

COVID Recovery – Housing Services

Business and Housing Policy Committee

9 February 2021



HOUSING UPDATE

“Business as usual” for most services

Service Summary

- New Homes
- Tenancy Services
- Property Services
- Housing Options
- Private Sector Housing
- Tenant Involvement

Housing Service Planning 2021

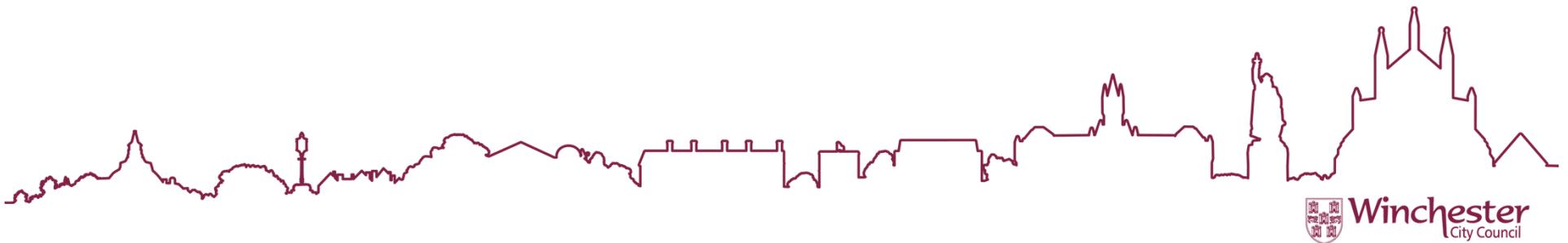
Support for Vulnerable Tenants – Proposal for additional investment

Next Generation Winchester Update



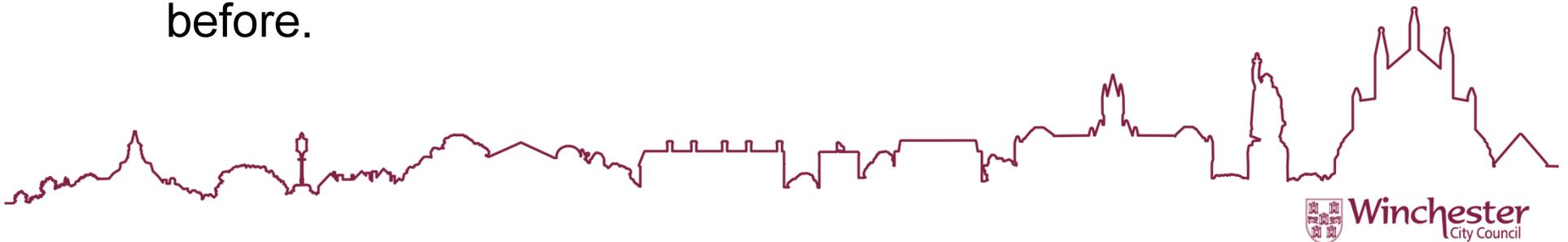
NEW HOMES

- Development Sites all operational. 119 units under construction:
 - Valley, Stanmore phased completion between March – May 21
 - Letting and sales process commenced
 - Hookpit due for completion in June 21
 - Rowlings Rd progressing. Completion on 25th Feb 21
 - 10 Year funding for 1000 secured in HRA Budget
- Winnall scheme – Planning application submitted Dec 20
- Nitrates – Reviewing options to purchase credits to support Council development



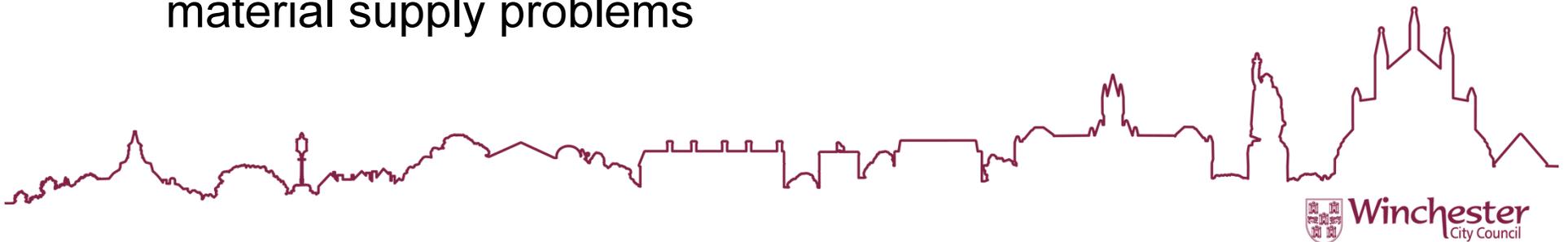
TENANCY SERVICES

- Arrears approx. 2% of Rent Roll (22% of tenants)
- 20% claiming Universal Credit
- Additional controls at sheltered/extra care schemes (communal areas closed, activities at scheme suspended etc).
- Welfare calls to all Sheltered Housing tenants. Additional support in place during lockdown for those that require it.
- Void/allocation process – No change. Void works, viewings, sign-ups are continuing in line with risk assessments/government guidance.
- All other essential services to tenants are continuing as before.



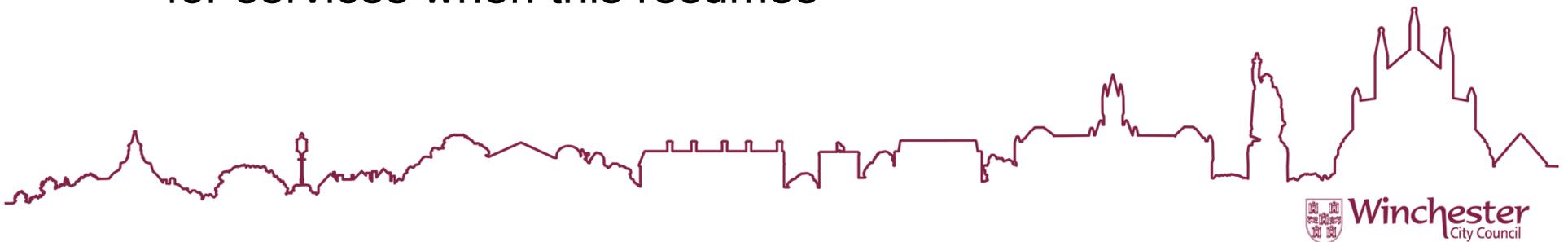
PROPERTY SERVICES

- Normal “business as usual” repairs service being maintained
- No significant backlogs - majority of repairs and voids still being completed
- Swedish unit project delayed - but still due to complete in next 3/6 months
- Proposals for Energy Works/retrofitting to Cabinet March 2021 (options reviewed by Health/Env. Cttee in late 2020)
- Property Surveyor inspections have reduced, but tenants generally happy to allow access
- Fire door replacement programme progressing - some material supply problems



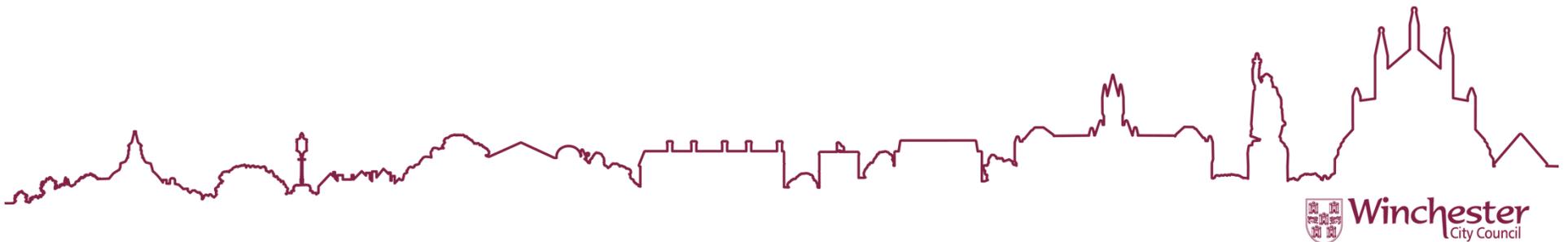
HOUSING OPTIONS

- 🏰 Reception/Appointment service maintained
- 🏰 Temporary Accommodation service enhanced – outbreak planning, symptom checking, welfare calls. Staff/residents prioritised for vaccine.
- 🏰 Further call to ‘Everyone In’ - 16 individuals in emergency accommodation. 10 in City Road, 6 in hotels
- 🏰 Funding secured to support the above and maintain through to Spring
- 🏰 Individuals with complex needs in emergency accommodation, challenging to maintain
- 🏰 Most evictions still suspended – likely increase in demand for services when this resumes



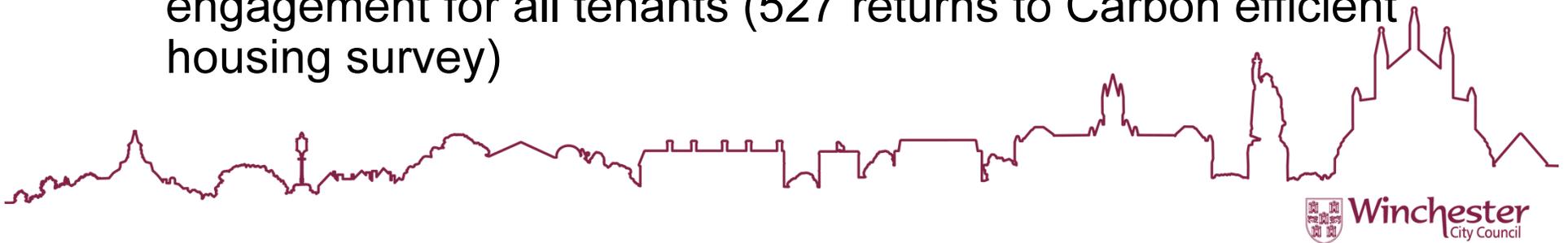
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

- Stock Condition Survey commissioned- to be undertaken Feb/March 2021
- Urgent housing complaints still being investigated, virtual alternatives for some assessments.
- HMO licensing and accreditation progressing if property is empty, on hold if tenanted.
- Disabled Adaptations – “business as usual” for stair lifts, hoists and works already in progress as assessments undertaken remotely. 49 DFG cases approved to the value of £626,968.



TENANT INVOLVEMENT

- 🏰 TACT Chair challenge at December Cabinet Meeting re Engagement
- 🏰 Council commitment to consult tenants on all key “HRA related” decisions
- 🏰 TACT – Meeting virtually at present. Continue virtual option for meetings post lockdown?
- 🏰 TACT Elections May 21 – developing online voting option
- 🏰 Tenant training programme – supporting virtual engagement
- 🏰 Development of an eNewsletter planned for 2021.
- 🏰 Building on success of “e-surveys” in 2020 to achieve wider engagement for all tenants (527 returns to Carbon efficient housing survey)



HOUSING SERVICE PLAN – 2021/22

Climate Emergency – Retrofit measures for Council homes

-  Swedish Timber Trial – Extend to other Low EPC properties?
-  “Fabric First” works
-  Focus on Voids in year 1 but with “willing volunteers” also
-  £15m now allocated

Commission Gas Maintenance/safety service

Fire Safety actions

Review/Update Decent Homes. Refresh Asset Mgt Strategy

Focus on Tenant Engagement

New Homes

-  Complete Valley, Rowlings, Hookpit Farm
-  Mixed Tenure housing at Winnall
-  Implement Development Strategy (Cabinet report March 21)
-  Nitrate Solution



HOUSING SERVICE PLAN – 2021/22

Tenancy Support

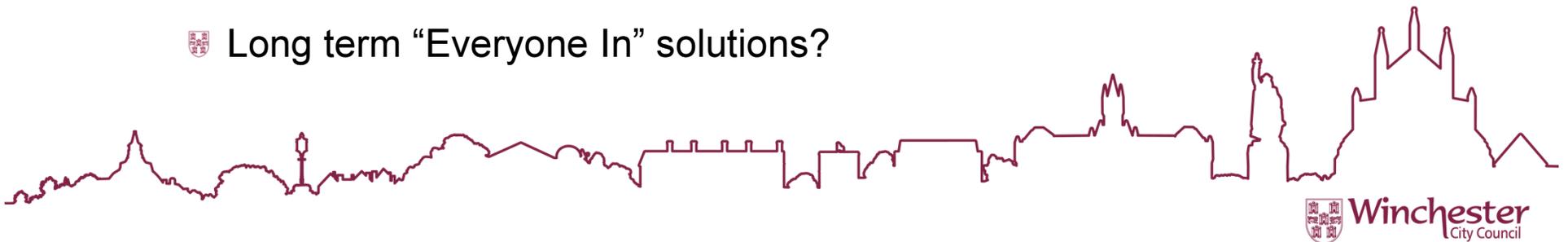
-  Increase assistance for those with poor mental health
-  Research tenant poverty levels to inform a strategy targeted to help those most in need

Private Sector stock survey

-  Refresh Private Sector Housing Strategy
-  Use data to identify households at risk of fuel poverty or with a low EPC rating (refer to LEAP/ LAD funding)

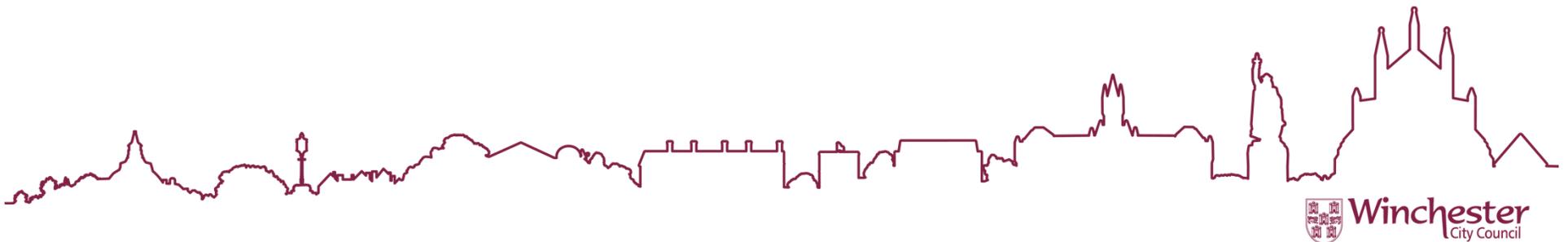
Reduce rough sleeping

-  exploration of a new and flexible local outreach offer
-  Explore options to maintain City Road as an emergency accommodation provision following long term reduction of 7 beds at Nightshelter
-  Long term “Everyone In” solutions?



SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE TENANTS

- Significant increased impact of Mental Health issues in recent years
- Increased caseload in relation to Hoarding, Anti-social behaviour, neighbour disputes, Isolation, Arrears
- Mental Health specialist appointed January 2020 in partnership with Southern Health.
- 94 referrals received requiring support with their well-being which was impacting ability to maintain accommodation. This is only the tip of the iceberg!
- Long term impact on Mental health will be seen for many years to come as a result of COVID-19.



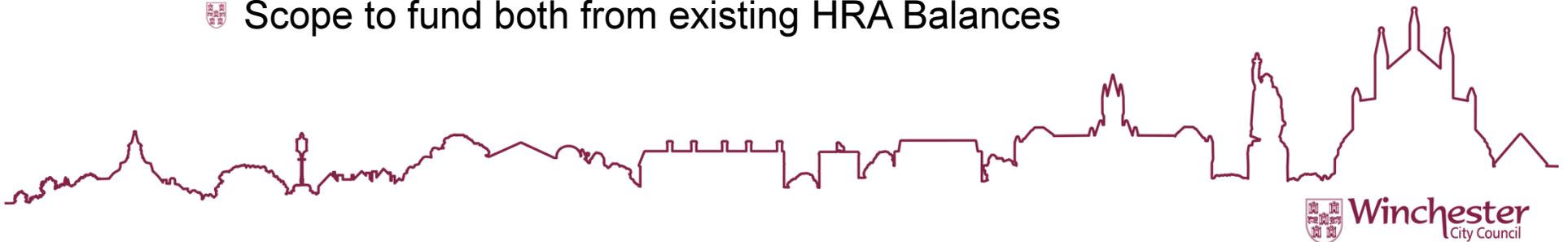
SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE TENANTS

Options/additional investment:

-  Develop relationships further with Adult Social Care, CMHT and the voluntary sector to provide wrap around support.
-  Hoarding-develop clear pathway for WCC to co-ordinate a multi agency approach and commission services.
-  Further develop our support offer for those with lower level well being scores.
-  Look to commission support services to help those with poor mental health.

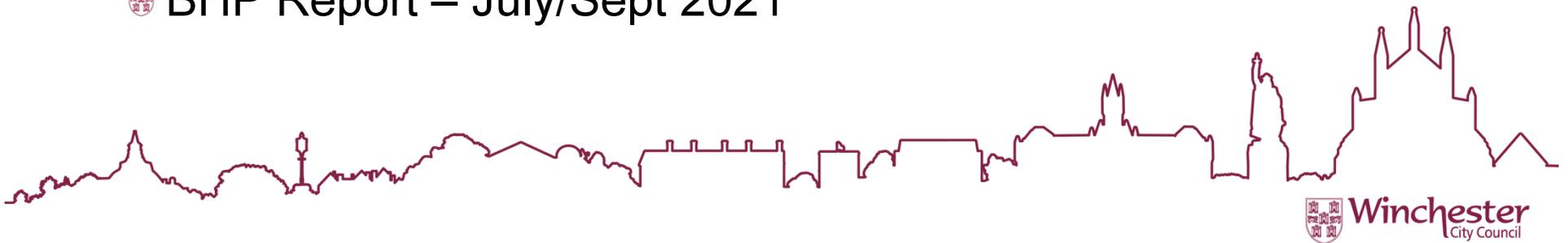
Potential Resources

-  Another Mental Health Specialist (2 year appointment?)
-  Commissioning Budget (£50K per annum?)
-  Scope to fund both from existing HRA Balances



NEXT GENERATION WINCHESTER

- 🏰 Calling on the districts 'next generation' (18-35 years)
- 🏰 Aim – To improve housing opportunities for younger residents
- 🏰 Steering Group – Cllrs Weir, Horrill, Laming, Bell
- 🏰 Project Team – Housing, Community, Local Plan teams all represented
- 🏰 Actions:
 - 🏰 Survey (closes 18 Feb 2021)
 - 🏰 Steering Group meeting – March 2021
 - 🏰 Information & Engagement Event – May 2021
- 🏰 BHP Report – July/Sept 2021



ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TENANTS?

Option of lower annual rent, a fixed discount or “rent free week” raised at Scrutiny Ctte

Set a lower rent?

Not in line with national policy/rent formula

Impacts on sustainability of 30 year business plan

Social rents 50-60% of market rents

Discount/”Rent free period”?

£530k-£540k per week

Impact on Universal Credit

Who benefits? (Maybe not those that need it most)

Scope for additional “Hardship funds”?

Universal Credit support



ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TENANTS?

Proposed:

-  Rent Policy maintained (CPI+1%)
-  Impact of below policy rent increases in future years be reviewed and brought back to Policy Ctte
-  Option of a rent credit, discounted period or “rent free week” not be pursued at this time.
-  Options to provide help to those that need it most be reviewed an brought back to Policy Ctte

