

## HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

**Monday, 25 January 2021**

**6.00 pm**

**Virtual Meeting**

Membership:	Councillors Gary Hewson (Chair), Pat Vaughan (Vice-Chair), Liz Bushell, Christopher Reid, Edmund Strengiel and Loraine Woolley
Substitute member(s):	Councillors Biff Bean and Susie Parry
Lincoln Tenants Panel member(s):	Mick Barber (Chair of LTP), Steven Bearder (Member of LTP), Caroline Coyle-Fox (Member of LTP), Debbie Rousseau (Member of LTP) and Sheila Watkinson (Member of LTP)
Officers attending:	Democratic Services, Yvonne Fox, Matthew Hillman, Keeley Johnson, Andrew McNeil, Chris Morton and Daren Turner

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### VIRTUAL MEETING

To join this virtual meeting please use the following link:

<https://zoom.us/j/94549421452?pwd=RFFGaTA3ZURoMU9hTS9rdmFHZklOZz09>

You may need to enter the following password and meeting ID:

Webinar ID: 945 4942 1452  
Passcode: 992240

Alternatively, you can join the meeting via telephone by calling 0330 088 5830 quoting the above password and meeting ID when instructed.

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## A G E N D A

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<b>SECTION A</b>	<b>Page(s)</b>
1. Confirmation of Minutes - 2 November 2020	<b>3 - 10</b>
2. Declarations of Interest	
Please note that, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, when declaring interests members must disclose the existence and nature of the interest, and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) or personal and/or pecuniary.	
3. LTP Matters	<b>Verbal Report</b>

4. Verbal Update-Cleaning of Communal Areas-Covid Restrictions	<b>Verbal Report</b>
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6. Update on Housing Service Status	<b>15 - 20</b>
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9. Exclusion of Press and Public	<b>39 - 40</b>

You are asked to resolve that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item(s) because it is likely that if members of the press or public were present, there would be disclosure of 'exempt information'

## **SECTION B**

10. Performance Update-Homelessness and Rough Sleeping	<b>41 - 44</b>
	<b>[Exempt Para 3]</b>
11. Rents Report	<b>45 - 48</b>
	<b>[Exempt Para 3]</b>

**Present:** Councillors Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*), Liz Bushell, Christopher Reid, Edmund Strengiel, Pat Vaughan and Loraine Woolley

**Apologies for Absence:** Steven Bearder (Member of LTP)

**Also in Attendance:** Mick Barber (Chair of LTP), Caroline Coyle Cox (Member of LTP), Debbie Rousseau (Member of LTP), and Sheila Watkinson (Member of LTP)

**90. Confirmation of Minutes - 12 October 2020**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2020 be confirmed.

**91. Matters Arising**

The Chair referred to Minute Number 84 and asked for an update on the cleansing of communal facilities within the Councils Sheltered Accommodation during Covid-19.

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director – Housing advised that she had spoken to the Corporate Health and Safety Team responsible for carrying out risk assessments on the caretakers. She had been informed that the Council had a duty of care in terms of health and safety to its workforce going into unknown environments potentially to clear bodily fluids, and advised tenants to contact the caretakers of communal areas in circumstances where this type of cleansing regime was required. Tenants were being advised to make their own decision as to whether it was safe to carry out light cleaning as required.

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director – Housing referred to previous advice given to keep staff safe that they were not allowed to brush or mop as Covid-19 was an airborne virus. The guidance would be closely monitored and the full cleaning regime would be resumed once allowed to do so.

The Chair asked whether tenants were being updated via social media of the need to be careful and to take precautions in any attempts to carry out light cleaning. It was felt that in circumstances where the Council withdrew normal services or altered services there should be a means put in place to make sure our tenants were made aware of this

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director – Housing agreed to re-consult with the Corporate Health and Safety Team as to a view on whether an announcement should be made on social media in this respect.

RESOLVED that a further verbal update on the regime for cleaning communal areas during COVID restrictions be given to the next scheduled meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee.

**92. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **93. LTP Matters (Verbal Report)**

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP discussed and requested clarification on procedure in relation to the following main areas:

- Mutual exchanges
- Sustainability of tenancies.

Officers offered advice as follows:

Mutual Exchanges – The authority continued to follow guidance in relation to mutual exchanges and non-essential moves. At this time it would consider requests for mutual exchanges on a case by case basis and emergency or essential moves would be approved subject to the tenants' agreement to comply with guidance. If we were able to offer alternative housing advice or solutions then we would explore this with the tenant at this time.

Sustainability of Tenancies - At present, the focus for Tenancy Services was on sustainment and the Team had identified tenants who needed additional support at this difficult time. A job evaluation decision on grading was awaited after which time it was possible that a team of a Team Leader and two sustainment officers would be recruited to enhance the work that Housing Officers had already been doing.

RESOLVED that the content of the verbal report be noted.

### **94. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director – Housing;

- a. presented Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee with a report and supporting data outlining information relating to homelessness and rough sleeping issues within the City
- b. reported that preventing homelessness and rough sleeping were key priorities both locally and nationally, and that the Council received significant funding from MHCLG to address the issues of rough sleeping together with annual funding for initiatives to assist the Council with the delivery of its statutory functions outlined in legislation and the Code of Guidance
- c. stated that the Council delivered statutory homelessness services via the Council's Homelessness Team and provided a 24/7 service, 365 days per year
- d. reported that all policies and procedures fully complied with the relevant legislation, (Housing Act 1985, Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2011 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) the code of Guidance, Statutory guidance and advice and Case Law
- e. highlighted with regard to the prevention and response to rough sleeping in the City, the Council had received significant funding from the MHCLG's Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding (RSI), being the first of 11 local authorities to receive funding, together with additional funding received year on year to fund the Councils Rough Sleeper Team, support services

such as the Cornerhouse Project, specialist support workers and move-on accommodation

- f. reported further on the work of the Council in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping, covering the following main areas:
- Homelessness Team
  - Rough Sleeping Team
  - Temporary Accommodation
- g. requested feedback from members on the content of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail. The following comments/questions emerged:

- Comment: Officers were commended for the work done within their teams to deal with homelessness and rough sleeping in such difficult times. Joint working arrangements were making a huge difference in the City.
- Question: Why had there been a reduction in costs for bed and breakfast accommodation which came to £132,404.74 during the period April-September 2019 reducing to £109,113.99 in the period April to September 2020?
- Officer Response: The authority had procured a number of temporary accommodation units in the private sector and had also used its own properties to house homeless people using MHCLG funding.
- Question: Was there any further funding forthcoming to help with homelessness in the second lockdown?
- Officer Response: There was no further funding available at this stage which was disappointing. The authority had received a sum of £62,000 for ongoing support. It also received funding from the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative until April 2021. It was possible for capital funding to be used in the future for move on accommodation, however, this did not help with day to day costs. There had been no receipt to date of monies from the County Council from the funding allocated to them by the Government.
- Comment by LTP Member: The council had accommodated a homeless man who couldn't read or write and his son in a property within three days of presenting themselves which was very good going.
- Officer Response: Officers would not expect anything less than this of the Homelessness Team.
- Question: What banner did homelessness come under since P3 support had ceased?
- Officer Response: Housing related support was administered by the one provider Lincolnshire County Council Adult Support Team. Officers at the City of Lincoln Council had been offering help to those tenants not requiring such intensive assistance. Following a job evaluation exercise it was hopeful to be able to appoint Tenancy Support Officers to offer assistance.
- Comment: It was important for members to scrutinise expenditure on homelessness provision in the city to ensure it was cost effective, although currently it fell within the parameters set.
- Officer Response: The authority had a legal obligation to provide temporary accommodation as a statutory service. It was not always possible to reclaim 100% of costs from housing benefit, although the

council would always try to minimise costs to the General Fund within the parameters set.

- Question: Did the authority pay Framework for the cost of advice as a provider of a service to people with specialist needs
- Officer Response: There was now only one contract for housing related support between the County Council and Framework, The City of Lincoln Council did not contribute financially to this in any way.
- Comment: An amount of £109,113.99 between April-September 2020 seemed a large sum of money to spend on temporary accommodation considering numbers currently amounted to only 44 people housed there.
- Officer Response: The cost was recovered on expenditure for clients housed in our own accommodation and private rental accommodation. In terms of bed and breakfast accommodation the authority had no other option than to pay the commercial rate. There tended to be about 12 people in bed and breakfast accommodation at any one time and the authority always tried to minimise costs.
- Question: What efforts were made to prevent homeless people coming into the City from other areas?
- Officer Response: An individual was able to approach any local authority in the country for advice in such a situation and could not be turned away. Officers always recommended people returned to the area they came from, however, a decision had first to be made in each individual case as to whether there was a statutory requirement to offer assistance anyway.
- Comment: The current variance in the charge to the General Fund for temporary accommodation was within parameters set. Provision of help to the homeless was a statutory duty. Lincoln was on the right track and should be commended for all the hard work it was doing.
- Comment: It was important to look at our Allocations Policy in relation to housing those people already associated to the City.
- Officer Response: A new Allocations Policy was scheduled to be introduced the first week of 2021. Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions in force only essential moves were permitted in respect of homeless people and rough sleepers. The Council had a duty to ensure it offered assistance to those most in need of help as a priority.

The Director of Housing emphasised the incredible work the Homelessness Team were involved in. Lincoln was a major City in a large rural area which brought additional problems. The authority received core funding from the Government for this statutory service. Every effort was made to try to drive down bed and breakfast accommodation costs. Having a major hospital and a prison was also a challenge in respect of homelessness provision. Some temporary accommodation for families hadn't been of a high enough standard which had driven up costs in some instances and had been unavoidable.

RESOLVED that:

1. An update be provided to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee every six months on the homelessness cell chaired by the Director of Housing.
2. The content of the report be noted.

## 95. Scheduled Repairs Pilot

Matt Hillman, Assistant Director, Housing:

- a. provided a report giving an interim review on the implementation of the Scheduled Repairs Pilot within the Housing Repairs Service
- b. reported that the Housing Repairs Service had recently begun a pilot of a new way of managing housing repairs for scheduled repairs that needed to be completed although not urgent and unlikely to cause risk to our customers, their home or belongings, carried out at set times of the year across set areas of the City
- c. advised that the City had been divided into four areas for this purpose; North- Ermine East, West and Newport, East-St Giles and Monks Road, Central- Boutham Moor, Bracebridge, Manse, City Centre, South-Birchwood and Hartsholme, with repairs for each of these areas scheduled in every 12 weeks over a three week period
- d. emphasised that priority repairs would continue to be prioritised within 24 hours and urgent repairs within 3 days
- e. reported that based on previous feedback, our customers had said they would like fewer appointments and follow on work, less missed appointments, minimal disruption and more flexibility in appointment time slots
- f. added that scheduled repairs allowed the service to plan all the work in each area to ensure the correct resources and materials were in the right place to complete any repairs reported in the one visit, which gave customers more certainty that the repair would be carried out on the expected date
- g. reported further on the background to the pilot scheme in relation to the following:
  - Repairs Data
  - Vehicle Data
  - Travis Perkins Data
  - Customer Survey
  - HRS Staff Survey
  - Communications
  - Welfare Unit
- h. gave a power point presentation to members on the background to the new way of working to illustrate his report covering the following main areas:
  - Repairs Data
  - Fuel Expenditure
  - Mileage
  - Deliveries
  - Operative Visits to Stores
  - Social Media Reach
  - Productivity North (9-27 November)
  - Customer Survey Responses
- i. requested members' feedback on the content of the report.

Chris Morton, Resident Involvement Manager and Rachel Jackson, Resident Involvement Officer presented a power point presentation to members on the responses received as a result of the customer survey, covering the following areas:

- Uncompleted surveys- 40% responded out of 186 properties surveyed.
- Complaints before August-majority of tenants said they were happy before the new pilot began.
- Disruption due to scheduled repairs- most reported less disruption.
- Fewer repair appointments-55 responses said there were fewer repair appointments.
- Repairs carried out in one visit-most tenants responded agreed.
- Completed by repair date-most responses agreed with this.
- Flexibility in time slots-51 people felt there was greater flexibility.
- Difficulty in receiving different trade repairs-69 tenants responded they had no difficulty in receiving all different types of trade repairs.
- Scheduled repairs within timeframe- the majority of responses received said they either always or very often received appointments within the timeframe.
- Scheduled repairs accessibility-most responses answered accessibility was easier or no difference.
- Weekdays or weekend repairs-more than half of respondents requested evening or weekend repairs.
- Literature on scheduled repairs-most people happy with information provided.
- Housing Repairs Service-future communication-text messages preferred option.
- Materials used- majority of responses said they were good or excellent.
- Additional comments received – two positive and 2 negative comments received.

Members discussed the content of the report and associated presentations in further detail, commenting/raising questions as follows:

- **Comment:** If the survey was conducted in the first area of work tenants would be happy to be a part of the first trench of scheduled repairs.
- **Question:** How would the number of repairs in each customer property be monitored going forward to ensure it could be compared against measured data?
- **Officer Response:** Repairs were booked out on multiple tickets based on job type. If one operative was able to carry out all repairs in the household it would be measured as a one job. Consistent monitoring would be carried out to ensure exact data was compared
- **Comment by LTP Member:** Concerns had been raised regarding repairs taking more than 28 days and being deferred to the next cycle. Customers only got one week's notice before work started and were told they would only get repairs when operatives were in the area. There were also some repairs outstanding from March.
- **Officer Response:** The procedure was to finish repairs in the current cycle within the allocated timeframe. Officers were aware of minor issues with regards to the completion of contracts during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters and were looking at redirecting resources to deal with this. Operatives worked in each zone for three weeks. Urgent repairs continued to be prioritised



within 24 hours and urgent repairs within 3 days. There were only a few cases now of outstanding repairs since March which were due to COVID 19 restrictions.

- Question: LTP Member: Had the council carried out a Quality Impact Assessment with regard to vulnerable/disabled customers in relation to the Repairs Policy?
- Officer Response: The policy contained a section on vulnerable people, however, the process would be refined to potentially include a Handyperson scheme for such customers in need.
- Question: Lenton Green was being used as a temporary welfare unit for staff operatives in the north of the city. Were there any plans for the north zone?
- Officer Response: The Newland Street West Depot would incorporate a welfare unit to serve central and north area relocated from Turner Avenue as it offered better resilience especially to the new team working on fire doors.

RESOLVED that:

1. The continuation of the Scheduled Repairs Pilot making changes to the service based on customer feedback be supported.
2. The continued development of data to provide exact comparisons be supported.
3. The provision and delivery of the 'drop down' sites be supported.
4. Development of further assistance to vulnerable customers in terms of the Repair Policy be included as an agenda item at the next scheduled meeting of Lincoln Tenants Panel

## **96. Complaints (Verbal Report)**

Daren Turner, Director of Housing provided a verbal update to the Sub-Committee following on from a report to Audit Committee which highlighted that the number of housing repair complaints received had increased. He offered the following points of clarification:

- The report to Audit Committee covered the years 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- In terms of where we were now between April to the end of September 2019 there had been 105 complaints received regarding repairs compared to 74 for the same period April to the end of September 2020.
- Repairs were now being completed in 6 working days.
- There was no corporate policy target for responding to complaints due to the complexity of the types of complaints received.
- All complaints were dealt with as quickly as possible as a matter of course.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>LTP GRASS VERGE SURVEY PROPOSAL</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>HOUSING AND INVESTMENT</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>MICK BARBER AND CAROLINE COYLE-FOX, LINCOLN TENANTS PANEL</b>

**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To present an initial proposal for a pilot survey to be carried out on grass verge parking on the Hartsholme Estate in Lincoln.

**2. Background**

2.1 All estates in Lincoln suffer from a lack of parking space available for cars, this causes a number of issues including blocked roads, junctions and parking on grass verges. It is this last point that LTP has received feedback from residents, who are concerned about the damage being done to the grass verges. Elected members have also had these concerns raised to them by residents and the issue was raised at Policy Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 The damage done to the grass verges can cause an area to look unsightly and lots of mud to form on the side of the road, particularly in the winter.

2.3 There are a number of different solutions to address the problem and these are:

- Installing barriers to stop cars being parked on grass verge
- Constructing parking bays
- Planting trees, bushes and wildflower meadows to act as a barrier
- Requesting County Council Highways install signage and road markings in specific hotspots, this could include double yellow lines close to junctions and one side of the road
- Setting up a residents parking scheme for the area. This would involve going through a consultation with residents and if a majority are in favour passes could be issued for residents. This would allow certain areas to be designated as no parking
- The final option is to look at working with stakeholders such as the local police and county council to increase the level of enforcement.

Before any solutions are decided on an equality and diversity impact assessment will be carried out as part of the options appraisal.

2.4 LTP would like to look into the matter further to gain a better understanding as to the scale of the problem and capture residents' views on possible solutions by conducting a survey on Hartsholme. This will be a pilot area and that can possibly be extended into other areas of the city if this is deemed a success.

### **3. What will the Survey Aim to Answer?**

3.1 The survey will aim to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the scale of parking on grass verges?
- 2) Do residents view tackling grass verge parking as a priority?
- 3) Is there a consensus among residents for one of the options described in 2.3?

### **4. Methodology and Target Audience**

4.1 The consultation will be led by Lincoln Tenants Panel and will be carried out using three main methods:

- Online survey advertised through Facebook but conducted through the City of Lincoln Council's website
- Postal surveys sent out if a low response rate is received from the online surveys
- Zoom calls with residents conducted by LTP as part of a public meeting

The target audience for the consultation will be residents of the Hartsholme estate. However, LTP will also speak to other local stakeholders such as the local school and the police.

### **5. Next Steps**

5.1 The next steps will be to conduct the survey in the Hartsholme area. The results will be reported back to Policy Scrutiny Committee once collated and analysed.

5.2 This is a pilot area for the surveys and if deemed successful consideration will be given to carry out the surveys in other areas.

### **6. Data Protection**

6.1 The survey will be conducted through the council's website and the resident involvement team will process and store the results in line with DPA policies. The Lincoln Tenants' Panel will receive an anonymised set of results. Tenants will be made aware that results will be shared with the tenants' panel and asked to give affirmative confirmation. If the Zoom calls go ahead this will be as part of a public residents meeting and procedures will be put in place to ensure compliance with DPA.

## 7. Recommendation

7.1 That the Committee agree the approach proposed by the LTP and:-

- The area of the city in the initial survey
- The methodology of the survey

**Is this a key decision?** No

**Do the exempt information categories apply?** No

**Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?** No

**How many appendices does the report contain?** No

**List of Background Papers:** None

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**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON HOUSING SERVICE STATUS**

**DIRECTORATE: HOUSING AND INVESTMENT**

**REPORT AUTHOR: ANDREW MCNEIL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, STRATEGY AND INVESTMENT**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Housing Scrutiny Committee on the current services provided by the directorate for Housing and Investment taking into account the restrictions required in response to the current national lockdown requirements as a consequence of Covid – 19.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Following the initial advice and guidance by the Government to the emergence of Covid 19 in spring 2020 the services provided by Housing and Investment have responded to maintain services in an appropriate and safe manner. During 2020 with the easing of restrictions Housing and Investment moved to increase the services being delivered.
- 2.2 In December 2020 further restrictions were announced following the introduction of a tiering system for local authority areas in England. In December Lincoln was placed into Tier 4. In advance of the move to a higher tier we reviewed the scope of services that could be delivered taking into account potential increases in covid response restrictions.
- 2.3 This preparation enabled a swift move by Housing Services to the current lockdown requirements. In all cases we have looked to maintaining services delivering them in a way that is within the current government requirements and looks to ensure the safety of our residents and staff.

### **Current Service Status**

## **3. Assistant Director Investment**

- 3.1 Construction and repair activities can continue to operative within the Government guidance issued. We have decided to prioritise our service delivery to ensure that the most essential repairs and maintenance is carried out and our staff, customers and properties remain safe.

A summary of each key service is as follows:

### 3.2 **Housing Repairs Service**

HRS have moved to delivering emergency and urgent repairs. We will constantly keep these definitions under review as we may need to understand individual circumstances when deciding whether a repair is needed immediately. Risk assessments and method statements for staff are as a matter of course constantly reviewed and this will continue.

### 3.3 **Voids**

Void repairs will continue to be delivered under the revised Covid Risk and Method Statement (RAMS). This means that no more than three people can work in a property at any one time.

### 3.4 **Aids & Adaptations**

This service will continue in line with the customers consent and with a priority on enabling customers to remain independent or return to their home after a hospital stay.

### 3.5 **Aaron Services**

Aarons have moved to delivering emergency and urgent repairs. Gas servicing will continue to be carried to ensure compliance and safety is maintained. Boiler installations will be delivered to ensure the repairs to heating systems are limited voids.

### 3.6 **Kier**

Kier will be limited to 8 open elements only, with a maximum of 1 element per property. Operatives have been formed into bubbles

### 3.7 **Miscellaneous Work Streams**

External Doors, Windows, external environmental work, automatic door openings, external decoration can all continue to be delivered

Major incidents surveys, Gen/Oil servicing, TV Aerial, Lift repairs, lightning conductors, Fire alarms (Service/test/repairs) including automatic opening vents (service/test/reactive) and Emergency Lighting (service/test/reactive) will all continue.

Fire door inspections along with maintenance/repairs will continue.

### 3.8 **Hamilton House**

Open but with restricted staff and reviewed Risk Assessments and Method Statements/cleaning/Personal Protective Equipment. Office staff within Maintenance and Investment will continue to work from home where possible. We have a limit of 30 in place at Hamilton House.



### 3.9 **Material and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**

The Managed store will remain open to continue to provide materials and PPE. We have increased our stocks of key PPE to ensure we can continue our service delivery.

## 4. **Assistant Director of Strategy and Investment**

The majority of services in this area are delivered remotely and this continues to be the case. On site works for the Extra Care development at De Wint continues as does support for asbestos surveying and works where appropriate

### 4.1 **Safety Assurance Team**

Mix of working from home and safe office working where required. Contractors still providing survey testing and removal services. Fire Safety Manager at work and co-ordinating response and support to Housing Repairs Service.

### 4.2 **Resident Involvement**

Staff to return to remote working. Continue with remote LTP meetings. Monitor IT capabilities of LTP members. Switch engagement to enhance digital capacity.

### 4.3 **Strategic Housing Function - Delivering De Wint Court**

Working groups planning for allocations, finance and communications continue with remote working. Site works continue with management by contractor. Assurances given on contractor safe working.

### 4.4 **Strategic Housing Function - Sincil Bank Neighbourhood Renewal**

City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) staff working remotely on community engagement. Office open to support community testing

### 4.5 **Strategic Housing Function -**

Delivering NSAP (Rough Sleeper move on accommodation)

First tranche on properties identified. Still visiting empty properties for viewing and establishment of work schedules

### 4.6 **House Purchases** – use of RTB receipts.

Working remotely. Viewings currently on empty properties. Purchases continuing.

## 5. **Assistant Director Housing**

5.1 As members are aware, we deliver several frontline, essential services on a 24/7/365 basis. Since March 2020 we have followed Government guidance and carried out risk assessments to ensure that we keep staff safe and services running for our customers, many of whom are vulnerable.

5.2 In this current lockdown, with the exception of the Rough Sleeper Team, on site Independent Living Co-Ordinators, LinCare operators, Caretakers and Cleaners, and Voids Support Officers, all staff are working from home and are continuing to replace face to face contact with telephone contact. Staff who are working in the community and LinCare operators work in bubbles to avoid any Covid infection spreading throughout the team so that services can be maintained.

5.3 Officers cover on a rota basis, the Out of Hours service. Officers will work primarily from home and will only carry out home or onsite visits in an emergency.

5.4 A summary of each key service is as follows:

#### 5.5 **Rough Sleeper Team**

Staff members work from home and City Hall in distinct bubbles. Staff work in pairs and are provided with full PPE.

#### 5.6 **Homelessness Team and Temporary Accommodation**

Working from home. Visits/appointments will be made in exceptional circumstances.

#### 5.7 **Housing Solutions Team**

Working from home.

#### 5.8 **Tenancy Services**

Working from home. Will carry out visits in pairs in an emergency. Mutual exchanges are being approved in exceptional circumstances in line with guidance and risk assessments. Full PPE provided where visits are required.

#### 5.9 **Caretaking Service**

Work either on site at a multi storey block or in a mobile 'bubble'. Full PPE provided. The night caretaking service is currently suspended due to the risk of lone working at night. Onsite cover is currently provided until 9pm on Thursday to Sunday.

The mobile service is currently focusing cleaning on higher risk blocks and carrying out fire safety checks.

#### 5.10 **Voids Support**

Officers are still carrying out sign ups and viewings. This is limited to two officers and full PPE is provided.

#### 5.11 **LinCare**

Team members work in bubbles and either work from home or on a rota covering at City Hall. This delivery model is unchanged since March 2020 as it offers maximum protection for the staff and continued service delivery.

## 5.12 Supported Housing

All non-emergency visits are suspended and replaced by telephone contact and contact using the monitoring equipment.

Specific officers cover the supported housing schemes. Full PPE is provided. Communal rooms remain closed and all visitors to the scheme (housing repairs staff, carers etc.) need to wear face masks on site and adhere to Government guidelines.

## 5.13 Housing Business Support

Essential support services such as the rents team, Housing IT, continue to work from home

## 5.14 Safeguarding

Officer continues to work from home assisting and supporting staff across the service and Council and preparing for the Section 11 Audit in the Spring.

## 6. Organisational Impacts

### 6.1 Finance

The services outlined above are being delivered within the current Department for Housing and Investment budget.

### 6.2 Legal Implications

All current services are being delivered following government guidance.

## 7. Recommendation

7.1 To note the report and provide any comments.

**Is this a key decision?** No

**Do the exempt information categories apply?** No

**Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?** No

**How many appendices does the report contain?** 0

**List of Background Papers:** None

**Lead Officer:** Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director, Strategy and Investment.



**SUBJECT: SUSTAINMENT REPORT**

**DIRECTORATE: HOUSING AND INVESTMENT**

**REPORT AUTHOR: KEELEY JOHNSON, TENANCY SERVICES MANAGER**

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of the current position regarding the sustainment of tenancies.
- 1.2 Tenancy sustainment continues to be a key priority for City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) and this year has seen and increased need to provide tenants with the essential support and guidance in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 There has been a continued reduction in income for many tenants with the ongoing reductions in welfare benefits and an increase in zero hours contracts meaning those who are not only unemployed but in low paid employment are facing significant challenges when trying to sustain a tenancy. With the added financial difficulties of Covid-19 sustaining tenancies, it has been a challenging period for tenants and residents of Lincoln.

At the start of the pandemic we made a very clear promise that no tenant would be evicted due to Covid-19 where an individual was engaging. This was prior to the national ban on evictions. Eviction had already halved in the 2019/2020 financial year with a significant emphasis placed on multi-agency working to keep tenants in their homes.

## 3. Current Position

### 3.1 Key Figures

- Current tenancies – 7,617
- Annual rent debit - £28,283,203
- % in receipt of HB (partial and full) – 42.58%
- No. affected by under-occupancy charge - 347
- Live UC cases – 2,009 and the average balance across these cases being £309.40

No. of tenants affected by the benefit cap – 18

### 3.2 **Universal Credit**

Lincoln saw the rollout of Universal Credit in March 2018 and CoLC currently has 2,009 tenants claiming Universal Credit with £246,000 arrears over these cases. The current Personal Budgeting Support and Assisted Digital Support contracts paid for by the DWP to support Universal Credit Claimants has been awarded to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Welfare Advice Team also work closely with Tenancy Services in providing essential support to tenants in need of any additional support.

Housing Assistants currently verify the Universal Credit claims daily on the Landlord Portal followed by a 30-minute interview with a Housing Officer within three working days. This ensures a payment arrangement is made at the earliest possible opportunity with any other issues identified to maximise income to the tenant, authority and provide essential support that reduces the risk of tenancy failure. Tenants are guided through their entitlement, payment options and Housing Officers become a vital point of contact for new Universal Credit claimants.

The following government support measures have been put into place and have provided an essential financial safety net for many of our tenants.

#### **General**

- Job Retention Scheme provides a grant to employers to enable them to pay the wages of their workforce who remain on payroll but are temporarily not working during the coronavirus outbreak.
- Job Centres remain open and continue to support people who need it.

#### **Statutory Sick Pay**

- Payable from day 1 of sickness (rather than day 4)
- As getting a fit note could be problematic, employers are urged to use their discretion about what evidence, if any, they ask for
- A system is now in operation whereby claimants who need one can get an 'isolation note' from the NHS 111 Online service.

#### **New-Style Employment and Support Allowance**

- Payable from day 1 of sickness (rather than day 8)
- Not required to produce a 'fit note' or 'isolation note'
- Treated as incapable for work

#### **Universal Credit**

- Standard Allowance increase by £20 a week for 12 months- the main purpose behind this appears to be to give self-employed claimants the same basic level of income as SSP.
- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) changes from 1st April 2020 – pay for at least 30% of market

- Minimum Income Floor (MIF) suspended for everyone affected by the economic impacts of coronavirus
- Not be required to produce a 'fit note' or 'isolation note' if affected by Coronavirus.
- Those who have contracted Coronavirus or are self-isolating are treated as having a Limited Capability for Work (LCW)
- Claimants will not be required to attend the Job Centre
- Claimants can receive Advance Payment without having to physically attend a Job Centre

### 3.3 **Tax Credits**

- Standard rate to increase by £20 a week

Since the start of the pandemic several measures have been put into place as a local authority to support tenants.

#### **Rent Free Weeks**

We took the decision to move the rent-free weeks for the 2020/2021 financial year. The rent-free weeks were on 6 and 13 April 2020 instead of having the two free weeks at Christmas. Many tenants were facing uncertainty with their income and by bringing the rent-free weeks forward, our tenants were given more opportunity to access much needed financial support. Moving the rent-free weeks was received very positively by tenants facing huge uncertainty.

#### **Discretionary Rental Hardship Payment Fund**

In April 2020 we set up a Discretionary Rental Hardship Payment Fund to support tenants whose income has been directly affected by the Coronavirus outbreak and would therefore struggle to meet their rental obligations.

The Rental Hardship Payments are a one-off payment made directly to tenant's rent accounts. This has not replaced the Discretionary Housing Payments which are available for all tenants to apply for who are facing financial hardship and have a shortfall in their rent entitlement.

:

- 266 full applications received
- 182 applications approved
- 41 applications refused
- 27 applications cancelled as the applicant failed to provide the requested documents
- 9 non eligible applications (private residents or other authorities)
- 7 applicants put their application on hold
- £48,270.91 awarded

The Rental Hardship Fund has been relaunched in January 2021 to support tenants further affected by the third national lockdown.

### ***Befriending Service***

The City Council launched a befriending service to support tenants and residents. This service offered a friendly chat with those tenants who would like to have a conversation and perhaps gain a little reassurance at this very worrying time for many. It ensured that early intervention was taken to identify anyone struggling to manage their finances and the necessary referrals made. These essential referrals enabled Tenancy Services to contact tenants who may have been struggling financially to offer support and advice.

### ***Community Helpline***

If tenants or residents were in need of help and/or need general advice about the types of community support in place which were on offer, they can access the newly launched community help-line which is open Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm and staffed by the city council. This again has given tenants the opportunity to access much needed support prior to them falling into debt or general hardship.

### ***Early Intervention***

Tenancy Services are currently ensuring all tenants in difficulty are contacted weekly to discuss rent arrears and offer tailored support and advice which is relevant to the tenant's circumstances. A letter was sent out to all tenants outlining the types of support available and have been urged to make contact if necessary.

### ***Communications***

Communications to tenants have been clear and efficient to ensure tenants have been given the necessary information at the earliest possible opportunity. A range of platforms has been used including regular social media updates, telephone, text, email, radio and letters. We will continue to work with the communications team to ensure key messages are communicated promptly to tenants.

## **4. Future Action**

The development of the Sustainment Team has been approved and the attached pre-tenancy process completed in preparation for the team recruitment. Allocations, Voids and Tenancy have been working to develop a streamlined and effective support mechanism to help tenants particularly in the first three months of their tenancies. At present Housing Officers provide this support to tenants in conjunction with the Welfare Advice Team. The Housing Officers cannot give the level of support required on many of their cases and hence why the Tenancy Sustainment Team has been deemed as essential.

The team will be comprised of two Tenancy Sustainment Officers and a Tenancy Sustainment Team Leader on two-year fixed term contracts to initially pilot offering an in-house, intensive advice service. The provision of social housing has changed significantly over the past ten years with a need to provide more intensive support for tenants to navigate the often-daunting task of managing their own tenancy, often for the first time.



We are also in the process of working with external agencies to provide a furniture donation service.

We are committed to tenancy sustainment and are hopefully in the next six months we can have the team in place and fully operational to provide the pre-tenancy support.

## **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 That members note the actions taken to support tenants in order to improve levels of tenancy sustainment

**Is this a key decision?** No

**Do the exempt information categories apply?** No

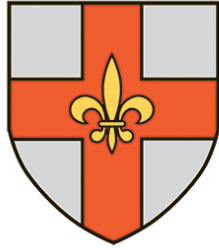
**Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?** No

**How many appendices does the report contain?** 1

**List of Background Papers:** None

**Lead Officer:** Keeley Johnson  
Tenancy Services Manager

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# CITY OF *Lincoln* COUNCIL

## Tenancy Sustainment Procedure

Created: December 2020

### **Purpose:**

To detail the process for the provision of advice, support, signposting and referral through the Tenancy Sustainment team.

### **1. Introduction**

This procedure describes the process and methods for use by the Tenancy Sustainment team (TST). The purpose of this team is to help Lincoln City Council tenants manage their money, pay their rent and ultimately sustain their tenancy.

Shortlisted applicants, new and existing tenants of CoLC managed properties are the target group, and it is unlikely that non-tenants would be signposted or referred to the TST, however if they were they would not be logged as referrals, but would be signposted to an appropriate advice service.

### **2. How tenants are referred to the Tenant Sustainment Team**

#### **2.1 Pre-tenancy**

Allocation Officers (AO) carry out shortlisting for available properties weekly and contact applicants to make a possible match. Where the applicant meets the criteria of the vulnerability assessment, the possible match is subject to attending a pre-tenancy interview with a Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO). The TSO is assigned on an active caseload basis.

AO's contact the successful applicant by telephone and book in the pre-tenancy interview with the TSO. The appointment is booked into the TSO diary on Outlook and an email is sent to the TSO to confirm the appointment. Where the property is ready to let and there are no available TSO appointments, the AO completes pre-agreed sections of the pre-tenancy interview form with the applicant by telephone.

At the pre-tenancy interview, the TSO introduces the support available through the TST, the importance of paying rent and completes the pre-tenancy interview form with the applicant; including, affordability check, and a summary sheet to

highlight support needs. The TSO will signpost the applicant to another advice organisation if additional advice is required prior to a tenancy commencing. The TSO then updates the AO to confirm a formal offer can proceed. If there are concerns about the appropriateness of an offer, the TSO will immediately inform the AO and Tenancy Sustainment Manager (TM) to discuss and confirm if the offer can proceed.

The completed pre-tenancy interview form will include confirmation of key information including the applicant's income and how rent will be paid. The pre-tenancy interview form is scanned into Workflow Manager.

## **2.2 New Tenancy**

TSO's as a minimum, check twice weekly for new tenancies in their assigned patches, these will always have been set up by Void Support Officers (VSO). Each Monday VSO's will send through a list of all new tenancies that were set up the previous week. The TM assigns a TSO on an active case basis. The TSO will then access the tenant's rent account on Universal Housing and input a diary note detailing all the income and rent payment details. The TSO will send out a rents welcome pack to the tenant. All new tenants must receive the rents welcome pack or personal contact from the TST within 5 working days of their tenancy starting.

Weekly, a 'lettings in the last 14 days' report is run to ensure all new tenancies have been captured by the relevant TSO.

Any Housing Benefit applications are reviewed, any missing information clarified with the tenant and forwarded to the Housing Benefit team. If the tenant is a Universal Credit claimant, the application is reviewed, the portal is checked to ensure that the claimant's details have been confirmed and that the claim is active. The initial Universal Credit interview form is completed by the TSO and outcome is inputted on Universal Housing.

The tenancy is signed off by the TSO if no support is required and two weeks have passed since the rents welcome pack sent, and either, payment commences, intention to pay confirmed or Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit is in payment. The TSO makes a record of the review on Universal Housing and records the tenant as assessed as not requiring further advice at this stage.

If a referral is received on this tenancy after it has been reviewed and closed, it is treated as a referral, rather than a new tenancy review.

## **2.3 Referrals to the Tenancy Sustainment Team**

Referrals are received from Housing Officers (HO), Area Housing Managers (AHM), Customer Service Officers, Neighbourhood Teams or any other Tenant related City of Lincoln staff. Referrals are made through the Tenancy Sustainment Team email inbox or a phone call to the TST. Each referral is logged on the TST referral log.

Tenants can self-refer either face to face Housing Offices, in meetings, by telephone or by email. Tenants are informed of the advice available in the rents welcome pack sent at the start of their tenancy and on the City of Lincoln Council website.

Between 9am and 5pm, if the TST phone was not answered by the TST team, the call would transfer to Customer Services, and a message would be taken by Customer Services and passed onto the TST team. Outside of these hours, the TST phone number has a message stating opening hours. There is no facility to leave a voicemail.

### **3. Referrals Management**

All referrals are recorded on Universal Housing and the TST referral log, whether they're made via the telephone, email, face to face or from a TSO, HO, AO's assessment of the tenancy.

#### **Conflict of interest-**

- If a TSO is referred a case of someone known to them personally, the case is referred to another TSO to acknowledge and address it.
- When a case is referred to court, the TSO will not assist customers with the completion of the court summons paperwork; they are advised instead to seek independent legal advice.
- Where there is a breakdown in a relationship and a joint tenancy agreement is in effect, we will provide impartial advice to both parties to seek legal advice regarding their new personal circumstance and the management of the tenancy.
- If the basis of an issue is dispute between neighbours, then the parties will be referred to the HO for the ASB procedures to be followed.
- There may be instances where the best advice to a tenant could be seen to be against the best interest of the City of Lincoln Council, in the case of this arising the client will be referred to a suitable independent approved advice provider.

Each TSO also uses a separate new tenancy weekly report and a referrals log spreadsheet to keep a record of all open referrals and the actions taken on each. The support required and advice given is also record on UH.

Certain documents are scanned into Workflow Manager, i.e. authority to disclose, documents referencing the customers income, disability and expenditure and subject to GDPR. All remaining documents are securely shredded after the case is concluded.

Telephone contact is made initially with each referral or new tenancy reviewed as requiring assistance. Identity is checked by asking customers to confirm their date of birth or national insurance number. The TSO establishes if assistance or support is required and what areas advice is required in.

If telephone contact is unsuccessful, the TSO will try text messages, letters and ad hoc home visit to contact the tenant. If no contact can be achieved, then the case is marked as no response/refusal to engage and closed.

If assistance is required in relation to budgeting, debts, benefits assessment, applying for benefits, help to acquire furniture, help to gain training or employment, improvement in reading/ writing English skills and maths, opening a bank account, sign up for home insurance, or health support advice assistance the TSO explains the advice support that the City of Lincoln Council can provide and how that could be provided.

The tenant and TSO determine if the advice and support can be provided totally by phone immediately or if a face to face meeting will be required.

If a phone discussion is determined as adequate to address any issues, the outcome of the meeting is recorded on Universal Housing with any actions agreed (and referral log when a referral) and carried out by the TSO as required. The TSO and tenant determine if a further follow up call is required or if the case should be closed.

Alternatively, or as a follow up to a phone discussion, a face to face meeting is arranged by the TSO with the tenant at City Hall or at their home as required.

At a face to face meeting the tenant is made aware of the scope of advice given by a TSO, the areas which the tenant requires support are identified and the relevant advice organisation we signpost and refer on to discussed.

For each area of support or advice the tenant is informed of the support and advice options available to them, and the cost implication of any options. The decision is made in agreement with the tenant on the further action to be take, and if a next review meeting is to be held with the TSO and if by phone or face to face.

Any documents of ongoing cases are kept in the TST locked filing cabinet, this is closed and locked outside of office working hours and keys are kept in a locked key safe. Only paperwork relevant to the tenant being met is taken out in a meeting, other tenants' information is kept in a zipped up bag at all times and not left unattended.

#### **4. Action Outcomes**

##### **4.1 TSO Continuing Support**

The TSO's have competency to provide advice in Welfare Benefits, Debt and Money advice and Housing.

The competency of a TSO is evidenced by successful completion of the planned induction training programme, with deficiencies identified and addressed at the end of the introductory period review. During their introductory period TSO's are

subjected to double the number of file reviews and more frequent one to one meetings.

Briefing emails are distributed to all TSO's about relevant changes and updates from relevant sources/ organisations deemed relevant by the TM or Tenancy Services Manager (TSM).

Advice and support are provided to the tenant, and then actions and a review period are agreed with the tenant. This may involve actions by the TSO or actions by the tenant.

At the review with the tenant the resolution or progress on identified issues is reviewed and documents. The tenant and TSO agree if further actions are required or would be beneficial, and if so actions and a review period are agreed again.

If the identified issues are resolved, and no other issues identified, the case is closed with agreement of the tenant.

Key dates are defined as 'external deadlines' which if missed would have a financial impact on a tenant. This could include a deadline to submit a benefit appeal. These deadlines are recorded in outlook as an appointment with the TSM, and clearly labelled. Calendars are then shared with the TSM and AHM's to ensure absences are covered. These key dates are minimal as cases requiring court date attendance or most benefit appeals would have been referred on to specialist advice organisations.

If actions lead to different outcomes than expected, the tenant will be told as soon as possible, rather than waiting until the next planned review date.

#### **4.2 Sign Posting and Referral**

Cases are signposted or referred to another advice organisation when it becomes clear that another provider or agency can offer more appropriate or specialist help or support than a TSO. Tenants are given the options of suitable service providers and choose for themselves. Personal information is not disclosed unless permission is given by the tenant.

The tenant is always informed when signposted or referred what continuing role the City of Lincoln Council will take if any, and the service to be expected from the new advice organisation, and any cost implication of the referred or sign posted advice organisation.

If a sign posting or referral is confirmed in writing to the tenant within 3 working days, with written details of the cost implications previously discussed, to ensure the tenant is aware and understands the implications.

Organisations reviewed and approved to sign post or refer to are listed on the Tenancy Sustainment Approved Advice Organisation list.

If an organisation is not on the approved list and is identified as a potential suitable organisation, it is reviewed and approved if appropriate by the TM or TSM.

TSO's would sign post or refer for debt, Hardship/poverty, additional needs, legal, benefits or employability.

## **5. Case Closure**

All tenants are informed that if a referral or signposting doesn't meet their needs or expectations, then they should call the TSO back as soon as possible.

When the TSO and tenant agree that the issues have been addressed or a signposting or referral has been made and accepted by the selected advice organisation, the file is closed on Universal Housing and on the referrals log.

If tenant wishes to formalise their feedback on the service, they can complete a feedback form which will be sent out when a case is closed.

If it is a complaint, it will follow the corporate complaints procedure and be passed to the TM or TSM to respond.



**HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE****25 JANUARY 2021**

**SUBJECT: WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE 2020/21**  
**DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK**  
**LEAD OFFICER: ALI HEWSON, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER**

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To present Members with the work programme for 2020/21 (Appendix A).

**2. Background**

2.1 The work programme for 2020/21 is provided for information to ensure members are aware of the forthcoming business at future meetings of the Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee. The work programme is regularly updated in consultation with the Chair of the committee and Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel.

2.2 The work programme includes those areas for scrutiny linked to the strategic priorities of the Council and housing matters, to ensure that the work of this committee is relevant and proportionate.

**3. Recommendation**

3.1 That Members agree the work programme and recommend any necessary amendments.

**Access to Information:**

Does the report contain exempt information, which would prejudice the public interest requirement if it was publicised?

No

**Key Decision**

No

**Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply**

No

**Call In and Urgency:** Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

No

**Does the report contain Appendices?**

Yes

**If Yes, how many Appendices?**

1

**Lead Officer:**

Ali Hewson, Democratic Services Officer  
 Telephone 873370

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**Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee Work Programme – Timetable for 2012/21****20 July 2020**

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)
Housing Department Update – COVID19	Daren Turner
Housing Finance	Coleen Warren

**7 September 2020**

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)
30 Allocations Policy Update	Yvonne Fox
Analysis of Housing Register	Yvonne Fox
Performance Indicators	Yvonne Fox
Sheltered Accommodation	Yvonne Fox

**12 October 2020**

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)
Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 (2020/21) – Performance and Finance Report	Yvonne Fox
Voids	Yvonne Fox
Befriending Service	Paul Carrick

Updated 15 01 21  
**2 November 2020**

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)
Homelessness and RS Update	Yvonne Fox
LTP review update report	Mick Barber Chair of LTP
Schedule repairs pilot update	Matt Hillman
Complaints - Verbal update	Daren Turner

**25 January 2021**

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Origin of Request
Update on Housing Service Status	Daren Turner/Andrew McNeil	Suggested by Director
Grass Verge Parking Survey Update.	Mick Barber Chair of LTP	Survey completed by LTP
Sustainment Report	Keeley Johnson	12 Oct 2020 meeting Min 86
Performance Report -Homelessness and Rough Sleeping	Yvonne Fox	Suggested by Director in lieu of performance report quarter 3 deferred to next meeting alongside quarter 4.
Rent Report	Yvonne Fox	Suggested by Director in lieu of performance report quarter 3 deferred to next meeting alongside quarter 4.
Verbal Update - Cleaning of Communal Areas - COVID restrictions	Yvonne Fox	2 November meeting Min 91

Updated 15 01 21

Work Programme 2020/21	Ali Hewson	Regular Report
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### 15 March 2021

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Origin of Request
ASB	Yvonne Fox	Requested by Chair
Costs of Voids	Yvonne Fox	12 Oct meeting Min 89
Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 (2020/21) – Performance Report	Yvonne Fox	Regular report Agreed by Executive that both quarters to be reported together year-end.
Allocations Policy Update	Yvonne Fox	New Allocations Policy commenced in Jan 2021
Occupation of Council Homes	LTP Members	Request via Chris Morton 11 Jan 2021
Report from PH Cllr Nannestad to Performance Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Nannestad	Annual report
Work Programme 2020-21	Ali Hewson	Regular Report

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**Future topics: 6 Monthly Update by Director of Housing on Homeless Cell: Requested by Chair at meeting on 2 Nov 2020.**

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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS &amp; PUBLIC</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE &amp; TOWN CLERK</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>CAROLYN WHEATER, MONITORING OFFICER</b>

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To advise members that any agenda items following this report are considered to contain exempt or confidential information for the reasons specified on the front page of the agenda for this meeting.

**2. Recommendation**

2.1 It is recommended that the press and public be excluded from the meeting at this point as it is likely that if members of the press or public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt or confidential information.

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