rent deposit, rent in advance or removal costs within the last two years with exception of people fleeing domestic violence, suffering from mental health illness (known to mental health partners, CNWL, and in receipt of mental health care package) or intentionally homeless

Statutory framework

DHP is legislated for in the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 as amended and provides the following framework:

- DHP may only be awarded to people in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs from Winchester Council;
- DHP may only be awarded to people who the authority find are in need of additional financial assistance to enable them to meet their housing costs;
- DHP may not be awarded to cover housing costs that are specified as ineligible for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs;
- Where DHP is awarded to assist with weekly rental liability, payments will not exceed that liability less any ineligible charges for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs;

DHP cannot be used to:

- assist with the payment of Council Tax;
- assist with an increase in rent to cover arrears;

- To cover sanctions, reduction in benefits due to collection of debt or due to a failure to comply with a Child Support Agency Order e.g for recovery of a housing benefit overpayment.
- The Council will only award DHPs from the Central Government funding allocation, and will not seek to top up this grant from the General Fund.

Housing costs

There is no legal definition of the term 'housing costs' or 'further financial assistance'. Under Winchester's DHP policy 'housing costs' will be deemed to be:

- Eligible Rent as defined by the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or Rent Payments as defined by the Universal Credit Regulations 2013
- Rent deposit
- Rent in advance
- Removal costs
- Lump sum expenditure for household items that are essential to enable the property to be used as a home

An application for DHP will be considered for the following situations where it is demonstrated that the claimant is unable to meet these costs by other means:

- Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Cost shortfall in rent due to welfare reform including Benefit Cap, Social Sector Size Criteria and reductions in Local Housing Allowance (LHA)
- Housing Benefit/Universal Credit shortfall in rent due to LHA/rent officer restriction
- Housing Benefit/Universal Credit shortfall in rent due to level of household income
- Housing Benefit/Universal Credit shortfall in rent due to non-dependant deductions
- Rent deposit/rent in advance
- Removal costs
- Household items that are required to enable the property to be used as a home.

The following are ineligible costs for which DHP cannot be paid:

- Ineligible service charges as defined by the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or Universal Credit Regulations 2013
- Rent arrears, including where these have been added to ongoing rent payments
- Council tax
- Costs resulting from a suspension in HB or UC or where benefit pended awaiting the outcome of an appeal
- Shortfall resulting from recovery of HB or UC overpayment from ongoing benefits
- Shortfall resulting from a sanction or reduction in HB or UC imposed by DWP

Secondary Qualifying criteria

In addition to meeting primary and legislative criteria, successful applicants must, in most instances, fall into one of the groups listed below. Meeting any of the criteria will not in itself result in an award being made.

The following are a guide to the types of scenarios when DHP may be awarded, but each case will be considered on its own merits.

- Disabled. Defined as in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Employment and Support Allowance (support component), Armed Forces Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance or registered blind;
- Suffering with severe medical complaint that results in additional needs;
- Pensioner, as per DWP definition;
- An expectant mother within 3 months of child birth requiring an additional room following the birth of the child;
- A child in the household will turn 10 years of age within 6 months and due to them being of the opposite sex to their sibling(s) will become entitled to an additional room under Housing Benefit/Universal Credit rules;
- A single applicant who within 6 months will turn 35 years and their rent is restricted under the Shared Accommodation Rate rules;
- A move would be seriously detrimental to a child's education, e.g. within a year of GCSE exams.
- Household member is leaving institutional care;
- Household member is at risk of entering institutional care;
- Fleeing domestic violence;
- Entering into work or in long term genuine and effective employment;
- Ex-prisoner leaving prison;
- Suffering with mental health issues (known to mental health partners and in receipt of mental health care package) and known to Social Services;
- Supported Families (previously Troubled Families) (SF), Children's Services Youth Offending Team (YOT), Hampshire Safeguarding Children board under Child Protection Plan);
- Household requirement to remain in locality of specialist support needed by household members, e.g. health care provision
- Requirement of household to remain in accommodation due to lack of suitable alternative, cheaper accommodation, e.g. if property adapted for disability
- Households needing to move on advice of Police e.g. witness protection;
- Where there is a risk to the health or safety of household members if a DHP is not paid.

Once identified as falling into one of more of above categories, the household will be assessed against the following criteria to identify the ability of the household to manage the 'housing costs' themselves.

Each case will be considered on its own merits with reference to the following financial criteria:

- DHP funding is still available

- Household is experiencing severe financial hardship
- Income and expenditure available to the household compared to the amount of the housing cost applied for
- The ability of all household members to financially contribute including any assets held
- Whether payment of DHP will resolve financial difficulties
- Whether payment of DHP promotes financial independence, including to take up work
- Reasonableness of rent charged
- Other steps taken by applicant to resolve financial difficulties, such as negotiating rent level with landlord
- No alternative financial assistance available to household
- Additional household expenditure due to illness/disability

Any case falling outside of the above discretionary criteria will be considered on its own merits and in exceptional circumstances may result in an award of DHP.

Underpinning this decision making process will be whether the payment of a DHP will resolve, either temporarily or long term, the financial predicament for the household, and whether moving the household would prevent them from accessing the support/employment/education they receive in their current property

Accessing DHP

Claim process

An application for DHP must be made to the local authority. The applicant or application appointee (but not a landlord) must make the initial application verbally, in writing or electronically. The Council may request that the application be supported by additional written, telephone or electronic evidence or further information deemed reasonable by the council to enable a decision to be made.

Where possible the council will obtain information internally or from DWP, however the Council may require the applicant to obtain and provide further information. If the information is not provided within one month, the claim will be deemed to be defective.

The applicant has a duty to notify the local authority of any change of circumstances that may affect their entitlement to DHP. This includes changes that may be known by other council services or the DWP.

Start date of award

DHP award will normally begin from either:

- The Monday following the date the application is received; or
- The date Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Cost entitlement began if the application is received within 1 month of the date the applicant was notified that their benefit had been decided; or

- The effective date of change to benefit following a change of circumstances, if the application is received within 1 month of the applicant being notified of the decision relating to the change of circumstances; or
- The effective date of change to benefit following a change of legislation, if the application is received within 1 month of the applicant being notified of the decision relating to the change; or
- A date requested by the customer following a successful claim for backdating (see backdating below)

Backdating

The request for backdated DHP must be in writing and must give reasons to show continuous 'good cause' for not making a DHP application within the above time limits. 'Good cause' must be shown for the whole of the backdate period.

There is no limit to the period DHP backdating can be awarded for, but the applicant must receive Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Costs for all of the period backdating is awarded for, and funds must be available to support the award.

End date

A DHP is always for a limited period and cannot carry on beyond the end of the Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Cost claim. The end date of the DHP period will depend on the individual circumstances of each application and funds available. The issues to be considered are:

- The expected duration of the applicant's circumstance that led to the award being made;
- Tenancy end date;
- Expected date of change of circumstances, such as child leaving school;
- Amount of funds available in the current financial year and future financial year(s);

Where a DHP is awarded to support the transition into work, the end date of the award will be the latest of either:

- Four weeks from the start of work if an extended payment run on is not applicable; or
- The date tax credit payment begins.

If the need for a DHP continues after the award period ends, the period can be extended if a new application is made.

Amount

The maximum DHP is the amount of shortfall between the eligible rent and the entitlement to Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Costs, or the amount of other housing costs if a lump sum is awarded, e.g rent deposit.

For applicants in receipt of Universal Credit Housing Costs the shortfall will be based on the identifiable housing element of the claim. The amount of the award will be decided depending on the applicant's circumstance.

Where DHP is awarded for a weekly amount, the level of the award will not exceed the full eligible rent.

The amount of the award does not have to be for the full shortfall in rent or for the full lump sum. Consideration will be given to how much is needed to ease the applicant's financial situation and the ability of the household to contribute

Where a DHP is awarded to assist the transition into work, the maximum weekly payment will not exceed the Housing Benefit entitlement prior to starting work.

Decision

A decision will be made once all relevant information is received. Awards of DHPs are at the local authority's discretion. All decisions will be recorded within the electronic assessment system for auditing purposes.

Decisions will be notified in writing within three working days of the decision or such period as is reasonably practicable. Decision notices will include the reason for the decision, the amount, period of the award if appropriate, method of payment, review process and the need to notify changes of circumstance.

If the decision refers to an overpayment of DHP the decision notice will include the amount, period and reason for the overpayment.

Payment

Although not benefit, where the DHP is awarded to cover a rent shortfall the DHP will, in the first instance, be paid with any Housing Benefit entitlement. If benefit is paid to the landlord then DHP will be paid in the same way.

Where Universal Credit is in payment, the council may deem it reasonable to pay either the applicant, landlord or someone acting on behalf of the applicant.

DHP will be paid in the same payment cycle as Housing Benefit. Where Universal Credit is in payment, the frequency of payments will be dependant on the applicant's requirements and the ability of the council to meet those requirements.

Rent deposits will be paid to the landlord in all but exceptional circumstances.

Rent in advance will be paid to the new landlord in all but exceptional circumstances.

Removal costs will be paid via invoice to the removal company.

Any goods will be purchased directly from companies identified through the Council's procurement process.

Cancellation and change of circumstances

Applicants will be notified of the requirement to inform the council of changes in circumstance. This may be with reference to information provided in their claim for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit.

A DHP award can be cancelled or amended if:

- The applicant has had a change in circumstance that affects DHP; or
- DHP has been awarded based on information that was wrong or that the authority was not aware of (this may be fraudulent or otherwise); or
- An error was made when the award was decided and payment was made based on this error; or
- The Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Cost entitlement changes. Where the change results in a reduction in Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Cost, the applicant may be required to apply to have the amount of DHP increased. This will be considered under the same criteria as a new DHP application.

The cancellation or amendment may be from the start of entitlement or from a later date depending on the reasons for cancellation.

DHP can be suspended if a question has arisen over the entitlement to the award or the method of payment.

Overpayments

Overpayments of DHP will be recoverable. Consideration will be given to whether the overpayment is due to applicant or local authority error and whether the applicant could have reasonably known they were being overpaid.

If the overpayment is recoverable a decision will be made from whom to recover the overpayment from. Recovery could be made from either:

- Applicant; or
- the person the DHP was paid to; or
- a third party who knowingly gave false information which led to the overpayment.

Collection of overpayments

The following methods will be used to recover overpayments of DHP:

- Recovery from ongoing DHP entitlement;
- Transfer of the debt onto the Council Housing rent account if the account has sufficient credit;
- By sundry debtors invoice.

DHP overpayments cannot be collected from ongoing Housing Benefit entitlement.

Information will be gathered from the applicant, DHP records and any other relevant sources to inform the rate the overpayment will be recovered at. Consideration will be given to:

- The size of the debt;
- How long the debt will take to recover;
- Whether the overpayment is due to fraud;
- What other corporate debts are owed;

- The financial circumstance of the household;
- Any vulnerability identified within the household as in accordance Council Tax Recovery policy.

All recovered overpayments will be allocated back into the outstanding DHP grant for the year.

If the overpayment is not recoverable then it will be submitted for write off within the Schedule of Delegation.

Disputes

If the customer disagrees with the decision they must make a dispute in writing giving the reasons why they think the decision is wrong and providing additional evidence to support their case.

This must be received by the local authority within one month of the original decision. Late requests can be considered if the applicant has good reason for the delay.

The review will be carried out by an officer in a more senior position to that of the original decision maker and who has had no previous involvement in the determination of the claim.

Disputes will be considered within one month of receipt or as soon as reasonably practicable, The applicant will be notified in writing of the decision within 3 days of the decision, giving the reasons for the decision.

There is no further internal right of appeal

Monitoring and evaluation

The DHP spend will be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure expenditure is within available funds.

Management Information (MI) will be collated to identify areas of high demand to allow monitoring against the intention of this policy.

MI will be aligned to the requirements of the DWP statutory return as detailed in Appendix A.

Appendix A

Has the applicant been affected by one of the following? (Select from list)

Benefit Cap

Removal of spare room subsidy in social rented sector

LHA restrictions

Combination of reforms

No welfare reform related impact

What is the intended outcome? (Select from list)

(a) To help secure and move to alternative accommodation (e.g. rent deposit)

(b) To help with short term rental costs until applicant secures alternative accommodation

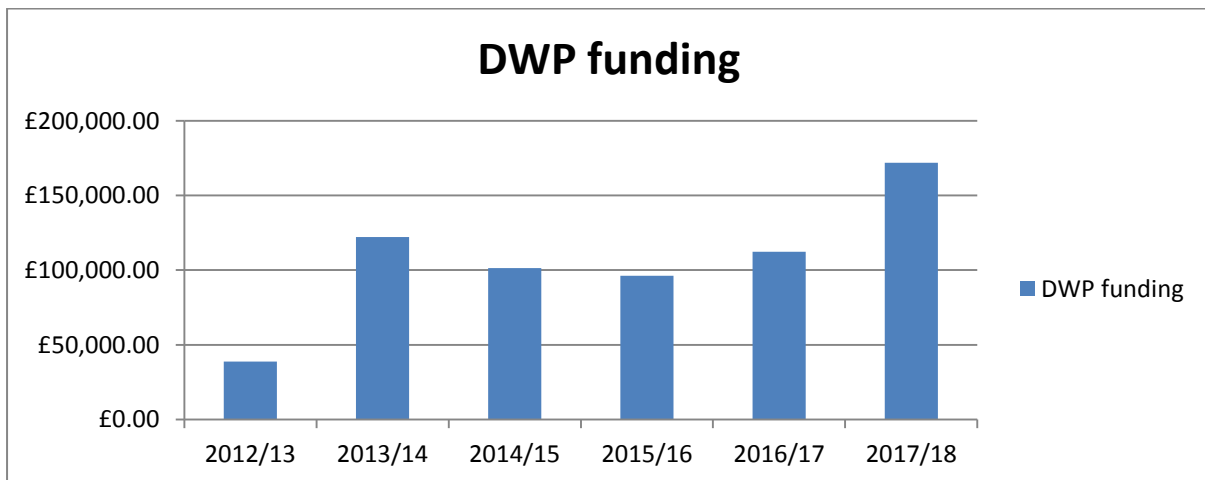
(c) To help with short term rental costs while the applicant seeks employment

(d) To help with on going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation

(e) To help with getting into work

(f) To help with short term rental costs for any other reason

Appendix B



This page is intentionally left blank

Hampshire Home Choice Review

Gillian Knight
Corporate Head of Housing (Interim)



Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme

Background Context :

Page 58



Hampshire Home Choice



HAMPSHIRE HOME CHOICE

 Launched in 2009

 Hampshire Home Choice Framework

 Hampshire Home Choice Board

 LA Officers/Registered Providers Groups

 Operational Procedures

LOCAL SCHEME OF ALLOCATION

Allows for flexibility but must have regard to:

- 🏰 Legislation: Housing Act 1996 (part 6), amended by Homelessness Act 2003, Localism Act 2011.
- 🏰 Strategies: Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy.
- 🏰 Homelessness prevention and statutory duties.
- 🏰 Determine priorities between applicants.
- 🏰 'Reasonable Preference' categories (those in greatest housing need).

WCC scheme also include

- 🏰 Tied tenants
- 🏰 Army Personnel

LOCAL SCHEME OF ALLOCATION

must also:

Consider and meet the needs of vulnerable people: domestic abuse victims, those with mental health problems, an ageing population.

Tackle under-occupation and overcrowding.

Provide applicants with as much choice as possible.

Help create & maintain sustainable communities.

Make best use of housing stock.

Set out policy, detailed operational procedures, customer friendly guide.

Publish a summary of the Winchester scheme of allocation.

QUALIFYING CRITERIA - WINCHESTER HOUSING REGISTER

 An applicant must demonstrate:

 Housing need:

- Living at home with family/parents
- Living in private rented accommodation
- Living in tied accommodation
- Unsatisfactory accommodation
- Existing RP tenants
- Overcrowding/Under occupation
- Health and welfare issues


 Income of less than £60,000

 Assets and or savings of less than £16,000

 Local connection

SERVICE REVIEW & CONSULTATION

National Influence






-  Social Housing Green Paper – Wider policy framework for allocations & lettings (first discussion for a decade).

Part of the chapter ‘expanding supply and supporting homeownership’.
Sub section on ‘efficient use of existing housing stock for those who need it’.

Welfare reform – risk adverse social landlords, pre-tenancy affordability checks.













-  Housing Quality Network (HQN)

Consultation










-  Elected Members Briefing
-  Tenants & Residents Together (TACT) Scrutiny group
-  Customer Smart Transformational Change Group
-  Hampshire Home Choice Board
-  Housing Staff focus groups

REVIEW SCOPE

Improving the customer journey









-  S106 agreement – criteria applied correctly?
-  Application renewal process applied to rigorously
-  Explore reasons for non bidding applicants
-  Cross boundary moves - WCC importing?
-  Better use of digital platforms to connect with applicants – advert details/bulk messaging
-  Customer profile data: understanding/managing expectations, evidence demand
-  Culture/system change
-  Individual case work approach
-  Comprehensive and coordinated housing advice & options service for applicants.
-  Learning from complaints
-  Staffing Review 2018/19
-  Staff customer service training

IMPROVEMENTS TO SERVICE DELIVERY

-  Duty service, case management approach in place
-  New Management team
-  Staff training/shadowing opportunities undertaken
-  Housing Hub move
-  Digitalising the service - more responsive service.
-  An holistic approach applied to the health & welfare criteria, banding status. (Allocation team lead)
-  Applying a consistent approach to village and s.106 agreements allocations – agreements reviewed, saved electronically, nominations verified by management team.
-  Renewal applications - no longer automatically removed
-  Cross boundary moves - remain low but an important housing option.

POLICY SERVICE REVIEW

Policy changes:

-  Reviewing non bidding Band 2 applicants – reduce priority status, based on reasoning.
-  Band 4 owner occupiers eligibility (older persons properties) affordability definition of assets, savings to ensure best use of housing stock.
-  Tailored approach for adapted properties - priority/ advert based on need rather than limitation of number of adaptations within the property.
-  Ground floor property need – more flexible approach on a case to case health & welfare needs to make best use of adapted properties.
-  Band 2 Temporary accommodation move on - based on occupation time rather than housing duty timescales.
-  Tailored solutions for larger families/4 bedroomed persons need – allocated on a case to case basis.
-  Bedroom size criteria for pregnant applicants - amended at Mat B1 certificate stage
-  Consultation/Amendments to SLA to be agreed – decision process.

Questions













This page is intentionally left blank

Fire Safety Strategy

Gillian Knight
Corporate Head of Housing (Interim)



FIRE SAFETY MANAGEMENT

-  Robust approach
 -  Good record on fire safety
 -  Fire Safety Policy
 -  Fire Risk Assessments, evacuation plans
 -  Fire Risk Check Lists/Inspections
 -  Weekly Health & Safety checks/alarm testing
 -  Robust Housing Stock Information (fire safety elements & measures available)
 -  Good tenant involvement structure
 -  Staff expertise and knowledge
 -  Good core systems












MEASURES TAKEN POST GRENFELL

- 🏰 Fire Safety Policy refreshed
- 🏰 Established Fire Strategy Group
- 🏰 £1 Million fire provision within the HRA Budget
- 🏰 Fire safety review of Winnall Flats with Hampshire Fire and Rescue
- 🏰 Undertook a survey of communal flat entrance doors/alarm provision - replacement programme of works underway.
- 🏰 Property Surveyor new tenant visits to cover fire safety.
- 🏰 New Homes properties – commissioning independent fire safety advice, Clerk of works (monitoring), Building Control (compliance)
- 🏰 Consultation – TACT, tenant digital surveys, focus groups
- 🏰 Joined Housing Quality Network - Health & Safety Network
- 🏰 Re-joining IHS – improving access to industry guidance
- 🏰 Promoting Hampshire Fire and Rescue ‘Safe & Sound’ survey – resident personal safety plans.
- 🏰 Linking work of housing teams. ‘

FIRE STRATEGY PROJECT

Task and Finish Groups

Tenant/Leaseholder representation




-  Resident information & complaints
-  Fire risk assessment & evacuation plans
-  Construction & Property Related Processes
-  Learning from fires
-  Alarm Provision & Management
-  Mobility Scooter storage & Charging
-  Inspection & Enforcement
-  Insurance
-  Permissions Policy
-  Leaseholders & Shared Ownership
-  Rubbish Chutes

PROJECT OUTCOMES




- Defined Roles and Responsibilities
- Fire related policies, standards & processes held in one central area
- Risk Assessments accessible to residents published on the Website
- Mobility Scooter storage policy
- Tenant and Leasehold fire safety responsibilities & messaging
- Clear 'Lessons Learnt' structure for fires & alarm activation
- Ready to take forward recommendations from the Grenfell investigations & further government announcements from the Grenfell Inquiry
- Staff Competency & Training
- Service Processes & Information
- Adopted Fire Strategy regularly reviewed & monitored

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Dame Judith Hackitt's recommendations

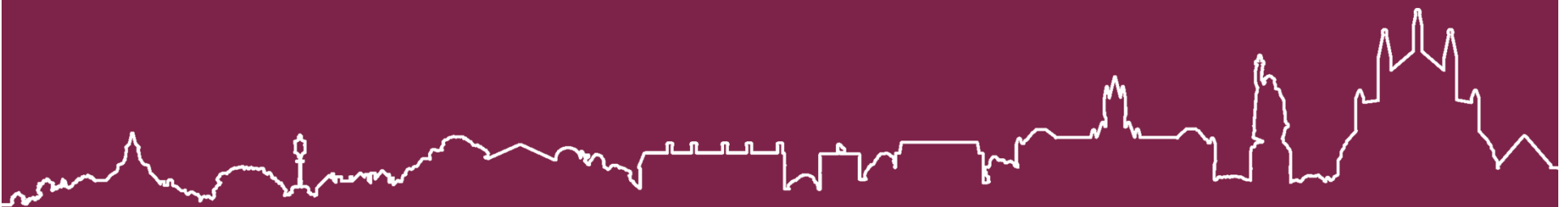
-  Strengthening the Residents Voice & Raising Concerns
-  Transparency
-  Approach to providing tenant & other residents fire safety information

Clear & timely service user information & messaging on:

-  prevention & emergency response messages for customers.
-  the responsibilities of tenants, leaseholders & landlords
-  how to raise concerns

'Fire safety is everyone's responsibility'

Questions



This page is intentionally left blank