

High-level scopes for CLSC Pre-meet

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At the CLSC de-brief session on 23 May 2018, it was agreed to produce a high-level scope on three review / briefing topics for possible consideration by CLSC, and its 2018/19 work programme. These topics were;

- Communities (drawing from the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper)
- Affordable housing
- Impact of welfare reform

Potential integrated communities scope

Background

In March 2018, the Government published the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*. This document highlighted a number of challenges drawn from a range of evidence sources including Dame Louise Casey's independent review into opportunity and integration.

Challenges highlighted in the green paper

- High levels or sudden migration can put a strain on local communities, particularly in deprived areas
- There is a high level of segregation in schools, reducing opportunities for different ethnicities to mix (e.g. 60% of minority ethnic pupils were in schools where minority ethnic pupils were in the majority)
- There can be ethnic segregation in communities, and lack of meaningful social mixing
- There is labour market disadvantage amongst ethnic minority groups (unemployment and under-employment)
- There is a lack of English proficiency amongst some groups

Possible review focus

- Overview of the demographic information held on the city
- Overview of the community cohesion strategy and how this seeks to integrate communities locally
- Overview of the Sincil Bank Regeneration Scheme and how this seeks to integrate communities locally
- Overview of what the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper proposes to do at a national level
- Case studies from the Government's first five integration areas (Blackburn with Darwen; Bradford; Peterborough; Walsall; and Waltham Forest).
- Evidence from Bishop King Primary School (61% are EAL 2016/17); and Monks Abbey Primary School (42% are EAL 2016/17).
- Identification of the challenges to integration, what is currently in place through the Community Cohesion Strategy and Sincil Bank Regeneration Scheme to promote integration in neighbourhoods, and where the gaps are.

Possible meetings

This review would have a broad scope, and may benefit from taking place over three meetings;

- Meeting 1: Background to the data; case studies; and the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper.
- Meeting 2: Review of the community cohesion strategy and Sincil Bank Regeneration Scheme, and the impact they are having in integrating communities within neighbourhoods. Additionally, evidence from Bishop King Primary School and / or Monks Abbey Primary School.
- Meeting 3: Collation of findings, identification of what should continue / stop / commence; and then agreement of recommendations to Executive.

[Potential affordable housing scope](#)

Background

In 2017, the city council adopted the Lincoln Housing Strategy 2017-2022. It identifies Lincoln's six housing challenges;

- Housing supply: demand for housing in the city is increasing exponentially, with particular emphasis on smaller family accommodation, and affordable housing for younger people.
- Homelessness and entrenched rough sleeping: many of those utilising and seeking temporary accommodation, and rough sleeping in the city, have gravitated from other locations in response to the concentration of support.
- Supported and specialist accommodation: there is a need to modernise the supported housing service, and respond to a largely unmet need for specialist accommodation for those with more acute mental / physical health needs.
- Private rented sector and poor housing conditions: The private rented sector has seen a sharp increase, partly due to the rapid rise in property prices compared to wages. University expansion has also increased student demand. This has caused increases to rents and alongside benefits changes, good quality private rented housing is more expensive to access.
- Sustainable living and fuel poverty: Around 6,147 households are unable to afford to heat their home to a suitable level, which can cause health issues.
- Affordability: where the housing market doesn't deliver enough housing for the city, by default it doesn't provide enough housing that is affordable.

Possible review focus

A significant amount of work is already being undertaken to;

- Enable 400 new homes by 2020
- Increase the council's supply of council housing
- Respond to the issue of rough sleepers (June 2018 – awarded £376k to establish a rough sleeper coordinator post and a range of outreach and intervention activities, to further support an already active partnership)

With this in mind, if there is an appetite to consider the above, it may be worth review these topics at a later date, to enable the partnership led interventions to take place, and then review their outcomes.

However, a shorter term review of affordable housing could focus on two possible areas;

1. The issue of affordability in the private rented sector, and the challenges this creates for accessing good quality private rented accommodation. There is a large body of evidence on the challenges associated with poor quality private rented accommodation, and the challenges surrounding affordability, that could feed into a review. This review could consider;
 - a. What the housing strategy is doing to address this
 - b. The impact of the Trusted Landlord Scheme
 - c. The scale of the issue in Lincoln, with a focus on rent levels; hazards; non-decent homes; and fuel poverty
 - d. Evidence from the Private Housing Team and the Citizens Advice Bureau

2. The affordability of home ownership, and the impact of people struggling to pay their mortgages. There is less local evidence on the affordability of home ownership. The figures for Lincoln suggest housing is more affordable locally than elsewhere in the country. However, the figures could be masking the true picture of housing affordability.
 - a. What the limited data on housing affordability tells us about Lincoln
 - b. National evidence on affordability
 - c. What help to buy schemes are currently available
 - d. The impact on replacing support for mortgage interest with locals for mortgage interest
 - e. Evidence from partners such as Westleigh and Waterloo

[Potential impact of welfare reform scope](#)

Background

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 became law on 08 March 2012. The Act introduced a wide range of reforms to the benefits and tax credit systems. More recently, social security and housing measures in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 included;

- Lowering the household benefit cap threshold from £26,000 for a family and £18,200 for a single person, to £23,000 in London (£15,410 for a single person) and £20,000 (£13,400 for a single person) elsewhere in the UK.
- A four-year benefits freeze.
- Limiting support through Child Tax Credits/Universal Credit
- The abolition of Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Component
- Changes to conditionality for “responsible carers” under Universal Credit
- Replacing Support for Mortgage Interest with Loans for Mortgage Interest
- Reducing social housing rent levels by 1% in each year for four years from 2016-17

In addition, in March 2018, the Law Society published *Priced out of Justice?* which argued some of the poorest families in England and Wales are being denied legal aid because they cannot afford the financial contributions they are required to make.

Also, Universal Credit came into effect in Lincoln on 07 March 2018. Since then, the city council's newly formed Universal Credit Support Team has been working hard to support residents' transition onto the system. As of June 2018, there are 1,254 Universal Credit claimants in Lincoln, and the council has provided 133 residents with digital support; 65 residents with budgeting support; and 30 residents with combined digital and budgeting support. Amongst our council tenants, 101 tenants have had their rent arrears increase since claiming UC; and 79 have had their rent arrears decrease.

Possible review focus

- Briefing on the impact of welfare reform, particularly Universal Credit, from the city council's UC Support Team
- Briefing on the impact of welfare reform and challenges around legal aid and PIP applications, from Lincoln Citizens Advice Bureau (+ law firm if relevant)
- Briefing on the city council's service level agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau

Possible meetings

Given the recent changes to portfolio holder scopes, and the changes to this topic's reporting line, it may be appropriate to consider this topic later in the work programme to allow time for the portfolio holder to review this important service.

In light of the very broad nature of welfare reform and its far-reaching impact, it is suggested this review could commence with a single-meeting briefing to Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee on the current effects of welfare reform and UC. This briefing could come from the city council's newly established Universal Credit Support Team, and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

This briefing could provide initial evidence to Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee to inform a possible follow up meeting on a specific area of welfare reform. Options could include;

- The challenges of accessing legal aid in Lincoln, in light of the Law Society's recent report
- The impact of welfare reform on city council housing rent arrears, and the support in place to respond to this
- Review of the support available to people in accessing and applying for benefits e.g. PIP