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Joint Chief Executive
Rob Barlow

4 May 2021

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE CABINET

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Cabinet on
Wednesday, 12th May, 2021 at 6.30 pm
in the Committee Room, Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston

ROB BARLOW
Joint Chief Executive

Membership:

Leader of the Council – Councillor Paul Skinner
Deputy Leader – Councillor Nigel Welton
Councillors Tracey Abbott, Richard Austin BEM, Martin Griggs, Jonathan Noble and
Yvonne Stevens

A G E N D A

PART I - PRELIMINARIES

A MINUTES (Pages 1 - 14)

To sign and confirm the minutes of the last meeting, held on 31st March 2021.

B APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for absence.

C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To receive declarations of interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

D QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

To answer any written questions received from members of the public no later than 5 p.m. two clear working days prior to the meeting – for this meeting the deadline is 5 p.m. on Friday, 7th May 2021.

PART II - AGENDA ITEMS

1 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (STANDING ITEM)*

2 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE (BTAC) (STANDING ITEM)

3 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - 2021 to 2024 (Pages 15 - 26)

(A report by James Gilbert, Assistant Director - Organisation and Corporate Services)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Skinner

4 SUB REGIONAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME AND SHARED IT SYSTEM (HOUSING REGISTER & HOMELESSNESS) - BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL AND EAST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL (Pages 27 - 94)

(A report by Michelle Howard, Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Martin Griggs

- * In accordance with the Constitution, recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committees referred to Cabinet (if any) shall be included at this point in the agenda (*unless they have been considered in the context of the Cabinet deliberations on a substantive item on the agenda*) within six weeks of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee completing its report / recommendations.

Call-In – any decision taken by the Cabinet concerning an item on this agenda can be 'called in' in accordance with the Constitution, within 5 working days of the decision notice being published. It is expected that the decision notice will be published on Friday 14th May 2021. Subject to this publication, the deadline for calling in a decision is **5 p.m. on Friday 21st May 2021.**

Alternative Versions - *Should you wish to have the agenda or report in an alternative format such as larger text, Braille or a specific language, please contact Democratic Services on direct dial (01205) 314227*

The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Janette Collier, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Boston Tel. no: 01205 314227
e-mail janette.collier@boston.gov.uk

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BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

NOTICE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET ON 31 MARCH 2021

DATE OF PUBLICATION: THURSDAY, 1 APRIL 2021

DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 12 APRIL 2021

NOTES:

A COPY OF THE CABINET AGENDA HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL. IF YOU REQUIRE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY ISSUE PLEASE CONTACT, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER OR OFFICER NAMED IN THE RIGHT HAND COLUMN.

MEETING OF THE CABINET

31 March 2021

Present:

Councillor Paul Skinner, in the Chair
Councillors Tracey Abbott, Richard Austin BEM, Martin Griggs, Jonathan Noble, Yvonne Stevens and Nigel Welton

Officers –

Deputy Chief Executive (Place) & Monitoring Officer, Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy), Section 151 Officer, Assistant Director - Housing & Wellbeing, Assistant Director - Towns Fund, Community Safety Manager, Transformation & Governance Manager and Senior Democratic Services Officer

143 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 24th February 2021 were received and would be signed by the Chairman.

144 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from the Chief Executive, as he was attending the Executive meeting at East Lindsey District Council.

145 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations were made.

146 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question from Mr Darron Abbott to the Leader:

“At the last full Council Meeting councillor Dorian asked a question of yourself regard whether it was appropriate for Councillors to attend premises during the Covid lockdown period.

I have privately provided you evidence of 2 Councillors that have visited constituents in early March.

As the councils constant message is stay home, stay safe will you publicly condemn the actions of these councillors?”

Response from the Leader:

“The matter was investigated by the Monitoring Officer and the Regulatory Body no action was taken.”

Supplementary question from Mr Abbott:

“I thank the leader for his answer, but I did ask him personally if he would condemn the councillors actions!

“Earlier this week one of these Councillors took to Social media as you are aware to tell all their constituents of the changes to Covid restrictions which proves they are aware of the rules so is the word from the council do as we say not as we do or do Councillors had Covid immunity?”

Response from the Leader:

“I would be supportive of the authorities in enforcing the law.”

147 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (STANDING ITEM)*

Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committees were contained within the reports on the agenda.

148 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE (BTAC) (STANDING ITEM)

There were no recommendations from BTAC for this meeting.

[The order of agenda items was changed to enable officers to attend the Executive Board at ELDC.]

149 LINCOLNSHIRE HOMES FOR INDEPENDENCE BLUEPRINT

DECISION That the Lincolnshire Homes For Independence Blueprint be endorsed and that it be agreed to support its ambitions and shape the associated work	Portfolio Holders and Officer
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programme for the benefit of communities.

MG/MH

REASON FOR DECISION

The Portfolio Holder introduced a report, which presented a blueprint for Lincolnshire Homes for Independence.

Housing was a key determinant of health. The evidence as clear that mental health, physical health, wellbeing and life opportunities were positively impacted through access to a safe, warm, affordable and decent homes.

The Lincolnshire Homes for Independence Blueprint was the result of system-wide collaboration and commitment to ensure that Lincolnshire residents could access and sustain safe, affordable and suitable housing throughout their lives to meet their current and future needs. The Blueprint was a high-level statement and a call to action to partners across the Lincolnshire system.

The Blueprint had been developed over a long period by the partners, officers and members that collaborated to form the Lincolnshire Housing, Health & Care Delivery Group (HHCDG); a formal sub group of the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board. It was significant that this was a system-wide programme of work. Its delivery and work programme would be overseen by the HHCDG but would require continued commitment and collaboration from all partners to deliver the associated work programme.

The blueprint was endorsed by the Lincolnshire Health & Wellbeing Board in December 2020. The Board noted that ‘the development of the blueprint was the first step in agreeing across local government, NHS organisations, social housing providers and communities, the standards wished to be achieved in Lincolnshire. It had since been endorsed by Lincolnshire County Council and was in the process of being considered by all District Councils.

The Blueprint focused on key thematic areas that required a system response:

- Growing the supply of appropriate housing to meet a range of specific housing needs
- Aiming to influence the design, location and number of homes delivered
- Secure better outcomes from existing resources
- Enable residents in Lincolnshire to plan ahead to meet their housing needs

Alongside the Blueprint was a delivery plan, which set out the detail and actions to delivery of the shared vision. The delivery plan itself would not commit partners; decision on actions within the delivery plan would be subject to partners’ individual decision-making processes. In endorsing the Blueprint, Members were being asked to commit to a set of principles that could be delivered collaboratively, across the housing, health and care system.

The audience for the blueprint was senior managers, board members and Members who worked across the housing, health and care sectors as well as those who might be less familiar with the housing and health agenda. It was relevant to many area of the Council’s work – housing and wellbeing, planning, environment, economic growth, better ageing, Wellbeing Lincs.

The aim was that it could be used for project planning, providing evidence and justification in decision-making processes as well as focusing the efforts of members of the partnership on actions to secure greater provision of a wide range of housing choices and to further integrate services designed to promote independent living.

There were a number of national and local things that had influenced the development of the Blueprint and shaped the focus of the work for the Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group, which were listed in the report.

The blueprint was welcomed. A Member asked whether the Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group liaised with social housing providers regarding the design of new properties, particularly with respect to affordable housing. The Portfolio Holder assured Members that the group frequently liaised with housing associations. It was comprised of an extensive range of partners involved in decision-making relating to housing, health and wellbeing in order to tackle issues holistically and make best use of available resources.

The Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing added that there was also a Lincolnshire Housing Association Partnership, whose Chairman served on the Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group, so providing additional communication and support. The Partnership would be formally considering the blueprint at their next meeting.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Council could choose not to support the blueprint. This has not been recommended as it is the result of collaboration of all partners, including BBC, and will enable a much needed system focus on improving housing options and outcomes for residents. The blueprint itself does not commit BBC to specific actions; relevant actions within the delivery plan will be considered separately as required. Endorsing the blueprint, and being part of the Lincolnshire system response to housing, health and care, provides the Council with an important opportunity to shape future work and focus as a key system partner, for the benefit of communities.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

150 SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

DECISION	Portfolio Holders and Officer
1. The updated safeguarding policy and procedures for the strategic alliance be adopted.	
2. The delivery of safeguarding as a shared corporate function across the strategic alliance be noted.	MG/MH

REASON FOR DECISION

The Portfolio Holder presented a report, which appended an updated safeguarding policy and procedures for the Strategic Alliance to adopt.

Changes had been made in order to streamline and align the policies and procedures of the two authorities for ease of use and to make the best use of resources.

The key changes were summarised as:

- To reflect that this was a Strategic Alliance policy for both councils
- Roles and responsibilities
- Web links refreshed all updated
- Updated text for reporting concerns
- Included updated domestic abuse (Ask Ani) information
- Updated Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking chapter and included referral flowcharts
- Included links to the Lincolnshire Multi-Agency Hoarding protocol
- Training plan updated and safeguarding board 6 year training pathway was reflected – extracted as a separate procedure document.

Members recognised the crucial importance of safeguarding and welcomed the updated policy and procedures.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Councils could choose to manage safeguarding as two separate entities. This option has not been proposed because:

- Lincolnshire District Councils already strive to align safeguarding policies and

procedures

- This would not align with the ambitions and aspirations for the strategic alliance
This would not make best use of officer time, skills or experience.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

151 VISITOR ECONOMY RESILIENCE

<p>DECISION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The establishment of Destination Lincolnshire – a business led, project focused initiative – a county Destination Management Organisation (DMO) be approved.2. A proportion of the Additional Restrictions Grant funding of £300,000 be allocated to support the delivery of the Visitor Economy Resilience plans.3. The East Lindsey Destination Strategy be developed to incorporate Boston and reflect a joint Cultural Strategy across the Alliance.4. Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director for Town Deal to establish a Service Level Agreement with Destination Lincolnshire.	<p>Portfolio Holders and Officer</p> <p>RA/NW/LR</p>
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REASON FOR DECISION

Councillor Richard Austin presented a report by the Assistant Director - Towns Fund, which outlined the delivery of a plan to support the visitor economy, incorporating support to businesses within the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.

The plan was a key component of the recovery plan developed by the Strategic Alliance and would deliver core elements of the Corporate Plan. It would deliver an improved visitor experience – new products to take advantage of the rise in domestic travel – as well as critical support to tourism and hospitality businesses – connecting them to national initiatives to re-open safely and bring more consumers to the District's towns.

The importance of the tourism sector to the area, the opportunity for future growth through the Town Deal and the imperative to support recovery for an industry significantly impacted

by the pandemic restrictions, combined to make the case for a sector focused delivery plan.

The plan for the visitor economy was based on working in partnership to deliver recovery, assist businesses and underpin growth. It would complement the new Economic Growth's team amalgamation for the Alliance and was phased to reflect the Government's roadmap.

Attached at Appendix A was an interim report containing the early recommendations from the Towns Fund Tourism Report.

Councillor Austin explained that he would be heavily involved with the establishment of a service level agreement (SLA) with Destination Lincolnshire. Councillor Austin was keen to communicate with the Visit Lincolnshire team to acquire more details and hoped that the SLA would provide more opportunity for Boston to feature in publicity and promotion to enable people to discover, rather than simply visit, Boston.

Councillor Welton described the plan as a comprehensive document that would take Boston forward into the future. The incorporation of Boston in the East Lindsey Destination Strategy was significant, as it removed boundaries and would allow productive, collaborative partnership working across the whole area. A huge amount of work had gone into producing the plan and it was a working document. The Alliance would bring in more resources than ever and improve the skills available to both authorities to improve their economies.

Members commended the proposals as exciting and excellent. Although there was some concern regarding future funding of the Destination Management Organisation (DMO), Members were keen to support the visitor economy and businesses in the borough, and promote the area's unique offer.

The Assistant Director - Towns Fund explained that the Visitor Economy Resilience plans were part of the Recovery Plan for the Strategic Alliance. The plans were in line with national policy. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport was preparing a visitor economy recovery plan and planning future funding opportunities through culture and tourism. It was essential to support all businesses that supported the visitor economy, including retail, and be prepared for future funding opportunities following the critical effect of Covid19 restrictions.

In response to questions, the Assistant Director - Towns Fund confirmed that a Destination Lincolnshire pathway group had been set up from various private businesses to look at the establishment of the DMO and that the group would consider offices in different locations across the county. The £300,000 was a ring-fenced amount provided by the Government for business support measures. The proposed SLA would support businesses in line with that funding with Destination Lincolnshire around outcomes; it was not purely for the DMO establishment. The funding could not be used internally to support staff etc. and would be spent in line with funding requirements based on the SLA in year one. The pathway group was focusing on the sustainability of the DMO and working with officers on a robust business plan for its future. The DMO was being established by Visit Lincoln as a separate organisation. The SLA would be examined in liaison with the Portfolio Holders to ensure it met the requirements for Boston and East Lindsey.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternative option is to allocate all funding to support business grants and not follow the recommendation of the funding grant from Government to support wider business support activities.

This would not be reflective of the approach of other local authorities, or the need to support a priority sector that has been most impacted by the pandemic.

If no support was given to Destination Lincolnshire it could hinder and restrict the effectiveness of the recovery plan developed by the Strategic Alliance – particularly elements of the proposed environmental improvements and the direct and indirect assistance to local businesses.

In the long term, there is a risk to the implementation and adoption of the Destination Strategy and the wider corporate plan priorities for the visitor economy.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

152 REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - RESTRICTING PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY OVER HIGHWAY - ON HATTER LANE, BOSTON

DECISION	Portfolio Holders and Officer
1. That an extension of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) be approved covering Hatter Lane (restricting public right of way over highway) for a further three-year period commencing on 27th April 2021 and ending on 26th April 2024.	PS/PH
2. The gated area remains the same as the original order as introduced on 27th April 2015.	

REASON FOR DECISION

The Leader presented a report by the Community Safety Manager, regarding a review of the Public Spaces Protection Order (Restricting Public Right Of Way Over Highway) on Hatter Lane, Boston.

The current Hatter Lane Gate-related PSPO expired on 27th April 2021, marking the end of the second 3-yearly review of the original order, which commenced on 27th April 2015.

The Council was one of the first in the country to make such an order when the government passed new legislation in the late autumn of 2014.

Since the order took effect in April 2015 and the gates were installed, no one had breached the conditions set within the legislation and that showed the order was a powerful part of the Council's enforcement toolbox in addressing nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

The most powerful statistic that came out of this enforcement order was that it had decreased by 100% incidents of the nature reported to Police and the Council suffered prior to the installation of the gates.

This was a real success story showing that officer used the legislation made available by the Government to the best of their ability to address the issues suffered in the community and support residents when and where possible.

The legislation stated that any PSPO could last no longer than 3 years without review and the time had now come for the Council's next review.

Lincolnshire Police had been fully consulted throughout the whole process and shared the Council's view that the current order should remain in place and that this order was a valuable tool for the Police and Council to address concerns of nuisance within the borough's precious public spaces.

The recommendation made within the report was that the PSPO in connection to Hatter Lane, Boston be extended for another three years, commencing from the 28th April 2021, when the current order expired and that the conditions set out within the order remain the same as in the original order.

Members commended the success of the order and welcomed its extension.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

To discharge the PSPO covering Hatter Lane.

This is not recommended; the PSPO has been successful in addressing the issues detailed above. It is highly likely that the issues would reoccur if the order were discharged.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

153 QUARTER 3 REPORT - PERFORMANCE, RISK AND FINANCE

<p>DECISION</p> <p>1. That the quarterly monitoring information for Quarter 3 be noted.</p> <p>2. That the specific finance recommendations, summarised below, be agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>F1: to approve the reserve movements detailed table 6</i>– <i>F2: to approve the updated capital programme as detailed in table 8</i>– <i>F3: to write-off the irrecoverable Housing Benefit Over-Payments in the sum of £11,689</i>– <i>F4: that the supplementary estimates in respect of the Green Homes Grant and the Homes England Funding be approved, as set out in table 12</i>– <i>F5: that the supplementary estimates in respect of COVID-19 be approved, as set out in table 13</i>	<p>Portfolio Holders and Officer</p> <p>PS/JN/SR/AS</p>
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REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered the quarterly monitoring information report, which presented performance, risk and finance information for Quarter 3 of 2020/21 (April to December 2020).

Overall, performance in Quarter 3 of 2020/21 was in line with targets though heavily impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, as anticipated.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the key headlines of the finance monitoring information, reporting that the Council was in a stable financial position, with a balanced budget for 2021/22.

However, the Council faced greater challenges the following year, 2022/23, requiring continued financial prudence. Trading income had fallen substantially in the last year due to lockdown restrictions, particularly from parking, planning and leisure. Financial support had been received from Government by way of grants, most recently the Green Homes grant and a grant towards lost fees and charges.

There had been some reserve movements during the last year due to the challenges faced during the pandemic, but they remained in a quite healthy position, and the property funds had performed quite well in the circumstances. The capital programme had been updated due to deferred spending for which an extension had been allowed.

In conclusion, the Portfolio Holder said that the Council's financial position remained healthy, but continued prudence was essential, as the level of future government support was not known.

Members were referred to the specific finance recommendations requiring approval, which were set out in Appendix C, relating to reserve movements; the updated capital programme; the write-off the irrecoverable Housing Benefit Over-Payments; supplementary estimates in respect of the Green Homes Grant and the Homes England Funding; and supplementary estimates in respect of COVID-19.

The two high strategic risks in Q3 remained *Housing* and *Budget*. There had been no change to the strategic risk scores in Q3.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative reporting arrangements.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

154 STRATEGIC ALLIANCE COVID19 RECOVERY PLAN 2021-2023

DECISION

That the Recovery Plan set out at Appendix A be approved and its implementation be authorised.

Portfolio Holders and Officer

**PS/NW/
TL**

REASON FOR DECISION

The Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) introduced a report, which presented a Recovery Plan prepared in conjunction with Assistant Directors.

The purpose of the Recovery Plan was to set out a range of practical measures calculated

to help the people and businesses of Boston and East Lindsey to bounce back from the harm caused to their economies and civil society by the “lockdowns” imposed on local businesses and communities to contain Covid19.

The Recovery Plan was focused on delivering activities and tangible things useful to local people and businesses. Progress would be measured and reported to Cabinet and the Executive Board of East Lindsey District Council every 6 months. This would help them understand what was working and what was not, solve problems, identify the potential to implement additional or improved initiatives and ensure resources provided to the authorities by Government were spent to good effect on activities that produced the greatest benefit. It was anticipated the first review would be reported to the Cabinet and Executive Board in September 2021.

It was recognised that many had suffered financial hardship due to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. A range of projects were being undertaken in order to help local people and businesses to recover from the effects of the pandemic that would also provide opportunities for the future. The *Visitor Economy Resilience* plan was an example.

The main aims of the plan were to boost employment opportunities, particularly for young people; tackle financial inequalities; improve financial wellbeing; carry out environmental improvements and assist businesses. Assistant Directors had been asked to identify and scope a number of projects and identify the budget to utilise Government funding in order to progress them quickly. The projects specified so far needed further work. In the meantime, Members were asked to agree the principles of the plan and Portfolio Holders were asked to assume responsibility, alongside the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy), to ensure that the projects set out in the appendices were developed to an acceptable standard in the next four weeks.

The Portfolio Holders welcomed the Recovery Plan and stressed the importance of proceeding without delay, accepting the request for assistance.

During debate, the issue of fly tipping was raised, which was a high priority for local people, and reference was made to proposed actions to tackle this.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reiterated the Council’s financial constraints and underlined the dependence of many of the projects on future government funding.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) agreed, but pointed out that projects might have initial costs, but could also provide income streams. In addition, increased confidence in the area and its raised profile, resulting from the success of Boston’s Towns Fund bid, would help produce further funding in order to the most of available opportunities and assist with bringing schemes to fruition. The Deputy Chief Executive (Place) strongly supported this view and confirmed that increased confidence was already apparent and would encourage existing investors and potential external investors to bring forward projects to assist with the area’s recovery.

Members were urged to identify environmental schemes and put ideas forward for officers to try to progress.

The Leader welcomed the achievement of the Towns Fund bid and the increase in collaborative working with businesses and the education sector it had generated.

Councillor Welton referred to the shared ambition of all concerned and the significant opportunities available. The more ideas that were put forward, the more chance that projects could be worked up using the officers' professional skills and their commendable ability to identify funds.

The Section 151 Officer added that no project would go forward without a full report to Members first.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Do nothing.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

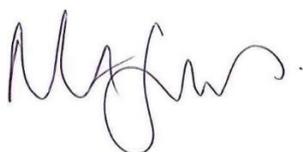
None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

The Meeting ended at 7.35 pm

Signed by the Deputy Chief Executive (Place)



THURSDAY, 1ST APRIL 2021

These decisions will come into force (and may then be implemented) on the expiry of five clear working days after the date of this notice UNLESS the decisions are subjected to the Call-In procedure or are starred minutes requiring Full Council approval.

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REPORT TO:	CABINET
DATE:	12 MAY 2021
SUBJECT:	MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - 2021 to 2024
KEY DECISION:	NO
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR PAUL SKINNER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
REPORT AUTHOR:	JAMES GILBERT, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – ORGANISATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	NO
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

The Council previously had a Member Learning and Development Strategy, however, this has now expired.

The Strategy at Appendix A updates the Council's previous strategy and formalises the Council's commitment to Member Learning and Development.

The Strategy has been agreed by the Councillor Development Group. The Strategy was also discussed by the Environment and Performance Scrutiny Committee and no suggested changes were put forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That Cabinet approves the Member Development Strategy at Appendix A to this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Strategy provides a framework to guide learning and development for Members and having an effective Strategy in place is a requirement of the Local Government Association in enabling reaccreditation for the Councillor Development Charter.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None

REPORT

1. The Learning and Development Strategy at Appendix A provides a framework within which to deliver learning and development activities for Boston Borough Councillors and updates the previous Strategy, which has now expired.
2. The Strategy document, which was supported by the Councillor Development Group on March 10, 2021, sets out the Council's commitment to Member development, as well as roles and responsibilities and how development undertaken will be evaluated.
3. As well as being an important document to guide Member development, in 2022 the Council will be seeking reaccreditation for the Local Government Association's Councillor Development Charter and having an up to date Strategy in place is a requirement of that process.
4. Environment and Performance Scrutiny Committee discussed the draft Strategy on April 27, 2021, and no changes were put forward.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Strategy itself doesn't come with a resource requirement. The Council has a dedicated Learning and Development Budget for Councillors of £8k that is allocated via the Councillor Development Group.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

EQUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

None

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

CONSULTATION

The draft Strategy was considered and supported by the Councillor Development Group on March 10, 2021.

The draft Strategy has also been considered by Environment and Performance Scrutiny Committee and no suggested changes were made.

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX A

Member Learning and Development Strategy 2021 - 2024

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

Name of body	Date
Councillor Development Group considered the Strategy (not the report)	March 10, 2021
Environment and Performance Scrutiny Committee	April 27, 2021

REPORT APPROVAL	
Report author:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director – Organisation and Corporate Services
Signed off by:	Alison Penn, Deputy Chief Executive (People)
Approved for publication:	Alison Penn, Deputy Chief Executive (People)

APPENDIX A



Member Learning and Development Strategy 2021 to 2024

Appendices

Appendix	Document Title
A	Member Learning & Development Evaluation Policy

Introduction

This Member Learning and Development Strategy is fully endorsed by the cross party Councillor Development Group.

Local government is the subject of frequent change and councils have new and varied responsibilities and functions from time to time. The learning and development needs of Members will vary and be required to be assessed in the light of changed roles and responsibilities.

Members are integral to achieving our aims and strategic objectives and to the delivery of high-quality services. We are working to support the development of all Members to enable them to perform effectively in their roles and to develop to meet future challenges.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out our approach to helping our Members develop their own performance and contribution to lead the community of Boston.

We are committed to ensuring that:

- All Members have access to appropriate learning and development activities to enable them to acquire the knowledge and skills required to be effective in their role.
- A planned and structured approach to Member learning and development needs is taken.
- Access to learning and development activities is equitable.
- Learning and development is linked to the Council's priorities.
- Learning and development, wherever possible, is linked to Members' specific roles.
- Member learning and development activities are adequately resourced and within available budgets.
- Learning and development activities are evaluated to assess the impacts.

Members are encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in learning and development activities.

An agreed member Learning and Development Programme will be produced each year based on feedback from Members; the requirements of the Council and in recognition of the changing local government landscape. This Programme will be linked to the Council's corporate priorities, the roles and function of Members and the key changes affecting the Council's priorities and services.

East Midlands Regional Councillor Development Charter

Standards set out in the East Midlands Regional Development Charter aim to promote best practice in Member development and can be seen as a vehicle to improve the corporate performance of a Local Authority through the development of its Members. The Council was accredited to the Charter in December 2012 and successfully re-assessed in March 2016. The Council will be seeking reaccreditation in 2022 as its accreditation expired in early 2020.

Roles and responsibilities in Member learning and development

In addition to input from Group Leaders, a cross-party Councillor Development Group was set up in 2010 to champion Member development. The Democratic Services and People Services teams provide support and assistance to the Group.

The role of political leaders

The role of political leaders is to pledge commitment to learning and development for Members from all political parties and to support the delivery of the Member Learning and Development Strategy.

The role of the Councillor Development Group is to:-

- Assist in the development and monitoring of this strategy.
- Approve and monitor the delivery of the Members' Learning and Development Programme.
- Create an environment that encourages self-development and continuous learning and the sharing of knowledge and skills amongst the members in their 'political' groups.
- Consider requests for learning and development and direct priorities for learning and development.
- Review the effectiveness of Member learning and development.
- Monitor the Member learning and development budget.

The role of individual members

Members are responsible for:

- Identifying their learning and development needs, supported by Group Leaders where appropriate.
- Seeking opportunities to improve their effectiveness and increase their potential.
- Attending arranged learning and development activities.
- Sharing their knowledge and skills with their peers.
- Reviewing their learning and development activities.

- Applying the knowledge and skills developed through learning and development activities.

The role of services

Services are responsible for:

- Identifying service specific learning and development areas.

Member Learning and Development Programme

To ensure that the maximum is achieved for the investment, learning activity needs to be planned.

The purpose of the Programme is to:

- Establish clear priorities for learning and development linked to the Council's corporate priorities and the changing landscape in which local government operates.
- Enable identified needs to be prioritised and linked to the Council's corporate priorities.
- Identify resources required to deliver the plan and any resource gaps.
- To ensure equity.
- Ensure the best use is made from learning and development budgets and other resources.

Delivery of learning and development activities

A flexible approach to the delivery of learning and development will be adopted to make use of the different development methods available and to meet the needs of Members.

Methods used will include the following but this list is not exhaustive:

- Officer mentoring
- Councillor mentoring
- E-learning
- Facilitated presentations
- Facilitated workshops
- Member briefings

Where appropriate shared Member and Officer development activities, as well as joint learning events with other local authorities, will be encouraged.

Access to learning and development opportunities

- All Members will have the opportunity to benefit from learning and development opportunities.
- All Members will have equal access to information relating to learning and development opportunities.
- All Members will have equal access to participation in learning and development opportunities,

subject to their personal needs, taking into account those with work or family commitments and the needs of their roles and responsibilities throughout their office on the Council.

Monitoring and evaluation

Evaluation will establish the effectiveness of learning and development activities. The role of Members in the evaluation of learning and development is critical to the continuous improvement of learning events.

The Councillor Development Group is committed to increasing the take up of those who provide feedback as this will provide better data to determine the value and benefit of learning and development opportunities.

Evaluating what has taken place can assess the extent to which training has benefited Members, the organisation and the community.

Appendix A sets out the Evaluation Policy.

Resources to support elected member learning and development

Member learning and development is resourced from the allocated Member development budget. This budget will be prioritised to cover the most pressing needs linked to the member Learning and Development Programme and corporate learning and development needs. The budget is £8,000.

Learning and development records

It is the responsibility of PSPS HR to maintain Member learning and development records. Learning will be evaluated to inform future plans and budgets.

Implementing the strategy

This strategy is intended to be a common framework for the provision of all Member learning and development.

Review of the strategy

This strategy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets the needs of the organisation and its Members.

Appendix A

Member Learning and Development Evaluation Policy

Introduction

We are committed to carrying out evaluation of learning and development opportunities to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the individual, the organisation and achieving value for money.

This policy is inextricably linked to the Member Learning and Development Strategy and will help support the Council's aim to achieve the East Midlands Councillor Development Charter once again.

Evaluation will help to:

- provide the value of a Learning and Development Programme.
- measure the effect of learning and development activities.
- ensure that individuals have met their stated needs.
- show links between learning and development and achieving the corporate aims.

Prior to a learning and development event

Clear and measurable objectives for the activity should be set:

- individually by those attending the learning and development event.
- by the course designer – who will identify what the activity is aiming to achieve.
- corporately – what area(s) of the corporate aims and objectives the activity is designed to support.

How we will gather feedback.

There are a variety of methods which can be used to evaluate activities that have been delivered. Evaluation can be determined prior to any activity taking place as some forms of evaluation will be to measure a change and therefore there will be a need to measure the behaviour or knowledge level before the activity takes place.

Examples of methods of evaluation:

- feedback from course facilitator
- pre and post course questionnaires
- case studies
- longer term evaluation
- input from senior officers or members

Feedback from delegates will be requested immediately after the delivery of learning and development activities to gauge 'on the day' responses.

In the case of more significant events i.e. induction or where a specific piece of training has targeted a particular need post training evaluation questionnaires will be circulated within three months of attendance at the event to capture information on any changes they have been able to make as a direct result of the training or any other gaps in their knowledge that they have been able to identify.

Information gathered from evaluation feedback will be reported to the Councillor Development Group to support future training provision and to make any necessary adjustments to future activities.

Value for money

Value for money will be determined for each course delivered through consideration of Member feedback and cost per head.

Delivery of this policy

This policy will be delivered through the Councillor Development Group with ongoing support of the PSPS HR and Democratic Services teams. Evaluation of learning and development activities is a standing agenda item at meetings of the Group and as such they will be asked to evaluate progress against the Member Development Programme on a regular basis.



REPORT TO:	Boston Borough Council, Cabinet and; East Lindsey District Council, Executive Board
DATE:	BBC Cabinet: 12th May 2021 ELDC Executive Board: 2 nd June 2021
SUBJECT:	Sub Regional Housing Allocations Scheme and shared IT System (Housing Register & Homelessness) – Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council
KEY DECISION:	Yes
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	BBC: Cllr Martin Griggs ELDC: Cllr Wendy Bowkett
REPORT AUTHOR:	Michelle Howard, Assistant Director: Housing and Wellbeing
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Whole of Boston Borough and East Lindsey
EXEMPT REPORT?	No
OTHER INFORMATION:	A report on this subject will also be considered by East Lindsey District Council Executive Board on 2 nd June 2021

SUMMARY

All councils are required to have a mechanism to assess housing need, advertise available social housing and allocate properties to households in need. The Housing Allocation Scheme determines who can join the housing register for social housing and the level of priority that will be awarded based on an applicant's circumstances. It provides a framework to determine eligibility and prioritisation of applications for social housing properties via the Housing Register (Choice Based Letting Scheme).

The Sub Regional Housing Allocation Scheme will be operated by Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council. Working as a strategic alliance, the two councils will share an IT system to manage applications, assessments, property adverts and allocations. A single staff team will be in place. The IT system will be integrated with a homelessness case management system. Customers will be able to manage their housing register applications online. Customers' circumstances and needs will be assessed on a case by case basis and local connection criteria will be applied to determine priority banding for each area.

The two councils will transition to the new policy framework and shared IT system from June 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members approve the adoption of the proposed sub regional housing allocations policy scheme between Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council and;
2. That Members agree for Boston Borough Council to operate a shared IT system with East Lindsey District Council for the provision of the housing register and homelessness case management systems

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- To ensure continued housing register system provision for Boston Borough Council
- To ensure an up to date and compliant policy position for both Councils
- To achieve value for money and best use of shared resources and investment in technology
- To enable alignment of staff teams, systems, policies and processes in line with the aspirations of the Strategic Alliance
- To enable improved customer, stakeholder and staff experience

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. The Councils could choose to operate their housing and homelessness services separately, with separate IT systems
2. Boston Borough Council could choose to procure its own housing register IT solution, or could choose to partner with another Local Authority. These options are not recommended because

These options are not recommended because:

- They do not align with the ambitions and aspirations for the strategic alliance
 - They would not achieve value for money
 - They would not make best use of officer time, skills or experience
3. Boston Borough Council is required to implement an alternative housing register solution due to the current system becoming obsolete. Therefore, 'doing nothing' is not an option.

REPORT

1. Local Housing Authorities are required to have a mechanism to assess housing need, advertise available social housing and allocate properties to households in need. This is known as the Housing Allocation Scheme.
2. The Housing Allocation Scheme determines who can join the housing register for social housing and the level of priority that will be awarded based on an applicant's circumstances. It provides a framework to determine eligibility and prioritisation of applications for social housing properties via the Housing Register (Choice Based Letting Scheme).
 - 2.1. Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council current operate separate Housing Allocation Schemes and associated IT systems.
3. There are some key considerations driving the opportunity for Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council to operate a sub-regional Housing Allocations Scheme and shared IT system:

- Boston Borough Council has an existing housing allocations policy but it needs to be updated
 - The current IT system in Boston (operated by Lincolnshire Housing Partnership) is no longer an up to date system. It is paper driven, has limited reporting capabilities and it will cease to operate from July 2021
 - There is a key interdependency between the allocations policy framework and associated IT system configuration
 - Boston Borough Council currently uses separate IT systems for housing register and homelessness case management, there is no opportunity for integration between the current systems
 - East Lindsey District Council invested in a new integrated case management system in 2019 (housing register, homelessness). This is embedded, working effectively and is used by the majority of housing providers that have social housing in Boston Borough (with the exception of Accent Housing)
 - This creates an opportunity to update, improve and integrate (systems, processes, customer journey) between the two Councils
 - The strategic alliance presents a range of positive opportunities (increase capacity and resilience of staff teams, align systems, align policies and processes, make best use of resources, improve customer experience and stakeholder relationships)
4. The proposed East Lincolnshire Housing Allocation Scheme will be a sub-regional partnership operated by Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council.
 - 4.1. Working as a strategic alliance, the two councils will share an IT system to manage applications, assessments, property adverts and allocations. A single staff team will be in place. The IT system will be integrated with the homelessness case management system.
 - 4.2. Customers will be able to manage their housing register applications online.
 - 4.3. Customers' circumstances and needs will be assessed on a case by case basis and local connection criteria will be applied to determine priority banding for each area.
 5. Having received recent investment and configuration and with the associated policy having undergone a review in 2020, the existing East Lindsey District Council allocations policy forms the foundation for the sub regional policy.
 - 5.1. By triggering a contract variation process, value for money has been achieved by enabling Boston Borough Council to join the ELDC system rather than procure an IT solution in isolation or join another authority with whom there is not such a formal strategic relationship.
 6. With the exception of Accent Housing, all Registered Providers (Housing Associations) operating in Boston Borough also have properties in East Lindsey and already use the IT system and ELDC policy.
 7. As a sub-regional policy, the following changes are proposed:
 - 7.1. A shared policy framework that ensures compliance with housing allocations legislation, homelessness legislation and statutory guidance for both councils
 - 7.2. A shared policy framework that is compliant with recent statutory guidance in respect of armed forces personnel and victims of domestic abuse for both councils
 - 7.3. For Boston Borough Council, transition from an 'open' register (anyone can apply) to one that applies more criteria regarding who qualifies to join the register (applicants with no local connection, no housing need and not in a reasonable preference category will no longer qualify)
 - 7.4. For Boston Borough Council, an updated position for applicants in a reasonable preference group to ensure that they are not automatically placed into the lowest priority band if they do not have a local connection (instead, they would move into Band 3)

7.4.1. Reasonable Preference categories are defined in legislation. They are:

- (1) People who are 'homeless', within the meaning of either HA 1996, Pt 7, (England) or H (W) A 2014, Pt 2 (Wales);
- (2) People who are owed a particular statutory duty by any local housing authority under certain provisions of homelessness legislation;
- (3) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (4) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including (in England) grounds relating to a disability; and
- (5) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship, to themselves or to others

7.5. A shared policy framework that allows for applicants to apply to either or both Councils with a single application, but for their priority banding to reflect their local connection / circumstances relevant to that local area

7.6. For East Lindsey District Council, a broadening of the local connection criteria to align with that within the previous Boston Borough Council (to include award of a local connection to applicants who have had close family living within the area for 5+ years)

7.7. For both councils to use the same banding definitions (Bands 1-4) rather than Gold to Copper

8. It is proposed to transition to the new policy framework and shared IT system from June 2021.

8.1. Customers will be required to re-register on the new system. Support will be provided to anybody who needs advice, help and support.

8.2. A communications plan will ensure that customers and stakeholders are aware of the changes and what they need to do

8.3. During the transitional period, a manual 'direct let' process will be activated to ensure customers do not miss out on properties.

CONCLUSION

This is a positive development opportunity for the Strategic Alliance which will enable:

- Continued housing register system provision for Boston Borough Council
- An up to date and compliant policy position for both Councils
- Value for money and best use of shared resources and investment in technology
- Alignment of staff teams, systems, policies and processes in line with the aspirations of the Strategic Alliance
- Improved customer, stakeholder and staff experience

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs associated with the integration with the existing ELDC system will be met within existing Boston Borough Council budgets. East Lindsey District Council will pay these costs and recharge them to Boston Borough Council. The costs are set out below:

- One off system implementation and configuration cost: **£6,930**
- Annual software costs: **£13,995** [for the next two years; remaining ELDC contract period]

Quotes to BBC to procure an IT solution in isolation ranged from £70k to £90k (informal quotes)

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

It is a legal requirement to have a compliant housing allocations policy framework in place.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Not relevant to this report.

EQUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. It has been updated in response to consultation and scrutiny feedback. No issues have been reported through the consultation process, drafting of the Equality Impact Assessment or identified through other means that would suggest anyone with a protected characteristic would be disadvantaged by the changes to the policy / move to this sub regional policy framework.

The Equality Impact Assessment can be found at Appendix B.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

East Lindsey District Council has an existing contract in place with a software provider. There are two years remaining. Due to the formal relationship between the two Councils and as the ELDC contract is within OJEU thresholds [£117k over 4 years], it has been possible to negotiate a variation of this contract to add Boston Borough Council

Both Councils will need to take a view on future software / system procurement arrangements in the future in line with expiry of current arrangement in June 2023

CONSULTATION

Consultation on the proposed sub regional policy has been carried out. Details of amendments to the policy as a result of consultation can be found at Appendix C. For completeness, details of consultation and engagement undertaken are also set out below:

BBC and ELDC housing staff were consulted during March 2021. This led to changes to the proposed local connection criteria in the final policy draft. A further comment requested consideration of the purpose and clarity of wording regarding former tenant arrears / housing debt. This has been incorporated into the final policy. No negative impacts were identified relevant to protected characteristics.

Registered providers (social housing providers) operating in Boston and East Lindsey have been contacted directly to seek their views and feedback on the policy. With the exception of Accent Housing, all Registered Providers (Housing Associations) operating in Boston Borough also have properties in East Lindsey and use the IT system and current ELDC policy. All housing providers have been formally consulted on the revised sub regional policy. Only one comment was received, from Accent Housing, to welcome the move to an online system. There were no written submissions from housing providers about the revised allocations policy framework however verbal feedback to officers have been positive that Boston will be using the same system as operating in East Lindsey, which they have experience of using to let properties. No negative impacts were identified relevant to protected characteristics.

Key stakeholders have also been contacted directly, via the various housing and health networks to brief them on the changes and to seek their views and feedback on the policy. There were no comments from housing providers about the revised allocations policy framework however positive verbal feedback has been received regarding the move to an online process and system.

Current housing register applicants have been contacted directly to advise them of the changes and to provide opportunity to feedback on the proposed policy. To date, no feedback has been received.

The MP for Boston, Matt Warman, has been contacted directly to brief him on the changes and to provide a link to the policy consultation.

Online Consultation: The policy consultation was available online for a period of three weeks, closing 16th April 2021: <https://www.mybostonuk.com/consultation/>

Elected members have been kept up to date with the proposed changes including via attachments to the BBC leaders weekly briefing updates and a briefing session held in March 2021. Portfolio holders at BBC and ELDC have been briefed throughout.

BBC Corporate and Communities Committee: The policy was considered by the committee on 22nd April 2021 and was recommended to Cabinet for approval. Feedback from the committee relevant to the Impact Assessment has been included within this document. The notes from this meeting can be found at Appendix B.

APPENDICES	
Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -	
APPENDIX A	Sub Regional Housing Allocations Scheme – Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council
APPENDIX B	Equality Impact Assessment [v5]
APPENDIX C	Details of policy amendments made following consultation exercise
APPENDIX D	Presentation delivered to Corporate and Community Committee 22.4.21
APPENDIX E	Excerpt from draft Corporate and Community Committee minutes 22.4.21

BACKGROUND PAPERS
No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT
22.4.2021: Corporate and Community Committee
Resolved: That the proposed Sub-Regional Housing Allocations Scheme be recommended to Cabinet for approval with the Committee’s comments [see Appendix E]

REPORT APPROVAL	
Report author:	Michelle Howard Assistant Director, Housing and Wellbeing
Signed off by:	Robert Barlow, Chief Executive
Approved for publication:	1 st May 2021

**Boston Borough Council
and
East Lindsey District Council**



**Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings
Housing Allocation Scheme**

In partnership with:

- Accent Housing Group
- Acis Group Limited
- Advance Housing and Support
- Anchor Hanover Group
- Housing 21
- Lace Housing Association
- Lincolnshire Housing Partnership
- Lincs Rural
- Longhurst Housing Group
- Platform Housing Group
- Sanctuary Housing
- Stonewater

INDEX		Page
Section		
1	Introduction	4
2	Vision of the Policy	5
3	Partnership Working	6
4	Equality and Diversity	6
5	Housing Options	6
6	Service Standards	7
7	How to Apply	7
8	Qualification criteria	7
9	People who do not qualify	10
10	Providing Information	12
11	Banding Priorities and Relative Preference	13
12	Medical Banding	17
13	Right To Move	18
14	Homelessness	19
15	Corporate Parenting Responsibility	19
16	Rough Sleeping	19
17	No Fixed Abode	19
18	Housing Related Debts	20
19	Financial Capacity	20
20	Housing Support	20
21	Carers	21
22	Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976	21
23	Dating of Registrations	21
24	Change in Circumstances	21
25	Suspended and Cancelled Applications	22
26	Supporting Vulnerable Applicants	22
27	The Bidding Process: Advertisement of properties Property Descriptions Bidding for a Property Determining Priorities between applicants Adapted Properties Properties let outside the scheme Verification Process Offers of Accommodation Rent in Advance Types of Tenancy Withdrawing Offers Refusals and Non Bidding Feedback	23 23 23 24 24 24 25 25 25 25 26 25 26
28	Property Types and Household Size	26
29	Local Lettings Policy / Section 106	28
30	Managing Risks	28
31	Confidentiality and Access to Information	29
32	Requesting a Review	29
33	Compliments and Complaints	30
34	Further Redress	30
35	Monitoring	30
	Glossary of Terms	31
	Annexe A	32
	Annexe B	33
	Properties within East Lindsey	34
	Properties within Boston Borough	35

Legal Context:

The authorities have had regard to the following in formulating the Housing Allocation Scheme:

- The Housing Act 1996. Part VI as amended by Localism Act 2011
- The Homelessness code of guidance 2018
- The Children Act 2004
- The Homelessness Reduction Act
- Equality Act 2010 - Public Sector Equality Duty
- Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England
- Providing social housing for local people
- s.225 of the Housing Act 2004
- EU Transition
- Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategies

Statutory Guidance:

- Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997, SI 1997/483
- Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002, SI 2002/3264
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/1869
- Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/2989
- The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2012 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017)
- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015
- The Homeless (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018

Strategic Alliance, Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council:

In July 2020, Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council formed a Strategic Alliance. Both Councils remain separate entities but share a single workforce, a number of services and systems. Both Councils continue to retain their own identity and remain accountable to their local communities, however, sharing expertise, teams and resources allows us to work more effectively, efficiently improve the delivery of services to local people.

Both Councils have adopted a single Housing Allocations Policy Framework. In delivering this, both Councils will share a case management system. Applicants may wish to apply to join the housing registers for:

- Boston Borough Council and / or
- East Lindsey District Council

Where applicants wish to be considered for both Councils' housing registers, they need only make a single application. However, applicants should be aware that they may be placed into a different priority 'band' for each area depending on their local connection to each area.

Throughout this policy document, Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council are referred to as the 'Councils'.

Local Context:

The Government is of the view that, in deciding who qualifies or does not qualify for social housing, local authorities should ensure that they prioritise applicants who can demonstrate a close association with their local area. Social housing is a scarce resource, and the Government believes that it is appropriate, proportionate and in the public interest to restrict access in this way, to ensure that, as far as possible, sufficient affordable housing is available for those amongst the local population who are on low incomes or otherwise disadvantaged and who would find it particularly difficult to find a home on the open market.

Both Councils have a high level of people wanting to relocate to the district and therefore have to prioritise social housing for local people who are in housing need as well as people who can demonstrate a strong local connection to the districts or whom qualify due to statutory guidance. Many people on the housing register won't receive an offer of accommodation because demand is too high.

All applicants are advised to consider other housing options in order to obtain suitable accommodation rather than solely waiting for an offer of social housing. Demand for social housing is high and the availability of properties is insufficient to quickly provide applicants with an offer of social housing. Further details are in the Housing Options section.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document explains how social housing is allocated in Boston Borough and East Lindsey. Social housing in both areas is managed by registered providers, also known as Housing Associations. The councils do not own or manage any "Council" Housing.
- 1.2 Working in close partnership with providers of social housing, the Councils maintain a Housing Register which provides a Choice Based Letting Scheme (CBL) whereby people can access social housing within Boston Borough and East Lindsey.
- 1.3 Properties owned by private landlords may be advertised from time to time.
- 1.4 The Boston and East Lindsey CBL Scheme enables qualifying applicants to bid for most available social homes for which they are eligible, in the areas of their choice.

Both Councils have adopted a single Housing Allocations Policy Framework. In delivering this, both Councils will share a case management system. Applicants may wish to apply to join the housing registers for Boston Borough Council and / or East Lindsey District Council.

Where applicants wish to be considered for both Councils housing registers, they need only make a single application. However, applicants should be aware that they may be placed into a different priority 'band' for each area depending on their local connection to each area.

- 1.5 By completing an online registration process via the [website](#) applicants who are eligible and qualify for registration and in need of social housing can bid for housing in the location of their choice.
- 1.6 There are also accommodation providers who offer supported short and long term housing to people with particular support needs. However, this type of accommodation isn't usually advertised through the Councils' housing register.

1.7 **Advice and assistance about any part of this policy can be obtained from:**

East Lindsey Housing Hub: 01507 613135 Housing.Register@e-lindsey.gov.uk	Boston Housing Hub: 01507 314200 Housing.dept@boston.gov.uk
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2 VISION OF THE POLICY – OUR STATEMENT ON CHOICE

2.1 Boston Borough Council (BBC) and East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) are fully committed to enabling applicants to play a more active role in choosing where they live, whilst continuing to house those in the greatest need from the areas or those needing to move to the area. The Policy aims to be as open and transparent as possible and to offer the widest possible choice to people looking for an affordable home.

2.2 The main objectives of the Policy are:-

- To take account of relevant legislation and code of guidance
- To take account of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy, Local Authority Housing Strategies and Tenancy Strategies.
- To provide a fair, open and accountable framework in which everyone has equality of access when seeking an affordable home.
- To welcome applicants seeking independent advice this may include Shelter and/or Citizens Advice Bureaus.
- To ensure that the best use of limited housing resources is made and that balanced and stable communities are maintained.
- To ensure that quality and accessible advice about the Scheme is freely available to everyone, especially to those who may have difficulty in registering to join the Scheme.
- To ensure all applicants are aware of and understand the Scheme and the ways in which they can apply for a home.
- To provide assistance to applicants of the Scheme who are unable, for whatever reason, to participate fully in the Scheme without help, support or advocacy.
- To ensure that good quality information and property details are easily available.
- To provide registration options that are easy to complete for all sections of the community.
- To provide a guide on the Scheme to all applicants giving them information on how to register and how to bid.
- To provide a bidding process that is easy to access for all applicants of the Scheme.
- To prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation through an effective prioritisation system.

3 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 3.1 Both Councils and social housing providers who have signed up to this Policy are committed to working together to deliver high quality housing services. The day to day administration of the Housing Register is the responsibility of East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council delivered as a single workforce through a strategic alliance. However, letting homes through the Scheme is the responsibility of the individual housing providers in accordance with their own lettings policies.
- 3.2 The Councils offer an advertising service for social housing providers in order to increase the number of social homes advertised through the scheme. A charge may be made to the Housing provider for each property advertised or for being a member of the Scheme.
- 3.3 Social housing providers generally have to advertise between 50% and 75% of their vacant properties through the scheme. However they encouraged to exceed this percentage.

4 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- 4.1 Both Councils are committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all existing and potential applicants wishing to access the Scheme. No one will be treated unfairly because of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, marital status, age, sexuality, health or other reason. This list is not intended to be exclusive, but indicative of the intention and commitment to ensuring equality.
- 4.2 Both Councils aim to promote good race relations and equality of opportunity throughout the community. Copies of each organisation's equality policies are available on request.
- 4.3 Some offices are accessible and fitted with loop system for the hard of hearing.
- 4.4 Where required, the Councils will seek to provide wherever possible interpretation and translation facilities, within a reasonable timescale, as well as using alternative or additional methods of communication. The allocations policy is supported by a summary document which is available in a number of different languages.

5 HOUSING OPTIONS

- 5.1 Due to the high demand for social housing some applicants may have to wait a considerable time before appropriate accommodation is made available to them, particularly in areas of high demand for social housing and/or where the applicant has low priority. In some cases, applicants may have little prospect of ever being allocated accommodation. In order to give such applicants a wider choice, both Councils aim to provide information, or signpost applicants to the appropriate agency, about other appropriate housing options which might be available to them. This might include:
- **Private rented accommodation** - the private rented sector can provide types and sizes of dwellings which may not be readily available within the social rented sector. For those with a lower priority under the CBL scheme, and who may be waiting a considerable time before they are offered accommodation, a vacancy in the private rented sector may offer a quicker housing solution.
 - **Immediately available properties** – some low demand properties may be available directly through the registered providers
 - **Shared ownership schemes** – for those people who cannot afford to buy a home outright on the open market, shared ownership allows the applicant to purchase a share of a property and pay rent on the remainder. See [Help to Buy website](#) for further details.
 - **Mutual exchanges & mobility schemes** – possibly a quicker way of moving, rather than applying for a transfer. Tenants find another Housing Association or Council tenant to swap their homes with, providing they have the agreement of their landlord.
 - **Home improvement schemes or provision of aids and adaptations** – these may enable applicants to remain in their existing accommodation for longer.

Annexe B provides details of the number of each property type within the Councils areas.

6 SERVICE STANDARDS

6.1 Both Councils will also apply the following service standards within the Allocations Scheme to ensure an excellent service is provided to scheme applicants.

- Use Plain English, and avoid using jargon, in all our correspondence
- Inform you within 14 days of you completing the application process including providing required documentation whether you are eligible to be placed onto the housing register
- Provide you with information about your application and prospects of obtaining social housing
- Produce an annual summary to show properties advertised, number of bids and the priority banding of the successful applicants
- Offer the use of a private interview room, if available, when discussing personal details
- Respect the confidential nature of information provided by or in respect of an applicant
- Provide support for applicants who need assistance. Support can be in the form of one of the following options:
 - Telephone advice and guidance
 - An appointment with a housing team member for assistance in registering to the scheme. This could be face to face, on the telephone or via video call where appropriate

7 HOW TO APPLY

7.1 Anyone aged 16 and over has the right to make an application to join the Scheme by completing an online application through the [website](#). Prior to making an application, we recommend you speak to us to find out your prospects of qualifying and obtaining social housing.

7.2 Applicants who require assistance to make an application or provide the required supporting evidence can request help from either Council.

7.3 Information that is required in support of the application will be detailed through the website portal. Further details about the required information can be found at section 10.

7.4 Once the application and required evidence has been submitted, the application will be assessed and a decision provided in writing. If accepted onto the housing register, this will include the band that has been awarded.

7.5 Applicants who are suffering from ill health or disabilities which is affected by their current accommodation and applicants suffering from financial hardship could be asked to provide further supporting evidence.

7.6 Applicants should be aware of potential scammers and should keep their login details secure and not disclose their password to anyone including the Councils. There is no fee for making an application or bidding for properties. Applicants should contact the Councils if they are asked to provide their login details, asked to make a payment of any other suspicious behaviour.

8 QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

8.1 To be accepted onto the housing register an applicant must be:

- Eligible for housing assistance, and
 - Meet a reasonable preference category; or
 - Have a local connection and be in housing need; or
 - Meet an Exception category, and
 - Not meet a disqualification category

Applicants who cannot provide satisfactory evidence will not qualify to join the housing register.

8.2 Under section 160ZA of the Housing Act 1996 the Secretary of State has determined that certain persons from abroad, who may or may not be subject to immigration controls, are ineligible for an allocation of accommodation. Eligibility for the scheme is based on nationality (including habitual residency) and the Right to Rent and is subject to change.

8.3 Applications from eligible 16/17 year olds will also be considered where they are:

- A single woman aged 16 or 17 who is expecting a child. Proof of pregnancy will be required in all cases.
- A single parent aged 16 or 17 who has a dependent child.
- A couple aged 16 or 17 who are expecting a child, or have a dependent child. In the former case, proof of pregnancy will be required.
- People aged 16 or 17 who are homeless. In such cases a referral will be made to Children's Services to identify appropriate housing and support needs. This process may include other agencies such as Health, Probation, and Youth Offending Teams.
- Leaving care

Some housing providers require 16/17 year olds accepted for housing to have a guarantor and/or sign up for support from the housing provider or their agent where satisfactory support is not in place from statutory agencies.

8.4 **Reasonable preference**

The Councils are required by law to determine the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important when the demand for social housing is greater than the availability of homes.

8.5 The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that reasonable preference for housing must be given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Applicants with reasonable preference must be given a reasonable head-start in terms of accessing housing over those who do not have reasonable preference.

8.6 Reasonable preference does not mean that applicants will have an absolute priority over all other applicants. Applicants who meet a reasonable preference category who cannot demonstrate a strong association to the districts will qualify to join the register however their prospects of receiving an offer of accommodation is very low. This is because the councils' prioritise people in high housing need who have a strong connection to the area.

8.7 The statutory reasonable preference categories in section 166A(3) (a) to (e) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) are:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Act). This includes non-priority need applicants to whom no duty is owed;
- People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2) (intentionally homeless but in priority need), 193(2) (the full housing duty) or 195(2) (duty to those threatened with homelessness) (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3)) (discretion to accommodate non-priority need homeless applicants);
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability);
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.

8.8 Further information about each reasonable preference category can be found in Annexe A.

8.9 No local connection

Applicants who cannot demonstrate a local connection might qualify to join the housing register if they meet a reasonable preference category, however, their application will not be placed higher than band 3 until they evidence they have a local connection.

8.10 Local Connection

Applicants who can evidence a strong local connection to each district as follows will usually qualify to join the housing register. Applicants may be placed into a different band on the housing register for each Council area (Boston and East Lindsey) depending on their local connection to that area.

<u>East Lindsey Local Connection</u>	<u>Boston Local Connection</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have permanently resided in East Lindsey for the last 12 months. 2. Has previously resided within East Lindsey for 3 out of the last 5 years 3. Was born and resided in East Lindsey for the first 5 years of their life 4. Applicants have family members who are resident within East Lindsey. Resident family members are defined as parents, adult children or brothers or sisters who have lived in the district continuously for the last five (5) years. <p><i>Time spent living on a seasonal caravan site or holiday accommodation won't count as residency in the district. Applications from occupiers of permanent all year round sites which are licenced by ELDC can be considered once they have been resident in East Lindsey for over 12 months as their sole and main residency.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Has permanent Employment in East Lindsey. <p><i>Temporary and seasonal work is not included. The applicant must also be working a minimum of 16 hours per week.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have permanently resided in Boston Borough for the last 12 months. 2. Has previously resided within Boston Borough for 3 out of the last 5 years 3. Was born and resided in Boston Borough for the first 5 years of their life 4. Applicants have family members who are resident within the Borough of Boston. Resident family members are defined as parents, adult children or brothers or sisters who have lived in the Borough continuously for the last five (5) years. <p><i>Time spent living on a seasonal caravan site or holiday accommodation won't count as residency in the district. Applications from occupiers of permanent all year round sites which are licenced by BBC can be considered once they have been resident in Boston Borough for over 12 months as their sole and main residency.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Has permanent Employment in Boston Borough. <p><i>Temporary and seasonal work is not included. The applicant must also be working a minimum of 16 hours per week.</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Lincolnshire Care Leavers up to age of 25. 	

8.12 Exceptions

Applications will be accepted from people with no connection to the Councils areas who meet one or more of the following.

1. HM Forces

- members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
- bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
- serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
- separated spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation

2. Domestic abuse.

Victims who have moved to a refuge or temporary supported accommodation to flee Domestic abuse and want to live in the district

It must be considered safe for the victim to reside in the district. Advice will be taken from domestic abuse professionals to ensure the safety and suitability of any properties bid for, to limit the applicants risk of further domestic abuse from the perpetrator.

3. People who are sleeping rough in the district / borough.

The rough sleeper is unable to return to an area where they have a local connection and this has been confirmed by an appropriate professional. The rough sleeper is also actively engaging with appropriate agencies and professionals to access suitable accommodation and support services. Sofa surfing is not considered to be sleeping rough.

4. Other exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis. Such cases will usually include those where applicants are deemed at serious risk of harm

Applicants will need to state their reasons in writing addressed to the Housing Manager for consideration by a suitably qualified senior officer. Upon receipt a decision would be made and put in writing.

9 PEOPLE WHO DO NOT QUALIFY

9.1 Generally, the following groups will not qualify however the Council's Housing Services Manager does have discretion on such matters.

- Applicants who provide false information
- Applicants who are already registered on another BBC/ELDC application
- Applicants who have the means to resolve their own housing circumstances such as purchasing a property that meets their needs
- Applicants who do not meet a reasonable preference category and have no or minimal prospects of receiving an offer of accommodation could be refused unless there are lower demand properties that they may have prospects of being offered
- Applicants with no particular need for social housing
- Applicants who do not have capacity to manage a tenancy
- Applicants who have been convicted of housing or welfare benefit related fraud where that conviction is unspent
- Applicants in serious breach of a condition of their Tenancy Agreement in respect of their current or former accommodation (including temporary accommodation). Examples of a serious breach could include subletting, deliberate damage to property, perpetrator of domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour
- Applicants who owe more than 8 weeks rent at time of application or upon review of their application in respect of the current address or a former property that was occupied within the last 12 months. If an appropriate repayment agreement has been sustained for a

minimum period of 12 weeks and the debt remains more than 8 weeks the applicant might then become a qualifying applicant. Existing social tenants with rent arrears who are affected by the under-occupancy charge will not normally be excluded where a move will prevent further arrears building up and they have made a reasonable contribution towards the charge.

- Applicants who are in receipt of Housing Benefit/UC Housing element who have consistently not paid a shortfall in their rent for 8 weeks or more within the last 12 months
- Applicants that have in the 12 months prior to making an application voluntarily surrendered any tenancy that would have been reasonable for them to continue to occupy
- Applicants with no strong connection to the East Lindsey district or Boston Borough who do not meet a reasonable preference category

- 9.2 A person may also be excluded from the scheme as a result of previous unsuitable behaviour or conduct defined as anti-social within the meaning of the anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, the severity of which makes them unsuitable to hold a tenancy. In assessing this, all relevant factors will be taken into account. This includes but is not limited to, the time that has elapsed since the offences or occurrences of anti-social behaviour occurred, the applicant's health, dependents and the individual circumstances of the applicant at the point of applying when making these decisions.

Behaviour which can be regarded as unacceptable includes conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person. In addition to this behaviour which has either directly or indirectly affected the housing management function of a Registered Provider or Local Authority. This includes as aforementioned, anti-social behaviour, non-payment of rent, obtaining a tenancy by way of making a false statements, acts of neglect of waste leading to damage to the previous property. This list is illustrative and the examples are not intended to be an exhaustive.

A person will only normally be excluded from the Housing Register where such behaviour would likely have or did lead to a Possession Order be it outright or suspended being granted, the tenancy has been demoted, the Court has granted an Injunction to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance, Criminal Behaviour Order, a Public Spaces Protection Order or other enforceable court order being issued or the Local Authority has enforced a noise abatement notice. Such exclusions may be made regardless of previous tenure.

- 9.3 When reaching a decision to refuse a registration all the relevant factors would be taken into account including any mitigating circumstances. A decision will also be made on the length of time that the application will be excluded stating the reasons why and the actions that can be undertaken to enable an application to be re-considered earlier.
- 9.4 Applicants who have previously been deemed not to qualify may make a fresh application if they consider they should now be treated as qualifying, but it will be for the applicant to show that his or her circumstances have changed.
- 9.5 Applicants who have qualified to join the housing register may become a non-qualifying applicant if their circumstances change.
- 9.6 Acceptance onto the housing register does not mean the applicant will be offered a property. Each Social Housing Provider will assess whether they will offer a property in accordance with their own lettings policy. Applicants who still owe a housing related debt could be declined an offer if they haven't cleared the debt or significantly reduced it and be able to provide appropriate evidence to the Social Housing Provider. Any applicant refused by a Social Housing Provider should be provided with the reason for refusal in writing and be given an opportunity to request a review of the decision.
- 9.7 Some housing providers might directly advertise low demand properties through other means. These will usually be properties that have already been advertised through the

Councils' CBL scheme and there were no successful applicants. All housing applicants including those refused onto the Councils' housing registers might be able to apply for these properties by contacting the housing provider direct.

10 PROVIDING INFORMATION

- 10.1 Applicants are required to provide proof of identity such as their National Insurance Number(s), photographic ID in the form of passport, national identify card or photo driving licence, birth certificate and also a 5 year address history and proof of local connection. This will normally be required before an applicant is allowed to start bidding for properties.
- 10.2 In accepting any registration which includes anyone from abroad, proof of identification, nationality and immigration status will be required. Verification will be sought to safeguard the use and allocation of public funds.
- 10.3 All relevant documentation to verify the details provided will be required from the applicant when they complete their application and can be uploaded through the website portal.
- 10.4 Verification documents might be requested again after bidding for a property to confirm the applicant's circumstance and banding are still accurate.
- 10.5 Applicants are expected to cooperate with the Councils when requesting further information in regard to the assessment of their application. Where information isn't available and the applicant has made reasonable efforts to provide the requested information the applicant will unlikely to be disqualified in regard to section 9.
- 10.6 Where an applicant notifies that they or a member of their household are affected by one or more of the following circumstances, they will be required to provide relevant documentation upon registration.
- Homeless or facing homelessness
 - Medical problems worsened by their current accommodation
 - Are or have served in the Armed Forces
 - Have been involved in ASB or have criminal convictions
 - Moving to provide or receive support
 - Moving for education and/or training
 - Suffering hardship or have a welfare need
 - Current home not fit for habitation
- 10.7 Where there are concerns about a person's suitability as a tenant arising from information given during registration, the Council will make any necessary enquiries, including via the police, to check information given about applications. The declaration Applicants sign on the Registration form gives permission for such enquiries, if necessary.
- 10.8 It is important that the information provided by applicants is accurate to determine the correct priority that the Registration receives. The Housing Act 1996 section 171 states that a person commits an offence if, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under this Part – (a) he knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular, or (b) he knowingly withholds information which the authority have reasonably required him to give in connection with the exercise of those functions.' The offence is punishable on summary conviction by magistrates by a fine of up to £5000.
- 10.9 Applicants who obtain social housing fraudulently are committing an illegal act and likely to be evicted and fined.

11 BANDING PRIORITIES AND RELATIVE PREFERENCE

- 11.1 A Banding Scheme as set out in 11.7 below has been adopted to prioritise the housing needs of applicants. The Banding Scheme has four bands based on the applicant's current housing

circumstances. They have been adopted following guidance issued by the Secretary of State and all eligible registrations are placed into one of these bands.

Registrations are generally prioritised first by band, and secondly by date - see Section 23 for further details.

Depending on their circumstances and local connection to each Council area (Boston and East Lindsey, applicants may be placed into separate bands for each area.

- 11.2 If an applicant is assessed as having more than one identified needs within a band, consideration is given to raising the application into a higher band. For example:
- An applicant who has been assessed as having three or more Band 4 needs is placed into Band 3
 - An applicant who has been assessed as having two or more Band 3 needs is placed into Band 2.

Where the needs are similar, applications are unlikely to move into a higher band. For example a non-priority homeless person would be placed into band 3 but would not be moved into band 2 due to also lacking facilities.

- 11.3 The scheme may make provision for deciding on the relative priority of people in the reasonable preference (and possible additional preference) groups. In doing so, the following factors may to be taken into account:
- a) The financial resources available to the applicant to meet his or her housing costs;
 - b) Any behaviour of a person (or a member of the household) affecting his or her suitability to be a tenant;
 - c) Any local connection (as defined under HA 1996 Part 7: see para 13.191) the person has with the authority.

- 11.4 Additional preference can be awarded to applicants who are considered to be in high housing need. This would usually apply to bands 1 and 2, however, may include other high housing need such as at risk of homelessness. Additional preference can be applied in the following circumstances:

1. Current and former members of the armed forces; who:

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

2. Persons who are terminally ill and must move to suitable accommodation

3. Other exceptional circumstances

An award of additional preference would mean the date the application is placed into the assessed band would be backdated by up to 5 years for points 1a, 1c, 1d and 2. Points 1b and 3 would be backdated by 1 year dependent upon the circumstances.

- 11.5 Housing Priority can be reduced or even taken away in certain situations, for example:

- Circumstances have changed which materially affect the assessment of the application.

- Applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances

Where priority has been reduced or changed, applicants will always be notified.

- 11.6 The councils will expect applicants to improve their circumstances where possible to do so through completing various actions which could reduce or remove the need to move home. This could include accessing money management advice, asking the landlord to rectify disrepair or accepting suitable accommodation if eligible and considered appropriate. Applicants who unreasonably do not cooperate could have their banding reduced to band 4.

11.7 Banding Scheme

BAND 1 – Urgent need and have a local connection or meet an exception

1.1	The “Main Housing Duty” has been accepted by the Council – in the case of main housing duty, this banding would only apply to the housing register of the Council that has accepted the homelessness duty (ELDC or BBC) See section 14 – Homelessness
1.2	Both Councils have a Corporate Parenting responsibility to any young person who is aged 16 or over who is either a "looked after child" from Lincolnshire, or is a "care leaver" supported by Lincolnshire County Council, up to the age of 25. Band 1 will apply when they are not intentionally homeless and are accessing services, and have been assessed as capable of independent living, even with the support of a Leaving Care Worker.
1.3	The applicant is currently in hospital and homeless or doesn't have a suitable home to return to upon discharge as assessed by the Councils taking advice from relevant professionals. Applicants could be placed into a lower band if they have deliberately worsened their circumstances. Housing providers will require a copy of any support plans if applicable.
1.4	The applicant will be going into hospital for a major operation and they will not be able to return to their current home.

BAND 2- High Need and have a local connection or meet an exception

2.1	The applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days and believed to be in priority need and not intentionally homeless as determined by the Local Authority, in accordance with homelessness legislation prevention and relief duties. (This includes persons of no fixed abode - see section 16)
2.2	The household is assessed as needing at least two or more bedrooms than currently available. This is assessed under the space standards contained within Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 or assessed using the HHSRS set out in the Housing Act 2004. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children of the same sex and from the same household can share a bedroom until the oldest child reaches the age of 16 • Children of the opposite sex can share a bedroom until the oldest child reaches the age of 10 Households who live with other households are only placed into this band if they have NOT deliberately made the circumstances worse. People who cannot reasonably be classed as being from the same household are NOT counted within this category e.g. short term lodgers
2.3	The applicant or a member of their household has been awarded High Medical Priority. Medical banding is based on how and why your current living conditions are not appropriate to your medical needs
2.4	The property in which the applicant lives is subject to a Direction, Demolition, Compulsory Purchase Order or Category 1 Hazard, with a prohibition order being made. Applicants do NOT qualify for this band if such orders have been made because they have failed to satisfactorily maintain their own property or because the disrepair has been caused by them and had the financial means to prevent the disrepair

2.5	The applicant is a retiring agricultural worker who falls under Rent Agriculture Act 1976 and their home is required for a new employee
2.6	The applicant is a tenant of a registered housing provider living in permanent accommodation within the Councils geographic area and no longer needs the property because of its extensive disabled adaptations
2.7	The applicant or a member of their household needs extensive disabled adaptations and is prepared to move to a property with such adaptations rather than having them done at their current home. Evidence from an OT/or copy of the DFG referral will be required
2.8	The applicant is a tenant of a registered housing provider living in permanent accommodation within the Councils geographic area who is releasing 2 or more bedrooms to move to a smaller property
2.9	The applicant is suffering from harassment or domestic abuse and it is considered that the accommodation is unreasonable to occupy as defined in the homelessness legislation and determined by the Local Authority. Any recommendations made by a MARAC will be taken into consideration, where appropriate. A risk assessment must be conducted in accordance with MARAC for all offers of accommodation in such cases
2.10	The applicant is a victim of domestic abuse and resident in supported accommodation and assessed by the service provider as ready to move into social housing
2.11	Urgent need to move due to violence, harassment, protection issues. Evidence will be required.
2.12	The applicant currently lives in supported accommodation in Lincolnshire (excluding sheltered housing for older people and where floating support is being provided) and is actively engaging and has been assessed as being ready to move into social housing
2.13	The applicant has been verified by the Council or a commissioned partner to be a rough sleeper who is actively engaging and assessed as being ready to move into social housing
2.14	The applicant has two or more housing needs as set out in Band 3

BAND 3- Medium Need including those who meet a Reasonable Preference category who do not have a local connection

3.1	The applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days but not believed to be in priority need and not likely to be intentionally homeless as determined by the Local Authority, in accordance with homelessness legislation prevention and relief duties. (This includes persons of no fixed abode - see section 16)
3.2	The applicant is a tenant of a registered housing provider living in permanent accommodation within the Councils geographic area who is releasing 1 bedroom to move to a smaller property
3.3	The applicant or a member of their household has been awarded Medium Medical Priority. Medical banding is based on how and why your current living conditions are not appropriate to your medical needs
3.4	<p>The household is assessed as needing one more bedroom than currently available. This is assessed under the space standards contained within Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 or assessed using the HHSRS set out in the Housing Act 2004.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children of the same sex and from the same household can share a bedroom until the oldest child reaches the age of 16 • Children of the opposite sex can share a bedroom until the oldest child reaches the age of 10 <p>Households who live with other households are only placed into this band if they have NOT deliberately made the circumstances worse. If they have, they are placed in Band EX/removed from the list.</p> <p>People who cannot reasonably be classed as being from the same household are NOT counted within this category e.g. short term lodgers.</p>

3.5	<p>The applicant's current home is assessed as permanently lacking or the applicant is unable to access basic essential facilities and it is through no fault of their own, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an inside toilet • hot and cold running water • bathing facilities • mains services i.e. electrical / water supplies <p>This category excludes caravans/mobile homes unless on a permanent site. It will not be used where any of the above has been caused by the occupier.</p>
3.6	The property in which the applicant lives is subject to a Category 1 Hazard, as per HHSRS legislation (written confirmation required) and the landlord is refusing to rectify the disrepair.
3.7	A household with dependent children unable to live together as a family unit (this is defined as spouse/partner/children) and wishes to live with them
3.8	<p>The applicant is experiencing undue financial hardship which is a direct result of current housing circumstances. To fall into this band the situation must be;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one that is not likely to be short lived • one that is not/has not been caused by a deliberate act or omission and, • one that the applicant is unable to have any reasonable control over • The circumstances make their current home unaffordable in terms of rent and utilities where they previously could have afforded it. <p>A full financial assessment will be undertaken as the basis for placing/not placing registrations into this category. The assessment could result in the applicant being assessed as threatened with homelessness and placed into a higher band.</p>
3.9	A household with dependent children lodging and sharing facilities with friends or family who has not deliberately worsened their circumstances by moving from accommodation that was otherwise suitable
3.10	<p>The welfare of the household is being <u>severely</u> affected by the current accommodation or location, this could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant is <u>currently unemployed</u> and has been offered permanent employment (seasonal work not considered) and <u>must</u> move to be able to carry out the job. • The applicant is <u>currently unemployed</u> and <u>needs</u> to move to access full time education/training that cannot be accessed in their current location. • The applicants <u>needs</u> to move to provide long term care and support. This could include foster carers and those approved to adopt who need to move to a larger property. • The applicant is severely isolated and <u>must</u> move to access vital services. <p>Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances</p>
3.11	Right to Move applicants (see section 12)
3.12	Applicants who meet a Reasonable Preference category but do not have a local connection to the Councils geographic area (as defined in section 8.8)
3.13	The applicant has three or more housing needs as set out within Band 4

BAND 4- Low Need

4.1	The applicant has housing need that would ordinarily place them into a higher band but has been found Intentionally Homeless within the last 12 months and has not had a settled home in that time
4.2	Applicants who fail to reasonably cooperate with advice provided by the council in respect of preventing or relieving their homelessness or following other advice and actions to reduce the need for them to move home. This includes failing to bid for properties.

4.3	A household without dependent children lodging and sharing facilities with friends or family
4.4	The applicant's relationship with their partner has broken down and they do not have the legal right to live there but they haven't been asked to leave within 56 days
4.5	The applicant or a member of their household has been awarded Low Medical Priority. Medical banding is based on how and why your current living conditions are not appropriate to your medical needs
4.6	The applicant's existing tenancy is insecure or an assured shorthold tenancy
4.7	<p>The households welfare is being affected by the current accommodation or location, this could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has been offered employment (including seasonal work) and wishes to move nearer to the job. • The applicant or family member <u>wishes</u> to move to access education/training that cannot be accessed in their current location. • The applicant <u>wishes</u> to move to provide long term care and support. This could those applying to become foster carers or to adopt and need to move to a larger property. • The applicant is isolated and <u>wishes</u> to move to access services. <p>Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances</p>

12 MEDICAL BANDING

- 12.1 Medical banding is awarded to housing applicants or those to be rehoused with them who can demonstrate that their medical condition (physical or psychological) is currently being adversely affected by their housing situation AND that a change to more appropriate housing would benefit them medically.
- 12.2 An assessment of medical need is made by the Councils after receipt of the completed medical assessment form, evidence of disability benefits and list of medication. Supporting evidence and reports from medical professionals will be taken into account if provided but these are not usually necessary and there might be a charge which the Council will not pay. If the assessment places an applicant into a higher band, then the registration will be re-dated to the date of the assessment. If the assessment does not change the band into which the registration falls, the existing effective date and banding remains unchanged.
- 12.3 There are FOUR recommendations that can be returned;
- High Priority – Registration placed into Band 2
Medium Priority – Registration placed into Band 3
Low Priority – Registration placed into Band 4; or
No Medical Priority.
- 12.4 The Assessor determines medical priority based on the current housing circumstances in relation to the illness or disability of the applicant or household member (who is moving with them) as well as considering measures that could be taken to make the current home more suitable. The assessment will take account of the level of risk of the applicant coming to harm as a result of the property not meeting their needs such as from trips and falls.
- 12.5 The Council assessing the application will consider a request for a further medical assessment if it is satisfied that there has been a significant change in the medical circumstances of the applicant or their household.
- 12.6 Applicants who require a specific type of property such as due to a medical need will normally only be allowed to bid for a property of that type. If applicants consider they can manage a different type of property, their medical assessment will be reviewed. For example an

applicant who needs a ground floor property due to a disability who wishes to bid for a first floor property would either not be allowed or would have their medical assessment reviewed.

- 12.7 If an applicant disagrees with the medical band that has been awarded they can request a review of this decision in writing stating why they disagree. A further assessment would then be completed by an independent medical professional for which there may be a charge. This could result in the Council's assessment being confirmed or overturned which may result in the medical award being increased or decreased.

13 RIGHT TO MOVE (social tenants)

- 13.1 The Right to Move regulation enables social housing tenants to move to another authority to take up a job or live closer to employment or training.

- Existing social housing tenants living outside of the Councils' geographical areas may apply to join the housing register in cases where they have a need to move to the area to avoid hardship, and
- The social housing tenant has a need to move to the district because the tenant works or has been offered work in the district and has a genuine intention to take up the offer.

- 13.2 Anyone wishing to apply under this regulation must provide evidence of employment/training in the area and reasons why they would experience hardship if they were not able to move into the district / borough.

- 13.3 The employment should be long-term – at least 12 months, and should be for at least 16 hours per week. The work must be based in the district / borough, not just requiring the applicant to travel to the area occasionally. Voluntary work is not eligible, however apprenticeships are eligible.

- 13.4 Where an applicant has received an offer of a job, there must be genuine intent to take it up.

- 13.5 Applicants must provide evidence to confirm employment. This may include:

- A contract of employment
- Wage/salary slips
- Bank statements
- Proof of working tax credit
- A formal offer letter

- 13.6 Verification of on-going employment in the area will be sought at the point of making an application active, and at the point of allocation.

14 HOMELESSNESS

- 14.1 In cases where the Council assessing a homeless application has accepted a main housing duty following on from the "prevention" and "relief" duty, applicants will be placed into Band 1 if they have a local connection or meet an exception as per 8.12. Such applicants are required to make bids on the first suitable property that they are eligible for, from the date that they have been accepted as homeless. The Council will also bid on their behalf for properties which the Council consider meet their needs and they are eligible for. If an applicant refuses a successful bid, the homelessness duty to them will be discharged but a right to a review is available. The application band would also be reassessed.

- 14.2 Where statutorily homeless applicants have a housing related debt they could be placed into temporary accommodation under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996, during this time an affordable repayment agreement will be made with them to repay the debt. This will allow applicant(s) to place bids, however it is unlikely that they will be offered a property unless the debt has been cleared or regular payments have been made to reduce the debt over a period of time determined by the relevant housing provider.

- 14.3 Statutorily homeless applicants will also be considered for an offer of accommodation in the private sector. This could result in the homelessness duty being discharged.
- 14.4 Anyone provided with a temporary tenancy pursuant to a homeless application will be required to update their application and continue to bid on suitable properties.

15 CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITY

- 15.1 The Councils have a Corporate Parenting responsibility to any young person who is aged 16 or over who is either a "looked after child" from Lincolnshire, or is a "care leaver" supported by Lincolnshire County Council, up to the age of 25. Band 1 will apply when they are not intentionally homeless and are accessing services, and have been assessed as capable of independent living, even with the support of a Leaving Care Worker. Children's Services would need to make this request and provide appropriate evidence to confirm the young person did not become homeless intentionally.

16 ROUGH SLEEPING

- 16.1 Defined as being street homeless and having access to no accommodation at all. People of 'No Fixed Abode', who are for example staying at various locations on an ad hoc basis, are not regarded as rough sleepers.

17 NO FIXED ABODE

- 17.1 Applicants who claim that they are of no fixed abode have to satisfy the Council to which they are applying that they genuinely have no settled accommodation and are living at various locations for very short periods of time.
- 17.2 In confirming cases where applicants claim that they are of no fixed abode, proof may be sought from each address and/or other agencies with which they are registered.

18 HOUSING RELATED DEBTS

- 18.1 Where an applicant(s) has any current/former rent arrears or other housing related debt they might be accepted onto the housing register and placed in the appropriate band. This would allow applicant(s) to place bids, however, housing providers might still refuse to offer a property whilst the debt is still outstanding. Further information is within section 9.

Applicants who have housing related debt are strongly advised to make arrangements to reduce or clear this to improve their prospects of receiving a housing offer. The Councils Housing Teams, Citizens Advice or other support services will be able to offer advice. Applicants may wish to seek support from the services listed on ["Connect to Support Lincolnshire"](#)

19 FINANCIAL CAPACITY

- 19.1 All households applying to the scheme are assessed for their ability to buy their own home, or adapt their own home to meet their assessed needs. Assets that may be taken into consideration when assessing financial capacity may include but are not limited to savings, shares, bonds, commercial property, residential property, property abroad and money apportioned through the proceeds of a divorce settlement, inheritance or any form of cash windfall. An allocation will not be made where an applicant(s) owns a property that would be reasonable for them to live in or where, if they sold it, they could afford to buy another property in the area.
- 19.2 In determining the priority an applicant receives within the scheme, the following are some examples of what will be considered:

- Whether the applicant(s) can sell their current home or any other property that they own
- Whether the applicant has rights to a former matrimonial home
- The expected equity after the proposed sale of the property.
- The applicant(s) current financial circumstances and commitments.
- Whether the applicant(s) will be eligible for a mortgage.
- The supply of accommodation suitable for the applicant(s) specific needs on the private market for either sale or rent.
- Whether the applicant(s) housing need can be met in the private market taking into consideration the cost of housing within the district.
- Whether adaptation of the present property is a viable option.
- Whether significant care and support needs would impact on the ability of the applicant to secure and maintain accommodation.
- For applicants from the Armed Forces who receive a lump sum as compensation for injury or disability sustained on active service, this settlement amount will be disregarded for the purposes of financial capacity.

19.3 An allocation will not be made to an applicant who can obtain and afford a mortgage to buy a property which meets their requirements within the area by using their assets and income.

20 HOUSING SUPPORT

20.1 A range of support services are available throughout the area and are there to help vulnerable people live safely and independently within the community.

20.2 Housing providers might request risk assessments, support plans and other relevant information from relevant agencies before making an offer of a property.

20.3 Housing Providers reserve the right to refuse any bids from applicants for accommodation it deems unsuitable and where in its opinion, support plans are not sufficiently detailed to provide support to the applicant to ensure that their tenancy remains sustainable.

21 CARERS

21.1 Applicants with a disability or other need who require an additional bedroom to accommodate a carer are required to provide satisfactory evidence such as an approved and detailed Care Plan. Such evidence may need to be shared with a Housing provider to confirm the need for the additional bedroom.

21.2 This information is required to evidence that an additional bedroom is needed and also to enable a Housing Provider to assess whether the accommodation will be affordable taking account of the under-occupancy rules.

22 RENT (AGRICULTURE) ACT 1976

22.1 The Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 and the Housing Act 1988 give certain agriculture workers (including retired workers and successors) living in farm cottages, security of tenure. However, under these Acts a farmer may apply to the appropriate Local Authority to have the protected worker re-housed if they need the cottage for another worker in the interests of efficient agriculture.

22.2 The authority will consider whether the employee occupied the accommodation as part of their employment in agriculture and worked whole time in agriculture for 91 out of the preceding 104 weeks. The authority will also consider whether the landlord is able to provide alternative suitable accommodation.

22.3 The authority will award band 2 if it considers the requirements of the Acts have been met.

23 DATING OF REGISTRATIONS

- 23.1 The initial registration date of an application will be the date that the applicant registers their application details online. Where the councils housing register system has changed and customers need to re-register, the original application date will be retained.

Once the application and accompanying evidence has been provided, the banding will be assessed and the application placed within a band in date order.

- **new application**, the banding date will be the date that all requested evidence has been provided
- **change in circumstances which results in a higher band assessment:** the banding date will be the date the applicant provides satisfactory evidence of the change in circumstances.
- **change in circumstance which results in the banding remaining the same:** the banding date will not change
- **change in circumstances which result in a lower band assessment:** the banding date will revert to the original application date.
- **Refusal of three offers:** the banding date will be changed to the date of the last refusal and the application might be placed into a lower band (see 26.26). Applicants will be informed in writing and can request a review of this decision.
- **Cancelled applications** – see section 25.

24 CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES

- 24.1 All changes in Applicant's circumstances must be updated on the applicant's application through the [website](#) or via the Housing Teams. Changes in circumstances that lead to re-banding will be dealt with in accordance with this policy and the Applicant(s) advised accordingly.
- 24.2 Applications will be regularly reviewed to ensure the applicant wishes to remain on the housing register and their application is still accurate, eligible and qualifying.

25 SUSPENDED AND CANCELLED APPLICATIONS

- 25.1 Applicants may be temporarily suspended whilst the Council assess the information provided by the applicant and complete further enquiries that may be necessary such as where there has been a change of circumstance or new information has been provided.
- 25.2 Applications will be suspended if there is a report of possible fraud or false information until enquiries are completed.
- 25.3 Applications will not be suspended at the request of the applicant due to not wanting to be considered for accommodation at the current time however applicants can generally choose whether to bid or not bid for properties.
- 25.4 Applications will usually be cancelled in the following circumstances:
- The applicant hasn't provided the requested information to enable their application to be assessed
 - The applicant is no longer a qualifying applicant as per section 8 & 9
 - The applicant has been rehoused through the housing register
 - A request to cancel the application
 - There is no reply from the applicant following reasonable efforts made by the Councils to contact the applicant
 - Correspondence has been returned as "gone away"
 - Notification has been received that the applicant had deceased

25.5 Applicants can request that their application is re-instated however this must be received within 3 months of the date of cancellation in order to retain the original application date and band effective date.

26 SUPPORTING VULNERABLE APPLICANTS

26.1 Some vulnerable applicants may require help to ensure that they have the same opportunity to access the scheme. If an applicant is determined as vulnerable they may be offered support to access the scheme. In order to ensure that vulnerable applicants can express an interest in a property, the 'auto bid' function can be activated on their application. This means that during each bid cycle an applicant's details are matched to suitable available homes and a bid is automatically placed on their behalf through the system.

26.2 Applicants can also ring the Councils' Housing Teams where an advisor will be able to place a bid on their behalf:

- East Lindsey: 01507 613135
- Boston: 01205 314200

26.3 Referrals for auto bid may come from a number of sources, although most would come from the following (however this is not exclusive);

- Request from support worker or Housing Officer
- Self-referral
- From monitoring applicants who have not bid – where the Council identifies applicants who are not making bids for accommodation

27 THE BIDDING PROCESS

27.1 When the applicant(s) has been accepted onto the scheme, they will then be able to bid for up to 3 properties in each cycle, for which they are eligible. There is no fee for making a bid.

27.2 **ADVERTISEMENTS** – Available properties are advertised in the following ways:

- **Website** – applicants are able to view available properties and apply for properties via the customer portal
- **Telephone** – Applicants can telephone the Housing Teams where an advisor will be able to place a bid on their behalf.

27.3 All available properties will normally be advertised any day Monday to Friday and will run for a minimum of four days. Any bids received after the deadline will not usually be considered.

27.4 Occasionally it is necessary to withdraw a property/properties from an advert. Housing Providers reserve the right to withdraw properties without notice. This may be due to the notice on the property being withdrawn or for other reasons of good Housing Management practice.

27.5 **PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS** – Properties advertised using the above methods will have (where possible) a photograph of the property and a full description. This normally includes:

- Type of property
- Number of bedrooms
- Location of property
- Any adaptations (e.g. disabled facilities etc.)
- Services provided (e.g. caretaker, cleaning)
- Heating type
- EPC rating
- Rent charged/service charges
- Whether it has a garden
- Amenities in the area
- Details if pets are permitted

27.6 Adverts also give information on who will be eligible to bid for the property including household size. For example if the property is a sheltered housing unit also known as independent living the advert may state that only applicants above a certain age or those with assessed support needs will be eligible to apply. Those properties that have local connection criteria will be appropriately detailed to indicate who is eligible to bid.

27.7 **BIDDING FOR A PROPERTY** – Where an applicant meets the bidding criteria they may bid for that property within the deadline given. Applicants may use any of the following methods to make a bid:

Website:	https://www.oneteamlincs.housingjigsaw.co.uk/
Telephone	Boston: 01205 314200 East Lindsey: 01507 613135
Email:	Boston: Housing.dept@boston.gov.uk East Lindsey: Housing.Register@e-lindsey.gov.uk
Auto Bid:	No action required by the applicant

27.8 **DETERMINING PRIORITIES BETWEEN APPLICANTS WITH A SIMILAR LEVEL OF HOUSING NEED** - Where two or more applicants with similar housing needs (i.e. within the same band) bid for a property, the usual policy of offering the property to the applicant who has been in the band the longest might be overridden in certain circumstances such as:

- Local Connection - applicants with a strong connection to the location of the advertised property (i.e. town or village) might be prioritised over applicants without a local connection. A local connection is usually created through living or working in the location of the property or needing to move near to close family such as mum, dad, brother or sister for support.
- Financial means – rent levels for social housing properties can vary significantly even for identical properties which can result in some properties being less affordable. This might require an applicant with less disposable income to be prioritised over an applicant that has greater financial means.
- Adapted properties – the Councils wish to make best use of the limited supply of adapted homes and might prioritise applicants who best meet the property requirements over an applicant who doesn't require all of the adaptations.
- Bedroom requirements – the Councils wish to make best use of larger family properties and might prioritise applicants who require additional bedroom(s) because they have children that live with them permanently over a household that has children whom they do not live with on a permanent basis.

27.9 **ADAPTED PROPERTIES** – adapted properties will be advertised for rent and these will range from fully wheelchair accessible properties to homes with adaptations such a ramped access, level access showers or stair-lifts. These properties are prioritised for applicants who evidence they need such adaptations.

Generally, disabled people will not be allowed to bid for a property which is not suitable for their needs but rules might be relaxed if the home can be adapted quickly and not leave the applicant at significant risk of coming to harm.

Where an applicant's existing home has undergone adaptations to meet the needs of the applicant or household Member, any subsequent application made to join the Scheme would

have its eligibility restricted to other similarly adapted homes unless there has been a material change in their circumstances.

27.10 **PROPERTIES LET OUTSIDE THE SCHEME** - The majority of available properties will be advertised through the [website](#). However, there are circumstances where a property may be let outside of the scheme through a direct letting. Examples of this are, where:

- Properties that have been advertised through the CBL scheme and there hasn't been any bids/suitable applicants
- a Housing Provider has been requested to help the Council in their duty to accommodate statutorily homeless households
- a Housing Provider has to temporarily decant (move) a tenant whilst major works are carried out at their current property
- a property is required for use as supported accommodation by the Council
- a Housing Provider is carrying out major refurbishment works leading to the demolition of property and a tenant has to be housed in alternative accommodation
- High Level Supported accommodation, such as Extra Care Schemes
- a Housing Provider carries out a Management Transfer
- a request from MARAC or MAPPA in regard to a high risk victim or perpetrator
- For reasons of good Housing Management practice.
- Sensitive lets – see section 25.14

Such properties will usually not be advertised through CBL scheme.

27.11 Housing Providers will make appropriate arrangements for the housing of such tenants into suitable accommodation without their requirement to bid for available properties.

27.12 **Extra Care schemes** are not let through Homes Direct and have separate Housing Registers. These properties are let by a Lettings Panel selecting the most suitable applicant from a list. Further information can be obtained from the Housing Teams.

27.13 **VERIFICATION PROCESS** - Applicants who are being considered for a property will be contacted to verify the details of their application and banding are still accurate. It is advisable for applicants to ensure their application is accurate at all times.

27.14 If the applicant's details are not accurate and further information is required, this could result in the applicant being overlooked for a property if they can't quickly provide the required information. If the banding is incorrect, the Council will review the application to ensure the applicant is eligible to remain on the housing register, review the banding and decide whether the applicants can still be considered for the property concerned.

27.15 Applicants might be required to provide a reference from their current or previous landlord. Those with an unsatisfactory written reference where there has been a serious breach of tenancy will not normally be offered accommodation. Each case is considered individually and applicants will be advised of what is required of them in order to be re-considered for an offer at a future point in time.

27.16 **OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION** – At the close of the bidding process a list will be produced in priority and date order, and where required (on certain properties) highlighting applicants with a local connection. The housing provider will contact the first suitable applicant (taking into account sections 20 Housing Support and 30 Managing Risks) to establish that the property being considered is suitable in meeting the households needs. If not, the applicant might be bypassed.

27.17 In making this decision, the housing provider will consider a range of factors including family make-up, financial, health, isolation, safeguarding, support needs, previous tenancy and criminal history and their own lettings policy.

- 27.18 Occasionally, a Housing Provider may wish to carry out a “**sensitive let**” which is where they are trying to achieve community cohesion. This could result in applicants being over-looked for a property.
- 27.19 Once an application has been approved, arrangements will usually be made by the Housing Provider for an accompanied viewing to take place followed by a sign-up which includes the applicant(s) signing the relevant tenancy agreement which might be on the same day.
- 27.20 There is a right of appeal against any decision not to make an offer and this should be detailed in each housing provider’s lettings policy
- 27.21 **RENT IN ADVANCE** will be required by most housing providers and it is recommended that applicants save up in the region of £400 prior to being offered a property.
- 27.22 **TENANCY TYPES** - Housing Providers always make formal offers of accommodation in writing to successful bidders. However, to ensure that homes are let as quickly as possible, verbal offers may be made prior to a written offer. The type of tenancy offered may be a Starter, Assured, or an Assured Shorthold fixed term depending on the circumstances of the let. The type of tenancy to be issued will be confirmed at the point of offer. Housing Providers may also operate two different rent levels; either a social rent or an Affordable Rent (where the rent level is set at 80% of the market rent level for the local housing allowance area).
- Housing Providers will operate their own internal Policies around rent levels and type of tenancy offered.
- 27.23 If the property is refused the next suitable applicant on the list will be contacted until the list is exhausted. At that point the property may be re-advertised.
- 27.24 **WITHDRAWING OFFERS** – There may be occasions where housing providers have cause to withdraw an offer on a property. This may be due to information coming to light about an applicant’s circumstances that affect their entitlement either their level of need, priority or other factors including the out-going tenant withdrawing their notice to quit.
- 27.25 **REFUSALS / NON BIDDING** – If an applicant refuses 3 offers, (unless homeless, see section 14), they will be contacted regarding their housing requirements to ensure they understand the system and to offer support and assistance if required.
- 27.26 An applicant who refuses 3 offers for unsatisfactory reasons will be penalised in the form of having the band effective date changed to the date of last refusal.
- 27.27 All applicants in Band 1 and 2 who have not placed a bid during a 6 month period will be monitored to establish if any suitable properties have been advertised during the period. If eligible properties have been advertised the Applicant may be interviewed to establish why they did not bid, and their Registration will be reassessed.
- 27.28 All other applicants who have not placed a bid during a 12 month period will be contacted asking if they still wish to remain on the register. Applicants who fail to respond will be removed from the register.
- 27.29 **FEEDBACK** – An important part of the Scheme is the need to give applicants feedback on allocated properties. This will help applicants make an informed evaluation of their housing options. Feedback information will be provided through the Councils website.

When making a bid, applicants can see their bid position for each property which will give an indication of their prospects of being successful. Some bid positions will change, in particular for properties which are prioritised for people with a strong local connection. Positions could also change following a check if each applicants circumstances because this could result in a change to their band or eligibility for the advertised property.

28 PROPERTY TYPES AND HOUSEHOLD SIZE

- 28.1 The Policy covers the letting of a range of property types throughout the area. These properties range from bed-sitting rooms to five bedroom houses. See Appendix A for a guide to the size and type of accommodation that you may be eligible for.
- 28.2 Housing Providers always endeavour to make the best possible use of their stock in terms of size and suitability when setting the criteria for eligibility. For example, ground floor flats may be reserved for people with a disability. Housing Providers may also relax the criteria for example where a particular location has few properties of a specific type and size.
- 28.3 Each housing provider will have different rules about when they will consider an expected child in calculating the number of bedrooms required. Most will require a copy of the MATB1 maternity certificate which is usually issued after 20 weeks.
- 28.4 Housing Providers can amend the bid criteria of previously advertised properties to widen the eligibility and enable successful bids to be made.
- 28.5 Housing Providers will generally let in accordance with the social size criteria, introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012. (Specific details will be shown on the property advert). The rules allow 1 bedroom for
- Every adult couple (married or unmarried)
 - Any other adults aged 16 or over
 - Any 2 children of the same sex aged under 16*
 - Any 2 children aged under 10*
 - Any other child (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere)*
 - Children who can't share a bedroom because of a disability or medical condition
 - A carer (or team of carers) providing overnight care

One spare bedroom is allowed for

- An approved foster carer who is between placements, but only for up to 52 weeks from the end of the last placement
- A newly approved foster carer for up to 52 weeks from the date of approval if no child is placed with them during that time.

Rooms used by students and members of the armed or reserve forces will not be counted as 'spare' if they're away and intend to return home.

- * If an applicant shares the care of a child with the child's other parent, the child will be treated as living with the parent who provides the child's main home. If the child spends equal amounts of time with both parents, they will be treated as living with the parent who claims Child Benefit for them. This may mean that the applicant won't be allowed a bedroom for the child. The Council have the right to use discretion in some cases when considering bedroom need and the applicant will need to provide evidence showing the amount of overnight stay such as court order or letter from the parent with main residency. The housing provider might be lenient if there is low demand for the type of property requested from applicant who meet the property requirements and the applicant would have to meet the affordability criteria.
- * Unborn babies will be considered on receipt of the MATB1 certificate which is normally issued at about 20 weeks.

- 28.6 Retirement Living (also known as Independent Living Schemes) are usually prioritised for persons over 55 years of age who want the support of a scheme manager who is regularly on site plus an emergency alarm service. Most schemes will have communal facilities such as a lounge and laundry. There will be an additional charge for these services.

- 28.7 Adapted properties are prioritised for applicants who need the use of adaptations such as a level floor shower due to a disability. Generally disabled applicants will not be allowed to bid for non-adapted properties but exceptions might be made by the housing provider if there are minimal adapted properties within the applicant's area of choice or the property can be adapted within a reasonable timescale. The applicant would need to be able to evidence to the housing provider's satisfaction that they can get the property adapted to meet their needs. Some housing providers will require the applicant to sign a disclaimer and might not allow the applicant to apply for a transfer for a period of time.
- 28.8 In cases where social housing properties have 'small' bedrooms (i.e. less than 6.5 m²), housing providers might alter the lettings criteria.
- 28.9 In some circumstances a second living room in a property may be considered for use as a bedroom providing certain criteria are met.

29 LOCAL LETTINGS POLICIES, PLANNING CONDITIONS AND SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

- 29.1 Local Lettings Policies are usually introduced to meet a particular local need and have an overall positive effect on estates. For example, if an estate had a high level of anti-social behaviour, applicants who bid for the advertised property would have a criminal check completed to ensure they were suitable for the property.
- 29.2 To be considered for a property within a Local Lettings scheme, the applicant would have to meet the criteria listed in the advert. Applicants would usually need to have a local connection to the town or village of the advertised property. Suitable applicants for tenancies will be selected from those who bid for the properties and invited for interview with the Housing Provider, the Council or Police. Selection will be based on the interview, employment, current accommodation and history of applicant.
- 29.3 When new developments are advertised restrictions may have been set on the development by the Planning Department of the Local Authority, these can be planning conditions with letting restrictions or Section 106 agreements. These are legal agreements between local authorities and developers, which are linked to a planning permission. For example, the Planning Department may restrict a new development in a village by stating that only people with a local connection to that village can be housed in the available properties meaning local connection could take priority over housing need. In cases where restrictions have been placed on a development properties will be advertised appropriately.
- 29.4 Where there are local connection restrictions relating to a property, these will be detailed on the property advert. They will vary depending upon the Housing Provider and Local Authority restrictions. Any applicant can bid, but in the first instance preference will be given to applicants who have a local connection to the town, village or district as stated in the advert. Applicants will be ordered according to the strength of their local connection, followed by Band and then Band Effective Date.

To be considered as having a local connection to an area one of the following must normally apply:

The applicant must:

- Have been born in the town or village and resided there for the stated period of time
- Currently reside in that town, village for a stated period of time.
- Have previously resided in that town, village or district for a continuous stated period.
- Have permanent employment in that town, village or district for a given number of hours per week for a continuous stated period.
- Need to reside in that town, village or district to give/receive support to/from someone who has resided in the district for a stated period of time.

If none of the above apply, the property will usually be let to the applicant who has been registered within the relevant housing need band the longest.

- 29.5 Applicants must provide evidence of their local connection within 5 days of placing a bid where a S106 is applicable. If this information is not provided, the applicant will be bypassed.
- 29.6 When a property has been advertised with a Section 106 agreement, an applicant's shortlist position may change following local connection verification checks.

30 MANAGING RISKS

- 30.1 The primary aim of Housing Providers is to maintain balanced and stable communities which are safe, thriving and attractive places to live. In working towards this vision, housing providers recognise that all people have a right to a home that is more than just somewhere to live. However, there will always be people who are more difficult to integrate into mainstream housing. To manage risks to individuals and communities, a multi-agency approach must be taken. For example, securing accommodation for a high-risk ex-offender will be done in consultation and with the approval of the appropriate agencies. In order to achieve this there may be occasions when the Applicant(s) who has/have the greatest priority within the scheme may not be offered a particular property. In such cases they will be written to by the housing provider explaining the reasons why.
- 30.2 Where an applicant is subject to MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Agency), we will liaise with the MAPPA panel to ensure an appropriate housing solution to meet the needs of the applicant and the community as a whole. In such cases, the offer of any accommodation following a successful bid, will be directed and approved by relevant statutory agencies. For any case registered with MAPPA and Divisional High Risk Meetings, the Councils are the nominated point of contact and will take the lead on working with registered housing providers in the provision of suitable accommodation.
- 30.3 Where an applicant suffering domestic abuse is the subject of a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) housing providers will liaise with the appropriate agencies to ensure any accommodation offered is as suitable in terms of location and security. Where it is possible to identify perpetrators of domestic abuse, consideration of the victim will be given when providing them with accommodation as far as is practicable.
- 30.4 An integral part of managing risks is to ensure that appropriate support networks are in place and are regularly monitored and reviewed.
- 30.5 Any successful bid will be deferred if the relevant agencies have not provided a relevant Care Plan/Risk Assessment to manage the risk.

31 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- 31.1 The information given during the registration process includes special category data as defined by Article 9 of the General Data Protection Regulation and will be collected, processed and retained by the strategic alliance workforce for the purpose of administering the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Applicants have the right to request a copy of the information held about them (there is no fee) alongside other rights which help them to control their data. For the purposes of Data Protection Legislation, East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council are the data controllers in common. Application for this information can be made through the Strategic Alliance Data Protection team.
- 31.2 Applicants have the right to request information regarding any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering their applications to join the Scheme or assess the banding.
- 31.3 Information that you provide is held securely and only shared with housing providers if you have given us permission to do so or we are legally obliged to share and you are being considered for a property.

Personal information held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart unless the Councils are required by law to make such disclosures

- 31.4 In order to maintain confidentiality, Applicants will be asked a number of 'checking' questions when they contact the Councils by telephone before discussing their application. If Applicants wish another person (friend or family member) who is not a joint applicant to enquire about their application on their behalf, permission will be required from the Applicant beforehand.

32 REQUESTING A REVIEW

32.1 Every Applicant has the right to request a review of;

- The band into which they have been placed or
- Any decisions taken in relation to their Registration
- The outcome of their support needs assessment e.g. sheltered housing, risk assessment

32.2 All requests for a review must;

- Be in writing, addressed to the Housing Manager, East Lindsey District Council & Boston Borough Council, Tedder Hall, Manby Park, LOUTH, Lincs LN11 8UP or via email jason.oxby@e-lindsey.gov.uk
- Be received within 21 days from the date of the decision letter, from the applicant(s) or their representative, clearly stating the grounds on which the review is being sought and providing any supporting evidence. Verbal representation will be allowed in exceptional circumstances.
- ELDC will review such requests and provide a written response within 56 days of receipt of the request setting out the reasons for the decision.

32.3 The outcome of a review will always be given in writing.

33 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

33.1 Applicants who wish to provide compliments or register a complaint can do so by contacting the relevant Council. Further details can be found on either website.

<https://www.mybostonuk.com/>
<https://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/>

34 FURTHER REDRESS

34.1 If applicants are still dissatisfied following making a complaint may seek other forms of external redress, such as the Local Government Ombudsman (www.lgo.org.uk) or through a legal process known as Judicial Review. Both of these forms of redress are primarily concerned with ensuring that correct procedure has been followed rather than the actual decision made, although they will consider whether the scheme policy on which a decision was based is lawful.

35 MONITORING

35.1 In order to ensure that the Housing Allocation Scheme is achieving its Vision and Objectives as well as informing on gaps in service provision and availability of accommodation the Councils will produce an annual report taking into account a range of factors such as:

- The number of non-qualifying applicants
- The number of applicants on the register by band
- The number of lettings per band
- The number of allocations to people:
 - with and without a local connection
 - with reasonable preference

- with an exception
- The number of allocations to each band
- The number of refusals by applicants or landlords
- The number of complaints about the scheme
- Customer satisfaction & performance against service standards

Glossary of Terms

“Applicant(s)”	A person or persons submitting an application for Registration and those accepted onto the housing register which includes both main and joint applicant
“Application”	An application for Registration submitted on a Registration Form
“Banding Scheme”	How applicants are prioritised in the scheme – the banding may be different for applicants wishing to access housing in Boston and East Lindsey due to local connection criteria
“Bid”	The process of applicants saying which property they would like to live in
“CBL”	Choice Based Lettings
“Household”	People who can be reasonably expected to live with you, e.g. children dependent adults, carers
“Housing Related Debt”	Rechargeable repairs, current or former rent arrears, rent assist or homeless prevention payments
“Policy”	The Choice Based Lettings Policy
“Registered Provider”	Also known as Housing Associations or Social Housing
“Registration”	The method of applying for housing
“Registration Form”	The online form which must be completed to apply for housing
“Repayment Agreement”	An agreement made by the applicant to repay any housing related debt
“Scheme”	The Housing Register - also known Choice Based Lettings Scheme
“Service Standards”	The service standards set out at Section 6
“Stakeholders” scheme	Other agencies/organisation with an interest or involvement with the
“Street Homeless”	Sleeping rough on the streets
“The Councils”	Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council – operating as a Strategic Alliance

Annexe A

Further information and conditions in respect of the Reasonable Preference categories:

Homelessness:

Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness will be referred with consent to an area where they do have a local connection if it is safe for them to move there. Applicants who refuse to be referred could be removed from the housing register.

People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions:

This includes households who live in unsatisfactory housing conditions such as where a category 1 hazard notice or prohibition order has been served; or

The property is overcrowded as per the Housing Act 1985 or Housing Act 2004; or

The property is overcrowded as per the Local Housing Allowance size criteria.

Properties that are suffering from disrepair will not be considered under this heading unless the landlord is refusing to rectify the disrepair and a category 1 hazard awareness notice has been served by the local authority.

Under-occupation of social housing comes under this category.

Other unsatisfactory conditions will be considered on a case by case basis.

Applicants who live outside of the borough / district assessing their application will need to provide evidence from their local housing authority to evidence they meet this category.

People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability):

The current housing conditions must be having an adverse effect on the welfare or medical condition of the applicant or member of the household meaning they “need” to move rather than they “wish” to move

The conditions must be of a long term nature rather than temporary. Reasonable measures to help overcome the issues must have been exhausted or an appropriate person in a professional capacity considers there to be no suitable measures.

Isolation is considered under this category.

Below is not an exhaustive list but provides some examples of why an applicant needs to move:

- Child/Children with special needs and support is needed to enable normal daily living
- Applicant or child suffering from severe illness and support is needed to enable normal daily living
- Team around Child or similar recommendation
- MARAC recommendation

The following are examples of where an application may be refused because support can be provided in current location:

- Have a partner who is able to offer support
- Have close relatives or friends within a 10 mile radius who are able to offer support

- Other sufficient support networks i.e. public or charitable sectors i.e. housing support, social worker, Home-Start can provide the support
- Financial ability to buy in support i.e. personal budgets or sufficient savings
- Social tenant with reasonable prospects of getting a mutual exchange within a 10 mile radius of support networks

People who need to move to the district to avoid hardship to the applicant or others:

People who have an extenuating need to receive care and support. This will only be considered if the extenuating need is to provide or receive on-going and substantial care which can be evidenced and without doing so exceptional hardship would be caused to the applicant or others.

The applicant must demonstrate:

- That they or the person they are moving near to needs to be cared for and are dependent on the person who will provide the care
- The person in need of support has been assessed as eligible for carers allowance and are in receipt of personal independence payments.
- That other satisfactory arrangements cannot be made
- That the arrangement is ongoing rather than short term

The person residing in the Borough or District of the Council assessing the application must have had permanent residence within the district for a minimum of 2 years. Where this isn't the case the application will be placed into band 4 until the local connection criteria has been met

Annexe B

The following charts provide a guide to the type and size of property that applicants can bid for. Where there is a limited number of properties, applicants are advised to consider other housing options such as private rented and shared ownership. This is because a suitable social home might not become available to be advertised for many years and depend is likely to be high.

Exact details will vary per property and will be dependent upon a range of factors including the size of the bedrooms, the sex and age of the children as well as any disabilities within the household. Some properties are designated for certain age groups.

The approximate numbers of properties are shown in brackets. If you need to know details for a specific area, please contact the Housing Teams.

Social rented properties in the East Lindsey area:

	Single person	Childless Couple	Single OAP	Couple OAP	1 Child Family	2 Child Family	3 Child Family	4 Child Family	5 Child Family	6 Child Family	7 Child Family
Bedsit/Apartment (30)	✓		✓								
Retirement Living Bedsit/Apartment (74)	✓		✓								
Retirement Living 1 Bed Flat (367)	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Retirement Living 1 Bed Bungalow (296)			✓	✓							
Retirement Living 2 Bed Bungalow (177)				✓							
Retirement Living 2 Bed Flat (45)				✓							
1 Bed Flat (199)	✓	✓	✓	✓							
1 Bed House (124)	✓	✓									
1 Bed Bungalow (196)	✓	✓	✓	✓							
2 Bed Flat or Maisonette (779)		✓		✓	✓	✓					
2 Bed Bungalow (1493)		✓		✓	✓	✓					
2 Bed House (1273)					✓	✓					
3 Bed Flat or Maisonette (57)						✓	✓	✓			
3 Bed House (2127)						✓	✓	✓			
3 Bed Bungalow (21)						✓	✓	✓			
4 Bed House (130)							✓	✓	✓		
4 Bed Bungalow (1)							✓	✓	✓		
5 Bed House (2)									✓	✓	✓

Social rented properties in the Boston Borough:

	Single person	Childless Couple	Single OAP	Couple OAP	1 Child Family	2 Child Family	3 Child Family	4 Child Family	5 Child Family	6 Child Family	7 Child Family
Bedsit/Apartment (46)	✓		✓								
Retirement Living Bedsit/Apartment (177)	✓		✓								
Retirement Living 1 Bed Flat (141)	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Retirement Living 1 Bed Bungalow (52)	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Retirement Living 2 Bed Bungalow (36)		✓		✓							
Retirement Living 2 Bed Flat (45)		✓		✓							
1 Bed Flat (435)	✓	✓	✓	✓							
1 Bed House (144)	✓	✓									
1 Bed Bungalow (512)	✓	✓	✓	✓							
2 Bed Flat or Maisonette (506)		✓		✓	✓	✓					
2 Bed Bungalow (885)		✓		✓	✓						
2 Bed House (816)					✓	✓					
3 Bed Flat or Maisonette (35)						✓	✓	✓			
3 Bed House (1692)						✓	✓	✓			
3 Bed Bungalow (2)						✓	✓	✓			
4 Bed House (61)							✓	✓	✓		
4 Bed Bungalow (0)							✓	✓	✓		
5 Bed House (0)									✓	✓	✓
6 bed house (2)										✓	✓

PROJECT MANAGEMENT - EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Author: Jason Oxby and Michelle Howard

Version Date: 1st May 2021 (v5)

Project Name: Sub Regional Housing Allocation Scheme (June 2021)

APPENDIX B

Introduction

The Housing Allocation Scheme determines who can join the housing register for social housing and the level of priority that will be awarded based on an applicant's circumstances. It provides a framework to determine eligibility and prioritisation of applications for social housing properties via the Housing Register (Choice Based Letting Scheme).

The revised Housing Allocation Scheme will be a sub-regional partnership operated by Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council. Working as a strategic alliance, the two councils will share an IT system to manage applications, assessments, property adverts and allocations. A single staff team will be in place. The IT system will be integrated with the homelessness case management system. Customers will be able to manage their housing register applications online. Customers' circumstances and needs will be assessed on a case by case basis and local connection criteria will be applied to determine priority banding for each area.

Having received recent investment and configuration and with the associated policy having undergone a review in 2020, the existing East Lindsey District Council allocations policy forms the foundation for the sub regional policy. With the exception of Accent Housing, all Registered Providers (Housing Associations) operating in Boston Borough also have properties in East Lindsey and use the IT system and ELDC policy. All housing providers have been formally consulted on the revised sub regional policy. Only one comment was received, from Accent Housing, to welcome the move to an online system. There were no comments from housing providers about the revised allocations policy framework.

As a sub-regional policy, the following changes have been made:

1. A shared policy framework that ensures compliance with housing allocations legislation, homelessness legislation and statutory guidance for both councils
2. A shared policy framework that is compliant with recent statutory guidance in respect of armed forces personnel and victims of domestic abuse for both councils
3. For Boston Borough Council, transition from an 'open' register (anyone can apply) to one that is more restrictive regarding who qualifies to join the register (applicants with no local connection, no housing need and not in a reasonable preference category* will no longer qualify)

4. For Boston Borough Council, an updated position for applicants in a reasonable preference group to ensure that they are not automatically placed into the lowest priority band if they do not have a local connection (they would move into Band 3)
5. A shared policy framework that allows for applicants to apply to either or both Councils with a single application, but for their priority banding to reflect their local connection / circumstances relevant to that local area
6. For East Lindsey District Council, a broadening of the local connection criteria to align with that within the previous Boston Borough Council (to include award of a local connection to applicants who have had close family living within the area for 5+ years)
7. For both councils to use the same banding definitions (Bands 1-4) rather than Gold to Copper

*Reasonable Preference Categories are defined in legislation. They are:

- (1) People who are 'homeless', within the meaning of either HA 1996, Pt 7, (England) or H (W) A 2014, Pt 2 (Wales);
- (2) People who are owed a particular statutory duty by any local housing authority under certain provisions of homelessness legislation;
- (3) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (4) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including (in England) grounds relating to a disability; and
- (5) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship, to themselves or to others

Evidence

Potential impacts / mitigation

Potential Impact	Mitigation and Considerations
<p>For Boston, the main change is for applicants who do not have a local connection, <u>and</u> are not in a housing need <u>and</u> are not in a reasonable preference category. As the Council moves away from having an open register, these applicants will no longer qualify to join the Boston housing register. Due to reporting capabilities in the existing Boston System, it is not possible to determine how many applicants this will apply to.</p>	<p>As the local connection criteria reflects Boston's current criteria and the policy recognises the need to accept applicants in a reasonable preference group, the anticipated impact is small. Any applicant refused has the right to request a review of this decision and can make a fresh application at any time in order to be reconsidered. Any existing applicant affected by this change would receive advice and guidance on alternative housing options. Boston is the only council in Lincolnshire to still have an open register. The waiting list numbers are significantly higher than any other council in Lincolnshire and higher than the national average.</p>

	<p>Some applicants will not qualify to join the housing register. An assessment of these applications will still be undertaken and if they would be provided with advice about alternative options such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • securing private rented accommodation, • applying for social housing in an area where they do have a local connection, • applying for a mutual exchange if they are a social or council tenant, • applying direct to housing providers who have accommodation in this district and hold their own housing register • applying for low demand social homes which are made available to anyone <p>The Housing Allocation Scheme does include some flexibility for Officers to accept applicants onto the housing register who do not meet the qualifying criteria in exceptional circumstances.</p>
<p>For Boston, there will be a requirement for applicants to re-register to join the new system. This may be frustrating for customers, particularly those who have recently registered and provided their documents.</p>	<p>Applicants have already been contacted to let them know that the system will be changing. A communications plan is in place. Applicants will receive detailed information on what they need to do to re-register. Support will be provided to applicants to minimise disruption. Some impact on customers is inevitable. The Council will suspend non urgent applications at 30th April 2021 to allow for the transition. Housing advice, homelessness advice services will continue. Urgent housing applications will still be processed. There will be a period of transition during which a process for direct lets will be implemented to avoid the risk of customers missing out on being considered for properties they are eligible for. Support will be provided directly to vulnerable applicants to ensure they are re-registered quickly, to avoid them missing out. Stakeholder partners will be offered training sessions so that they can directly support their customers to re-register.</p>
<p>For Boston, the new system will be online / digital by default – moving away from the current paper based system. There will be no paper housing application forms and no requirement for applicants to submit proof of ID / documents in hard copy form. Applicants will bid for properties via the web portal.</p>	<p>Positives include greater customer ownership and ability to manage housing applications, provide required evidence and bid for properties. This will also reduce staff time spent on processing post and manually inputting housing applications forms and manually assessing applications. Timescales for processing and assessing applications will be improved. Stakeholder partners will be offered training sessions and guidance will be produced so that they can directly support customers to manage their applications. Telephone support will be available to customers</p>

	<p>without IT access. A housing hub will be in place, staffed by experienced staff who can advise and support customers. Direct / auto bidding can be set up for vulnerable customers in some circumstances. Housing surgeries and translation support will be provided where there is evidence of need. Evidence from ELDC is that applicants have transitioned readily to this way of managing their applications. The move to a digital system and reduction in paper applications and hard copied of ID being held by the council has been identified as positive by the DPO.</p> <p><u>Update further to C&C Committee:</u> Owing to the increasing prevalence of scams, officers will ensure that advice is given to applicants regarding key messages for example 'do not share your login details / password with others'. Where possible, this will be built into the web system. This action will be added to the project plan.</p>
<p>For Boston, the policy will no longer use a GP to provide an assessment of medical circumstances.</p>	<p>Assessments of medical need will follow the matrix set out within the policy through which officers assess 'how do medical needs affect suitability of current home'. These assessments will be carried out by officers and a full audit trail of decision making will be documented within the IT system. This will avoid the risk of the lack of availability / capacity of the GP and consistency of decisions (this has been a challenge during the pandemic). This will also reduce cost and time taken to carry out medical assessments / provide recommendations. The medical form is integrated into of the online application process and forms of the assessment process. Evidence of health issues can be uploaded directly to the system. Evidence to assess medical needs includes non GP evidence such as welfare benefit claims (PIP).</p> <p><u>Update further to C&C Committee:</u> Seeking the views of a medical professional to determine priority banding relevant to medical and housing need offers an important safety net and protection for customers and the councils. For individual cases, GP advice is taken into account. To further improve the policy position, officers have updated the policy to reiterate that customers may appeal an officer decision on priority banding for medical reasons [in terms of policy application and officer judgement] and that an independent medical view would be sought and documented in those cases.</p>

<p>For Boston, there will be an automated housing register review process built in to the system, replacing the current manual requirement.</p>	<p>The automated process will require each applicant to confirm / update their circumstances online every twelve months. This will keep the information on the system up to date and relevant. The system will also trigger a review of applications where applicants are not bidding for properties they are eligible for. A review of the Boston housing register has not been possible for a number of years, making it difficult to determine how many applicants are in need of / still require social housing in Boston.</p>
<p>For East Lindsey, the local connection criteria has been broadened to align with the criteria currently in place to grant local connection in Boston (close relatives in the area for the last 5 years).</p>	<p>There is a possibility that this increases demand on the coast where there is evidence of demand for housing from family members of relatives who have previously retired to the coast. However it should be noted that for any applicants within a reasonable preference group, they would already be eligible to apply to the East Lindsey register.</p>
<p>For Boston and East Lindsey there is a risk that it is perceived that by operating a sub-regional housing allocations scheme, more properties will be allocated to people from the other councils area compared to the current arrangement</p>	<p>Irrespective of local connection, applicants in a reasonable preference group can already apply to join any housing register in the country and they should be offered a level of priority ahead of someone with a local connection but no reasonable preference. In this sub regional scheme, applicants will receive a priority banding for East Lindsey and a priority banding for Boston, depending on their local connection to that area. This will mean that a Boston resident could apply for a property in East Lindsey, however, if they did not have a local connection to that area and were not in a reasonable preference group they would not be considered ahead of someone who was. Positives of a sub-regional arrangement include applicants having greater housing choice, not needing to make multiple applications and where there are areas on the Boston / East Lindsey border (eg Sibsey, Stickney) this will ease applicants' ability to express an interest in those properties / areas. This will also help both councils to build a better picture of housing demand.</p>
<p>For Boston, the policy changes are more explicit that care leavers in Lincolnshire will be granted local connection</p>	<p>This is a requirement of all councils in order to fulfil corporate parenting duties. The policy change makes this explicit for Boston whereas previously the policy document had not been updated to reflect this.</p>

Consultation and Engagement

BBC and ELDC housing staff were consulted during March 2021. This led to changes to the proposed local connection criteria in the final draft. A further comment has requested further consideration of the purpose and clarity of wording regarding former tenant arrears / housing debt. This is currently being considered before finalising the policy. No negative impacts were identified relevant to protected characteristics.

Registered providers (social housing providers) operating in Boston and East Lindsey have been contacted directly to seek their views and feedback on the policy. With the exception of Accent Housing, all Registered Providers (Housing Associations) operating in Boston Borough also have properties in East Lindsey and use the IT system and current ELDC policy. All housing providers have been formally consulted on the revised sub regional policy. Only one comment was received, from Accent Housing, to welcome the move to an online system. There were no written submission from housing providers about the revised allocations policy framework however verbal feedback to officers have been positive that Boston will be using the same system as operating in East Lindsey, which they have experience of using to let properties. No negative impacts were identified relevant to protected characteristics.

Key stakeholders have also been contacted directly, via the various housing and health networks to brief them on the changes and to seek their views and feedback on the policy. There were no comments from housing providers about the revised allocations policy framework however positive verbal feedback has been received regarding the move to an online process and system.

Current housing register applicants are being contacted directly to advise them of the changes. To date, no feedback has been received.

The MP for Boston, Matt Warman, has been contacted directly to brief him on the changes and to provide a link to the policy consultation.

Online Consultation: The policy consultation was available online for a period of three weeks, closing 16th April 2021: <https://www.mybostonuk.com/consultation/>

Elected members have been kept up to date with the proposed changes including via attachments to the BBC leaders weekly briefing updates and a briefing session held in March 2021. Portfolio holders at BBC and ELDC have been briefed throughout.

BBC Corporate and Communities Committee: The policy was considered by the committee on 22nd April 2021 and was recommended to Cabinet for approval. Feedback from the committee relevant to the Impact Assessment has been included within this document.

Detailed Impact Assessment					
Characteristic	Positive impacts	Adverse / negative impacts	How consulted	Feedback from all consultation phases	Response to the feedback / mitigation
Age	The policy positively considers the needs of care leavers	None identified	Consultation with housing providers, stakeholders, housing register applicants and staff	No issues were identified during the consultation	N/A
Disability	The policy positively considers the needs of applicants in a reasonable preference category	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation	
Gender reassignment	None	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation. The housing register doesn't currently hold information about gender reassignment.	
Marriage and civil partnership	None	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation	
Pregnancy & maternity	None	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation	
Race	None	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation	
Religion or belief	None	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation	

Sex	None	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation.	
Sexual orientation	None	None	“	No issues were identified during the consultation	

Conclusions

As at 1st May 2021, no issues have been reported through the consultation or identified through other means that would suggest anyone with a protected characteristic would be disadvantaged by the changes to the policy / move to this sub regional policy framework.

Details of policy amendments made as a result of consultation responses and feedback from Corporate and Communities Committee will be available to Cabinet on 12th May 2021 for consideration as part of the report.

Overall, the changes that have been made will benefit those people wanting to join the housing registers in Boston and East Lindsey. There may be some inconvenience to customers who are required to reapply, but support will be put in place.

Boston will be moving from an open register to a closed register. It is not anticipated that this will have a significant impact, however, applicants who don't qualify to join the housing register do have other options available to them and advice would be provided to these applicants about these options.

Monitoring

The new IT system will allow for greater insights into the needs of customers applying for housing. If there is any evidence of negative effects, a policy review will be carried out. The councils will also need to positively consider any complaints and any changes to legislation and statutory guidance and recommend amendments to the scheme accordingly. It is recommended that a further review of the policy is carried out in 12 months to ensure that the sub regional approach is effective.

Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council: Sub Regional Housing Allocation Scheme 2021

Amendments made following consultation exercise

The following were consulted about the proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme.

- Social Housing Providers with accommodation in Boston Borough or East Lindsey
- Current Housing Applicants
- BBC and ELDC staff
- Key stakeholders in Boston via the Boston Strategic Health Network
- Boston Borough Council Corporate & Community Committee
- Boston Borough Council Cabinet Briefing
- Anyone else via the Councils consultation webpage

Amendments made following feedback:

Section 9 – People who do not qualify. This section has been made clearer in regard to rent arrears and payment of any shortfall in rent.

Section 10 – Providing Information – detail added in regard to the requirement on applicants to cooperate with the Council when requested to provide further information.

Section 12 – Medical banding – where an applicant disagrees with an officers assessment of their medical banding they can request a reassessment. The revised assessment would be completed by an independent medical professional for which a charge may be made.

Section 19 – Financial capacity – former matrimonial homes will be considered when deciding whether the applicant has the financial means to resolve their own housing circumstances

Section 27 – Properties let outside of the scheme – added a request from MARAC or MAPPA in regard to a high risk victim or perpetrator

Other minor amendments to wording have been made for housekeeping purposes which do not affect any decisions made by the Councils.

Other Feedback

- Following feedback at the Corporate & Community Committee in regard to scam awareness, guidance has been added to the policy and will be added to the housing register portal and the Housing register acceptance letter
- Feedback from housing providers and stakeholders has been very positive regarding the move to a shared system and a modern IT platform
- Corporate and Communities Committee 22.4.21: Resolved that: the proposed Sub-Regional Housing Allocations Scheme be recommended to Cabinet for approval with the Committee's comments

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Sub-Regional Housing Allocations Scheme



Boston Borough Council:
Corporate and Communities Scrutiny Committee



Background / Context

- All Councils are required to have:
 - A mechanism to assess housing need, advertise available social housing and allocate properties to households in need
 - A housing allocations policy framework
- Four important considerations:
 - Boston Borough Council has an existing housing allocations policy but it needs to be updated
 - The current IT system (operated by LHP) is no longer an up to date system and it will cease from July 2021
 - Interdependency: Allocations policy framework and IT system configuration
 - This creates an opportunity to update, improve and integrate (systems, processes, customer journey)



Strategic Alliance as an Opportunity for a Sub Regional Approach

- Work to explore an alternative IT solution / policy framework began in 2019:
 - Lots has changed since this time (Covid 19, Strategic Alliance, legislative and policy frameworks / requirements)
- Strategic Alliance with ELDC presents opportunities to:
 - increase capacity and resilience of staff teams, align systems, align policies and processes, make best use of resources, improve customer experience and stakeholder relationships



Strategic Alliance as an Opportunity for a Sub Regional Approach

- A sub-regional policy framework and approach to delivery that takes a 'best of both' approach:
 - **Policy framework:** BBC local connection criteria, ELDC refreshed policy
 - **Processes / IT system** team structures, existing investment in / configuration of IT systems, value for money, integration of IT modules for housing and homelessness, IT based / digital processes, housing register review processes, housing demand insights, reporting
 - **Stakeholder relationships:** Registered Providers operating across both areas and experienced in using system to advertise / allocate properties
 - **Customer journey and experience:** greater ownership / visibility and management of applications, housing options and choices, staffing structure to better manage initial demand, IT based, no paper applications, ability bid for properties online, support for vulnerable customers



A 'digital first' system – what does this mean for customers, stakeholders and staff?

- **Customers**

- Online applications, updating of details and changes in circumstances, intuitive application to ask the relevant questions only
- Online upload of evidence
- Visibility of application at all times
- Online bidding for suitable properties
- Online access to letters, information
- Support for vulnerable customers
- Interactive, customer friendly system

- **Stakeholders**

- Housing providers can advertise properties, receive and process shortlists – housing providers are experienced with the system and positive about this transition for Boston
- Stakeholders can support customers directly to manage their applications



A 'digital first' system – what does this mean for customers, stakeholders and staff?

- **Staff**

- Reduced handling of applications and documents (housing and customer services)
- Reduced manual assessment of applications
- Reduced telephone demand
- Improved reporting capabilities, insights and management / performance 'dashboards'
- One system for housing and homelessness

“The new system will be more modern, will allow us to better coordinate housing advice, housing allocations and homelessness prevention support and be much better for our residents”



Policy changes: what will be different for Boston Borough Council applicants?

- Much of any housing allocations policy framework is guided by legislation and statutory guidance
- Moving from an completely 'open register' to one that applies some additional qualifying criteria
- Applicants with no local connection to BBC or ELDC, no housing need and not in a reasonable preference category will no longer qualify*
 - Difficult to quantify impact but mitigations in place (advice and guidance, reasonable preference groups, consultation and contact with customers and stakeholders, exceptional circumstance considerations)
 - Local connection criteria (family in the area) – adoption of current BBC approach
- Applicants will be able to 'see' properties in the other council area (BBC/ELDC) but prioritisation of bids guided by:
 - reasonable preference and local connection to that area
 - priority band (a single applicant may have two separate bands for each area)
 - positive case example: Sibsey health care key worker



Reasonable Preference – Legal Requirement

- Localism Act (2011) allowed councils to determine local qualifying criteria
- Balance with Public Sector Equality Duty
- Applicants in a reasonable preference group can already apply to join the housing register of any council. The legal position is that they should also be granted some level of 'reasonable preference' i.e: not automatically be placed into the lowest band if they do not have a local connection

*Reasonable Preference Categories are defined in legislation. They are:

- (1) People who are 'homeless', within the meaning of either HA 1996, Pt 7, (England) or H (W) A 2014, Pt 2 (Wales);
- (2) People who are owed a particular statutory duty by any local housing authority under certain provisions of homelessness legislation;
- (3) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (4) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including (in England) grounds relating to a disability; and
- (5) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship, to themselves or to others



Priority Banding

Current BBC Policy	Revised Policy
Gold	Band 1: Urgent need and have a local connection or meet an exception
Silver	Band 2: High Need and have a local connection or meet an exception
Bronze	Band 3: Medium Need including those who meet a Reasonable Preference category who do not have a local connection
Copper	Band 4: Low Need



Transition and Supporting our Communities

- Minimal data will transfer to new system, re-registration will be required – original application date, band effective date will be transferred (robustness of data, relevant and up to date data and documents, a supported process)
- Temporary direct let process to support transition and ensure nobody misses out
- Stakeholders briefed and trained to support customers
- User guides, virtual support, telephone support, face to face support
- Some inconvenience to customers but support to minimise disruption
- Continued communications and engagement with customers
- Translation / transcription of documents and support



Communication and Engagement

- BBC and ELDC housing staff
- Registered Housing providers (a statutory requirement)
- Key stakeholders
- MP for Boston and Skegness
- Current housing register applicants
- Social Media
- Online consultation (closed 16th April)
- Member briefings and engagement
 - C&C a key part of our engagement and consultation process



Timeline

- Current LHP IT system will cease to operate July 2021
- Proposed transition to new system / policy June 2021
 - Customers to re-register
 - Applications assessed
 - Activate temporary direct let process
- Cabinet BBC May 2021
- Executive Board ELDC June 2021
 - Policy, sub regional approach, consultation feedback, equality impact assessment
- Soft launch approach
- Reserved members day / member briefing and system demonstration July 2021
- A review in twelve months to ensure the sub regional approach is effective / report on progress



Questions, feedback and comments welcome at
any time:

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EXCERPT FROM CORPORATE & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MINUTES 22.4.21

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY AND HOUSING REGISTER CHANGES

The Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee, which set out a proposed Sub-Regional Housing Allocations Scheme.

All Councils were required to have a mechanism to assess housing need, advertise available social housing and allocate properties to households in need and to have a robust housing allocations policy framework in order to do so.

The Council had an existing housing allocations policy, but it needed updating. The current IT system (operated by Lincolnshire Housing Partnership) was no longer up to date and would cease from July 2021. These considerations, along with the interdependency between the allocations policy framework and IT system configuration, created an opportunity to update, improve and integrate the systems, processes, and the customer journey.

Work to explore an alternative IT solution and policy framework began in 2019. There had been significant changes since then, not least the Covid-19 pandemic, but also legislative and policy frameworks and requirements. Furthermore, the Strategic Alliance with East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) provided an opportunity for a sub-regional approach.

The Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing went on to explain:

- How a sub-regional policy framework and approach to delivery would take a 'best of both' approach for the two authorities;
- What a 'digital first' system would mean for customers, stakeholders and staff; and
- How policy changes would affect the experience of Boston's applicants, including the use of the "reasonable preference" legal requirement and priority banding.

The presentation also set out the details of how the transition would be managed, including support for communities; methods of communication and engagement, of which the Scrutiny meeting was a key part; and the timeline.

The matter would be reported to Cabinet in May and ELDC's Executive Board in June 2021 with respect to the policy, approach, consultation feedback and equality impact assessment. Following a 'soft launch' approach, a reserved Members' day or Member briefing would be held in July to demonstrate the system. A review would take place twelve months later to ensure the sub-regional approach was effective and to report on progress.

Following the presentation, Members commended the work undertaken by officers. However, some raised concerns regarding additional information that had been e-mailed to them after the publication of the agenda pack to assist their scrutiny, as it had been received too late to allow them to read and digest it. The Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing gave apologies, but advised Members they could forward their comments after the meeting and they would be captured and incorporated in the consultation feedback.

During debate, the report was commended as professional and well written, and the proposal as one that would make a real improvement in the service to the public. Comments included the view that a single system would work better for partners and give applicants more choice; that it should reduce the need for applicants to provide evidence multiple times, which caused frustration; but also that that the previous lack of investment in IT had resulted in an unsatisfactory service for the public.

Officers answered specific questions as follows, in summary.

Would the transition period in June/July be long enough for people to re-register, to avoid re-inputting data?

Officers would use direct contact, media and social media to encourage people to re-register. It would be a challenge, but they would ensure that communication with the public and Members was clear and timely, and guided by the configuration of the IT system. All efforts would be made to assist vulnerable people to re-register and this could be done by telephone. At ELDC, many people had delayed re-registering; therefore, officers had drawn up a database to assess who would be interested in the available housing to ensure they filled vacancies, to avoid a situation where housing providers had empty properties.

Officers should not be making judgements regarding medical conditions; it should be for medical professionals to give their opinions in order to avoid any legal challenge.

Some authorities used professional medical advice and some used their own methods. In the past, ELDC had placed reliance on obtaining professional medical opinions and it had resulted in a significant backlog of several months. Therefore, the contingency measure in place was for officers to apply a clear, defined matrix to assess applications and it worked well. Officers considered health issues along with evidence and assessed the impact on the applicant's life. For example, the impact for a person in a wheelchair living in an adapted bungalow would not be the same if they lived in a first floor flat. If a person was in receipt of personal independence payments this was clear evidence of health issues.

Professional opinions could be sought in order to review Council decisions and a review procedure would be added to the Equalities Impact Assessment.

It was confirmed there had been no response in terms of feedback after writing to all applicants on the housing register.

How would existing applicants eligible under the current register in Boston but not eligible under the new system be handled?

Officers would carry out appropriate communication with applicants including one-to-one conversations with everyone who wanted one. There would be people who did not appear to have housing need and had no local connection and, therefore, had it would be fair to let them know they had minimal prospects of accessing housing.

How would they protect people from scams?

The system would meet standard requirements in terms of security. For example, verification of identity via email, requesting strong login passwords be used and periodic reminders not to share passwords and so on.

The Assistant Director - Assets advised Members of the significant challenges and time pressures on officers in order to ensure continuation of service.

The Portfolio Holder urged Members to submit any further comments to the Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing after the meeting.

Members unanimously supported the proposal's recommendation to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Sub-Regional Housing Allocations Scheme be recommended to Cabinet for approval with the Committee's comments.

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