

EXECUTIVE – 14 SEPTEMBER 2017

PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR ACCESS SCHEME POLICY

Executive Summary

This report seeks approval of an Executive recommendation to Council of a Policy on how the Council intends to assist homeless households access accommodation in the private rented sector to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Across Woking, the demand for housing is high, and where households present themselves to the Council as homeless the Council is under a duty in certain circumstances to provide temporary accommodation while permanent accommodation is secured.

For some households there is likely to be a considerable delay between presenting as homeless and being offered social housing. Given the negative health and well-being impacts of living in temporary accommodation, it is often appropriate for the Council to assist households to secure a private rented tenancy.

Many homeless households are in financial hardship and are often in receipt of housing benefit to support their housing costs and in many cases are unable to provide the necessary deposits and other charges that are currently expected before being accepted as a private tenant. In these cases, the Council is able to assist through the use of deposit bonds, where the Council provides security in lieu of a cash deposit.

There is also a significant disparity between housing benefit levels and market private rents in Woking, and the proposed use of financial incentives for private landlords is a mechanism to bridge the gap and secure a private tenancy at a housing benefit rent level.

Where a household is supported to secure a private tenancy, the use of financial incentives reduces the Council's expenditure in respect of temporary accommodation, and the reduction in length of stay in temporary accommodation reduces the negative consequences associated with homelessness.

Reasons for Decision

The adoption of a policy ensures that the Council acts consistently in providing incentives and other activities to procure private rented accommodation for homeless households. It also provides private landlords with transparent information on how the Council intends to work with them in helping homeless households secure accommodation and assists in marketing the Council's schemes to private landlords.

The policy also ensures that the Council's offer to private landlords is competitive within the marketplace and that wherever possible homes across the Borough are secured for local families rather than homeless households from other local authority areas.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND to Council That

- i) the Private Rented Sector Access Scheme Policy, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be adopted;
- ii) the Strategic Director for Housing be delegated authority to agree leases with private landlords for accommodation to be used in accordance with the Policy;
- iii) the Strategic Director for Housing be delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Policy (specifically including changes to the scope and level of incentives) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder;
- iv) the Council's Allocation Policy be amended such that existing tenants accommodated through the Council's existing Private Rented Sector Access schemes cease to be eligible to apply for the Council's Housing Register after 31 March 2018; and
- v) the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant be used to provide the additional £95k budget provision required to deliver the Let's Rent Connect scheme and £10k for the Let's Rent Complete scheme.

This item will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to the Council.

Background Papers:

Sustainability Impact Assessment
Equalities Impact Assessment

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Date Published:

8 September 2017

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Private Rented Access Schemes were established to assist the prevention of homelessness in the Borough. The schemes assist single households and households with dependent children that are threatened with homelessness.
- 1.2 The Council currently has three Private Rented Sector Access Schemes; Bond Scheme, Private Rented Scheme (PRS) and Private Sector Lease Scheme (PSL). The PRS and PSL schemes were established in 1999 and 2002 respectively and the Bond Scheme was established in 2010 to replace the cash rent in advance and deposits. The Private Rented Sector Access Schemes have facilitated over 1,100 new tenancies to date.
- 1.3 The schemes have been reviewed and feedback from the 19 July 2016 Housing Task Group has been used to inform the Policy.
- 1.4 The service has been the subject of an internal audit, and the findings of that process have been included in the draft Policy.
- 1.5 The revised offer has been benchmarked against other Surrey Districts and Boroughs, London Boroughs and Local Government Association good practice.
- 1.6 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, when enacted, will introduce significant changes to the way the Council will be required to respond to homelessness, and while this Policy may need to be adapted at that time, the adoption of this Policy will ensure that the Council has a competitive offer for securing private rented accommodation for homeless households.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In recent years, despite the schemes providing essential tools to respond to homelessness, the popularity of the Council's Private Sector Access Schemes with private landlords has declined in line with the increase in demand for accommodation in the private rented sector across Woking. For example the number of new lettings procured through the schemes reduced from 131 during 2012/13 to 45 in 2015/16 and 38 during 2016/17.
- 2.2 The schemes have therefore become less effective as a tool to prevent homelessness at a time when homelessness is in general terms on the rise.
- 2.3 There are over 1,600 private rented tenants¹ in Woking that receive Local Housing Allowance (i.e. Housing Benefit) to assist with rent payments.
- 2.4 The average market rent for a 2 bed flat in Woking is £1,200² while the Local Housing Allowance is £966 – 20% lower than - which has resulted in private landlords being able to choose tenants that can pay a higher rent.
- 2.5 The Local Housing Allowance rates are currently subject to a four-year freeze which started in April 2016, and therefore it is anticipated that affordability issues for residents in receipt of Housing Benefit will worsen.

¹ West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015, Page 100

² www.home.co.uk – median market rent for a 2 bedroom property in Woking as of 08/08/17 and comparing 232 properties

- 2.6 The 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) indicates that affordability in the lower percentile has worsened in Woking³. This reflects the increase in market rent across the Borough and the difficulties households experience when trying to secure private rented accommodation.
- 2.7 The review of the schemes aims to ensure that the schemes continue to be competitive in the marketplace, and meet the Council's aims to support the prevention and relief of homelessness.
- 2.8 The Policy (Appendix 1) sets out three priorities:
- Priority 1: To prevent homelessness by assisting households threatened with homelessness to secure affordable private rented accommodation.
 - Priority 2: To relieve homelessness by assisting homeless households to secure sustainable long-term private rented accommodation.
 - Priority 3: To improve the health and well-being of homeless households by securing good quality temporary accommodation working with the private rented sector.
- 2.9 It is proposed that the priorities of the Policy are delivered through three schemes, which are in effect revised versions of the current approaches.

3.0 Changes to current schemes

- 3.1 The Council currently operates three private sector access schemes:
- i) The bond scheme – provides a rent deposit bond for residents who are unable to afford a tenancy deposit to secure a private tenancy.
 - ii) The Private Rented Scheme – provides a partially managed lettings service for homeless households.
 - iii) The Private Sector Lease Scheme – secures properties through leases to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- 3.2 The proposed schemes build on the current schemes by offering lease and repair, partially managed and rent deposit bond schemes but with enhanced offers to attract private landlords to work with the Council in an increasingly competitive market.
- 3.3 To improve the presence of the schemes within the marketplace, it is proposed to deliver the schemes under the new Let's Rent brand as:
- i) Let's Rent Core – rent deposit bond scheme;
 - ii) Let's Rent Connect – partially managed lettings service; and
 - iii) Let's Rent Complete – private sector lease scheme.

³ West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015, Page 108

Private Rented Sector Access Scheme Policy

3.4 The table below summarises the proposed changes to the schemes:

	Bond	Let's Rent Core	Private Rented Sector	Let's Rent Connect	Private Sector Lease	Let's Rent Complete
	Rent Deposit Bond		Partially managed		Lease	
	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Free service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicated contact	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advice and assistance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free independent inventory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free dispute resolution	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free gas and electrical certification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tenant affordability assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guaranteed rent in advance	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
Rent paid when vacant	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
Full tenancy management	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
Tenancy sustainment	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Routine tenancy inspections	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Preparation of tenancy paperwork	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accompanied viewings	N/A	x	✓	✓	x	✓
Right to rent checks	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓
Cash Incentive	x	x	x	£2,000	x	x
Cash Deposit	x	x	x	✓	x	x
Free £250 minor repairs	x	x	x	✓	x	x
Rent payment in advance	x	x	1 month	2 months	x	x
Rent deposit bond	6 weeks LHA	✓	£1,500	£2,500	x	x
Scheme length	Minimum 6 month tenancy		Minimum 6 month tenancy	3 year nomination period	Minimum 2 year lease	

4.0 Let's Rent Core

- 4.1 Let's Rent Core provides assistance to households to support the setting up of a new tenancy in the private rented sector. Let's Rent Core is a revised bond scheme.
- 4.2 Let's Rent Core is available to households who have a local connection to Woking and are either homeless or are threatened with homelessness and it is normally the case that the household has identified a private rented sector property that is suitable for their needs but they are unable to afford to enter into the tenancy due to the upfront costs.
- 4.3 Let's Rent Core is available in respect of properties in any location, not only within the Borough.
- 4.4 The Council will provide a 'bond' which replaces the need for a cash rent deposit and provides security to the landlord in respect of rent arrears or property damage etc. There is the option to provide a payment of rent in advance, or a cash deposit in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.5 Let's Rent Core will provide a rent deposit bond to the maximum amount of £2,500 (compared with the current amount of 6 weeks local housing allowance for the property).
- 4.6 The bond will be subject to a periodic review, and may be ended after 2 years and confirmation that the tenancy is successful.
- 4.7 The bond will be subject to an offer of a minimum 6 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy and the Council may discharge the full homeless duty in accordance with the Council's Policy on Discharging the Council's Homelessness Duty into the Private Rented Sector where a 12 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy is agreed.
- 4.8 Once a bond has been activated, the tenant agrees to abide by the terms of the tenancy agreement (e.g. pay rent on time and not to cause damage to the property), and the bond provides security to the landlord in the event that there are problems that result in a loss to the landlord.
- 4.9 Once the tenancy is in place, the household is no longer homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 4.10 During the tenancy the household is considered to be adequately housed, and is no longer eligible to apply to the Council's Housing Register (for social housing). This is a significant change from the Council's current practice, whereby tenants renting privately and in receipt of a bond remain eligible for rehousing through the Housing Register. It is argued that this represents an inequality with other residents who rent privately and are adequately accommodated not being eligible to join the Council's Housing Register.
- 4.11 At the end of the tenancy if there are arrears or the property has been damaged (not including fair wear and tear) the Council will agree a suitable compensation payment with the landlord and the tenant is liable to repay the Council in full.

Let's Rent Connect

- 4.12 Let's Rent Connect is a revised Private Rented Sector scheme which provides the offer of a long-term private rented tenancy to households who have a local connection to Woking and are homeless. The scheme is also available to those households who do not ordinarily have a local connection to Woking, but are fleeing another area (for example in the case of domestic abuse).

Private Rented Sector Access Scheme Policy

- 4.13 Let's Rent Connect enables the Council to end its homelessness duty towards homeless households by way of an offer of private rented sector accommodation in accordance with the Council's Policy on Discharging the Council's Homelessness Duty into the Private Rented Sector.
- 4.14 Let's Rent Connect is available in respect of properties in any location, not only within the Borough.
- 4.15 Let's Rent Connect will have a range of incentives for landlords that will better compete with the market, so that the Council can secure the type and location of accommodation it needs to meet the needs of individual homeless households. It is intended that any additional costs will be partly offset by savings in respect of temporary accommodation costs.
- 4.16 The cash incentive payment to landlords is intended to be non-repayable and to increase the ability for low income households to access private rented accommodation.
- 4.17 Where the Council provides the cash incentive the landlord will be required to provide nomination rights to the Council for a three year period. This means that should the initial tenancy end within the three year period, the Council will secure further tenants to the property.
- 4.18 A Let's Rent Connect offer to a landlord will require the following:
- i) A minimum tenancy term of 12 months;
 - ii) Rent set at no higher than the Local Housing Allowance level;
 - iii) Mains-powered smoke detectors to each floor;
 - iv) Proof of ownership; and
 - v) Valid certification in respect of:
 - Gas safety;
 - Electrical safety; and
 - Energy performance;
- 4.19 Let's Rent Connect will provide the following Council services to landlords:
- i) A Non repayable cash incentive to landlord paid over 2 years with 3 year nomination rights;
 - ii) Rent in Advance of 2 months (one month to be recouped from final Housing Benefit payment);
 - iii) Free safety certificates up to the value of £250 at the start of the tenancy;
 - iv) Let's Rent bond;
 - v) Free independent inventory and dispute resolution;
 - vi) Tenant affordability assessment;
 - vii) An assessment of property condition to ensure there are no health and safety hazards;
 - viii) Access to a dedicated officer to deal with any concerns or queries (for example Housing Benefit);
 - ix) Accompanied viewings;

- x) Preparation of tenancy paperwork;
 - xi) Periodic tenancy sustainment visits tailored to meet the needs of each tenant; and
 - xii) Resettlement to assist with sourcing furniture and setting up utility bills etc.
- 4.20 At the commencement of the tenancy the Council will discharge its homelessness duty to the household as set out above. During the tenancy the household is considered to be adequately housed, and is no longer eligible to apply to the Council's Housing Register (for social housing). Again this is a departure from the current Private Rented Scheme.
- 4.21 Let's Rent Connect properties will ordinarily be provided unfurnished however carpets and other floor coverings will be required in each room, and curtains and blinds will be required to be provided to each window. Where households do not have access to necessary furniture, officers will assist the household to source furniture and in exceptional circumstances a furniture pack will be provided for the household.

Let's Rent Complete

- 4.22 Let's Rent Complete is a revised Private Sector Lease scheme that provides stable short-term temporary accommodation for households who are homeless and in priority need so that they can remain within the local area while permanent accommodation is secured for them.
- 4.23 This scheme does not require agreement from a private landlord to accept a tenant and tenants will be placed on a licence agreement to encourage short lets and fulfil lease obligations to provide vacant possession at lease end.
- 4.24 Let's Rent Complete will have uplifted lease terms that better compete with the market and to enable the Council to secure accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households.
- 4.25 Let's Rent Complete will continue to offer the property owner a guaranteed rent during the lease period as well as a range of other incentives designed to attract property owners to the scheme.
- 4.26 The Let's Rent Complete offer provides property owners with the following:
- i) Full-repairing lease for a minimum 2 year period;
 - ii) Annual lease payment paid in advance equivalent to full rent paid at 90% of the local housing allowance level;
 - iii) 4 month lease break clause;
 - iv) An assessment of property condition to ensure there are no health and safety hazards;
 - v) Guaranteed vacant possession; and
 - vi) Property returned in original condition less fair wear and tear.
- 4.27 The Let's Rent Complete offer requires the following to be present:
- i) Proof of ownership and Buildings Insurance;
 - ii) Mains-powered smoke detectors to each floor;
 - iii) Valid certification in respect of:

- Gas safety;
- Electrical safety; and
- Energy performance.

4.28 Let's Rent Complete properties will ordinarily be provided unfurnished however carpets and other floor coverings will be required in each room, and curtains and blinds will be required to be provided to each window. Where households do not have access to necessary furniture, officers will assist the household to source furniture and in exceptional circumstances a furniture pack will be provided for the household.

Tenancy sustainment

4.29 In order to promote tenancy sustainment and limit claims, an inspection programme is to be implemented for the Let's Rent Connect and Complete tenancies. No inspections will be made to the Let's Rent Core tenancies.

4.30 The inspections allow Officers to assess the condition of the property, report back to the landlord, offer guidance to tenants on their property condition and any action required to minimise a subsequent claim at the end of the tenancy. This is also an opportunity to review rent payments, Housing Benefit claims, and determine if additional support is required for the household.

4.31 Officers negotiate with tenants and landlords wherever possible to sustain a tenancy but also have a duty as a last resort to advise the landlord when they should serve a notice to end a tenancy.

4.32 In order that a tenancy is successful, Officers need the tenant history and support needs prior to viewing a property. A financial assessment is carried out with advice given to reduce debt or change spending where appropriate. Officers also ensure that income is in place prior to tenancy commencement to ensure a Housing Benefit claim can be assessed as quickly as possible due to Housing Benefit being paid to the landlord four-weekly in arrears. This type of assessment is in line with Crisis and National Practitioner Support Service good practice.

5.0 Implementation of the new schemes

5.1 There are no implementation matters to consider in respect of Let's Rent Core. The new terms will apply to new cases following adoption of the new Policy.

5.2 Current tenants benefitting from the bond scheme - although adequately housed and in many cases accommodated in the same property for several years – are eligible to apply to the Council's Housing Register. It is proposed to end this link with effect from 31 March 2018. Existing tenants will remain able to bid through the Council's Hometrak choice based lettings system to secure accommodation through the Housing Register until this date.

5.3 The new terms and conditions relating to Let's Rent Complete will apply to new leases secured following adoption of the Policy. The existing leases within the current Private Sector Leasing scheme will be converted onto Let's Rent Complete at the point of the annual rent review.

5.4 Let's Rent Connect provides the greatest level of change and there will need to be a transitional period to enable existing Private Rented Sector properties convert to Let's Rent Connect.

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- 5.5 Current tenants within the Private Rented Sector (PRS) scheme - although adequately housed and in many cases accommodated in the same property for several years – are eligible to apply to the Council's Housing Register. It is proposed to end this link with effect from 31 March 2018. Existing tenants will remain able to bid through the Council's Hometrak choice based lettings system to secure accommodation through the Housing Register until this date.
- 5.6 Where current PRS scheme tenants secure alternative accommodation the property will cease to be part of the PRS scheme and the landlord will be offered the opportunity to join Let's Rent Connect.
- 5.7 Where a current PRS tenant does not secure alternative accommodation through the Council's Housing Register (or otherwise) before 31 March 2018 the landlord will be provided with 3 months notice of the Council's intention to withdraw the PRS scheme and the property will be passported onto Let's Rent Core.
- 5.8 Where a PRS scheme landlord wishes to transfer their property to join Let's Rent Connect the property will need to be vacant to enable the Council to utilise the accommodation for a homeless household.
- 5.9 The number of properties within the Let's Rent schemes will be limited to match current levels of staffing to ensure that the schemes are delivered professionally and to maximise tenancy sustainment and to reduce the risk of financial loss due to rent deposit bond claims etc.

Marketing

- 5.10 The creation of Let's Rent as a brand provides a greater opportunity for the Council to promote the scheme within the competitive private rented market. Let's Rent links closely to the Council's Let's Talk brand that is used to promote letting agent, landlord and tenant forums.
- 5.11 The proposed schemes are considered competitive within the current market and consequently it is anticipated that additional properties will be procured to support the provision of accommodation for homeless households.

6.0 Implications

Financial

- 6.1 The Let's Rent schemes are intended to provide accommodation for homeless households who are currently largely accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation, Council-owned housing stock used as temporary accommodation, and the current private rented sector access schemes.
- 6.2 The provision of permanent accommodation for homeless households through Let's Rent Connect provides positive health and well-being benefits which represents a social value that cannot be readily monetarised.
- 6.3 During 2015/16 the average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households was 27.5 days. A further stay in temporary accommodation generally followed this period either within the Council's own housing stock (used as temporary accommodation) or through the Private Rented Sector or Private Sector Lease schemes. In some cases this additional period within temporary accommodation lasted years.

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- 6.4 The average nightly cost of providing bed and breakfast accommodation is £85.27 and the average length of stay of 27.5 nights results in a total bed and breakfast cost of £2,345 per household.
- 6.5 The additional cost of providing further temporary accommodation within the Council's housing stock is not readily available, however the reliance on the Council's housing stock reduces the availability of social housing for residents waiting for accommodation through the Council's Housing Register.
- 6.6 Each Let's Rent Connect property provides a three year nomination rights period to the Council for a maximum cost of £2,377 where all incentives are provided (e.g. £2,000 Connect incentive, maximum £250 repairs allowance, gas and electrical certification etc), based on the following assumptions:

	Set scheme level	Maximum scheme level	Fixed costs	% offers requiring incentive	Average cost
Incentive payment	£2,000	N/A	N/A	100%	£2,000
Inventory	N/A	N/A	£102	100%	£102
Minor repairs	N/A	£250	N/A	40%	£100
Gas certification	N/A	N/A	£100	25%	£25
Electrical certification	N/A	N/A	£150	100%	£150
				Total	£2,377

- 6.7 It is proposed to limit Let's Rent Connect to a maximum 40 properties each year, and based on an average cost of £2,377 this would require a budget provision of £95,080.
- 6.8 From 2017/18 the Council will receive a Flexible Homelessness Support Grant of £201k to replace the Government's current Temporary Management Fund grant, and it is proposed that the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant be used to provide the £95k budget provision for Let's Rent Connect. Any future changes to the grant funding may impact the scheme accordingly.
- 6.9 Each Let's Rent Connect nomination will result in the Council discharging its homeless duty to a homeless household and experience in other council areas suggests that in some cases the household will refuse the offer of accommodation and a further nomination may be made to another homeless household. It is estimated that 10% of offers will be refused resulting in the Council being able to discharge its homelessness duty to additional households.
- 6.10 Assuming 75% of Lets Rent Connect tenancies are sustained during the full 3 year nomination period, each Let's Rent Connect property is therefore anticipated to provide an average of 1.25 nominations during each 3 year nomination period (i.e. the portfolio of 40 properties provides 50 nominations during a three year period).
- 6.11 Factoring in the additional nominations and the estimated level of refusals reduces the average maximum cost per Let's Rent Connect property to £1,761 (from £2,377) and the

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40 Let's Rent Connect offers would result in discharging the Council's homelessness duties to 54 households over the 3 year nomination period.

- 6.12 During 2016/17 the Council accommodated 147 homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation. The provision of 40 Let's Rent properties would provide accommodation for 27% of those households, and this equates to a reduction in bed and breakfast costs of £93,570 (based on the net bed and breakfast cost in 2016/17).
- 6.13 Where the Council provides payment of rent in advance through Let's Rent Connect this will be funded through use of the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment fund, and £50k has been ring-fenced each year for supporting the Council's private rented sector access schemes.
- 6.14 The two months rent in advance to Let's Rent Connect landlords assists due to Housing Benefit being paid in arrears and any delays with their HB assessment. The final HB payment will be paid to the Council to recoup one of the two months paid for rent in advance.
- 6.15 The proposed Let's Rent Complete lease payments to landlords represent an uplift from the current lease payments and will result in a budget increase of £10k. It is proposed that the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant be used to provide the additional £10k budget provision for Let's Rent Complete.
- 6.16 The increased Rent Deposit Bond level within the Let's Rent Core scheme is not expected to result in a higher claim rate due to work already undertaken to reduce claim amounts through quick and responsive tenancy sustainment, tailored routine inspections and the requirement for landlords to inform the Council within 7 days of rent arrears or any other issues. During 2016/17 the average bond claim amount for tenancies ending was £893, and claims were accepted in respect of 45.5% of those tenancies. However, due to the nature of these debts, it is difficult to recover amounts owed once the debtor has left the property. Therefore there is a risk of bad debt under the scheme. The current rent deposit bonds agreed by the Council (217 in total) represent a financial risk of £275k.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 6.17 The proposed changes will have no staffing implications and will be delivered within existing staffing resources.
- 6.18 If the volume of properties delivered through the schemes increases, for example as a result of increasing homelessness acceptances, increased staffing resources may be required.
- 6.19 The changes resulting from the implementations of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 from April 2018 may result in the need for additional properties to be procured through the schemes, and this would result in the need for additional staffing resources.

Community Safety

- 6.20 There are no community safety implications.

Risk Management

- 6.21 Currently the Council is using 72 void properties within the Sheerwater regeneration area as temporary accommodation for homeless households. When the Sheerwater redevelopment progresses, the availability of these units will be reduced and result in a

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likely increase in emergency accommodation costs. The adoption of this policy will help to minimise any increase in these costs through the provision of a range of accommodation for homeless households.

- 6.22 The adoption of this policy will help to increase the diversity of the stock used to provide temporary accommodation, and will reduce the current disproportionate use of the Council's housing stock as temporary accommodation.
- 6.23 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which is due to come into force in April 2018 is likely to increase the need for a wide range of housing solutions for households who present as homeless to the Council. The adoption of this policy will enable the Council to resolve the housing situations of households who are currently experiencing homelessness, and consequently assist in the preparations for the new homelessness regime.
- 6.24 If the proposed policy is not adopted the Council's current offer to procure properties within the private rented sector to provide homes for homeless households is not considered competitive and there is a risk that the Council will not be able to secure this type of accommodation.
- 6.25 There is a risk that properties that are offered for use for homeless households within Woking may be offered to other local authorities and in particular London boroughs for use for their homeless households. Where other local authorities discharge their homelessness obligations by placing homeless households within private rented accommodation in Woking, these households would be considered as having a local connection to Woking and would if threatened with homelessness in the future access homelessness services locally.
- 6.26 The current scope and level of incentives linked to the Let's Rent schemes have been established by benchmarking with other schemes across London and Surrey. Given the competitive private rented market it may be appropriate to alter the incentives offered through the Let's Rent Schemes at short notice. This report recommends that delegated authority be provided to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, for amending the Let's Rent schemes as necessary to ensure the schemes remain competitive.

Sustainability

- 6.27 The adoption of this policy supports local private landlords in providing sustainable private rented accommodation for local residents.
- 6.28 The policy supports improvements in health inequalities for homeless households resulting from the reduced length of stay in temporary accommodation.

Equalities

- 6.29 The policy advances equality for those disproportionately affected by homelessness, including those with learning difficulties, mental health problems, younger people, pregnant women and those from low socio-economic groups.

7.0 Consultations

- 7.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Housing Task Group and Portfolio Holder.

REPORT ENDS
EXE15-110

APPENDICES

Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to improve the work of the Council by making sure that it does not discriminate against any individual or group and that, where possible, it promotes equality. The Council has a legal duty to comply with equalities legislation and this template enables you to consider the impact (positive or negative) a strategy, policy, project or service may have upon the protected groups.

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action) THIS SECTION NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED AS EVIDENCE OF WHAT THE POSITIVE IMPACT IS OR WHAT ACTIONS ARE BEING TAKEN TO MITIGATE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations			
Gender	Men					X	
	Women					X	
Gender Reassignment							
Race	White					X	
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups					X	
	Asian/Asian British					X	

	Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British					X	
	Gypsies / travellers					X	
	Other ethnic group					X	

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	<p>What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)</p> <p>THIS SECTION NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED AS EVIDENCE OF WHAT THE POSITIVE IMPACT IS OR WHAT ACTIONS ARE BEING TAKEN TO MITIGATE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS</p>
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations			
Disability	Physical					X	
	Sensory					X	
	Learning Difficulties		X				People with learning difficulties are disproportionately affected by homelessness
	Mental Health		X				People with mental health problems are disproportionately affected by homelessness
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual					X	
Age	Older people (50+)					X	
	Younger people (16 - 25)		X				Younger people with learning difficulties are disproportionately affected by homelessness
Religion or Belief	Faith Groups					X	

Pregnancy & maternity	X			Pregnant women are disproportionately affected by homelessness
Marriage & Civil Partnership			X	
Socio-economic Background	X			People from deprived socio-economic background are disproportionately affected by homelessness

The purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment is to improve the work of the Council by making sure it does not discriminate against any individual or group and that, where possible, it promotes equality. The assessment is quick and straightforward to undertake but it is an important step to make sure that individuals and teams think carefully about the likely impact of their work on people in Woking and take action to improve strategies, policies, services and projects, where appropriate. Further details and guidance on completing the form are [available](#).

Sustainability Impact Assessment

Officers preparing a committee report are required to complete a Sustainability Impact Assessment. Sustainability is one of the Council's 'cross-cutting themes' and the Council has made a corporate commitment to address the social, economic and environmental effects of activities across Business Units. The purpose of this Impact Assessment is to record any positive or negative impacts this decision, project or programme is likely to have on each of the Council's Sustainability Themes. For assistance with completing the Impact Assessment, please refer to the instructions below. Further details and guidance on completing the form are [available](#).

Theme (Potential impacts of the project)	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative, how can it be mitigated? (action)
Use of energy, water, minerals and materials			X	
Waste generation / sustainable waste management			X	
Pollution to air, land and water			X	
Factors that contribute to Climate Change			X	
Protection of and access to the natural environment			X	
Travel choices that do not rely on the car			X	
A strong, diverse and sustainable local economy	X			The policy supports local private landlords
Meet local needs locally	X			The policy supports the provision of local housing for homeless households
Opportunities for education and information			X	

Provision of appropriate and sustainable housing	X			The policy supports the provision of affordable housing for local residents
Personal safety and reduced fear of crime			X	
Equality in health and good health	X			The policy supports improvements in health inequalities resulting from reduced length of stay in temporary accommodation
Access to cultural and leisure facilities			X	
Social inclusion / engage and consult communities			X	
Equal opportunities for the whole community			X	
Contribute to Woking's pride of place			X	