



Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: MONDAY, 12 MARCH 2018

TIME: 5:30 pm

PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

Members of the Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Cank (Chair)

Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillors Aqbany, Byrne, Dawood, Halford and Hunter
1 Un-allocated Non-Group Place

Members of the Scrutiny Commission are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

A. Thomas .

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Ayleena Thomas (Democratic Support Officer):

Tel: 0116 454 6369, e-mail: Ayleena.Thomas@leicester.gov.uk

Jerry Connolly (Scrutiny Support Officer):

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Leicester City Council, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

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- ✓ where filming, to (via the Chair of the meeting) ensure that those present are aware that they may be filmed and respect any requests to not be filmed.

Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact Ayleena Thomas, **Democratic Support on (0116) 454 6369 or email Ayleena.Thomas@leicester.gov.uk** or call in at City Hall, 115 Charles Street.

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PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on 15 January 2018 have been circulated, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any questions, representations or statements of case received in accordance with Council procedures.

6. DISCRETIONARY POLICY REVIEW 2017/18

Appendix A

The Director of Housing submits a report to outline the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Council Tax Discretionary Relief (CTDR) and Community Support Grant (CSG) policies, and to present key amendments intended to further focus intervention funding towards the prevention of homelessness and managing short term financial crises.

7. GOSCOTE HOUSE

Appendix B

The Director of Housing submits a report to update Members of the Housing

Scrutiny Commission of the long-term future of Goscote House. An update on the sprinklers installation progress will also be provided.

8. VOIDS PERFORMANCE REPORT [Appendix C](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to provide an update on the Division's performance on the completion of Void repairs to council properties for the third quarter of 2017/18.

The report will also update Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on progress made on items previously raised in the last report dated 20 November 2017.

9. RESPONSIVE HOUSING REPAIRS PERFORMANCE REPORT [Appendix D](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to provide an update to Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the Division's performance on the completion of responsive repairs to council properties.

The report will also provide a final update about the implementation of service changes reported to the Housing Scrutiny commission and agreed by the Executive in February 2016.

10. DISTRICT PERFORMANCE REPORT [Appendix E](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report on the District priorities and performances.

11. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PERFORMANCE [Appendix F](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to provide an update on the current performance of Housing Services in managing and dealing with reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) on our Council Housing estates. The vast majority of these involve council tenants but can also involve leaseholders and private owners if the dispute is with a council tenant.

12. INCOME MANAGEMENT TEAM VISIT

The Chair will provide a verbal update on the visit Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission took to the Income Management Team.

13. TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' FORUM ACTION AND DECISION LOG [Appendix G](#)

The Scrutiny Policy Officer submits for noting the Tenant Forum Meeting Notes from 18 January 2018.

14. WORK PROGRAMME [Appendix H](#)

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.

15. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Appendix A



Housing Scrutiny Commission

Discretionary Policy Review 2017/18

Assistant City Mayor: Cllr Kirk Master

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 12 March 2018

Lead director: Alison Greenhill



City Mayor

Useful Information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: James Rattenberry, Principal Policy Officer, Revenues & Customer Support
0116 454 1616
James.rattenberry@leicester.gov.uk
- Author contact details:

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Council Tax Discretionary Relief (CTDR) and Community Support Grant (CSG) policies, and to present key amendments intended to further focus intervention funding towards the prevention of homelessness and managing short term financial crises.

2. Summary

- 2.1 In 2017 the city has continued to be impacted by welfare changes. The most significant are the reduced benefit cap from January 2017, restrictions to allowances for children born after April 2017, the benefit rate freeze and Universal Credit, commencing Full Service (UC FS) in June 2018.
- 2.2 Discretionary support represents a crucial safety net for vulnerable households, and the city has experienced unprecedented demand from welfare reform primarily affecting DHP spend, as recent changes disproportionately affect housing cost entitlement. The Council also provides CTDR for those experiencing difficulty paying their Council Tax charge, and non-financial emergency assistance under the CSG scheme.
- 2.3 Our key priorities for our discretionary policies in 2018/19 are to:
- Include in our policies explicit protection for vulnerable groups – including disabled households, cases referred fulfilling our statutory homelessness duties, those engaging with the Early Help Family Programme and households including care leavers under the age of 25;
 - Following successful pilot outcomes, introduce referred access to social welfare advice for discretionary award claimants affected by the Benefit Cap;
 - Maintaining the Council's commitment to time-limited underoccupancy unless exceptions apply, to tackle overcrowding and our new obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- 2.4 The table below details the discretionary spend by year and the number of applications received, demonstrating this fluctuation in expenditure.

Discretionary fund	Funding source	2016/17 fund value	2016/17 actual spend	2017/18 Fund value	2017/18 projected spend	2018/19 Projected fund value	2018/19 Projected spend
DHP	DWP	£781k	£820k	£1.186m	£1.241m	£1m	£1.5m
CTDR	General Fund	£500k	£313k	£500k	£360k	£500k	£500k
CSG	Welfare Reserves	£500k	£250k	£500k	£250k	£500k	£300k

3. Discretionary Housing Payments

- 3.1 Government DHP allocation was increased to £1.1m in 2017/18, and is expected to be exhausted by the end of the financial year. From 2018/19 onwards, the DHP budget is expected to reduce by £100,000 per year until 2020/21, although we anticipate applications to remain close to their current level of over 3,000 annually. Our future capacity to meet demand solely from within the DWP grant alone is limited unless changes are made to encourage and support a greater number of applicants towards greater self-reliance.
- 3.2 Our statutory obligation is to ensure that the most vulnerable claimants are provided with appropriate assistance, particularly those who are severely disabled and unable to change their circumstances. We are also proposing action to help meet new obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act, to ensure the continued availability of permanent accommodation. We have identified three new categories to be offered explicit protection:
- for vulnerable tenants placed under our homelessness duty to be provided with rent deposits, rent-in-advance and top-up payments where required to sustain tenancies,
 - for families engaging with the Council's Early Help Family programme, and
 - for young care leavers up to the age of 25.
- 3.3 Despite the impact of more recent and forthcoming welfare reform changes, over 70% of the DHP budget remains committed to two changes introduced in 2013 – underoccupancy and the Benefit Cap. In many cases affected households may be able, with assistance, to achieve greater financial independence through improving their skills, seeking employment, exploring alternative accommodation and receiving expert advice on how to resolve debt issues and budget on their existing income.
- 3.4 The Council's discretionary policies have previously introduced some conditional elements to awards namely, encouraging claimants affected by under-occupancy to seek alternative accommodation, and engaging Universal Credit claimants with intensive budgeting and money management advice delivered by CITAL. We are proposing to strengthen this conditionality and better target who we support.
- 3.5 Analysis has identified that existing recipients of DHP's affected by underoccupancy are not fulfilling the existing policy intention – of 483 live claims, only 24 had placed a bid in the previous twelve months. One in ten

affected households are currently receiving a DHP, despite underoccupation being in place for over four years, accounting for more than a third of ongoing DHP expenditure. More than half of those contacted by the HomeSwapper team have stated they are not interested in alternative accommodation and are happy with their current home. It was also established that recipients were disproportionately single without dependant children (75%) and lacking indications of severe disability (95%). One in three, predominantly those with a single occupant, were underoccupying their property by two or more bedrooms. In contrast, by January 2018 there were 3,831 households on the Housing Register who were living in overcrowded conditions from a total waiting list of 6,269 (61%).

3.6 The Council have sought to pilot these principles within the current policy with repeat Benefit Cap claimants from July 2017. Where claimants engage and make positive steps towards obtaining skills and committing to personal budgets, awards have been extended on a case by case basis. Unless circumstances are exceptional a failure to engage during the period of the award will result in the cessation of discretionary support. Initial findings of 128 cases reviewed are encouraging – 1 in 6 have moved off the benefit cap, half of which is due to finding work, whilst only 1 in 10 have requested any additional support following their initial award.

3.7 Key elements of the discretionary policies from 2018/19 are as follows:

a) Newly under occupied or Benefit Cap households who claim a DHP will receive a 13 week transition award whilst they seek support and consider other options.

b) The requirement to commit to downsize to affordable accommodation will be expected from the point of claim for repeat underoccupied tenants, unless exceptions apply. To do this they must enrol on the Housing register and undertake realistic bidding, or consider exchanging their property via HomeSwap. Underoccupied households who have not previously sought assistance will continue to receive a thirteen week grace period before conditions are applied.

c) All claimants will be offered the opportunity to receive budgeting advice from our contracted social welfare advice provider.

d) Unless exceptions apply, all repeat awards will be subject to consideration of a taper. Reducing the DHP gradually, over a period, will help to ease the recipient into managing the rent shortfall themselves with the support of budgeting advice.

4. Council Tax Discretionary Relief (CTDR)

4.1 CTDR expenditure has risen by 25% annually for the past three years, to approximately £360,000 in 2017/18. We anticipate further, but more modest increases, from 2018/19 onwards. It is anticipated demand will continue to mirror DHP applications as above. This fund is to help mitigate impacts within

local taxation and help households pay their council tax. The Council has committed £500,000 for this purpose towards the non-statutory Council Tax Discretionary Relief (CTDR) fund.

- 4.2 Expenditure for 2017/18 is expected to be less than £400,000. We anticipate take up for 2018/19 remains within current spend parameters. We will continue to promote the use of this fund to maximise take up and ensure vulnerable households are protected.

5. Community Support Grants (CSG)

- 5.1 There are two elements which make up the Community Support Grants, including crisis and support. Crisis Grants cover emergency situations including food parcels, clothing and fuel. Support Grants cover the provision of items to enable applicants to remain in their home, such as furniture, carpets and white goods.
- 5.2 CSG expenditure has remained stable over the past three years at approximately £250,000 per year and is funded from limited Welfare Reserves. Future sustainability has been embedded in the delivery plan for 2020.
- 5.3 In 2016/17 we received we received 1,077 CSG applications or 21 per week. This has continued into 2017/18. The annual CSG budget is £535,000, and expenditure is expected to be £250,000. From 2018/19 crisis spend is anticipated to increase with the introduction of Universal Credit, and could triple based on the experience of other Councils. We are working with our commissioned partners and through our Universal Credit Equality Impact Assessment to plan for this demand spike.

6. Risks

- 6.1 There are number of risks associated with this change of policy and fund management. A risk log has been created which will be monitored by the Director of Finance and the Lead member for Welfare Reform. The main risks have been identified as:
- a) Demand will outstrip the DWP DHP grant / Council funding;
 - b) The review of the DHP caseload fails to realise projected budget reduction;
 - c) Demand for budgeting support or Housing Advice outstrips capacity;
 - d) Where under-occupancy applies, and the tenant is seeking to move, the market fails to respond to demand;
 - e) DWP loans fail to be granted to welfare benefit claimants;
 - f) Introduction of third party referrals significantly increase take up;

g) BIC numbers rise greater than DWP prediction creating a higher demand.

We consider these risks to be adequately mitigated by the changes outlined above.

7 Financial, Legal and other Implications

7.1 Financial Implications

Changes to benefits are having, and will continue to have, a direct impact on the incomes of those who depend on such income. Those in exceptionally difficult circumstances may apply for discretionary funding which the Council administers. These include:

(a) a council tax discretionary relief (hardship) fund, initially intended to assist those having to pay a proportion of their council tax for the first time. The budget for this fund is £500,000 in 17/18 and is part of the Council's normal budget;

b) discretionary housing payments, for which the budget in 17/18 is £1,186,000. This budget is directly supported by government grant, which is expected to reduce in future years as described above. Demand for this support has, however, been increasing;

(c) community support grant, originally funded by a grant from the DWP which has now ceased. The Council has sustained the programme having saved various related underspends in a reserve specifically for this purpose. The budget for 2017/18 is £535k, funded from this reserve. The amount held in the welfare reform reserve fell from £4.5m to £4.1m as at 1st April 2017, and will eventually be fully spent. It is possible to increase the annual budget, but this will result in the reserve being spent sooner. Decisions on the amount to spend are taken as part of annual budget deliberations.”

This report sets out options to reduce the ongoing costs to the Council and to influence/drive certain behaviours by actual and potential claimants / recipients of support.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

7.2 Legal Implications

From 2013, Upper Tribunal decisions have imposed increased reliance on DHPs to justify the legality of otherwise potentially discriminatory legislation. As a result, LAs have new duties to fulfil, as DHPs are tied ever closer to the operation of HB (& UC) regulations. All three discretionary policies have an objective 'to avoid disability or other unlawful discrimination.'

Conditions should only be applied to cases in which it is appropriate to make a conditional award. It may be potentially discriminatory to time-limit awards, and to insist on registration with rehousing schemes for claimants who would otherwise face potential Article 14 discrimination, in particular those resident

in accommodation substantially adapted to disability needs (Rutherford) and households containing a disabled person with an ascertained need for an additional bedroom (Rutherford) including those unable to share a bedroom due to disability (Grisham). R (Hardy) v. Sandwell MCB (2014) also established that disability-related income should not be considered available for rent expenditure in assessing Discretionary Housing Payment entitlement.

In dealing with the allocation of the DHP over the course of a financial year the Council needs to bear in mind the risk of challenge based on fettering of discretion. We have been given an express power to top-up the Government grant by up to 2.5 times. Whilst this is not a duty, it is a power and a blanket refusal to exercise a power would most likely be rendered unlawful. This should be borne in mind if, for example, the earmarked DHP monies are spent before the year ends. Failing to entertain applications, contrary to both our own policy and DWP Guidance might lead to an accusation of having fettered our discretion.

The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination of people sharing protected characteristics which are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. There is also a duty to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those sharing a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not do so.

Kamal Adatia, City Barrister & Head of Standards. Ext. 37 1401

7.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Implications

There are no significant climate change implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Duncan Bell, Senior Environmental Consultant. Ext. 37 2249

7.4 Equalities Implications

The report provides information, highlights concerns and outlines options regarding the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Council Tax discretionary Relief (CTDR) and Community Support Grant (CSG). Those affected by the changes will be those households who are in receipt of either housing benefit or Universal Credit with a Housing Costs element. There will be services users from across all protected characteristics affected by the changes proposed, however there are some protected characteristics such as disability, gender and age which are most likely to be disproportionately affected should funds be exhausted due to increased and sustained demand.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which is part of the Equality Act 2010 expects us to show due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. Our public sector duty expects us to demonstrate how we do this. The Equality Impact Assessment appended to the report should include the information and evidence that is

used to inform the proposals, what impacts have been identified and for who and how any disproportionate negative impacts will be mitigated. If mitigating actions aren't identified or implemented where a disproportionately negative impact has been identified, we will not have met our statutory duty and, therefore, it is important to assign responsibility to an individual and a timescale for having implemented any actions that are identified.

The proposed introduction of explicit protection for households where there has been an adaptation due to a disability or long term health condition, for vulnerable tenants (placed under the homelessness duty), for families who are engaging with the Early Help Family Programme and looked after children aims to ensure that those who would be most negatively affected, if the fund were to become exhausted due to increased and sustained demand, are protected. The steps taken to ensure support for these protected groups will help us to meet the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The Equality Impact Assessment which is appended to the report outlines improvements to the collection of equalities data. More information about the protected characteristics of those making applications, both successful and unsuccessful, will allow meaningful analysis of the actual equalities implications of the implementation of the policy and will allow equalities considerations to inform the review of the policy and procedures in the future.

Hannah Watkins, Equalities Manager. Ext 37 5811

8. **Other Implications**

N/A.

9. **Summary of Appendices**

Appendix One: Discretionary Policy documents 2018/19.

Appendix Two: Equality Impact Assessment & Statistical Analysis

For further information on Welfare Reform Impacts – see report to Scrutiny Commission October 2016:

<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk:8071/documents/s79047/Welfare%20Reform%20update%20-%20JTy.pdf>

For existing Discretionary Policies, please see:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/180408/discretionary-housing-payments-2015-18.pdf>

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/180407/council-tax-discretionary-relief-policy-2015-18.pdf>

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/benefits-and-support/housing-benefit/community-support-grant/>

13. **Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)**

No.

14. **Is this a “key decision”?**

No.

15. **If a key decision please explain reason**

1. What is the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme?

1.1 This scheme helps people who require further financial assistance towards their housing costs who are facing financial crisis.

2. What are the main features of the scheme?

2.1 Discretionary Housing payments may be made for a fixed period or an indefinite period dependent upon the personal circumstances of the applicant. Payment is made where the claimant's income is insufficient to meet their living costs, the security of tenure maybe under threat and they are responsible to pay their housing costs. Applicable housing costs in respect of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants are rent and deposits for new tenancies.

2.2 Payment will be considered in any of the following circumstances where a shortfall in rent exist; and is subject to certain exclusions (see paragraph 3.4 below); the City Council has a wide discretion as to the type of financial assistance it can provide. It may, for instance:

- Top up a payment of rent where the accommodation was caused by urgent need, significant health problems or disability. Payments of this nature maybe deemed to be of a long nature than others. Such as where the accommodation has been physically adapted to meet the needs of the claimant or household resident;
- Pay a rent deposit – this will only be applied when the customer does not meet the rent deposit scheme criteria in operation by Leicester City Council;
- Top up payment to allow the household to remain in the tenancy because of social, economic and cultural reasons;
- Top up a payment of rent to maintain a tenancy for a limited period while the household seek cheaper alternative, affordable more suitable accommodation.

3. What type of help is available?

3.2 DHP's provide people with further financial assistance when a council considers that help with housing costs is needed. The legislation provides a very broad discretion; decisions are made in accordance with ordinary principles about good decision making; these include administrative law, in particular to act equally fairly, reasonably and consistently. The policy principles are detailed in appendix A.

4. Am I eligible for support?

4.1 The various types of shortfalls that a DHP can cover include:

- reductions in HB or UC where the benefit cap has been applied;
- reductions in HB or UC for under-occupation in the social rented sector;
- reductions in HB or UC as a result of local housing allowance restrictions;
- rent shortfall to prevent a household becoming homeless whilst the housing authority explores alternative options or to secure a tenancy under the authorities duty to house;
- rent officer restrictions such as local reference rent or shared room accommodation rate; non-dependant deductions;
- income tapers.

4.2 DHPs cannot be paid in respect of certain elements of rent. These are fully set out in Appendix B:

- Ineligible service charges;
- Increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears;
- Certain compliance / sanctions and reductions in benefit.

5. Are my personal circumstances taken into account?

5.1 In order to qualify for a DHP, a claimant must:

Leicester City Council Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 2018-2020

- be in receipt of housing benefit; and/or
- Universal Credit (UC) Housing costs; and
- has a rental liability; and
- and demonstrate you are experiencing financial crisis thus requiring require further financial assistance with housing costs.

6. How do I apply?

6.1 Applications to the City Council for a DHP may be made in one of the following ways:

- By visiting our website: www.leicester.gov.uk/housingbenefits
- By telephoning (0116) 454 1006;

6.2 Applications may be made by a claimant or someone else on the claimant's behalf.

7. We will offer you help ask you to help improve your financial position

7.1 Leicester City Council will ask you to seek help to tackle your financial crisis. We will offer you free budgeting and financial advice to fully assess your personal and financial circumstances with Citizens Advice LeicesterShire.

7.2 You can choose to seek advice from another accredited financial advisor to fully assess your personal and financial circumstances. – Known organisations in the city who offer this free advice are listed here. <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/benefits-and-support/advice-and-guidance/>

7.3 If you seek further financial assistance from discretionary funding and have received any help you may not receive further financial assistance.

8. How will I be paid?

Leicester City Council Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 2018-2020

8.1 The City Council may make single or periodic payments of DHPs.

8.2 There is no limit on the length of time for which periodic payments may be made but, where it is considered appropriate to make conditional awards, this will usually be for no more than thirteen weeks on the first award.

8.3 Periodic payments are normally paid in accordance with the applicants' current HB/UC benefit payment cycle, which can be weekly, four weekly, monthly, or as one payment.

8.4 Payments may be made to:

- the claimant;
- his or her partner,
- an appointee
- his or her landlord (or agent of the landlord); or
- to a third party to whom it might be most appropriate to make a payment.

8.5 DHP will usually be paid using the following methods:

- By electronic transfer (eg BACs)
- By crediting the customer rent account

9. How will I be notified of the decision?

9.1 The City Council aims to notify the claimant of its decision within four weeks of receiving all the information necessary for it to process the application for the DHP. Claimants are notified of decisions in writing.

9.2 They will detail the

- weekly amount of DHP,
- the period of the DHP award,
- the reason for the award

Leicester City Council Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 2018-2020

- how, when and to whom the payments will be made,
- the requirement to report changes in circumstance; and
- the claimants right for a review.

9.3 Where the decision is against the claimant's interests, the City Council will provide reasons for it and inform the claimant of his/her right to request a review of the decision, the period within which that request must be made and to whom the review request must be made.

10. What if I have a change in my circumstances?

10.1 Any changes must be reported to the City Council as soon as possible and may be reported by letter, telephone or email (see paragraph 4.1). In respect of Universal Credit claimants, all changes must be reported to both the Department for Work and Pensions and the City Council.

You must report a change in;

- Address;
- Income and capital;
- Employment status and earnings;
- Outgoings;
- Availability of other financial assistance ;
- Household composition (baby born , child left household);
- A change in yours or a family members significant health which was the reason for the applicant;

11. What can I do if I want the decision to be reviewed?

11.1 A claimant who is refused a DHP or awarded less than the amount applied for has a right to request the City Council to review the decision provided the request is made in writing within one month of being notified of the decision.

Leicester City Council Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 2018-2020

11.2 The review will be conducted by an officer, who was not involved in the original decision, and who is of an appropriate grade.

12. How does Leicester City Council prevent fraudulent claims for the DHP scheme?

12.1 If you falsely declare your circumstances, provide a false statement or provide false evidence in support of your application, you may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006.

12.2 Leicester City Council will investigate allegations of fraud and retains the right to prosecute such cases under section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972.

13. Are the application form and this document accessible in other formats?

13.1 If you would like a hard copy or large print version of this policy please contact Leicester City Council on 0116 454 1006 or via email at SDIO@leicester.gov.uk or by post at the following free post address: Freepost RTRE-HTRJ-CSSJ, Service Improvement Team, Leicester City Council, Revenues & Benefits Department, York House, 91 Granby Street, LEICESTER, LE1 6FB.

Appendix A: Background and Legislative Framework

1. Background

1.1 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) were introduced on 2nd July 2001 provide further financial assistance for people who need help with their housing costs. This appendix sets out the policy, practice and procedure applying to awards of DHPs by the Council.

1.2 Detailed provision for the payment of DHPs is contained in The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 (SI 2001/1167) as amended. When deciding whether to award DHPs, the Council will take into account guidance issued by central government; the current guidance is The Discretionary Housing Payment Good Practice Guide Draft for 2016 issued by the Department for Work and Pensions in December 2016. This was issued because of the changes due to welfare reforms, in particular:

- The introduction of benefit cap
- The introduction of size criteria in social rented sector; and
- Reductions in local housing allowance
- The introduction of Universal Credit.

2. Finance and Monitoring

2.1 The Council is awarded an annual government contribution to make payments in addition to benefit entitlement. This is subject to an overall cash limit; any payments above the contribution have to be financed by the council. Any part of the contribution that remains unspent has to be returned to the DWP. The high volume of welfare reforms taking place has led to a significant increase in the amount of monies available for DHP applications by the government. The allocation for Leicester over the past three years is as follows:

Leicester City Council Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 2018-2020

- 2015/16 £681,863
- 2016/17 £780,900
- 2017/18 £1,186,024

2.2 The Revenues & Benefits Service will undertake monitoring of the number, amount and period of DHP awards in relation to the available DHP budget. The purpose is to ensure the DHP budget has sufficient funds to meet demands on the DHP budget throughout the financial year.

2.3 The Revenues & Benefits Service will also monitor cases where a DHP request has been refused to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently. The Council is subject to the general equality duty.

2.4 This means that steps will be taken to monitor implementation of this policy to ensure no one is subject to disproportionate adverse treatment because they had a protected characteristic. The general equality duty requires that the Council has due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations.

2.5 The policy will be reviewed on a rolling three year programme or at such time or occurrence where a review is appropriate.

3. Legislative framework & equality monitoring arrangements

3.1 The Council has taken all relevant legislation into account when devising the Community Support Grant policy, including but not limited to:

- i) The Welfare Reform Act 2012
- ii) The Localism Act 2011

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- iii) The Equality Act 2010
- iv) The Local Government Finance Act 2012 and 1992
- v) The Local Government Act 2003
- vi) The Leicester City Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2015/16
- vii) The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 Default Scheme
- viii) The Social Security Act 1992
- ix) The Universal Credit Regulations 2012 and accompanying legislation
- x) The Local Government Act 1972 section 222
- xi) The Fraud Act 2006, section 2
- xii) The Data Protection Act 1998
- xiii) The Housing Act 1996
- xiv) The Social Security Act 1986
- xv) The National Assistance Act 1948
- xvi) The Child Poverty Act 2010
- xvii) The Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
- xviii) The Disabled Persons (Services, consultation and representation) Act 1986
- xix) The Mental Health Act 1983
- xx) The Children Act 1989
- xxi) The Localism Act 2011
- xxii) The Care Act 2014
- xxiii) Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC877, 11 March 2016

3.2 In addition to the above requirements, the Council also takes account of current guidance and advice which has been published by the DW P and local policy. The Council has engaged extensively with stakeholder groups on this policy and is supported by a comprehensive Impact Assessment.

4. Principal objectives

4.1 The following outlines the principal objectives behind the Policy:

- alleviating poverty

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- encouraging and sustaining people in employment and education
- sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness
- to avoid disability or other unlawful discrimination;
 - supporting vulnerable people
 - support for those subject to size criteria under the Welfare Reform Act
 - support those subject to other welfare reform changes including income capping
 - safeguarding residents in their own homes
 - helping those who are trying to help themselves
 - keeping families together
 - supporting domestic violence victims who are trying to move to a place of safety
- supporting the vulnerable or the elderly in the local community
- helping customers through personal and difficult events
- supporting young people in the transition to adult life, or
- promoting good educational outcomes for children and young people

Appendix B: Financial and Personal Circumstances

1.1 The City Council has a very broad discretion as to whether to make a DHP but will make its decisions in accordance with principles of good decision-making; in particular, it will act fairly and reasonably and each claim for a DHP will be decided on its own merits. The City Council will have regard to all the relevant circumstances.

1.2 A number of groups have been defined as being potentially financially vulnerable. The main groups are listed in the table below (this list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive):

- Households who are considered to be vulnerable and need to remain in their current properties for reason of disability, particularly those with property adaptations;

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- Households placed in their homes under the Council's statutory homelessness obligation;
- Households receiving assistance through the Early Help Family Programme;
- Households containing a care leaver under the age of 25.

1.3 Where the claimant is not living in social housing, the City Council will seek the advice of its Housing Options Service as to whether his/her accommodation is affordable and sustainable.

1.4 Where the claimant is living in social housing and is subject to the Social Rented Sector Size Reduction the claimant will be expected to have found suitable alternative, cheaper accommodation, within a reasonable timeframe unless exceptional circumstances apply.

1.5 Where the claimant is subject to a high level of award such as but exclusively the Benefit Income Cap, DHP awards will typically be made for up to 26 weeks only, then a taper will apply gradually reducing the award over the following weeks, reducing to 10% in the final week of the award.

1.6 Reconsiderations and extensions of the award will typically only be made where the claimant can prove they have engaged with Citizens Advice LeicesterShire or another accredited social welfare advice provider to fully assess their personal and financial circumstances.

1.7 Where the claimant has been allocated a property in the private sector in order to meet the Authority's statutory obligations relating to homelessness, Housing Options may make a one off payment to cover a rent deposit and or a month rent in advance direct to a landlord to secure accommodation to meet its duty to house.

1.8 The rent deposit will be paid into the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme on behalf of the tenant.

1.9 If the City Council decides to award a DHP, it has discretion as to the amount of the award provided that the claimant's need for financial assistance arises in respect

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of a liability to pay his/her rent (or similar payments), the amount cannot be more than the claimant's weekly eligible rent.

1.10 The City Council may backdate an award of a DHP but only in respect of a period during which the claimant was entitled to housing benefit or universal credit for a period not usually exceeding 6 months from the date of the DHP claim or the date of claim if this is less than 6 months. In exceptional circumstances backdate may be considered for a longer period. Backdates cannot be awarded prior to the introduction of DHP on 2nd July 2001.

2. Ceasing payment

2.1 The City Council may cease making, or reduce the amount of, a DHP where:

- the decision to make the award was based in whole or in part on a misrepresentation;
- the claimant failed to disclose a material fact;
- the award was made as a result of an error; and/or
- the claimant failed to inform the City Council of a relevant change of circumstances.

2.2 If the City Council decides to cease making, or reduce the amount of, a DHP award, it will notify the claimant of this in writing, provide reasons for the decision and inform him/her of his/her right to request a review of the decision, the period within which that request must be made and to whom the review request must be made.

2.3 The claimant may request a review of such a decision in accordance with paragraphs 8.1 to 8.2 above.

3. Recovery of overpayments

3.1 The City Council has a right to recover all or part of a DHP made in any of the circumstances set out in paragraph 10.1.

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3.2 If the City Council decides to recover a DHP overpayment, it will notify the claimant of this in writing, provide reasons for the decision and inform him/her of his/her right to request a review of the decision, the period within which that request must be made and to whom the review request must be made. The customer/payee will receive an invoice against which to make a payment.

3.3 The claimant may request a review of such a decision in accordance with paragraphs 8.1 to 8.2 above.

1. What is the Council Tax Discretionary Relief (CTDR) scheme?

This scheme helps to support local Council Tax charge payers experiencing financial hardship under section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003 and section of the 13A Local Government Finance Act 1992. Applicants must demonstrate that they require further financial assistance and satisfy the full eligibility criteria.

2. What are the main features of the scheme?

2.1 This Policy aims to operate a Council Tax Discretionary Relief scheme to support local Council Tax charge payers experiencing financial hardship under section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003 and section of the 13A Local Government Finance Act 1992. Applicants must demonstrate that they require further financial assistance and satisfy the full eligibility criteria. The principles of the scheme are listed below.

2.2 Relief is primarily intended as short-term assistance as opposed to a long-term reduction in Council Tax liability. The Council has discretion as to whether to award Council Tax Discretionary Relief, but will make its decisions in accordance with principles of good decision-making; in particular, it will act fairly and reasonably. Each case will be considered on its own merits with regard to all the relevant circumstances.

2.3 If the Council decides to award Council Tax Discretionary Relief, it has discretion as to the amount of the award, provided that the claimant's need for financial assistance arises in respect of a liability to pay their Council Tax. The award cannot be more than the claimant's weekly liability.

3. Am I eligible for support?

Claims for Council Tax Discretionary Relief under this scheme should be one of last resort. Applicants will be expected to have explored and secured any lawful entitlement to other benefits, incomes and reductions in preference to claiming Council Tax Discretionary Relief. Applicants will need to ensure they are able to

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satisfy the Council that they have taken all reasonable steps to resolve their own situation prior to application.

4. Are my personal circumstances taken into account?

5.1 In order to apply for a Council Tax Discretionary Relief, a charge payer must have a Council Tax liability and:

- be in receipt of a Leicester City Council Tax Reduction; and/or,
- be in receipt of Universal Credit (UC); and/or,
- require further financial assistance; and/or,
- suffer hardship through an extreme event or natural disaster where their main or sole residence has structural damage, which could not reasonably have been rectified within the normal period of exemption (see below)

6. How do I apply?

6.1 Applications to the Council for a Council Tax Discretionary Relief must be made on Leicester City Council's Council Tax Discretionary Relief application form available:

- a) by calling the Revenues & Benefits Service on: 0116 454 1006;
- b) in person, by visiting any Customer Services Centre, Neighbourhood Housing Office, or the Revenues and Benefits Service;
- c) by emailing housingbenefits@leicester.gov.uk;
- d) by visiting our website: www.leicester.gov.uk/dhps to download an application form.

6.2 Applications to the Council for a Council Tax Discretionary Relief must be submitted in one of the following ways:

- a) by post to the Revenues & Benefits Service, Leicester City Council, FREEPOST; RTRE-HTRJ-CSSJ, York House, 91 Granby Street, Leicester LE1 6FB;
- b) by visiting any Customer Services Centre, Neighbourhood Housing Office, or the Revenues and Benefits Customer Contact Centre;
- c) by emailing housingbenefits@leicester.gov.uk

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6.3 Applications may be made by a claimant; someone else on the claimant's behalf; or, by their representative with authority to act on their behalf i.e. Power of Attorney; Appointee; or any other authorised third party representative.

6.5 The claimant must provide the Council with all supporting information and documentary evidence, as required, to enable the application to be assessed.

6.6 Applications may be made by a claimant or someone else on the claimant's behalf. The Council will accept referrals by email from:

- a) Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire District Councils; and, Rutland Unitary Authority on behalf of Leicester City residents;
- b) Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority;
- c) Leicestershire Policy Authority.

6.7 The Council will accept applications on Leicester City Council's Council Tax Discretionary Relief application form from:

- a) third sector organisations i.e. Citizen's Advice Bureau;
- b) Leicester City Council internal partners i.e. Welfare Rights Service; Adult and Children's Services;
- c) a third party to whom it might be appropriate.

7. How will I be paid?

7.1 The Council will usually consider an award from the date the application is received. However in exceptional circumstances consideration will be made for a request to backdate to an earlier period should sufficient good cause be shown to warrant an additional award for a prior period.

7.2 If a backdate is considered the date of an award of a Council Tax Discretionary Relief will not usually exceed 52 weeks prior to the date of application or from the date liability was established whichever is the earlier.

7.3 The award in general is designed to give temporary assistance, and the Council would not normally grant the relief indefinitely, however, each case would be considered on its own merits and the length of the award determined on that basis.

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7.4 The relief will normally cease at the end of a financial year unless an earlier date is specified. A claimant is not prevented from reapplying for a further award in subsequent years.

7.5 The award of Council Tax Discretionary Relief will be made based on the net liability after any discounts, exemptions and reductions have been applied to the Council Tax account.

7.6 If it is subsequently identified that a reduction has been awarded as a result of false or fraudulent information, the Council reserves the right to withdraw the award and recover the resulting sum due. The Council also reserves the right to prosecute the applicant for false representation under the Local Government Act 1972, section 222.

7.7 The Council may make single payment in the form of a reduction from the Council Tax account. Where the account is in credit, a refund may be made to:

- a) the claimant; or,
- b) his or her partner; or,
- c) an appointee; or,
- d) to a third party with the written permission of the claimant.

7.8 Council Tax Discretionary Relief may be paid using the following methods:

- by crediting the customer's Council Tax account;
- (n.b. - payment will usually be a one off credit);
- by cheque, if the Council Tax account has been paid in full or is in credit.

8. Will I be offered help to improve my financial position?

8.1 The Council will ask you to seek help to tackle your financial crisis. We will offer you free budgeting and financial advice to fully assess your personal and financial circumstances with Citizens Advice LeicesterShire.

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8.2 You can choose to seek advice from another accredited financial advisor to fully assess your personal and financial circumstances.

8.3 If you seek further financial advice from discretionary funding and have received any help, you may not receive further financial assistance.

9. How will I be notified of the decision?

9.1 The Council will provide a written notice of its decision to the applicant or their representative. The decision notice will set out:

- a) the amount of the award (if any);
- b) the period of the award (if any);
- c) provide a summary of the factors considered in reaching the decision;
- d) provide details of how to request a review or obtain more information about the decision;
- e) provide details of how the award (if any) will be made. This will be in the form of a credit on to the council tax account.

9.2 On the provision of all satisfactory requested information, a decision will be made, where practicable, within 14 working days.

10. What do I need to do after I have been awarded CTDR?

10.1 A claimant who is in receipt of Council Tax Discretionary Relief must inform the Council in writing or by email about any relevant changes in circumstances occurring after the application has been made, which may affect the continuation of the award. In particular the claimant must tell the Council about any of the following changes for themselves, their partner or any non-dependent in their household within one calendar month of any change:

- a) entitlement and payment of housing benefit;
- b) address;
- c) income and capital;

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- d) employment status and earnings;
- e) outgoings;
- f) availability of other financial assistance;
- g) household composition;
- h) entitlement to any other benefits including disability related income and Universal Credit;
- i) compliance activity stipulated in the award notice.

10.2 This list is not exhaustive. Recipients are advised to contact the service if they require clarification. If in doubt they are advised to tell us.

10.3 Any changes must be reported in writing to the Council directly as soon as possible and must be reported by letter, or email within one month. Notification of changes to the Department for Work and Pensions for welfare benefit purposes is not sufficient to obviate this responsibility.

11. What can I do if I want the decision to be reviewed?

11.1 Claimants may request the Council looks again at the decision within one calendar month of the decision notice where:

- a) they have not been awarded Council Tax Discretionary Relief; or,
- b) where they feel the award should be increased;
- c) they disagree with the period of the award;
- d) they disagree that the award has been reduced;
- e) they disagree with the recovery of an overpayment.

11.2 Requests for review must be:

- a) submitted in writing;
- b) addressed to the Head of Revenues and Benefits;
- c) received at the Council offices within one calendar month of the date of the decision notice;
- d) signed by the claimant, their appointee or agreed third party representative;

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e) outline the reasons for review, providing any new evidence required.

11.3 Applicants will not have the right of review:

- a) where their request is received by the Council more than one calendar month after the date of the decision notice; unless good cause can be shown for the delay; or,
- b) where the Council has already made a determination of a previous request for review in respect of the matter; unless significant new information is identified; that would have a direct bearing upon the original decision; or,
- c) for any day on which they have already received 100% discount or exemption.

11.4 Any request for review of the decision under this scheme will be determined within one calendar month of receipt of the request or as soon as reasonably practicable.

11.5 Any review will be considered on its own merits, in the light of all relevant circumstances at the time (as described in the eligibility guidelines part 4).

11.6 The review request must give the reasons why the applicant considers the original decision should be amended, and may include new or additional information relevant to the request to change the original decision. The Council may require further supporting evidence to be provided.

11.7 The reviewing officer (who will not be the original decision maker) will review the original decision. The outcome of the review request will be notified to the claimant normally within one calendar month of its receipt or the receipt of the supporting information.

11.8 If a customer disagrees with the decision, the only statutory avenue open to challenge such decisions is through judicial review. The High Court may be asked to consider whether the Council has acted within its powers.

12. How does Leicester City Council prevent fraudulent claims for the CTDR scheme?

12.1 If you falsely declare your circumstances, provide a false statement or provide false evidence in support of your application, you may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006.

12.2 Leicester City Council will investigate allegations of fraud and retains the right to prosecute such cases under section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972.

13. Are the application form and this document accessible in other formats?

10.1 If you would like a hard copy or large print version please contact Leicester City Council on 0116 454 1006 or via email at SDIO@leicester.gov.uk or by post at the following free post address: Freepost RTRE-HTRJ-CSSJ, Service Improvement Team, Leicester City Council, Revenues & Benefits Department, York House, 91 Granby Street, LEICESTER, LE1 6FB.

Appendix A: Background and Legislative Framework

1. Background

1.1 Leicester City Council has updated its Council Tax Discretionary Relief policy to ensure that the most vulnerable members of the community are protected in line with the requirements of the Government's localisation of benefits, which replaced the previous Council Tax Benefits system from 1st April 2013.

1.2 The Council has updated the policy to offset the most severe impacts of these reforms on vulnerable persons (placing particular reference to protected characteristics) who face exceptional financial hardship. The relief will reduce the Council Tax payable after taking into account eligibility for any national benefits, discounts, reliefs and exemptions. The relief can be applied to an individual or to a defined class of cases such as in a fire or flood situation for a district of the city.

1.4 The scheme is locally funded, but will seek a contribution from precepting authorities to offset the full cost of the schemes operation. The scheme will be subject to a budget cap each year set by the Council through its budgeting and

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precepting arrangements. The values of the discretionary fund will be published annually.

1.3 The Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy will permit officers the discretion to provide discounts in council tax liability under the policy up to 100% of the remaining Council Tax liability. Notwithstanding the schemes budget cap, the Council retains the discretion to award additional discount under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

2.0 Legislative Framework

2.1 Awards under this scheme are made in line with the following legislation:

- i. The Local Government Finance Act 2012
- ii. Section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003; this introduced a new power, as section 13A Local Government Finance Act 1992 – the award of discretionary discounts
- iii. Section 4, Local Government Finance Act 1992 - Dwellings may be exempt from Council Tax if they fall within one of the specified classes
- iv. Section 11, Local Government Finance Act 1992 - The amount of Council Tax payable may be subject to a discount where there is no resident, or all but one of them falls to be disregarded
- v. Leicester City Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2013
- vi. Child Poverty Act 2010
- vii. Equality Act 2010 (incorporating the Disabled Persons Act 1986)
- viii. Housing Act 1996
- ix. The Leicester City Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2013
- x. The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 Default Scheme
- xi. Social Security Act 1992
- xii. Universal Credit Regulations 2012
- xiii. Local Government Act 1972 section 222
- xiv. The Fraud Act 2006, section 2

xv. Data Protection Act 1998

2. Finance and Monitoring

2.1 The Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy will have a budget set each financial year. This will be set in agreement with and with a contribution from major precepting authorities.

2.2 If all available funds have been exhausted from the discretionary relief budget, reductions in Council Tax liability may continue to be made on a discretionary basis under s13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

2.3 Current funding limits are encompassed with the general hardship fund for local tax. The funds are cash limited with the option to increase the limit in exceptional circumstances if deemed necessary.

2.2 The Revenues & Benefits Service will undertake monitoring of the number, amount and period of DHP awards in relation to the available DHP budget. The purpose is to ensure the DHP budget has sufficient funds to meet demands on the DHP budget throughout the financial year.

2.3 The Revenues & Benefits Service will also monitor cases where a DHP request has been refused to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently. The Council is subject to the general equality duty.

2.4 This means that steps will be taken to monitor implementation of this policy to ensure no one is subject to disproportionate adverse treatment because they had a protected characteristic. The general equality duty requires that the Council has due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it

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- Foster good relations.

2.5 The policy will be reviewed on a rolling three year programme or at such time or occurrence where a review is appropriate.

3. Legislative framework & equality monitoring arrangements

3.1 The Council may use any evidence and information supplied to it in respect of Council Tax Discretionary Relief to check the eligibility of the applicant in respect of this scheme or any other welfare benefit, discounts or exemptions in compliance with its powers and obligations under Data Protection Act 1998 and other legislation. Our data sharing and fair processing detail can be found at the following web link: <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/council-and-democracy/key-documents/internet-disclaimer/>

4. Principal objectives

4.1 The following outlines the principal objectives behind the Policy:

- alleviating poverty
- encouraging and sustaining people in employment and education
- sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness
- maintaining residents in their own homes
- supporting vulnerable people
- support those subject to other welfare reform changes including income capping
- safeguarding residents in their own homes
- helping those who are trying to help themselves
- keeping families together
- supporting domestic violence victims who are trying to move to a place of safety
- supporting the vulnerable or the elderly in the local community
- helping customers through personal and difficult events

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- supporting young people in the transition to adult life, or promoting good educational outcomes for children and young people;
- To avoid disability or other unlawful discrimination.

Appendix B: Financial and Personal Circumstances

1.1 The Council is committed to equality, fairness and transparency. Equality is about ensuring people are treated fairly and given fair chances. It is also about ensuring that people receive fair outcomes in the standard of service they receive from the Council and equality of access to Council services. This incorporates everyone, regardless of their race, gender, gender reassignment, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status and/or disability, in line with the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

1.2 A number of groups have been defined under Leicester City Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme Impact Assessment (2013) as being potentially financially vulnerable. The main groups are listed in the table below (this list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive):

- Households who are considered to be vulnerable and need to remain in their current properties for reason of disability, particularly those with property adaptations;
- Households placed in their homes under the Council's statutory homelessness obligation;
- Households receiving assistance through the Early Help Family Programme;
- Households containing a care leaver under the age of 25.

1.3 Examples of financially vulnerable groups:

- The claimant or member of the household or a dependent child is in receipt of the middle or higher rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) care component; or the

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standard or enhanced daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP); or Armed Forces Independent Payment (AFIP)

- The claimant is a disabled adult living in supported living accommodation who has carers and is unable to work due to their health
- The claimant or partner is in receipt of attendance allowance.
- The claimant or partner is in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and gets a support component
- The claimant is a care leaver up to the age of 22 years
- The claimant or household member is deemed vulnerable through drug or alcohol dependency who are attending a accredited rehabilitation programme
- The claimant or household member has suffered domestic violence and is being supported by accredited local schemes to remain in permanent accommodation or move into permanent accommodation, inclusive of forced marriages
- The claimant or partner is a registered foster carer (child or adult) and has current foster child/adult placements
- The claimant or partner is a registered foster carer (child or adult) and is in-between foster care placements
- The claimant has dependent children under the age of 5 and is living on income support
- The claimant or partner is either an expectant or nursing parent.
- Claimant and/or partner who is unable to work due to caring responsibilities and is in receipt of, or has an underlying entitlement to carers allowance.
- The claimant or partner has parental care responsibility for non-resident children (up to 20 years old) to support family cohesion
- The claimant or household member is a hostel leaver where they were resident in a hostel engaging with support while resident. Minimum period of hostel residency is 3 months
- The claimant or partner is an ex-offender on probation
- The claimant or partner is receiving additional support from the council. Such as floating support from STAR or the think family programme.
- The claimant or partner is in receipt of war widow's pension or a recipient of an armed forces compensation payment/pension.

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1.4 There may be households which for short periods of time may have exceptional circumstances or life events which lead to severe financial hardship. Examples of applicants or households who may potentially be awarded a Council Tax Discretionary Relief under exceptional circumstance are (this list is not exhaustive):

- a) recently bereaved and as a consequence benefits have been suspended which had caused a disruption to their income;
- b) terminally ill and unable to contribute to the household income;
- c) recovering from a serious illness and unable to contribute to the household income.

1.5 The Council has discretion as to whether to make a Council Tax Discretionary Relief payment; but will ensure all decisions are made in accordance with principles of good decision-making; in particular, it will act fairly and reasonably and each claim for Council Tax Discretionary Relief will be decided on its own merits with regard to all relevant circumstances.

1.6 If the Council decides to award Council Tax Discretionary Relief, it has discretion as to the level of that award; however, the need for financial assistance must be in respect of a liability to pay their Council Tax. The value must not exceed the net Council Tax liability after all reductions, discounts and exemptions have been applied.

1.7 The Council must be satisfied that the applicant has taken all reasonable steps to resolve their situation prior to making their application.

1.8 The Council will consider whether the applicant has access to other assets that could be used to pay their Council Tax.

1.9 The application will not be considered until the claimant's eligibility to Council Tax Reduction; any other discretionary fund; or, welfare benefit such as Housing Benefit entitlement/Universal Credit; and, all other statutory reductions has been assessed.

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1.10 The claimant must be able to demonstrate that their current circumstances are unlikely to improve in the short- to medium-term.

1.11 The Council's finances allow for Relief to be made, on the basis that sufficient money is available in the relevant budget to meet the potential cost of any Relief granted, including Relief to others who might meet the qualifying criteria.

1.12 It is reasonable for the Council to award Relief having regard to the interests of other local Council Tax payers who have to contributed to meeting the cost of any Relief granted.

1.13 Awards will stop immediately if the applicant or household or their representative has misrepresented or failed to disclose a material fact, fraudulently or otherwise. The Council will look to recover any overpayment of award; and, in instances of proven fraudulent activity the Council will always seek to recover any overpayment in all cases.

1.14 Failure to provide the information required to support an application without sufficient reason will result in the application being considered without the information. This is likely to result in the request being refused.

1.15 There is no entitlement for a charge payer to withhold payment of Council Tax pending the submission and determination of an application for Council Tax Discretionary Relief, or during any subsequent request for a review of the decision. A reduced payment arrangement may be considered on request pending the submission and assessment of any application. However, claimants must be aware that if their application for Relief is unsuccessful this could result in them having to pay a higher monthly amount over a shorter period of time. If an application is successful the charge payer will receive a payment into their account. Any credit in excess of their annual liability will be refunded.

1.16 Where applications are made as a result of an exceptional event or natural disaster, these will be determined by the City Mayor, following consideration and recommendation from the Director of Finance.

1.17 The Council will usually consider an award from the date the application is received. However in exceptional circumstances consideration will be made for a request to backdate to an earlier period should sufficient good cause be shown to warrant an additional award for a prior period. If a backdate is agreed, the date of an award of a Council Tax Discretionary Relief will not usually exceed 52 weeks prior to the date of application or from the date liability was established whichever is the earlier.

2. Ceasing payment

2.1 The Council may cease making, or reduce the amount of, a Council Tax Discretionary Relief where:

- a) the decision to make the award was based in whole or in part on a misrepresentation; and/or,
- b) the claimant failed to disclose a material fact; and/or,
- c) the award was made as a result of an error; and/or,
- d) the claimant informs a relevant change in circumstances; and/or,
- e) the claimant fails to inform the Council of a relevant change of circumstances; and/or,
- f) a condition of the award stipulated in the award notice has not been met.

2.2 If the Council decides to cease making, or reduce the amount of, a Council Tax Discretionary Relief, it will notify the claimant of this decision in writing, provide reasons for the decision and inform them of their right to request a review of the decision. This will include the period in which to make the request and to whom the review request must be made.

2.3 The claimant may request a review of such a decision. There is no right of appeal.

3. Recovery of overpayments

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3.1 15.1 The Council may recover any overpayment of Discretionary Relief that has been paid by removing the amount from the Council Tax account, or by invoicing the claimant where the Council Tax account is closed.

Leicester City Council Community Support Grant

1. What is the Leicester City Council Community Support Grant (CSG)?

1.1 This scheme helps vulnerable people in short-term crisis to meet urgent needs, or to maintain their independence in the community.

2. What are the main features of the scheme?

2.1. It is only open to Leicester residents, those moving to a tenancy within the city, those fleeing from domestic violence or those with a link to Leicester. See the Glossary for more details.

2.2. Each case will be treated strictly on its own merits and you will receive fair and equal treatment.

2.3. It reflects the Council's commitment to work with voluntary advice services to provide budgeting and income maximisation advice and repeat applicants will be expected to engage with these services.

2.4. There is a limit of two awards within a rolling twelve month period. However, this is subject to exceptions.

3. What type of help is available?

3.1 For Crisis Grants help includes food, essential clothing, fuel and electricity costs. This will usually be issued in the form of food parcels, credits uploaded on to fuel cards or vouchers.

3.2 Support Grants will usually be issued in the form of reuse furniture or reconditioned white goods. Delivery will then be arranged by the suppliers with you or your support worker.

4. Am I eligible for support?

4.1 You must be over the age of 16, meet the conditions in 2.1 and have a low income – whether in receipt of welfare benefits, low income or pension credit.

4.2 You must have exhausted other means of alternative funding, including private funding, insurance, and DWP funding. See Appendix A for more details.

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4.3 For Crisis Grants, you will need to be able to demonstrate exceptional financial hardship. See the Glossary for more details.

4.4 For Support Grants, you should be in receipt of any of the following: be receiving IS, JSA (income-based) or ESA (income-related), or another low income with less than £500 in savings. We will consider other exceptional circumstances at our discretion.

4.5 The award is intended to support a person with limited financial means to return to, or remain in the community.

4.6 If your benefit claim is undergoing a sanction, please see Section 3 of Appendix B of this scheme.

5. Are my personal circumstances taken into account?

5.1 The following personal circumstances will be taken into account during the decision making process:

- a) Whether a CSG payment would prevent homelessness;
- b) Whether a CSG payment would help you maintain employment, education or training; or
- c) Whether a CSG payment would prevent a move that would have a detrimental effect on you and your household, for example children's schooling, health, support networks or employment.

5.2 Crisis Grant. This covers help where you have suffered an emergency or crisis, for example, a fire or flood. This crisis will be the cause of a severe risk to the health and safety of the applicant or an immediate family member/dependant(s). Examples of when your health and safety might be at severe risk include:

- a) no access to essential needs (food, heating and clothing);
- b) imminent deterioration/deterioration in health;
- c) domestic abuse;
- d) neglect and harm;
- e) breakdown of the family unit;
- f) exceptionally poor living conditions;
- g) onset of, or deterioration in the health of an immediate family member;
- h) risk of homelessness deemed to be unintentional.

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5.3 If you have dependent children between the ages of 7 and 16, who meet free school meal criteria, and you are suffering a crisis, you can apply for food parcels during the school holiday periods. Households with dependent children of Reception age and in Years 3 and 4 must meet the free schools meals claim criteria as applied prior to September 2014 when changes to free school meals criteria were introduced.

5.4 Support Grant. This helps you to establish a home or remain in the community when you are under exceptional financial pressure but do not have an immediate need. Examples of when you might be under exceptional financial pressure include the following:

- a) you have suffered a disaster (such as a fire or flood);
- b) you are leaving care or prison;
- c) you have had to move due to violence, or fear of violence;
- d) you are leaving accommodation where you received significant care and supervision, you should also be expecting to move out within 6 weeks.
- e) you, or a member of your family, suffers from a disability or chronic illness which gives rise to an exceptional need, and which cannot be met by another support fund;
or
- f) you are a former member of the armed forces.

6. How do I apply?

6.1 By telephone, call: 0116 454 1019, between 8.30am and 5pm from Monday to Friday. For an out-of-hours emergency, you can call: 0116 255 1606.

6.2 If you are homeless, or think you are at risk of being homeless, please call 0116 454 1008.

7. How long will it take?

7.1 For Crisis Grants, a decision is usually made within two working hours of receipt of a verified and completed application form.

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7.2 For Support Grants, a decision is usually made within 10 working days of receipt of a verified and completed application, and successful claimants may have to wait for up to 5 days for delivery of the items.

7.3 An advisor will contact you by telephone, email or text to let you know if you have been successful. A letter will also be sent to you by post explaining the decision. Leicester City Council will set out the reasons for why the decision was made and explain your right of appeal.

7.4 Alternative arrangements will be put in place as necessary for those who do not have a permanent contact address.

8. What can I do if I want the decision to be reviewed?

7.1 If you are unhappy with the decision, you can write to Leicester City Council's Head of the Revenues and Customer Support Service, explaining why you think the decision should be changed. You will need to sign your letter and make sure it reaches the Council within one calendar month of the date of the original decision. - Your application will then be reviewed by a senior officer of the Revenues & Customer Support Service.

7.2 If you remain unhappy with the decision after it has been reviewed, you have the right to challenge the decision through judicial review. The High Court may be asked to consider whether the Council has acted within its powers.

8. How does Leicester City Council prevent fraudulent claims for the CSG scheme?

8.1 If you falsely declare your circumstances, provide a false statement or provide false evidence in support of your application, you may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006.

8.2 Leicester City Council will investigate allegations of fraud and retains the right to prosecute such cases under section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972.

9. Are the application form and this document accessible in other formats?

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10.1 If you would like a hard copy or large print version please contact Leicester City Council on 0116 454 1006 or via email at SDIO@leicester.gov.uk or by post at the following free post address: Freepost RTRE-HTRJ-CSSJ, Service Improvement Team, Leicester City Council, Revenues & Benefits Department, York House, 91 Granby Street, LEICESTER, LE1 6FB.

Appendix A: Background and Legislative Framework

1. Background

1.1 Prior to 1 April 2013, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Social Fund scheme consisted of a regulated scheme made up of Sure Start Maternity Grants, Funeral Payments, Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments, and a discretionary scheme made up of Community Care Grants, Budgeting Loans and Crisis Loans. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans from 1 April 2013 and replaced them with a new Local Welfare Provision (LWP) administered by local authorities.

1.2 From 1 April 2013, Crisis Loan alignment payments and other Crisis Loans paid due to issues with benefit were replaced by a new national scheme of Short Term Benefit Advances (STBAs) administered by the DW P. Budgeting Loans continue for 'legacy' benefit claimants only, i.e. recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance (Income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (Income-related) and Income Support). Universal Credit (UC) claimants are able to apply for a Budgeting Advance.

1.3 The Government allocated the Council a grant to deliver a local scheme to meet local priorities. There was no requirement to replicate the current Crisis Loan or Community Care Grant schemes. The Council was provided with the funding and flexibility to design emergency provision for vulnerable groups according to local circumstances, in order to meet severe hardship in the most appropriate way.

1.4 The Council was encouraged to:

- i) work in partnership with local third sector organisations to develop their scheme;

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- ii) explore a range of in-kind support, and to link to advice, information and advocacy;
- iii) explore a full range of models for delivery.

1.5 In the development of CSG the Council fulfilled its duty to consult with all major stakeholders. The service is committed to continuing to work with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other key stakeholders in the City to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits, charitable funds and grants; this is reflected in the administration of CSG. It will also continue to work closely with money and welfare benefits advice services across the city to provide budgeting and income maximisation advice, and will continue to consult with all stakeholders on the effectiveness of this policy.

1.6 In January 2014, the government announced that it would no longer provide central funding for local welfare assistance schemes operated by local authorities from April 2015. This decision was confirmed following further consultation in November 2014.

1.7 The Council will continue to operate the scheme on the basis of reserves accumulated from previous grants being available.

1.8 From 6 April 2016, Local welfare funds were designated as 'public funds' for immigration purposes. This means that CSG cannot be used to support any person from abroad without recourse to public funds.

1.9 While an assessment of habitual residence is pending, CSG may assist those with a presumption of eligibility with a short-term award of food and essential items only.

2. Finance and Monitoring

2.1 The financial management of the budget will be undertaken through the corporate financial audit procedures. The purpose is to ensure the CSG decision making is robust, meets the intention of the policy, is transparent and is making

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decisions that allow for sufficient funds to meet demands on the CSG budget throughout the financial year.

2.2 The Council will undertake monitoring of the number, amount and period of CSGS awards in relation to the available CSG budget. The Council's Quality Assurance Team Leader will ensure that an audit check is conducted of 5% of the decisions made to ensure consistent decision-making.

2.3 The policy will be reviewed annually or at such time or occurrence where a review is appropriate.

2.4 Each application will be treated strictly on its own merits. You will receive equal and fair treatment within a transparent process taking full account of the Council's responsibilities under all relevant government legislation and to meet our standing statutory duties under Homelessness, Equality, Human Rights, Child Poverty and Child Protection legislation. Decisions under the scheme are made in accordance with the principles of good decision making and decision makers will act fairly, reasonably and consistently. Details of the legislative framework and equality monitoring arrangements of the scheme are provided in section 3.

2.5 The Council will also monitor cases where a CSG application has been refused or supported to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently.

2.6 The Council is subject to the general equality duty. This means that steps will be taken to monitor implementation of this policy to ensure no one is subject to disproportionate adverse treatment because they had a protected characteristic. The Council's equality duty requires that the Council has due regard to the need to:

- i) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- ii) Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and
- iii) Foster good relations.

3. Legislative framework & equality monitoring arrangements

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3.1 The Council has taken all relevant legislation into account when devising the Community Support Grant policy, including but not limited to:

- i) The Welfare Reform Act 2012
- ii) The Localism Act 2011
- iii) The Equality Act 2010
- iv) The Local Government Finance Act 2012 and 1992
- v) The Local Government Act 2003
- vi) The Leicester City Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2015/16
- vii) The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 Default Scheme
- viii) The Social Security Act 1992
- ix) The Universal Credit Regulations 2012 and accompanying legislation
- x) The Local Government Act 1972 section 222
- xi) The Fraud Act 2006, section 2
- xii) The Data Protection Act 1998
- xiii) The Housing Act 1996
- xiv) The Social Security Act 1986
- xv) The National Assistance Act 1948
- xvi) The Child Poverty Act 2010
- xvii) The Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
- xviii) The Disabled Persons (Services, consultation and representation) Act 1986
- xix) The Mental Health Act 1983
- xx) The Children Act 1989
- xxi) The Localism Act 2011
- xxii) The Care Act 2014
- xxiii) Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC877, 11 March 2016

3.2 In addition to the above requirements, the Council also takes account of current guidance and advice which has been published by the DW P and local policy which includes:

- i) Local support to replace Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses in England, June 2011;

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- ii) Social Fund Community Care Grants – Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Customer Insight Research Report 2, 2011;
- iii) Local Authority field work summary report, December 2011;
- iv) The Leicester Child Poverty Commission (2013) (Recommendation 18).

3.3 The Council has engaged extensively with stakeholder groups on this policy and is supported by a comprehensive Impact Assessment.

4. Priority groups

4.1 The following circumstances may place you in a priority group:

- i) Whether you are fleeing domestic abuse;
- ii) Whether you are a care leaver;
- iii) Whether you or another household member is subject to Social Services intervention;
- iv) Whether you or another household member is undertaking care duties for relatives in the area;
- v) Whether you are a returning ex-offender who is having difficulty in finding suitable accommodation;
- vi) Whether you are a former member of the armed forces who is having difficulty in finding suitable accommodation;
- vii) The exceptional nature of you and your family's circumstances;
- viii) Any reasons which make it necessary or especially desirable for you to occupy the dwelling you currently reside in the view of the assessor;
- ix) Whether the payment of a CSG award keep you and your family together;
- x) Whether it support a young person in the transition to adult life, or will it assist in the safeguarding of a vulnerable adult or child;
- xi) Whether you have a physical or mental condition that if not managed correctly will result in a serious health risk.

Appendix B: Financial and Personal Circumstances

We will consider your circumstances in full before deciding whether or not to award a CSG taking into account the following:

1. Financial Considerations

- i) Proximity of essential services relied upon by you and your partner to your home
- ii) The relevant financial, medical and social circumstances of you and your household
- iii) The income and essential expenditure of the customer and their household when considering income.
- iv) Whether your expenditure is considered to be above your basic living requirements. If your expenses seem high, the CSG assessor will make enquiries with you to clarify the details
- v) Savings and investments held by you and your household, which could be used to your their financial situation. The accessibility of these funds will be taken into account and the award may be reduced
- vi) Whether you has insurance to help you recover the costs of the lost goods. Your grant may be reduced by an equivalent amount
- vii) Whether other family members outside your household help in any way towards your financial expenditure;
- viii) Whether you and your household could reduce expenditure on non-essential items;
- ix) Whether the you and your household are entitled to other welfare benefits but are not claiming them;

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- x) Your the level of indebtedness;
- xi) Whether the you and your household are taking long-term action to help their problems in meeting their housing costs; and
- xii) Any steps taken by you to help yourself such as financial advice you have sought to alleviate your situation, such as from Citizens Advice Leicestershire, local advice agencies or the Welfare Rights Service.

2. Claim Requirements

2.1 If you claim JSA, ESA, or Universal Credit, you will be expected to first apply for a Short Term Benefit Advance (STBA) or Universal Credit Advance (UCA).

- i) If you have applied for a STBA or UCA and you have been informed that this will be granted, you may apply for a Crisis Grant. If your CSG application is successful, the award will cover the period until receipt of your first STBA payment (usually 14 days from application).
- ii) If you have applied for a JSA or ESA STBA and you are excluded from the STBA or you have received a negative decision, you may apply for a Crisis Grant. If your CSG application is successful, the award will cover a period of up to 4 weeks or receipt of your first welfare benefit payment, whichever is earlier.
- iii) If you have claimed Universal Credit but you are excluded from a UCA or have received a negative decision, you may apply for a Crisis Grant. If successful, the award will cover a period up to 8 weeks or receipt of your first welfare benefit payment, whichever is earlier.
- iv) Up to 14 days crisis support - If your JSA, ESA or UC claim is undergoing a sanction, disallowance or suspension, you will be expected to first apply for a DWP hardship award through the JobCentre Plus. If you receive a positive decision for a hardship award, you may apply for a Crisis Grant.

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If your CSG application is successful, the award will cover the period until receipt of your first hardship payment (usually 14 days from application);

v) If your JSA, ESA or UC claim is undergoing a sanction, disallowance or suspension and you are excluded from applying for hardship or have received a negative decision for a hardship award, you may apply for a Crisis Grant.

vi) If your application for a CSG award is successful the crisis payment will cover a period up to 4 weeks extending to a maximum of 13 weeks in exceptional circumstances or receipt of your first welfare benefit payment, whichever is earlier;

vii) If you have claimed UC and an award decision has been made but you have not yet received a payment, you may apply for a CSG.

viii) If your application for a CSG award is successful the crisis payment will cover a period up to 8 weeks or when your first payment of welfare benefit is paid, whichever is earlier; and

ix) Food parcel - To support vulnerable households where an immediate hardship payment is granted, however these payments take 24 hours to arrive.

3.2 These are the circumstances for, or in, which no assistance will be given (excluded persons)

i. people in hospital and care homes (independent or local authority) with no plans for discharge within 2 weeks;

ii. prisoners and people lawfully detained or on release on temporary license;

iii. members of a religious order who are fully maintained by it;

iv. people treated as in full-time relevant education who are not in receipt of welfare benefit these persons will only be considered to receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster.

v. full-time students not in receipt of IS, JSA (IB) or ESA (IR) or Pension Credit (including payments on account) – these persons will only be considered to receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster;

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- vi. someone who meets the legal definition of a 'Person From Abroad' these persons will only be considered to receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster
- vii. those whose benefit claim is disqualified, disallowed or sanctioned in relation to their JSA, ESA, IS or Pension Credit. DWP hardship payments should assist such claims;
- viii. where other statutory provisions are in place; including but not restricted to:
- ix. DWP budgeting loans, DWP benefit alignment payments, DWP short term benefit advances, and DWP statutory social fund payments (for example: winter fuel allowance);
- x. people who have made two applications to the Community Support Grant Scheme within the current financial year – except in extreme circumstances;
- xi. for items other than that which the Council can provide or needs which are not covered by Crisis Grant;
- xii. where private insurance covers costs of the damage;
- xiii. where liability exists elsewhere which addresses the issue (for example if a ceiling falls down because of a leak in the flat above);
- xiv. solely due to unexpected budgeting issues without a causal emergency or crisis;
- xv. a need for a person who resides outside England;
- xvi. when the CSG budget has been exhausted;

3.3 Assistance will be limited to support for expenses arising out of a disaster for, or in, the following circumstances:

- i) persons treated as in full-time relevant education or full-time students not entitled to IS, JSA (income-based), ESA (income-related) or PC (Guarantee Credit);

3.4 Crisis Grants are not available for the following

- i) a need which occurs outside United Kingdom
- ii) an educational or training need including clothing and tools (the DWP is able to support with these)
- iii) distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- iv) travelling expenses to or from school

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- v) school meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- vi) expenses in connection with court (legal) proceedings such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses (other than emergency travelling expenses when stranded away from home)
- vii) removal or storage charges if you are being re-housed following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under a housing authority's statutory duty to the homeless
- viii) domestic assistance and respite care
- ix) any repair to council property and any repair to property of certain housing trusts (details of which can be found by contacting Leicester City Council.
- x) a medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (these needs can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you receive IS, JSA (IB), ESA (IR), the maximum award of Universal Credit (supported by relevant SOS letter and qualifying criteria) or Pension Credit (guarantee credit)
- xi) work related expenses
- xii) debts to Government departments or investments
- xiii) purchase, installation, rental and call charges for a telephone
- xiv) mobility needs
- xv) holidays
- xvi) a television or a radio, or a licence, aerial or rental charges for a television or a radio
- xvii) garaging, parking, purchase, and running costs of any motor vehicle except where the payment is being considered for emergency travel expenses
- xviii) housing costs, (other than intermittent costs not met by Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) or Pension Credit, certain rent in advance payments, certain boarding charges, and minor repairs and improvements)
- xix) council tax, council water charges, arrears of community charge, collective community charge contributions or community water charges.

The above list is not exhaustive and whilst it is indicative of the rationale applied to the scheme, The Council will always consider exceptions.

Appendix C: Glossary

Disaster

This is 'an event that causes great distress or destruction' and includes major flooding, gas explosions or a house fire, but it is not expected that a minor mishap or damage or failure of a household item would be included in this situation in most circumstances. A disaster could also cover having no financial funds available to meet daily living expenses as a result of some sort of crisis, such as theft or unintended loss.

In cases of theft, the claim must be supported by a crime reference number. In cases of loss, the claimant must be able to demonstrate that the loss is not their fault.

Person From Abroad

A Person From Abroad is someone who fails or would fail the habitual residence test for the purpose of Income Support, Pension Credit, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Related Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit.

Link to Leicester

Applicants may be considered to meet the 'link to Leicester' criteria in 2.1 of the Policy by satisfying at least one of the following:

- Applicants living within the city of Leicester must be able to produce documentary evidence that they have used a residential address within the City as their settled home for 2 consecutive years immediately prior to their application;
- Applicants that have previously lived in settled accommodation in the city of Leicester for 3 consecutive years or more out of the last 5 years;
- Applicants currently working within the city of Leicester and have been for the last 12 months;
- People who are aged over 18 and approved as a homeless person under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996;

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- Applicants who need to give or receive support to direct family members who have been living in the city for the past 5 years. Direct family members include husbands, wives, civil partners, parents, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters;
- Asylum seekers who have been dispersed to the City by the National Asylum Support service (NASS) and whose status changes to that of refugee, or who are awarded exceptional or indefinite leave to remain whilst living in the city;
- Persons who have previously served in the armed forces and they make an application for housing within 5 years of their discharge;
- Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving service family accommodation following the death of their spouse/partner;
- Prisoners released from prison who meet one of the above criteria prior to them entering service or prison.

Severe Financial Hardship

This means that you have limited disposable income and you or your household are at risk of severe detriment to your health and safety.

Intentional Homelessness

Being intentionally homeless means that you are homeless because you left accommodation that you could have stayed in. If your last home was temporary or short-term, the Council looks into the reasons you left your last 'settled home'.

When deciding if you are or aren't intentionally homeless, the council must consider the reasons you became homeless. It's up to the Council to prove that you became homeless intentionally and that:

- you did, or failed to do, something that caused you to leave your home
- the act, or failure to act, was deliberate or you were aware of what was going on
- it was reasonable for you to continue living in your accommodation.

You have the right to explain your actions to the council in relation to your housing situation.

1. Background

1.1 Prior to 1 April 2013, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Social Fund scheme consisted of a regulated scheme made up of Sure Start Maternity Grants, Funeral Payments, Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments, and a discretionary scheme made up of Community Care Grants, Budgeting Loans and Crisis Loans. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans from 1 April 2013 and replaced them with a new Local Welfare Provision (LWP) administered by local authorities.

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- i) work in partnership with local third sector organisations to develop their scheme;
- ii) explore a range of in-kind support, and to link to advice, information and advocacy;
- iii) explore a full range of models for delivery.

1.5 In the development of CSG the Council fulfilled its duty to consult with all major stakeholders. The service is committed to continuing to work with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other key stakeholders in the City to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits, charitable funds and grants; this is reflected in the administration of CSG. It will also continue to work closely with money and welfare benefits advice services across the city to provide budgeting and income maximisation advice, and will continue to consult with all stakeholders on the effectiveness of this policy.

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2. Finance and Monitoring

2.1 The financial management of the budget will be undertaken through the corporate financial audit procedures. The purpose is to ensure the CSG decision making is robust, meets the intention of the policy, is transparent and is making decisions that allow for sufficient funds to meet demands on the CSG budget throughout the financial year.

2.2 The Council will undertake monitoring of the number, amount and period of CSGS awards in relation to the available CSG budget. The Council's Quality Assurance Team Leader will ensure that an audit check is conducted of 5% of the decisions made to ensure consistent decision-making.

2.3 The policy will be reviewed annually or at such time or occurrence where a review is appropriate.

2.4 Each application will be treated strictly on its own merits. You will receive equal and fair treatment within a transparent process taking full account of the Council's responsibilities under all relevant government legislation and to meet our standing statutory duties under Homelessness, Equality, Human Rights, Child Poverty and Child Protection legislation. Decisions under the scheme are made in accordance with the principles of good decision making and decision makers will act fairly, reasonably and consistently. Details of the legislative framework and equality monitoring arrangements of the scheme are provided in section 3.

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- i) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
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3.1 The Council has taken all relevant legislation into account when devising the Community Support Grant policy, including but not limited to:

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- vii) The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 Default Scheme

- viii) The Social Security Act 1992
- ix) The Universal Credit Regulations 2012 and accompanying legislation
- x) The Local Government Act 1972 section 222
- xi) The Fraud Act 2006, section 2
- xii) The Data Protection Act 1998
- xiii) The Housing Act 1996
- xiv) The Social Security Act 1986
- xv) The National Assistance Act 1948
- xvi) The Child Poverty Act 2010
- xvii) The Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
- xviii) The Disabled Persons (Services, consultation and representation) Act 1986
- xix) The Mental Health Act 1983
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- xxi) The Localism Act 2011
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- ii) Whether you are a care leaver;
- iii) Whether you or another household member is subject to Social Services intervention;
- iv) Whether you or another household member is undertaking care duties for relatives in the area;
- v) Whether you are a returning ex-offender who is having difficulty in finding suitable accommodation;
- vi) Whether you are a former member of the armed forces who is having difficulty in finding suitable accommodation;
- vii) The exceptional nature of you and your family's circumstances;
- viii) Any reasons which make it necessary or especially desirable for you to occupy the dwelling you currently reside in the view of the assessor;
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- iv) Whether your expenditure is considered to be above your basic living requirements. If your expenses seem high, the CSG assessor will make enquiries with you to clarify the details
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- vi) Whether you has insurance to help you recover the costs of the lost goods. Your grant may be reduced by an equivalent amount
- vii) whether other family members outside your household help in any way towards your financial expenditure;
- viii) whether you and your household could reduce expenditure on non-essential items;
- ix) whether the you and your household are entitled to other welfare benefits but are not claiming them;
- x) your the level of indebtedness;
- xi) whether the you and your household are taking long-term action to help their problems in meeting their housing costs; and
- xii) any steps taken by you to help yourself such as financial advice you have sought to alleviate your situation, such as from Citizens Advice Leicestershire, local advice agencies or the Welfare Rights Service.

2. Claim Requirements

2.1 If you claim JSA, ESA, or Universal Credit, you will be expected to first apply for a Short Term Benefit Advance (STBA) or Universal Credit Advance (UCA).

- i) If you have applied for a STBA or UCA and you have been informed that this will be granted, you may apply for a Crisis Grant. If your CSG application is successful, the award will cover the period until receipt of your first STBA payment (usually 14 days from application).
- ii) If you have applied for a JSA or ESA STBA and you are excluded from the STBA or you have received a negative decision, you may apply for a Crisis Grant. If your CSG application is successful, the award will cover a period of up to 4 weeks or receipt of your first welfare benefit payment, whichever is earlier.
- iii) If you have claimed Universal Credit but you are excluded from a UCA or have received a negative decision, you may apply for a Crisis Grant. If successful, the award will cover a period up to 8 weeks or receipt of your first welfare benefit payment, whichever is earlier.
- iv) Up to 14 days crisis support - If your JSA, ESA or UC claim is undergoing a sanction, disallowance or suspension, you will be expected to first apply for a DWP hardship award through the JobCentre Plus. If you receive a positive decision for a hardship award, you may apply for a Crisis Grant.

If your CSG application is successful, the award will cover the period until receipt of your first hardship payment (usually 14 days from application);

- v) If your JSA, ESA or UC claim is undergoing a sanction, disallowance or suspension and you are excluded from applying for hardship or have received a negative decision for a hardship award, you may apply for a Crisis Grant.
- vi) If your application for a CSG award is successful the crisis payment will cover a period up to 4 weeks extending to a maximum of 13 weeks in exceptional

circumstances or receipt of your first welfare benefit payment, whichever is earlier;

- vii) If you have claimed UC and an award decision has been made but you have not yet received a payment, you may apply for a CSG.
- viii) If your application for a CSG award is successful the crisis payment will cover a period up to 8 weeks or when your first payment of welfare benefit is paid, whichever is earlier; and
- ix) Food parcel - To support vulnerable households where an immediate hardship payment is granted, however these payments take 24 hours to arrive.

3.2 These are the circumstances for, or in, which no assistance will be given (excluded persons)

- i. people in hospital and care homes (independent or local authority) with no plans for discharge within 2 weeks;
- ii. prisoners and people lawfully detained or on release on temporary license;
- iii. members of a religious order who are fully maintained by it;
- iv. people treated as in full-time relevant education who are not in receipt of welfare benefit these persons will only be considered to receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster.
- v. full-time students not in receipt of IS, JSA (IB) or ESA (IR) or Pension Credit (including payments on account) – these persons will only be considered to receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster;
- vi. someone who meets the legal definition of a 'Person From Abroad' these persons will only be considered to receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster
- vii. those whose benefit claim is disqualified, disallowed or sanctioned in relation to their JSA, ESA, IS or Pension Credit. DWP hardship payments should assist such claims;
- viii. where other statutory provisions are in place; including but not restricted to:

- ix. DWP budgeting loans, DWP benefit alignment payments, DWP short term benefit advances, and DWP statutory social fund payments (for example: winter fuel allowance);
- x. people who have made two applications to the Community Support Grant Scheme within the current financial year – except in extreme circumstances;
- xi. for items other than that which the Council can provide or needs which are not covered by Crisis Grant;
- xii. where private insurance covers costs of the damage;
- xiii. where liability exists elsewhere which addresses the issue (for example if a ceiling falls down because of a leak in the flat above);
- xiv. solely due to unexpected budgeting issues without a causal emergency or crisis;
- xv. a need for a person who resides outside England;
- xvi. when the CSG budget has been exhausted;

3.3 Assistance will be limited to support for expenses arising out of a disaster for, or in, the following circumstances:

- i) persons treated as in full-time relevant education or full-time students not entitled to IS, JSA (income-based), ESA (income-related) or PC (Guarantee Credit);

3.4 Crisis Grants are not available for the following

- i) a need which occurs outside United Kingdom
- ii) an educational or training need including clothing and tools (the DWP is able to support with these)
- iii) distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- iv) travelling expenses to or from school
- v) school meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- vi) expenses in connection with court (legal) proceedings such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses (other than emergency travelling expenses when stranded away from home)

- vii) removal or storage charges if you are being re-housed following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under a housing authority's statutory duty to the homeless
- viii) domestic assistance and respite care
- ix) any repair to council property and any repair to property of certain housing trusts (details of which can be found by contacting Leicester City Council.
- x) a medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (these needs can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you receive IS, JSA (IB), ESA (IR), the maximum award of Universal Credit (supported by relevant SOS letter and qualifying criteria) or Pension Credit (guarantee credit)
- xi) work related expenses
- xii) debts to Government departments or investments
- xiii) purchase, installation, rental and call charges for a telephone
- xiv) mobility needs
- xv) holidays
- xvi) a television or a radio, or a licence, aerial or rental charges for a television or a radio
- xvii) garaging, parking, purchase, and running costs of any motor vehicle except where the payment is being considered for emergency travel expenses
- xviii) housing costs, (other than intermittent costs not met by Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) or Pension Credit, certain rent in advance payments, certain boarding charges, and minor repairs and improvements)
- xix) council tax, council water charges, arrears of community charge, collective community charge contributions or community water charges.

The above list is not exhaustive and whilst it is indicative of the rationale applied to the scheme, The Council will always consider exceptions.

Disaster

This is 'an event that causes great distress or destruction' and includes major flooding, gas explosions or a house fire, but it is not expected that a minor mishap or damage or failure of a household item would be included in this situation in most circumstances. A disaster could also cover having no financial funds available to meet daily living expenses as a result of some sort of crisis, such as theft or unintended loss.

In cases of theft, the claim must be supported by a crime reference number. In cases of loss, the claimant must be able to demonstrate that the loss is not their fault.

Person From Abroad

A Person From Abroad is someone who fails or would fail the habitual residence test for the purpose of Income Support, Pension Credit, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Related Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit.

Link to Leicester

Applicants may be considered to meet the 'link to Leicester' criteria in 2.1 of the Policy by satisfying at least one of the following:

- Applicants living within the city of Leicester must be able to produce documentary evidence that they have used a residential address within the City as their settled home for 2 consecutive years immediately prior to their application;
- Applicants that have previously lived in settled accommodation in the city of Leicester for 3 consecutive years or more out of the last 5 years;
- Applicants currently working within the city of Leicester and have been for the last 12 months;
- People who are aged over 18 and approved as a homeless person under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996;
- Applicants who need to give or receive support to direct family members who have been living in the city for the past 5 years. Direct family members include husbands, wives, civil partners, parents, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters;

- Asylum seekers who have been dispersed to the City by the National Asylum Support service (NASS) and whose status changes to that of refugee, or who are awarded exceptional or indefinite leave to remain whilst living in the city;
- Persons who have previously served in the armed forces and they make an application for housing within 5 years of their discharge;
- Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving service family accommodation following the death of their spouse/partner;
- Prisoners released from prison who meet one of the above criteria prior to them entering service or prison.

Severe Financial Hardship

This means that you have limited disposable income and you or your household are at risk of severe detriment to your health and safety.

Intentional Homelessness

Being intentionally homeless means that you are homeless because you left accommodation that you could have stayed in. If your last home was temporary or short-term, the Council looks into the reasons you left your last 'settled home'.

When deciding if you are or aren't intentionally homeless, the council must consider the reasons you became homeless. It's up to the Council to prove that you became homeless intentionally and that:

- you did, or failed to do, something that caused you to leave your home
- the act, or failure to act, was deliberate or you were aware of what was going on
- it was reasonable for you to continue living in your accommodation.

You have the right to explain your actions to the council in relation to your housing situation.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Template: Service Reviews/Service Changes

Title of spending review/service change	Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Discretionary Relief policy changes
Name of division/service	Finance, Revenues & Customer Support
Name of lead officer completing this assessment	James Rattenberry, Principal Policy Officer
Date EIA assessment completed	17/10/17
Decision maker	Alison Greenhill
Date decision taken	1/3/18

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EIA sign off on completion:	Signature	Date
Lead officer	James Rattenberry	1/3/18
Equalities officer	Hannah Watkins	29/11/17
Divisional director	Alison Greenhill	29/11/17

Please ensure the following:

- (a) That the document is understandable to a reader who has not read any other documents, and explains (on its own) how the Public Sector Equality Duty is met. This does not need to be lengthy, but must be complete.
- (b) That available support information and data is identified and where it can be found. Also be clear about highlighting gaps in existing data or evidence that you hold, and how you have sought to address these knowledge gaps.
- (c) That the equality impacts are capable of aggregation with those of other EIAs to identify the cumulative impact of all service changes made by the council on different groups of people.

1. Setting the context

Describe the proposal, the reasons it is being made, and the intended change or outcome.

The Government allocates Leicester City Council ('the Council') a grant allocation to deliver Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to those households who are in receipt of either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit with a Housing Costs element. This is a statutory duty to provide 'top up' rent payments and lump sums for applicant households who require further financial assistance with their housing costs. Case law establishes limitations on the amounts which can be paid, in which circumstances, and which groups are entitled to open-ended or unconditional support. Most significantly, this applies to treatment of disability-related income such as DLA or PIP which cannot be treated in the same way as other income, making time-limited or conditional awards for those who should not be obliged to seek alternative accommodation in the short-term (i.e. severely disabled claimants with property adaptations), and refusing claims which mitigate the indirect discrimination of welfare reforms (for example, allowing additional rooms relating to disability not expressly permitted by the relevant legislation).

The proposed changes are also to be applied to the Council's Discretionary Council Tax Relief (CTDR) policy. This is a non-statutory fund to mitigate the impact of Council Tax collection for vulnerable claimants, particularly those of working-age who are unable to pay the minimum 20% payment required under the current Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme.

There are no current changes proposed in relation to the Council's emergency Community Support Grant fund, which was established under Local Welfare Provision legislation but continues on a non-statutory, non-ring fenced basis.

The main service changes proposed for implementation are:

- Restricting initial awards of discretionary support to claimants affected by the Benefit Cap, and those who have previously received support at 100% of rent shortfall to a further award of thirteen weeks only, supplemented by intensive support by Citizens Advice LeicesterShire (CITAL). Claimants affected by the Benefit Cap are considered by the government to be fit to move into work and are not receiving any of a series of exclusionary benefits. As they are entitled to more than £20,000 a year in welfare benefits, this is reduced to the cap level via their Housing Benefit award. Repeat claimants will be considered on a case by case basis and may not be excluded if exceptional circumstances apply, such as severe disability/property adaptation. Further awards will, in most circumstances, only be considered where the claimant has engaged with CITAL or an equivalent provider and are assessed as requiring additional assistance with housing costs.
- Removing the initial 13 week allowance of discretionary support prior to applying to be placed on the Housing Register and actively seeking alternative accommodation, instead requiring this engagement from the outset of a claim, unless a legal exemption or exceptional circumstances apply. Awards were originally made on this initial basis to smooth the transition for newly affected claimants and allow engagement with support and relocation services during this period. However, the relevant welfare reform (under-occupancy) has now been in place for four years and all affected tenants have been directly approached on numerous occasions by Housing Services to outline their options.
- To ensure that households affected by welfare reforms are able to move to more appropriate properties and that we are meeting our new statutory homelessness obligations, by transferring a ring-fenced allocation of the DHP budget of approximately £50,000 to the administration of the Housing Department, to provide rent deposits and rent-in-advance supporting the LeicesterLet scheme. Where claimants are also eligible for ongoing DHP awards, these will be made for a minimum 52 week period to ensure certainty for private sector landlords participating in the scheme.

2. Equality implications/obligations

Which aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) are likely be relevant to the proposal? In this question, consider both the

current service and the proposed changes.	
	Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?
<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation</p> <p>How does the service ensure that there is no barrier to access for anyone with a particular protected characteristic (as set out in our PSED) with needs that could be addressed by that service?</p>	<p>Service has previously operated on a paper-based system, however this is now supplemented by an e-form and online application form. The continued provision of paper based forms for claimants who cannot complete the e-form will mean that those with poor literacy skills will not be disadvantaged by having to complete a form with others for support.</p>
<p>Advance equality of opportunity between different groups</p> <p>How does the proposal/service ensure that its intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for users? Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).</p>	<p>The E form and online form will enable remote access and include a dedicated email evidence submission which support workers and agencies can assist with directly.</p> <p>Specialist telephony service will help meet equality obligations, particularly for those with literacy, numeracy and disability needs who may struggle with the online format. This additional support will promote equality of opportunity of those in need of financial support being able to more robustly report their personal circumstances as evidence of need and therefore improve the likelihood of receiving discretionary support based on their need.</p>
<p>Foster good relations between different groups</p> <p>Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives? How does it achieve this aim?</p>	<p>By being more transparent and accessible, the assessment process will likely be considered to be fairer and thus more equitable across the city's different communities/protected groups. The aim of a fair and accessible support grants system will aid in fostering good relations between different groups</p>

challenging potential perceptions of bias or exclusion of those who have not been successful in the past.

3. Who is affected?

Outline who could be affected, and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include current service users and those who could benefit from but do not currently access the service.

Changes will be on offer to all existing service users. The outcome of this change in service provision will be a more responsive, personalised and easily understandable assessment procedure that treats all applicants fairly and in an equitable manner.

Identifiable existing client groups who will be positively affected by the changes include:

- Customers with both physical and mental disabilities;
- Customers with literacy, numeracy and IT difficulties;
- Customers with a history of homelessness;

4. Information used to inform the equality impact assessment

What **data, research, or trend analysis** have you used? Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you. Are there any gaps or limitations in the information you currently hold, and how you have sought to address this, e.g. proxy data, national trends, etc.

National data was used for comparative purposes, for example census data and national discretionary payment statistics.

5. Consultation

What **consultation** have you undertaken about the proposal with current service users, potential users and other stakeholders?
What did they say about:

- What is important to them regarding the current service?
- How does (or could) the service meet their needs?
- How will they be affected by the proposal? What potential impacts did they identify because of their protected characteristic(s)?
- Did they identify any potential barriers they may face in accessing services/other opportunities that meet their needs?

The Executive have considered welfare reform and Universal Credit update reports on local welfare reform impacts and future developments, and appendices detailing current benefit performance statistics and consultation responses on changes to Local Welfare Provision allocation. The Executive has regularly been provided with similar updates in the past and are aware of the challenges facing the service.

Feedback from the stakeholder group has regularly been encouraged and fed into the review process – annual discretionary award forums are held and promoted to obtain formal feedback, in addition to monthly input through the Social Welfare Advice Partnership forum and in relation to individual cases on an ad-hoc basis.

The service will continue to consult on the reform programme and seek to introduce further refinements to the process on an ongoing basis.

6. Potential equality Impact

Based on any evidence and findings, use the table below to identify if any individuals or community groups are likely to be affected by the proposal because of their protected characteristic(s). Describe what the impact is likely to be, how significant that impact is for individual or group well-being, and what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts?

This section also asks you to consider whether any particular vulnerable groups are likely to be affected by the proposal. List the relevant vulnerable groups that may be affected, along with likely impact, and mitigating actions to reduce or remove those negative impacts. These groups need not have protected characteristics.

Protected characteristics	Impact of proposal: Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic. Will their needs continue to be met? What issues will affect their take up of services/other opportunities that meet their needs?	Risk of negative impact: How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being? What will determine who will be negatively affected?	Mitigating actions: For negative impacts, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact? These should be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA.
Age	Mixed model of appointments and online/phone discretionary applications should cater for all ages – only potential negative impact for older customers who may struggle to apply online and already statistically underrepresented.	Promotion of additional personal support available and other sources of support available (advice agencies) should ensure that people are aware of availability of support grant and their applicability to their personal circumstances.	Ensuring that telephony support continues to be available to support the primary online receipt route.
Disability	Changes to policy include disregard of DLA/PIP payments and additional allowances to disability needs and welfare reform impacts. Telephone support and online access are anticipated to help overcome access barriers.	The assessment will be based on personal circumstances.	N/A
Gender Reassignment	No impact identified from existing data/national trends.		N/A

Marriage and Civil Partnership	No impact identified from existing data/national trends.		N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	No impact identified from existing data/national trends.	No impact identified from existing data/national trends.	
Race	Evidential requirements now relaxed, online form and process more easily understandable and improved engagement with community support groups will expand awareness among the city's different BME communities.	Risk of indirect discrimination, potentially as a result of language difficulties and/or community awareness of the schemes involved.	Increased engagement with community groups who offer direct translation. Simplified form, reviewed evidential requirements and understandable step-by-step electronic format also of assistance for those with poor literacy and numeracy.
Religion or Belief	No impact identified from existing data/national trends.		N/A
Sex	National research indicates the financial vulnerability of women in relation to economic and welfare trends.	The improved approach will promote both men and women in terms of awareness and accessing the scheme.	N/A
Sexual Orientation	No impact identified from existing data/national trends.		N/A

Vulnerable groups	Impact of proposal: Describe the likely impact of the proposal on children in poverty or any other people who we consider to be vulnerable. List any vulnerable groups likely to be affected. Will their needs continue to be met? What issues will affect their take up of services/other opportunities that meet their	Risk of negative impact: How likely is it that this group of people will be negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being? What will determine who will be negatively affected?	Mitigating actions: For negative impacts, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact for this vulnerable group of people? These should be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA.
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	needs/address inequalities they face?		
Children in poverty	Face complex needs and dependant on adult income – also disproportionately affected by welfare reform changes. Additional allowances available in relation to THINK family engagement, care/care leavers, fostering, overcrowding and poor living environments.	New government welfare reforms will continue to reduce available benefits to support families, placing additional pressure on them to bridge any gaps.	Improved engagement with advice organisations.
Other vulnerable groups -	Include history of homelessness, domestic and sexual abuse, safeguarding issues, alcohol/substance abuse and other financially vulnerable groups.	New government 'savings' will continue to adversely affect the level of funding provided for services to meet the needs of these groups, placing additional pressures on their day to day living requirements.	Additional allowances available from other sources, improved stakeholder engagement and online/telephony service.

7. Monitoring Impact

You will need to ensure that monitoring systems are established to check for impact on the protected characteristics and human rights after the decision has been implemented. Describe the systems which are set up to:

- monitor impact (positive and negative, intended and unintended) for different groups

- monitor barriers for different groups
- enable open feedback and suggestions from different communities
- ensure that the EIA action plan (below) is delivered.

Significant improvements have been made to the monitoring data collated around discretionary awards. This will be improved by the online e-form whereby data is automatically uploaded onto a central database. This will ensure we are able to monitor both positive and negative impacts in greater detail and with a much higher degree of certainty regarding the inferences drawn.

Improvements have also been made in relation to spend monitoring and outstanding claim data, which will be reviewed by Senior Management on a weekly basis. The support grant scheme has been designed to be flexible so that amendments can be made with the weighting of awards following feedback and due regard to budgetary constraints.

The service will continue to monitor performance indicators, protected characteristics and demographic elements as part of an ongoing system of renewal and improvement.

8. EIA action plan

Please list all the equality objectives, actions and targets that result from this Assessment (continue on separate sheets as necessary). These now need to be included in the relevant service plan for mainstreaming and performance management purposes.

Equality Outcome	Action	Officer Responsible	Completion date
Establish and augment monitoring data and corresponding analytical framework	To gather & monitor improved equalities data, adjusting the policy and promotion of the scheme to enable fair and consistent distribution of funds, as necessary and	James Hudson	31/3/18

	appropriate.		
Improved Communication Strategy with advice organisations stakeholders	To continue to develop core interaction with identified stakeholders, e.g. advice organisations and collective action/needs strategy.	Nilkesh Patel	31/3/18
Improved delivery mechanisms from first contact to assessment, all users benefitting from an accessible and easy to understand service	Fit for purpose systems developed to meet the needs of all customers, and making allowances to reflect need and vulnerability as appropriate.	James Rattenberry	31/3/18
Long-term sustainability – short- medium- and long-range planning and strategy reviews	To develop, monitor and update strategies and range plans in line with findings – annual reporting and at regular intervals where appropriate.	James Rattenberry	31/3/18

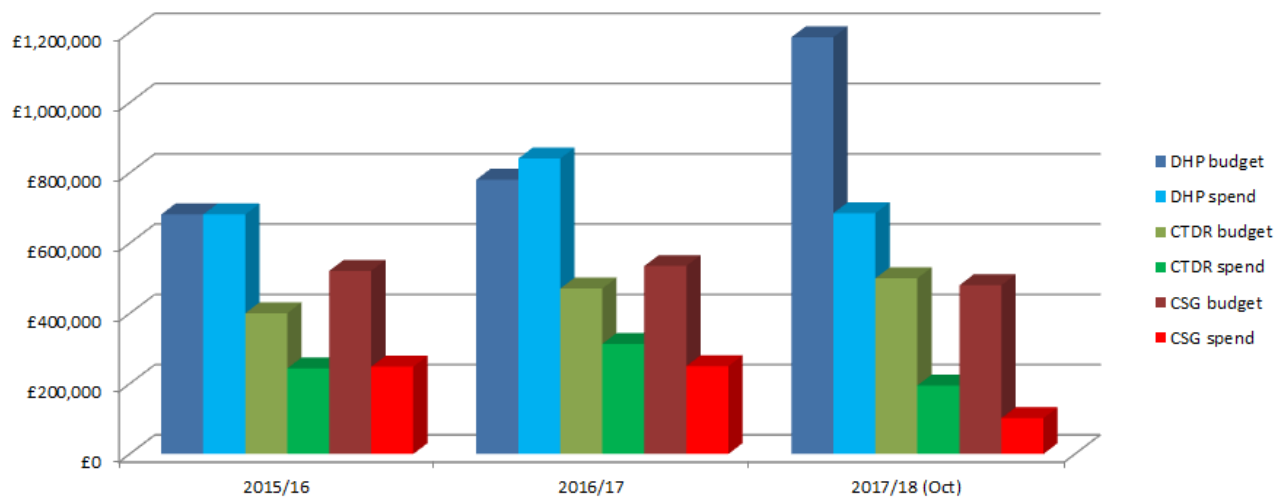


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City Council

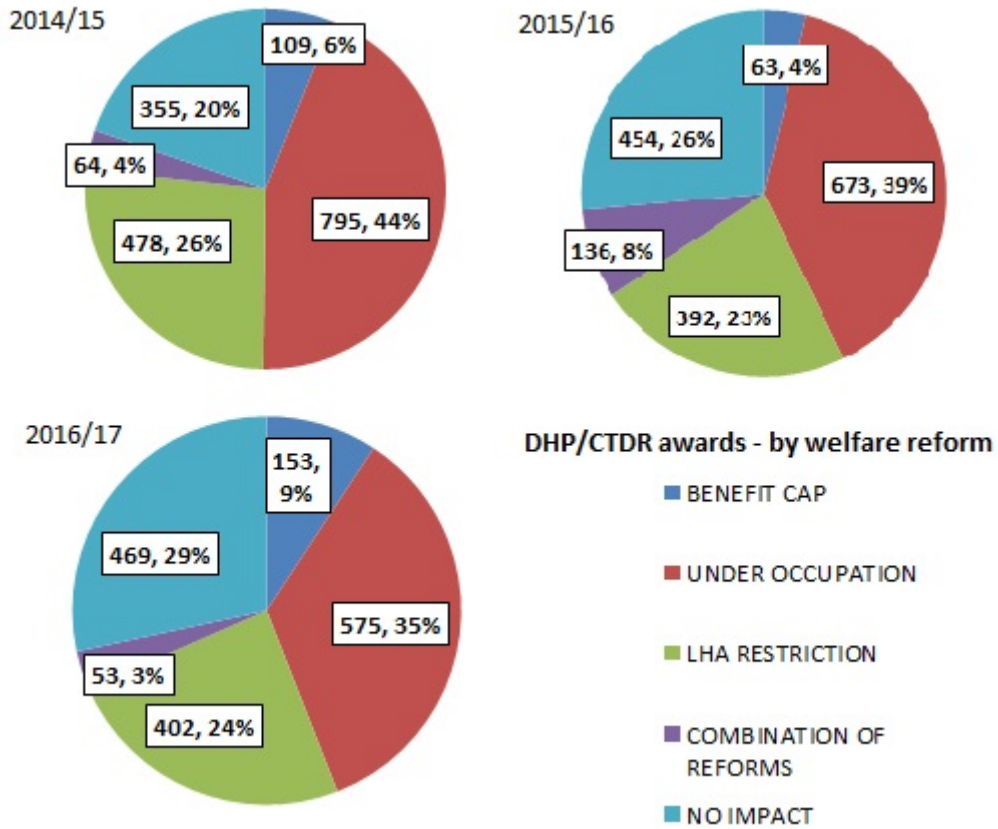
Appendix 2b:
Discretionary Policy & Welfare Reform
Statistical Analysis

Discretionary Expenditure 2015/16 to date

Financial year	Discretionary Housing Payments		Council Tax Discretionary Relief		Community Support Grants	
	DHP budget	DHP spend	CTDR budget	CTDR spend	CSG budget	CSG spend
2015/16	£681,863	£681,828	£400,545	£243,516	£521,171	£248,316
2016/17	£780,900	£840,895	£470,696	£313,240	£535,000	£250,103
2017/18 (Oct)	£1,186,024	£685,457	£500,000	£194,946	£480,000	£102,000



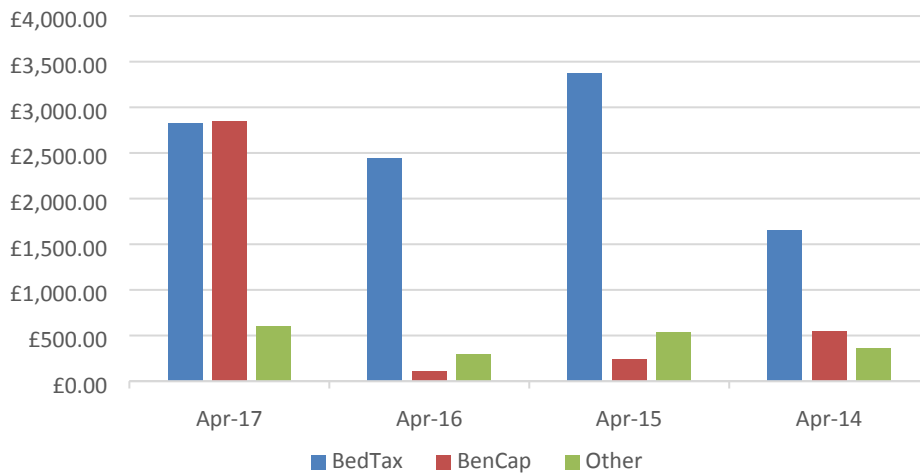
Financial year	DHP national budget	(Projected) LCC DHP budget
2015/16	£125m	£681,863
2016/17	£150m	£780,900
2016/18	£185m	£1,186,024
2018/19	£170m	(£1,089,860)
2019/20	£155m	(£993,696)
2020/21	£140m	(£897,532)



LA DHP expenditure by welfare reform

	LA DHP wkly	Underocc	BenCap	Other
Apr-17	£6,279.32	£2,828.51	£2,848.28	£602.53
Apr-16	£2,840.56	£2,443.66	£105.46	£291.44
Apr-15	£4,153.99	£3,376.24	£242.85	£534.90
Apr-14	£2,548.00	£1,648.02	£542.97	£357.01

Weekly LA DHP spend by welfare reform



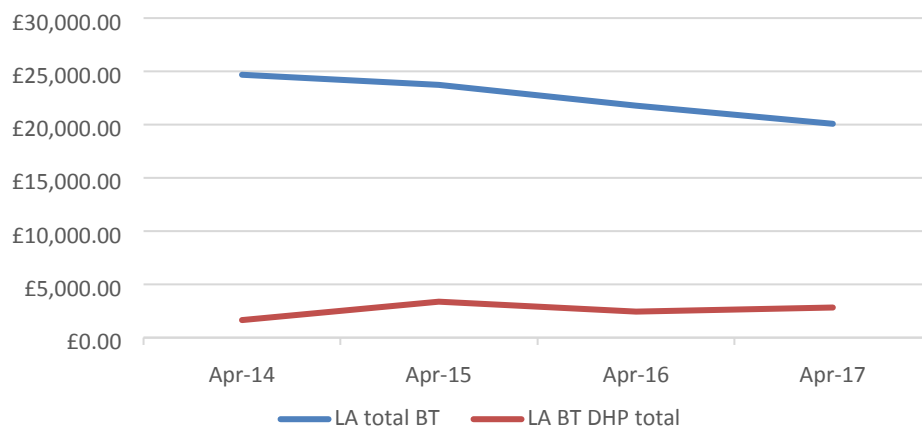
- Weekly DHP expenditure on LA cases has more than doubled between 2016 and 2017, from £2.8k to £6.2k per week.
- DHP expenditure on LA bedroom tax cases peaked in 2015, but again increased by 16% from 2016 to 2017.
- The lowered benefit cap has had a significant effect and now accounts for more spend for LA claims than the bedroom tax.
- Spend for claimants not affected by welfare reforms has also doubled.

LA Under-occupancy DHP expenditure

	LA total BT	LA BT DHP total	% DHP support
Apr-17	£20,077.33	£2,828.51	14.09%
Apr-16	£21,778.73	£2,443.66	11.22%
Apr-15	£23,731.04	£3,376.24	14.23%
Apr-14	£24,680.91	£1,648.02	6.68%

	LA BT cases	LA BT DHPs
Apr-17	1458	171
Apr-16	1585	166
Apr-15	1771	245
Apr-14	1850	119

Weekly LA underoccupancy reduction in HB versus DHP support



The number of properties and HB losses from under-occupancy have decreased steadily 2014 to date. However, DHP volumes and expenditure in this area have increased, are now level with the previous peak of 14% of under-occupancy rent shortfalls.

Bedroom tax households have previously typically been supported for a 52 week period, although of 172 live LA DHP under-occupancy claims:

- 49 have been supported for one to two years; (26.9%);
- 28 have been supported for two to three years (16.4%);
- 8 have been supported for over three years (4.6%).

We estimate that those we are legally required to support for a long-term or indefinite period, for example due to disability/property adaptation, to be between 5 and 10%.

LA underoccupancy cases – demographic analysis

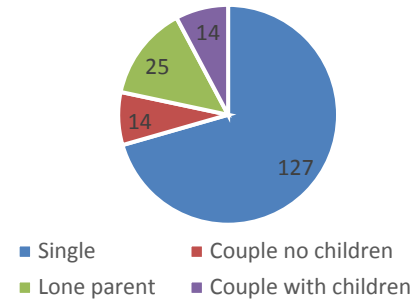
Household makeup	Number	% of caseload
Single	127	74.27%
Couple no children	14	8.19%
Lone parent	25	14.62%
Couple with children	14	8.19%

29 of the households listed as single also have at least one other non-dependent adult resident.

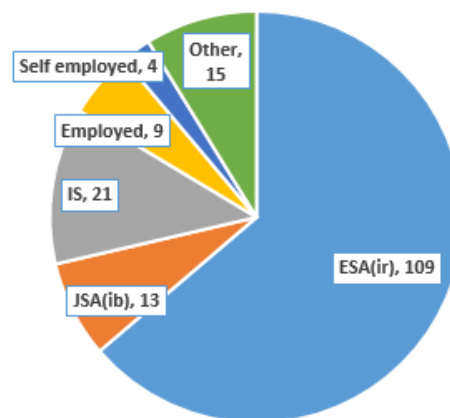
Gender	Number	% of caseload
Male	58	33.92%
Female	113	66.08%

Primary income	Number	% of caseload
ESA(ir)	109	63.74%
JSA(ib)	13	7.60%
IS	21	12.28%
Other	28	16.37%

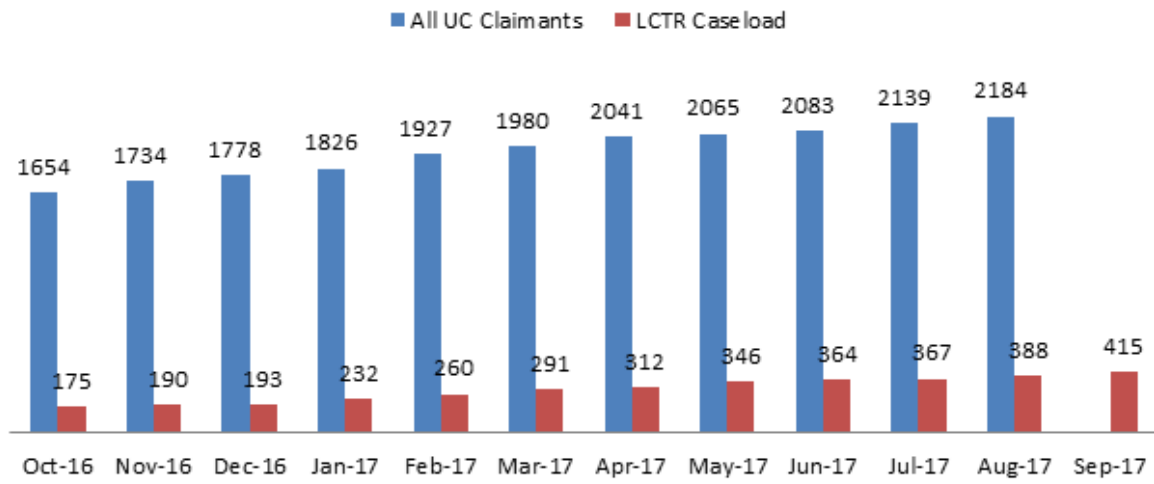
LA DHP claimants by household type



LA DHP claimants by primary income



Universal Credit Caseload in Leicester



Housing Scrutiny Commission

Goscote House

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 12th. March 2018

Lead Director: Chris Burgin



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Wycliffe
- Report author: Simon Nicholls
- Author contact details: simon.nicholls@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1.1

Purpose of the report.

This report has been prepared to update member of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the long-term future of Goscote House.

To inform them that the previous decision made by the Executive to refurbish and reconfigure Goscote House has been reconsidered, as a result of the Grenfell Tower fire and new evidence that other local authorities are reviewing the long-term future of similarly constructed blocks of flats. Goscote House will be decommissioned, demolished and redeveloped

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Housing Division commissioned a report to establish the condition of Goscote House, options for its future and costings. The report confirmed that the block was currently structurally sound and that the layout could be reconfigured. However, the report wasn't able to guarantee the ongoing structural stability and recommended that the block be inspected every five years to ensure that the integrity of the block didn't change.
- 1.2 The report estimated the total cost of the refurbishment/reconfiguration to be in excess of £6m, however this figure is set to increase now that we have agreed in principal to install a wet riser and sprinkler system.
- 1.3 Goscote House was built by Taylor Wimpey, there are several similarly constructed blocks across the country, many have been decommissioned because of ongoing concerns about their structural stability. The construction type hit the headlines many years ago, due to the Ronan Pint incident.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Goscote House should be decommissioned and demolished and that the site be redeveloped by the council or sold. This is because the long term structural integrity of the concrete frame cannot be guaranteed for longer than 5 years.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

- 3.1 Goscote House is one of 5 tower blocks on St Peters Estate, the other 4 are or have been recently refurbished as part of the Tower Block Refurbishment Project.
- 3.2 Goscote House is 23 storeys' high and has 134 units of accommodation, including bedsits, 1 bedroom flats and cluster flats. It was built in 1973 and is well known locally, it is unpopular, difficult to let and suffers from anti-social behaviour issues
- 3.3 Goscote House is constructed differently to the 4 other blocks and it presents different challenges to the others. Not only do the individual elements need to be refurbished/upgraded because they are at the end of their useful life but the layout issues needed to be addressed.
- 3.4 The Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service are also interested in the future of Goscote House because it is the subject of a prohibition notice which requires us to carry out significant improvement works. They have not actioned this because they know that we have not confirmed the position on the long-term future of Goscote House.
- 3.5 Since the fire at Grenfell Tower the Fire Service are requesting that we carry out improvements ahead of any decision. Also, because the tower is over 60m tall they have requested that should the block be refurbished the specification should now include a wet riser so that in the event of fire they have a water supply on each floor.
- 3.6 As a result of the fire at Grenfell the decision has been made to retrofit sprinkler systems in all LCC high rise accommodation, this was not included in the consultant's recommendations/original costings.
- 3.7 Goscote House is connected to the District Heating network.

General summary of report.

The report was commissioned so that we had an independent assessment of its condition, including costs, options for refurbishment/reconfiguration and potential disposal.

Structure.

- 3.8 The report has concluded that the structure is in generally good condition, this is good news. The report was specifically designed to ensure that invasive testing was carried out and several parts of the block were opened up to ensure that the condition of the wall and slab panels, the reinforcement, dry pack mortar and concrete quality were satisfactory, extensive off site testing was also carried out. Establishing the blocks structural integrity is key to the block having a future at all.
- 3.9 The report does not suggest an expected life span of the building but recommends that if the building is refurbished RICS accredited inspections are carried out every 5 years to confirm the continued structural integrity of the building. It has also come to light that blocks constructed the same in other areas of the county are now

starting to show signs of stress fractures and landlord are taking the decision to vacate the blocks as a precaution measure. It would be naive of us to ignore what is going on in other parts of the country.

3.10 The report does recommend that if it is refurbished/reconfiguration any alterations should be kept to a minimum and that we should not consider applying any additional external covering because the structure could not cope with the additional weight (this means we couldn't externally insulate it) see appendix a, Southwark Council press release.

Cost of Refurbishment.

3.11 The report goes into detail about the condition of all the elements. Such as lifts, fire safety equipment, asbestos and heating and ventilation etc and has concluded that 80% of these are at the end of their useful life. The cost of refurbishment is approximately £5.3m, this does not include any associated fees for Planning, Building Control, procurement, Consultants or any allowance for rent loss. It is likely that taking all these into account the actual figure would be in excess of £6m.

3.12 Proposed layout options eliminate all the bedsits and increases the amount of 2 bedroom accommodation. There have been restrictions on the layout changes due the structural report results limiting the amount of structural work that is permissible. It is felt that the layout as designed is the best one that could be achieved under the circumstances, however there is still some flexibility and it would be possible to reduce the number of 4 bedroom units and increase the number of 2 bedroom units, if required.

3.13 This reconfiguration would result in a reduction in rental income of £67,645 per year. These figures are based on social rents.

3.14 No allowance has been made for 'home loss payments' for tenants' that will permanently lose their home as a result of the refurbishment/reconfiguration being carried out.

3.15 The additional cost to reconfigure the block is just an additional £54k onto of the refurbishment costs.

3.16 As a result of the fire at Grenfell the LFRS has recommended that a wet riser be installed, this is in addition to the installation of a sprinkler system, this will increase the refurbishment cost to £6.5m

Demolition

3.17 It would cost approximately £3m to demolish Goscote House; this is only an estimate and based on the cost of previous demolitions. It is also based on the block being disassembled because of its closeness to the neighbouring buildings.

3.18 Demolition would result in the loss of 134 affordable housing units in the city. The impact of demolition would mean that 88 tenancies would be affected and we would have to find alternative accommodation for them and make homeless

payments. To mitigate this the following actions would need to be taken

Cost to build a new tower block

3.19 The cost to build a new tower block, similar in size to Goscote House is £17.3m, this is based on a cost model used to estimate construction costs. The cost is based on a specification suitable for social housing

Value of block

3.20 The valuers have concluded that the block would be worth £1.2m on the open market and that if the decision was to sell it should be marketing by two agents, one local and one located in London. This to ensure that it marketed to the widest audience possible.

3.21 It is likely to be attractive to other social landlords, landlords, housing associations and organisation that specialise in student accommodation. The valuers think that the student let market is the most likely. They have also warned that it should not be sold to a speculative investor unless they can demonstrate that they have the capacity to deliver the full refurbishment that Goscote House requires. High rise blocks are particularly difficult to manage for private landlords as they are not set up to deal with issue such as anti-social behaviour in the same was as local authorities and housing associations.

3.22 The valuers have also suggested that once refurbished the block will have an estimated resale value of £8.35m.

3.23 The valuers have also said that the block has no value as a development site due to the cost of the demolition, the size of the plot and its location.

4. Details of Scrutiny

Presented to the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the 12th. March 2018

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

If Goscote House were to be retained and refurbished rather than demolished then the Council would retain the responsibility for future decommissioning. As such, the estimated demolition cost of £3m is bringing forward future expenditure and would be funded from reserves. It should be noted that using reserves has an opportunity cost, which are then not available for any other purpose

There will be a loss of rental income as a result of demolishing the block, but this income would have been dependent on the significant investment outlined in the report. Reductions in revenue expenditure will need to be sought to offset this. There

will also be one-off home-loss payments for those permanently losing their home.

Clearly, any future additional income and expenditure would depend on the use of the cleared site.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant (37 4004)

5.2 Legal implications

In the event that, having opted to demolish Goscote House, any of the tenants refuse to vacate their flats, it will be necessary to take possession proceedings in the County Court in order to recover possession of individual flats.

Tenancies which are introductory in status can be ended by serving an appropriate termination notice in accordance with S128 Housing Act 1996 as a prelude to possession proceedings.

Secure tenancies require the service of a Notice of Seeking Possession with reliance on Ground 10 of Schedule 2 Housing Act 1985. The making of a possession order in such circumstances necessitates the Council demonstrating that it intends within a reasonable time to undertake the demolition work and is able to carry out that intention. The court must also be satisfied that suitable alternative accommodation is available for the tenant.

As a prelude to possession proceedings in relation to assured shorthold tenancies (Homecome tenancies), it is necessary to end the tenancy by service of a notice pursuant to S21 Housing Act 1988 or, if the tenancy is within its initial fixed term, a notice pursuant to S8 of the Act.

Jeremy Rainbow.

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Demolition of Goscote House would require the transfer of tenants out of accommodation which is relatively low carbon, due to the district heating supply, and into alternative accommodation. The impact on Leicester's carbon emissions would depend on the energy efficiency and heating systems of the alternative housing, but an increase in emissions could result. In addition, the removal of Goscote House from the district heating network might affect the overall efficiency of the network – and the resulting carbon emissions per unit of heat. The Council could mitigate these negative effects by requiring that any new development on the site is connected to the district heating network.

The demolition itself would have climate change implications too, as concrete and other construction materials require a lot of energy to manufacture – so the disposal of existing materials and the use of new materials in any new development would generate additional carbon emissions. This impact could be minimised by ensuring that as much as possible of the demolition material is recovered for reuse or recycling.

Duncan Bell, Senior Environmental Consultant. Ext. 37 2249.

5.4 Equalities Implications

The demolition of Goscote House will result in the loss of 134 affordable homes and 88 tenancies, this will have a negative impact across all protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act. However, this does need to be balanced against the health and safety issues which are highlighted in the report, and the need to ensure tenant safety regardless of protected characteristic. The health and safety issues cited in the report, in relation to the structural integrity of the concrete frame of Goscote House and the prohibition notice served by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, are important deciding factors regarding the future of Goscote House.

However, the council's Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010, requires decision makers to be aware of and take account of the impact of its proposals on those likely to be affected, which in this case are the 88 tenancy holders. Any impact on the tenancy holders would need to be considered and taken into account, with mitigating actions put into place to ensure that the tenants' needs are met.

In order to demonstrate that there has been 'due regard' paid to equalities implications, the impacts must be considered and taken into account before and at the time a particular policy that will or might affect people with protected characteristics is under consideration, as well as at the time a decision is taken. It must be demonstrated that the duty to pay 'due regard' to the equalities implications has been exercised in such a way that it influences the final decision. An equality impact assessment would need to be carried out to fully ascertain the impact across the protected characteristics.

The implications of the recommendation in the report to demolish Goscote House must also be considered alongside the **obligations of public authorities under the Human Rights Act 1998** ("the HRA"), in particular Article 8, the right to respect for private and family life, which denotes that:

- 1 Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
- 2 There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

Introduction.

The Leicester District Energy Company (LDEC) agreement 2011 adopts a PFI type avoided cost financial model. In this financial model the Council has agreed to purchase energy for specified group of housing estates and buildings over the duration

of the contract. The contract requires the financial model to be reviewed at least every five years.

The financial opportunity

The financial model encourages the expansion of the District Heating Networks because any addition buildings to the network, together with increased energy consumption means that the unit cost and standing charge for the remaining buildings may be lowered under a financial review.

The risk.

The loss of any building from the LDEC District Heating network means that the unit cost and standing charge for the remaining buildings is likely to increase, in order to compensate LDEC for the loss of revenue.

Cumulative loss of dwellings from the LDEC Scheme

Since the beginning of the LDEC contract, the sale of council assets has seen the net reduction of properties connected to the LDEC district Heating Scheme. The demolition of Goscote House will remove an further 135 dwellings from the LDEC scheme, the consequences of which are likely to see a further increase in unit and standing charge for the remainder of Council buildings connected to the LDEC Network.

The above gives a general description of the principles and contractual arrangements relating to the LDEC financial model. If further estimates of the actual numerical costs are required, then such estimates should be obtained from the finance department.

6. Background information and other papers:

None

7. Summary of appendices:

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes

10. If a key decision please explain reason

Value in excess of £0.5m

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Void Performance Report

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 12th. March 2018

Lead Director: Chris Burgin



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: all
- Report author: Simon Nicholls
- Author contact details: simon.nicholls@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: v.1

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Division's performance on the completion of Void repairs to council properties for the third quarter of 2017/18.

The report will also update members on progress made on items previously raised in the last report dated 20th. November 2017

2. Summary.

So far in 2017/18 Voids performance against target is as follows:

Measure	Target	Actual performance as at January 2018
Routine Voids	45 days average	39.6
Long term voids	90 days average	91.7
All voids	Maximum 90 days average	51.6
No. Voids Held	Less than 2% (421)	1.8%
Total annual rent loss	No greater than £825k	£695k (£829k year-end projection)
Total annual council tax loss	£202,537	£171,526 (£200k year-end projection)
Ready to let to Occupation	10 days	6.5 days

See appendix A

Overall performance is good and we continue to deliver year on year improvements. Long term void performance has been slightly affected by the turnaround of properties for the tower block refurbishment project and other priority voids.

What impacts on Void performance

Asbestos removal. Delays due to the removal of licenced asbestos. This requires notification to the HSE and if not arranged in a timely manner can have significant impact on the planning of void work. Delays can also occur due to contractors who can't always work as quickly as we would like as they have built in delays due to lead in times i.e. asbestos, kitchens and rewires. This will form part of our ongoing process improvements and partnership working with other sections.

Refusal rates. Refusal rates are high, properties are offered correctly in accordance with policy and applicants bid for the properties they want. However, when some applicants have secured the property they have bid for they then refuse the actual offer. This is largely due to the property not being in the area they want, or they see a property advertised in the next cycle that they prefer, this is an issue nationally. We have increased the amount of information on the website so that applicants are fully informed on the location and the property attributes we even link to Google maps so they can physically see the property. Applicants are also encouraged to visit the area to view the outside of the property to be certain it is the area they want in order to mitigate refusals. This is an ongoing issue for us and nationally.

Productivity measures: Void repairs staff currently operates a manual work allocation system and are not currently mobile working. This does not allow easy access to productivity data which has to be manually calculated. We have put some systems in place to capture some data in this area and are just starting to record productivity information and need to be able to collate this over a period of time for it to have meaning and application. This will enable us to set realistic targets and carry out future resource/workforce planning and increase the efficiency of craft operatives.

Peaks and Troughs: Void repairs are a reactive service and we respond to the number of voids we have at any one particular time. Naturally there are peaks and troughs, we have agreed a protocol for prioritising voids and have stated issuing work to contactors when it has been identified that there are not enough in house resources to deliver priority cases.

Progress and Future work areas:

Mobile working/works planning: The roll out of the mobile working solution is eagerly anticipated by Voids, this will help automate systems and communicate more effectively within voids and other areas of the business that we work for and those that help us, eg. Asbestos team and stores. It will also streamline the ordering of materials making it more efficient and accurate.

Target Setting: We have introduced some manual systems to monitor productivity as an interim measure prior to mobile working being introduced, this will enable us to set more realistic individual and team targets which prior to the transformation did not exist.

Performance Management: There is ongoing work being carried out to improve the performance management data. We are looking at the time in between processes to ensure any dead time can be eliminated, for example by looking at one particular area in detail RTL(ready to let) to occupation we have been able to identify issues and put mitigating measures in place to ensure that this timescale could be reduced and it now stands at 6.5 days. This will continue with the look at other areas and the same approach will be applied

Sheltered Housing: In recent years Sheltered Housing schemes have proved unpopular and difficult to let. We have started a project to find out why, what the actual demand is for the schemes and re visit our offer, we have delivered an interim report that has made some recommendations from an operational view point and we continue to work on the full report, this is ongoing

Decorating voucher scheme: A soft market testing exercise has been carried out and a pilot scheme has been done. Unfortunately this didn't deliver the results we had hoped for, it was a 'paint pack' scheme but the feedback from the tenants was negative, we will now start to re procure a voucher scheme. The current B&Q scheme will continue until a new scheme is operational.

The Stores review is ongoing and not expected to go live until April 2019. This will potentially change the way materials are delivered in future, we will know more and if there is likely to be an impact on voids in the coming months.

4. Details of Scrutiny

This report is to update members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

None sought

5.2 Legal implications

None sought

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

None sought

5.4 Equalities Implications

None sought

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

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7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A, Void Performance

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

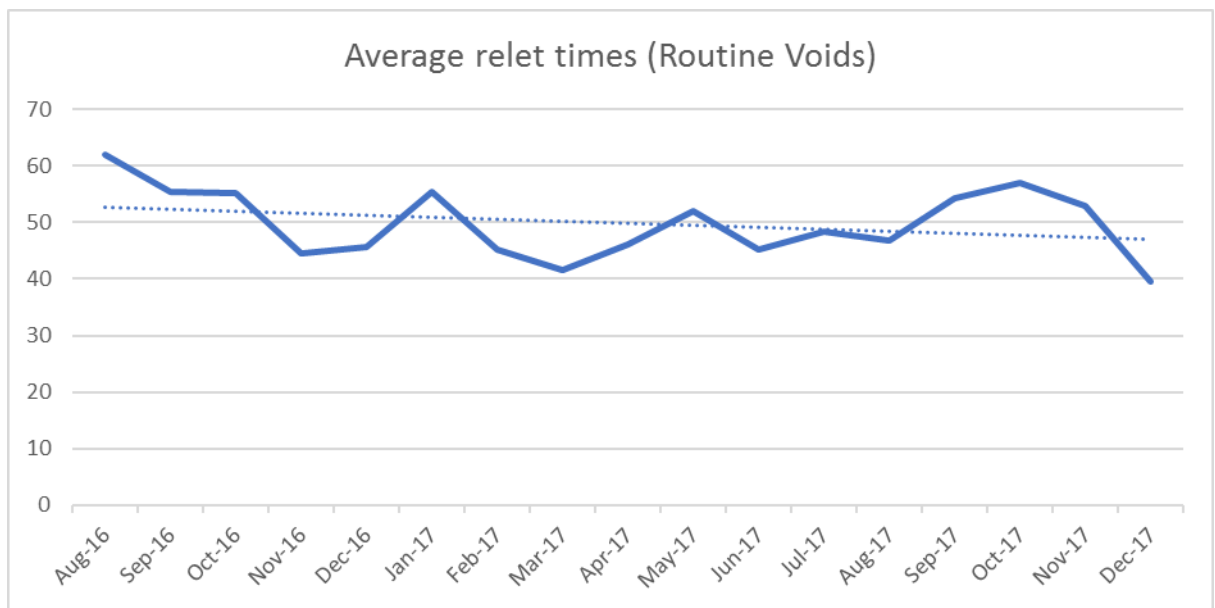
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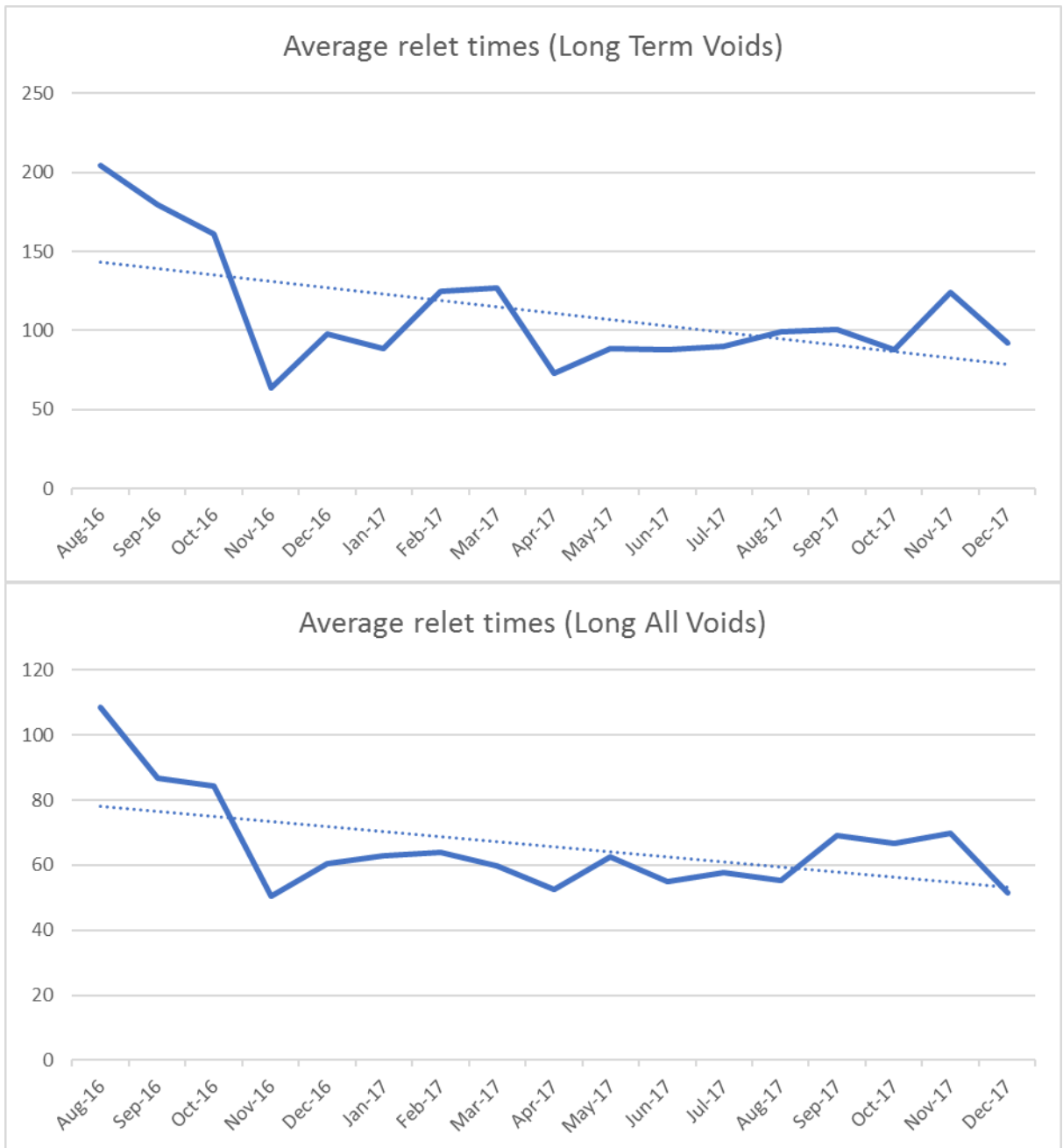
9. Is this a “key decision”?

No

Appendix 1

Void Performance since April 2016





Report to Housing Scrutiny Commission

Responsive Housing Repairs Performance Report

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 12th March 2018

Lead Assistant Mayor: Councillor Connelly

Lead director: Chris Burgin



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Ian Craig, Head of Service
- Author contact details: Ext 37 5211
- Report version number: v 1

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Division's performance on the completion of responsive repairs to council properties.
- 1.2 The report will also provide a final update about the implementation of service changes reported to the Housing Scrutiny commission and agreed by the Executive in February 2016.

2. Summary

- 2.1 In 2017-18 a total of 72,691 repairs have been completed .
- 2.2 Over 85.9% of these repairs were completed within the target time and 89% of repairs undertaken have been completed on the first visit.
- 2.3 As at January 2018 a total of 825 jobs remaining outstanding and out of category.
- 2.3 Tenant complaints about the repairs service have continued to reduce now standing at 0.3% .
- 2.4 A total of 25 Apprentices coming out of their apprenticeship in September 2017 have been successful in gaining a permanent post within the craft workers structure filling a number of existing vacancies held to create this opportunity.
- 2.5 The Repairs service continues to challenge its performance and operating practices and how services are provided. In 2018/19 the Mobile working system will be replaced and an improved online repairs reporting system is being developed.

3. Responsive Repairs Performance

- 3.1 Four key indicators evaluate the success of the repairs service. These are:

- Percentage of Day to Day repairs carried out within target time
- Number of Repairs which are outstanding and out of category
- Percentage of repairs completed on first visit
- Percentage of repairs which lead to a complaint

More detailed performance information against each is set out in 3.2 to 3.5 of this report.

3.2 Percentage of Day to Day repairs carried out within target time

Over 85.9% of repairs in 2017 were completed within target time which continues to improve towards the target of 95%.

3.3 Number of Repairs which are outstanding and out of category

The number of outstanding repairs out of category, at year end Jan 2018 stood at 825 .

This figure continues to reduce month-on-month now that the benefits of the review are being realised, with further improvement expected for 2018-19. A break down by area is provided in Appendix 2.

3.4 Percentage of repairs completed on first visit

Performance in relation to jobs completed at first visit during 2017-18 was 89.% This just fall's short of meeting the target of 90%.

Several operational challenges were identified around reaching this target during the review period. Most of these issues have been addressed, however there are still improvements to reach in achieving this target. These include better planning of work and rigorous challenges to ensure that we maximise completion on first visits. This situation is being monitored and a report is being presented to the Assistant City Major on the progress.

3.5 Percentage of repairs which lead to a complaint

Tenant's complaints about the repairs service have matched the significant reduction in historic outstanding jobs and these have remained consistently low in 2017-18.

The latest target set for 2018-19 was to achieve below 1%; to date performance at December 2017 performance is currently 0.3% which remains below and better than target.

4. Service Changes

4.1 As reported back in February 2016, the Executive had agreed four key service changes after consideration by our tenants and the Housing Scrutiny Commission. These were:

- Improved communications with tenants
- Increase the range of small repair jobs that are the tenant's responsibility
- To provide the normal repairs service between Monday and Friday 8am - 4pm
- Reclassify repairs and their timescales

A further update on progress is provided from 4.2 to 4.5.

4.2 Communication

Introduction of online reporting, tenants selecting appointments for jobs and satisfaction

monitoring are yet to be introduced.

To achieve the introduction of online reporting it is necessary to change the existing mobile working solution. This work is currently in progress; it is a very large piece of work and will take some time to successfully implement. It is anticipated that a new mobile working solution will be implemented in 2018, which is still the case, however it can be noted that the contract with the new provider has been signed.

This implementation will enable much more effective online services for the repairs service, including tenants booking their own repairs alongside pictorial repairs related information to aid tenants select the correct repair details.

Electronic customer satisfaction monitoring was introduced in August 2017. This has enable more timely satisfaction data to be reported and acted upon. The aim ultimately is to have in-day satisfaction monitoring reports to line managers for action to be taken to resolve issues quickly; this is due to be in place by March 2018

4.3 Tenant Responsibilities

As reported in February 2017 this change was implemented, and to date there has not been any significant reaction or complaints with the revised range of small jobs repairs that are a tenant's responsibility.

4.4 Repairs Service Hours

The service continues to operate from 8am to 4pm Monday to Thursday & 8.00am to 3.30pm Friday, with an out of hour's emergency repairs service operating at all other times.

4.5 Reclassifying Repairs and timescales

As reported in 2017 this approved change had been introduced since April 2015. It has enabled the operational service to prioritise emergency and routine repairs ahead of batched repairs. Further work in creating programmed and planned maintenance will help deliver a more strategic and efficient service. To date this has been received positively.

5. Responsive and Planned Repairs Improvement Project update

5.1 The continued focus of this Project since last reporting to the commission in Feb 2017 has been to continue in striving to deliver on the commitments to tenants and the commission to meet the existing service offer and have no responsive repair jobs outside of this service offer. The service has made significant strides towards achieving this.

5.2 The new Northgate system has now been running since January 2016, the next stage for day to day repairs is to introduce channel shift to provide tenants the opportunity to make their own arrangements in appointing repair work at their property. This will improve services for tenants, specifically improving communication with tenants and flexibility around appointments. Work started in January 18.

- 5.3 There are still issues regarding the software for planning works which has created difficulties for the service which are being addressed and managed and have affected some job recording completions. These are in the process of being resolved with the purchase of new updated hand-held device and new Mobile software being procured (6.3).
- 5.4 Vehicle trackers have bought more effective information on good driving behaviour and efficient fuel use. This continues to assist in better use of Housing vehicles in reducing expenditure on fuel, as well as reducing repairs and maintenance of the fleet. In addition, it has allowed better planning and use of resources.
- 5.5 Skills development plans have been completed, or are in progress for all housing staff following agreed development plans and training needs to help craft workers to undertaking their role more effectively and completing more jobs first visit.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Channel shift - The introduction of online booking of appointments will enable tenants to book an appointment online directly and to choose a suitable appointment slot.
- 6.2 The service is still driving forward with improvements to bring about better service performance and ownership within the workforce.
- 6.3. The service is working to procure a new Mobile working solution. There is also an ongoing programme of hardware replacement involving the replacement of hand held PDAs/Tablets.
- 6.4 Other ongoing service and operational improvements continue. These are focused around, improving our operating processes in being Customer focused and flexible to the tenants needs.
- Enhancing communications around materials, deliveries to homes so our tenants understand what is happening all the time in the repairs process.
 - We also continue to challenge our fleet usage to make sure we are using it effectively and challenge our supply and delivery of materials to the Housing Service as part of a review under the Corporate Technical Services Review.
 - The service is running a pilot with regard to delivery of glass from our supplier to help speed up our response on Glazing.
 - Vehicles are being fitted with more modern internal racking to ensure that storage in vehicles is maximised and materials are available to complete as many repairs first time.
 - A managed stores service that provides materials for repair works is being procured during 2018-19
- 6.5 To establish programme and planned work, making the service more efficient and effective allowing early notification of works being carried out to tenants and reducing ad-hoc responsive repairs. Work has started on communal areas.

9. Background information and other papers:

10. Summary of appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Project key Performance Indicators
- Appendix 2 - Number of Repairs which are outstanding and out of Category by Area

11. Is this a “key decision”?

No

Appendix 1 – Key Performance Indicators

Measure	Previous Years		Target	YTD Jan 18
	2015/16	2016/17		
Percentage of Day-to-Day Repairs Carried Out Within Target Time	90.7%	84.3%	95.0%	85.9%
Number of Outstanding Repairs That Are Out of Category	789	1,851 (1,418 without gas)	0	825 (657 without gas)
Percentage of Repairs Completed on First Visit	78.2%	89.8%	90.0%	89.0%
Number of Repairs Related Complaints	670	416	Not Set	219
Percentage of Repairs Which Lead to a Complaint	0.65%	0.45%	1.00%	0.30%

Appendix 2 – Number of Repairs which are outstanding and out of Category by Area

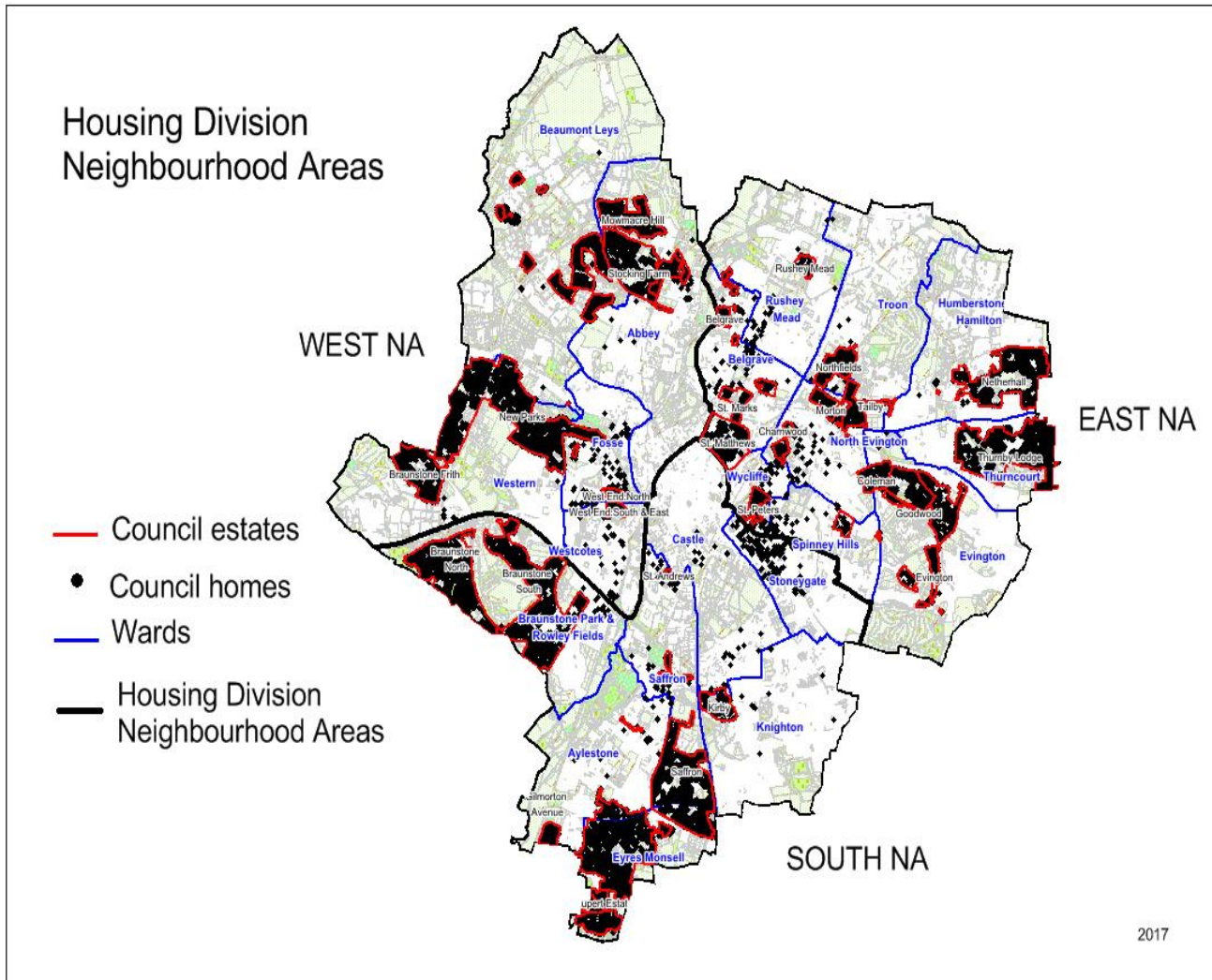
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Repairs Manager 1 - Rob Pallatt												
Count	799	477	410	465	474	374	419	512	449	399		
Repairs Manager 2 - Tony Waterfield												
Count	513	382	263	221	194	158	150	133	172	232		
Repairs Manager 3 - Aidy Farmer												
Count	31	6	9	83	55	25	24	25	6	26		

Suki Supria Head of Service

Ellen Watts, Marie Murray and
Nick Griffiths
District Managers

District Management

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Tenancy Management Roles

- Primary Housing roles are :
- District Managers - Strategic oversight of area and complex case Management
- ¹/₆• Team Leaders – Operational Management and supervision of staff to deliver services
- Neighbourhood Housing Officers –patch management and daily case management
- Assistant NHO – fire inspection and assisting NHO

Priorities

- Tenancy Management and dealing with customer enquiries, tenancy changes/and enforcement
- Undertaking Welfare visits to the most vulnerable tenants and engaging with difficult to reach tenants
- Estate Management, communal inspections
- Dealing with Anti Social Behaviour , Harassment and Domestic Violence cases
- Improving the estates and environment. Environmental Budget (£750,000)
- Fire Safety inspections and arranging specified works
- Inspecting communal cleaning standards are maintained
- Working with agencies , support groups, ward councillors, police and TARAs to support tenancies and improve the environment
- Leaseholder support

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Leicester
City Council

Challenges

- The need to deliver more efficient front line services
- Impact of the welfare reform changes .
- Vulnerability and tenancy sustainment Introduction of Universal credit and the need for tenants to manage own monies
- 121 • TNS programme being rolled across the City has this has introduced changes in the way we deliver front line services
- Pressures on other service areas that have had reductions in funding and the impact on housing
- Flexible tenancies –challenges remain outstanding

Service Actions

- To develop action plans to support and sustain tenancies or provide suitable alternative accommodation
- To focus on more joined up working and integrated services with the NHS , Adult Social Care , GPs and agencies to fully support tenants within their home
- To visit tenancies to support changes of occupation, tenure and detect and investigate fraud
- To tackle anti social behaviour on our estates and deal with perpetrators
- To have a planned approach to managing and inspecting communal areas , landscaped areas and buildings to ensure compliance with regulations as well as maintain high standards
- To identify and agree with Ward Councillors and local people improvement schemes to be undertaken through the Environmental budget or other capital programmes.

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Leicester
City Council

Key Events

- Tower Block programme . Refurbishment of Framland House , Clipstone House ,Gordon House and now Maxfield House. GH all tenants are now back and MH is now vacant
- Welfare visits over 1176 action plans recorded so far
- Estate Wardens duties and roles have been reconfigured
- Conditions of Tenancy is currently being reviewed and is out for consultation
- Environmental budget – 17/18 approximately 45% of the budget (£750,000) has been spent so far. Schemes for 18/19 have been provisionally agreed

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Leicester
City Council

Questions



Report for Housing Scrutiny Commission

ASB Performance

Housing Scrutiny Commission: March 2018
Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: all
- Report author: Suki Supria
- Author contact details: 37 51 25
- Report version number: V3

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the current performance of Housing Services in managing and dealing with reports of Anti- Social Behaviour (ASB) on our Council Housing estates. The vast majority of these involve council tenants but can also involve leaseholders and private owners if the dispute is with a council tenant.
- 1.2 Reports of ASB can be made to Leicester City Council by a tenant or a third party that has been subjected to acts of ASB or has witnessed such acts.
- 1.3 ASB within Housing is currently managed by the Crime Reduction Anti -Social Behaviour Unit (CRASBU) and Tenancy Management depending on the severity of the case.
- 1.4 The number of ASB cases reported in the financial year 2016 -2017 was 724. An average of approximately 60 cases reported cases per month.
- 1.5 The number of ASB cases reported from April 2017 to December 2017 is 663. An average of approximately 73 cases per month.

2. Recommendations.

- To note the content of the report.

3. Supporting information:

- 3.1 Leicester City Council will pursue action against a tenant if they commit acts of ASB against other tenants, council staff and other parties including contractors This is contained and defined in the conditions of tenancy and various housing legislation.
- 3.2 The conditions of tenancy outline all the obligations that the tenant has when they sign for a council tenancy. Tenants will sign for a tenancy agreement with Leicester City Council (LCC) and agree to these conditions of tenancy. Any breach in these conditions will be dealt with accordingly and can ultimately result in a tenant losing their home (being evicted).
- 3.3 Acts of ASB (not an exhaustive list) can include the following:

- * General Nuisance
- * Harassment of other tenants and other people
- * Direct and indirect discrimination including victimisation
- * Domestic abuse including domestic violence
- * Damage or graffiti to the property
- * Noise Nuisance
- * Criminal activity
- * Drug dealing
- * Behaviour of friends and family in the householder

3.4 If we receive a report of ASB, this will usually be investigated initially by the Housing Officer and the appropriate action will be taken against the perpetrator if it is reasonable and that the acts of ASB can be proven to have occurred. An incremental approach is adopted in terms of the action that is usually taken against a tenant.

3.5 The appropriate action that can be taken against a tenant can include the following:

- Issuing warnings to ensure the ASB stops and the behaviour of the tenant improves or is modified.
- Obtain an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC). This is a voluntary agreement that is jointly agreed by LCC and the tenant. This document must be signed by the tenant outlining and agreeing to the kind of behaviour that is acceptable and now required for them to continue residing in an LCC tenancy.
- Serve a Notice of Possession Proceedings against a tenant This is the first stage if any litigation action is to be taken against the tenant. This also allows the tenant one final opportunity to stop and resolve the ASB before the case proceeds to the County Court for resolution. Failure to resolve the ASB can lead to an application being made to the County Court to consider possession proceedings against the tenant.
- Obtain an injunction in the Magistrates Court to stop the ASB or a specify act that is causing significant concern. A breach of an injunction can usually result in a heavy fine or even imprisonment.
- For acts of Noise Nuisance, the Noise Nuisance Team also have powers to seize equipment.
- Suspended Possession Order. This is an order obtained in County to stop and reduce the ASB in specify terms and possession of dwelling has been suspended as long as the terms of the order are compiled with.

- Possession Order. This is an order to seek possession of the dwelling and is usually reserved for very serious of ASB.
 - Closure Order. This can be taken by the Police and this will mean that the dwelling will be closed for a fixed term and no one can reside in the dwelling during this period.
- 3.6 There is currently arrangements in place that serious cases of ASB are referred to CrASBU (Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit) by Housing Officers. They will then investigate the case, work in partnership with other agencies and decide on the most appropriate action to take to reduce the ASB. CrASBU (formerly LASBU)) deals with complex/ high risk Anti-Social Behaviour cases.
- 3.7 For information, high level ASB matters include those cases that involve those with mental ill health, vulnerability, drug and substance mis-use, personal threat, high community impact/tension, families with complex histories and needs, high risk, serious and violent/sexual offenders, high risk victims or witnesses or any combination of these matters which require multi-agency co-ordination, management and progression.
- 3.8 The number of ASB cases reported in the financial year 2016 to 2017 was 724. An average of 60 cases reported cases per month. The number of ASB cases reported from April 2017 to December 2017 is 663, an average of 73 cases per month. If this trend continues we are looking at 882 cases for this financial year. This would indicate an increase of 158 reported cases from the previous financial year.
- 3.9 Neighbour disputes are the highest type of ASB that is reported. It represents nearly 46% of all reported ASB cases. ASB relating to animals and environmental issues is the least reported, and represents 1% of all reported cases.
- 3.10 Nosie Nuisance is also an area where we have high levels of ASB that is reported. This represents 19% of ASB cases that are reported in this financial year. We have a Nosie Nuisance Team that will monitor and record noise and have powers to seize equipment
- 3.11 The area with the highest amount of ASB is the New Parks area. This represents 25 % of all reported ASB cases. The New Parks area currently has 2,273 dwellings which represents 10.8 % of the total Council Housing stock.
- 3.12 The area with the lowest level of reported ASB is the Saffron area. This represents a mere 3% of all reported cases. The Saffron area currently has 1443 dwellings which represents 6.9% of the total Council Housing stock.
- 3.13 Examples of ASB cases that escalate to legal action include cases where we had had severe threats made to neighbours and the public including violence, criminal behaviour, dealing in drugs from the dwelling and cases where there has been a major disruption to the community
- 3.14 Severe ASB cases are also discussed with the Police and the normal process is that these will be discussed the JAG (Joint Action Group). Agreement is reached on the best way to deal with these cases. This can include action from the Police or action from Housing to take legal proceedings or a combination of both. Certain serious crime investigations which involve ASB can also involve Housing and CRASBU working in conjunction with the Police

to deal with the problem in a planned and measured way.,

3.15 Also severe ASB cases that are likely to have a high community impact/tension, families with complex histories and needs, high risk, serious and violent/sexual offenders, high risk victims or witnesses or any combination of these matters which require multi-agency co-ordination, management and progression. These cases are dealt in a multi-agency approach and chaired by the 2 Heads of Service from CRASBU and Tenancy Management

3.8 Please see Appendix 1 for the performance data on ASB recoded on Northgate.

3.9 The number of Legal sanctions obtained from 01.01.2017 – 31.08.2017 is as below.

Type of Sanctions	Number
Notice of Possession Proceedings	7
Referrals from Housing to LASBU/CrASBU (This includes the number of referrals and the number of advice cases where they have required over 10-100 hours of Officer time)	53
Evictions (Actual)	1
Tenancy Demotions	2
Suspended Possession Orders	5
Injunctions	2
Undertaking	2
Injunction Breach	3
Irresolvable case management/review/co-ordination	2

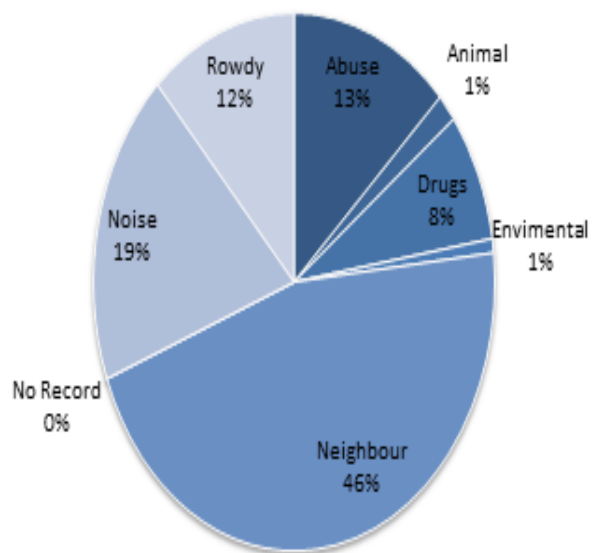


ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REPORTING

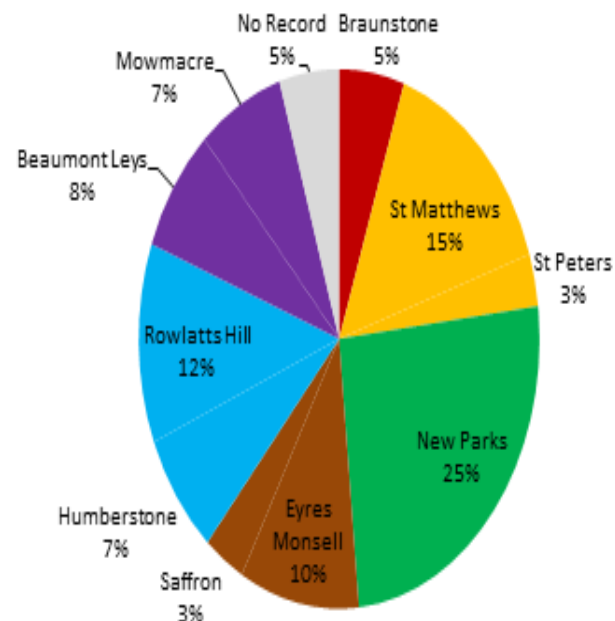
Total ASB Cases Reported													
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	YTD
2016-17	49	41	47	56	62	92	65	70	64	56	41	81	724
2017-18	73	82	74	95	83	68	67	83	38				663

Cases That Escalated To Perpetrator Path													
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	YTD
2016-17	28	32	48	56	59	71	54	72	43	48	62	61	634
2017-18	65	72	58	68	60	46	39	53	33				494

ASB By Type



ASB By Area



Total ASB Cases Reported

By Housing Office

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	YTD
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Beaumont Leys

2016-17	2	8	6	12	10	6	6	6	4	5	3	10	78
2017-18	4	4	5	10	9	4	2	5	3				46

Mowmacre

2016-17	9	2	3	6	3	3	3	5	2	4	4	6	50
2017-18	2	8	4	4	6	6	4	7	4				45

New Parks

2016-17	17	8	17	14	19	28	20	22	16	16	9	7	193
2017-18	21	29	20	16	21	20	16	18	7				168

West Total 2017-18

259

Humberstone

2016-17		1	1	3	4	7	7	3	17	6	2	10	61
2017-18	5	3	6	8	4		8	5	8				47

Rowlatts Hill

2016-17	5	8	4	7	1	10	8	9	6	8	9	5	80
2017-18	9	7	6	16	12	8	9	10	1				78

St Matthews

2016-17	1		1		1	4		2	2	4	2	8	25
2017-18	8	8	12	19	7	8	8	10	3				83

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St Peters													
2016-17	1		1		3	2	1	4	4	1	4	3	24
2017-18	2		4	4	4	1	2		1				18
												East Total 2017-18	226

Braunstone													
2016-17	7	1	5	4	4	10	9	8	4	6	4	13	75
2017-18	3	7	5	8	5	3	4	12	1				48

Eyres Monsell													
2016-17	4	7	5	4	11	18	7	8	2	4	2	8	80
2017-18	8	8	6	6	9	9	4	12	6				68

Saffron													
2016-17	2	4	3	5	5	3	4	3	7	2	1	7	46
2017-18	4	2	6	2	4	5	5	3	3				34
												South Total 2017-18	150

Per ASB Type

ASB Types are recorded in Northgate only down the 'Victim' path and only once an interview has been completed. The following tables take their data only from Business Actions where these are both true. The total number of jobs meeting this criteria in the current reporting year is: 517

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	YTD
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Abuse	Abusive or Threatening Behaviour												
2016-17	1	4	7	11	9	11	6	7	10	6	2	4	78
2017-18	7	13	6	6	13	5	6	5	1				62

Animal		Animal Nuisance											
2016-17	2			2	1	3		4		2		5	19
2017-18			2		2	1	2	1					8

Drugs		Drug Dealing / Substance Misuse											
2016-17	1		1		3	1	3	1	1	2	3	1	17
2017-18	3	6	4	2	6	6	5	4	1				37

Envimental		Environmental Damage											
2016-17	1	1		3	1				2	2	2		12
2017-18	1		1	1					1				4

Neighbour		Issue With Neighbour											
2016-17	9	14	10	18	16	35	33	21	14	14	15	37	236
2017-18	29	29	30	44	18	21	22	22	6				221

Noise		Noise											
2016-17	23	16	18	7	12	16	14	20	13	13	8	19	179
2017-18	10	13	10	17	18	7	6	7	2				90

Rowdy		Rowdy or Inconsiderate Behaviour											
2016-17	3	2	5	3	1	10	2	4	6	2	2	2	42
2017-18	10	8	8	4	7	6	9	5					57

		Other											
2016-17	1	3	1	4	4	4	2	2	11	2	2	5	41
2017-18	3	2	3	8	9	4	5	3	1				38

2016-17	624
2017-18	517
Total	1141

By ASB Type, By Housing Office

Figures below are for the financial year to date.

Type	Braunstone	St Matthews	St Peters	New Parks	Eyres Monsell	Saffron	Humberstone	Rowlatts Hill	Beaumont Leys	Mowmacre	No Record	Total
Abuse	4	5	2	19	5	1	1	14	5	4	2	62
Animal		2			3		1	2				8
Drugs		4		21	6	1		1		3	1	37
Envimental			1	1				2				4
Neighbour	10	35	8	37	20	11	26	16	24	17	15	219
No Record												
Noise	10	16	3	24	8	3	2	13	4	5	2	90
Rowdy	1	8	1	19	4		5	9	3	4	3	57
Total	25	70	15	121	46	16	35	57	36	33	23	477

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The ASB report can be misleading in places, as this is tied in to how Northgate records ASB cases in the first place. 'Cases by type' is inconsistent with 'cases reported' because a type is not recorded until halfway through the process, so the sum of case types will always be consistently lower than the sum of cases reported.

We also have a number of records with no address data and hence no housing office area because of the way they're logged.

Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum Action and Decision Log

18th January 2018

Forum members present: Wendy Biddles (Chair), Joe Carroll (Vice Chair), Peter Hookway, Gwen Clifford, Redvers Forryan, Paresh Shah

Also attended: Bharat Keshwala, Jennifer Kenderine, Dipesh Joshi and Tim Draper.

Apologies: Janet Statham, Jean Williams, Ann Green, Philip Allen, Jamal Abdulla, May Jones.

No.	Action item	Progress
1.	Welcome and Action Log feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Draper gave feedback on the six points raised from the previous meeting; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regarding Philip Allen's repair request for the communal roof leak to his block. It was confirmed that the repair work is arranged for completion by the end of today (18th January 2018). Phil to come back to us if it hasn't. 2. Concerning Ann Green's 'issue' surrounding the use of Nescafe coffee at our meetings. The caterers have agreed to supply us with a 'Fairtrade' brand of coffee. 3. Gwen Clifford confirmed that she now had Andy East's direct telephone number for the Rowlatt's Hill Office. Gwen did confirm that there still issues with using the council's voice recognition system eg. The switch board puts you through to the person you wish to speak too, but they can't hear you. This was tested at today's meeting. Tim said he will investigate this further.

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Tim confirmed that he has contacted Housing Options regarding the lack of response to Phil's emails, sent back in October and November 2017. It was confirmed that Housing Options did get back to the applicant and it was advised by them that they needed to bid regularly on the system to consider a move. 5. In relation to Jamal's enquiry regarding the outstanding repairs at the housing development in Rowlatt's Hill. Andy East (Neighbourhood Team Leader) confirmed that the homes are now past the years 'snagging' period and therefore, any repairs required must be reported in the same way as we do at present. 6. Jeans concerns regarding the lack of supply of heating and hot water at Chester Road, when the district heating is being repaired. Tim confirmed that he had contacted Rob Webster (Gas Servicing Manager) and Neal Hackett (Gas Team Leader) and they informed him that immersion heaters were installed in all properties. Unfortunately, there was a delay specifically at 93 Chester Road, but this matter has now been resolved.
2.	Local Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh explained that the standard agenda item 'Local Issues' discussed at our meetings, should be focussed around specific issues in their local areas. Issues could be about; the community, its estates, security, crime level, anti-social behaviour, communal cleaning etc. We feel that a forum member living in our estates would be most suitable to tell us honestly how they see things working in their areas. Too often, are members using this time to bring their own personal issues to the table to seek resolution.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendy mentioned about the broken gates on her road. Tim said he will again investigate and see if a repair date has been made. • Peter Hookway raised an issue about dumped and untaxed vehicles in Beaumont Leys. Josh explained the process of reporting abandoned cars and if untaxed they can be removed.
3.	Update on Universal Credit	<p>Bharat Keshwala (Partnership Manager at Job Centre Plus) and Jennifer Kenderine (Manager at Job Centre Plus) attended the meeting to give the forum an update on the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in Leicester.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bharat explained to the forum how Universal Credit is being set-up and how it will be managed and run from the Department of Work and Pensions. He gave the date for the actual roll out of UC in Leicester. • Members were shown how forms are to be completed on-line and what process is involved.
4.	Annual Report	<p>Following the publication of the 2018 Annual Report for Tenants & Leaseholders, a copy was handed out to every member present.</p> <p>The report can also be accessed via the following URL link; https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/184277/tenants-and-leaseholders-annual-report-2017.pdf</p>
5.	National Social Tenant Engagement Survey	<p>Tim informed members that following the recent meeting that he, the Chair and the Vice Chair attended in Nottingham last year. Where Alok Sharma (Minister of State for Housing) was present</p>

		<p>and came to talk to social housing tenants. A feedback questionnaire has now been devised and members of the forum were asked to complete during this session. Tim handed out the questionnaire and he and Josh assisted members to complete them individually. It was agreed that Tim will enter the information from their questionnaires onto the government website, as these are where the information is being recorded.</p>
6.	Scrutiny planning for 2018	<p>Josh informed the forum that it is time to plan a programme for this year. Members were asked to have a think about who they want to invite and why. It was also agreed that before we invite any guest speaker/ service area representative in future, we should plan a set of questions beforehand.</p> <p>The following list was compiled;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutiny of Homelessness, especially regarding the Homeless Reduction Act. 2. Repairs with a special request to speak with Ian Craig, Head of Service. 3. Voids, especially regarding the length of time taken to let properties. 4. Presentations from the District Team Leaders. 5. Highways and Parking. 6. Grass Cutting. 7. Re-visit from CrASBU team with special reference to drug abuse. 8. A presentation from a beat policeman to chat about present day issues in the city. 9. A presentation and information regarding Domestic Violence. <p>It was agreed that we discuss this item again at the next meeting</p>

		and get further suggestions from members who were not present here today.
7.	Any Other Business & Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the last Housing Scrutiny Commission meeting at city hall. Both Cllr Cank and Cllr Alfonzo (Chair and Vice-chair) have expressed an interest to attend our meetings in future. Members agreed that the Councillors will be invited as necessary and will be only present as observers and will only be asked for any comments on the meeting's agenda. • No other AOB points was raised.
Next meeting date:		Date: 22nd March 2018 Venue: Town Hall Meeting Room (1.24)

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18			
MEETING DATE	MEETING ITEMS	LEAD OFFICER	ACTION AGREED
<p>Meeting Date 10th July 2017</p> <p>Agenda Date: 14th June 2017</p> <p>Papers despatch: 29th June 2017</p>	<p>Goscote House – future use</p> <p>Rent Arrears Qtr 4 plus update</p> <p>District Managers’ presentation – 12 month changes and challenges</p> <p>Fire safety update</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Nick Griffiths</p> <p>Chris Burgin</p>	
<p>Meeting Date 14th August 2017</p> <p>Agenda Date: 16th July 2017</p> <p>Papers despatch: 3rd August 2017</p>	<p>Feedback from members’ task group voids report</p> <p>Who Gets Social Housing</p> <p>Mutual Exchange Under/Over occupation pilot update</p> <p>Repairs Service performance report</p> <p>Tenants’ Forum feedback</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Ian Craig</p> <p>Jerry Connolly</p>	
<p>Meeting Date 18th September 2017</p> <p>Agenda Date: 30th August</p> <p>Papers despatch: 7th September 2017</p>	<p>Rent Arrears Q1 performance report</p> <p>Channel Shift & Northgate update</p> <p>Homeless draft Strategy (2018 – 2023)</p> <p>TNS Central and East – Final Proposals</p> <p>Update on tower block fire incidents</p>	<p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Charlotte McGraw</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Shilen Pattni / Lee Warner</p> <p>Chris Burgin</p>	

<p>Meeting Date 20th November 2017</p> <p>Agenda Date: 8th November 2017</p> <p>Papers despatch: 10th November 2017</p>	<p>Voids performance report</p> <p>Empty Homes report</p> <p>Technical Services Programme update</p> <p>HRA Savings – HTP3 Update including a breakdown of existing budget contributions, including HRA contribution to general funds.</p> <p>House Building update including Affordable Housing</p> <p>Government funding response: Sprinkler programme update</p> <p>Tenant Forum action log</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Phil Davison</p> <p>Chris Burgin</p> <p>Simon Nichols</p> <p>Chris Burgin</p>	<p>To reference normal, long term and all voids; also action on voids due to tenants' actions (minute 21: 14th August 2017)</p>
<p>Special Meeting Date 18th December 2017</p> <p>Papers despatch: 7th December 2017</p>	<p>HRA Budget Report</p>	<p>Chris Burgin</p>	
<p>Meeting Date 15th January 2018</p> <p>Agenda Date: 18th December 2017 (4.30 pm: room 3.12)</p> <p>Papers despatch: 4th January 2018</p>	<p>Rent Arrears Q2</p> <p>Customer Services performance report</p> <p>Universal Credit</p> <p>Report on consultation in relation to Homelessness strategy</p>	<p>Zenab Valli</p> <p>Alison Musgrove</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p>	

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<p>Meeting Date 12th March 2018</p> <p>Agenda Date: 21st February 2018</p> <p>Papers despatch: 1st March 2018</p>	<p>Goscote House project</p> <p>Voids performance report</p> <p>Repairs performance report</p> <p>District Performance & Priorities report (covering all 3 areas)</p> <p>ASB Service review</p> <p>Tenants forum action notes</p>	<p>Chris Burgin</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Ian Craig</p> <p>Suki Supria</p> <p>Suki Supria</p> <p>Tim Draper</p>	
<p>To be allocated 2017/18</p> <p>145</p>	<p>Customer Service Centre Update</p> <p>Homeless Service performance report</p> <p>Housing & Planning Act – Flexible tenancies</p> <p>Decorating Allowance Scheme</p> <p>Repairs Service – Jobs not completed first visit (potential Scrutiny task group)</p> <p>Private landlords (Register/Licencing Scheme) – (potential visit and meeting with team)</p> <p>Conditions of Tenancy – consultation</p> <p>Paint packs pilot and procurement</p> <p>Sprinkler installation programme</p> <p>Hard to let sheltered housing</p>	<p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Ian Craig</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p>	

