

People and Communities Policy Committee

Members of the People and Communities Policy Committee:

Mr D Bills (Chairman)

Mr J Hornby (Vice Chairman)

Mrs S Blundell

Ms V Clifford-Jackson

Mr J Easter

Mrs F Ellis

Mr T Holden

Mr N Legg

Mrs J Wilby

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

This meeting will be live streamed for public viewing via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZciRgwo84-iPyRlmsTCIng>

If a member of the public would like to attend to speak on an agenda item, please email your request to

democracy@s-norfolk.gov.uk, no later than 5.00pm on Tuesday 6 October 2020



Agenda

Date

Thursday 8 October 2020

Time

10.00 am

Place

To be hosted remotely at:

South Norfolk House
Cygnet Court
Long Stratton
Norwich
NR15 2XE

Contact

Claire White tel (01508) 533669
South Norfolk District Council
Cygnet Court
Long Stratton Norwich
NR15 2XE

Email: democracy@s-norfolk.gov.uk

**If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting,
please let us know in advance**

Large print version can be made available



A G E N D A

1. **To report apologies for absence and to identify substitute members;**
2. **Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972. Urgent business may only be taken if, "by reason of special circumstances" (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency;**
3. **To Receive Declarations of Interest from Members;**
(Please see guidance form and flow chart attached – page 3)
4. **To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the People and Communities Policy Committee held on Thursday 6 August 2020;** (attached – page 5)
5. **Housing Standards Enforcement Policy** (report attached – page 8)
6. **Future of Community Grants** (report attached – page 37)
7. **The Vision for a Best in Class Housing Offer and Draft Allocations Scheme**
(report attached - page 43)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

When declaring an interest at a meeting Members are asked to indicate whether their interest in the matter is pecuniary, or if the matter relates to, or affects a pecuniary interest they have, or if it is another type of interest. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote. If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed. If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting. Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.

Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If Yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.

Does the interest directly:

1. affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position?
2. relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner?
3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council
4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own
5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.

Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

Does the interest indirectly affect or relate any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1-5 above?

If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but you should not partake in general discussion or vote.

Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be an other interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.

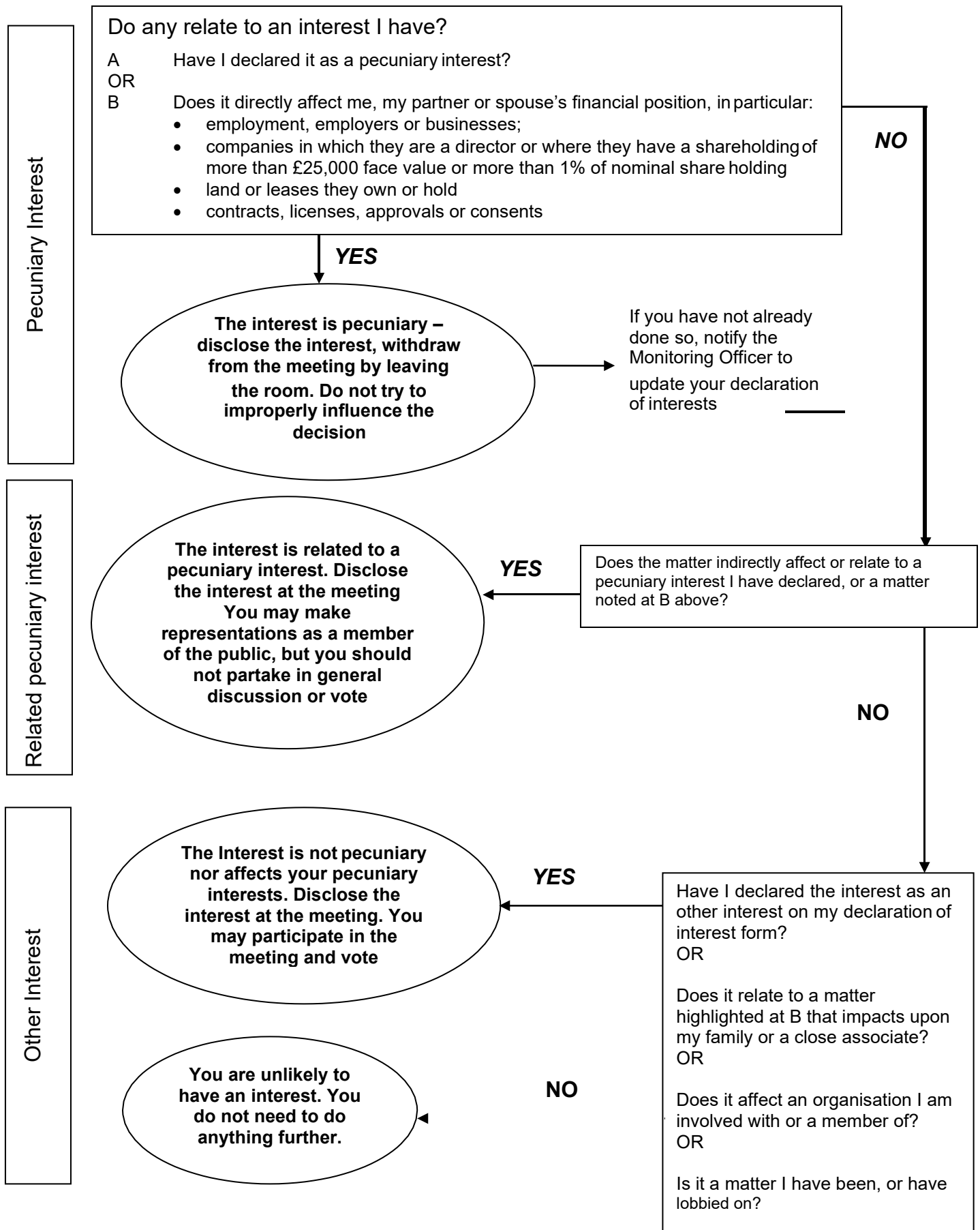
Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting, and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.

FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF.

PLEASE REFER ANY QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST INSTANCE

What matters are being discussed at the meeting?

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



People and Communities Policy Committee

Minutes of a remote meeting of the People and Communities Policy Committee of South Norfolk Council held on Thursday 6 August 2020 at 10.00 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: D Bills (Chairman), S Blundell, V Clifford-Jackson, J Easter, F Ellis T Holden, N Legg and J Wilby

Apologies: Councillor: J Hornby

Cabinet Member in Attendance: Councillor: Y Bendle

Officers in Attendance: The Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse) and the Policy and Partnerships Officer (V Parsons)

13 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the People and Communities Policy Committee held on 9 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

14 GREATER NORWICH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2020-2025; SOUTH NORFOLK AND BROADLAND ROUGH SLEEPER STATEMENT 2020-2022

Members considered the report of the Policy and Partnerships Officer which presented the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-25 and the South Norfolk Broadland Rougher Sleeper Statement 2020-2022, for recommendation to Cabinet.

The Committee noted that that the Council had a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to publish the Homelessness Strategy at least once every five years, and this was the fourth time the Council had collaborated with both Broadland and Norwich on the production of the Strategy. It was now a requirement for the Strategy to also include a specific focus on rough sleeping, and South Norfolk and Broadland had produced a separate Rough Sleeper Statement. The intention was that the three councils would produce an aligned Greater Norwich Rough Sleeper Strategy from 2022.

The Policy and Partnerships Officer explained that the responses to the Housing Strategy consultation had been broadly supportive of the Strategy and its priorities, which had been identified using an evidence-based approach, in consultation with partner agencies. The priorities fed in to work already underway to redesign the housing offer across South Norfolk and Broadland, taking a person-centred approach

to increase resilience where needed and offer additional support when required. The Strategy also fed into the Council's recovery planning and strategic housing partnership work being undertaken at County level. Members noted that the priorities had been reviewed in light of Covid, and were found to be more relevant than ever.

Turning to rough sleeping, the Policy and Partnerships officer advised that the Council had been able to offer accommodation to all rough sleepers at the beginning of lockdown, and that this process had uncovered a considerable level of "hidden homelessness" cases, where arrangements were untenable during the Covid-19 lockdown. Members' attention was drawn to the graph at paragraph 3.20 of the report, which illustrated this increase in demand for temporary accommodation.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Y Bendle, commended both documents to members. She referred to the excellent response from officers to Covid-19 and the impact it had had on the service. She also drew attention to the "Best in Class Housing Offer" project, which would undertake a radical reimagining of how the Council would deliver the housing and homelessness service. Members noted that consultants were assisting this process and were appointed through a formal procurement process based on their knowledge and innovation.

Discussion followed and officers responded to a number of queries from the Committee. One member queried the ongoing support available for people once they had been permanently housed and the Policy and Partnerships Officer explained that this support was vital to ensure sustainable tenancies, and would be provided through Assessment and Resettlement Officers and Housing Benefits Officers, linking in with the Help Hub and other services.

Concern was expressed with regard to mental health and the need to interact with mental health providers. Officers explained that a conscious decision had been made to not make mental health a specific priority in the Strategy, as it was theme across all of the existing priorities. The Council had a commitment under the Mental Health Discharge and Homelessness Prevention protocol, along with its partners, to ensure that those people in a mental health ward that may be facing homelessness on discharge, could access accommodation that was quicker and was appropriate to their needs. Work was also being undertaken at County level and within the Help Hub, to provide support to people with mental health needs.

The importance of partnership working was discussed, and the need to provide a "one stop" service, and concerns were raised that some charities might not survive Covid. Cllr Bendle explained that the Help Hub worked with many different partners and that the Community Connectors played a vital role in ensuring that people were able to access the appropriate support. Officers assured member that the Council would do everything it could to ensure that support continued to be delivered in a cohesive manner, to benefit those requiring assistance. They also believed that building community resilience at a local level, was key in helping people endure the current crisis.

Members queried whether the Government's target to end rough sleeping by 2027 was achievable. Officers agreed that this was an ambitious target but felt that it was achievable across both South Norfolk and Broadland, for those people not wishing to live on the streets.

The Committee was pleased to note that the Council had been able to accommodate all rough sleepers during lockdown and officers explained that this was because the Council's First Steps Rough Sleeper Service was well established, allowing the Council to act quickly and effectively. Through this service, the Council was able to provide "rapid access accommodation" where people were allowed to stay for 72 hours. Funding was also secured to provide further interim accommodation for up to eight weeks, which provided a temporary home for people whilst officers assessed their future needs. The Committee noted that both South Norfolk and Broadland had rented rooms at the old RAF site in Coltishall to be used for this purpose. Some temporary accommodation had also been utilised across the South Norfolk District.

The Policy and Partnerships Officer explained that the Council was looking to apply for funding to support those homeless people with more complex needs and that officers were working with Housing Associations to try to provide them with properties to move in to permanently. Members were also reminded that a policy had also been approved at Cabinet to temporarily change the allocations process, so that more people in temporary accommodation could move into permanent accommodation more quickly. Officers stressed the importance of ensuring that accommodation was suitable and that this sometimes meant that allocations needed to be made over a wider footprint across the county.

Some discussion followed regarding the proposed changes in planning laws outlined in the recently published White Paper, and how this could impact on affordable housing. Members agreed that more details were required before this could be fully assessed.

The Committee expressed its support for the Strategy and the Rough Sleeper Statement and thanked the Policy and Partnerships Officer for a well written and comprehensive piece of work.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To

1. Note the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 and the South Norfolk and Broadland Rough Sleeper Statement 2020-2022.
2. Recommend that Cabinet adopts the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 and the South Norfolk and Broadland Rough Sleeper Statement 2020-2022

(The meeting concluded at 11.00am)

Chairman

Agenda Item: 5
People and Communities Policy Committee
8 October 2020

Housing Standards Enforcement Policy

Report Author(s): Leigh Booth
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Hub
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Portfolio: Cllr Yvonne Bendle, Better Lives

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

This report recommends the adoption of the Council's new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet

1. Consider and approve the Council's new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.
2. Approve alternative action in respect of the proposed new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides context to the creation of the new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In common with all Local Housing Authorities, the Council has a statutory role in ensuring the quality and suitability of homes in its area and address Hazards in people's homes. To do this, the Housing Standards Team works closely with home owners, housing associations and private sector landlords to ensure that properties within their ownership meet the required standard.
- 2.2 A multitude of legislative tools are available to assess properties and address Hazards and Risks. The Housing Act 2004 is the primary Act detailing 29 specific Hazards that may be assessed. The Act details procedures and duties for local authorities to address defects identified in people's homes. In addition various regulations have been introduced to amend the Act and provide bespoke procedures, for example specific Smoke Alarm Regulations.
- 2.3 The Housing Standards Enforcement Policy is a legislative reference document for officers in the Housing Standards Team. The Policy details what action can be taken and what legislative and regulatory basis there is for that action. It is an essential tool in ensuring that the Council remains legally compliant in its enforcement activity.
- 2.4 The current Housing Standards Enforcement Policy is out of date and needs to be updated to ensure the Council remains compliant with the latest housing enforcement legislation and regulations.
- 2.5 The appended policy has been written to meet the requirements of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and the Regulators Code, which came into statutory effect on 6 April 2014. The Council has a duty to follow the principles of good regulation specified in the Act and to have regard to the Code when setting policies or principles that determine how we carry out our regulatory activities.
- 2.6 The focus of this report and the proposed new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy is in relation to the statutory and therefore non-discretionary powers that the Council has under a wide range of housing related legislation. Use of discretionary housing enforcement powers, including those relating to empty homes will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet later in the year.

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The Council's existing policy statement is in need of updating in order to reflect newly enacted regulations in relation to Electrical Safety Standards in the private rented sector.
- 3.2 In addition it has been agreed that a Banning Order Policy, that is solely applicable to Housing Standards related matters should be adopted. Therefore the opportunity has been taken to develop a Council Banning Order Policy, which has

been appended to the attached Housing Standards Enforcement Policy. The Banning Order Policy has been developed in accordance with the current MHCLG Guidance.

4 PROPOSED ACTION

- 4.1 In order to provide the Housing Standards Team with a legally compliant and legislatively up to date Enforcement Policy, it is proposed that the appended policy be agreed and adopted. The new policy, when agreed, will take immediate effect and will be published on the Council website.

5 OTHER OPTIONS

- 5.1 It is feasible that the Council could continue with the current Housing Standards Enforcement Policy, however such an approach would undermine the Council's ability to take effective enforcement action in respect of sub-standard housing in the district.

6 RISKS

- 6.1 **Resource Implications:** There are no new resource implications arising from this report.

- 6.2 **Legal Implications:** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

- 6.3 **Equality Implications:** There are no direct equality issues arising from this report and it has not been necessary to prepare an Equalities and Communities Impact Assessment.

The Housing Standards Enforcement Policy articulates the importance of ensuring that housing standards are adhered to in order to improve the quality of life of those living in sub-standard homes.

- 6.4 **Environmental Impact:** One of the primary roles of the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy is to address any adverse environmental impacts that might arise from poor housing conditions.

- 6.5 **Crime and Disorder:** The Housing Standards Enforcement Policy provides a clear statement of action that can be taken by the Council, should there be a breach of the relevant housing legislation. This will on occasion lead to enforcement action that will address illegal activity.

- 6.6 **Risks:** Not adopting an up to date Housing Standards Enforcement Policy could have both legal and reputational risks for the Council.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The current Housing Standards Enforcement Policy requires updating to reflect new legislation and practice, and in order to adhere to central government guidance.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Cabinet
1. Consider and approve the Councils new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.
 2. Approve alternative action in respect of the proposed new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.

Background Papers

Improving the private rented sector – A Guide for Councils, MHCLG July 2020

Banning Order Offences under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, Guidance for Local Housing Authorities MHCLG April 2018

South Norfolk Council

Housing Standards Enforcement Policy

**Adopted: November 2020
Review Date: November 2022**

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Principles

Enforcement action will be based upon an assessment of risk to residents' health and safety, public health and/or the environment.

All enforcement action will be based upon an objective assessment following consideration of all the facts of the matter, and will not be based on anecdotal evidence, hearsay or other subjective assessment.

It will not be normal practice for formal enforcement action to be used as a punitive measure for minor technical contravention.

All enforcement action shall have regard to relevant legislation, codes of practice and guidance periodically issued by the Government, the Chartered Institution of Environmental Health, Local Government Regulation and other relevant bodies. This also includes the Human Rights Act 1998 and the test of proportionality. Regard will also be had for departmental procedures and work instructions.

All authorised officers, when making enforcement decisions will abide by the requirements of the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy. Any departure from this policy must be exceptional, be capable of justification and be fully considered by the Assistant Director, Individuals and Families before the decision is taken, unless there would be a significant risk to public health and/or safety by delaying the decision.

SECTION 2. TYPES OF ACTION

2.1 Informal Action

2.1.1 Informal action to secure compliance with legislation includes:

- Offering verbal advice
- Verbal requests for action
- Informal written advice (visit reports and letters)

2.1.2 The circumstances where it is appropriate to use informal action are:

- Where the act or omission is trivial or not of a serious enough nature to warrant formal action.
- As an initial notification to the alleged offender of a minor problem.
- Where from the individual/organisations/businesses past history it can be reasonably expected that informal action will achieve compliance.

- Where confidence in the individual/businesses management is high.
- Where the consequences of non-compliance will not pose a significant risk to residents' health and safety or the environment.

2.1.3 There may be circumstances when some of the above are not met. However it may be more effective than a formal approach e.g. this may apply to charitable or voluntary organisations. If an authorised enforcement officer considers this is appropriate, they will discuss the matter with their line manager to ratify their action. For non-hazardous and minor contraventions, a revisit may be an inappropriate use of resources.

All enforcement documentation issued or sent, will:

- Contain all the information necessary to understand what needs to be done, why, when and by whom.
- Clearly distinguish between legal requirements and best practice advice or recommendations.
- Indicate the legislation that applies.

An authorised enforcement officer will at all times, even if only giving verbal advice, differentiate between legal requirements and matters which are recommended as good practice.

2.2 Formal Action

2.2.1 Relevant Legislation

Formal action to secure compliance with legislation may include:

- Improvement Notice (Housing Act 2004)
- Suspended Improvement Notice (Housing Act 2004)
- Prohibition Order (Housing Act 2004)
- Suspended Prohibition Order (Housing Act 2004)
- Hazard Awareness Notice (Housing Act 2004)
- Emergency Remedial Action (Housing Act 2004)
- Emergency Prohibition Notice (Housing Act 2004)
- Empty Dwelling Management Order (Housing Act 2004)
- Compulsory Purchase Order (Housing Act 2004 and/or Town & Country Planning Act 1990)
- Demolition Order (Housing Act 1985)

- Ruinous and dilapidated buildings and neglected sites Notice (Building Act 1984)
- Protection of Buildings Notice (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982)
- Drainage Notice (Building Act 1984/Public Health Act 1961)
- House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Mandatory Licence (Housing Act 2004)
- The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018
- The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Prescribed Description) (England) Order 2018
- Caravan Sites Licence (Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960)
- Direction Order (Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994)
- Civil Fine Procedures - The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014; The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations (2015); The Housing Act 2004 as amended by The Housing and Planning Act 2016; Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 Notices
- Works in Default
- Prosecution (summary or indictment)
- Rent Repayment Orders
- Banning Orders

2.2.2 Appropriate Circumstances

The circumstances where it is appropriate to use formal action include:

- There are significant contraventions of legislation.
- There is a lack of confidence in the individual/business to respond to an informal approach.
- There is a history of non-compliance with informal action.
- The consequence of non-compliance could be potentially serious to residents and/or public health.
- There is a requirement to issue a notice to protect the resident from any retaliatory conviction.

- Although prosecution is intended, immediate or swift action is necessarily required to remedy a serious threat to public health.

2.2.3 Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020

This recently enacted legislation enables a range of Notices to be used. The relevant Notices are:

- Remedial Notice (Regulation 4 (1))
- Remedial Action Notice (Regulation 6 (2))
- Urgent Remedial Action Notice (Regulation 10 (3))

The Council may consider it necessary to deal with non-compliance with the processes, (as detailed in the above regulations), using summary proceedings in a Magistrates Court or via the Civil Fine procedure as detailed in Appendix A.

2.2.4 Improvement (IN), Prohibition (PN), Emergency Prohibition (EPN) and Hazard Awareness Notices (HAN) (including Suspended, Improvement and Prohibition Notices)

The circumstances where authorised officers will consider the service of Improvement, Prohibition and Hazard Awareness notices under the Housing Act 2004 includes one or more of the following:

- An assessment of a property under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) reveals the presence of one or more Category 1 Hazards, (hazards rated A, B or C). The Council has a duty to take action.
- An assessment of a property under the HHSRS reveals the presence of one or more Category 2 Hazards, (hazards rated D, E, F, G, H, I or J). The Council has a discretionary power to take action.
- There is little confidence in the individual/business resolving the matter through an informal approach.
- The service of a notice is the only realistic option to secure compliance.
- There is a history of non-compliance with informal action.
- Standards are generally poor with little management awareness of statutory requirements.
- There is a realistic chance of securing conviction for non-compliance
- The consequences of non-compliance could be a risk to

residents' health and safety.

- Previous action has failed to resolve the issue in question.

In general, improvement and prohibition notices will not be used for minor technical contraventions but will be used where there is a risk to resident's health and safety. Hazard awareness notices may be used where the risks are either minor or where it is deemed impracticable for works to reduce or eliminate more serious risks.

Authorised enforcement officers will only serve an improvement notice where they are satisfied that service of a notice is the most appropriate course of action and will discuss the content of the notice with a colleague, usually their line manager, **before** service takes place.

Notices will only be issued and signed by those officers authorised to do so. Authorised enforcement officers will only consider service of an improvement notice in respect of one or more HHSRS Category 2 Hazards where the following applies.

HHSRS Band D Hazard

There will be a general presumption that where one or more Band D hazards exist, officers will consider action under the Housing Act 2004. Where the hazards identified relate to "Damp and Mould" and "Fire", action will be determined as if the assessment for a "vulnerable occupant" is the "actual occupant". Where "Excess Cold" is identified as a Band D hazard, insulation works to the property will be considered a priority when enforcement action is taken.

Multiple HHSRS Hazards Bands D – I

Where a number of hazards at Band D or below appear, when aggregated together, to create a more serious situation, or where the property appears to be in an un-maintained and/or dilapidated condition, the Housing Standards Senior Manager or the Assistant Director, Individuals and Families may authorise action under the Housing Act 2004.

Officers will discuss the content of the notice with a colleague, usually their line manager, **before** service takes place.

Authorised enforcement officers will place realistic time limits on improvement and prohibition notices which, where possible, will be agreed with the recipient as being attainable. Wherever possible, the authorised officer should also discuss the contents of the notice with the recipient and will consider any alternatives that may be put forward by the recipient at that time.

Generally, in cases where there has been a failure to comply with an improvement or prohibition notice, the Council will consider summary proceedings or a Civil Fine Procedure and works in default where they are also required.

2.2.5 Emergency Remedial Action

The circumstances where authorised officers will consider the undertaking of emergency remedial action includes one or more of the following:

- An assessment of a property under the HHSRS reveals the presence of one or more Category 1 Hazard, (hazards rated A, B or C). The Council has a duty to take action.
- The hazard(s) involve an imminent risk of serious harm to the health or safety of any of the occupants in those or any other residential premises.
- There is little confidence in the individual/business resolving the matter through an informal approach.
- Taking emergency remedial action is the only realistic option to remove the imminent risk.
- There is a history of non-compliance with informal action.
- Standards are generally poor with little management awareness of statutory requirements.
- The consequences of in-action could be a risk of serious harm to residents' health and safety.
- Previous action has failed to resolve the issue in question.

Emergency remedial action will not be used for minor technical contraventions but will be used where there is an imminent risk of serious harm to residents' safety. Emergency remedial action will only be approved by those officers authorised to do so.

Authorised enforcement officers will only approve emergency remedial action where they are satisfied that such action is the most appropriate course of action. They will discuss the details of the case, the required works and content of the notice with their line manager, **before** the action takes place.

Wherever possible, the authorised officer should also discuss the matter with the property owner(s) and will consider any alternatives that may be put forward by the recipient at that time.

Emergency remedial action will be followed in the statutory time (7 days), by a Housing Act 2004 Section 41 Emergency Remedial Action Notice.

2.2.6 Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Actions in relation to empty homes will be carried out in accordance with the current approved Council policy.

The circumstances where authorised officers may consider the initiation of an EDMO or CPO includes the following:

- These Orders will only be considered in respect of long term empty property where all other actions have failed to result in the dwelling coming back into use within a reasonable timeframe.
- Additionally a CPO may be considered without previous engagement, where a suitable long term empty property is brought to the Councils attention in an area of housing need, and where the owner has made it clear they have no intention to have the property occupied, and has no good reason for that intention.
- A CPO will not be initiated without prior authorisation from the Assistant Director, Individuals and Families in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- The owner(s) have been fully appraised of their statutory compensation rights.

Only enforcement officers authorised to issue EDMOs shall do so and they must follow and have due regard to the statutory guidance under the Housing Act 2004 and relevant case history decisions from the Residential Property Tribunal.

2.2.7 Demolition Order

The serving of a Demolition Order may be considered appropriate to deal with a property (normally a detached property) where a full socio-economic assessment indicates that there is no other reasonably acceptable alternative.

The Council will not serve a Demolition Order unless satisfied the following conditions are fulfilled:

- There must be sufficient evidence to instigate prosecution proceedings.
- There must be adequate arrangements in place to ensure that the Demolition Order does not result in homelessness of any occupants.
- The owner(s) have been fully appraised of their statutory compensation rights.

2.2.8 Ruinous and Dilapidated Buildings and Neglected Sites Notice, (Building Act 1984),

Protection of Buildings (Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1982),

Drainage Notice (Building Act 1984 and Public Health Act 1961).

These notices will be considered in the following circumstances:

- An assessment of the property indicates defects likely to lead to risks to public health or safety.
- There is little confidence in the individual/business resolving the matter through an informal approach.
- The service of a notice is the only realistic option to secure compliance.
- There is a history of non-compliance with informal action.
- Standards are generally poor with little management awareness of statutory requirements.
- There is a realistic chance of securing a conviction for non-compliance.
- The consequences of non-compliance could be a risk to residents' health and safety.
- Previous action has failed to resolve the issue in question.

2.2.9 Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) and Holiday Caravan Sites Licences.

These licences will be issued on application by a relevant fit and proper person and payment of the appropriate fee.

Conditions will be attached to Holiday Caravan Site Licences in accordance with statutory guidance and Model Standards where applicable. Conditions for relevant HMO's that require a licence, will include statutory conditions and additional conditions based on, but not exclusive to, the Councils adopted 'Landlord's guide to amenities and facilities for licensed HMO's'.

A person commits an offence for breaches of Licence conditions of Holiday Caravan Sites. Section 72 of the Housing Act 2004 details offences relating to the HMO licensing procedure. Such offences will be dealt with according to the general policy on Prosecutions and Civil Penalties (See Appendix 1).

2.2.10 Residential Caravan Sites Licences (Breach of conditions)

The circumstances where authorised officers will consider the service of a Compliance Notice under the Caravan Control of Development Act 1960 includes one or more of the following:

- There is little confidence in the individual/business resolving the matter through an informal approach.
- The service of a notice is the only realistic option to secure compliance.
- There is a history of non-compliance with informal action.

- Standards are generally poor with little management awareness of statutory requirements.
- There is a realistic chance of securing a conviction for non-compliance.
- The consequences of non-compliance could be a risk to residents' health and safety.
- Previous action has failed to resolve the issue in question.

2.2.11 Direction Order

Service of a Direction Order is only relevant to unauthorised encampments, and will only be considered after a meeting under the auspices of the Norfolk Protocol for the Consideration of Unauthorised Encampments has been convened.

A protocol meeting will consider all aspects of the encampment including the health, safety, welfare, human rights etc. of the campers, balancing the human rights of the campers, with those of any affected nearby settled residents. The campers will be invited to send a representative to the Protocol meeting.

In cases of urgency, a Direction Order may be considered without prior reference to a Protocol meeting but in these cases the matter must be discussed with the Assistant Director, Individuals and Families and their agreement obtained. Where practicable the County Traveller Liaison Officer will be notified of such urgent action.

2.2.12 Works in default

The Council will consider it appropriate to instigate works in default where one or more of the following criteria are met:

- The relevant person has failed to comply with a statutory notice requiring the execution of works.
- It is considered unlikely that the relevant person has any intention to carry out the required works.
- It is considered that the relevant person does not have the capability or capacity to organise and execute the required works.
- One or more of the property's occupants are considered to be vulnerable.
- Where the relevant person demonstrates a flagrant disregard for the health and safety of his tenants, and/or a flagrant disregard for the requirements of the legislation, consideration will be given, where statute empowers, to undertake works in default

and a simultaneous prosecution.

2.2.13 Simple Caution

The issuing of a caution may be considered appropriate under the following circumstances:

- To deal quickly and simply with less serious incidents.
- To divert the accused from an unnecessary appearance in the criminal courts on matters that can be more quickly and equally efficiently dealt with by way of a simple caution.
- To reduce the chance of a repeated offence.

The Council will not issue a caution unless the following conditions are fulfilled:

- There must be sufficient evidence to instigate prosecution proceedings.
- The offender must admit the offence.
- The offender must show remorse and have undertaken to prevent recurrence of the offence.
- The offender must accept the caution once they have understood its importance and significance and have given a written consent to being cautioned.
- Commencing a prosecution proceeding is not in the public interest, taking into account the public interest principles described in The Code of Practice for Crown Prosecutors.

If a person declines the offer of a caution, prosecution proceedings will normally be the next course of action. In some circumstances, the Council may consider a written warning will suffice instead of a caution, e.g. in the case of an offence which is minor in nature.

2.2.14 Prosecution

The Council will consider it appropriate to instigate prosecution proceedings where one or more of the following criteria are met:

- There is general disregard for the law, particularly where the economic advantages of breaking the law and/or the loss/adverse impact or potential loss/adverse impact on others resulting from the offence are substantial.
- There appears to have been a disregard for residents' health and safety.
- There is a history of non-compliance with the law, an approved Code of Practice or the relevant guidance, and the person in charge and/or company is not intending to rectify or deal with this non-compliance.

- The person in charge and/or company is not capable of dealing adequately with the issues and is not prepared to pay for professional advice, or take on board recommendations.
- As a result of a legal contravention, there has been a serious incident or case of ill health.
- The offence involves failure to comply with a notice.

When considering whether to prosecute for a breach of legislation following an incident, the seriousness of the contravention not the severity of the incident, is the prime issue for consideration. The extent of personal or company responsibility for the incident is also relevant.

Due regard must also be taken of guidance contained in The Code of Practice for Crown Prosecutors issued by the Crown Prosecution Service and relevant statutory codes of practice and the test of proportionality under the Human Rights Act. Factors to be considered may include:

- The seriousness of the alleged offence.
- The risk of harm to public health.
- Identifiable victims.
- Failure to comply with a statutory notice served for a breach of legislation.
- Disregard of public health for financial reward.
- The previous history of the party concerned.
- Offences following a history of similar offences.
- Failure to respond positively to past warnings.
- The likelihood of the alleged offender(s) being able to establish a due diligence defence.
- The ability of any important witness to give evidence and their willingness to co-operate.
- The willingness of the alleged offender to prevent recurrence of the alleged offence.
- The probable public benefit of a prosecution and the importance of the case e.g. whether it might establish a legal precedent.
- The more serious the offence, the less likelihood that the public interest will allow anything other than a prosecution.
- Whether other action, such as issuing a simple caution in accordance with current government guidance.
- Any explanation offered by the alleged offender, (person or company representative).

Once a decision to instigate prosecution proceedings has been taken, the matter should be referred, without undue delay, to the Council's legal advisors.

2.2.15 Fine Procedures

The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014

Where the Council is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that a person has failed to comply with the requirement to belong to a Redress Scheme the Council may, by notice, require the person to pay the authority a penalty of £5,000.

The Council will initiate a fine procedure detailed in the Order where satisfied that a person has failed the requirement without any warning procedure.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations (2015)

Where the Council is made aware that a rental property does not have a Smoke Alarm fitted on every floor and a Carbon Monoxide Alarm fitted to any habited room which contains a solid fuel burning combustion appliance, or that such an alarm was not appropriately checked at the start of a tenancy, the Council will consider issuing a penalty notice.

The level of fine imposed will be determined by procedures detailed in the Councils "Statement of Principles" which can be found on the Council website.

Financial Penalties as an Alternative to Prosecution

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 amends the Housing Act 2004 by introducing a new Section 249A, to enable local housing authorities to impose a financial penalty up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution for the following offences under the Housing Act 2004:

- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice (section 30).
- Offences in relation to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Section 72).
- Offences in relation to licensing of houses under Part 3 of the Act (Section 95).
- Offences of contravention of an overcrowding notice (Section 139).
- Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Section 234).
- Breach of a Banning Order (Section 21 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016).

The criminal burden of proof, i.e. beyond all reasonable doubt will be satisfied before a Civil Penalty is issued as an alternative to prosecution. The Council

will satisfy itself that a realistic prospect of conviction will be achieved prior to the introduction of this Civil Penalty.

The Council will assess whether there is sufficient reliable evidence to prosecute with regard to The Code of Practice for Crown Prosecutors. The Council will consider any potential defences available and in certain circumstances may decide to conduct an interview under caution in accordance with PACE codes of practice to assist in determining whether the issue of a Civil Penalty is appropriate or not.

The decision to impose fixed penalty notices under the Housing Act 2004 as amended, is delegated to the Assistant Director, Individuals and Families. Determination of appropriate penalty levels will follow the procedure as approved by the Council.

2.2.16 Rent Repayment Orders

Under Section 40(2) The Housing and Planning Act 2016 a Rent Repayment Order (RRO) requires the landlord, under a tenancy of housing in England, to repay an amount of rent paid by a tenant, or a local housing authority, an amount in respect of a relevant award of Universal Credit paid (to any person) in respect of rent under the tenancy.

RROs have now been expanded to cover the following Housing Act 2004 offences:

- Section 30(1) failure to comply with an improvement notice.
- Section 32(1) failure to comply with a prohibition order etc.
- Section 72(1) control or management of an unlicensed HMO.
- Section 95(1) control or management of an unlicensed house.

And

- Section 21 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 for breach of a Banning Order.

If the Council becomes aware that a person has been convicted of such an offence, the Assistant Director Individuals and Families will consider the commencement of proceedings at the First Tier Tribunal for a RRO. This will however only apply in cases where the Council has paid rent, in the form of Universal Credit/Housing Benefit on behalf of the tenant.

2.2.17 Banning Orders

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 makes provision for the imposition of banning orders. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 (Banning Order Offences) Regulations 2017 details Banning Order offences. Among other relevant offences detailed in the regulations, Housing Act 2004 offences for which a banning order may be used include:

- Section 30(1) failure to comply with an improvement notice

- Section 32(1) failure to comply with a prohibition order etc
- Section 72(1) control or management of an unlicensed HMO
- Section 95(1) control or management of an unlicensed house
- Section 139(7) Contravention of an overcrowding notice
- Section 234(3) Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Section 238(1) False or misleading information

The Assistant Director, Individuals and Families will consider application to the First-tier Tribunal for a banning order against a person who has been convicted of a banning order offence.

A copy of the Councils Banning Order Policy is attached at Appendix 3.

Appendix 1 Civil Penalty Decision Process

This Civil Penalty Decision Process encompasses procedures for the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.

Where the Local Housing Authority considers that a Housing Act offence has been committed it must decide whether to prosecute or to issue a civil penalty as an alternative to prosecution.

The following factors, whilst not exhaustive, are examples of where it would be appropriate to consider for prosecution:-

- The seriousness of the offence, for example breach of a Prohibition Order would be an offence only suitable for prosecution.
- The antecedents of an individual, for example a landlord indicates that he / she has been prosecuted for Housing Act / similar offences.

The following factors, whilst not exhaustive, are examples of where it would be appropriate to consider the issuing of a Civil Penalty:-

- No evidence of previous non-compliance with appropriate legislation
- No previous convictions recorded
- Not in the public interest to prosecute
- Offence was committed as a result of a genuine mistake or misunderstanding (these factors must be balanced against the seriousness of the offence)
- Prosecution is likely to have a serious adverse effect upon an individual's eg a landlord physical or mental health, always bearing in mind the seriousness of the offence.

Determining the level of Civil Penalty

In order to ensure that the civil penalty is set at an appropriate level the following factors will be considered

- The seriousness of the offence, determined by harm caused and culpability of the offender
- The history of compliance of the offender
- The punishment of the offender for the offence
- The deterrent from repeating the offence
- The deterrent from others committing similar offences
- Removing any financial benefit obtained from committing the offence

Harm

In determining the level of harm the Local Housing Authority will have regard to

- The individual i.e. physical injury, damage to health, psychological distress
- To the community i.e. economic loss, harm to public health
- Other types of harm i.e. public concern/feeling over the impact of poor housing condition on the local neighbourhood

The nature of the harm will depend on the personal characteristics and circumstances of the victim e.g. tenant. Where no actual harm has resulted from the offence the Local Housing Authority will consider the relative danger that persons have been exposed to as a result of the offenders conduct, the likelihood of harm occurring and the gravity of harm that could have resulted

Factors that indicate a higher degree of harm include:

- Multiple victims
- Especially serious or psychological effect on the victim
- Victim is particularly vulnerable

Examples of Harm Categories that will be considered

High	Housing defect giving rise to the offence poses a serious and substantial risk of harm to the occupants and/or visitors for example danger of electrocution, carbon monoxide poisoning or serious fire safety risk
Medium	Housing defect giving rise to the offence poses a serious risk of harm to the occupants and/or visitors for example falls between levels, excess cold, asbestos exposure
Low	Housing defect giving rise to the offence poses a risk of harm to the occupants and/or visitors for example localised damp and mould, entry by intruders

Culpability

In determining culpability the Local Housing Authority will have regard to 4 levels of culpability.

Where the offender:

- Has the **intention** to cause harm, the highest culpability where an offence is planned
- Is **reckless** as to whether harm is caused i.e. the offender appreciates at least some harm would be caused but proceeds giving no thought to the consequences even though the extent of the risk would be obvious to most people
- Has **knowledge** of the specific risks entailed by his actions even though he does not intend to cause the harm that results
- Is guilty of negligence

Examples of Culpability that may be considered

Very High (Deliberate Act)	Intentional breach by landlord or property agent or flagrant disregard for the law i.e. failure to comply with a correctly served improvement notice
High (Reckless Act)	Actual foresight of, or wilful blindness to risk of offending but risks nevertheless taken by the landlord or property agent for example failure to comply with HMO Management regulations
Medium (Negligent Act)	Failure of the landlord or property agent to take reasonable care to put in place and enforce proper

	systems for avoiding commission of the offence for example; part compliance with a schedule of works but failure to fully complete all schedule items within notice timescale
Low (Low or no culpability)	Offence committed with little or no fault on the part of the landlord or property agent for example obstruction by tenant to allow contractor access, damage caused by tenants

Determining the Civil Penalty Amount

In assessing the seriousness there is a need to consider both culpability and harm. The table below sets out the interrelation between harm and culpability as a determinant of the Civil Penalty banding.

Harm	Culpability			
	Very high	High	Medium	Low
High	Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2
Medium	Band 3	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1
Low	Band 1	Band 1	Band 1	Band 1

Banding Levels

Band 1	£0 - £999
Band 2	£1000–£4999
Band 3	£5000–£9999
Band 4	£10,000–£19999
Band 5	£20000–£30000

The starting point in each band will be the midpoint i.e. for Band 3 the mid-point will be £7,500

- Band 1 relates to offences where there is a low risk of harm. Financial penalties at this level are designed to encourage compliance with lower level requirements for example failing to maintain yards and gardens or failure to display an information notice in a house in multiple occupation. They will also act as an initial deterrent where management standards are beginning to slip to prevent more significant contraventions.
- Bands 2 and 3 relate to more serious problems however a lower level of harm or culpability will reduce the need for higher fine levels.
- Band 4 and 5 fines relate to where there is a higher risk of harm and greater culpability. These offences carry significantly higher financial penalties.

Aggravating/Mitigating Factors

The penalty may be increased or decreased from the centre starting point within the band to the maximum or minimum level in the band. Issues affecting this decision are detailed in the table below

Issues relating to Aggravating/Mitigating Factors

Full co-operation following identification of offence	Reduce from starting
Minimal further input required by the council to achieve compliance	No adjustment

Significant involvement by the council required to achieve compliance	Increment increase
A significant lack of co-operation and/or obstruction leading to significant further enforcement activity (e.g. works in default)	Further incremental increase

Ability to Pay

1. Statutory guidance states that local housing authorities should use their existing powers to, as far as reasonably possible, make an assessment of a landlord's assets and any income (not just rental income) they receive when determining an appropriate penalty.
2. The existing powers available to the council include:
 - Section 235 Housing Act 2004 (power to require documents to be produced)
 - Housing benefit and council tax information (permitted by Section 237 of the Housing Act 2004)
 - Service of a requisition for information under section 16 of the Local Government (miscellaneous provisions) Act 1976 (power to obtain particulars of persons interested in land)
3. An offender will be assumed to be able to pay a penalty up to the maximum amount unless they can demonstrate otherwise. When a person receives a notice of intent to impose a financial penalty they have the right to make written representations about the proposal. We will specifically ask for those representations to include any evidence of the person's inability to pay the stated penalty.
4. If no representation is received then the starting assumption will be that the person is able to pay. This assumption will be tested against information held by the council such as council tax and housing benefit records, or publically available information such as company records or land registry entries.
5. Evidence put forward in a representation will be assessed for accuracy against council-held and public information.
6. Where appropriate, further information may be required through service of notice using the powers listed above.
7. Any evidence about ability to pay will be considered before a final decision is made about the level of the penalty.

Representations and Appeals

8. A person who receives a notice of the council's intention to impose a financial penalty may make written representations to the council. These should be addressed to the Housing Standards Team.
9. Written representations will be considered by the Housing Standards Senior Manager.
10. A person who receives a final notice requiring a penalty to be paid may appeal to the First-tier Tribunal against
 - 10.1. The decision to impose the penalty, or
 - 10.2. The amount of the penalty
11. Details about how to make an appeal will be included with any final notice.

Recovery

12. A penalty must be paid within 28 days beginning with the day after that on which the notice was given
13. Where a penalty is not paid within 28 days, the councils will seek to recover it through a county court order.

Appendix 2 Government Penalty Process

Matrix for civil penalties

- This matrix has been developed to help local authorities use their powers under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to impose a civil penalty as an alternative to prosecution for certain housing offences;
- This matrix is not binding and local authorities may choose to take a different approach
- In this matrix the following banding has been applied:

Band 1	£0 - £4,999	ASP £2,500
Band 2	£5,000 - £9,999	ASP £7,500
Band 3	£10,000 - £14,999	ASP £12,500
Band 4	£15,000 - £19,999	ASP £17,500
Band 5	£20,000 - £24,999	ASP £22,500
Band 6	£25,000 - £30,000	ASP £27,500

(ASP = Assumed Starting Point)

Level of Culpability	Assessment
Low	
Medium	
High	
Level of Harm (potential or actual)	
Low	
Medium	
High	
Culpability and Harm (combined)	
Civil Penalty Band 1	Amount
Aggravating factors 2	Revised penalty
Mitigating factors 3	Revised penalty
Income/asset check 4	Revised penalty
Final assessment	Final amount

1

Low culpability/high harm = Band 4	Medium culpability/high harm = Band 5	High culpability/high harm = Band 6
Low culpability/medium harm = Band 3	Medium culpability/medium harm = Band 4	High culpability/medium harm = Band 5
Low culpability/low harm = Band 1	Medium culpability/low harm = Band 2	High culpability/low harm = Band 3

1 Penalty to be increased by £1k for each aggravating factor up to a maximum of £5k

2 Penalty to be decreased by 31k for each mitigating factor up to a maximum of £5k

3 Offender assumed able to pay a penalty up to a maximum unless they can demonstrate otherwise.

Appendix 3 Banning Order Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Broadland and South Norfolk Councils will:

- decide when to apply for a Banning Order, and
- how we will determine the length of time we will request the ban apply for

This policy applies only to Housing Standards offences and is designed to ensure transparency, consistency and fairness in how and when banning order are sought and accords with the published MHCLG guidance.

Legislation

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 enables the Councils to pay for the FTT to impose a banning order on an individual following conviction for a banning order offence.

Considerable Offences

The offences for which a banning order may be applied for are listed in the statutory regulations issued in 2017 and apply to convictions for these offences issued either on or after 6 April 2018.

Spent convictions cannot be considered and if an absolute or conditional discharge for a relevant housing offence has been given, then that offence cannot be regarded as a considerable banning order offence.

Principles of Banning Orders

The MHCLG guidance sets out an expectation that banning orders should be aimed at the most serious offenders.

Length of Banning Order

It is not possible for the Councils to determine the length of a banning order, however we will make a recommendation to the FTT with accompanying reasons. A banning order is for a minimum of a 12 month period but there is no statutory maximum limit.

Determining When to Apply for a Banning Order

The Councils will consider applying for a banning order for the most serious and pernicious offenders. In doing so, the following factors will be considered:

- The seriousness of the offence
- Any previous convictions or listing on the National Rogue Landlord Database
- The harm caused to the tenant by the offence
- Whether the recommended punishment is proportionate to the offence
- Will it provide sufficient deterrent and prevent repeat offending
- Will it deter others from committing similar offences

Where it is deemed appropriate and proportionate to do so, the Councils will make full use of the powers to apply for banning orders.

The decision whether to pursue a banning order will be made on a case by case basis and will be based on legal advice. The decision will be made by either the Housing Standards Senior Manager or the Assistant Director Individuals and Families following a recommendation made to them by the case officer.

Procedure for Applying for a Banning Order

The procedure for applying for a banning order is set out in Section 15 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and can be summarised as:

- The Councils are required to issue a 'notice of intent' to the individual within 6 months of them being convicted of the relevant offence
- The person the notice relates to will have 28 days in which to make written representation to the Councils. The representation may be via any written format.
- Following the 28 day period, having given due consideration to any representation received, should the Councils still propose to pursue a banning order an application will then be made to the FTT

Requests for Information

Section 19 of the Housing and Planning Act gives provision to the Local Authority to be able to require that a landlord provide information for the purpose of enabling the Councils to decide whether to apply for a banning order. This can include requiring the landlord to provide details on ALL properties they own.

In relation to requests for further information made by the Councils under this section:

- It is an offence to ignore or fail to provide the information requested, unless the landlord can provide reasonable excuse
- It is an offence to provide false or misleading information
- Failure to provide information or providing false or misleading information is punishable on summary conviction to a fine.

Consequences of a Banning Order

Where a banning order is made, the individual will be determined not to be a 'fit and proper' to hold a license under Part 2 or 3 of the Housing Act 2004 and any licences in force under those parts will be revoked.

Where a banning order is made, the individual prohibited from:

- Letting housing in England
- Engaging in letting agency work within England
- Engaging in property management within England; or
- Doing two or more of those things (to ensure that any order is effective and to prohibit engagement in other related activities)

It is a criminal offence to breach a banning order and is punishable on summary conviction to imprisonment, a fine, or both.

Entry on the Rogue Landlord Database

Where a successful banning has been made, the Councils must make an entry on the National Rogue Landlord Database. The entry is maintained for the period of the banning order.

Publicity Following a Banning Order

Where a successful banning order is made, the Councils will consider whether to publish the details including the name of the individual who has been banned. The Councils may take legal advice prior to publication and will be cognisant of the relevant Ministry of Justice guidance as to whether to publish sentencing outcomes. Information on banned landlords will be made available to tenants on written request.

Future of Community Grants

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Portfolio: Cllr Yvonne Bendle, Better Lives

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to review how and why the Council issues community grants, and to put forward proposals for change.

Recommendation:

1. The Committee is asked to endorse officers to take proposals to Cabinet on a new approach to community grants which include:
 - Changes to the member-led Ward grant system
 - Changes to the Community Action Fund
 - Development of a whole council approach to community funding

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council delivers several grant schemes which are accessible to the community, based on building capacity and infrastructure. These schemes include the Member's Ward grants, the community action fund (CAF), the go for it grant, as well as community transport. Whilst community transport is a grant-based scheme, it has a different focus to others mentioned and will be the subject of a separate report at a later date.
- 1.2 All community grants at the Council are discretionary, there is no statutory requirement for this work. At a time when Councils budgets (and other funding bodies) are under pressure, we need to ensure that future community grant schemes have a clearly defined role in supporting the prevention agenda to

reduce demand on current and future council services by building capacity and infrastructure within the community to allow our residents to help themselves and each other.

- 1.3 Due to the current pandemic many community groups have been placed on hold, which has resulted in a loss of income. However, many of our community groups have really stepped up and out of their comfort zones to support those impacted by the COVID crisis, by providing volunteers and support to residents in need. It is an appropriate time to review our grants to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our communities.
- 1.4 This report outlines proposals to review the current community grant scheme; to overcome some of the challenges currently faced in its effective delivery and its impact on our communities.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Building community capacity is much bigger than simply providing the community with funding for projects. We utilise an asset-based approach to community development which seeks to build on what is already present in our communities; mobilising individuals and groups to come together in order to realise and develop their strengths. Quite often groups and residents who contact the Councils are looking for support to gain the skills and tools needed to be able to run their own schemes and are not looking for funding. The communities team deal with approximately 262 contacts every year to support with a wide range of issues, which includes finding funding sources.
- 2.2 There are a wide range of potential funding sources for communities to tap into, beyond what the Council can offer. One of the key functions of the communities team is to look for other funding sources to make the Councils money go further. It is easy to look at using our funds first as a 'quick win' and whilst this is popular, it is not always the most appropriate. Where members actively engage with the communities team, we often see better outcomes for the community group and are able to maximise the funding available.
- 2.3 The current community grants we provide are as follows:
 - Community Action Fund (CAF) – up to £15,000 for bigger projects which is allocated by a panel following a period of application. Total budget £50,000 per year (although additional funding has been granted this year).
 - Members Ward Grant - £1,000 allocated per member to support projects which benefit ward residents. This can be spent on up to 10 individual projects per ward member. Total budget £46,000
 - Go for it grants – this fund offers up to £300 to groups to identify and develop new ideas without the requirement to be a formalised group. Total budget £10,000.
- 2.4 The CAF Panel has been inundated with applications for the past few years, with more funding applied for, than the budget available. The window for groups

to apply for funding is limited, and so many groups miss out because they need funding at a different time of the year.

- 2.5 Feedback has been received about Members Ward grant which tells us that several councillors struggle to spend the money, whilst others feel they need more available to them. The whole budget has been consistently underspent over the last three years, the average being a 15% underspend.
- 2.6 The Go For It grant scheme continues to be a very effective tool to engage with groups in the inception of their ideas, to provide them not only with seed funding, but also advice and guidance to get their projects off the ground. Anecdotally we know that the success rate of groups which start out with a go for it grant is high.
- 2.7 We have a clear purpose in the ground rules for community grants, in terms of reducing demand on services, supporting inclusive growth and promoting health and wellbeing. However, this is interpreted in many different ways by the community and members, it is also challenging to track the impact that grants have.
- 2.8 Evaluation of the impact of community grants is incredibly difficult. The more preventative a grant is, the less precise an evaluation to its effectiveness can be. This difficulty can lend itself to grant bodies in general awarding funding to projects that are dealing with demand management, rather than true prevention and long-term capacity building. However, whilst future evaluation shouldn't be led by 'bean counting', officers are working to tighten up the evaluation process to ensure we can demonstrate the effectiveness of a community grant programme.
- 2.9 Incomplete applications can take time to process; often additional information must be sought by officers or members of the CAF panel to enable effective decision making.
- 2.10 Currently there is little interconnection between community grants and CIL (community infrastructure levy). CIL funding can provide communities with funding related to growth to provide community infrastructure. The CAF also provides smaller amounts of funding for infrastructure, which could potentially duplicate resource.

3 PROPOSED ACTION

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the following proposals to revise our community grants package. The proposals look to implement changes to our member-led grant system, following feedback from members and our communities, which will also support our community groups post COVID.
- 3.2 These proposals will look to address the underspend that we have seen over the last few years, providing a more flexible approach and ensuring we have the

right mechanisms in place to work closely with communities to target our resources where it is needed the most.

- 3.3 The approach needs to ensure we move away from a money centred approach to a problem-solving approach. Members and officers need to work together more, within our communities, to identifying what the problem is we are trying to address with each allocation of funding. By identifying what the problem and solution is, we will be more likely to effectively measure the impact of our intervention. Officers will work to review how we measures the impact of community grants for future recommendations.
- 3.4 The new approach should embed itself within the health and wellbeing strategy which will help support a revised evaluation process, enabling us to track the aim of the funding request, with strategic goals, to support reporting of the added value our funding provides.

3.5 Single member led funding stream:

- 3.5.1 The fund opens at the beginning of the financial year and remains until all the money is gone or until March 1st. It is allocated on a first come, first served basis.
- 3.5.2 Funds are accessed by completing a form which is jointly populated by the community group and the Ward member. This format encourages greater partnership working between the community and the member, placing greater emphasis on the community helping themselves. It also ensures that the community who are potentially benefiting from funds can fill in details such as bank details, reducing the amount of duplication and room for error in the current system.
- 3.5.3 Authorisation to allocate funding remains unchanged with the Member who has authority to sign off budget spend in their own ward.
- 3.5.4 The funding stream would be accessible to all Members to apply for, with a limit of how much they can be awarded in a single year from £50 to a proposed cap of £2,000 which could be spent over single or multiple projects. The total amount of grant funding available does not change. This means that some Members may not access any community funding if there is little demand in their Wards, and that others can access more than they can presently in any given year if demand is there.
- 3.5.5 More emphasis on the naming and branding of the scheme to support promotion of its existence, and to encourage the community in being proactive in applying for it - thus supporting the work members currently undertake to promote the grants available.
- 3.5.6 This promotion could particularly work well in areas where local intelligence or data suggests we have issues that need addressing, encouraging awareness

of the issue and applications from community groups who can address them. This way we can ensure our funding supports 'need' and not 'want'.

- 3.5.7 The single funding stream would be based upon the existing ground rules for accessing member-led funds. The purpose of these changes would be reinforced to make the funds more accessible in areas where they are needed, to meet the council's objectives to reduce demand on long term services and encourage inclusive growth and health and wellbeing in our communities.

3.6 Community Action Fund

- 3.6.1 The CAF could accept applications for between £2,001 and £10,000 – a change from the current system which is from £1,000 to £15,000.
- 3.6.2 Where projects need over £10,000 of investment there could be greater emphasis on utilising the Community Infrastructure Levy. If this proposal was endorsed, officers from the communities' team, planning and economic development would work together to identify how this would work.
- 3.7 The CAF panel currently meets once a year (and once more if there is unspent allocation) which creates pressure on members and community groups to submit applications to a Council deadline, and not when the project is ready. This also creates an intense workload for a short period of time for the communities team and committee services. A possible change to this would be a more regular CAF meeting, for example four times a year. With fewer applications per panel, this would give more qualitative time for preparation and discussion. The CAF panel is also well placed to take advantage of online meetings to further increase its efficiency.
- 3.8 The go for it grant will remain unchanged at this time – as cited above it is a very effective tool in kickstarting worthwhile community activity.
- 3.9 For both member ward and CAF grants, where funding is required by a project, the Council needs to reinforce an approach to seek other funding sources first, before using our own limited funds. This approach does not diminish the Council's role in funding but enhances our role as a place shaping organisation and not a funding body.

3.10 Infrastructure projects

- 3.11 For applications over £10,000, projects tend to be more based on physical infrastructure rather than human resources. Working closely with the planning and economic development teams, there is opportunity to create a whole council approach to funding, by linking together community grants and CIL to provide the appropriate funding stream and support. Communities see themselves as one, therefore the Council needs to work together as one team to identify the right route for funding applications. This could include supporting loans to communities on future CIL money.

- 3.12 It is proposed that officers work together to identify opportunities to create a flexible whole Council approach to community grants and CIL funding.

4 OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The current arrangements could be kept in place. Whilst this would still ensure money goes out to communities, the current systems is inefficient and results in underspend in certain areas.

5 ISSUES AND RISKS

- 6.1 Resource Implications: there is no requirement for extra resources to implement changes.
- 6.3 Legal Implications: None
- 6.4 Equality Implications: None
- 6.5 Environmental Impact: None
- 6.6 Crime and Disorder: Community capacity building and cohesion contributes to safer communities.
- 6.7 Risks: None

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.3 The Councils grant scheme has supported a wide range of communities over the years, with the Council having a strong reputation for community support. By reviewing how we deliver the grant function for the Council we can more effectively support the work within the community to support local community projects

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to endorse officers to take proposals to cabinet on a new approach to community grants which include:
- Changes to the member-led Ward grant system
 - Changes to the Community Action fund
 - Development of a whole council approach to community funding

THE VISION FOR A BEST IN CLASS HOUSING OFFER AND DRAFT ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

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Portfolio:

Better Lives

Ward(s) Affected:

All

Purpose of the Report:

- To present findings from the review of two service areas within the Housing and Benefits team; the redesign of an Interim and Temporary Accommodation pathway and developing a best in class customer journey to sustainable Social Housing tenancy
- To provide an overview of the vision for a new service model
- To seek comment from the panel in relation to the draft Allocations Scheme prior to presentation at Cabinet and full Council

Recommendations:

1. Committee to note and comment on the findings of the final project report and recommend cabinet endorse that officers work towards the Best in Class Housing model.
2. Committee to note and comment on the draft Allocations Scheme prior to public consultation, and subsequent presentation to cabinet and council for approval and adoption.

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 In bringing together one Housing & Benefits team an opportunity arose to review the Housing and Homelessness Service, referred in the report as Housing Service. This would enable the council to develop an efficient and consistent working approach which in turn ensures that residents receive the best possible and coordinated service. In addition to this, a review and update to the Allocations Scheme by which local authorities detail the process for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation was necessary as one had not been undertaken since 2018. Furthermore, the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 gave an additional impetus to the review process to ensure that the council can offer a model of a housing service that is best placed to meet the noted and expected increase in demand.
- 1.2 To provide an impartial and nationally informed viewpoint and added value to the review process, an external consultant, Campbell Tickell was engaged. These services were procured following a successful bid to the Local Government Association's (LGA) Housing Advisor Programme. As part of the review process, the consultants worked with the internal officer group and a Joint Member Working Group (JMWG).
- 1.3 The findings from the review highlighted that although the council achieves good outcomes through the prevention or relief of homelessness, it is mainly through an offer of social housing. The findings made clear that this model is unsustainable in the future, particularly in a COVID-19 landscape. A change in approach is required, one that seeks to enable quicker actions by our residents in identifying their housing need, supports those who needs it most and secures the best possible use of resources through the alignment of the Housing Service.
- 1.4 A Best in Class Housing Offer has been developed based on those findings and is outlined at section 5 below. It should be noted that the proposals are for members to note and comment on the direction for the new Housing service at this point in time. The proposals also help to frame the context of the draft Allocations Scheme which we are seeking to take forward to Cabinet and full Council for approval and adoption.
- 1.5 The Allocations Scheme is the cornerstone of the Best in Class offer, it is also a document we have a statutory duty to produce and to keep up to date in line with current legislation, case law and best practice. Further detail can be found in section 5 of the report and the Draft Allocations Scheme at Appendix B. However, there are proposed changes in process for:
 - Qualification Criteria for the Housing list
 - A proposed Hybrid model for the Allocation of Social Housing
 - The Priority Bands for households on the housing list

- A single point of access to the Housing service and the schedule of allocating properties
- 1.6 Finally, the LGA funding requires that the Council prepares a project case study that will be available on the LGA website. This is an opportunity for the Council to share the learning and outcomes from the collaborative working of the JMWG and the desire to develop an innovative and sustainable approach to post COVID-19 Housing and Homelessness services.

2 BACKGROUND

Housing Allocations Schemes

- 2.1 Housing Authorities are required to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities, and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation. Housing Authorities must allocate in accordance with that scheme and all aspects of the allocation process must be covered.
- 2.2 Best practice dictates that allocations schemes should be reviewed every 1-2 years to take into account changes in legislation, such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or case law and to be reactive to any reviews, case law or complaints received. This ongoing process of review should allow for housing systems to adopt and build on local and national best practice, good policy housekeeping and remain current to the local environment. The Allocations Scheme for South Norfolk was last reviewed in 2018.
- 2.3 In respect to the Allocations Scheme, although the policy has allowed the Council to meet the aims of the team, it is intrinsically complicated which in turn prompts additional demand to the service mitigating the team's ability to further prevent new customer concerns. The new Allocation Scheme simplifies matters so that they are easier to understand from a customer and officer point of view, allowing explanations relating to eligibility and priority to be both communicated and understood to a greater extent thus avoiding unnecessary contact. This releases further resource to focus on the proactive work that avoids customers facing far more difficult issues
- 2.4 From a customer interaction point of view the new systems and procedures that are explained in this report allows the team to achieve many of the aspects we have tried to do. The challenge has been the piece meal approach the Council has had to take as each new challenge arises. This new co-ordinated approach will allow the Council to provide clear early guidance to customers so that they are empowered to make suitable life decisions to better their housing situation
- 2.5 The Housing teams for Broadland and South Norfolk have a previous history of working collaboratively to deliver successful strategies and services to prevent homelessness, for example, through the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy (now in its 4th iteration) and the MHCLG funded First

Step service dedicated to identifying, supporting and preventing rough sleeping operates across both districts.

The Housing Advisor Programme

- 2.6 The Local Government Association's (LGA) Housing Advisor Programme (HAP) supports councils seeking to explore solutions in meeting the housing needs of their communities. There is a particular focus on encouraging learning and innovation, particularly in terms of where that learning can be shared nationally as examples of good practice.
- 2.7 The support provided by LGA programme is through the granting of funding to procure external advisors in order for local authorities to take their projects forward. In September 2019, the council in a joint bid with Broadland, were successful in their bid to the programme and secured just over £49,000 in funding. With this funding we had a fantastic opportunity to capitalise on the added value offered by the funded external consultants in meeting the need to update the allocations scheme and the introduction of the new staffing structure within the Housing team to develop an offer that will:
- Meet the right of all people in South Norfolk to realistic and expanded housing options.
 - Enable people to resolve their own housing needs where possible by promoting 'resilience', 'self-help' and emphasising their 'rights and responsibilities'
 - Ensure the protection of vulnerable individuals and households who need additional assistance in resolving their housing problems
 - Provide seamless solutions and support through cross agency working
- 2.8 In addition, a conditional requirement of the funding is for participating local authorities to prepare a case study for the end of the funding period which will be published on the LGA website. This provides an opportunity for South Norfolk Council to demonstrate the customer-focused and forward thinking approach displayed both during, and beyond the life the of the project and showcase the Council as an exemplar of innovative practice.
- 2.9 Following a robust procurement process in early 2020, officers were pleased to appoint Campbell Tickell as our consultants of choice. They have extensive experience working across a variety of housing and homelessness related projects and their bid demonstrated real innovation in securing solutions.
- 2.10 As external advisors, Campbell Tickell were key to the project and provided an impartial and nationally informed viewpoint coupled with a background of innovative thinking when developing customer solutions, partnership working and operating across public/private sectors. Additionally, as part of the project team, they engaged with a number of stakeholders including customers, staff, members and housing providers,

2.11 To achieve this, Campbell Tickell worked with us in two key areas:

Exploring the redesign of an Interim and Temporary Accommodation (TA) Pathway

2.12 The Council has a well-developed TA offer which includes the provision of support to those in TA. This support ensures that those in TA are able to not only sustain their current accommodation but also to access wider support such as benefits/employment support and health services so that they are ready to enter and sustain more permanent accommodation.

2.13 The review process explored the TA offers at Broadland and South Norfolk Councils and opportunities for alignment. This would enable us to increase our capacity to place people in TA only when necessary, ensuring it is right for their needs and offers the right support necessary. It was also felt that there was scope to go much, much further and in this respect, the LGA funded consultants worked with us and consulted key stakeholders including other Norfolk Local Authorities to identify innovative solutions, including the potential to work across boundaries to secure scale, efficiency and positive outcomes for vulnerable residents. The TA review considered the following areas:

- Exploring opportunities within the council's current offers which will enable officers to best manage voids and risk while offering further options to customers at times of need, including the alignment of procedures, budget management and universal access to all eligible residents to our collective offer.
- Investigating funding options to ensure the council can achieve best value for money and develop a sustainable growth model to ensure income can be reinvested into support provision
- Explore how the project can develop solutions with partners beyond the boundaries of the two councils to deliver a ground-breaking and exceptional TA pathway.
- Embedding within the Council's offers, the provision of accommodation for those who are rough sleeping as part of the First Step service.

Redesign of a Social Housing System

2.14 A desire of the project was to create a social housing system that simplifies and improves the customer journey through the housing list, but also ensures that whatever form of housing is offered, that this is the most appropriate and sustainable housing option for them. The review explored the following areas:

- A comprehensive review of current policy and processes

- Created understanding around customer demand, need, aspirations, responsibilities and resilience
- Barriers to accessing and maintaining the right housing at the right time
- The delivery of recommendations for a pathway that increases choice for the customer and creates the best opportunities for sustainable tenancies

A Joint Member Working Group (JMWG)

- 2.15 In addition to Campbell Tickell, an internal project team was assembled to take this work forwards to a point of being able to offer a preferred model for both housing allocations and temporary accommodation. However, active Member involvement was vital to the success of the project not only in terms of engagement and providing input into the review but also knowledge of issues at ward level. An informal JMWG, while having no decision making capacity, was the preferred means of ensuring good member engagement and challenge in the project
- 2.16 The South Norfolk cohort of the JMWG consisted of one Liberal Democrat and three Conservative members to ensure cross-party representation and including both the Portfolio Holder for Better Lives and the Chair of the People & Communities Policy Committee.
- 2.17 The group attended a series of workshops enabling them to engage with the different stages of the project and to build a shared consensus of the principles and structure of the new housing offer. The group:
- Reviewed and agreed the overarching design principles
 - Highlighted strengths and weaknesses of current service access pathways
 - Helped to scope and agree key elements of the target pathway definition
 - Reviewed key aspects of the proposed service model as a precursor to formal consideration within the committee structure.

Design Principles

- 2.18 At the beginning of the project, the overarching design principles, the values that act as the benchmarking steer towards achieving the desired outcomes of the project, were reviewed and agreed by Campbell Tickell, the internal project team and the JMWG:
- To provide tailored accommodation solutions based on insight and evidence needs

- Offer choice to our customers to meet individual needs
 - Promote self-reliance, enabling people to move-on and add value to people's lives
 - Be sustainable and free resources to fund housing objectives
 - Be compliant, with robust business processes and systems.
- 2.19 The review completed by Campbell Tickell provided invaluable feedback regarding the housing service. It was great to see the positive feedback regarding the service however the constructive feedback has provided the Council with an opportunity to relook at the service, especially from an allocations point of view but also from a customer interaction.
- 2.20 Campbell Tickell have produced a comprehensive final report which can be found at appendix A. Key aspects of the report including the findings of the Baseline review and the proposals to take the service forward are considered in the sections below.

COVID-19

- 2.21 The outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 and the subsequent lockdown measures brought about a significant step change in the operational aspect of the Housing Team, where working from home and offering video and telephone appointments became the new normal. At the same time demand on the service rose to unprecedented numbers. The team have risen quickly to the challenge and have worked at a level above and beyond. Further information on this demand can be found at 3.2.
- 2.22 From a long term perspective, the uncertainty around the future due to the COVID-19 outbreak means that the review of the housing service had come at the worst but also the most opportunistic time. The impact of COVID-19 and how we will meet demand is explored further throughout this report.

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The table below provides details of the current housing list for South Norfolk Council. As of 11th September there were a total of 804 households seeking an allocation of social housing. The average time spent on the list is approximately 2-6 months dependant on individual's circumstances and housing need.

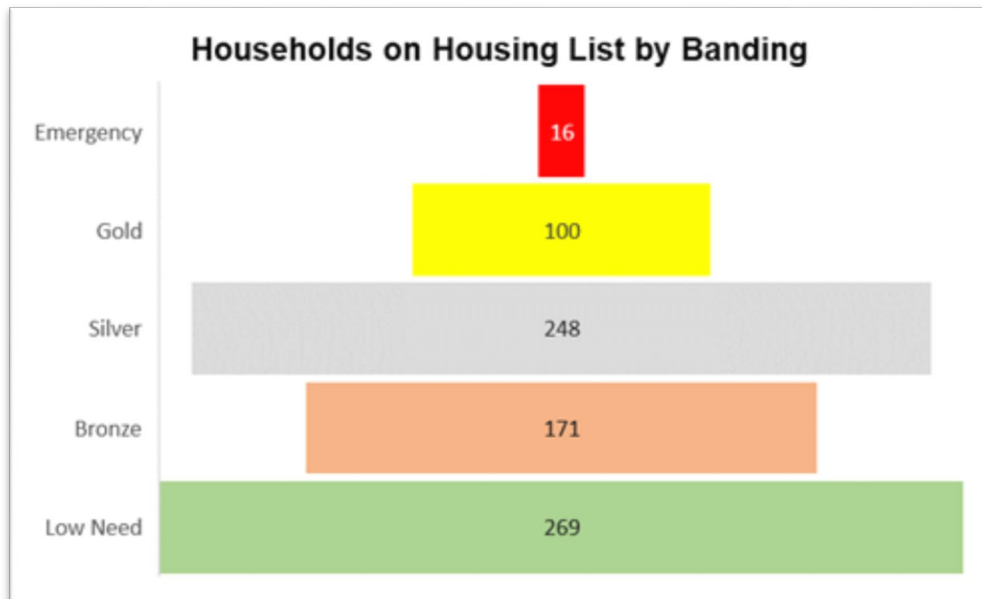


Table 1: Households on South Norfolk Housing List

COVID-19 Impact on Demand

- 3.2 COVID-19 has presented the team with unprecedented challenges, far greater than that we experienced during the economic recession in 2008. COVID-19 has impacted people from all socio-economic groups meaning each and every call differs in nature with some requiring support to downsize within the private sector, some needing advice regarding mortgage payments and others no longer being able to sustain within the private sector and so requiring assistance within the social housing sector. To add to this a far greater number of the people accessing the service have not required this kind of assistance before meaning their knowledge of the sector, time constraints and requirements are not understood making many phone-calls and in turn case management far longer than usual.
- 3.3 The demand on the service has been relatively wide-reaching however but can be focussed on three key elements
- 3.4 Temporary Accommodation demand increased with immediate effect during lock down. Those requiring TA were also those with higher support needs than usual. The team worked closely with Landlords, Housing Associations and supported accommodation providers to restart the housing sector and utilise existing stock to realise the necessary throughput required. This has paid dividends with occupancy returning to near normal levels.
- 3.5 The diagram at figure 1 below demonstrates the increase in TA occupancy rates during the lockdown and continued pandemic period.

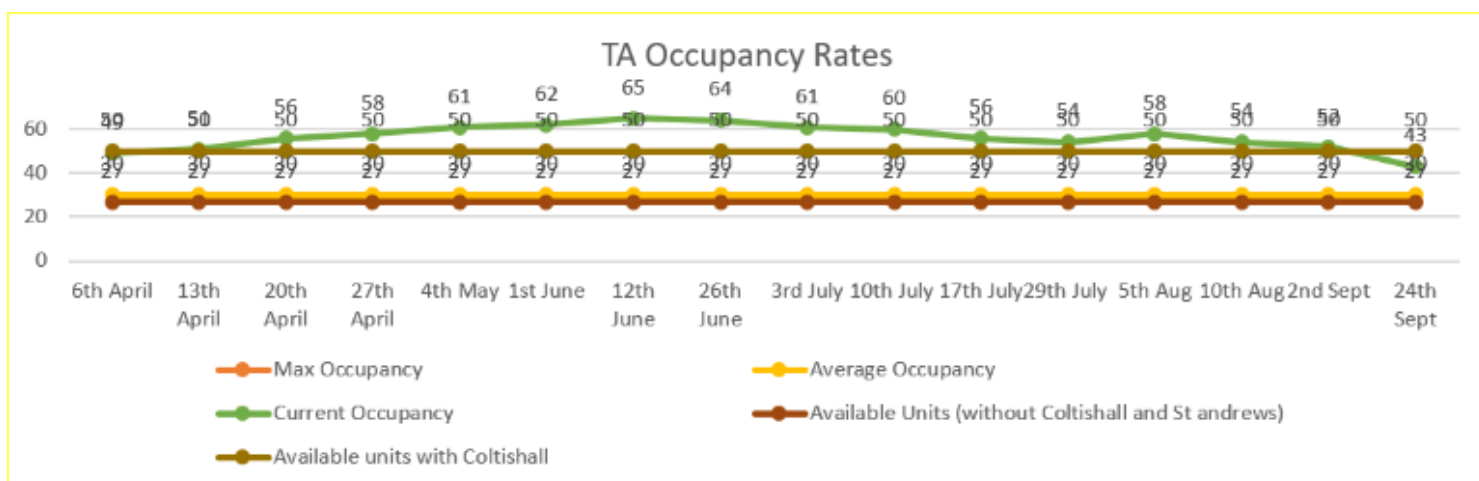


Figure 1: TA Occupancy Rates

- 3.6 Incoming calls have steadily increased and the Council is not seeing any reduction. Although the below only shows incoming calls the overall income and ongoing calls combined is circa 2000 a week showing the proactive nature of the team to work through their cases. We anticipate that this will continue and to support the teams call handlers who can assist with basic call questions have been put into place thus allowing the specialist HSO s to act on their case work and avoid people facing homelessness. The diagram at figure 2 demonstrates the increase in customer contacts during the pandemic period.

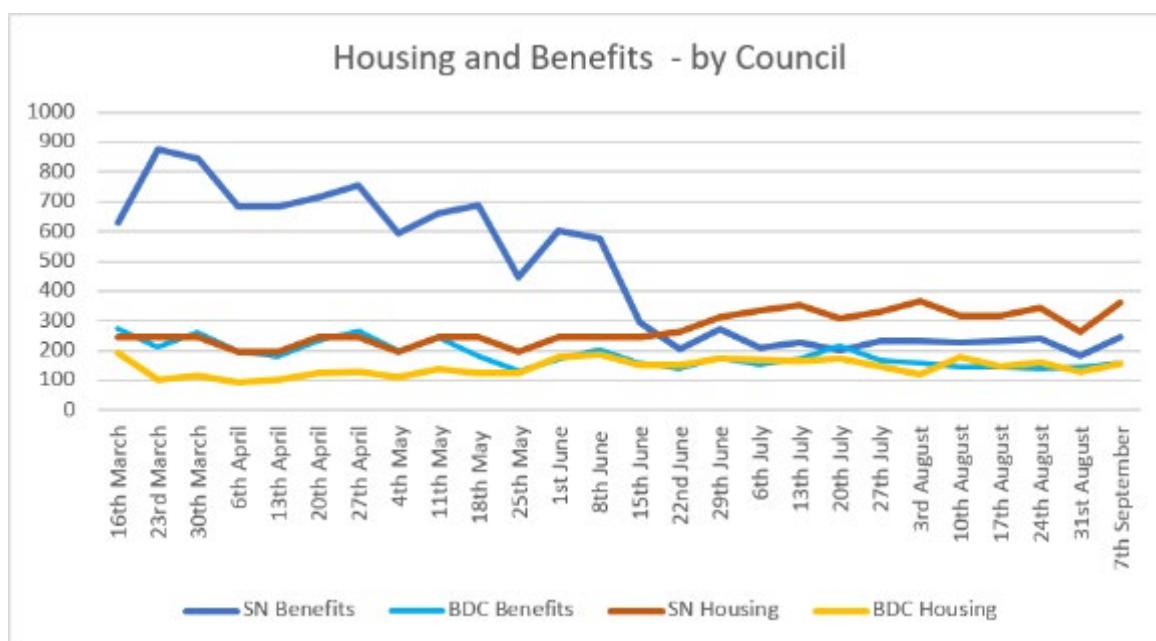


Figure 2: Customer Contacts to the Housing & Benefits Team

- 3.7 At present the team are not having to accept increased homelessness cases than usual however this is only due to the restriction on evictions that was put into place by central government. The fact that numbers remained sustained despite this is very concerning, especially when considering the phone stats evidence the number of those worried re their current housing situation. We anticipate that this number will continue to rise, figure 3 below shows that

there was a marked increase in August, before the ending of the freeze on court eviction hearings. The team have done all they can to negotiate with landlords and find people alternative accommodation during the hold provided by the eviction freeze in order to mitigate this impact. However we do anticipate demand to be sustained on at an increased level, circa 30% for the next few years.

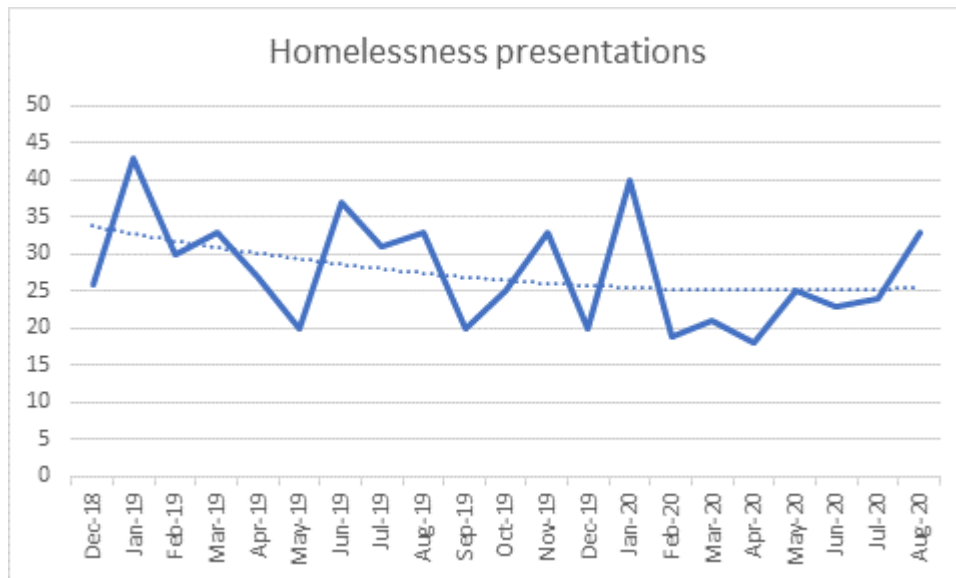


Figure 3: Homelessness Presentations

The Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy and the South Norfolk and Broadland Rough Sleeper Statement

- 3.8 The documents above were approved for adoption and publication in September and take a person centred, preventative approach to increase resilience and offer wrap around support for those who might need extra assistance when tackling homelessness. This feeds well into the proposed direction for the housing service outlined in section 5 below.
- 3.9 The priorities contained within the documents are:
- Domestic Abuse
 - Preventing Homelessness
 - Single and Youth Homelessness
 - Financial Inclusion, Welfare Reform and Economic Growth
 - Early Intervention and reducing the incidence of rough sleeping

- 3.10 These priorities were reviewed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak with the findings that the identified priorities were still highly relevant and the details of demand above reflect this.

4 ESTABLISHING A SERVICE BASELINE

4.1 In drawing together a baseline from which an innovative and customer focused housing model can be built, Campbell Tickell undertook a number of activities. This was achieved through working closely with the project team and the wider Housing and Benefits team in addition to desk top research and data analysis. These include:

- Approach: A review of the current access and delivery model for managing homelessness and the allocation of social housing
- Insight: A review of demand, demographics and support needs, drawn from statutory returns and data held on the housing management systems of both councils
- TA provision review: A review of demand, an assessment of the Council's TA portfolios, cost effectiveness and effectiveness of procurement strategies
- Social Housing provision: A review of access arrangements, registration and assessment processes, housing register management, allocations and lettings processes, and tenancy sustainment support provision.
- Service user perspectives: Drawn from a digital survey of recently housed tenants, highlighting the experience of the customer journey
- Partnership perspectives: Drawn from interviews with senior and frontline staff from partner landlords, neighbouring District Councils, people focussed service functions of the County Council, and other service providers.

4.2 A full analysis of the findings can be found at appendix 1, however they have been summarised in tables 3 and 4 below.

Baseline Review Findings		
Theme	Areas of good practice	Areas for consideration
Approach and Demand		Can be a cliff-edge service. Despite the councils best effort customers only seek support when in crisis. Can be passive, not proactive service Building resilience is not a front loaded activity
	Prevention and relief of homelessness is good (above England average) Numbers of households in TA are low.	Can be viewed as 'a race to the bottom' as customers see the higher bands as the only means to gain a property Low numbers of customers are able to stay in their current home at point of presentation, high numbers of

Baseline Review Findings		
Theme	Areas of good practice	Areas for consideration
		households diverted in alternative accommodation, mainly social housing. Not sustainable long-term and does not promote a mixed economy of solutions.
Data		BDC - Collection of data to build insight is difficult owing to two IT systems covering different aspects of the service, one of which is about to be de-supported. Use of data to take a proactive approach in anticipating and meeting demand
Temporary Accommodation (TA)	BDC – Low use of B&B accommodation Provision of support for those in TA Work is underway to implement a single, fully resourced TA team with clear responsibilities Good mix of TA offer available throughout	BDC – Private Sector Leased scheme is costly following changes to DWP subsidy rules and more suited to longer term placements SNC – Portfolio is too small and could see increased reliance on costly B&B accommodation. This was particularly evidenced during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic Work needs to be completed Operational documents to be standardised and adopted
Social Housing Provision	SNC – Offer online qualification of applications Safeguarding of vulnerable residents is strong. Good coordination with Help Hubs and support partners and open and compliant service for sensitive and local lets. Transparent approach to shortlisting applicants	Processes to maximise online applications and provision of proof by applicants. BDC – 3 band system for Housing List is not broad or transparent enough SNC – 5 band system for Housing List is too complex. Straightforward and transparent banding system required to standardise banding decisions and remove risk of challenge. Application/Housing List reviews to have a consistent review schedule Introduction of accompanied viewings for vulnerable residents BDC - Manual approach to shortlisting can be time consuming. Landlords need to give 4 weeks' notice of voids to allow for effective matching.

Baseline Review Findings		
Theme	Areas of good practice	Areas for consideration
		Landlords to provide timely lettings paperwork. A self-service digital portal for landlords would make this simpler.
Compliance and Performance	Teams are compliant, however this is not backed up by policy as per section 1 of this report.	A legal offer of housing. This needs to be in writing to complete audit trail Policy needs to be updated

Table 3: Baseline review findings

Baseline Review Findings		
Theme	Areas of good practice	Areas for consideration
Service User Perspectives	Assessment letters were felt to be accurate A high proportion of respondents were aware of the council's allocations scheme and banding system. Half of respondents were housed within 6 months of being placed on the housing list. 85% of services users felt that their views had been taken into account when they had been made an offer of housing.	21% of respondents asked for a review of their application with two-thirds having their banding decision adjusted Special circumstances could be better reflected 45% of respondents contacted the housing service once they had been placed on the register. 68% of these contacts were to request information, check their status on the list or query their banding. Indicating a self-service portal would be beneficial.
Partnership Perspectives	Positive day to day working relationship reported Nominations and CBL processes each felt to have strengths and weaknesses Partners in favour of this Partners in favour of this	Nominations and CBL processes each felt to have strengths and weaknesses Ensuring up to date customer data and sufficient team resource is important to avoid void delays Review of formal arrangements and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) Exploring options for continued support for new tenants to ensure sustainment

Table 4: Baseline review findings: Stakeholder engagement

5 DEFINING A BEST IN CLASS HOUSING OFFER

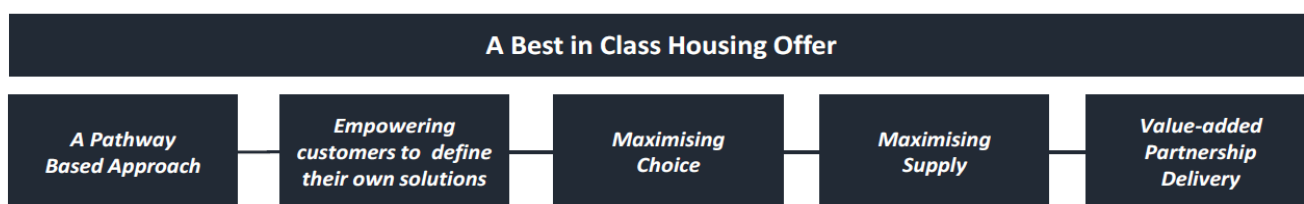


Figure 4: A Best in Class Housing Offer

- 5.1 It is imperative that the Council gives due deliberation to the areas of consideration given above in order to; deliver a compliant housing service; effectively meet challenges of COVID-19 as we stand the precipice of severe economic recession; and to facilitate households to think sooner about their housing situation, to avoid the circle of housing crisis and re-presentation to housing service. To achieve this, Campbell Tickell in working with the Internal Officer Team and the Joint Member Working Group, have co-designed a Best in Class Housing Offer.
- 5.2 The offer applies new thinking to the way housing advice, homelessness and social housing provision is delivered by the Council. The focus is on enabling customers to consider their housing options from an as early stage as possible, to increase customer resilience, avoid housing crisis and to support those where needed. Ensuring that households are in the right accommodation and homes at the right time means that there is less pull on resources, both staffing and financial and that the solutions offered are sustainable. The components of this offer are:
- 5.3 A Pathway based approach: To shape a holistic response to all residents in housing need, particularly as the full impact of COVID-19 becomes apparent and the Councils have to respond to a severe economic recession and its impact on housing and homelessness. The accommodation pathway model will deliver substantially more accommodation options over and above the combined statutory TA needs and will feature; suitable TA accommodation; short-term 6-12 month supported accommodation to help prepare households for longer term solutions and; long term housing through Social Housing or the Private Rent Sector (PRS). This would reduce the incidence of re-presentations from households experiencing a cycle of housing crisis and homelessness.
- 5.4 Empowering customers to define their own solutions: The new essential public service for residents in housing need regardless of whether they meet the statutory means tested categories of housing need. A Marketplace will help residents access a far wider range of accommodation solutions, including remaining in their own homes where possible, facilitated through the actions of the Council. Interventions would consist of light touch enabling or direct intervention.
- 5.5 Maximising choice: It is recommended that accommodation services, such as the PSL scheme and First Step service, are brought together to maximise the

pool of accommodation options available for the Council to meet or end its statutory duties as well as providing an alternative accommodation option that can be used for TA.

- 5.6 Maximising supply: The Accommodation Pool could consist of private rented accommodation, supported housing units where the council has nomination rights, third sector hostel accommodation, accommodation secured through new initiatives either by the council or registered providers and developers. Strategies to maximise access the private rented sector can also be developed. This will reduced pressure on the social housing sector and minimise the need for temporary accommodation.
- 5.7 Value-added partnership delivery: The commitment of staff with the One Team structure to deliver an effective housing-led response to COVID-19 is recognised as a potential key to unlocking a holistic service model with a wider shared service vision across the wider public sphere. Landlords are keen to review and formalise working arrangements that better reflect the post COVID-19 operating environment. In addition, commissioners and providers recognise that COVID-19 can act as a catalyst for joining up service elements around an individual at the centre and a housing and early intervention approach as a key driver. A strategic and coordinated response is imperative.

The Interim and Temporary Accommodation Pathway

- 5.8 The Council notes the report recommendations concerning new models of TA provision, the Accommodation Pool model and opportunities to expand on a wider Norfolk footprint. This pool aligns the current TA provision available across Broadland and South Norfolk making use of the different types of accommodation to best match need with the customer and the type of accommodation required at that time. This approach ensures an effective and consistent use of current provision and minimises voids and avoids. Further options for wider commercial opportunities that will allow the council to reinvest in the housing offer can be explored.
- 5.9 These recommendations will be worked up into more detailed business case/proposals and where required brought forward for member approval. In line with current agreed measures, the Portfolio Holder will be briefed during the process.

The Accommodation Pathway Model

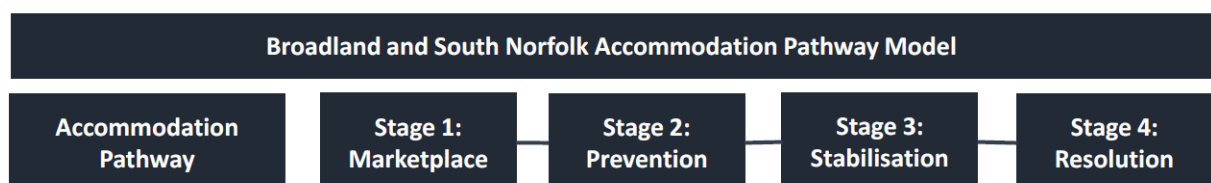


Figure 5: The Accommodation Pathway Model

- 5.10 The proposed Accommodation Pathway Model will provide a universal service open to all those with a housing need, through the provision of a one-stop housing advice platform on a wider basis than that of social housing. This could include options for young people moving away from the family home, affordable home ownership and entering the PRS. The model will offer:
- 5.11 Marketplace: Will provide digital self-help for the majority in housing need, and with early intervention for residents who may require additional support. Residents are encouraged to self-identify their housing need and begin to plan their housing future based on a Personal Accommodation Pathway. Housing need risk factors will be identified and effective help delivered based on the principles of self-help and resilience for those able to help themselves and proactive help for those who are more vulnerable.
- 5.12 Prevention: Proactive service intervention to prevent homelessness at the point of crisis to maximise positive outcomes.
- 5.13 Stabilisation: Provide excellent TA for those owed a statutory duty and additionally provide support and stabilisation for those who require more help to resolve problems that are more than just the need for a roof over their heads.
- 5.14 Resolution: Permanent resolution of the housing needs of households whether they are receiving formal interventions or owed a statutory TA duty, by delivering realistic, and suitable accommodation options across all tenures, and to break the cycle of the revolving door of eviction and homelessness by helping them build resilience and skills to sustain long-term accommodation solutions.
- 5.15 As with the Temporary Accommodation pathway, the findings from the project have made a number of recommendations in relation to the Social housing accommodation pathway which, in conjunction with the bringing together of the One Team Housing & Benefits Team, form part of a longer-term programme of works. These recommendations will also be developed into more detailed proposals.
- 5.16 Underpinning the proposed Accommodation Pathway model is the Allocations Scheme adopted by the Council. As detailed in section one. The current Allocations Scheme is in need of updating, however in adopting the proposed model, which is detailed below, it allows the Council to set out its intention to deliver a truly transformative housing offer.

The Draft Allocations Scheme

- 5.17 The Allocations Scheme which sets out the process for determining priorities, and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation needs to be implemented as soon as possible and is being brought forward through the member process for consideration and approval. This is necessary to ensure the council can provide the most effective housing service for our customers through an up to date and legally compliant scheme

- 5.18 The draft scheme has been co-produced between the internal officer team, the JMWG and Campbell Tickell and checked for legal compliance by NPLaw. The section below outlines the aims of the scheme and some of the key areas of variation with the previous scheme. The full draft Allocations Scheme document can be found at appendix B.

Aims of the Allocations Scheme

- 5.19 Through the aims of the Allocations Scheme the Council seeks to:
- Improve the means by which local people gain access to social rented housing through a system that allows choice and is fair, transparent and accountable.
 - Ensures the lettings service embraces equality and diversity by being open and fully accessible to all individuals and to provide support to customers where needed
 - Meets the legal obligation of the council in respect of giving appropriate priority to customers with a 'reasonable preference' category
 - Makes the best use of housing stock, including areas of low demand and 'hard to let' properties.
 - Assists customers with understanding their housing options
 - Increases opportunities for tenant mobility
 - Formalises partner working arrangements

Qualification for the Housing List

- 5.20 Criteria for the Housing List will ensure that local and, in some cases, people from outside the area in genuine difficulty are supported. The full criteria can be found at Section 3.2 of the draft Allocations Scheme.
- 5.21 The Council has some discretion in how it applies some qualification criteria where it is not prescribed under current legislation. For example, in applying a specific length of residency criteria. The Qualification criteria in the draft Allocations Scheme is broadly similar to the current criteria. An additional clause has been included to recognise a local connection for civil ex-partners of armed forces personnel. This is to align with the Council's Armed Forces Community Covenant pledge demonstrating support for our Armed Forces Personnel and their families.

The Allocation of Social Housing

- 5.22 The process by which it is proposed that the Council allocates a social housing property has been given careful consideration as part of the review and redesign process. In this, Campbell Tickell have been invaluable in understanding current practice, and identifying where changes can be made. The Council currently operates a predominantly Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system whereby customers bid on available properties through the Council's Home Options Service. Customer are limited to properties that are relevant for their needs, for example, bedroom size.
- 5.23 The current process has benefits in that it offers choice to the household and assisted bidding and direct lets are available for those who need additional support or where, for example, a sensitive let is requested by the landlord. However, feedback into the review has found that CBL can be problematic where there are occasion of housing development completions and properties becoming available in one area. Households may bid on the most favourable property in that development meaning there could be multiple bids on one property and less on the others leading to households on the higher bands not being successful for the new properties.
- 5.24 Taking these considerations into account, a Hybrid Allocations Process is proposed, for the majority of applicants this would be through a predominantly Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system.
- 5.25 Direct Lets and Nominations will be available in certain circumstances, which are outlined in full in the draft Allocations Scheme at appendix B. However, in summary they will be apply where:
- There is an urgent rehousing requirement
 - Where there has been failure to bid or a number of refusals
 - Where the applicant is vulnerable
 - For some adapted units.
- 5.26 In addition, where there is a delivery completion of more than five houses on a particular development, a nominations process will take place to review all applicants circumstances within the banding criteria (including s106 requirements) and allocate the most suitable properties to each successful individual to make sure those in most need gain access

Housing Priority Bands

- 5.27 Applications to the Housing List are assessed to determine the level of housing need of the household and are placed into a banding system. During the review process, it was felt that the South Norfolk five banded system was too complex. In this instance a four banded system is proposed. The system

is broadly similar to the current system adopted by the Council, however it would serve to bring together the existing Bronze and Low band categories in to Band 4 and simplify the banding system overall.

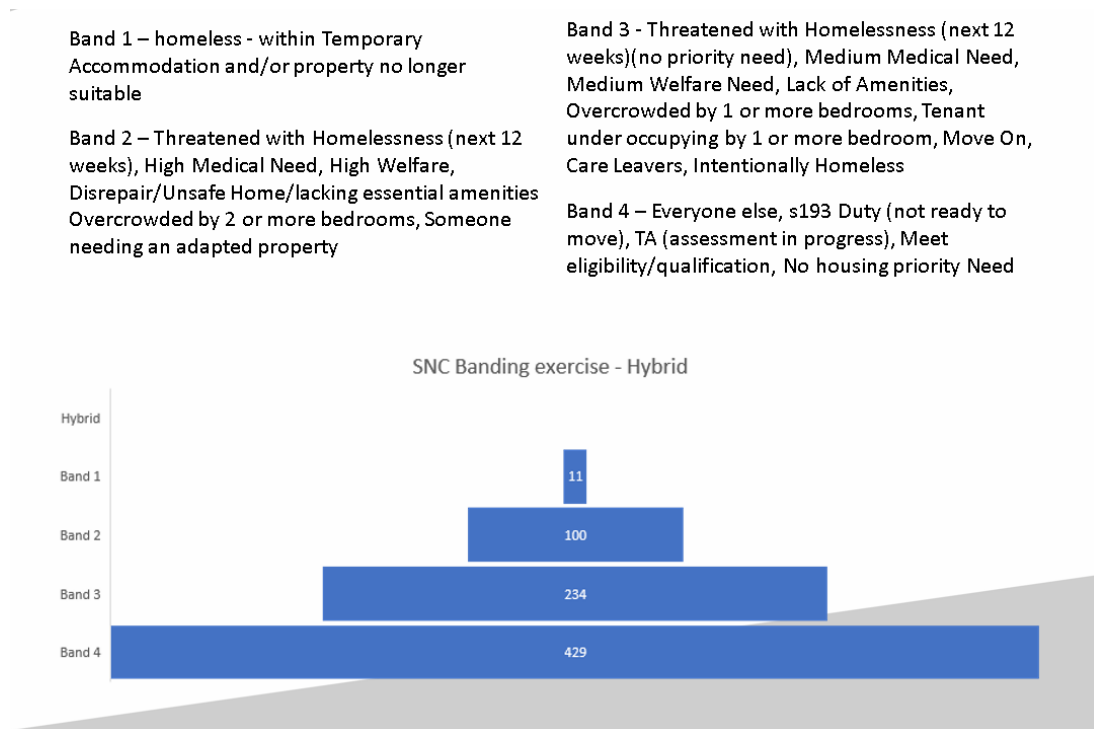


Figure 6: South Norfolk Housing Priority Bands

5.28 Where applicants would normally be allocated a reduced preference category, generally a low priority banding because they would not normally meet the qualification criteria due to, for example, rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, it is proposed instead to operate a suspension of bidding arrangement. In this respect, applicants would be awarded banding based on their needs but they would be suspended from bidding on any properties until a suitable period of stabilisation has been completed. This could include seeking support for anti-social behaviour or paying down rent arrears. In this way good tenant behaviour is promoted and there is increased likelihood of future sustainable tenancies. It should be noted that all suspension of bidding cases will be assessed carefully on their circumstances, for example where rent arrears arose due to the applicant being a victim of domestic abuse, we would not seek to apply a suspension of bidding but would ensure the applicant was able to fully access appropriate support through the housing team, help hub and wider partners.

Single point of access to Housing service and subsequent allocation of properties

5.29 In line with the One Team Housing & Benefits team approach, where a customer approaches the Council for help with their housing issue this will be through a single point of access with a single system to manage each applicant's case, enabling the application of consistency and efficiency for the

team. At the point in which applicants can place their bid for properties, they will be able to see and bid on all relevant properties available across the Broadland and South Norfolk Districts.

- 5.30 Following feedback from officers and the JMWG, the diagram at figure 4 below demonstrates how the available properties will be allocated to applicants. Where the property is in the South Norfolk district, the properties will be allocated to applicants from that area in order of priority banding. If no suitable applicant is found from South Norfolk the allocations are then opened to applicants from Broadland, again prioritised by banding.
- 5.31 This approach allows for an effective use of the housing stock, minimises void times and encourages use of hard to let properties. It also provides opportunities for mobility for residents of the two districts but only where properties cannot be allocated to households with an existing connection. It should also be noted that where properties are subject to an s.106 cascade, that will always supersede the arrangements below.

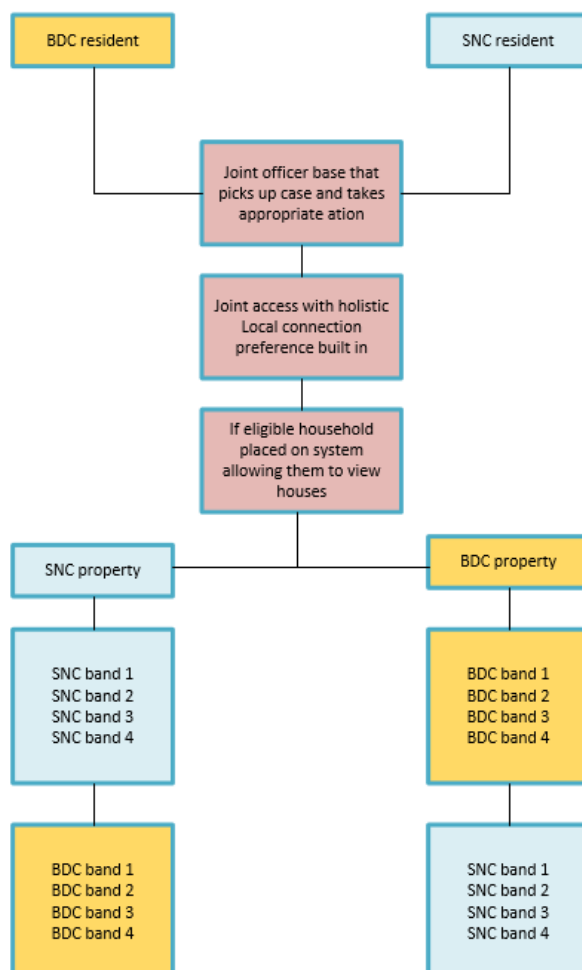


Figure 7: Allocation of properties by Priority Band and Council

6 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 The findings from the project have made several recommendations which, in conjunction with the bringing together of the One Team Housing & Benefits Team, form part of a much longer-term programme of works. The Allocations Scheme which we are bringing forward for member approval now is a vital aspect of this.
- 6.2 A project implantation team is being put together linking with the Internal Consultancy team, the Housing & Benefits team and the Policy & Partnerships team to see take this work forward. Detailed implementation plans including delivery timescales, resource requirements and interdependencies with wider SPARK projects such as the shared website are to be developed fully. In addition, project progression will be updated via the regular Portfolio Holder briefings.
- 6.3 However, to an overview of the current resource requirements has been provided below:
- Project oversight – this will be needed for the 6 months running up to April 2021. This work will be done by the internal consultancy team. There may be a further financial pull if the internal consultant is unable to facilitate this role, this will be capped at £20k
 - System upgrade – over a four year period the upgrade will provide a saving for both councils. As annual maintenance/licence charges differ for each council (SNC 22500.00p/a, BDC £35167.00p/a) the level of savings are different for each council. The total contract change are being shared within the standard 45/55 split:
 - South Norfolk – £3275.00
 - Broadland - £69711.55
 - Data configuration – to facilitate implementation of the new Allocations Scheme there will be a need to manually check, update and input particular residents. There will be the possibility to automatically port a large majority however this will create an additional pull on the team resource. This is however a great opportunity to gain experience in Housing and the Council as a whole. The team are therefore utilising the Kickstart programme. This will create a small cost to the council, however, by utilising the Kickstart programme this will be heavily mitigated whilst also providing a great opportunity to someone who might otherwise not be given the chance to widen their skillset and employability.
 - Engaging with stakeholders and the private sector to facilitate the TA pathway – we have sufficient skillset within the team to improve the way we work with the private sector. The aforementioned project oversight

will take the role of co-ordinating this work to make sure it is delivered on time.

- 6.4 As other aspects of delivering the housing service come forwards, resources will be considered as part of business cases, and subject to appropriate decision making forums.
- 6.5 A period of consultation is required to seek the views of the public and stakeholders for the draft Allocations Scheme. This consultation will run for two weeks from Friday 9th October to Friday 23rd October with the findings presented to Cabinet.
- 6.6 A requirement of the LGA funding is that the Councils prepares a project case study that will be available on the LGA website and form part of the learning package for future Housing Advisor Programme funded authorities. It is proposed that the case study focus on the successful collaborative working of the JMWG and the desire to develop an innovative approach to Housing and Homelessness services in a COVID-19 landscape. This case study will be completed by December 2020.

7 OTHER OPTIONS

- 7.1 The panel may wish to suggest alternative options for consideration in terms of the draft Allocations Scheme. However, it would not be feasible to continue with the current scheme as it is in urgent need of updating to ensure legal compliance and prevent the risk of challenge.

8 ISSUES AND RISKS

- 8.1 **Resource Implications** – There is resource requirement to implement the new offer and an overview is given at 6.3 above.
- 8.2 In relation to the Allocations Scheme, the draft document is aimed at a joint allocations scheme between South Norfolk and Broadland. This will enable an equal approach for residents and ensure a consistent and transparent service delivered by the one officer team. If the Council chooses to pursue different versions of the scheme, there is a risk that transparency could be lost, in addition to decreasing resilience within the housing team. Furthermore, separate methods of administering the scheme would result in increased costs in delivery of the IT systems.
- 8.3 In terms of the Best in Class Housing Offer, as has been indicated above, demand for the housing service has increased during the COVID-19 outbreak. Although the housing team has continued to deliver a high performing service, the findings of the review indicate that the model has to be changed in order to continue to meet that demand. In this respect a do nothing option would not provide an efficient or sustainable offer.
- 8.4 **Legal Implications** – A Housing Allocations Scheme is a requirement of the Housing Act 1996. Failure to have an up to date and relevant Allocations Scheme

means the Council may be at risk of not meeting its statutory duty. It could also lead to an increased risk of challenge from applicants on the housing list.

- 8.5 **Equality Implications** – It is aimed that the Allocations Scheme will have a positive impact. However, a detailed equality impact assessment for the Scheme is in the process of being prepared and will take into account the findings from the public consultation. The assessment will be presented as part of the Cabinet report.
- 8.6 **Environmental Impact** – There are no known impacts
- 8.7 **Crime and Disorder** – In working to offer sustainable housing solutions, and prevent housing crisis and homelessness including for those who have had contact with either side of the criminal justice system, it is hoped to assist victims and prevent instances of offending and reoffending.
- 8.8 **Affordable Housing Delivery** – Although out of scope of the project work, it is important to note that the delivery and provision of affordable housing is a key aspect in resolving a person's housing need, whether this is through Affordable Rent Tenure (ART) properties or Affordable Home Ownership Products. The next iteration of the Housing Needs Assessment, formerly the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is under development and expected to report in the spring 2021. This assessment provides the evidence base for affordable housing up until 2041 and will feed into the policy work for the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).
- 8.9 The outcomes of the current central government consultation on the planning White Paper *Planning for the Future* will also need to be given careful consideration as the project plans for implementation of the housing offer are brought forward. Contained within the white paper are proposals to; abolish the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 obligations, to become instead a simplified nationally set, value-based flat rate charge; to amend the development threshold for affordable housing from 10 units to 40 or 50; and for First Homes, homes sold with a discount of at least 30%, to make up at 25% of that affordable housing provision.
- 8.10 **Interdependencies** – There are a number of interdependencies both internal, through the corporate change projects that are underway, such as the Councils' economic recovery work and an example has been given above of using the Kickstart programme to provide support to the implementation process of the Allocation Scheme. There are also external interdependencies such as the local and national considerations to be given to affordable housing provision such as that detailed at 8.7 and 8.8 above. Close working with the owners of these projects and careful consideration of impacts will need to be given as the Allocations Scheme and overall Housing offer work is developed.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Council's work with Campbell Tickell, through the LGA's Housing Advisor Programme funding has given us the opportunity to develop a world class housing service that will change the culture and approach for supporting residents in

housing need to find solutions. It will also enable the council to take a proactive approach to housing need during this time of Covid uncertainty and for the long-term ramifications of the pandemic

- 9.2 The innovative vision presented in this report is not something that can be achieved in a short space of time and instead we are asking for members to note the findings of the Best in Class Housing Offer project. However, there is a pressing need for a new Allocations Scheme to be approved and embedded. This will not only enable the Council to meet its statutory duty but will form the cornerstone of the Housing Service as it seeks to deliver a truly innovative and preventative service for residents.

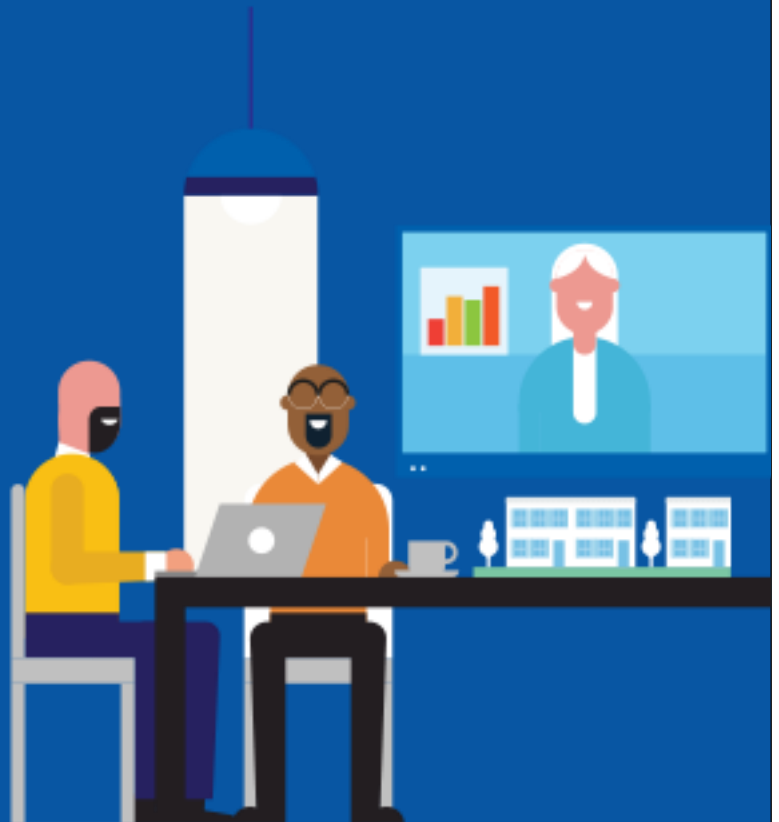
10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Committee to note and comment on the findings of the report produced by Campbell Tickell and recommend cabinet endorse the Best in Class Housing Offer
- 10.2 Committee to note and comment on the draft Allocations Scheme prior to public consultation.

Best in Class Housing Offer

Final Report

August 2020



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ambition

- 1.1 This report sets out the vision for creating an ambitious *Best in Class* housing service for Broadland and South Norfolk, enabling anyone in housing need to resolve their own accommodation needs, whilst focusing scarce resource on households in housing crisis to avoid homelessness and secure sustainable accommodation options, delivered within a sustainable service delivery model and an extensive partnership framework.
- 1.2 An *Accommodation Pathway Model* will be a first of its kind in the UK to deliver a holistic housing service to the whole community regardless of their immediate need.

Approach

- 1.3 The aim of the project is to enable Broadland and South Norfolk to create a flexible service offer that meets the individual needs of each sovereign council, but delivered through a single policy framework, operating model and social housing system.
- 1.4 The project has been delivered in partnership with Campbell Tickell (CT) and has been funded through the Local Government Association (LGA) Housing Advisor Programme (HAP), which has the aim of supporting transformation partnerships that enable services to meet their local housing need. This collaboration will allow Broadland and South Norfolk to project both the ground-breaking approach and the eventual service outcomes onto the national stage
- 1.5 A Members Working Group drawn from both Councils has been instrumental in acting as a sounding board throughout the project and sense-checking solutions, before they enter the governance cycles of each council.

Pulling back from the cliff-edge

- 1.6 Housing delivery models delivered by councils across the country are without exception passive in nature, delivered at the point of crisis to a relatively small cohort of households. They fail to deliver practical housing advice and solutions for the vast majority of residents that have a housing need, who are filtered-away from receiving support of any kind. This approach also fails to deliver resilience amongst residents in housing need by expecting them to be proactive, adapting their behaviour to increase their chances of obtaining a solution.
- 1.7 As a consequence, many residents end-up in housing crisis, resulting in homelessness and an application under statutory homelessness legislation. This situation is compounded by a lack of strategic alignment between Councils and landlords, resulting in a transfer of risk and responsibility for those placed in social housing, which increases the risk of tenancy failure, often resulting in a life-limiting and costly unbroken cycle of homelessness and eviction.

Forming a Service Baseline

- 1.8 Despite a significant increase (162%) in homelessness across in Broadland and South both councils since the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), both Councils have been particularly successful in preventing homelessness through upstream interventions,

which has relieved the pressure on Temporary Accommodation (TA) provision. However, this has been achieved almost exclusively by placing households in social housing, whilst there are no examples of an individual or household avoiding homelessness by remaining in their current accommodation, whereby avoiding an intensive service intervention altogether. This is not a fair or sustainable strategy.

1.9 A significant percentage of individuals approaching the service do so from what had been a stable home or sustainable tenancy, or from a position of relative financial stability, highlighting the need for supporting individuals to plan their own accommodation pathway before a point of crisis is reached. It is also clear that future demand and the need for structured interventions will be increasingly driven by younger people with less well developed life-skills, single person households who have very limited options, people leaving care settings with complex needs (particularly mental health conditions), and older-people requiring accessible housing solutions.

1.10 The demand for TA has remained fairly constant. However, the introduction of two new prevention and relief duties means that a balance between the need for short term emergency accommodation needs to be struck. Based on the analysis undertaken, Broadland and South Norfolk require additional short-term emergency accommodation and less long-term temporary accommodation moving forward. There is also an urgent need to implement a new TA structure from one location to ensure consistency, control and continuity.

1.11 CT has sought the view of recent service users and stakeholder landlords, to understand the effectiveness of the current service and future priorities:

Service users: Whilst generally happy with service they received from their Council, however the number of re-banding decisions upheld on appeal and level of contact made to chase progress, demonstrates that there is considerable scope to digitise (change of circumstances), automate and streamline (bidding and lettings) many aspects of the service.

Partner landlords: View the combined service in a positive light and would like to see the adoption of a joint, a blended approach to allocations moving forward that combines both approaches would be welcomed. They would also welcome the establishment of more formal, partnership-based relationships moving forward, centred on sharing risk and the needs of the individual.

1.12 The creation of the new One Team operating model provides a unique opportunity to completely overhaul the current model of social housing provision, building on upon the strengths of the combining services in identifying needs and providing supporting services through their respective Support Hubs.

Facing the future

1.13 In the Covid-19 operating environment, a sit back and wait approach is not an option. A demand spike driven by unemployment, tenancy and mortgage default, mental health and domestic violence driven household failures, could result in such financial pressure that the viability of the Councils is at risk.

- 1.14 New thinking is required to meet the legal responsibility to deliver housing advice, to help all residents in housing need to avoid homelessness. Existing service offers based on intervention at the point of crisis and delivery models based on disjointed service elements have been made irrelevant almost overnight. Only a holistic Pathway model can deliver an effective response on a sustainable basis.
- 1.15 Broadland and South Norfolk are at a natural point of reinvention and have the opportunity to be bold and create a *Best in Class* solution based in the Covid-19 world, which provides universal on-line access to support all residents and empower them to resolve their own housing issues. To support households along a supported pathway that keeps them away from or move successfully away from homelessness, with wider accommodation choices based on their circumstance, and to work in partnership with landlords and support providers to help individuals build a level of resilience that reduce future reliance on the system.

The Accommodation Pathway Model

- 1.16 The *Accommodation Pathway Model* will enable individuals to plan for their long-term accommodation needs with a realist set of options, whilst supporting those who reach a point of crisis to re-establish and sustain a suitable home.
- 1.17 The *Accommodation Pathway Model* has four clearly defined and outcomes focused stages:



- 1.18 **Marketplace:** Will present a single digital access pathway into the housing service for anyone needing help to assess their housing needs and options, with the objective of delivering self-help solutions to the majority of those in housing need. Equally however, it will identify at an early stage, individuals approaching a point of housing crisis, risk factors that may trigger a formal intervention, and residents who may be too vulnerable to support themselves through the process unsupported.
- 1.19 Marketplace will provide access all available housing products in one place with the intention that it would become the first place to go for all residents in housing need. Residents would be able to register electronically their housing need and explore accommodation options. A personalised *Accommodation Options Plan*, would outline accommodation options over time, applicable to their personal and financial circumstance
- 1.20 **Prevention:** Will provide options for people at imminent risk of becoming homeless. However, if the Marketplace fulfils its role, households seeking support, should be fewer in number and hopefully already in the system and their circumstances known.
- 1.21 Enabling families to remain at home and wait for social housing rather than become homeless is the best outcome for both a household and each Councils. As part of a new allocations policy framework, homeless households could be incentivised to wait for a social housing outcome

and have more choice over where that offer is, rather than becoming homeless and being offered a short-term private rented solution.

- 1.22 **Stabilisation:** Will provide a tailored package of suitable, high quality temporary accommodation and personalised support to a household with the space to stabilise their situation before taking the next step towards self-reliance. Additional wraparound support may be provided to those who need support beyond finding suitable accommodation.
- 1.23 **Resolution:** Will enable households to resolve their housing need through access to permanent accommodation solutions, regardless of whether they are owed a statutory temporary accommodation duty, by delivering realistic, and suitable accommodation options.

Enabling the Accommodation Pathway Model

- 1.24 To enable the *Accommodation Pathway Model*, the disparate components of the homelessness, TA, and allocations services, their service offers, operating models, business systems and partnership relationships need to be re-thought and re-aligned to create a holistic Best in Class solution envisaged.



Best in Class TA Provision

- 1.25 A new model for the provision of TA is a necessity if the right type of TA is to be provided to meet demand at a sustainable cost. The target model for the provision of TA is a closed cycle that will ensure statutory requirements are met, whilst optimising quality of product and operational performance through accurate demand forecasting and utilisation modelling.
- 1.26 Broadland and South Norfolk should adopt a joint approach to TA procurement, based on an accurate mapping of need. Reliance on expensive private rental sector accommodation should be reduced in favour of developing accommodation solutions through landlord partnerships. There also needs to be a shift in the type of accommodation procured from longer-term move-on to shorter-term emergency accommodation.
- 1.27 A dedicated TA management function is required, that is properly resourced and located in one place. An Operations Manual has been developed as part of this project and needs to be embedded, with staff trained in the preventative case-working methods provided.

Best in Class Housing Services

- 1.28 Similarly, housing service provision needs reframing around a joint Allocations Policy, that will blend the approaches currently adopted by both Councils into a compliant, flexible tool for allocating homes fairly and transparently. A combined Choice Based Lettings and direct offer-based approach will best meet the objectives of both Councils and landlords, in recognising local connection, prioritising the homeless and those most in need, whilst still filling hard to let stock and attracting new customer into areas of low demand.

- 1.29 The customer journey for social housing provision must be standardised, automated and performance managed. There is scope to significantly reduce contact demand through smart self-service registration and application self-management and to embed decision making within the business system to drive consistency and ensure transparency.

Best in Class Partnership Solutions

- 1.30 Formalising the management arrangements between the Councils and partner landlords will elevate what are currently little more than transactional relationships into strategic partnership relationships. Landlords would welcome the formalisation of obsolete service level agreements, to share system and data to join-up end to end processes. They would also welcome a strategic approach to helping households establish and sustain their tenancies, by jointly sharing and managing risk of failure, through the provision of wraparound support.
- 1.31 The Covid-19 crisis is focusing the minds of all stakeholders across the County. Neighbouring Districts, core service commissioners within the County Council and service providers all recognise the need for opening-up strategic service partnerships that create whole system approach, delivering wider and lasting outcomes at reduced costs and ongoing levels of dependency. This impetus must be harnessed and channelled quickly into ready-to-go solutions such as *the Accommodation Pathway Model*.

Best in Class Performance Management

- 1.32 A comprehensive Performance Framework will ensure compliance of the whole system, drive-up performance and demonstrate the value of the *Accommodation Pathways Model* in delivering key objectives. Specific objectives should be to measure the quality customer experience and outcomes achieved, the impact of self-service and process efficiency in managing demand, and the realisation of wider service outcomes delivered in partnership.

Delivering the Accommodation Pathway Model

- 1.33 The next step in making the *Accommodation Pathway Model* a reality is to develop a Blueprint that will set-out the characteristics and components of the Pathway and target operating model for the *One Team* housing service. Underpinning the Blueprint must be a robust Business Case that sets out the investment needed to deliver the Pathway, the operational efficiency savings and tangible customer benefits it will deliver. A Transformation Roadmap will enable the service to deliver the change programme quickly and efficiently, with effective governance and resource planning, and to ensure strategic goals are realised through ongoing benefits tracking.
- 1.34 Broadland and South Norfolk are well placed to become the exemplar *Best in Class* solution provider within the sector. This may in turn open up a range of business development opportunities that could generate income and cover investment costs made in the Model.
- 1.35 Finally, the drive of the Broadland and South Norfolk team to complete this project at a time of intense operational change and unprecedented service demand, coupled with the shared vision of Members of both Councils, proves that the *Accommodation Pathway Model* can quickly be made a highly successful reality.

2. INTRODUCTION

Strategic Context

- 2.1 On 2nd January 2020 Broadland and South Norfolk Councils came together operationally as *One Team*, to reshape the future of the two districts, through an innovative transformation of local authority collaborative working.
- 2.2 *Our Plan (2020-24)* sets out a radical agenda for supporting individuals and empowering communities, reshaping services around the needs of the most vulnerable, whilst enabling individuals to become more resilient and less reliant on core service interventions.
- 2.3 Core to this ambition is to undertake a radical reimagining of how to deliver a *Best in Class Housing Offer* that will meet the needs of communities across both districts. A new service offer and operating model is required that will provide a dynamic service for customers with broader choice, coupled with a framework of support services. Operating as a single service and underpinned by digital access pathways and service delivery processes, a new model will enable the service to operate more efficiently.
- 2.4 Campbell Tickell (CT) has been engaged to work collaboratively with the Housing Team to review, research and define a *Best in Class Housing Offer* for housing services.
- 2.5 However, the Covid-19 epidemic has thrown the fragility of long-term planning and aspirational thinking into sharp relief, as robust emergency plans must now deal with the immediate crisis and plot a course back to relative normality. Whilst every service will be in reset mode for the next six months or so, and it is too early to predict the enduring impact over the next three to five years, it is clear that all services will need to fundamentally rethink the way they engage with customers, flexing service offers to meet spikes in demand and changes in needs, to both offer service differently and operate differently.
- 2.6 Necessity is the mother of invention and by driving forward with this project during the lockdown period, it has served to focus and create a sense of real urgency in defining a housing solution that will respond to both immediate needs and meet longer-term aspirations of Broadland and South Norfolk.

Project Scope

- 2.7 The project scope is to:
 - Reduce the need for temporary accommodation in the first instance and exploring options for offering reasonable long-term accommodation options to households;
 - Align current offers to optimise efficiency and minimise risk, offering further options to customers at times of need, whilst respecting the sovereignty of each Council;
 - Investigate funding options to achieve best value for money whilst developing a sustainable model that enables reinvestment of income into support provision;
 - Explore how partnership solutions beyond the boundaries of the two councils to deliver a ground-breaking and exceptional housing pathway.

Expected Outcomes

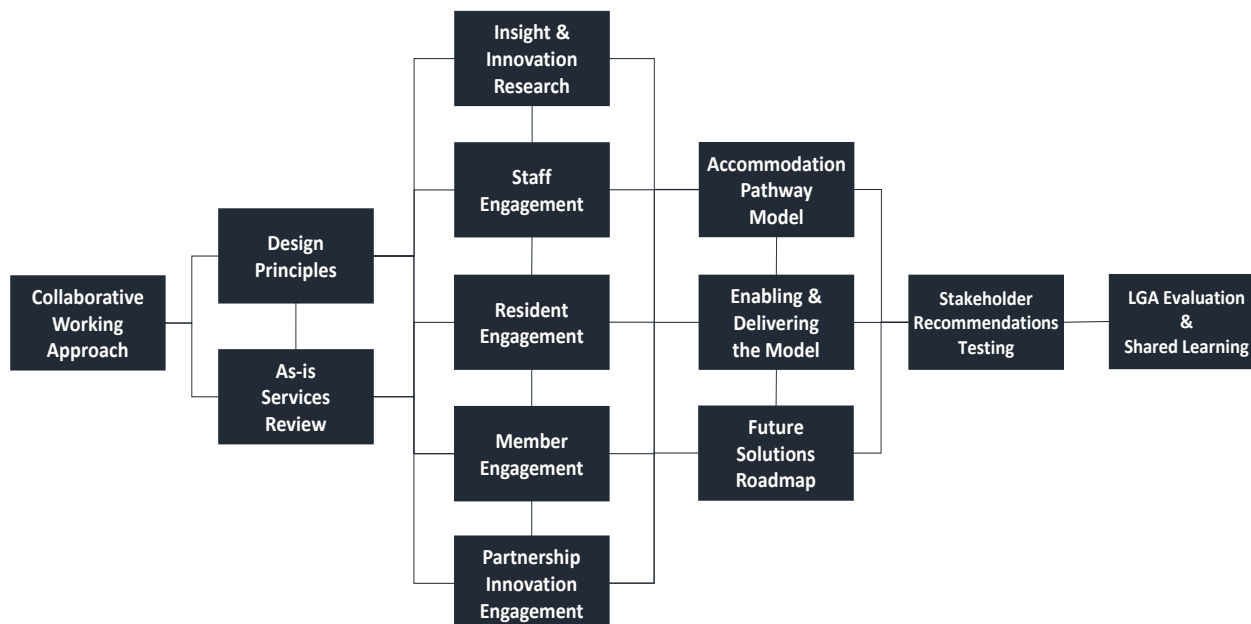
- 2.8 The project is designed to enable Broadland and South Norfolk to create a flexible service offer that meets the individual needs of both, delivered through a single social housing system that can provide a realistic set of largely self-managed housing options for anyone in need of support, whilst supporting those most in need to avoid crisis and to sustain a long-term home.
- 2.9 Specifically, the project will define a model that will support:
- A customer-centred housing offer that will enable people to take responsibility for meeting their own housing needs;
 - A prevention led, boundary-less approach to achieve sustainable outcomes;
 - A convergent policy frameworks;
 - A sustainable operating model;
 - A digital service pathway with support for the vulnerable;
 - Digital processes that support flexible service delivery; and
 - Seamless housing provider and support agency partnerships.

Transformational Partnerships

- 2.10 The project is funded through the Local Government Association (LGA) Housing Advisor Programme (HAP), which has the aim of supporting transformation partnerships that enable services to meet their local housing need.
- 2.11 To this end, Broadland and South Norfolk Council's recognise that there is a significant and timely opportunity to explore what local government can achieve by working together to achieve wholesale redesign of Temporary Accommodation (TA) pathways on a larger footprint. Two other local authorities have given agreement to explore this work further with the councils as part of the review process.
- 2.12 Additionally, at a County level, reviews are underway to explore demand and resource of housing and homelessness services. Based on the outcomes of this review, there is potential to create a cross-boundary, customer focussed and fair approach to seeking housing assistance including a combined temporary accommodation pathway using collective resources.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 This project has been delivered to a predefined CT methodology, tempered by the limitations of working within Covid-19 lockdown.



Collaborative Working Approach

- 3.2 A collaborate working approach has been adopted from the outset, with the CT team working closely with the newly formed internal consultancy team, with frontline managers and delivery teams, and with a Members Working Group drawn from both Councils.

Design principles

- 3.3 To ensure everyone involved with the project has a shared vision for what constitutes a *Best in Class* approach and to stay focused on that outcome when defining the detail of the new *Offer*, a set of *Design Principles* has been agreed to crystallise key outcomes and deliverables:

- Deliver a Best in Class housing solution, exceeding our statutory duties;
- Provide tailored accommodation solutions based on insight and evidence needs;
- Offer choice to our customers to meet individual needs;
- Promote self-reliance, enabling people to move-on and add value to their lives;
- Be sustainable and free resources to fund housing objectives;
- Be compliant, with robust business processes and systems; and
- Be an extendable or replicable offer to other Local Authorities.

Analysis of current service offer and delivery model

- 3.4 A review of the as-is service offer, operating and delivery models has been undertaken to provide both insight and to serve as a benchmark from which to define and measure the value-add of a target model. This has been achieved through:
- A desktop review of the current policy frameworks, operating procedures, and organisational design;
 - A review of the end-to-end customer journeys of service users approaching the service of both councils;
 - A review of operational processes and systems; and
 - A data and business intelligence review (waiting Lists, performance reports etc.).

Stakeholder engagement

- 3.5 Working with a spectrum of stakeholders has been central to establishing the nature of the need and demand for housing services, in how best to address those needs within a single model, and in shaping a new partnership-based service offer and partnership-based operating model.
- 3.6 **Staff engagement:** One-to-one interviews have been conducted with frontline managers and workshops held with frontline staff, to understand local context and service demand drivers, the strengths and weaknesses of the current operating models, and to establish the key business requirements of the target model.
- 3.7 **Members Working Group:** A series of remote workshops with Members from both districts has enabled the project to test thinking from the outset and to drive the definition of the new model forward based on negotiated consensus. This group has:
- Reviewed and agreed the overarching design principles;
 - Highlighted strengths and weaknesses of current service access pathways;
 - Helped to scope and agree key elements of the target pathway definition; and,
 - Reviewed key aspects of the proposed service model as a precursor to the formal governance review of each Council.

- 3.8 **Service User Engagement:** A digital survey of recent housing service users of both Councils has provided valuable insight into their experience of the service and the outcomes secured.

Partnership Innovation Engagement

- 3.9 A series of interviews with external stakeholders (somewhat curtailed by the Covid-19) has provided insight into the current operating models at Broadland and South Norfolk, how other Districts deliver similar services across the County, and the priorities of key service commissioners within the County Council. This exercise has been invaluable in assessing the appetite for forging new partnership arrangements in response to Covid-19 and to plan and act more strategically:

- 3.10 **Registered Providers:** To review current arrangements for delivering TA and social housing; potential approaches to increasing the pool of accommodation, for developing seamless partnership arrangement and streamlining processes.
- 3.11 **Private rental providers:** To explore current issues and constraints in the system and barriers to extending and developing provision and recommendations for development, particularly of private sector leased properties and self-contained properties for short-term TA.
- 3.12 **Adult and Children's Social Care commissioners:** To explore the responsiveness and effectiveness of the current systems in meeting the needs of vulnerable service users.
- 3.13 **Voluntary and community sector providers:** To explore current support for those in TA and social rental accommodation to develop recommendations for improving support to vulnerable groups in mitigating refusals and failed tenancies.
- 3.14 A full list of stakeholders interviewed is presented in Appendix 1.

Project Outputs

- 3.15 The core output of the project is an *Accommodation Pathway Model*, a highly innovative solution to help individuals meet their own housing needs, whilst supporting the more vulnerable to avoid homelessness, and if not, to stabilise and secure and sustain a lasting home.
- 3.16 To support the *Model* a set of supporting products has also been provided by CT:
- Homelessness prevention and statutory assessment toolkits;
 - TA procurement policy;
 - TA predictive model and a TA control framework;
 - TA operating manual;
 - TA casework resources pack;
 - Allocations policy;
 - Business requirements for a Housing system;

LGA Evaluation and shared Learning

- 3.17 Upon completion of the project an approach will be agreed between Broadland and South Norfolk stakeholders, CT and the LGA for disseminating the findings of the project and proposed model more widely. As with other Housing Advisors Programme projects this could include providing masterclasses to support dissemination of both the method and model.

4. SERVICE BASELINE

Approach

- 4.1 This section draws together the findings of the fieldwork undertaken by CT (desktop document review, data analysis and stakeholder consultation) to understand current service pathways and how they meet current need, and the operating models and delivery processes that are currently converging within the *One Team* model. This analysis will form a baseline from which a *Best in Class* and highly innovative model can be built.



- 4.2 The *Service Baseline* comprises:

Approach: A review of the current access and delivery model for managing homelessness and the allocation of social housing;

Insight: A review of demand, causation, demographics and support needs, drawn from statutory returns and data held on the housing management systems of both Councils;

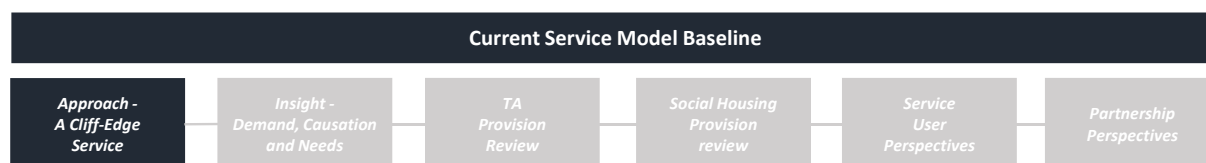
TA provision review: A review of TA demand in response to the Homelessness Reduction Act, and an assessment of both Council's TA portfolios, their configuration and cost-effectiveness, and the effectiveness of current procurement strategies in delivering the right TA at the right cost.

Social housing provision: A review of current access arrangements, registration and assessment processes, Housing Register management, allocations and lettings processes, and tenancy sustainment support provision;

Service user perspectives: Drawn from a digital survey of recently housed tenants of both Councils, highlighting their experience of the current customer journey;

Partnership perspectives: Drawn from interviews with senior and frontline staff from partner landlords, neighbouring District Councils, people-focused service functions of the County Council, and other service providers.

Approach – A Cliff-Edge Service



- 4.3 Under the current models operated by both councils (and by all Council) most residents in housing need initially to seek help through joining the housing register. A traditional housing register model only delivers housing solutions for a relatively small percentage of those registered. In addition, there is evidence nationally that many residents in housing need fail to register, having taken the view that they are unlikely to obtain social housing.
- 4.4 Others bypass the housing register route and present directly as homeless. Put simply the current housing register/statutory homeless service model, which is common to all local authorities, that people fail to access the service before needing housing help, and therefore fails to deliver practical housing help, advice and solutions for the vast majority of residents that have a housing need and this results in more residents approaching the council in crisis.
- 4.5 The table below demonstrates the cliff-edge nature of the service at both Councils, with the majority of individuals not seeking help until a point of crisis is near or has been reached:

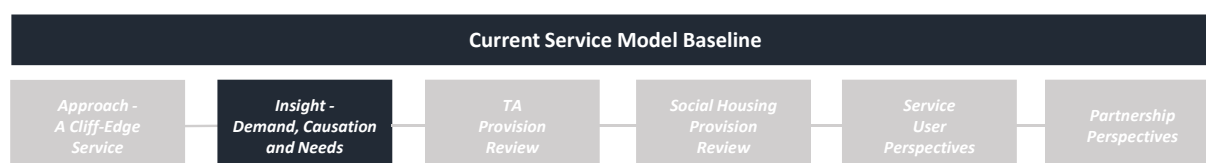
Applicant Status When Accessing Housing Team		
Status	Broadland	South Norfolk
Not at Risk (housing Advice Only)	8%	17%
At Risk (Relief Duty)	50%	33%
Homeless (Main Duty)	42%	50%

- 4.6 The current model is passive not proactive. The service waits for residents to approach the Councils and then filter help through a legislative focused lettings and homelessness system, built on rationing and means testing. This filter results in only a small percentage of the overall number of residents in housing need achieving a solution through the help of either Council, even though the Help Hub approach provides tailored support.
- 4.7 Furthermore, the model does little to encourage residents in housing need to be proactive, to adapt their behaviour to increase their chances of obtaining a solution. Many drift towards an inevitable housing crisis resulting in homelessness and an application under the statutory homelessness legislation. Each homelessness application might be viewed as a failure, caused by a system that all Councils have come to see as the norm.
- 4.8 The current model fails to promote and deliver resilience and self-help amongst residents in housing need. Common behaviours include:
- Many residents are unwilling to consider accommodation solutions outside of their immediate area because of family and social networks;
 - Few in housing need explore their housing options and plan their housing future

- There is, for many, a lack of resilience and lack of understanding of the principle of self-help. The Council is seen by many newly formed families as the solution to their housing problem, and that solution is only considered acceptable if it is social housing. If some are aware of the limited availability of social housing it is still considered obtainable through the route of becoming homelessness;
- National insight, but confirmed by housing officers locally, suggests that residents in housing need qualify for social housing on the basis of being able to demonstrate extreme housing need circumstances such as homelessness. There is no reward for residents in housing need who are proactive and try to help themselves. Academics have called the system "a race to the bottom" in order to receive help.

4.9 Those that try to be proactive face significant problems. All Councils largely focus on delivering help at the point of a housing crisis. There is little help available pre-crisis to support people to plan their housing future, or to overcome the challenges of securing accommodation in the private rented sector. Many can't afford a deposit and there is reluctance by many landlords and agents to accept tenants in receipt of benefits, or with small children.

Insight - Understanding Service Demand



- 4.10 To predict future accommodation needs across the two Councils, an understanding of the factors that influence demand is required, in particular the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2018 on homelessness applications and the demand for temporary accommodation. Logically, higher homelessness applications would normally evidence a need to plan for more cases requiring temporary accommodation.

Current Demand

- 4.11 Analysis of the Government's *Local Authority Homelessness Returns (2018 to September 2020)*, both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils have experienced a significant rise in homeless applications since the Homelessness Reduction Act was enacted in April 2018 is presented in the table below:

Total Homelessness Applications			
Council	Pre HRA: April 2017-March 2018	HRA Year 1: April 2018– March 2019	HRA Year 2: April 2019- Sept. 2019
Broadland	126	193	278 (120% increase)
South Norfolk	71	292	240 (238% increase)
Total	197	485	518 (162% increase)

- 4.12 Combining the figures for Broadland and South Norfolk, homeless applications have risen by 162% since the HRA was enacted, well above the 140% national increase for England.

Preventing and relieving homelessness

- 4.13 Where preventative casework is successful, fewer cases will require TA and, where relief casework is successful, more of the cases being accommodated in TA will leave at a faster rate. In contrast however, poor performance in preventing and relieving homelessness will result in higher numbers in temporary accommodation. This is an important issue to analyse for understanding how upstream solutions can result in better outcomes and to help predict how much Temporary Accommodation will Broadland and South Norfolk will need over the next 3 years
- 4.14 For both Broadland and South Norfolk performance is good. In respect of a successful outcome to the 'prevention of homelessness duty' is above the 'Eastern Region' and all England average based on the (MHCLG end of September 2019 HCLIC returns).

- 4.15 Performance for a successful outcome to the relief of homelessness duty is above the 'Eastern Region' average but, combining the figures for both Councils, is slightly below the all England average, as shown in the table below:

Successful Prevention Duty and Outcomes		
Council	Successful Prevention Duty Outcome %	Successful Relief Duty Outcome %
Broadland	69%	36%
South Norfolk	63%	41%
Easter Region average	56%	33%
England average	58%	40%

- 4.16 Taking the baseline figures, this is undoubtedly a strong performance by both Councils and this will have relieved pressure on TA. However, analysing the figures more closely there is evidence that raises concern regarding the sustainability of the current performance. The concern is that prevention and relief success has largely been achieved by diverting households into social housing rather than keeping people in the properties they have presented from and this may not be sustainable looking to the future.
- 4.17 Of the households recorded with a successful prevention outcome in South Norfolk in 100% of cases this was achieved through a move to alternative accommodation before the household became homeless, with 93% of that accommodation being a move into social housing. Put simply no cases were recorded as prevented through actions to help the household remain in their home and 93% were diverted into social housing before they became homeless. The '100% alternative accommodation prevention figure' is the highest recorded figure in England.
- 4.18 For Broadland the figures are a little better but still a concern. Of the households recorded as having a successful prevention outcome, in 76% of cases this was achieved through a move to alternative accommodation, with 64% of the alternative accommodation being social housing.
- 4.19 Both councils are fortunate in that social housing has to date taken the strain. So far, this approach has not had a negative impact on TA numbers, but there must be considerable doubt that this is a sustainable long-term strategy.
- 4.20 It may be possible to rely on social housing as the solution for another year or possibly 2, but this is not a sustainable strategy for suppressing numbers in TA indefinitely. Nor is it fair to other applicants in urgent housing need on the housing register who require social housing.
- 4.21 A failure to take action here may eventually see higher numbers in TA and higher costs.

Insight - Understanding Causation and Support Needs

- 4.22 Systematically recording and correctly interpreting the reasons why individuals and households approach the service, their demographic characteristics, and the support issues they may have, will provide the depth of insight from which the objectives and resources of the service can be focused to maximise outcomes.

Causation

- 4.23 The table below demonstrates that a significant percentage of households approaching the service do so from what had been a potentially stable home or sustainable tenancy, highlighting the need for supporting individuals to plan their own accommodation pathway, and to provide access to accommodation solutions that avoid a crisis intervention:

Main Causes of Homelessness	
Reason	Combined Councils
End of Private Rental Sector tenancy	25%
Friends or family unable to accommodate	20%
Relationship breakdown	15%
Domestic abuse or harassment	10%
End of Social Rental Sector tenancy	10%

Household characteristics

- 4.24 An increasing percentage of young and single people approach the service, for whom there is limited access to core interventions. To supporting the whole community to meet their housing needs, an understanding of how household form or remain hidden is needed. For example, nationally, there has been a 28% increase in 20-34 year olds living with their parents over the last 10 years, which will drive future demand. The table below demonstrates the demand on the service from single person and younger households:

Age Profile		Household Composition	
Age	Combined Councils	Household	Combined Councils
Under 26	22%	Single or couple	60%
Aged 27 to 56	63%	Family with 1 child	20%
57 and over	15%	Family with 2 children	10%
		Family with 3 or more children	10%

Economic Status

- 4.25 Currently, a significant proportion of individuals access the service from a position of relative economic stability (40% in work and 50% receiving no benefits). However, the impact of Covid-19 crisis on employment in the area, and in particular its impact on the gig economy and lower-paid seasonal jobs, may significantly increasing the urgency of need and level of financial hardship of those approaching the housing service.

Economic and State Support Status			
Economic Status	Combined Councils	State Support	Combined Councils
Full or part-time work	40%	No support	50%
Seeking work	15%	Housing Benefit	25%
Not seeking work (education or retired)	20%	Universal Credit	15%
Cannot work (long-term sick or disabled)	20%	Other benefits	10%

Primary Household Support Needs

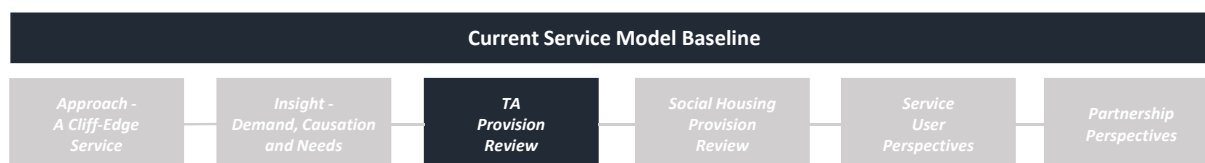
- 4.26 Currently, 40% of individuals approaching the service (across both Councils) identify a support need when they register, and again, in the wake of Covid-19, there will undoubtedly be a lasting legacy of mental health support needs and for building life skill amongst younger people who will be living at home for longer.

Primary Household Support Needs (of those needing support)	
Support Need	Combined Councils
Physical support	50%
Mental health support	25%
Younger person support (life skills, leaving care)	8%
Older person support (independent living)	7%

Building Insight

- 4.27 The level of insight gained through data collected by either service is limited at present and it is not clear how it drives planning and provision of the service, beyond the provision of statutory returns. The insight and experience of service users and service partners presented below helps to build out a more rounded picture of emerging need, particularly of younger people and those living with a mental health condition and finding it difficult to access support services.
- 4.28 Moving forward however, it is imperative to build a base of high quality insight to drive the new service model, providing the foresight needed to meet changes in demand and complexity of needs, rather than simply reacting to them.

TA Provision



Current demand

- 4.29 At the beginning of April 2020 there were 51 households placed in temporary accommodation across both Councils. Just over 30% were placed in accommodation outside of the Council area where they had presented as homeless from.
- 4.30 Despite the rise in homeless applications there has not been a corresponding rise for the number of households in temporary accommodation. In fact, numbers in TA have fallen in Broadland and have risen only marginally in South Norfolk, as shown in the table below:

People in Temporary Accommodation (provided to meet statutory)		
Council	March 2018 (last quarter before HRA)	September 2019
Broadland	59	29 (of which 15 are single people without children)
South Norfolk	11	20 (of which 12 are single people without children)

- 4.31 The analysis that the increase in homeless applications has not resulted in a significant rise in temporary accommodation would appear to go against the logic that higher applications must surely result in higher numbers in temporary accommodation. The explanation for why this is not the case is that prior to the HRA implementation, both Councils offered advice and prevention of homelessness help to customers without being required by the legislation to record this help through the means of a statutory homeless application.
- 4.32 What we can conclude on this question is:
- Homelessness applications have risen by 162% across the combined authorities and this is above the regional and national average;
 - However, the increased figure does not represent a 162% increase in presentations to both Councils as the rules for recording homeless applications have changed;
 - Nevertheless, there have undoubtedly been more people presenting as homeless in 2019/20 than in 2018/19 though it is difficult to accurately quantify what the real increase is. The figures recorded locally for new cases presenting for help are not sufficiently robust to be able to compare like-with-like with the figures for 2017/18;
 - Despite the fact that homeless applications have risen this has not fed through to a corresponding rise in temporary accommodation for either Council.

Predicting future demand

4.33 On the evidence set-out above, it is possible to conclude that despite the introduction of the HRA and the increase in homelessness applications, demand for temporary accommodation remains stable (rising from 11 to 20 in South Norfolk and falling significantly in Broadland) with a relatively small numbers accommodated by both Councils in comparison with Councils of a similar size and demography.

4.34 The specific reasons why the rise in homeless applications has not resulted in higher TA placements can be put down to the fact that:

Firstly, the recorded rise in applications is mainly for single people who have not been assessed as priority need and therefore are not owed a temporary accommodation duty and

Secondly, as is highlighted in the analysis above, both Councils are recording higher than the regional and national average figures for preventing homelessness which means households who would have required temporary accommodation have their threat of homelessness resolved before they become homeless and require TA.

Temporary Accommodation Portfolio Assessment

4.35 The current TA portfolio consists of accommodation that is Council owned, leased from private landlords or provided by Registered Providers. In addition, both Councils use *bed and breakfast* accommodation on a regular basis to provide emergency accommodation.

4.36 The TA portfolio at the 1st April 2020 consisted of the following stock:

Broadland Council TA Portfolio	
Council Owned	2 x 3 bed properties
Private Sector Leased	41 properties of various size including 2 x 4 bed
	1 x PSL leased 5 bed House of Multiple Occupancy
	Tustings: 5 x units leased from Clarion Housing
South Norfolk TA Portfolio	
Council Owned	Kestrel House: 6 x self-contained studio apartments for families, (all ground floor with wet room showers)
	St Andrews: 1 semi-detached 3-bed house, used for either for 3 x singles/couples (1 box room only suitable for a single person). 1 bathroom, 1 kitchen, 1 living room or can be used for 1 x large family
Private Sector Leased	The Manse: 6 x shared rooms, 3 bathrooms 1 large kitchen for singles or couples – 2 ground floor rooms, 4 upstairs, 1 communal lounge, leased from the Church

- 4.37 The large Private Sector Leased (PSL) portfolio (over 40 units) in Broadland is having a significant negative cost impact on the Council, with the net annual cost estimated at between £200 and £250k. Except for two Council-owned properties, PSL makes up the rest of the TA portfolio with bed and breakfast the emergency accommodation resource. Taken together Broadland is reliant on the type of TA that has the biggest negative cost impact. In comparison PSL accounts for 20% of the total TA portfolio on average for the rest of England.
- 4.38 The portfolio is more suited to longer-term TA placements. This is having a negative cost impact on the Council compared to the position before the introduction of the HRA. There are higher than budgeted for turnover rates and increasing levels of voids impacting on costs.
- 4.39 The business case behind the PSL procurement scheme for Broadland was based on a cost comparison with bed and breakfast costs. However, given the changes to DWP subsidy rules (2017) have had a negative impact on PSL schemes, there is a need to consider alternative models.
- 4.40 The two main forms of TA currently used to meet Broadland's emergency accommodation and second stage accommodation needs are forms of accommodation that have the biggest net financial cost to the Council.
- 4.41 For South Norfolk Council it can be argued that the TA portfolio is too small. There are only seven Council owned properties and six rooms/units leased, leaving the Council at risk of having to rely on costly bed and breakfast if there is an upturn in homelessness presentations. However, this is to some extent mitigated by the combined service model where TA resources can be shared across both Councils.
- 4.42 For both Councils there is a strong financial and operational case to suggest that the type and stock profile for the TA currently procured needs to change to respond to the impact that the HRA has had which is the need to procure more short term accommodation and less long term TA.
- 4.43 The balance between the need for short term emergency accommodation pending a decision on a homeless application, and longer term largely self-contained accommodation required to meet a full statutory homeless duty once accepted, has been impacted by the introduction of the two new prevention and relief duties and the flexible way these duties can be ended through 6 month accommodation lets of any tenure offered. Broadland and South Norfolk Council require additional short-term emergency accommodation and less long-term temporary accommodation.

TA Service Delivery

- 4.44 This section examines the current resource allocation models of the TA functions within the two Councils to assess how they can be best configured as a single service to meet future demand:

South Norfolk Council

- 4.45 There is no dedicated TA manager or team, with the function delivered across a number of resources, as follows:

Housing Solutions officers: Responsible for contacting Bed and Breakfast providers, completing risk assessments, charging sheets, and agreeing placements;

Administrative officer: responsible for some TA work (approximately 10 hours per week) along with a wide range of other administrative and support work. The TA administrative tasks include arranging contractors, cleaning rooms, and some maintenance functions;

Housing and Benefit Advisors (1.6 FTE): Provide intensive housing management and support for TA occupants, signposting mental health, social services, CAB, debt advice;

Housing Benefit Assessors (1.4 FTE): Process TA claims and assess housing benefit for other specialist accommodation including exempt and supported accommodation and Gypsy and Traveller site claims;

IT Systems officer (7.5 hours a week): Complete TA placement forms and set-up TA charges on the Abritas IT system.

4.46 **Broadland Council**

4.47 There is no dedicated TA manager, with the function delivered by:

Private Sector Leasing Officer (1 FTE): Responsible for most aspects of the Council's PSL scheme including management, sign ups, and managing contractors;

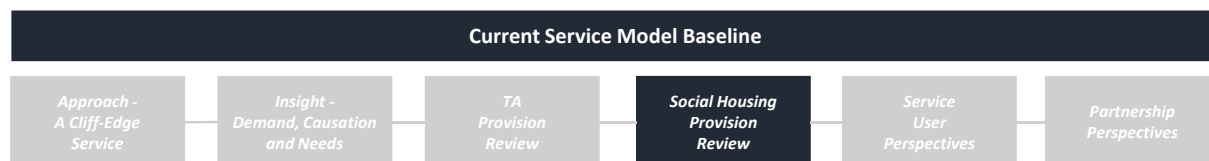
Housing officers (1.4 FTE): Responsible for TA placements, contacting bed and breakfast providers, set-up of charges and to record placements on the Jigsaw system.

4.48 Staff resources for the temporary accommodation function are not sufficient to deliver this critically important statutory function. Current structures are 'haphazard' and have evolved over time.

4.49 There is a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities for TA, and gaps at both strategic and operational level. This is compounded by out-of-date operating procedures and working documents at both councils.

4.50 There is an urgent need to implement a new TA structure for the combined authorities and to operate from one location to ensure consistency, control and continuity. Any additional growth in TA staff resources can likely be met through increased MHCLG Government funding for 2020/21. This funding case is set-out in Appendix 2.

Social Housing Provision



Review of current model

- 4.51 The principles underpinning housing service provision and delivery currently followed by both Councils have shortcomings that work against the core principle of effectively and efficiently matching the right person and their needs with the right accommodation:
- From a service user perspective, the service is complicated and encourage *band chasing* and a *race to the bottom* to evidence urgent housing need whether it exists or not;
 - *Housing Need* is a relative concept and the Government's statutory definition of housing need as defined by the reasonable preference groups are outdated and do not fit with the market or supply position in Norfolk in 2020;
 - Dependency is encouraged and resilience is not promoted, with applicants being responsible for making tough decisions about their options and taking responsibility for solutions where they are able;
 - They do not sufficiently recognise the changing circumstances of applicants registering with many more in part time or full time work.

Allocations Policy

- 4.52 An Allocations Policy is the keystone of any housing service and dictates the operability and level of outcomes achievable, as it is delivered on the ground. key aspects of the Broadland and South Norfolk policies and delivery models are reviewed below to assess how a common allocations policy and delivery model might be constructed:

Qualification of applications: Only South Norfolk currently offer any on-line qualification of applications. The processes of both Councils need overhauling to maximise the level of on-line pre-qualification and provision of proof by applicants;

Assessment of need: In South Norfolk assessment is undertaken within the on-line CBL process, whilst in Broadland, this is a manual process undertaken against the homeless and allocations policies. Moving forward, a common approach is needed that removes any officer interpretation from the process, as it will be prescribed within the business system, which will guarantee transparency, but still permit auditable management discretion;

Banding: in our view, the banding models of both Councils have weaknesses, in common with many other local authorities, the Broadland Model (3 bands) is not broad or transparent enough and the South Norfolk model (5 bands) is too complex. Moving forward, a straightforward, transparent banding is required that will reduce the level of incorrect banding decisions and resultant level of challenge;

Notification of banding decisions: Formal, correctly justified written notifications of banding decisions must be consistently produced;

Local connection: Is problematic for both Councils, as evidencing connection in relation to an application is not granular enough and specific nuances are not recorded or considered;

Allocations by bed size: Whilst both services appear to operate in a compliant way, there is potential for missing rules, such as when a child turns 16 and is entitled to their own bedroom;

Medical assessment: Decisions are made in-house at both Councils, which puts pressure on non-medically qualified staff. Moving forward, if this arrangement is continued, an electronic medical triage form is needed to capture circumstances accurately, and a medical assessment script that will ensure the consistency and integrity of assessment decision making.

4.53 Both Councils are strong in safeguarding vulnerable residents, needs are identified early and coordinated through the respective *Service Hubs*. Both Councils are also strong in conducting home visits and also engaging appropriate support partners in supporting vulnerable residents (sourcing mental health support provision is however cited as being extremely difficult).

4.54 However, neither Council regularly arranges accompanied viewing for vulnerable residents. Also, the support status flags on systems used by either Councils are not clear, moving forward there needs to be clear distinction and consistency of use.

4.55 The management of the housing register is a problem for both Councils, with limited maintenance of individual applications or scheduled reviews:

Changes of circumstances: A manual process is followed at Broadland, whilst there is some self-service automation in South Norfolk. Self-service capability must be expanded and strengthened moving forward, as the gateway to any new service pathway;

Application reviews: Neither Council currently does no more than to review the homelessness cases on their lists there is no consistent approach or schedule for reviewing other cases. Housing registers are not therefore being maintained correctly and have significant numbers of obsolete cases. A definitive and audited review path is required going forward.

4.56 The approach to allocations and lettings in both Councils is generally robust, but needs strengthening in several areas:

Shortlisting: Both Councils can demonstrate a transparent, auditable approach to shortlisting;

Viewings: Neither Council uses multiple viewings, which may impact landlord void turnaround;

Sensitive lets: Both councils operate open and compliant processes;

Local lettings: Both councils operate open and compliant processes;

Offers: Both Councils rely on a verbal offer process, which may be open to re/mis-interpretation by applicants;

Reasons for refusal: Are recorded consistently by both Councils. However, greater consistency is needed when recording process bypass reasons.

4.57 Working with landlords to coordinate the letting of homes to those in most need, whilst minimising voids loss is challenging:

- The manual, nominations-based approach at Broadland means staff can often struggle to match applicants against a void quickly, which can lead to critical information such as sensitivities (witness protection for example) being missed. It is critical that landlords give 4 weeks' notice of new voids to allow a candidate to be matched;
- Landlords can be guilty of slippage in meeting expected hand-back dates, which can result in unfulfilled offers, particularly in homeless cases;
- The provision of lettings paperwork by landlords can also be slow, particularly in Broadland. A digital self-service portal for landlords will automate this process.

4.58 From a compliance and performance perspective, a number of critical weaknesses have emerged, that must be addressed by any new service model:

- The audit trail as to what constitutes a legal *offer* is not complete, as processes were streamlined as part of *lean-thinking* reviews – a full audit trail must be re-instated;
- Similarly, the audit trail of a customer's journey through the system is incomplete and is therefore not compliant;
- Extracting business information to drive performance reviews and to gain insight can be difficult, meaning services may not be performing or responding to changes in demand and needs appropriately;
- The configuration of the ICT solution at Broadland means that the reason recorded for an agreed banding is not transparent, a critical audit trail parameter.

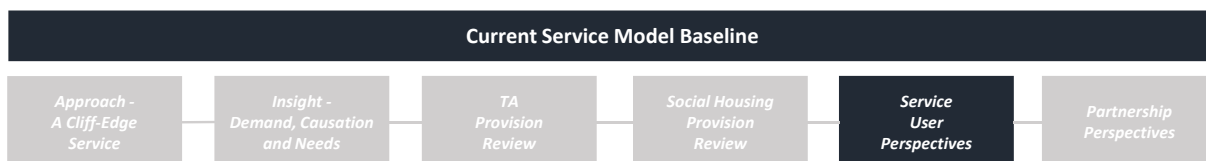
Review of current working practices

4.59 Current working practices have been assessed through a desktop review of policy and operational documentation and observations provided by frontline managers and staff. Many of the issues outlined below are already being addressed within the new *One Team* service model, but are recorded to enable the completion of the baseline analysis.

4.60 Frontline managers and staff recognise the need to rethink the operational and organisational design and converge policies, processes and working practices, to refresh business systems and review partnership working arrangements. Specific aspects of the current operating models that require rethinking are therefore to.

- Introduce a single way of working and to implement an organisational design that balances the number of specialist and non-specialist roles, to maintain service levels whilst focusing support on the most vulnerable;
- Reduce the number and increase the inter-operability of business systems and the processes they support, to reduce duplication and eliminate re-keying of information;
- Increase the scope of self-service functionality and eliminate manual processes.

Service User Perspectives



4.61 A web survey of 62 recent users of the housing service (out of 200 recently housed households contacted) has provided feedback on their experience of the service they received from Broadland and South Norfolk.

4.62 The primary reasons given for being on the register were:

Main Reasons Given When Applying For Housing	
Reason Given	% Respondents
Overcrowding	24%
Health and disability	18%
End of private sector tenancy agreement	13%
Homeless	11%
Affordability	8%
Family break-up	8%
Unable to continue in family home	5%
Downsizing	5%
Change of accommodation need	3%
Safeguarding issues	3%
End of social housing tenancy	1%
Disrepair of current home	1%

4.63 70% of respondents said they were familiar with the Allocations Policy of their Council and almost 80% said they were familiar with the banding system operated.

4.64 Over half of respondents were housed within six month of being placed on the Housing Register, with a further quarter placed in under a year. Only 6% of respondents said they had to wait for more than 18 months to be offered accommodation.

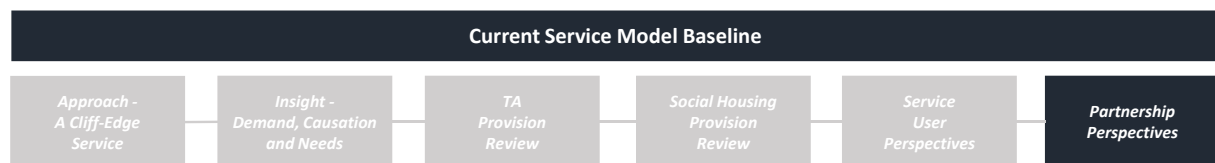
4.65 Assessment letters sent to respondents were universally viewed as being accurate and reflective of their circumstances, however special circumstances could have been better reflected. 21% of respondents asked for a review of their application, mostly because the applicant didn't agree with the banding allocated to them. Upon review, two-thirds of the original banding decisions were adjusted, which suggests weaknesses and inconsistencies in the assessment and banding process.

- 4.66 45% of respondents said they had to contact the housing service whilst they were on the Housing Register and of those that did, 28% did so once, 50% did so up to 5 times, 15% did so 5 to 10 times and 6% over 10 times. The main reasons for contacting the service were:

Main Reasons for Contacting Housing	
Reason	% Respondents
Information	23%
Status check	23%
Banding query	22%
Change of circumstance	18%
Bidding query	11%
Support need	3%

- 4.67 The effectiveness of the service response to an enquiry was mixed, with only 46% of enquiries resolved at the first point of contact.
- 4.68 Just over half of respondents (54%) accepted the first offer they received and a further 38% accepted the second. Reasons for refusal vary, from the property being unsuitable, not in a preferred location, or not ready. Almost 85% of respondents agreed that their Council had taken their views into account when making an offer.
- 4.69 Most respondents felt that the bidding and lettings process was well supported, but 20% were unaware of the need for an affordability check. Sign-ups were generally completed within a week.
- 4.70 Overall, most respondents were happy with their new home and the service they received from the Council and the landlord. However, the level of decisions upheld on re-banding enquiries and the number of contact made to chase progress, demonstrates that there is considerable scope to digitise (change of circumstances) and streamline (bidding and lettings) many aspects of the service.

Partnership Perspectives



- 4.71 Through a set of one-to-one interviews, partner landlords report a positive day-to-day working relationship with the two Districts, particularly when combined with regular co-working. They also report good access to and support from the wider housing and benefits services.
- 4.72 Landlords perceive that both services have sought to seek a balance between applicants in priority need and those who are not, and exercising fairness on a case-by-case basis. Both the nominations and choice-based lettings allocation policy approaches are perceived as having strengths and weaknesses (the former allowing for the placement of sensitive lets and the latter for enabling choice and driving greater efficiency), the adoption of a joint, a blended approach moving forward that combines both approaches would be welcomed.
- 4.73 Whilst the delivery of the service is seen as good overall, specific operational issues were raised that need to be considered in designing and operating the new housing service model. When working as individual services, the small support teams could struggle to maintain service levels and continuity during periods of staff absence, particularly when processing a release of new-build homes. Customer data and insight can sometimes be of poor quality or out of date, which can result in refusals and consequently increase void turnaround times. Waiting lists do not appear to be not refreshed or applications reviewed on a regular basis.
- 4.74 Most formal arrangements and service levels date back to the original stock transfer agreements or to when the stock was released by the developer and landlords recognise that they no longer provide a framework to manage the relationship. For example, processes for the disposal of hard to let or unsuitable properties are slow and do not allow landlords to react quickly to changes in accommodation demand or need.
- 4.75 Landlords recognise that their relationship with the Councils is primarily transactional at present, operating on a case-by-case basis, with risk transferred wholesale from one party to the other as a letting is made, with little follow-up or continuity of caseworking to support more vulnerable tenants, this leaves landlords with few options but to evict where tenancies fail, perpetuating the *revolving door* of homelessness. To this end, defining more holistic, partnership-based relationships, centred on sharing risk and the needs of the individual would be welcome.
- 4.76 More widely across Norfolk there is a recognition that whilst local authorities and providers have sought to do the right thing, this has often been without coordination or within an overarching governance framework, and consequently, previous partnership approaches have often broken down.

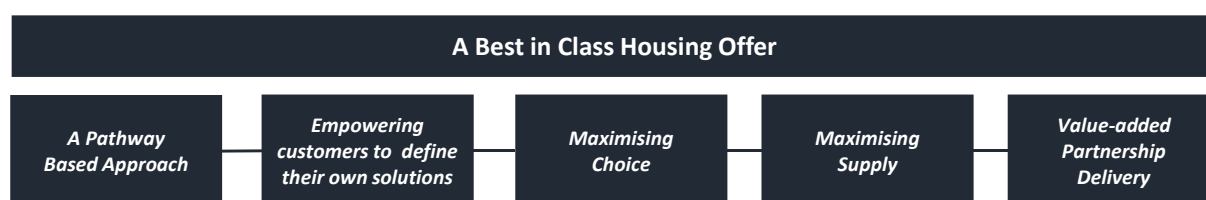
5. FACING THE FUTURE

New Thinking Needed

- 5.1 The impact of Covid-19 will undoubtedly drive additional demand and reduce income across all Council services. Specifically, a significant rise in unemployment could cause homelessness as residents' default on their rent and mortgage payments. There is already evidence of increased levels of domestic abuse and more people experiencing mental health problems. All of these factors may result in more homelessness for families and individuals.
- 5.2 The financial costs of delivering the homelessness service for significantly more households will increase the cost of temporary accommodation to a level unknown in both Districts. A large increase in temporary accommodation costs has the potential to place the Councils at risk of a section 114 notice if funds run out, unless the Government provides substantial additional financial support.
- 5.3 It may not therefore be an exaggeration to state that without applying new thinking in regard to the way housing advice, homelessness and social housing provision is delivered in Broadland and South Norfolk, the financial impact could put financial viability at risk. A sit back and wait approach is not an option. There remains a legal responsibility to deliver housing advice but there is also a financial imperative for the two Councils working together to deliver more effective housing help to all residents in housing need if we are to avoid the inevitable journey many residents will make towards a housing crisis and homelessness with the calamitous financial impact this will have on Council finances.

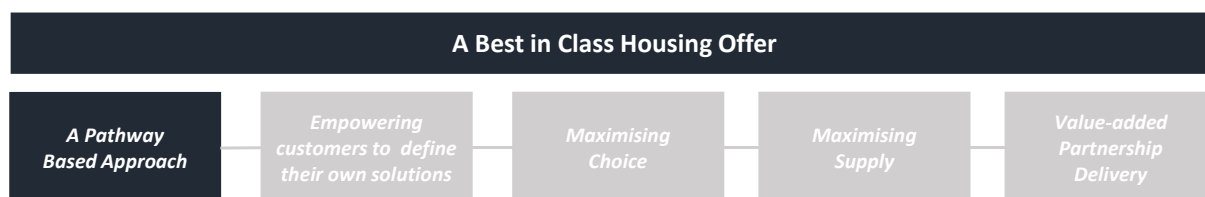
Defining a Best in Class Housing Offer

- 5.4 Broadland and South Norfolk have a unique opportunity to build a ground-breaking *Best in Class Housing Offer* that would be transformational, changing the culture and approach for supporting residents in housing need to find solutions, based on a *Pathway* based approach.



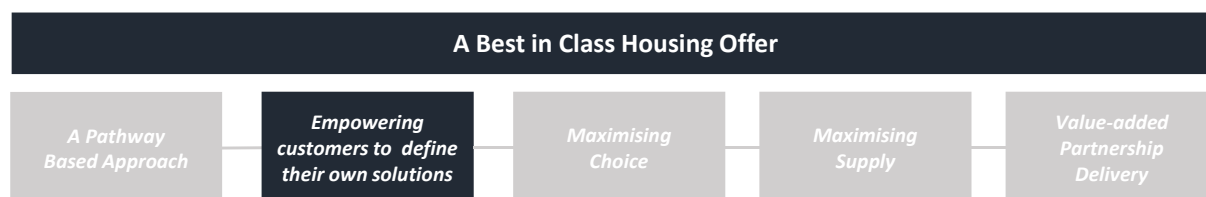
- 5.5 The components of a *Best in Class* Housing Offer for Broadland and South Norfolk are:
- A Pathway based approach:** With housing options defined along a pathway open to all;
- Empowering customers:** To define their own solutions through self-service and self-referral;
- Maximising choice:** Providing a *marketplace* of housing options to anyone in housing need;
- Maximising supply:** By creating a single, extended pool of available accommodation;
- Value-added partnerships:** Focused on the early intervention and provision of wraparound support that remains with a household until they can sustain a long-term tenancy option.

A Pathway Based Approach



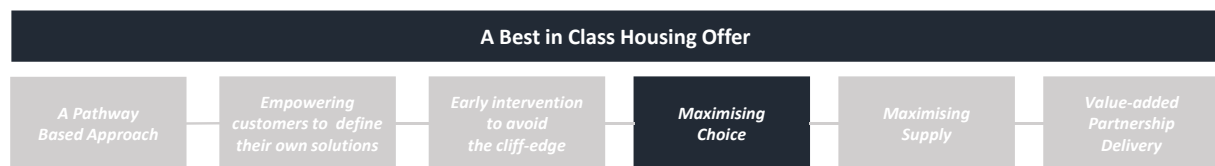
- 5.6 A *Pathway* based approach will shape a holistic response to help all residents in housing need, as the full impact of Covid-19 becomes apparent and Councils have to respond to the impact on housing and homelessness of the most severe economic recession in living memory.
- 5.7 A new innovative *Accommodation Pathway Model* will not only meet the combined council's TA statutory needs but also delivers substantially more accommodation options. Built around three core components it would provide:
- Suitable emergency accommodation to meet statutory TA duties;
 - Short term, 6-12 months, second stage accommodation providing support and stabilisation where required to help prepare households for longer term housing solutions;
 - Longer term settled housing either into Social Housing, the PRS, or property purchase products such as Rent to Buy, that provides long -term sustainable accommodation that reduces the chances of households representing as homeless and with support provided where needed to minimise the chance of eviction.
- 5.8 Some households would not require second stage accommodation as they would not have any vulnerabilities that require support and stabilisation before they were ready to move onto long term settled housing. The *Pathway Model* is intended to reduce the likelihood of more vulnerable households representing as homeless.

Empowering customers to define their own solutions



- 5.9 Housing supply should no longer be structured to focusing on one product only - social housing, recognising that this traditional model fails to respond to the reality of limited supply. Continuing to deliver a traditional housing register model focused on social housing alone reinforces the behaviour whereby residents are unwilling to consider other housing solutions.
- 5.10 The intention would be for the *Accommodation Pathway* to become accepted as a new essential public service for all residents in housing need in Broadland and South Norfolk regardless of whether they meet the statutory means tested categories of housing need.
- 5.11 Unlike the current register, it would proactively encourage residents in housing need to apply in order to capture as many of the families, couples and individuals living in the Districts who have a self-assessed housing need now, or are likely to have a housing need in the near future.
- 5.12 Having captured the real housing need across the two Councils the aim is to deliver a self-service *Marketplace* to help residents access a far wider range of accommodation solutions facilitated through the actions of the two Councils. Interventions would consist of light touch *enabling*, or direct *intervention*. The overall objective is to prevent as many residents as possible needing to present as homeless and in crisis. This will ensure that Broadland and South Norfolk are able to manage the costs of homelessness despite the impact of Covid-19.
- 5.13 The solution will seek to implement a comprehensive strategy for preventing homelessness through helping far more households to remain in the home where they have presented from where this is safe. This also reflects the Greater Norfolk housing strategy.

Maximising choice



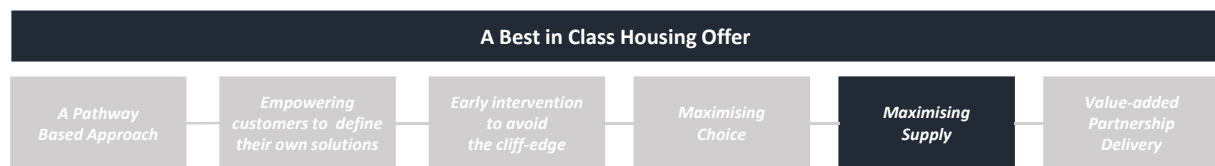
- 5.14 There is a need to maximise the pool of accommodation available to the Councils to meet or end its statutory duties. At present there may be a risk of a silo approach with units of accommodation designated as TA and other work streams seeking to develop schemes to increase PRS move on options such as developing a social letting agency.
- 5.15 The objective would be achieved by developing the concept of a *Marketplace* creating a pool of accommodation maximising the number and type of PRS accommodation units available to the Council to meet or end any of the statutory prevention and relief duties as well as providing an alternative accommodation option that can be used for TA.



The *Marketplace* property pool could be administered through a newly restructured Accommodation Pathway Team, property would be sourced and used flexibly:

- To end the new HRA duty to prevent homelessness and thereby preventing the need for a household in priority need to require TA;
- To contribute to the TA portfolio to meet any interim TA duties;
- To end the new HRA duty to relieve homelessness for any household in priority need who has been placed in TA and owed the new 'relief of homelessness duty';
- To end the final main duty for any household where the relief duty has come to an end and a full final homelessness duty has been accepted on the basis that the applicant is in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

Maximising Supply



5.16 An *Accommodation Pool* could consist of:

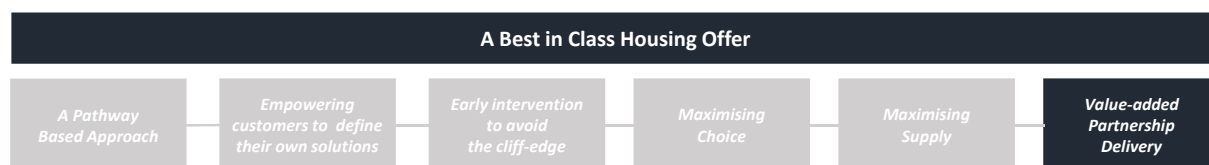
- All private rented sector accommodation sourced by the Accommodation Pathway Team
- Supported Housing Units where the Council is able to control access
- Any third sector hostel provision where it has been negotiated that this accommodation should form part of the marketplace.
- New initiatives such as accommodation procured through a Social Letting Agency
- New initiatives delivered by Registered Providers and Developers such as build for market rent.

5.17 The use of properties in the pool would be flexible so that properties can be switched from one use to another to meet the operational needs at any given time. So for example, a hostel space available through the pool could be used to end the new prevention duty for applicant A and when that unit became vacant again through the move on component of the accommodation pathway, it could be used to meet an interim TA duty for applicant B, or to end a relief of homelessness duty for applicant C who may be in TA.

5.18 A strategy is needed to open-up the private rented sector for households that cannot remain in their home. For households where this is not possible and homelessness cannot be prevented there is a need to develop an accommodation pathway that not only meets the temporary accommodation needs for both Councils, but also delivers far more private rented sector solutions and properties that can be used to successfully prevent and relieve homelessness. This will take the pressure off social housing and minimise the risk of temporary accommodation rising.

5.19 The new model will have the additional benefit of providing a more comprehensive picture of total housing need in both Councils, allowing Registered Providers and the Council to strategically plan housing provision.

Value-added partnership delivery



- 5.20 The commitment of Staff and Members of Broadland and South Norfolk to delivering a housing-led response to the COVID crisis within the new *One Team* structure is recognised as a potential key to unlocking a new holistic service vehicle with a wider shared service vision across the public realm.
- 5.21 Landlords are keen to review and formalise working arrangements that better reflect the post-Covid-19 operating environment, make better use of resources and deliver enduring outcomes:
- Work within a flexible policy framework that accommodate the needs of the Districts and the landlords;
 - Enables landlords to model accommodation portfolios and manage stock disposals to ensure the supply of accommodation can meet demand and type of need;
 - Facilitates an end-to-end customer journey underpinned by streamlined digital processes;
 - Better manage risk and pressures across the whole system;
 - Achieves better and longer lasting outcomes for people by providing tailored support offers and coordinated caseworking;
 - Makes people less reliant on service interventions and support.
- 5.22 More widely across Norfolk, commissioners and providers recognise that Covid-19 must act as a catalyst for joining-up disparate service elements around an individual, with a housing-centred approach and coordinated early intervention as key drivers. They also see the imperative of acting more strategically when planning and coordinating the delivery of services, to optimise resources, plan more coherently, and create lasting outcomes for individuals that ultimately reduce demand over time, as their resilience increases and reliance on core services decreases.

6. THE ACCOMMODATION PATHWAY MODEL

A housing first

- 6.1 The Broadland and South Norfolk *Accommodation Pathway Model* will be a first of its kind in the UK to deliver a holistic housing service to the whole community regardless of their immediate need, with the aim of enabling them to plan for their long-term accommodation needs with a realist set of options, whilst supporting those who reach a point of crisis to re-establish and sustain a suitable home.
- 6.2 The objectives set for the *Accommodation Pathway Model* might sensibly be to:
- Deliver an essential new service for all residents in housing need with no resident excluded and to ensure support is available through *assisted choice* for vulnerable applicants who cannot help themselves;
 - Deliver solutions based on greater transparency, simplicity and fairness, and that delivers solutions for the majority in housing need not the minority;
 - End the race to the bottom whereby the system encourages people's behaviour and actions to make or present their housing situation in the worst circumstances in order to obtain help;
 - Increase mobility across and outside of the Broadland and South Norfolk area;
 - Deliver cost savings that can be re-invested in support solutions.
 - Deliver innovation that places Broadland and South Norfolk at the forefront of new thinking for delivering housing advice, homelessness and social housing provision;

Service Promise

- 6.3 A suggested set of core principles to underpin the model would be enshrined in a *Service Promise*:
- Provide clear information to enable residents to make informed choices, covering housing products they do or may qualify for in the social, market and private rented sectors and realistic estimated waiting time for each product;
 - Provide details on where in the areas covered by the two Council's they have the most realistic chance of obtaining housing including facts on the type of tenure or tenures they have the best chance on obtaining;
 - Promote resilience through emphasising *rights and responsibilities*. This means everyone in housing need in Broadland and South Norfolk should have a right to realistic housing help and a level of choice, but must be prepared to take more responsibility for resolving their housing problems, with the facilitation and support of the Council acting as an enabler rather than as a constant provider;
 - Protect vulnerable individuals and households who cannot take any responsibility for resolving their own housing problems.

The Accommodation Pathway Model

- 6.4 The *Accommodation Pathway* will provide a universal service open to all with a housing need. A self-service *Marketplace* will enable the majority of households to resolve their accommodation needs before reaching a point of crisis and requiring service intervention. Where this is not possible the service will proactively work to prevent homelessness and where this cannot be avoided provide suitable emergency accommodation, with support provided to enable individuals to build resilience, and secure and sustain long-term accommodation solutions and to break cycles of homelessness or eviction.

Broadland and South Norfolk Accommodation Pathway Model				
Accommodation Pathway	Stage 1: Marketplace	Stage 2: Prevention	Stage 3: Stabilisation	Stage 4: Resolution
Stage Objectives	Self-identification of Needs & Homelessness Risk	Prevent Crisis & Maximise Outcomes	Provide High Quality TA & Support	<i>Break the Cycle</i> Tenancy Sustainment
Service Offer	Service Promise	Enabling Solutions	Direct Intervention Solutions	Wraparound Support
Accommodation Pool	Emergency Accommodation (Statutory TA)	Short-term Accommodation (Follow-on Support)	Private Rented Home (Sustainable)	Social Rented Home (Sustainable)

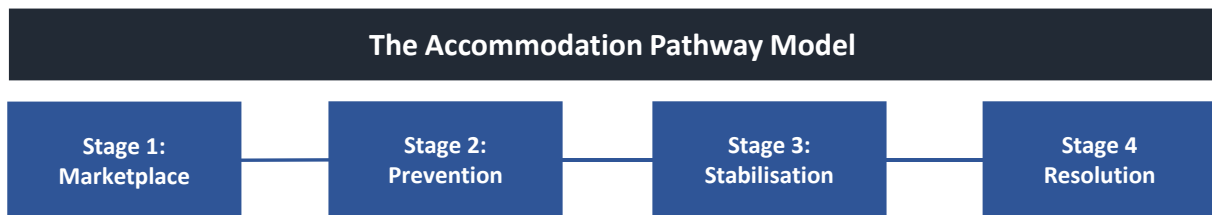
Stage 1 Marketplace: Provide digital self-help for the majority in housing need, and with early intervention for residents to remain in their homes, or who may be too vulnerable to help themselves. There are two components to Stage 1. Firstly, to encourage residents to self-identify their housing need and begin to plan their housing future based on a *Personal Accommodation Pathway*. Secondly to Identify housing need risk factors that may precipitate housing crisis or homelessness and deliver effective help based on the principle of self-help and resilience for those able to help themselves and proactive help for those more vulnerable.

Stage 2 Prevention: Prevent homelessness at the point of crisis to maximise positive outcomes for those who present at the crisis point of being at risk of imminent homelessness.

Stage 3 Stabilisation: Provide excellent temporary accommodation for those owed a statutory duty and additionally provide support and stabilisation for those who require more help to resolve problems that are more than just the need for a roof over their heads.

Stage 4 Resolution: To permanently resolve the housing needs of individual and households whether they are receiving formal interventions or owed a statutory temporary accommodation duty, by delivering realistic, and suitable accommodation options across all tenures, and to break the cycle of the revolving door of eviction and homelessness by helping them build resilience and skills to sustain long term accommodation solutions.

Stage 1: Marketplace



6.5 *Marketplace* will enable self-service exploration of available housing options, support self-registration to access an available option, with early targeted access support for the more vulnerable.

Marketplace - objectives

6.6 *Marketplace* has three primary objectives:

- To deliver effective and practical housing options and advice to all residents in housing need to help them to make timely and realistic decisions about their housing options and to plan their housing future. Help based on the principle of self-help for those who are able to help themselves and early intervention actions for those who are too vulnerable to help themselves.
- To identify those most at risk and take proactive action to protect the most vulnerable individuals and households who are not able to take responsibility for resolving their housing problems. This will involve early identification of housing need 'risk factors' that may result in a housing crisis, or homelessness.
- To encouraging residents to self-identify their housing need and plan their housing future through the support provided by the service through its enabling role.

6.7 Delivering the practical help in stage 1 would be framed around an interactive website where residents could register their housing need and explore accommodation options for meeting their accommodation needs both now and in the future. Residents would be able to build an *Accommodation Options Plan*. This might contain several accommodation phases applicable to their personal and financial circumstances.

6.8 *Marketplace* would best be delivered through remodelling of the housing application and housing register website so there is one point of access for residents wishing to register their housing need. It would need to be rebranded to give the clear message that a resident is registering not just for the social housing register but also to gain access to a wider marketplace of accommodation options and solutions across all tenures.

6.9 Key messages to deliver to all residents in housing need through Stage 1 are to:

- Remain at home as long as possible and save-up to move;
- Understand the costs of living independently and not leave home too soon before a) they can afford to live independently, and b) they can manage living independently;
- Always to plan a housing move rather than move.

Marketplace – digital service offer

- 6.10 Residents will be expected and be able to service their own needs through accessing through their on-line account all the information they need to answer any queries they may have and to make adjustments to their choices. The information would include their position in the queue and housing prospects for any housing product they have opted for and the estimated waiting time for all the housing products qualified for on self-registration.
- 6.11 Texts and emails would be automatically to inform applicants of their prospects based on the choices they have made and whether their prospects would be improved if they amended their choice
- 6.12 New and emerging social housing products such as rent to buy, market rented social housing and shared ownership would be promoted by direct marketing information (text, email, social media, written posted) sent directly from the housing team and the Registered Social Housing providers themselves.

Marketplace - enabling roles

- 6.13 The enabling role of Broadland and South Norfolk at Stage 1 could be fulfilled through a range of low cost help and support options, avoiding the need for interventions that are likely to be higher cost, as they involve significant time input from specialist officers.
- 6.14 Based on the information provided by an individual, Marketplace will personalise self-help housing advice and downloadable resources that address problems such as tensions at home, negotiating rent with a landlord, and how to find a room as a lodging.
- 6.15 Self-service software will enable residents to produce their own bespoke *Accommodation Options Plan*. This would cover social housing prospects, renting, sharing, shared ownership, extended family, or moving in or together with friends.
- 6.16 *Marketplace* will also deliver relevant complementary service information, sign-posting and service access, reflecting the face-to-face and telephone services currently delivered by the *Support Hubs*. This would include a wide range of services such as debt and money advice, adult social care and could be expanded to include services enabling residents to save for a rent deposit through a credit union or similar schemes.
- 6.17 A range of pre-tenancy courses could also be delivered digitally (through or in partnership with housing associations), with certificate upon completion to demonstrate the core knowledge, skills and commitment needed to manage a tenancy. This would improve their chances of being accepted by a private or social landlord.
- 6.18 *Marketplace* could also deliver Interactive functions to encourage people to think more realistically about where they wish to live and type of tenure based on behavioural psychology. The aim is to encourage people to think of housing solutions that are not all about social housing and help residents to think about the advantages of mobility across the Districts and Norfolk as a whole.

6.19 *Marketplace* would provide access all available housing products in one place with the intention that it would become the first place to go for all residents in housing need:

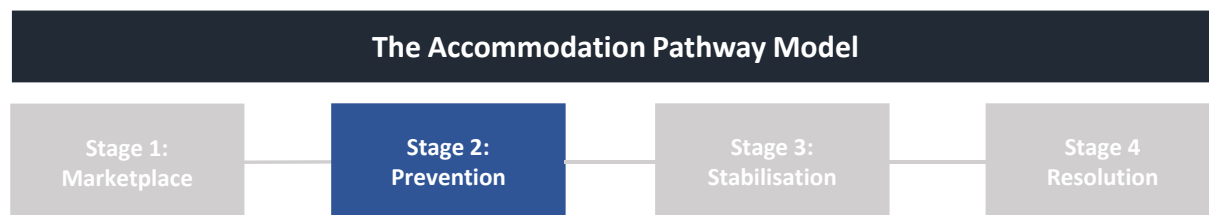
- Social rented housing in each Districts and elsewhere;
- Older person housing;
- Affordable rented housing;
- Intermediate rental homes, potential resale and shared ownership schemes
- For sale housing including private sector landlords who have been encouraged to let through the portal, and shared ownership opportunities and criteria to qualify;
- New rural development schemes and section 106 criteria Renting - sharing together;
- Moving in with family and friends;
- Lodging with a resident landlord schemes.

Marketplace – direct intervention role

6.20 Examples of direct interventions that could be adopted by Broadland and South Norfolk at Stage 1 are explored below' including their cost implications:

- Rent deposits could be offered at this early help stage when residents are largely planning their housing future and for the majority their circumstances could be described as a 'wish to move' rather than a need to move. However, a universal promise of a rent deposit or rent in advance would be unaffordable. Residents instead should be encouraged to save up for a rent deposit or rent in advance.
- The affordable housing 'pot' funded through section 106 planning gain could be re-prioritised deliver more semi-independent living schemes such as YMCA/Foyers type schemes, alongside new traditional social housing;
- There is a strong case for using analytics to create a data warehouse that combines council-wide business intelligence (housing, benefits, council tax, ASB, troubled families etc) to produce predictive models identifying households most likely to be at risk of homelessness and enable early intervention. This raises several questions:
 - How does this fit in with the objective of encouraging resilience and self-help?
 - If over-used it removes any responsibility for residents to take action to help themselves
 - It could potentially 'overrun' the service with cases at risk of homelessness sometime in the future, but if targeted at residents who cannot help themselves it could be a useful tool in preventing a future homelessness crisis;
 - A compromise might be to use predictive modelling to deliver signposting help for residents who are assessed as being able to help themselves, with more direct interventions for those assessed as more vulnerable.

Stage 2: Prevention



Prevention - objectives

- 6.21 *Prevention* will seek to keep high risk households who have self-identified in *Marketplace* from reaching the point of crisis and to maximise positive outcomes for those who present to the service as being at risk of imminent homelessness.

Prevention – enabling role

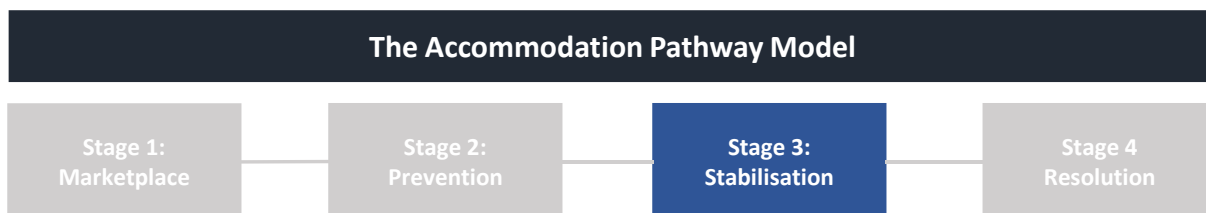
- 6.22 Much of the package of enabling activity outlined in Stage 1 will still be relevant to households at Stage 2. However, given the imminent risk of homelessness, caseworkers would need to be more proactive and directive when working with residents in order to prevent them losing their home, or to support them to find something else before they reached the point of becoming homeless. For example, residents would be not only be encouraged but expected to consider housing solutions that are not all about social housing.
- 6.23 Enabling families to remain at home and wait for social housing rather than become homeless is an option that could be delivered as part of the review of the allocation policy. The aim would be to remove the majority of family exclusion cases from the homelessness and temporary accommodation process through granting priority under a *new generation housing need category* on the housing register. This *deal* is a more honest approach and removes the need for some residents to collude to claim to be homeless. It involves a longer wait but a social housing outcome at the end of that wait and more choice over where that offer is. In contrast becoming homeless is likely to result in a private rented solution as opposed to social housing and limited choice over location.

Prevention – direct intervention role

- 6.24 The accommodation offer that is best for Broadland and South Norfolk and for residents, is to support people to remain at home for the longer term or long enough for the resident to plan their accommodation move. There will be direct costs in order to achieve a successful prevention outcome and decisions will be needed on who should be able to access direct financial support. The Support Hub role would be expanded to provide this support.
- 6.25 For example, a *Prevention of Homelessness Fund* could help resolve the trigger cause, that is the reason for the threat of exclusion, which could either be a grant or a loan. A decision would be required as to whether such payments would only be available to residents in priority need (and therefore would require temporary accommodation (TA) if homelessness cannot be prevented), or whether funding would be available to all residents at risk of homelessness regardless of whether there would be a TA duty if homelessness cannot be prevented.

- 6.26 Taking a specific common presenting problem, where private rented tenancy and social housing cases at risk of homelessness due to rent arrears. How much financial responsibility would Broadland and South Norfolk take to resolve the rent arrears, to pay off all or part of the arrears, arrears in full, or brokering a negotiated solution between landlord and tenant but not offering any payments to resolve the problem.
- 6.27 Where homelessness cannot be prevented an accommodation offer could be based on providing financial support to pay for rent deposits or rent in advance, either through a grant or a loan. Funding could be made available to priority need cases only or all to applicants owed a prevention duty including all single people. The *Discretionary Housing Payment Fund* could be 'top sliced' so that an agreed proportion is targeted for deposits and rent in advance payments.
- 6.28 Ultimately, a balance needs to be struck between funding accommodation at the prevention stage against placing the onus on the individual to find accommodation.

Stage 3: Stabilisation



Stabilisation - objectives

- 6.29 *Stabilisation* will deliver excellent temporary accommodation for those owed a statutory duty plus the provision of wraparound support for those who require more help where problems are more than just the need for a roof.

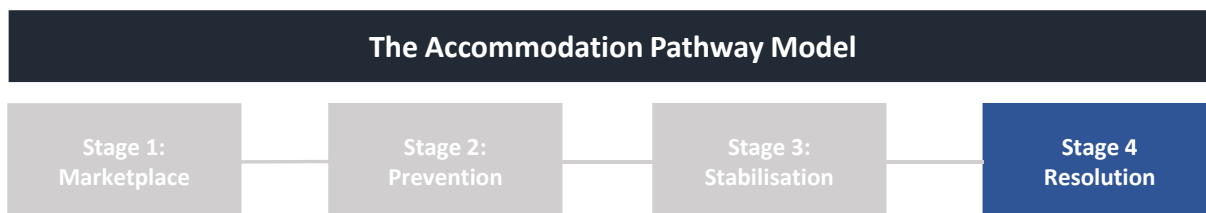
Accommodation offer – enabling role

- 6.30 Given that Stage 3 covers accommodation provided under a statutory duty in the form of temporary accommodation, many of the actions will come under the direct intervention rather than enabling. Caseworkers will need to be directive when working with residents in order support them to find accommodation. Homeless residents would be expected as well as encouraged to consider housing solutions that are not all about social housing.

Accommodation offer – direct intervention role

- 6.31 The TA offer at Stage 3 should aim to achieve the following key objectives:
- The accommodation provided should be of excellent quality and meet the needs of the household being housed;
 - The use of bed and breakfast should be minimised;
 - Procurement should be targeted at the locations from where most households present as homeless;
 - TA should include access to support where required.
- 6.32 TA Provision is covered in detail in the following section.

Stage 4: Resolution



Resolution - objectives

6.33 *Resolution* has two objectives:

Resolving homelessness for all applicants regardless of whether they are owed a statutory temporary accommodation duty through delivering realistic, and suitable accommodation options across all tenures;

Breaking the cycle of the revolving door of homelessness and of short-lived, broken tenancies by ensuring that solutions are sustainable and long term;

6.34 These actions are underpinned by the following key principles:

- Solutions to homelessness will be realistic and suitable, but not every solution can be accommodation that is long term;
- Some solutions will be short term with the applicant using the time in such accommodation to plan what their realistic next move should be;
- Unless someone is vulnerable and unable to help themselves, all applicants should be expected to make the same decisions as other B and SN residents about where they can realistically afford to live and the type of tenure available to them.

Resolving homelessness

6.35 The approach will largely be through direct interventions given the legal duty to help resolve homelessness but there will still be enabling principles that underpin the approach.

6.36 The aim would be to deliver an *Accommodation Finding Model* tailored to find a solution based on a homeless resident's informed choice. Sticking to the principles of resilience residents would access *Assisted Support* to deliver solutions. This would be based on a far more structured accommodation solution focused interview than currently delivered through the personal housing plan interview process.

6.37 It might be best described as a personal shopper type model linking to a social lettings agency (outlined in the following section) tasked with securing private rented accommodation in any area that the caseworker and the resident agree is realistic and affordable. This may include areas elsewhere in Norfolk or beyond.

6.38 The new approach would be based on the following core principles:

- Residents should be given all the information available to freely identify what accommodation options are realistic and affordable;

- The service will be based on working with applicants and not initially forcing them to take accommodation options. However, if applicants fail to engage through choice Broadland and South Norfolk could discharge any statutory accommodation duty under the final offer legal process if no solution can be agreed or, if agreed, found;
- Residents will be offered the new service and supported to secure any accommodation options in whatever area that is affordable based on a clear discussion and at this stage acceptance by the client;
- They will receive bespoke practical help and materials to help them secure including information on any guarantees re deposit, rent in advance, landlord incentive package, etc.;
- Residents would be given self-help tools and provided guarantees backed by the council to achieve resolution. For example, a rent deposit or rent in advance scheme.

6.39 The casework team would be fully trained in motivational interviewing. Among the techniques to be applied would be:

- Emotional resilience for staff and customers;
- Applying psychological principles and approaches such as, CBT, and motivational interviewing;
- Creating an enabling environment where applicants see the realistic housing options offered as an opportunity and not second best or options of last resort;
- Bringing about a cycle of change in client behaviour.

Breaking the cycle

6.40 A focused support and enabling role played by the service will ensure a positive exit from the Homeless Service for all individuals to minimise the risk of the revolving door of homelessness. At the point homelessness is relieved every applicant would receive a bespoke *Accommodation Sustainment Plan*.

6.41 For all applicants whose homelessness has been resolved their sustainment plan would include information on how and who to contact if they encounter any further housing problems and the need to act quickly and not to leave a problem too late so that it results in a crisis.

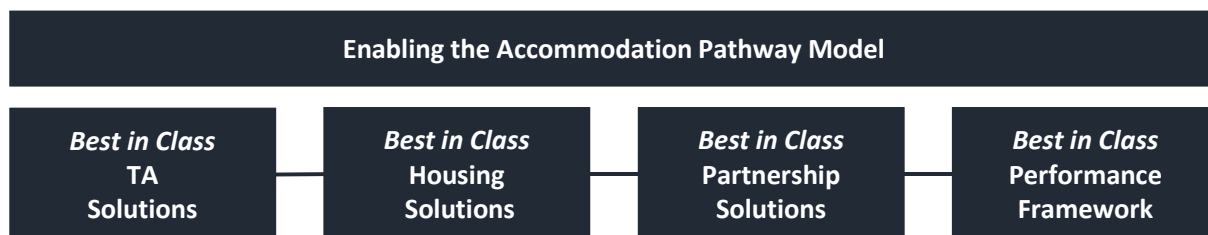
6.42 For applicants where their housing problem was assessed as more than just needing a roof, they will receive ongoing support. Support could be short term whilst they manage the transition from homelessness to settled housing or longer term where they require more intensive support to maintain their tenancy. This would be set out in a formal support plan in collaboration with partners, with a clear timescale for how long support will be provided.

6.43 For applicants where the homelessness duty has been ended with short term accommodation of only 6 months, they will receive a plan on how through their own actions they should

continue to secure the accommodation provided and if this is not possible to use the 6 months to obtain a move on.

- 6.44 This will mean that those households that only need a light touch sustainment plan know what they should do if they were to experience further problems. In contrast those vulnerable families and individuals where their needs are significantly more than just needing accommodation will be supported through a 'hub and spoke partner model, as they exit homelessness with a more detailed sustainment plan.
- 6.45 On-going support would be through a hub-and-spoke model. The model would promote more effective partnerships to deliver the wraparound services that some residents will need to sustain their accommodation targeting a resident's mental health, general health, and employment needs and ensure these are addressed in a joined up holistic way.

7. ENABLING THE ACCOMMODATION PATHWAY MODEL



- 7.1 To make the *Accommodation Pathway Model* a reality, existing service offers, operating models, supporting business systems and partnership relationships need to be re-thought and re-aligned to create a holistic housing solution that can best address future demand and changing needs, operate flexibly and sustainably, making the most from cross-organisational partnerships. These key components are:

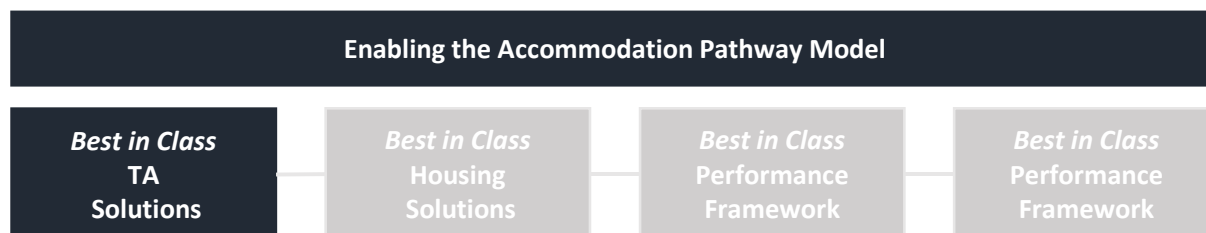
Best in Class TA Solutions: That where a household does reach the point of crisis, the statutory obligations of the councils are met, through accommodation of the right quality, available on sustainable terms to meet changing levels of demand;

Best in Class Housing Solutions: That provides the policy framework and operating model for managing the allocation of social housing stock across both Districts in a fair and efficient way, ensuring the right person finds the right home, and that they are provided a level of support to maximise the chances of them sustaining that tenancy;

Innovative Partnership Solutions: That formalise arrangements between the Councils and their landlords to create a single pool of homes that can be configured and managed flexibly, and nurture broader partnerships across Norfolk (public health, Police and Crime Commissioner for example) that focus on supporting people with specific needs to access and sustain enduring accommodation options;

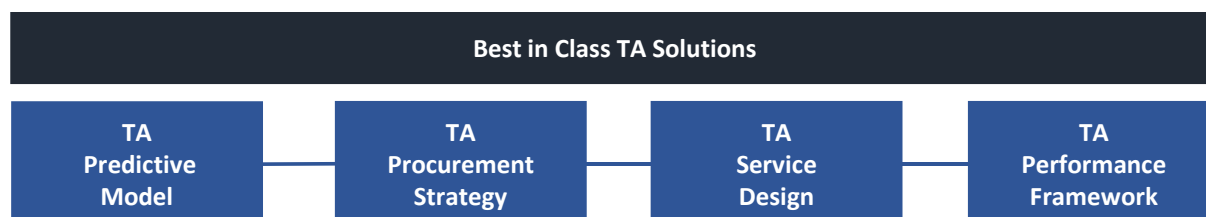
Best in Class Performance Framework: That provides the assurance that the model is fully compliant and that the Councils are correctly discharging their statutory duties, the shape and nature of future demand is being modelled, the performance of the service is optimised and is sustainable, and that the key outcomes of the service are being realised through partnership working.

Best in Class TA Solutions



7.3 As set-out above, the baseline for the combined service is a mixed picture of strengths and weaknesses:

- The introduction of the HRA has not increased the requirement for temporary accommodation, despite a substantial increase in the number of homeless cases presenting to the service, as prevention work has been particularly effective;
- The combined TA portfolio is correctly sized (however the impact of Covid-19 is yet to be fully felt), however the portfolio is not cost effective and needs refocusing;
- Current delivery models and processes are not fit for purpose and need properly resourcing and re-equipping;
- There is no effective modelling of service demands and tracking of outcomes.



7.4 The components of the *Best in Class* TA model are:

TA Predictive Demand Model: That will enable the service to predict the correct level of TA moving forward, based on modelling of current throughput;

TA Procurement Strategy: That will maximise the quality of TA and its match to needs, whilst minimising the cost of provision;

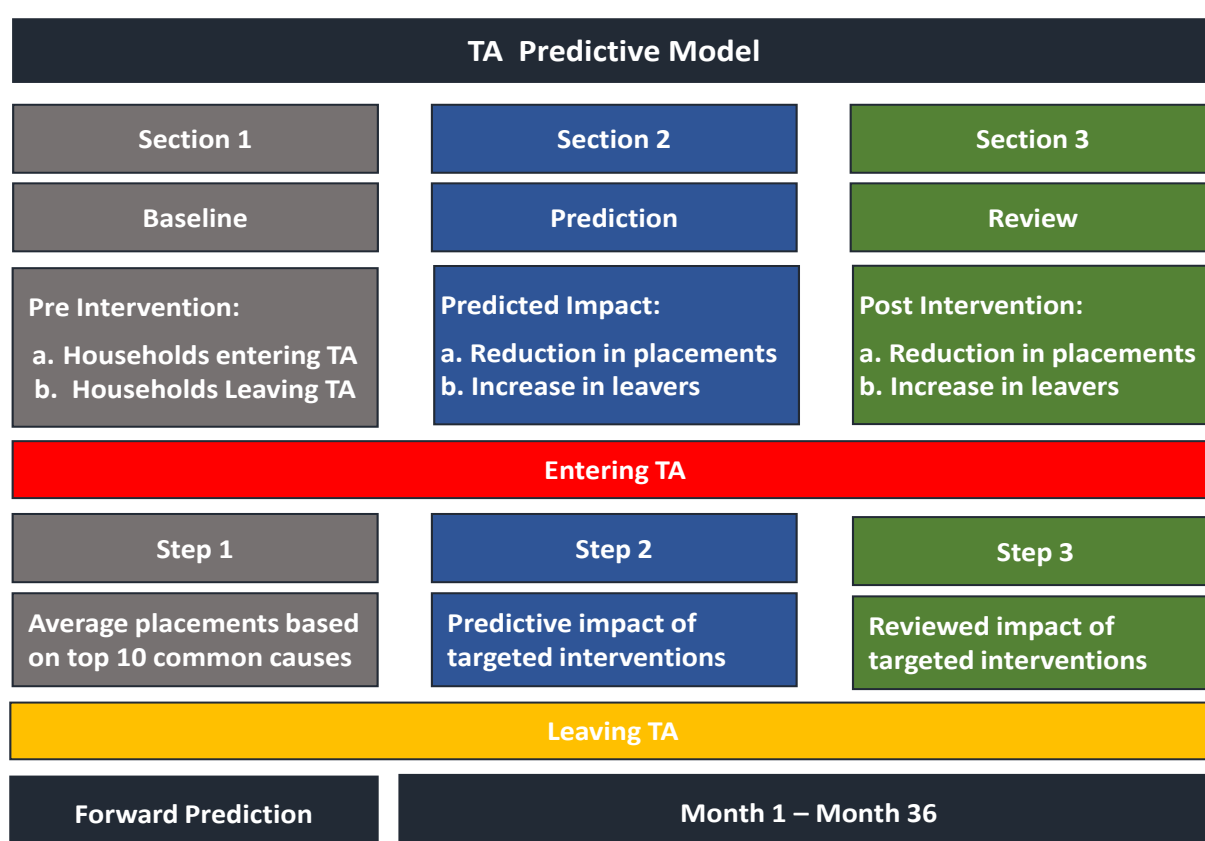
TA Service Design Model: That will restructure the service, the policy framework and operational model, with a focus on risk-based caseworking;

TA Performance Framework: That will use a control and monitoring model to reduce the number of households entering TA and proactively manage their exit to more secure forms of accommodation.

TA Predictive Model

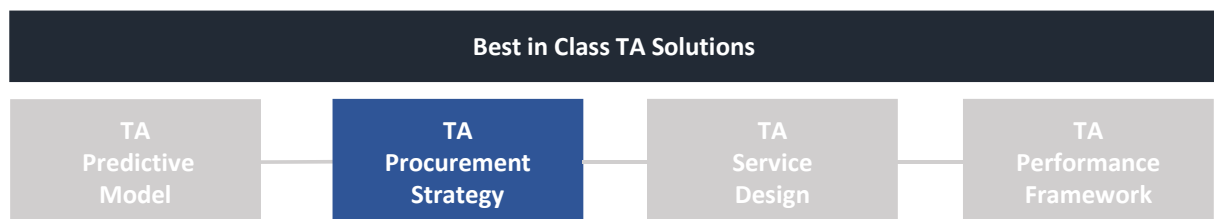


- 7.5 To enable the Broadland and South Norfolk to optimise TA requirements and costs, a *predictive modelling tool* has been developed to calculate the demand for TA over a rolling three-year period, producing a TA *Demand* (into TA) and *Supply* (out of TA) model that will support day-to-day procurement and forecast future temporary accommodation needs.



- 7.6 The model predicts TA demand on a rolling monthly cycle by analysing the potential impact of 14 key interventions that both reduce households entering TA and speed up their exit from it. It models the requirements of the HRA and assists in determining TA procurement needs and in meeting TA reduction targets and realising cost savings.
- 7.7 The model assesses supply and demand indicators in real-time, as well as monitoring performance, which allows for early action to be taken when demand increases or decreases outside of the assumptions made. It predicts with far greater accuracy than at present TA procurement needs and will support more accurate budgetary predictions and intervention when underperforming prevention or supply interventions are identified.

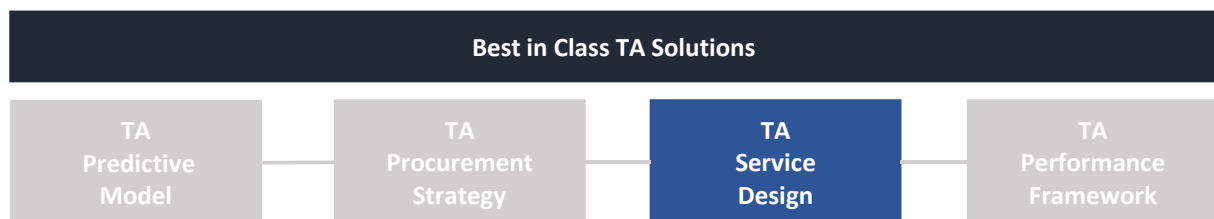
TA Procurement Strategy



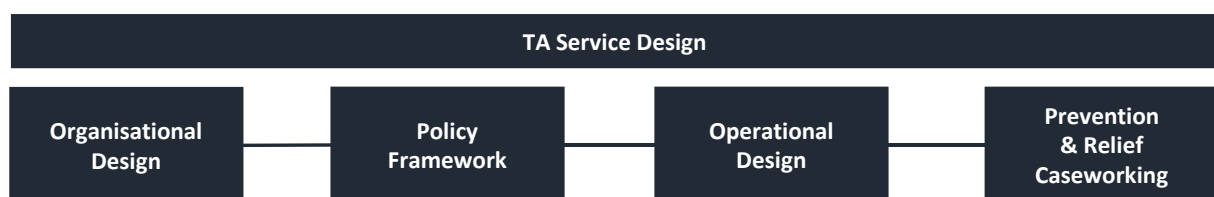
- 7.8 As part of this project a TA procurement Strategy has been drafted based on the baseline analysis, to support Broadland and South Norfolk's procurement decisions in respect of the type of temporary accommodation that would enable the councils to meet their legal duties and to also deliver TA at the lowest possible cost. The full strategy is presented in Appendix 3.
- 7.9 There is a need to make procurement decisions that seeks to minimise the financial costs and reduce financial risk for both Councils. Procurement decisions should be guided by analysing the net cost impact of for each TA type option. This will ensure there is a sufficient portfolio of low cost longer-term TA. The number of units needing to be procured will be guided by the supply and demand model and will need to fully reflect the changes brought about by the HRA in the need for longer-term TA.
- 7.10 There are a number of recommendations concerning the future temporary accommodation procurement model for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils. These are:
- TA procurement decisions should be taken jointly and based on the evidence and recommendations from this temporary accommodation strategy;
 - A mapping exercise is required to inform the TA procurement strategy in respect of the locations where TA needs to be procured;
 - Both Councils the aim should be to develop more units of low/nil cost emergency/short term temporary accommodation to the portfolio by exploring alternative options.
 - Both Councils should explore the option of procuring more short term emergency TA hostel type accommodation through converting multiple use shared accommodation such as low demand sheltered housing or purchasing any former multiple use home. This will provide 'nil net cost' emergency accommodation and will be more relevant to the post HRA legal framework.
 - Neither Broadland nor South Norfolk Councils have a low-cost emergency accommodation option in the form of a local authority owned hostel. This means emergency placements are more likely to be accommodated in bed and breakfast. For single people placed this may have a low net cost whereas for families this will be a far higher net cost. The current profile of the emergency accommodation is almost entirely weighted towards more costly bed and breakfast and nightly let arrangements (see Appendix 4).

- Procurement decisions should include seeking to develop more TA through using social housing stock held by Housing Association partners. This can deliver low cost or no net cost temporary accommodation that can be used for move-on from emergency accommodation or a half-way house between TA and a more settled solution. This option will be especially beneficial to reduce the need to place larger families into high cost Bed and Breakfast or nightly let accommodation.
- Set a target to cut the number of leased properties in half within 12/18 months. The target and exact timescale should be based on an exercise to consider all exiting leases should be completed within 6 months allowing decisions to be made for how many of the existing leases need to be handed back because of the condition of the property, or due to the landlord being unwilling to accept new lease terms. Once this is known the service will be able to plan how many properties need to be leased.
- Given that new procurement decisions will take some time to implement the recommendation is for Broadland Council to continue to maintain a Private Sector Leasing portfolio but not to over commit to this form of accommodation given its potential net cost and risk of further costs for voids if there is not the demand to fill the accommodation.
- Broadland should only renew existing leases, or replace with new units procured, through more beneficial lease terms. This will ensure that lease terms are more favourable to the Council re repairing obligations and rent levels.

TA Service Design



- 7.11 Within the *One Team* operating model, Broadland and South Norfolk have the opportunity to create both a customer focused and sustainable Temporary Accommodation service that will deliver both Councils legal obligations in respect of temporary accommodation.



Organisational Design

- 7.12 It is recommended that a single TA team be established operating from one location. The team must be responsible for the administration of all TA statutory duties, including procurement, placement, process management, charging policy, referral arrangements, checking of standards, receipt and payment of invoices, and the management of benefit payments and rent accounts, in time it could fulfil a broader remit. Specific responsibilities will include:

- Administering placements including performing the critical legal test for assessing suitability, formally offering TA and dealing with refusals and discharge of duty, and administering licences, risk assessments, referrals, housing benefit and rent accounts;
- Commissioning and procurement of temporary accommodation;
- Managing and inspecting TA units;
- Rent collection and managing rent arrears;
- Intensive management and support to tenants.

Policy Framework

A set of legally compliant policies has been drafted as part of this review to reflect the circumstances and meet the needs of both Councils:

- Out of Area Placement Policy;
- Charging Policy;
- Occupation Charge Arrears Policy.

Operational Design

- 7.13 A *TA Operations Manual* has been produced as part of this project to provide a compliant, best-practice based framework to support staff in delivering legal obligations in respect of temporary accommodation, it contains:

Operational procedures: Working processes, guidance notes and forms for the day-to-day management of temporary accommodation;

Occupancy agreements: Used by the Councils for letting temporary accommodation:

- Bed and breakfast or nightly let placements;
- Licence agreement for all forms of interim accommodation leased or owned by the Councils. (for shared facility units and for self-contained units);
- The non-secure tenancy agreement for main duty self-contained accommodation leased or owned by the Councils.

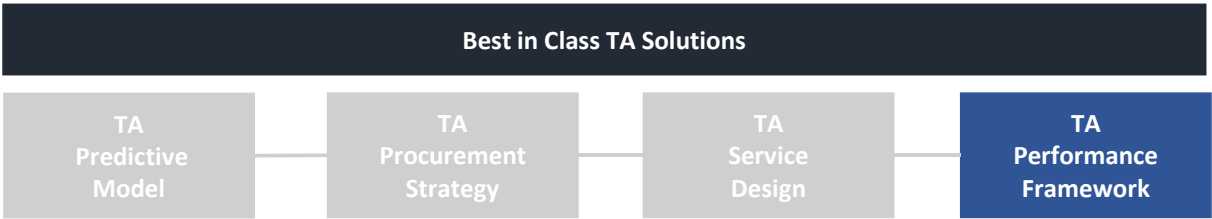
Letter templates: Covering every aspect of licence and tenure management.

Prevention and Relief Caseworking

- 7.14 To support a core deliverable of the *Accommodation Pathway Model* of keeping applicants in the home they have presented from where it is safe to do so, a consistent approach to prevention and relief of homelessness casework is required. A pack of casework resources has been provided as part of this project, which will help the new service to implement the actions required. Specific recommended actions are:

- For each presenting risk of homelessness case, the team will structure their casework around *Prevention Casework Action Sheets* that cover practical casework actions to be taken for each presenting risk of homelessness problem;
- These *Action Sheets* will direct all prevention and relief work to improve the chances of a successful outcome. They will guide officers on the actions to take, and will provide an audit trail to record casework allowing quality assurance that officers are taking the right prevention actions. Caseworkers will use the *Action Sheets* to record their casework notes;
- Caseworkers will be trained and coached ongoing on the new prevention casework processes and interview skills;
- Caseworkers will conduct excluder focused home visits for all family exclusion cases and if not possible, conduct office based structured prevention focused interviews with the parent/person who wishes to exclude the applicant;
- Intervention/solution interviews will be conducted with landlords/managing agents face-to-face rather than just over the phone. This will increase success rates.
- The case officer will make a written 'formal offer to resolve' to any parent, landlord or agent where there is a threat of homelessness.

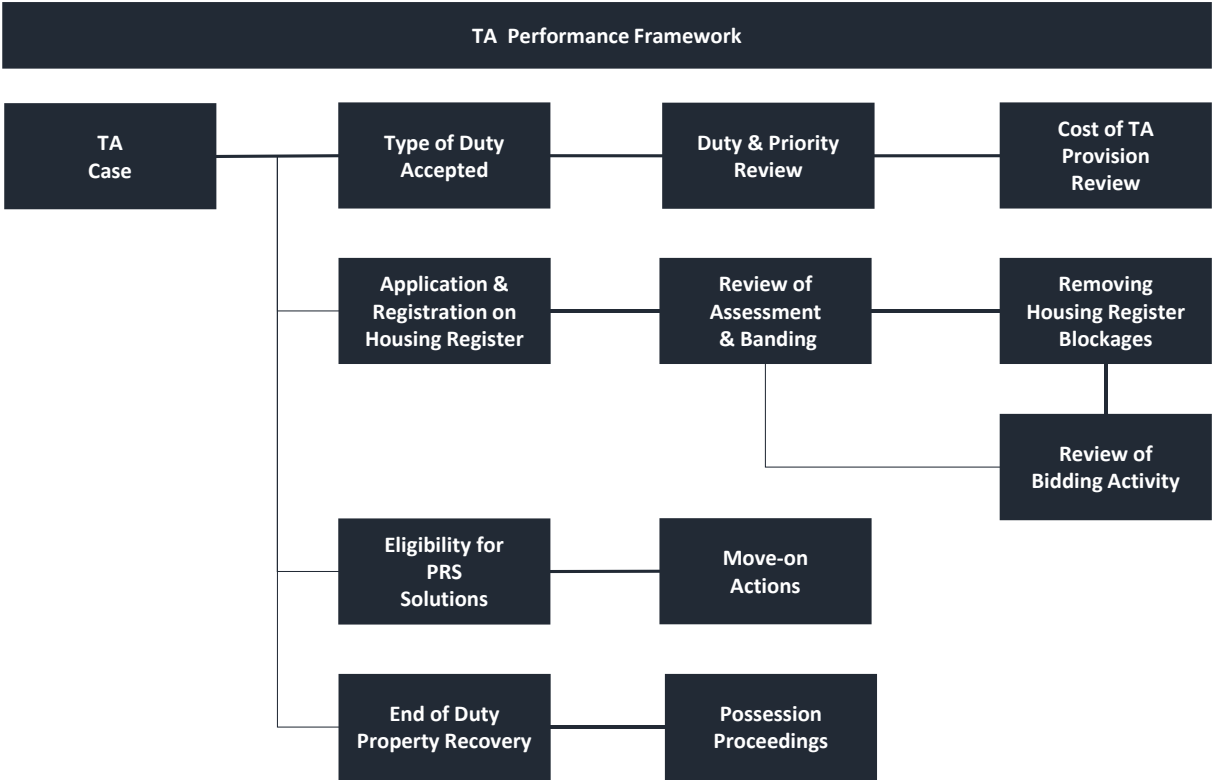
TA Performance Framework



- 7.15

An effective control process is critical in auditing a customer journey and throughput of all residents in TA, this applies to everyone either owed a Relief or Main Duty, where that duty has been brought to an end, and where action is needed to evict the occupant. It is essential to review and audit cases to ensure that applications are determined quickly and there are no blockages preventing cases from moving on from TA.
- 7.16

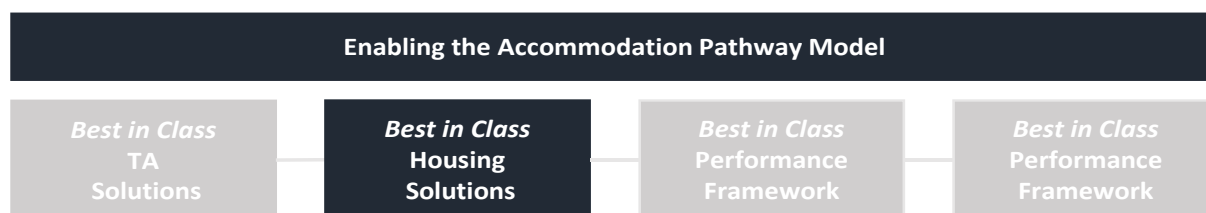
To this end, a *TA Control and Monitoring Sheet* has been developed as part of the project to deliver this objective. It is comprehensive, with every case in TA monitored against a possible 35 case status questions (summarised below). This simple control process will reduce numbers in TA by up to 20%, if reviews result in timely action to resolve the issue identified.



- 7.17

This is an essential tool for reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation and thereby reducing costs and pressures on the service. It will also allow the Councils to accurately predict how much TA they need going forward. It will ensure that the right people are placed into the right accommodation and only occupy that accommodation for the shortest period of time they need it.

Best in Class Housing Solutions



7.18 The characteristics of a *Best in Class* Housing Solution model is that it:

- Has an allocations policy framework tailored to meeting local housing needs;
- Is customer focused, is easy to access and navigate, and is fair and transparent;
- Has a clear view of demand and the ability to supply meet that demand;
- Builds partnerships with landlords through a Common Housing Register to ensure the successful establishment of a home and long-term sustainment outcomes.

Housing Solutions Model



7.19 The core components of this *Best in Class* Housing Solutions model are:

Allocations Policy: With a common approach adopted by the two Councils that will be flexible enough to meet the sovereign local needs of each council, and to maximise outcomes for both, whilst being complaint and sustainable;

Supply and Demand Model: Published to all delivery partners that predicts demand based on service data, that will inform year-ahead planning and longer-term accommodation build and reconfiguration programmes;

A Structured Customer Journey: That will support self-service registration (*Marketplace*), automated application processing and decision making, self-service housing register management and support efficient and transparent allocation processes that will maximise the choice open to a housing applicant;

Formalised partnership arrangements : With fully integrated Council and landlord processes, which will streamline the lettings and tenancy start-up, providing continuity of support for those who are more vulnerable or less experienced, to enable them to establish and sustain their tenancies.

Allocations Policy



7.20 Broadland and South Norfolk staff and Members are currently drafting a joint Allocations Policy facilitated by CT. key aspects of the policy are described below.

Aims

- 7.21 The aims of the policy must be clear and legally complaint:
- Improve the means by which local people gain access to social rented housing by providing a modern and easy to understand allocation system, which allows choice and is fair, transparent and accountable;
 - Ensure the lettings service embraces equality and diversity by being open and fully accessible to all individuals and to provide support to customers where needed;
 - Meet the legal obligations of the Council by giving appropriate priority to customers who fall within the Housing Act “reasonable preference” categories;
 - Make the best use of the housing stock within the scheme and to increase the availability of move-on accommodation to prevent blockages in supported housing schemes;
 - Reduce the use of housing stock as temporary accommodation for homeless applicants and to assist with prevention by making customers aware of their potential housing choices and the alternative options available to them e.g. private sector, low cost home ownership;
 - Increase opportunities for tenant mobility between the region and other areas of the country. In accordance with the Right to Move statutory guidance on housing allocations for local housing authorities in England (issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2015) a target of at least 5% of allocations has been set for people moving to a different District for employment purposes;
 - Attract new customers to areas of low demand and reduce void times on ‘hard to let’ properties;
 - Formalise partnership working with landlords within a Common Housing Register (CHR) arrangement, creating an equal partnership between stock holding and non-stock holding partners that will accommodate both landlord and applicant issues.

Qualification

7.22 Criteria for acceptance onto the Housing Register will ensure that local and in some cases people from outside the area in genuine difficulty are supported. Criteria will be based on:

- Homeless Prevention/Relief Duty as defined by the Homelessness Code of Guidance;
- Care leavers owed a duty;
- Supported housing placements in and out of the region;
- Current or former member of the armed forces and civil ex partners of armed forces personnel vacating MOD property;
- Victims of violence/abuse from and outside the region;
- Gypsy/traveller as defined Caravan Sites Act 1968 and habitually resided in region.

Local Connection

7.23 Local connection is defined as being where residency or connection is:

- Resided in the area for 6 out of the last 12 months;
- Previously resident for 3 out of the last 10 years;
- Regular work in the region dependent on residency within the region;
- Existing social tenancy plus ongoing employment or training in the region for the last 6 months and expected to continue beyond 12 months.

Medical Assessment

7.24 A two tier health priority is being promoted. Urgent Health Priority (Band 2) where long term illness and mobility issues are being significantly impacted by the housing and Band 1 emergency health priority where they meet the Urgent Health Priority but cannot live in their home now. Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments will be made through the council's independent OT service. This will enable non-medical professionals to make fair and transparent health assessments.

Allocation by Bedsize

7.25 Allocation by bedsize is determined by People, Children and Property driven circumstances:

People Driven:	Single Person	Couple	Carer	Medical
Policy:	1 bed property or 2 bed above ground	1 bed property or 2 bed above ground	Residency requirement	Provision for extra bedroom
Child Driven:	Child Residency	Unborn Child	16+	Sex Separation
Policy:	4 nights pw + Formal Evidence	MATB1*	Own bedroom	10 Years+

Property Driven:	Under-occupation	Ground Floor or Mobility Needs	* Used by NHS to confirm pregnancy
Policy:	4 nights pw + Formal Evidence	Provide choice and make best use of adapted stock	

Banding and Priority

- 7.27 Banding and priority allocation will be based on housing need, local connection and time waited.
- 7.28 Broadland and South Norfolk have been introduced to three potential banded systems:
- A 5 banded system containing a reduced preference band and cumulative need; this is an adaptation of South Norfolk's existing banded system. Named "Home Options";
 - A 4 banded system without a reduced preference band, no cumulative need and band prioritisation by local connection. Named "Rural";
 - A 4 banded system which is a hybrid of the two, has no cumulative need or a reduced preference band and no band prioritisation by local connection. Named "Hybrid".
- 7.29 An Equality & Communities Impact Assessments has been completed for each district, with the most positive impacts being seen with the 4 banded systems. The Rural banded system demonstrates more positive impacts than the Hybrid. The districts need to make their selection.

Reduced preferences

- 7.30 Where an intervention is needed in the case of unacceptable behaviour (ASB or non-payment of rent for example), the banding of the applicant will not be lowered as is the case now, but they will be prevented from bidding for properties at a lower band, and expected to take responsibility for addressing the problem. This incentivised approach will help enforce good behaviours and foster tenancy sustainment, and in turn supporting positive partnership working.

Allocation Choices

- 7.31 A blended approach will be adopted which will have clear criteria for circumstances where a direct let is appropriate, the bulk of the lettings being undertaken via choice based lettings and lets to the inactive list only where the active list has been exhausted and the household is deemed able to sustain their tenancy.. Reduced preferences will be managed via the Housing Register; households will need to undertake a mandatory period of stabilisation to ensure they acquire the skills to sustain a tenancy, during this time they will be inactive.

Direct lets:

- Homeless and in TA under s189B(2) Relief Duty or Main Duty;

- Urgent rehousing requirement: property, health, personal safety, discharge of homelessness duty, and MARAC where CBL would take too long;
- Emergency rehousing due to flood, fire etc and property requires work/uninhabitable or cannot be done with them in situ;
- Duty to house under s39 land compensation act 1973;
- Where number of offers or refusal already made is deemed unreasonable;
- Adapted units;
- Vulnerable applicants where Choice Based Lettings is deemed inappropriate;
- Sensitive lets;
- Local letting provisions such as s108, rural parish schemes and local lettings policies.

Choice Based Lettings:

- For all other circumstances, but with restrictions for:
 - Number of offers made and unreasonable refusals;
 - Weighting to local need/demand in shortlisting;
 - Restricted advertising around s106m;
 - Homeless applicants where they exceed local demand in the top priority group;
 - Local Partnership Agreements/Local Lettings Plans.

Housing Register Review

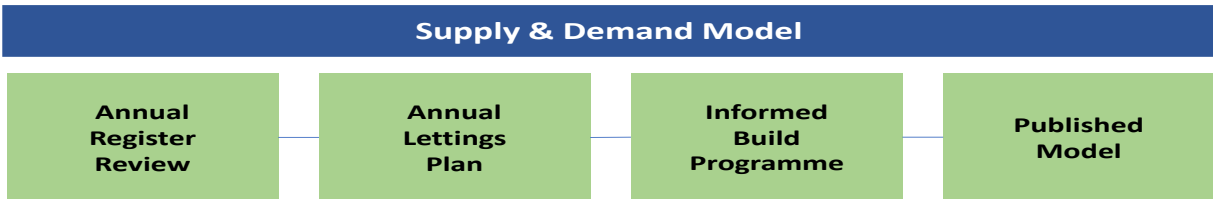
7.32 The Housing Registers will be reviewed to an agreed schedule:

- A 4 week review cycle for *Urgent* applications, aligned with the TA performance framework;
- A 12 month review cycle for all other applications.

Supply and Demand Model

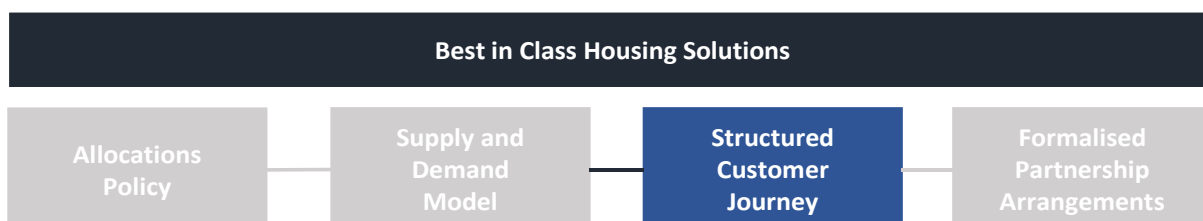


- 7.33 A robust *Supply and Demand Model* is an essential tool in enabling the two Councils to commission and landlords to plan the volume, type, configuration and location that is needed over the short term (year ahead) and the longer term (three to five years):
- The accuracy and usefulness of the model will be dependent on the quality of data output from the Housing Register;
 - The model will underpin the creation of *Annual Lettings Plans*. It will provide a baseline for all partners to track demand and needs trends accurately over longer planning horizons and to build, acquire or reconfigure stock holding with a higher level of confidence.



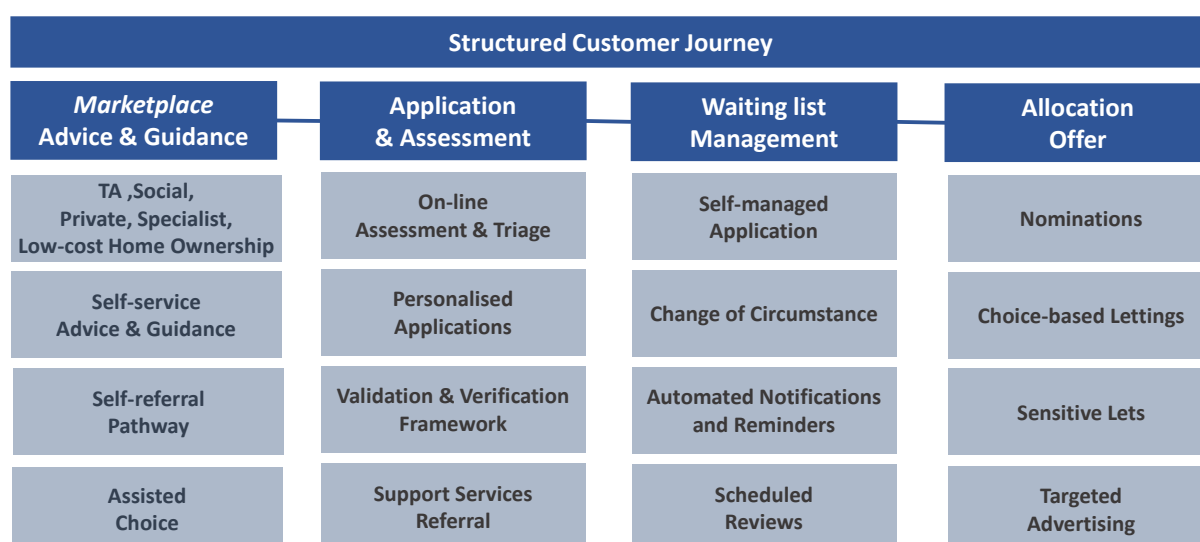
- 7.34 The elements that form the *Supply and Demand Model* are:
- Annual Register Review:** The discipline of undertaking an annual review of a well-maintained Housing Register will provide an accurate view of applications within the system and build a picture of demand and needs trends over time;
- Annual Lettings Plan:** Predicts for any one year the type of accommodation needed, the areas where it is most needed, its configuration and specialist requirement needs;
- Informed build programme:** Provides a detailed level of analysis to support capital investment decisions as to when and where to build new homes, to cluster and sustain communities;
- Published model:** The *Model* will be published to all service partners to provide a common partnership and understand of strategy direction and working model

Structured Customer Journey



7.35 High quality on-line advice and guidance, self-referral and self-service pathways, with assistance provided, will enable every customer to access an available housing solution:

- Structure high quality advice and support that leads customers towards the applicable self-referral access pathway;
- Identify and provide additional support (Assisted Choice) throughout to those who will find it difficult to navigate the customer journey;
- Support self-service and personalisation throughout the registration, waiting list management and lettings process.



7.36 This key components of the structured customer journey will be:

Marketplace: Advice and Guidance: Enabling customers to explore available housing options and to self-refer for social housing registration, with assisted support available for people who will need help to navigate the process;

Application and Assessment: Combining customer self-service and tailored registration processes with rules-driven process automation to improve accuracy and reduce risk of challenge, whilst triggering support referrals for people in need early in the process;

Housing Register Management: Supporting customer self-service, automated status updates to reduce enquiries, and scheduled reviews to keep the Register current;

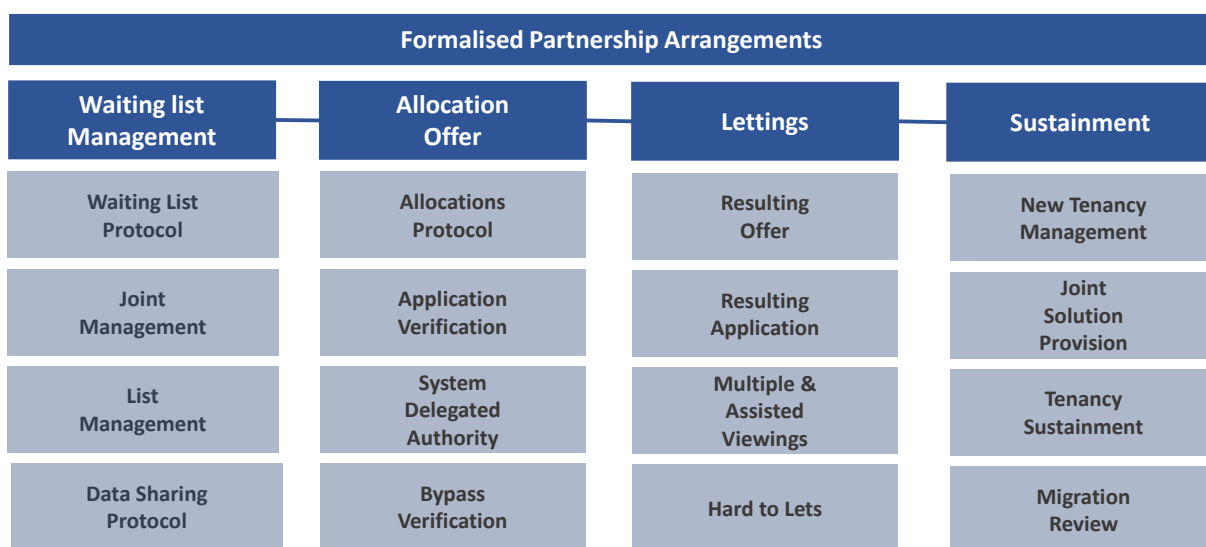
Allocation Offer: Applying the nominations and CBL offer rules fairly and transparently, whilst ensuring ensure that homes are let quickly.

Formalised Partnership Framework



7.37 Formalising the management arrangements between the Councils and partner landlords will elevate what is currently in the main a case-by-case into strategic partnership relationships, they will:

- Ensure the Allocations Policy is correctly and fairly applied, whilst providing flexibility to landlords through Local Lettings Agreements;
- Optimise the lettings process by making it largely self-service via a *Partnership Hub*;
- Turn what is currently largely a hand-off process into a hand-holding relationship that will support more vulnerable customers to establish their new home (particularly younger people), enabling them to build capacity in home management and consequently be less likely to fail in their tenancy and to present as homeless.



7.38 The key elements of the new arrangements will be:

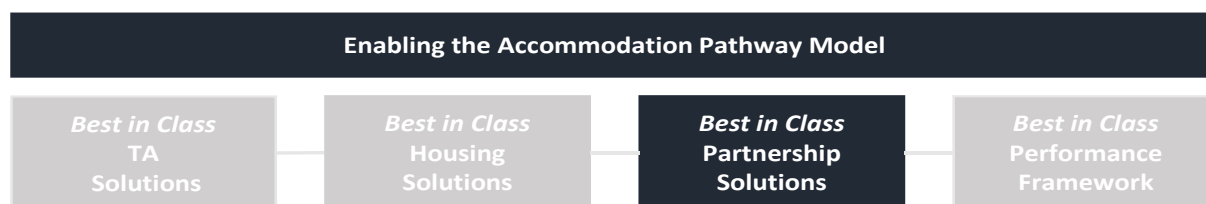
Waiting List Management: Adopting a joint management and deeper data sharing approach that will support a better matching of applicant to potential new home;

Allocation Offer: Enabling landlords to verify applicants quickly and to resolve their own tenancy management issues within the allocations policy;

Lettings: Optimising the process to minimise void loss (multiple viewings, hard to lets) whilst ensuring the most vulnerable are supported;

Sustainment: Providing wrap-around support that reduces risk over time and tracks move-on outcomes.

Best in Class Partnership Solutions



- 7.39 The Covid-19 epidemic has already forced service commissioners and service providers to work together in a very different way, with the usual demarcations and protocols pushed to one side. The legacy of this crisis may be that long discussed goals of wider strategic alignment and integration of service across the public realm may become a reality. The *Accommodation Pathway Model* is an ideal vehicle to help achieve this.



- 7.40 The elements of a *Best in Class* partnership solutions approach are:

Landlord partnerships: Building on the strong transaction-based relationships currently operated to develop strategic partnerships that both release resources and realise new value-added outcomes for all parties, in particular service users and tenants.

Support partnerships: Breaking-down the walls between different types of service and service providers, to deliver person-centred services that will reduce dependency over time;

Supply partnerships: Using a Social Lettings Agency model to unlock the supply of private sector accommodation into the available housing pool;

Business development partnerships: leveraging both the skills developed and investment made in the Pathway model, across Norfolk and beyond.

Landlord Partnership Arrangements



Working within a strategic framework

7.41 Partner landlords work within a range of social housing models and policy frameworks, both locally across Norfolk and nationally, they are keen to work with Broadland and South Norfolk to help shape an integrated housing pathway. Specifically, the features of a new model would from their perspective include:

- Adopting a common Allocations Policy that streamlines approach and process;
- Adopting a Common Housing Register (widely and successfully adopted elsewhere in Norfolk and Suffolk) that delivers a pool of accommodation that meets local needs whilst underpinning and sustaining the operating models of accommodation providers
- Adopting a CBL-based approach but with the added flexibility of direct nominations for certain groups of applicants or for specific types of accommodation;
- Building a holistic view of needs (Council Tax debt threshold) which doesn't penalise those with a chequered history of tenure sustainment or debt;
- Defining a shared approach to risk and to provide the best solution for an individual on a case by case bases, by jointly understanding the real pressures within the system;
- Undertaking affordability checks as standard, particularly for the under 25s, where costs such as heating and transport are critical additional factors in sustaining a tenancy;
- Adopting a flexible approach to homeless applicants who have one chance who then get penalised and or lose position on the housing register;
- Applying flexibility when assessing the local connection of hostel residents who may have originated in other parts of the country and need to escape their areas to prevent reoffending or substance abuse;
- Being attuned to the needs of individuals and to match the accommodation offer more closely (ruralness, support network etc.) to reduce downstream tenancy failure.

Digital by design

7.42 Landlords are confident that the majority of service applicants are perfectly capable of navigating a self-service access pathway and to manage their own applications, however,

more vulnerable residents would require appropriate levels of access support. Specific requirement identified for any new business system are to support:

- Seamless digital processes with shared access to core data and core processes;
- Provision and verification of proofs requested before an application is made live to minimise delay during the offer process;
- Data entry for vulnerable client groups who struggle with providing mandatory information within on-line forms;
- Affordability checks on all applicants and lettings reviews, to stop people bidding inappropriately;
- Landlord checks or references from current or past landlords;
- Provision of sensitive information (beyond contact alerts) to enable landlords to conduct their own interviews;
- Internal tenant transfers and management moves;
- Greater visibility of new build releases and support processes.

Reducing the risk of tenancy failure

7.43 Landlords would welcome a broader partnership-based approach to helping households establish and sustain their tenancies, by sharing and jointly managing risk of failure, by providing wraparound support that enables an individual to build capacity and self-reliance as they move through emergency, short-term and starter lets into secure longer-term accommodation solutions. Building on the frontloaded model of advice and signposting, approaches outlined are to:

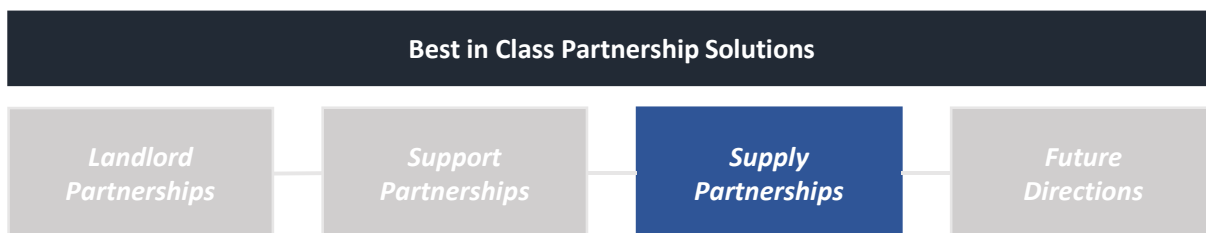
- Share financial risk through rent deposit or guarantee schemes, that will enable individuals with a history of debt problems to get restarted;
- Build support packages sensitive to an individual's needs and provide continuity of caseworking support through the letting, start-up and probationary period of a tenancy, building a level of trust with the most vulnerable and hard to communicate with;
- Agree criteria and triggers levels for wider interventions (level of debt, seriousness of ASB etc.) so that support can be provided, within the capacity of the broader system to do so;
- Develop tracking mechanisms that enable individuals to demonstrate skills and capacity building over a period of time;
- Share systems and sensitive information more widely between supporting parties to ensure issues are spotted and tackled quickly;
- Develop a flexible hierarchy of accommodation that support move-on from short-term licences to start tenancies, including the use of *training house* settings.

Support Partnerships



- 7.44 Commissioners of core services at County level such as Adults and Children's services, and other specialist support providers are interested in developing housing-led solutions that are person-centred and that enable an individual to avoid or move away from a point of crisis to one of self-sufficiency. With front-loaded advice services regarded as essential tools to cross-signpost benefits, employment, education, housing, and other support in relation to the nature of an individual's needs.
- 7.45 Opportunities for Jointly commissioning housing-based solutions in which people can receive care (mental health and learning difficulties support for example) need to be explored, as do the development of Joint protocols with social services, mental health units and prisons.
- 7.46 Similarly, there is considerable scope for jointly undertaking strategic planning, share insight and operational data at a much more level than at present, for joining-up capital resources. assets and moving beyond individual organisational budgets to agree whole system funding envelopes.
- 7.47 More broadly there is the potential to unlock a wealth community assets and volunteering initiatives within a collaborative framework accessed through social prescribing (the level of community response to supporting the vulnerable during COVID-19 lockdown has been inspiring and needs to be continued).
- 7.48 Commissioners and service partners identify a wide range of vulnerable groups to whom tailored accommodation and support solutions could be targeted:
- Street homeless with the aim of providing alternatives to a return to sleeping rough;
 - Single people with limited access to core homelessness interventions who are now disproportionately presenting as homeless;
 - People being released from prison and on ex-offender programmes;
 - People living with mental health conditions, with autism or with learning difficulties;
 - Young people, particularly care leavers who lack life-skills and who are not well equipped to sustain a first home;
 - People leaving hospital or acute mental health wards discharged into care settings;
 - Survivors of domestic abuse (large increase in number of presentations during lockdown, in an area with a higher than average incidence);
 - People with no recourse to public funds.

Supply Partnerships



Social lettings Agency

7.50 There is a strong business case for developing a Social Lettings Agency for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils. The aim would be to deliver private rented properties in far larger numbers reducing the need to place households into TA and speeding up move on for households in TA. Two distinct products could be offered by the new service:

'Direct let' tenant finder product: The landlord would not be charged a fee and properties would be accessed through a sensible incentive package which would include a menu of incentives that could be offered on a mix and match basis according to the landlords needs. These could be:

- Rent in advance (Could be a grant, a loan or can depending on tenant circumstances be financed from a Discretionary Housing payment)
- Rent Deposit (Could be a grant, a loan or can depending on tenant circumstances be financed from a Discretionary Housing payment)
- Guaranteed rent (risk assessed)
- Payment of insurance against loss or rent, damage and legal costs
- Small incentive payment to a landlord or letting agent (Councils are still able to make such payments under the Tenant Fees Act 2019 exemptions)

Management service: in addition to the letting service charging landlords between 5% and 8% of the rent as a management fee. This could include a repairs service at cost.

Future Directions



Providing Accommodation Services

- 7.52 There is a clear business opportunity to provide an accommodation finding and management service to meet any statutory duties owed under Children Act, or Adult Social Care legislation. This could be delivered through the expansion of the Social Letting Agency.
- 7.53 For Children's Services this could be:
- Providing accommodation and management services to meet any section 20 duties for 16/17 year olds or finding accommodation to meet any care or leaving care duty and running accommodation projects such as supported lodgings;
 - Placements under section 20 of the Children Act can be upwards of £1000 - £2000 a week and no housing benefit is recoverable on these placements. The procurement of high costs accommodation by Children's Services is often due to the lack of expertise in how to procure more cost effective accommodation;
 - Placements under section 17 of the Children Act can be upwards of £500 a week. These are often placements where a negative homelessness decision has been made and the case referred to Children Services because there are dependent children in a household.
- 7.54 The aim would be to source and procure accommodation placements at a far lower cost to the local authority with the savings offset against the new service's core budget as income.
- 7.55 The same could apply to adult social care placements in small group homes or for individual placements for people with learning difficulties.
- 7.56 The new service would receive a placement fee and the weekly rent with administration costs covered to cover the cost of running these schemes, which would yield cost benefits for . Norfolk County Council in respect of their looked-after costs.

Sharing the model with Norfolk and Suffolk Local Authorities

- 7.57 On-going financial restrictions on local authorities in England will require new approaches to delivering homelessness services and in particular the provision of private rented sector accommodation to prevent homelessness or to meet a temporary accommodation duty or indeed to end that duty with a private sector offer. Services must be more efficient and achieve more with a substantially reduced budget. Inevitably Norfolk wide local authorities will need to look to new ways of delivering their services and reducing any financial risk. The option to 'buy in' a successful private sector accommodation model will reduce the financial

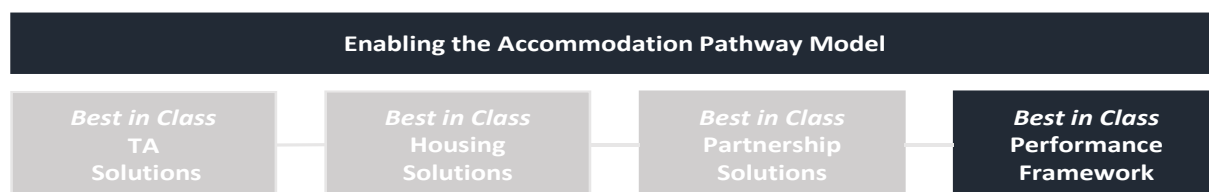
risk of higher homelessness and bed and breakfast costs, as a ready supply of private rented accommodation is the key component for any council to manage the costs of its statutory homeless duties.

- 7.58 Realistically the delivery of the new service model for other local authorities is likely to be only feasible where that authority is geographically close. There may however be an opportunity to franchise the model but this will depend on a number of factors including any intellectual property rights. Regardless of this opportunity, providing consultancy support to local authorities looking to develop a similar combined service will again generate income.
- 7.59 There may also be an income generating opportunity from offering a letting and management service to private sector landlords.

Selling the model to support payment by results payments

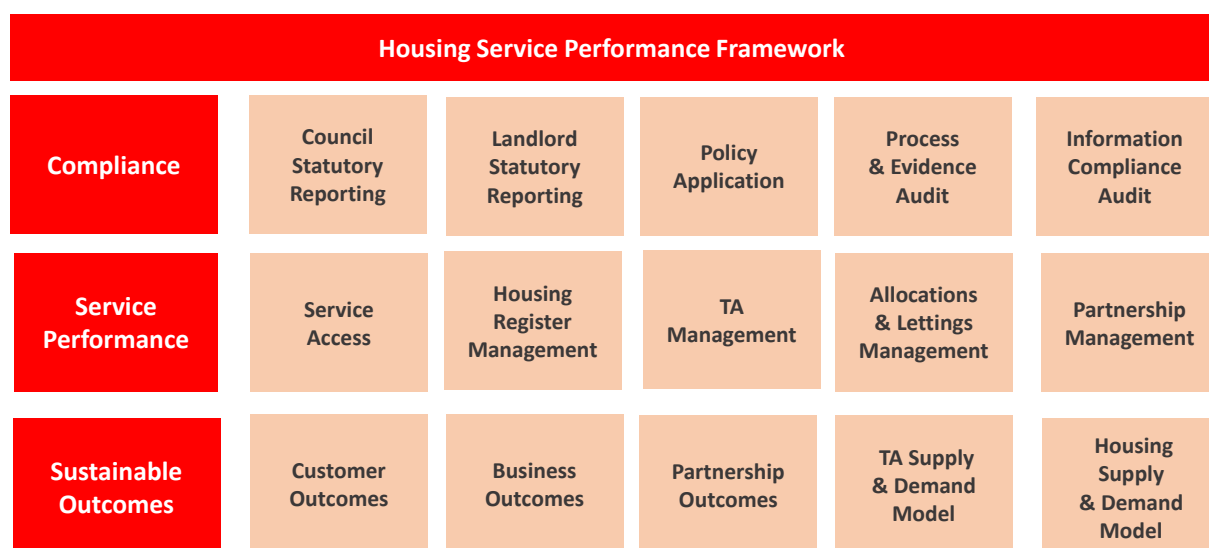
- 7.60 Soundings from MHCLG indicate that they may be intending to base a proportion of future homelessness funding to some extent on the basis of payment by results. Payment by results could conceivably be applied in the future to areas such as an authority's performance in preventing homelessness, eliminating bed and breakfast or reducing temporary accommodation. These all have an implication re higher costs if performance is poor.
- 7.61 A tried and tested model that works could be sold on a consultancy basis or through a partnership arrangement with the aim of ensuring that any Norfolk local authority is able to remain in the top quartile for the performance framework set by MHCLG and is able therefore to maximise any payment by results performance funding.

Best in Class Performance Framework



7.62 A comprehensive *Performance Framework* will ensure compliance, drive-up performance and demonstrate the value of the *Accommodation Pathways Model* in delivering key objectives:

- Customers receive a compliant, high quality service that enables them to resolve their housing needs in a fair and transparent manner;
- Self-service solutions and process automation are reducing demand and increasing efficiency, optimising the supply and cost of short term accommodation solutions;
- Driving wider service outcomes in partnership that are reducing future dependency on core services.



7.63 The *Performance Model* will consist of a suite of performance indicators that measure:

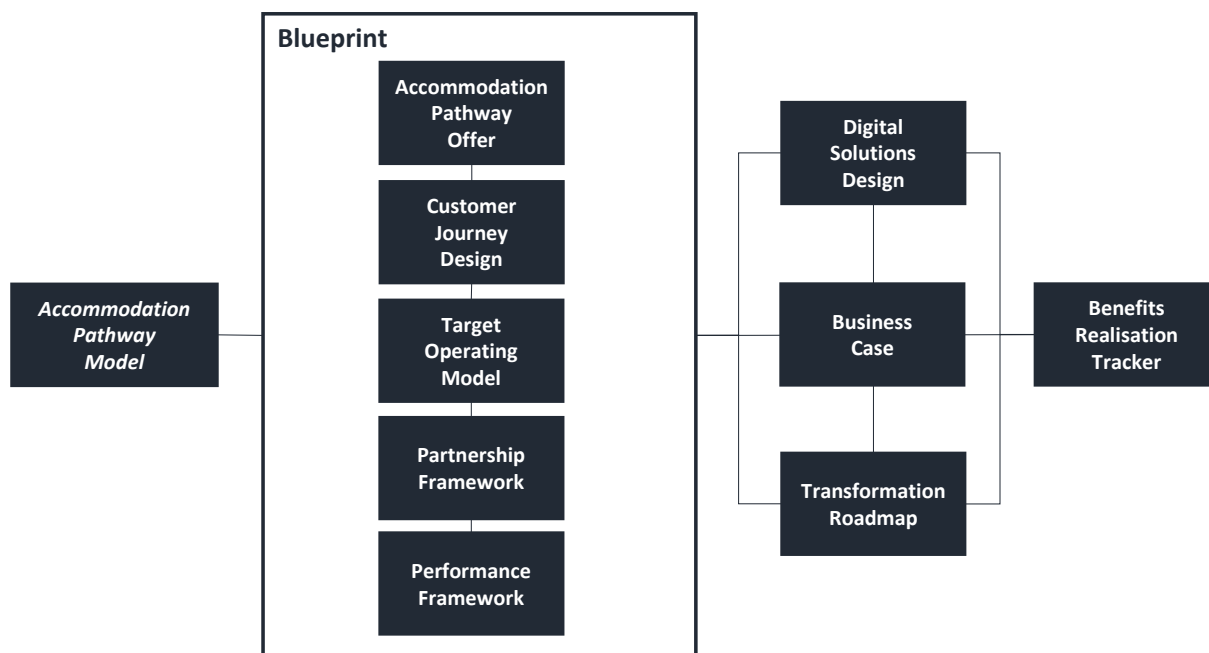
Compliance: The level of assurance that housing services are compliant and meet statutory obligations, are delivered to the terms of core policies, and that full audit trails are in place that will withstand challenge and scrutiny;

Service Performance: The quality of service delivered to customers and level of contentment with their experience, the efficiency of processes, the effective utilisation of resources, and the performance of partner relationships;

Sustainable Outcomes: The impact and value-add the *Accommodation Pathway Model* will deliver to customers lives, in meeting the business objectives of both Councils, landlords and service partners. Also ensuring the long-term sustainability of the model through evidenced-based demand and supply models.

8. DELIVERING THE ACCOMMODATION PATHWAY MODEL

- 8.1 The next step in making the Accommodation Pathway Model a reality is to develop a *Blueprint* that will specify the detail of the *Accommodation Model*. This must be supported by a detailed *Business Case* and *Transformation Roadmap* for delivering the model. A *Benefits Realisation Tracker* will ensure that the model delivers the anticipated outcomes and return on investment made.



- 8.2 A *Blueprint* will work through and resolve the detailed design of the *Pathway Model*:

Accommodation Pathway: Specifying the detailed service offer at each of the four Stages of the Pathway and the enabling *Best in Class* service elements;

Customer Journey Design: Mapping the customer pathways from first access through to sustained accommodation solutions;

Target Operating Model: Specifying detailed the operational and organisational design for aligning the combined with the *Pathway Model*;

Partnership Framework: Setting out the approach for formalising arrangements with landlords and service partners. focused on co-production, balanced risk management and fostering innovative new solutions.

Performance Framework: Defining the insight, supply and demand models, compliance and service KPIs, and customer outcomes that will ensure the model is *Best in Class*.

Digital Solutions Design

- 8.3 The *Accommodation Pathway Model* will require investment in a sophisticated digital business platform that will deliver both customer and delivery partner self-service capability, as well as an integrated digital platform for the service. The platform solution must support:

- The *Marketplace* portal with high quality, interactive content, context driven product registration and personalised applications;
- *Assisted Choice*, enabling people in need of support in accessing the pathway to self-identify and be supported on-line or through other channels;
- Digital workflow and rules-based processes that deliver the Allocations Policy, with caseworking functionality to support an individual over through the entirety of their relationship with the service;
- Portal access for landlords and service partners to complete self-service processes and to share data;

8.4 A set of business requirements for the core system is provided in Appendix 5.

Business Case

8.5 A detailed Business Case will enable stakeholders to assess the merits of the *Accommodation Pathway Model* based on a balanced view of costs set against the benefits and anticipated outcomes, including.

- Project costs including internal and external resources, software procurement and implementation;
- Operational efficiencies, savings and refocussing opportunities, based on implementing a single, flexible operating model and ongoing operating efficiencies delivered through self-service and process digitisation;
- Return on investment (ROI) in over a 3-year period;
- Estimates of potential opportunity costs, income generated and the associated risks of future business development opportunities.

Transformation Roadmap

8.6 Delivering the *Accommodation Pathway Model* represents a *whole system* change, requiring a coordinated transformational change programme, embedded within the business, with the momentum and resources to focus delivery over a 9-12 month timeframe. Specifically:

- A governance structure with Executive sponsorship and buy-in from Members and stakeholders to provide oversight of the delivery, to identify and mitigate risk, and ensure benefits are realised;
- A single prioritised resource plan that will maximise the capacity of the service (and core support services such as ICT) to deliver and embed change on top of a business as usual workload;
- A *Benefits Realisation Tracker* will ensure ensures strategic objectives are realised over the next three years.

9. SUMMARY

Scope

9.1 To deliver the goals of *Our Plan* (2020-2024) within the context of the newly formed *One Team* operating model, CT has worked in collaboration with Broadland and South Norfolk staff, Members and stakeholders to define a *Best in Class Housing Offer*. The project scope is to:

- Reduce the demand for TA and expand accommodation options open to households;
- Create a *One Team* housing service that minimises risk whilst maximising customer support;
- Develop a sustainable model that reinvests income into support provision;
- Outline partnership solutions that deliver a ground-breaking housing pathway.

9.2 The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic during the early stages of project delivery has delivered a salutary lesson in focusing on what really matters, and has helped set the level of ambition of the project in enabling Broadland and South Norfolk to tackle the aftermath of the crisis with the focus to achieve *Best in Class* at the same time.

Pulling back from the cliff-edge

9.3 Local authority housing delivery models are characteristically passive, and delivered at the point of crisis to a relatively small cohort of households. They fail to deliver practical housing help, advice, and solutions for the vast majority of residents that have a housing need, who are filtered-away from receiving support of any kind.

9.4 Furthermore, they fail to promote and deliver resilience amongst residents in housing need by expecting them to be proactive, to adapt their behaviour to increase their chances of obtaining a solution.

9.5 As a consequence, many residents end-up in housing crisis, resulting in homelessness and an application under statutory homelessness legislation. This situation is compounded by a lack of strategic alignment between Councils and landlords, resulting in a transfer of risk and responsibility for those placed in social housing, which increases the risk of tenancy failure, often resulting in a life-limiting and costly unbroken cycle of homelessness and eviction.

Forming a Service Baseline

9.6 Since the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018 , both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils have experienced a 162% increase in homeless applications (142% in the rest of England).

9.7 However, both Councils have been particularly successful in preventing homelessness through upstream interventions, which has relieved the pressure on TA provision (51 households housed in TA – April 2020). This has been achieved almost exclusively by placing households in social housing, whilst there are no examples of an individual or household avoiding homelessness by remaining in their current accommodation, whereby avoiding an intensive service intervention altogether. This is not a fair or sustainable strategy.

- 9.8 A significant percentage of individuals approaching the service do so from what had been a stable home or sustainable tenancy, or from a position of relative financial stability, highlighting the need for supporting individuals to plan their own accommodation pathway before a point of crisis is reached.
- 9.9 Whilst the level of insight available from current business systems is limited, it is clear from interviews within the service and with delivery partners that future demand and the need for structured interventions will be increasingly driven by younger people with less well developed life-skills, single person households who have very limited options, people leaving care settings with complex needs (particularly mental health conditions), and older-people requiring accessible housing solutions.
- 9.10 The demand for TA has remained fairly constant, despite the introduction of the HRA (however with the full impact Covid-19 still unclear). The TA portfolio across the Districts is a mixture of council owned and privately let units. The level of PRS provision at Broadland is having a significant negative cost impact, estimated at between £200 and £250k p.a., as the accommodation is more suited to longer term occupation. TA provision in South Norfolk (7 units) is too small and risks reliance on expensive bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 9.11 The introduction of two new prevention and relief duties means that a balance between the need for short term emergency accommodation needs to be struck. Based on the analysis undertaken, Broadland and South Norfolk require additional short-term emergency accommodation and less long-term temporary accommodation moving forward.
- 9.12 There are weaknesses in the way TA is currently managed in both Councils and there is an urgent need to implement a new TA structure from one location to ensure consistency, control and continuity. The combined service needs to be correctly resourced, and to this end a business case to access Government funding from 2021 is presented.
- 9.13 The creation of the new *One Team* operating model provides a unique opportunity to completely overhaul the current model of social housing provision. This must transform the underpinning principles that currently encourage band chasing to evidence *urgent* need, the weaknesses of allocations policies that render them potentially non-compliant, the high level of manual and inefficient business processes, and relationships with landlords many of which have not been reviewed or enhanced since stock transfer. The new model must build upon the strengths of the combining services in identifying needs and providing supporting services through their respective *Support Hubs*.
- 9.14 Service users surveyed were generally happy with service they received from their Council, however the number of re-banding decisions upheld on appeal and level of contact made to chase progress, demonstrates that there is considerable scope to digitise (change of circumstances) , automate and streamline (bidding and lettings) many aspects of the service.
- 9.15 Partner landlords interviewed view the combined service in a positive light and would like to see the adoption of a joint, a blended approach to allocations moving forward that combines both approaches would be welcomed. They would also welcome the establishment of more

formal, partnership-based relationships moving forward, centred on sharing risk and the needs of the individual.

Facing the future

- 9.16 In the post Covid-19 operating environment, a sit back and wait approach is not an option. A demand spike driven by unemployment, tenancy and mortgage default, mental health and domestic violence driven household failures, could result in such financial pressure that the viability of the Councils is at risk.
- 9.17 New thinking is required to meet the legal responsibility to deliver housing advice, to help all residents in housing need to avoid homelessness. Existing service offers based on intervention at the point of crisis and delivery models based on disjointed service elements have been made irrelevant almost overnight. Only a holistic Pathway model can deliver an effective response on a sustainable basis.
- 9.18 Broadland and South Norfolk are at a natural point of reinvention and have the opportunity to be bold and create a *Best in Class* solution based in the Covid-19 world, which provides universal on-line access to support all residents and empower them to resolve their own housing issues. To support households along a supported pathway that keeps them away from or move successfully away from homelessness, with wider accommodation choices based on their circumstance, and to work in partnership with landlords and support providers to help individuals build a level of resilience that reduce future reliance on the system.

The Accommodation Pathway Model

- 9.19 The Accommodation Pathway Model will be a first of its kind in the UK to deliver a holistic housing service to the whole community regardless of their immediate need, with the aim of enabling them to plan for their long-term accommodation needs with a realist set of options, whilst supporting those who reach a point of crisis to re-establish and sustain a suitable home.
- 9.20 The *Accommodation Pathway Model* has four clearly defined and outcomes focused stages:
- 9.21 **Stage 1 - Marketplace:** Will present a single digital access pathway into the housing service for anyone needing help to assess their housing needs and options, with the objective of delivering self-help solutions to the majority of those in housing need. Equally however, it will identify at an early stage, individuals approaching a point of housing crisis, risk factors that may trigger a formal intervention, and residents who may be too vulnerable to support themselves through the process unsupported.
- 9.22 *Marketplace* would provide access all available housing products in one place with the intention that it would become the first place to go for all residents in housing need. Residents would be able to register electronically their housing need and explore accommodation options. A personalised *Accommodation Options Plan*, would outline accommodation options over time, applicable to their personal and financial circumstance

- 9.23 Low-cost, self-service *enabling* packages could include pre-tenancy courses, access to complementary service and community resources, a digital extension of the Support Hub services already in place.
- 9.24 The extent of any *direct intervention role* at this point will need to be examined in terms of how such intervention can directly influence downstream costs and outcomes though out the system, such as providing a rent deposit scheme to help someone secure a tenancy, or a support scheme to help someone avoid eviction.
- 9.25 *Marketplace* will absorb a considerable volume of enquiry-based demand, structure, route and triage formal applications for accommodation and support, and build a picture of demand.
- 9.26 **Stage 2 - Prevention:** Will provide options for people at imminent risk of becoming homeless. However, if the *Marketplace* fulfils its role, households seeking support, should be fewer in number and hopefully already in the system and their circumstances known.
- 9.27 The *enabling* package set out in *Marketplace* would still be relevant, however, given the imminent risk of homelessness, caseworkers would need to be more proactive and directive when working with residents in order to prevent them losing their home, or to support them to find something else before they reached the point of becoming homeless.
- 9.28 Enabling families to remain at home and wait for social housing rather than become homeless is the best outcome for both a household and the two Councils. As part of a new allocations policy framework, homeless households could be incentivised to wait for a social housing outcome and have more choice over where that offer is, rather than becoming homeless and being offered a short-term private rented solution.
- 9.29 Direct interventions could include making financial payments through a *Prevention of Homelessness Fund* or the *Discretionary Housing Payment Fund*, which whilst enabling households to remain in place, has a direct cost and may not change behaviours, whilst brokering solutions to rent arrears between tenants and landlords may do.
- 9.30 **Stage 3 - Stabilisation:** Will provide a tailored package of suitable, high quality temporary accommodation and personalised support to an individual or household with the space to stabilise their situation before taking the next step towards self-reliance. Additional wraparound support will be provided to those who need support beyond finding suitable accommodation.
- 9.31 **Stage 4 - Resolution:** Will enable households to *resolve* their housing need though access to permanent accommodation solutions, regardless of whether they are owed a statutory temporary accommodation duty, by delivering realistic, and suitable accommodation options across all tenures.
- 9.32 Ongoing sustainment and support services will enable a household to set-up and manage a home successfully and to sustain a tenancy, supported by a bespoke *Accommodation Sustainment Plan*. This approach break the cycle of the revolving door of homelessness and of short-lived, broken tenancies by ensuring that solutions are sustainable and long term. On-

going support would be provided through a hub and spoke partnerships and enable access to wraparound services such as health and employment, to deliver joined-up outcomes.

Enabling the Accommodation Pathway Model

- 9.33 To enable the *Accommodation Pathway Model*, the disparate components of the homelessness, TA, and allocations services, their service offers, operating models, business systems and partnership relationships need to be re-thought and re-aligned to create a holistic Best in Class solution envisaged.

Best in Class TA Provision

- 9.34 Moving from the current model for the provision of TA is a necessity if the right type of TA is to be provided to meet demand at a sustainable cost. The target model for the provision of TA is a closed cycle that will ensure statutory requirements are met, whilst optimising quality of product and operational performance through accurate demand forecasting and utilisation modelling.
- 9.35 Broadland and South Norfolk should adopt a joint approach to TA procurement, based on an accurate mapping of need. Reliance on expensive PRS accommodation should be reduced in favour of developing accommodation solutions through RSL partnerships. There also needs to be a shift in the type of accommodation procured from longer-term move-on to shorter-term emergency accommodation.
- 9.36 A dedicated TA management function is required, that is properly resourced and located in one place. The Operations Manual developed as part of this project needs to be embedded, with staff trained in the preventative caseworking methods provided.

Best in Class Housing Service Provision

- 9.37 Similarly, housing service provision needs reframing around a joint Allocations Policy, that will blend the approaches currently adopted by both Councils into a compliant, flexible tool for allocating homes fairly and transparently. A combined CBL and direct offer-based approach will best meet the objectives of both Councils and landlords, in recognising local connection, prioritising the homeless and those most in need, whilst still filling hard to let stock and attracting new customer into areas of low demand.
- 9.38 The customer journey for social housing provision must be standardised, automated and performance managed. There is scope to significantly reduce contact demand through smart self-service registration and application self-management and to embed decision making within the business system to drive consistency and ensure transparency.

Best in Class Partnership Solutions

- 9.39 Formalising the management arrangements between the Councils and partner landlords will elevate what are currently little more than transactional relationships into strategic partnership relationships. Landlords would welcome the formalisation of obsolete service level agreements, to share system and data to join-up end to end processes. They would also

welcome a strategic approach to helping households establish and sustain their tenancies, by jointly sharing and managing risk of failure, through the provision of wraparound support.

- 9.40 The Covid-19 crisis is focusing the minds of all stakeholders across the County. Neighbouring Districts, core service commissioners within the County Council and service providers all recognise the need for opening-up strategic service partnerships that create whole system approach, delivering wider and lasting outcomes at reduced costs and ongoing levels of dependency. This impetus must be harnessed and channelled quickly into ready-to-go solutions such as the *Accommodation Pathway*.
- 9.41 The funding brief of the LGA Housing Advisor Programme has been fulfilled by this project as it has identified significant scope for supporting transformation partnerships that enable services to meet their local housing need.
- 9.42 Broadland and South Norfolk are well placed to become the exemplar *Best in Class* solution provider within the sector. This may in turn open up a range of business development opportunities that could generate income and cover the cost of investment made in the *Model*.

Best in Class Performance Management

- 9.43 A comprehensive *Performance Framework* will ensure compliance of the whole system, drive-up performance and demonstrate the value of the *Accommodation Pathways Model* in delivering key objectives. Specific objectives should be to measure the quality customer experience and outcomes achieved, the impact of self-service and process efficiency in managing demand, and the realisation of wider service outcomes delivered in partnership.

Delivering the Accommodation Pathway Model

- 9.44 The next step in making the *Accommodation Pathway Model* a reality is to develop a *Blueprint* that will set-out the characteristics and components of the *Pathway* and target operating model for the *One Team* housing service.
- 9.45 Underpinning the *Blueprint* must be a robust *Business Case* that sets out the investment needed to deliver the *Pathway*, the operational efficiency savings and tangible customer benefits it will deliver, ensuring its enduring sustainability.
- 9.46 A *Transformation Roadmap* will enable the service to deliver the change programme quickly and efficiently, with effective governance and resource planning, and to ensure strategic goals are realised through ongoing benefits tracking.
- 9.47 Finally, the drive and emerging culture of *One Team* to complete this project at a time of intense operational change and unprecedented service demand, coupled with the shared vision of Members of both Councils, proves that the *Accommodation Pathway Model* can quickly be made a highly successful reality.

APPENDIX 1: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Landlord Consultation List	
Landlord	Key Contact and Role
Registered Provider	
Clarion Housing	Nina Burton – Available Homes Manager Sally Greetham – Housing Services Manager Sue Stavers CIHCM - Head of Operations (East)
Flagship Housing Group	Michael Tanner – Housing Manager Simon Carr – Housing Manager Jay Furner – Housing Manager
Saffron Housing Trust	Tracey Dowse – Neighbourhood Manager Karen Benton-Warboys – Lettings and Support Manager Andrea Curson – Neighbourhood Manager
Victory Housing	Jackie Finnegan
Supported Housing Provider	
House of Genesis – BDC	Alan Barker

Key Agency Consultation List	
Landlord	Key Contact and Role
Local Authority	
Children Services – Norfolk County Council	Amanda King
Adult Social Care – Norfolk County Council	Rob Cooper – Commissioning Programme Manager Mental Health
North Norfolk District Council	Lisa Grice – Housing Options Manager
Norwich City Council	Chris Hancock, Chris Haystead
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk BC	Ross Hefford – Housing Manager

APPENDIX 2: FUNDING CASE FOR ADDITIONAL TA RESOURCES

Context

- 0.1 Additional TA resources can be delivered through Government grant funding for homelessness which includes funding for delivering the temporary accommodation function.
- 0.2 The funding from the Government is set out in the table below. This does not include the funding that the Council has already committed through its core Council Tax funding of homelessness as a statutory service.

Funding Source	Broadland 2019/2020	Broadland 2020/21	South N 2019/20	South N 2020/21
FHSG	£216,977	£165,094	£48,192	£69,287
NB/HRG	£33,616	£82,962	£41,248	£99,676
RSG Named HPG	£111,000	£111,000	£194,000	£194,000
Total	£361,593	£359,056	£283,440	£362,963

*Terms defined

FHSG = Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (Ring fenced funding for tackling homelessness)

New Burdens/Homelessness Reduction Grant = A grant to support Councils in implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act. Called 'New Burdens' in 2019/20 and renamed Homelessness Reduction Grant from 20102/21

Homelessness Prevention Grant = A named line in the Councils Revenue Support Grant settlement from MHCLG

*Note the MHCLG Grants above exclude grants specifically for tackling rough sleeping

- 0.3 Based on the funding table set out above, MHCLG Government grant funding for tackling homelessness is at approximately the same level for Broadland but has increased by nearly £80,000 for South Norfolk. Across the 2 Councils therefore there is £80,000 of additional funding some of which should be prioritised to set up a dedicated TA team.
- 0.4 In addition by taking the actions set out in section 3 of this strategy regarding future procurement decisions based on best value this should realise net savings across the combined Councils of at least £100k and possibly up to £200k based on reduced levels of bed and breakfast usage and savings to the PSL budget.
- 0.5 A mixture of additional MHCLG grant funding and TA cost savings should be used to fund the increase in resources required to establish the Accommodation/TA Team
- 0.6 It is critical that an evidence base can support the decisions in respect to the type of TA, a balance of short and longer term accommodation, that will be needed to enable both councils to meet their legal duties and to deliver high quality accommodation at the lowest possible cost.

APPENDIX 3: TA PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Context

- 0.1 It is critical that an evidence base can support the decisions in respect to the type of TA, a balance of short and longer term accommodation, that will be needed to enable both councils to meet their legal duties and to deliver high quality accommodation at the lowest possible cost.
- 0.2 The HRA brought into the legal framework for homelessness two new duties, that an applicant can receive before a local authority is required to assess whether a final 'Temporary Accommodation Main Duty' is owed. The two duties are:
1. A duty on local housing authorities to prevent a household from becoming homelessness by helping any eligible homeless applicant to stay in the accommodation they have presented from, or to help them to move to alternative suitable accommodation before they reach the point where they become physically homeless.
 2. A new duty is placed on local authorities for applicants who are owed the new prevention duty but subsequently become homeless, or who present to the Council at the stage when they are physically homeless. This duty is to take reasonable steps to relieve the applicant's homelessness by helping them to find suitable accommodation.
- 0.3 Importantly these 2 new duties can be ended successfully through a new flexibility in the legislation that recognises that many local authorities have limited social housing resources to be able to provide everyone with a long-term social housing solution.
- 0.4 The new legislative 'flexibility' is that the prevention and relief duties can be brought to an end through any suitable accommodation offered, or secured by the authority or the applicant that has a 'reasonable prospect' of being available for at least 6 months. The current main statutory duty in contrast can only be brought to a successful end through social housing or a 12-month fixed term tenancy.
- 0.5 The flexibility the HRA gives local authorities to tackle homelessness and successfully end the 2 new duties has altered the balance between the numbers of short term and long term TA units that a Council needs to procure.
- 0.6 Fewer units of longer term TA are needed because far fewer applicants progress to a 'final Main duty' as the prevention or relief duties can be ended with any accommodation of a minimum 6 month duration.
- 0.7 The focus for TA and its procurement going forward will be on the need to procure more short-term 'quick turnover' type temporary accommodation to accommodate applicants in priority need owed the relief of homelessness duty whilst they wait in TA for an accommodation solution that can be social housing, but equally can be a private rented offer of a minimum 6 month period.
- 0.8 Councils have a relatively 'long window' of 56 days to procure or arrange that offer of 6 months accommodation. There are important recommendations in this strategy aimed at opening up

the private rented sector to deliver far more private sector lettings to supplement the current level of social housing lettings.

- 0.9 It is anticipated therefore that in the future the vast majority of applicants in Broadland and South Norfolk that are in priority need and are owed a prevention duty because they are threatened with homelessness, or are in TA under a relief duty will be able to be offered an accommodation solution at the prevention duty stage or, if they become homeless, before the end of the 56 day period of the 'relief duty'.
- 0.10 The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) has impacted significantly in Broadland and South Norfolk regarding the 'balance' between short-term emergency accommodation need and longer-term TA need. More short-term TA units are required and fewer long-term PSL type units are needed.
- 0.11 Failure to adapt to this changing picture is already having a negative financial impact on Broadland Council in particular, as outlined above.

Evidenced-based procurement

- 0.12 TA procurement decisions must be taken after analyzing the evidence for the geographical areas that account for most homelessness demand.
- 0.13 Broadland District Council covers an area of 211 square miles and consists of 65 parishes. South Norfolk Council covers an area of 350 square feet and consists of 119 Parishes. It is inevitable that it will not be logistically possible to place households into temporary accommodation that is located in the area where an applicant became homeless from given the large geographical spread of both Councils. For practical, administrative and financial reasons temporary accommodation cannot be procured that is easily accessible from any Parish across the two Council geographical areas. Therefore, sufficient temporary accommodation has been procured in the larger areas that have reasonable road and public transport links.
- 0.14 It will not be possible to match every household requiring TA to a property that is physically located in the area they have become homeless from or wish to be temporarily housed. The procurement of TA has had to reflect the reality of the housing market in Broadland and South Norfolk. More TA has been procured in areas with lower rents with access limited in areas where the rented market is targeted at tourism.
- 0.15 However, a new TA procurement strategy must be guided by the locations where households are presenting as homeless from.
- 0.16 A strategic approach is required to ensure that the procurement of new TA whether as emergency or longer-term accommodation is able to provide a suitable geographical spread based on the locations people are presenting as homeless from.
- 0.17 A mapping exercise needs to be undertaken by both Councils and used to inform the procurement strategy. This should involve:

- 0.18 The two Councils analysing for the last 12 months all placements into TA to capture the location they have presented as homeless from and then to match this to the location of the TA portfolio as of 1st April 2020.
- 0.19 It is accepted (and would be likely to be accepted by the Courts in any legal challenge) that the Council cannot match every household requiring TA to the exact parish they have presented from. However, both Councils require a Policy for deciding placements where an applicant may need to be placed some distance away from an area where they may work, have children in school or have family support or other connections. This is the model placement Policy set out in the Operational Manual and legally needs to be adopted by Members for both Councils.
- 0.20 The aim should be to use the information for the locations people are presenting from to help shape the new TA procurement strategy for where procurement should be targeted at in terms of geographical locations

Increasing the TA Portfolio

- 0.21 There are potential options to purchase accommodation to increase the TA portfolio. Some caution should be exercised here.
- 0.22 It is not recommended that the Councils look to develop modular housing units such as 'Snoozebox' or similar low cost modular unit schemes. These are becoming common in areas of high demand such as in London where off the shelf units can be purchased specifically to increase temporary accommodation. However, these schemes are not very cost effective, can be controversial in terms of their visual impact and most importantly the homelessness position in the 2 Councils does not at present justify this option being explored.
- 0.23 However, a case for borrowing can be made to deliver a number of properties that can be used as TA.
- 0.24 This includes the purchase of accommodation that can be used as a hostel or individual ex right to buy properties that could replace the more costly PSL units. Alternatively, the option could be explored to enter into partnerships with Registered Providers to purchase some nits of new build designated for market rent.
- 0.25 However, this option does need a full options appraisal business case and comparison to the costs of alternative TA schemes set out in the costs table above. The business case would need to consider what rent rules could be applied, the cost where applicable of purchasing accommodation if purchased by the Council or a Registered Provider.
- 0.26 This option should be considered in the context of improving the quality, longevity and certainty of the TA portfolio. It would also help the Councils to develop a balanced portfolio of TA. However, there may be a higher cost impact certainly initially compared to other forms of TA.
- 0.27 The Councils therefore need to proceed with caution and undertake a full cost benefit analysis of any options to purchase. The findings should then be fed into the overall temporary accommodation strategy to influence the strategic decisions that are needed regarding the

number, type and cost of the TA portfolio that should be procured to meet the Council's TA needs over the lifetime of this strategy and beyond.

Procuring cost-effective temporary Accommodation

- 0.28 One of the key objectives of this TA Strategy is to guide decisions on the type of TA that should be procured based on the lowest net cost to the Councils.
- 0.29 Some types of TA have a greater financial net cost. This is largely down to the 'rules' set by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding the payment of subsidy for any housing benefit paid out a Council for occupants in TA who claim housing benefit.
- 0.30 DWP rules continue to financially penalize Councils that use of bed and breakfast type accommodation and nightly let type accommodation both of which are used on a regular basis by Broadland and South Norfolk. It is therefore important to analyse the financial costs for the type of temporary accommodation currently procured across the Councils, and looks at other forms of accommodation to guide the Councils in making future procurement decisions based on minimising costs.
- 0.31 The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) sets the funding rules for temporary accommodation through the 'Non-HRA Rent Rebate Subsidy System'. The rules are communicated to local authorities through a series of subsidy circulars. The most recent change by DWP was the decision to keep temporary accommodation within the housing benefit system thereby reversing the intention to pay housing costs for TA through Universal Credit.
- 0.32 However, the change that impacted significantly on Broadland Council was the decision taken by the DWP that from April 1st 2017 no management fee of £60 would be payable for accommodation held under a lease by a local authority. Instead the 'management fee' was to be paid through a new grant called the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG). This grant was 'ring fenced' to tackling homelessness and positively provided increased funding and flexibility for Councils to manage homelessness pressures.
- 0.33 However, a negative factor of the new funding system was that from April 2017 private sector leasing schemes (PSL) were no longer 'cost neutral'. Councils such as Broadland who had procured a large leasing portfolio saw a negative financial impact and this cost has increasing in 2019/20.
- 0.34 There is a need going forward to develop new TA initiatives to substitute for the more costly private sector leasing portfolio. This includes new TA schemes and reducing the need for TA through better access to the private rented market.
- 0.35 There is also the potential to combine the FHSG funding for both Councils with other funding such as the Homelessness Reduction Grant, Capital resources such as right to buy receipts and Core General Fund to create a larger commissioning pot to assist in the procurement of accommodation for both TA and enable access to 'move on' accommodation to end the prevention, relief or main homelessness duties.

- 0.36 The table in Appendix 4 sets out the estimated net cost to the Councils of TA. This includes the forms of TA currently used and the forms of TA that could be used. This is based on the current 'rules' as set by the TA funding circular issued by the DWP at the end of March 2017: S5/2017.
- 0.37 The DWP made a decision in 2017 to remove temporary accommodation from Universal Credit from 11 April 2018. Claimants making a new claim to UC and living in temporary accommodation cannot receive their housing costs through UC and would need to claim HB for help with temporary accommodation housing costs whilst still receiving the personal element of UC. This decision was helpful to Councils bringing more certainty to the rules for temporary accommodation subsidy and costs.

TA procurement strategy recommendations

- 0.38 These are the conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis of the evidence, to support Broadland and South Norfolk's procurement decisions in respect of the type of temporary accommodation that would enable the councils to meet their legal duties and to also deliver TA at the lowest possible cost.
- 0.39 There is a need to make procurement decisions that seeks to minimize the financial costs and reduce financial risk for both Councils. Procurement decisions should be guided by analyzing the net cost impact of for each TA type option.
- 0.40 This will ensure there is a sufficient portfolio of low cost longer-term TA. The number of units needing to be procured will be guided by the supply and demand model and will need to fully reflect the changes brought about by the HRA in the need for longer-term TA.
- 0.41 There are a number of recommendations concerning the future temporary accommodation procurement model for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils. These are:
- 0.42 Going forward TA procurement decisions should be taken jointly by both Councils in the spirit of closer working and based on the evidence and recommendations from this temporary accommodation strategy.
- 0.43 Both Councils need to undertake the mapping exercise to inform the TA procurement strategy in respect of the locations where TA needs to be procured.
- 0.44 Both Councils the aim should be to develop more units of low/nil cost emergency/short term temporary accommodation to the portfolio by exploring alternative options. Therefore, both Councils should explore the option of procuring more short term emergency TA hostel type accommodation through converting multiple use shared accommodation such as low demand sheltered housing or purchasing any former multiple use home. This will provide 'nil net cost' emergency accommodation and will be more relevant to the post HRA legal framework.
- 0.45 Neither Broadland nor South Norfolk Councils have a low cost emergency accommodation option in the form of a local authority owned hostel. This means emergency placements are more likely to be accommodated in bed and breakfast. For single people placed this may have a low net cost whereas for families this will be a far higher net cost. The current profile of the emergency accommodation is almost entirely weighted towards more costly bed and breakfast and nightly let arrangements.

- 0.46 Procurement decisions should include seeking to develop more TA through using social housing stock held by Housing Association partners. This can deliver low cost or 'no net cost' temporary accommodation that can be used for move-on from emergency accommodation or a half-way house between TA and a more settled solution. This option will be especially beneficial to reduce the need to place larger families into high cost B and B or nightly let accommodation.
- 0.47 Set a target to cut the number of leased properties in half within 12/18 months. The target and exact timescale should be based on an exercise to consider all exiting leases should be completed within 6 months allowing decisions to be made for how many of the existing leases need to be handed back because of the condition of the property, or due to the landlord being unwilling to accept new lease terms. Once this is known the Council will be able to plan how many properties need to be leased.
- 0.48 Given that new procurement decisions will take some time to implement the recommendation is for Broadland Council to continue to maintain a 'Private Sector Leasing' portfolio but not to over commit to this form of accommodation given its potential net cost and risk of further costs for voids if there is not the demand to fill the accommodation.
- 0.49 In addition, Broadland should only renew existing leases, or replace with new units procured, through more beneficial lease terms. This will ensure that lease terms are more favourable to the Council re repairing obligations and rent levels.
- 0.50 Develop a social letting agency to open up access to the private rented sector in Broadland and South Norfolk.

APPENDIX 4: TA SUBSIDY ANALYSIS

Table 5: Subsidy Analysis		
Type of TA	DWP Subsidy to the Council for any HB paid	Impact on Broadland and South Norfolk Councils
Costs 'Nightly Paid' including Bed and Breakfast accommodation Used by both Broadland and South Norfolk	100% up to 1 bedroom LHA rate of £98.08 and no subsidy payable to the Council above that rate (rate at Jan 2011 for Central Norfolk and Norwich BMRA)	Net loss to Councils per week based on current nightly rates B and B, or non self contained £30 a night = net loss £112(w) £5824 (y) £40 a night = net loss £182(w) £9464 (y) £50 a night = net loss £252 (w) £13,104 (y) £80 a night = (when only non budget hotel available or 2 rooms needed for a family) = net loss 462 (w) £24,024 (y) £100 a night (when 2 rooms needed for a family) = £602(w) £31,304 (y) Large families requiring more than 1 room the loss can be very large, plus risk of a family being impacted by the benefit cap with a further financial impact on the authority).
Pros and Cons 'Nightly Paid' / B and B	For ➤ No 'block booking' contractual costs ➤ Only need to use when required ➤ Let on a commercial licence so no responsibility for the authority re removal of residents ➤ Quick turnaround upon vacating ➤ Management provided as part of the costs	Against ➤ Very expensive net costs for anything more than single person placement or 1 plus 1 in 1 room. ➤ Larger families requiring more than 1 room result will result in exceptionally high unit cost ➤ If not self-contained legislation restricts the use for families with children to an emergency, and then for no more than 6 weeks. ➤ Shared facilities for cooking in any non self contained unit provides poor quality accommodation in terms of facilities ➤ Availability not consistent and can be impacted by seasonal variances in Broadland and South Norfolk due to supply issues during the holiday period. This potentially results in higher rates during the summer period especially when spot purchase is required
PSL 'Private Sector Leased' Includes the Broadland PSL portfolio and the properties leased from Clarion plus	The Council receives in subsidy on the HB paid 90% of the LHA rate for the property size (not the family size) but this is based on the lower LHA rate set for January 2011	Issue 1: Net cost of the PSL scheme for Broadland Council Note: The figures below need to be firmed up once there is a clear set of figures for the PSL scheme costs re rent paid to the landlord, HB, HB subsidy, repairs, hand back and management costs

(Tustings) the property leased from the Church in SN		Draft conclusions are: Costs for 2019/20 Rents to landlords: £261,000 Maintenance: £68,000 Hand Back Costs = unknown but can be up to £1000 per property Bad debt costs = Unknown but reported to be high £50,000 est for the scheme? Staffing costs = 1 FTE PSL officer and other staff costs proportioned for PSL work = £50,000 Total estimated cost per year circa = £430,000 Income = £184,000 estimate (includes HB income and working households income) Assumption is that rents are set at the 90% LHA 2011 rates. This needs confirming Loss for the PSL scheme = £246k estimated for the year Issue 2: Further risk going forward The assumption is that PSL rents are at the LHA rates. If in future the Council has to pay market rents this will have a further impact. For example the financial loss to the Council of would be using a 3 Bedroom example for North Broadland and South Norfolk LHA rate 90% of the 2011 rate = 90% of £124 = £111 Average 3 bedroom Market rent rate = £160 Cost to the Council where a lease has to be taken on at the market rent will be £49 a week or an additional £2,548 per year Issue 3: The increasing risk of higher costs through reduced income due to higher void levels due to higher rates of turnover post HRA legislative framework. Voids are increasing in the PSL stock. Example: average of 10 weeks voids per property x 40 properties 10 x £124 x 52 = £64,000 per year Total estimated cost per PSL unit £5780 per year rising to £6780 for year of hand back to the landlord
Private sector leased LA or RP	For ➤ Good quality self contained homes ➤ Certainty of length of use under lease	Against Net cost to the Council of leasing will be higher than many other forms of TA under the post April 2017 TA subsidy rules (albeit the subsidy for the £60 management a week has been paid through the Council's FHSG grant but this funding is likely to have been used elsewhere on homelessness?) Hand back, repairs, bad debt rent arrears and loss of rent through increased void levels result in significant additional costs

		<i>Fewer households will require longer term TA with a risk that properties remain void for longer periods with no rental income</i> <i>For households in PSL owed a 'Main homeless Duty' a court order is required to evict meaning cases can be left in TA for up to 6 months whilst possession action is progressed</i>
Local Authority owned properties accounted for in the general fund	Both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils own General Fund TA	100% subsidy can be recovered on HB payable. These properties should be able to be administered at nil net cost to the Councils. Rents can be set to recover the full costs including an amount built into the rent for management and voids and are not restricted by the DWP 'Non HRA rent rebate subsidy system'. A service charge can be levied on top of the rent charged. Eligible service charges for HB can be recovered through HB and 'non eligible' for HB service charges can be charged to the occupant
	<i>For</i> <i>Nil cost temporary accommodation</i>	<i>Against</i> <i>May require capital funding to purchase units</i>

Alternative TA Procurement Cost analysis and pros and cons 1) Procure a Hostel (General Fund) <i>For and Against points to be considered for the TA Strategy</i>	100% of the rent and eligible service charge charged will be eligible for full subsidy with no subsidy limit applied regardless of the family being accommodated in one room Once UC comes in LHA rate will be set by the size of the family occupying the accommodation and not the household size, which will ensure that the Council will continue to be able to recover all of its costs. For <i>Maximum flexibility to use accommodation unit or more than one unit as required.</i> <i>Fast placement and fast 'turnover' and 'turnaround' TA</i> <i>Very suitable TA for the Homelessness Reduction Act legal framework where short term accommodation is needed whilst 6 months accommodation to end the new prevention or relief duties is sourced</i> <i>As a hostel no court order is needed to remove the occupant regardless of whether or what homelessness duty is owed.</i>	No net loss to the Council as long as all costs are accounted for in the budget used to set the weekly rent and service charge to be levied to the occupant Against <i>There are no financial disadvantages of using a Council owned Hostel</i> <i>Shared facilities for cooking in any non self contained TA provides more limited facilities for occupants</i>
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Alternative TA Procurement 2) Registered Provider (Housing Association) own mainstream Housing Stock	For <i>Potentially all costs are covered so no net cost to the Council</i> <i>No restriction on the type of mainstream accommodation that could be used so lower demand older person ex sheltered blocks could be used</i> <i>The rent plus a service charge can be levied to cover additional management costs</i> <i>Provides good quality self contained accommodation</i> <i>Can be used for TA in the long term or short term and supply turned off and on according to demand</i> <i>No additional cost to the Councils or RP unless the RP charges the Councils for the service or any additional costs but even if this is the case the net cost is likely to be low</i>	Against <i>It removes some units that otherwise could be used for mainstream social housing</i>
Alternative to TA 3) Direct let with a Private Sector Landlord	For <i>This would not be TA but an alternative to TA</i> <i>Would be able to discharge duty therefore reducing need for TA</i> <i>No lease arrangement so no management, repair, rent collection or hand back costs</i> <i>The only cost would be the cost of the financial incentive to persuade the landlord to let at LHA rate or close to LHA rate</i>	Against <i>No negative impacts</i>

APPENDIX 5: BUSINESS SYSTEMS REQUIREMENTS

Scope of requirement	
Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils, operating within a joint operating model are seeking to develop and implement innovative new temporary accommodation and allocations pathways, that will enable customers to best address their housing needs, whilst implementing a sustainable operating model that optimises the allocation of assets and resources. To underpin these strategic aims, an integrated business system is required that will fully support interactive digital customer access and self-service, seamless process delivery with a high degree of automation, oversight and compliance, and partnership working: • Customer access portal • Housing options management functionality • Temporary accommodation management functionality • Allocations and lettings management functionality • Management oversight, compliance, business and statutory reporting • Accommodation solution partner access portal	
Key objectives	
Customer focused	Provide a digital marketplace for accommodation solutions that enable customers to take ownership of resolving their housing needs, to be achieved through: • The early identification of people facing homelessness and its prevention • An interactive customer portal that draws together advice and guidance, accommodation options and funding solutions into one place • Self-service applications and management with assistance for those who need support • Personalised high-quality advice and guidance on available housing options within the public and private sectors • Sign-posting and routing to employment, health and other support services • Delivering a consistent level of service and a high quality customer experience
Business focused	Develop a joint, compliant, sustainable operating model for meeting housing needs across the Councils, that adds most value for the resources available, to be achieved through:

	• A new flexible allocations policy, that best matches accommodation with priority needs and circumstances • Rationalising the temporary accommodation portfolio to deliver best value and best meet needs • Reducing demand through the provision of high quality advice and guidance on-line, on-boarding and self-service, and reducing failure demand through • Significantly reducing the level of staff intervention in straightforward processes • Productivity gains through process automation and the elimination of paperwork
Partnership working	Offer a digital hub through which partners are able to dovetail processes and services: • Provide digital support of the Duty to Refer requirement by partner agencies • Enable accommodation and manage the lettings and pre-tenancy process in a seamless way • Enable digital referral and commissioning of support services from external agencies • Track move-on and permanent accommodations outcomes with providers • Ability to support potential future service alignment with other Local Authorities within Norfolk
Housing Options	
Customer access	Portal with self-service password management, providing the customer with a real-time case status, timeline of current actions, their Personalised Housing Plan, supporting records and communications
S213 Referral	Portal access and digital forms (statutory, non-statutory and self-referral) to support partner agencies to meet s213b Duty to Refer requirements
Onboarding	Easily maintained content (including embedded video) will provide the customer with an <i>onboarding</i> style experience which supports a personalised journey through the housing options process, tailored to the need and circumstance information provided: • What is my priority?

	• What are <i>my</i> specific options? • How do I apply and what do I have to provide? • What is the timeline? • Am I entitled to supporting funds? • What happens next?
On-line assessment and triage	An intuitive digital questionnaire will enable the customer to describe their needs and circumstances, upload supporting evidence and proofs, and where routed by the process, complete a more detailed medical questionnaire Dependent on the whether the customer reaches the <i>risk of homeless</i> threshold, they will be either routed to a personalised set of advice outcomes and referral options will be provided, otherwise a detail assessment appointment will be triggered
Detailed assessment by officer	Complaint, rules-based workflow will guide the officer through the assessment and ensure they consistently apply statutory requirements correctly to each customer, based upon: • Circumstances • Accommodation • Needs • Support A Personalised Housing Plan will be automatically created to capture the outcomes of the assessment, agreed actions for the customer, the service and any support service provider, becoming a real-time, jointly-managed case file and enduring history.
Challenge of decisions	Provide a clear audit trail of actions and decisions made to demonstrate fairness and application of policy, in response to challenges of decisions, appeals, Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests
Third party support services	Enable housing related support service providers to access assigned support tasks through a portal, to report progress and completion of tasks and outcomes
Temporary Accommodation	
TA portfolio management	Maintain a portfolio of temporary accommodation and property data: • Ownership, contracts and letting arrangements • Asset details, compliance certification

	• Size, inventory and letting suitability • Local amenities and facilities • Placement history Support ongoing portfolio review to ensure sustainable investment decisions are made based on operating cost, charge and utilisation data
TA rent accounting and arrears management	Provide comprehensive rent account management functionality: • Reflect payments made through HB, UC or directly by customers • Make rent statements available to customers • Automated suggested actions list production, escalation processes, standard letter and Notice production
Housing Register	
Allocations policy	Manage the Register in accordance with the allocations policy, with the flexibility to meet local needs: • Flexible banding and pointing • Local connection • Hard to let properties
Customer Access	Portal (as per housing options) with self-service password management, providing the customer with a real-time application status, timeline of current actions, their application and supporting records, communications and contacts
Change of circumstance	Enable customers to manage their application and reflect change of circumstances such as household composition or needs
Application processing	Support automated banding and points award to create prioritised lists
Challenge of decisions	Provide a clear audit trail of actions and decisions made to demonstrate fairness and application of policy, in response to challenges of decisions, appeals, Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests
Renewal	Trigger a periodic review process (annual), with an automated communication inviting customers to renew their application and to schedule follow-up actions for officer attention
Allocations and Lettings	

Accommodation marketplace	Provide a highly automated and integrated solution that can facilitate the marketing of tenure-neutral accommodation by partner landlords, providing a high-quality customer experience, that empowers applicants, ensures the best match with the accommodation offer and reduces the rate of refusal
Approach to lettings	Support multiple letting processes and scenarios: • Choice Based Lettings • Nominations and direct lets • Temporary accommodation • Management transfers • Supported housing • Private sector letting
Partner integration	Portal access to accommodation providers for the marketing of properties, a seamless lettings process and feedback on the establishment of the tenancy
CBL	Support a high quality digital lettings process that effectively markets each property to reduce refusals and void loss: • Property characteristics (360 video) • Scheduled works and a realistic move-in data • Local facilities and amenities • Key tenancy terms and conditions Track and manage the process in accordance with the allocations policy – bids per cycle, non-bids, refusals etc.
Shortlisting	Automated production, provision and maintenance of shortlists
Proxy-bidding	Support proxy bidding to assist vulnerable customers
Pre-tenancy checks	Support providers in undertaking pre-tenancy checks and ensuring tenancies are not set-up to fail
Outcomes tracking	Report on accommodation letting, move-on, commissioning and support provision outcomes
Cross-cutting requirements	
Customer relationship management	Integrated customer relationship management system that provides a holistic view of the customer: • Fully digital customer record and supporting documentation • Customer Journal of activities and contacts

	• Customer communications preferences • Customer needs and vulnerability flags
Communications management	Manage communications with customers across multiple channels: • Generate standard communications • Generate bulk communications (emails, SMS, letters) • Generate customer satisfaction surveys
Workflow and case Management	Business configurable workflow and case management that optimises and automates business processes wherever possible: • Applications processing • Decision making and appeals
Management oversight	Customisable dashboard that enables real-time oversight of: • Case and task status tracking • Decision reviews and audit • Resource and workload allocation • Key performance indicators
Business reporting	Customisable reports and data exports that allow the tracking of: • Service access and referral demand • Caseload performance management • Outcomes and value-add • Customer experience and contentment • Partner performance
Statutory reporting	Automated provision of H-CLIC reporting
Non-functional requirements	
Solution provision	Solution to be provided on a Software as a Service (SaaS) basis
Access	Fully browser-based, mobile responsive and available to staff and delivery partners from anywhere, and WC3A (WCAG 2.1) compliant
Hosting	Secure cloud hosting options (G-Cloud) with demonstrably high levels of availability and resilience

Licensing	licensing model flex to reflect business needs, help realise efficiency savings and support any future cross-Authority partnerships
Delivery and operating charges	Transparent pricing structures for software and implementation services, annual maintenance fees, periodic upgrades, support and consultancy services
Support	Help Desk facility available during office hours with access to appropriate levels of specialist expertise
Compliance	The solution must be capable of underpinning GDS and GDPR compliance
Integration	Standardised API integrations available for core business applications supporting benefits management and finance
Data conversion	Templated approach for loading data from legacy applications

APPENDIX 6: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

There are a number of abbreviations used in this report. These are:

HRA – Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

MHCLG – Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

FHSG – Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

PSL – Private Sector Leasing

PRS – Private Rented Sector

UC – Universal Credit

HCLIC – The Government's MHCLGs homelessness statistical reporting system There is a need to develop an innovative accommodation pathway that not only meets the combined council's TA statutory needs but also delivers substantially more accommodation options.

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**Broadland and South Norfolk
Allocation Scheme**

With effect from ***[insert final Council date]***

Document Control		
Document reference	[Insert Corporate Reference Number]	
Document title	Broadland and South Norfolk Allocation Scheme	
Document status	Draft 2 [28 July 2020] – Major Change	
Document approval route	Internal Management	27 July 2020
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	CMLT	29 September 2020
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	Overview & Scrutiny	27 October 2020
	SNC Cabinet	2 November 2020
	BDC Cabinet	3 November 2020
	BDC Council	19 November 2020
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1.1 The Allocation Scheme

Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils operate a Housing Register known as the Allocation Scheme. Applicants of both Councils are held on the register and can be distinguished for each Council. A single team runs the Allocation Scheme.

This document outlines how affordable housing, which is a limited resource in both districts, is allocated to those who need it. Broadland and South Norfolk do not have properties of their own. We work in close partnership with a number of social housing landlords who we refer to as our partner landlords. The partner landlords own and manage properties in both districts. Broadland and South Norfolk will be seeking to formally review their partnership arrangements. It is anticipated that a Common Housing Register approach will be considered the way forward in order to embrace the Allocations Pathway Model. **See Part 2**

We work with:

- Broadland Housing Group
- Clarion Housing Group (Broadland District Council's Stock Transfer partner)
- Cotman Housing Association with Places for People
- Flagship Housing Group
- Hastoe Housing Association
- Havebury Housing Partnership
- Metropolitan Housing Trust
- Orbit Housing Association
- Orwell Housing Association
- Saffron Housing Trust (South Norfolk Council's Stock Transfer partner)
- Sage Housing
- Sanctuary Housing
- Victory Housing

We also work with a range of supported and specialist housing providers:

- House of Genesis
- Benjamin Foundation
- Emmaus
- Homegroup
- Solo Housing
- YMCA
- Leeway
- Evolve East Anglia
- St Martins Housing
- Stonham

1.2 The Legal Framework

The Allocation Scheme is a requirement of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants are able to apply for housing and all applications will be fully assessed. Broadland and South Norfolk as a merged service have equal responsibility to assess an application thereby discharging the legal responsibility for a local authority. The Allocations Scheme has been framed in accordance with the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Housing Strategy, and Tenancy Strategy. It has also been styled in accordance with the LGA funded work to develop an Accommodation Pathway Model. In developing the Scheme; the Councils have followed and fully considered the following housing legislation, regulations, and statutory guidance:

- The Housing Act 1996, Part 6 as amended by Localism Act 2011 (England)
- The Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local housing Authorities in England (2012, DCLG) “the Code”
- Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013) “Supplementary Code”
- Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997, SI 1997/483
- Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002, SI 2002/3264
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294 and all subsequent amendments
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/1869
- Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/2989
- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015
- ‘The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/861)’
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and contained within the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).
- Care Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998

1.3 Right to Move

In accordance with the Right to Move statutory guidance on housing allocations for local housing authorities in England (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2015) the Scheme sets a limit of no more than 2% of lettings per annum will be allocated to social housing tenants from outside of Broadland and South Norfolk who need to move for employment purposes.

1.4 Allocation of a Tenancy

The allocation of housing by a housing authority is defined in s.159 of the 1996 Housing Act as:

- a) Selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by them (i.e. by that housing authority)
- b) Nominating a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by another person (i.e. another housing authority)
- c) Nominating a person to be an assured tenant of housing accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider (Housing Association)

Lettings outside of the Allocation Schemes are those essentially where the allocation is for a tenant by their own partner landlord. These are summarised in **Appendix 1: Lettings outside of the Allocation Scheme.**

1.5 Data Protection

Broadland and South Norfolk will ensure personal information of all applicants (new, existing and deleted) is:

- Stored lawfully
- Processed in a fair and transparent manner

- Collected for specific, explicit and legitimate for the purpose
- The data will be kept up to date and not held only until it is no longer required.
- Shared only with other organisations for legitimate processing, the prevention of fraud or with the person's explicit consent.

An applicant's permission to share their personal information is a qualification condition of being accepted onto the Broadland and South Norfolk housing register. The Councils have a Privacy Notice which can be located at: [URL to be supplied](#)

1.6 Equalities, Access and Monitoring

Broadland and South Norfolk are committed to ensuring that the Scheme is non-discriminatory and that all applicants are able to access the service, especially taking account of any vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by the Equality Act 2010; the Human Rights Act 1998; and for Children, Section 11 of the Children Act. To identify the needs of our applicants the application contains specific questions relating to vulnerability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability and other relevant criteria. The information obtained will be used to monitor the impact of the policy on minority and specific needs groups and to evidence the need for amendments, as may be required.

Under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty, Councils are required to give due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, when exercising a public function such as their legal Housing Allocation Policy. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The new policy has been subject to a full, detailed Equalities and Communities Impact Assessment (EqCIA) before it has been adopted. The impact will continue to be monitored throughout the administration of the Scheme. Should evidence of discrimination occur; it will trigger a "Change to the Allocation Scheme".

1.7 Force Majeure

The Councils will not be liable for any delay in performing its obligations under this policy if the delay is caused by a Force Majeure (chance occurrence or unavoidable accident for example), provided that reasonable action and notification to customers is taken by the Council. More fully, this means, circumstances beyond reasonable control of that party, including without limitation, strikes, lock outs, acts of God, the act or omission of any governmental or other competent authority, war or national emergency.

1.8 Changes to the Allocation Scheme

The Council reserves the right to expand, change or alter any element of the scheme, as and when required, to meet changes in housing need, capacity, resources and legislation. The routes to enable the amendments would depend on whether the change is major or minor. The EqCIA will define whether the changes and their impact constitute a major or minor change.

Major	Minor
I. Internal management	Internal management only
II. Stakeholders including partner landlords and members	
III. Corporate Management Leadership Team (CMTL)	
IV. Legal Check	
V. SNC Policy Committee	
VI. Wellbeing Panel	
VII. Overview and Scrutiny	
VIII. SNC Cabinet	
IX. BDC Cabinet	
X. BDC Council	
XI. SNC Council	

The Council will ensure the changed scheme is then made available to the public through its website at [URL to be supplied](#)

Statement on Choice

This Allocation Scheme is fully committed to enabling customers to play an active role in choosing where, and in what property type and tenure they live, while continuing to house those people in the greatest housing need and complying with all relevant legislation. However, to minimise the risk of further incidents of anti-social behaviour an applicant may be restricted in their choice of area.

It is important to realise that the demand for accommodation is higher in some areas than others. In making a decision about the choices available, applicants need to consider their housing need priority against the availability of properties in any given area.

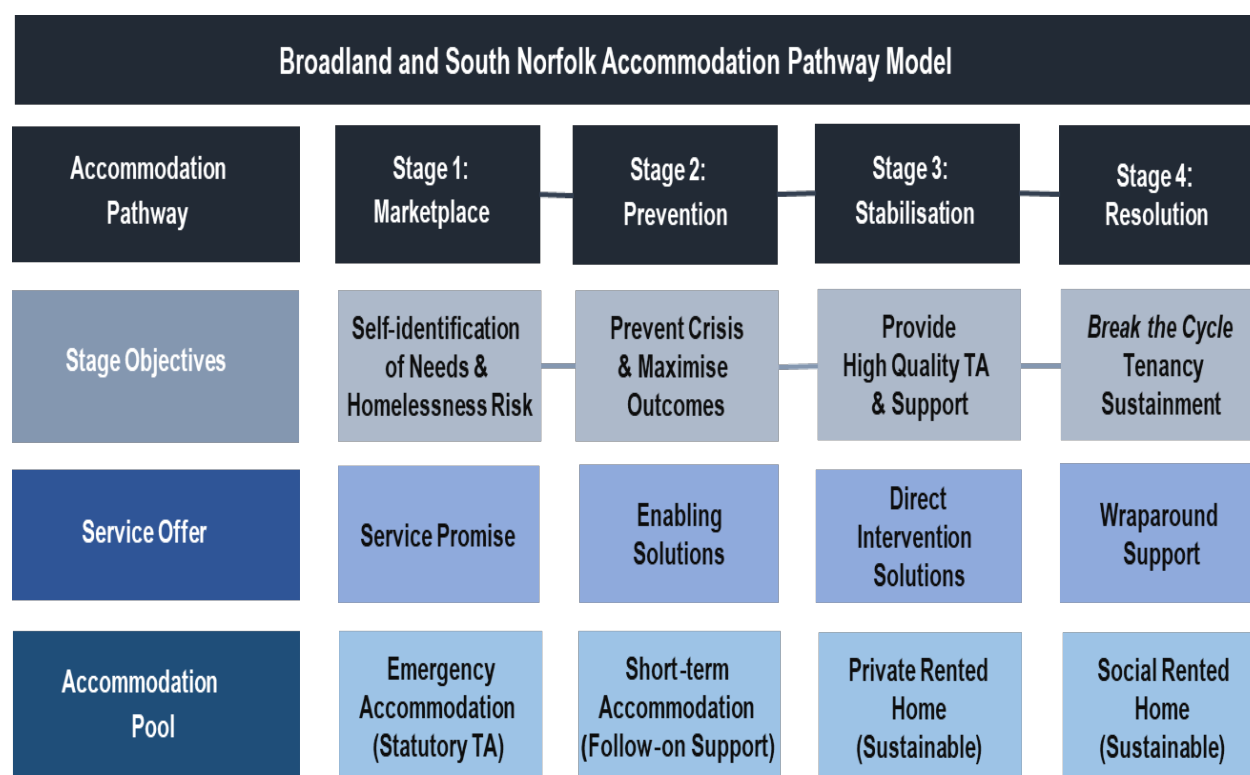
In order to meet our statutory duties, an applicant in the emergency band may be made a direct let of suitable accommodation anywhere within the district, although priority will always be given to the local authority they currently reside in.

2.1 Aims of the Allocation Scheme

In order to deliver this Allocation Scheme, Broadland and South Norfolk aim to:

- To reduce the use of temporary accommodation for homeless applicants and to assist with prevention by making customers aware of their potential housing choices and the alternative options available to them e.g. private sector, low cost home ownership.
- To increase the availability of move-on accommodation to prevent 'blockages' in supported housing schemes. Careful consideration will be given to cases referred by other authorities to ensure they fall in line with the intentions under the Right to Move legislation. Also, that it takes into account households who have been placed in Broadland and South Norfolk in short term housing projects, but where the longer-term responsibility lies with the referring authority.
- To ensure a lettings service that embraces equality and diversity by being open and fully accessible to all individuals and to provide support to customers where needed.
- To improve the means by which local people in the region gain access to social rented housing by providing a modern and easy to understand allocation system which allows choice and is fair, transparent and accountable.
- To encourage residents to access employment and to recognise residents who make a contribution to a local community.
- To make the best use of the housing stock within the scheme.
- To increase opportunities for tenant mobility between the region and other areas of the country. In accordance with the Right to Move statutory guidance on housing allocations for local housing authorities in England (issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2015) the Scheme sets a limit of no more than 2% of lettings will be allocated to social housing tenants from outside of Broadland and South Norfolk who need to move for employment purposes.
- To attract new customers from the existing housing register to areas of low demand and reduce void times on 'hard to let' properties
- To meet the legal obligations of the Council by giving appropriate priority to customers who fall within the Housing Act "reasonable preference" categories.
- To contribute to the creation of balanced and sustainable communities; ensuring local need is given sufficient weighting.

2.2 Accommodation Pathway Model



The model relies on investment of resources at the front end of our service by looking at how we work with households when they first approach the Council.

Marketplace

This would involve:

- A self-service portal for exploring options available to the household
- Providing it is relatively inexpensive once it is set up on our website as it enables individuals to solve their own need by exploring the support available to them.
- Where necessary, direct intervention will be undertaken to prevent homelessness
- The market place will give each household a bespoke Accommodation Options Plan
- Assistance will be available who find the website difficult to use.

Prevention

This would involve:

- Help to high risk households to avoid a point of crisis
- Prevention-based case work
- Support to enable people to remain in their home where this is feasible
- Investment of resources to prepare people to take control of their Accommodation Options Plan and ultimately the solutions necessary to prevent the homelessness risk reoccurring
- Target services to homeless families.

Stabilisation

This would provide:

- Sustainable discharge of Statutory Duties
- Excellent quality Temporary Accommodation that meets needs
- Directive casework to help find a longer-term home
- Wraparound support for those who need more than just a roof

Resolution

Undertaken by:

- Resolving homelessness for all applicants
- Exploring social and private sector options
- Building resilience and tenancy management skills
- Coordinating partnership support to break the cycle of homelessness, eviction and short-term solutions

2.3 Enabling the Model

The model relies on key components being in place to work.

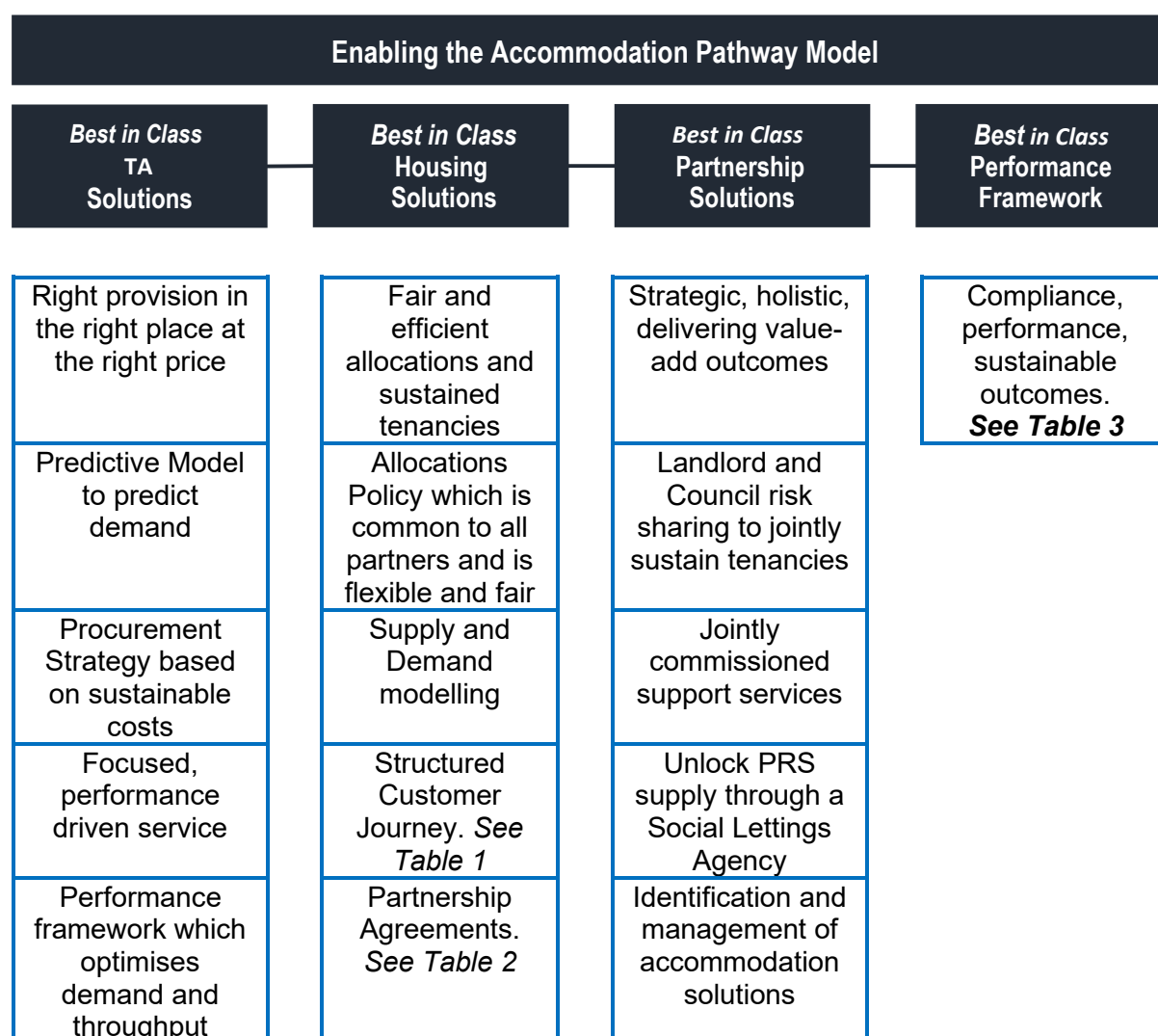


Table 1

Structured Customer Journey			
Marketplace Advice & Guidance	Application & Assessment	Waiting list Management	Allocation Offer
TA ,Social, Private, Specialist, Low-cost Home Ownership	On-line Assessment & Triage	Self-managed Application	Nominations
Self-service Advice & Guidance	Personalised Applications	Change of Circumstance	Choice-based Lettings
Self-referral Pathway	Validation & Verification Framework	Automated Notifications and Reminders	Sensitive Lets
Assisted Choice	Support Services Referral	Scheduled Reviews	Targeted Advertising

Table 2

Formalised Partnership Arrangements			
Waiting list Management	Allocation Offer	Lettings	Sustainment
Waiting List Protocol	Allocations Protocol	Resulting Offer	New Tenancy Management
Joint Management	Application Verification	Resulting Application	Joint Solution Provision
List Management	System Delegated Authority	Multiple & Assisted Viewings	Tenancy Sustainment
Data Sharing Protocol	Bypass Verification	Hard to Lets	Migration Review

Table 3

Housing Service Performance Framework					
Compliance	Council Statutory Reporting	Landlord Statutory Reporting	Policy Application	Process & Evidence Audit	Policy Application
Service Performance	Service Access	Housing Register Management	TA Management	Allocations & Lettings Management	Partnership Management
Sustainable Outcomes	Customer Outcomes	Business Outcomes	Partnership Outcomes	TA Supply & Demand Modelling	Housing Supply & Demand Modelling

3.1 Eligibility

The Broadland and South Norfolk Housing Register is a list of applicants across the two districts who qualify. It will include homeless applicants owed a duty, applicants with a priority need owed a duty and existing social housing tenants residing in the region and seeking a transfer.

3.1.1 Special arrangements for 16 – 18- year old

- Anyone over the age of 16 is eligible to join the Housing Register if their current address is their only home, or sole residence, and they are not already registered through someone else's housing application.
- Applicants under 18 cannot legally hold a tenancy. If they are under the jurisdiction of social services and owed a duty under the Children Act, social services will act as a guarantor for those within 6 months of their 18th birthday under an existing protocol. This is subject to their ability to live independently and manage their tenancy. Social services will need to provide a support package to prevent the risk of losing the tenancy. The tenancy will be held in trust until they reach 18.
- Those not owed a duty under the Children Act, may still be granted a tenancy provided they can provide a suitable person to act as a guarantor such as a parent, legal guardian or relative. They will accept responsibility for the tenancy whilst the tenancy is held in trust until the applicant reaches 18.

3.1.2 Persons from Abroad

Some persons from abroad may not be eligible to join the housing register. These include:

- Under sections 160ZA (1), (2) and (4) of the Housing Act 1996 Broadland and South Norfolk cannot allocate a tenancy, or nominate a person for housing, if they are a person who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of being a person subject to immigration control or a person from abroad who is prescribed as ineligible.
- Do not live habitually in the Common Travel Area (UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland);
- Do not have the right to live in the UK;
- Other categories of people who the Government may in the future, decide are not eligible for housing assistance.

The relevant regulations that apply to eligibility are:

- ❖ Regulations 3 and 4 Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294
- ❖ All subsequent amendments including 'The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/861)

The rules are complicated and anyone who is impacted or believes they may be impacted can approach the Councils for advice or seek independent legal advice.

The rules will change from 2021 due to the UK's exit from the EU and new regulations regarding eligibility for housing based on the EU settlement scheme. This policy will be amended to take into account any new rules.

3.2 Qualification Rules

Section 160ZA (7)) allows Broadland and South Norfolk to define who will be regarded as qualifying and non-qualifying persons. Applicants, who are eligible for an allocation, must meet one or more of the following qualification rules in order to join the Housing Register:

- a) Have a recognised housing need (please refer to 4.4.11 Housing Priority Band)
- b) Have a Broadland or South Norfolk local connection through one or more of the following:
 - Have lived in Broadland or South Norfolk for 6 of the previous 12 months
 - Have lived in Broadland or South Norfolk for 3 of the previous 10 years
 - Have a current contract of permanent employment where the job requires residency in Broadland or South Norfolk
 - Have a family member (parent, adult child or adult sibling) who lives in and has lived in Broadland or South Norfolk for a continuous period of at least five years.
 - Have an existing social tenancy and been in employment or training in Broadland or South Norfolk for a minimum of six months and there is a reasonable expectation that the employment or training will continue for a further 12 months.
 - If they are residing in a supported housing project and approaching the Councils via a Move On arrangement, they will have to have resided at the project at least 6 months before submitting an application. If the specialist provider has a move on arrangement with the Broadland and South Norfolk this will provide the local connection.
- c) Be homeless or threatened with homelessness (within 12 weeks and who are assessed as probably having a priority need) when the local connection criteria as laid down in the homelessness code of guidance would apply
- d) Be owed a Relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act, when the local connection criteria as laid down in the homelessness code of guidance would apply.
- e) Have been 'placed' or relocated outside the district due to illness, military service or other exceptional circumstances such as violence and lived in Broadland or South Norfolk for at least 6 months prior to the placement.
- f) A young homeless care leaver under 21 years who has been looked after by Norfolk County Council for at least 2 years, including some time before they turned 16, under section 22A of the Children Act 1989.

- g) A care leaver age under 21 years, placed in accommodation in Broadland or South Norfolk by another authority for at least 2 years, including some time before they turned 16, under section 22A of the Children Act 1989.
 - h) Are living in accommodation-based support services outside the district to which they were referred by or with the agreement of the Council and they lived in Broadland or South Norfolk for 6 months immediately prior to the placement.
 - i) Be a current or former member of the British Armed Forces, having left service within the preceding 5 years, as defined by s.374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.
 - j) Be a civil ex-partner of armed forces personnel and required to vacate a Ministry of Defence property.
- The spouse or civil partner of a deceased member of the regular forces where their death was attributable to that service
 - Current or former members of the reserve forces who suffer from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable to that service.
 - Victims of domestic abuse who are residing in a refuge or other safe temporary accommodation in Broadland or South Norfolk as they have fled abuse from another area.
 - Applicants who have a connection to Broadland or South Norfolk as a result of other special circumstances as set out in S199 of the Housing Act 1996 to be determined based on the individual facts of the case and in reference to statutory guidance on allocation schemes and homelessness.

Evidence of a connection to Broadland or South Norfolk may be required to be provided. Where a connection to Broadland or South Norfolk is through work (and in relation to the exemption for applicants through the Right to Move) employment must be physically located in the boroughs, not be short term or marginal or ancillary to work in another area or voluntary. Evidence of current employment or the offer of employment will be required.

Applicants who are disqualified as they meet one of the disqualification criteria can re-apply when their circumstances change so they would qualify.

- k) Be a gypsy (as defined in the Caravan Sites Act 1968) who has habitually resorted to the Broadland or South Norfolk area.

All applications accepted onto the Housing Register will be subject to a review. **See Part 6**

3.3 The Armed Forces Covenant



Broadland and South Norfolk Councils are signatories of the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant. It is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and the local armed forces community.

Both South Norfolk and Broadland Councils have created a Covenant Pledge to demonstrate its support, as an employer of choice, to the armed forces community. We believe that those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

In undertaking this covenant, we:

- ❖ Disregarding injury and disability payments; whether these are periodic or a lump sum
- ❖ Overlooking lack of connection for current and former members instead, we allow up to 5 years for divorced and separated spouses.
- ❖ All applications qualify from current or former members (having left service within the preceding 5 years, as defined by s.374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006)
- ❖ If they are divorced, separated or a civil partner of service personnel required and are required to move out of Ministry of Defence accommodation, they will qualify
- ❖ If they have to move from an unsuitable property as a result of injuries sustained while in the Armed Forces, they will be awarded the highest priority band.
- ❖ If they have a Housing Need Priority and they meet the local connection qualification they will also be placed in the highest priority band.

3.4 Non-Qualification Rules

An applicant will not qualify for an allocation where:

- a) They have been housed by a scheme landlord, through a partner landlord within the preceding year, unless there has been a change in circumstances resulting in a priority need.
- b) They have been housed through the Council's Rent Advance & Deposit Scheme within the preceding year, unless there has been a change in circumstances resulting in a priority need.
- c) They are under 18 and do not have a guarantor and cannot show they will be supported in a tenancy where the Council assesses that support is needed to sustain a tenancy.
- d) They, or a member of their household, have been evicted from a tenancy and has neither had a settled period of a minimum of six months nor met the criteria for reassessment, since the eviction.

- e) They, or a member of their household, have been evicted from a property for mortgage arrears and has neither had a settled period of a minimum of six months nor met the criteria for reassessment, since the eviction.
- f) They, or a member of their household, is/was responsible for paying rent and they have rent arrears and/or court costs greater than 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or greater than 4 months if the rent is charged monthly **and** they have not met the criteria for reassessment. This will apply equally whether they pay the rent in full, are on partial housing benefit and they pay the shortfall or are in receipt of full housing benefit where the arrears are solely the responsibility of the tenant. In respect of housing benefit an exception may be made if they have provided the information required and the claim is being reassessed.
- g) They have made a fraudulent claim for housing and/or housing benefit or provided false information.
- h) They, or a member of their household, has caused damage to a property and been charged for damages and/or recharges and/or court costs of over £1000.
- i) They, or a member of their household, has been evicted for anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour and there has been no demonstrable evidence of behaviour change in settled accommodation.
- j) They, or a member of their household, own a residential property and have the financial means to find their own housing solution. Exceptions may be made where there is demonstrable hardship and the applicants would qualify for sheltered accommodation or housing with care. An exception may also be made if a court order is in place rendering their property is not suitable for habitual residence.
- k) Failure to bid. Exceptions may be made around s106 properties or properties which are hard to let and the applicants can demonstrate they can afford the unit.
- l) Applicants who are considered to have sufficient financial resources to secure accommodation within the private sector
 - a. 'Sufficient financial resources' includes any assets or investments even if they are not immediately available to the applicant, such as any residential or non-residential property that they own, or part own anywhere in the UK or abroad.
 - Any lump sum received by a member of the armed forces as compensation for an injury or disability on active service will be disregarded.
 - They will not be awarded a priority housing need.
 - They will be advised on low cost home ownership schemes, such as rent to buy, shared ownership/equity, discounted market sale and starter homes, sheltered accommodation and housing with care, or lower demand properties.

3.5 Exceptional or Mitigating Circumstances

Each application will be assessed individually. Exceptional and/or mitigating circumstances will be considered And the council will be able to exercise its discretion. If it can be shown that they now qualify they will be placed in a suitable band. However, if there is still concern in relation to their behaviour or ability to pay the rent, their application may be suspended or made inactive for bidding until a suitable pattern of behaviour has been demonstrated over a period of 6 months or more. The factors will Be assessed against the Accommodation Pathway Model. **See Part 2**

The following are factors to be taken into account in determining non- qualification or reduction of preference and subsequent management of their application to either suspend or prevent from bidding.

- Physical disability
- Mental illness and/or severe depression
- Physical illness or frailty
- Special educational needs
- Learning disabilities
- Financial resources or substantial debt problems
- Low income/benefit recipient
- Support or floating support needs
- Rooflessness/homelessness
- Inability to find alternative accommodation
- Size of family (including young children)
- Known forms of violence have occurred including domestic abuse and neighbour disputes.

This list is not exhaustive and could apply to an applicant or a member of the household. Depending on the number of factors present, the severity and their relevance to the overall situation, the effect could be a non-qualification or reduction of preference or it could lead to a non-qualification being changed to a reduction of preference. Non-qualification means the applicants cannot join the housing register. Reduction of preference means the applicant can join the register but their ability to bid may be restricted or their application suspended for an agreed period of time and subject to a set of conditions.

3.6 Reassessment of applications who have not qualified

Applicant who have failed to qualify will need to provide the evidence if their circumstances have changed to initiate a reassessment. If the reassessment is successful and they now qualify, they will be treated as reduced preference and either suspended or made inactive for bidding for an agreed period of time.

The table below summarises the causes and evidence required to mitigate it.

Cause	Evidence
They are in arrears of rent in advance and deposit loan or other debt owed to the Council.	Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner

Eviction from a tenancy for rent arrears	Minimum six month settled accommodation with up to date rent account. Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months
Eviction from a property for mortgage arrears	Minimum six month settled accommodation with up to date rent account. Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months
Responsible for paying rent and they have rent arrears and/or court costs greater than 14 weeks rent, or if the rent is charged weekly or greater than 4 months if the rent is charged monthly. This will apply equally whether they pay the rent in full, are on partial housing benefit and they pay the shortfall or are in receipt of full housing benefit where the arrears are solely the responsibility of the tenant.	Up to date rent account (where relevant) and repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments, whichever is sooner. Confirmation of information provided for a housing benefit claim to be assessed.
Damage to a property and been charged for damages and/or recharges and/or court costs of over £1000.	Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner
Eviction from a tenancy for anti-social behaviour	Minimum six month settled accommodation with no complaints relating to behaviour.

3.7 Safe Surrender Agreements

Where a tenancy is failing but has not yet met the threshold for non-qualification and resulting reduced preference, a Safe Surrender Agreement may be considered which enables the surrender of the tenancy before the situation escalates to a crisis and/or eviction. It should be agreed before the tenancy is surrendered.

The agreement is between Landlord, Tenant and relevant Council

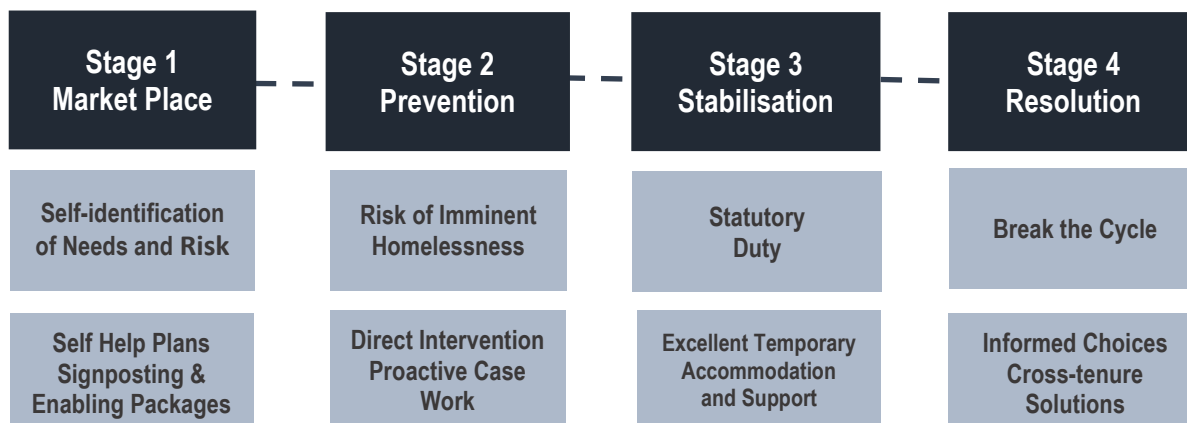
If the agreed the conditions are:

- a) The tenant will give usual 28-day notice.
- b) The partner landlord may agree a shorter notice period at their discretion.
- c) The tenant must be unable to manage the tenancy due to illness and/or other support needs which cannot be met at that time.
- d) Where the property is in danger of deterioration but substantial deterioration (under £500) has not yet occurred and does not occur before vacant possession is given.
- e) The tenant is struggling to pay the rent, but the rent account is not yet more than 8 weeks in arrears (net) and does not become so before vacant possession is given.

- f) The tenant is in breach of other terms of the tenancy, but this has not yet reached the level where a reduction of preference would usually be applied and does not become so before vacant possession is given.
- g) Applications submitted under a Safe Surrender Agreement, will not have reduced preference applied provided no further issues become known subsequent to the agreement.
- h) Their priority will be assessed according to current need and circumstances. If a subsequent homelessness application is made, the existence of a safe surrender agreement will allow the Councils to take this into account when making their decision.

The Safe Surrender Agreement is considered both a prevention and stabilisation under the Accommodation Pathway Model. **See Part 2**. It shows the tenant is being responsible and taking the necessary action and has taken the time to negotiate safeguards. This reconciles with the promotion of tenancy sustainment. **See 5.5**

Allocation Pathway Model



The model relies on an allocation plan for anyone who approaches the Council. This might be designed online the applicant self-supporting or with assistance from a third party or a Council Officer. Where they identify arrears or ASB or homelessness, prevention measures will be explored and then a period of stabilisation introduced. If social housing is a realistic option, they will submit an application and the Allocation Scheme is initiated.

Stabilisation will address reduced preference and non-qualification in that the application may be submitted under the reassessment process outlined in part 3 and a reduced preference awarded which either means their application will be suspended during the period of stabilisation or they will be LIVE but prevented from bidding.

4.1 The Application Process

The Key Stages



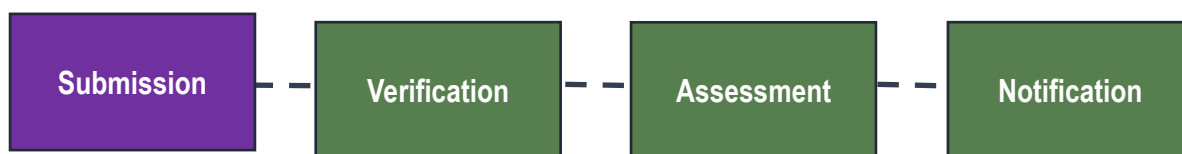
Submission: The application to join the housing register or rent a pitch.

Verification: Confirming and investigating the evidence needed to assess the application

Assessment: Assessing eligibility, qualification, non – qualification, reduced preference, priority need

Notification: Formal notification of the outcome of the assessment of the application

4.2 Submission



The application to join the housing register is online via the market place which is located by following the link. **URL to be supplied**

The application can be submitted by one of the following:

- a) When you enter the market place website by clicking the link to the housing register, it will ask you for your name, date of birth and national insurance number and if we already hold an application for you it will advise you on what to do next. If not, it will take you to the electronic online form. You will be offered assistance via a web chat facility if you need it.
- b) Or an application may be submitted as part of your advice session which you will be offered if your navigation through the market place provides you with this option.
- c) Alternatively, if a prevention interview is needed, the application may be submitted here.
- d) If you are being referred by one of the agencies we work with, they will navigate the market place with you and as part of this they may assist you to submit an application if this is deemed one of your options.

Wherever you enter the allocation scheme system, you will be given a unique identification number. This is not an application (housing register) number which is only issued once we have assessed your application. The identification number will enable you to use the market place as an account. You will be asked to create this account when you log on for the first time. The account will hold a user name and password and these should be held by you to access the account. When an application form is submitted, we will match your identification number to the application. This prevents duplications.

The Allocation Scheme is supported by our Housing and Benefits Service. They are responsible for:

- Providing the advice via a web chat or in person
- Assisting you in navigation of the market place.
- Conduction prevention interviews.
- Agreeing stabilisation plans
- Processing the intended housing solutions including applications to join the housing register.

Once you have submitted your application and based on the sections of the form you have completed, the system will:

1. Acknowledge your submission with a date and time email.
2. Provide you with a statement of how your application will be processed.
3. Indicate the time needed to process your application.
4. Provide you with a list of evidence we need in order to verify your application. We usually need originals to be seen in one of our offices. You will be advised where to take the evidence.
5. Provide you with the average waiting times for the types of accommodation in the areas you have chosen.

4.2.1 Applicants without a fixed address.

Applicants with no fixed address can request for correspondence about their application to be sent to the care of another address. If no other address is available, the Housing and Benefits Service will hold the correspondence and take reasonable steps to contact the applicant to inform them that correspondence needs to be sent to them and to agree a way of sharing the correspondence.

4.2.2 Joint Applicants

Joint applications will be accepted and will be treated as one application. The housing need of the full household will be considered in assessing housing need. Joint tenancies are normally granted where applicants have a long-term commitment e.g. married and unmarried couples, civil partners but this decision is down to the individual partner landlord who will decide whether to allow a joint tenancy in accordance with their own rules.

Carers cannot be a joint applicant unless they are already a member of the permanent household and are providing a carer role in addition to their prior and existing relationship with the applicant.

4.3 Verification



Verification requires the production of information to support the priority needs of the applicant or a member of their household and an investigation into its authenticity. Information will be required as follows:

- a) At the point of submission in order to make the initial assessment.
- b) At the point of a review to affirm the assessment.
- c) At the point of a change of circumstances to make a reassessment.
- d) At the point of offer of accommodation if either the last review was over 12 months or confirmation of new circumstances comes to light.

It is Broadland and South Norfolk's responsibility to ensure an application is verified before an allocation is made. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide the information required by the date indicated and to cooperate fully with the investigation.

Where proof cannot be supplied; the reasons will be determined, and a decision must be made by a senior officer on whether the application can be processed.

4.3.1 Proof Required

For every person on the application we must normally see at least two of the following forms of proof of identity - one of which must be a photo ID, and proof of where they currently live and previously lived:

- full birth certificate
- medical card
- marriage certificate
- driving licence
- national insurance card
- Passport.

In order to assess whether the qualification rules are met and to undertake the assessment the applicant will also be asked to provide independent documentary proof of the following:

- relationship to and between all those named on the application
- immigration status
- the property you currently live in – where, the occupation status and how long
- previous property details and reasons for moving
- if you have a local connection with the Local Authority area
- salary levels, proof of income e.g. pay slips, P60
- formal evidence proving separation and relationship breakdown
- main bank account into which benefits, or salary is paid
- details of savings held including stocks and shares
- title deeds of any properties owned and/or mortgage details
- school letters
- utility bills
- proof of benefits including proof of receipt of child benefits
- residence order
- other relevant court orders
- evidence of medical conditions and how it is impacted by your housing
- evidence of mobility or physical disability and how it is impacted by your housing
- MATB1 as evidence of a pregnancy
- Notice to Quit where notice has been served
- evidence to support welfare or social reasons for moving
- evidence of unspent criminal convictions (a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or police check may be subsequently).

This list is not exhaustive, and alternatives may be requested. In the case of mobility or physical disability, the Councils will use Occupational Therapists to make an assessment where required.

4.3.2 Household Splits

Where children live with one person, but another person has access where they stay with them some of the time, and in the absence of a Residence Order from the courts, a combination of this evidence must be provided which determines the length of time spent with the main carer. i.e. their habitual residence. Children cannot usually appear on more than one application.

4.3.3 False information

The application form states that under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002, it is a criminal offence for anyone to knowingly give false information or to withhold relevant information if reasonably required to give it, on any matter regarding the allocation of housing. In addition, applicants will be advised that should an applicant be successful in obtaining a tenancy from one of the partner landlords by knowingly or recklessly making a false statement then the landlord would seek possession of the property and may result in prosecution leading to a fine and/or imprisonment.

4.4 Assessment



4.4.1 Assessment of housing need

All applicants who are eligible and qualify to join the Housing Register will be assessed for housing need. The law requires that reasonable preference for an allocation must be made in the following cases:

- a) People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act. **See 4.4.2**
- b) People who are owed a duty by a housing authority under relevant housing and homelessness legislation.
- c) People occupying unsanitary (unhealthy) or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability.
- e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).
- f) Broadland and South Norfolk prioritises local housing for local people and will give additional preference to local connection specifically in relation to:
 - Properties built under a s106 agreement
 - Local lettings plans
 - Rural lettings schemes
- g) Additional preference is given under the Armed Forces Covenant. **See Part 3.**
- h) Additional preference may be given to certain groups of people in order to meet local and priority need.

Applicants are placed in the Broadland and South Norfolk banded priority award suitable for their circumstances.

4.4.2 Homeless Assessment

Applicants presenting as homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act will be subject to a homeless assessment to assess the following:

- a) Whether homeless prevention measures can keep the applicant in their home.
- b) Whether the applicant is going to become homeless in the next 12 weeks.

- c) Whether the applicant is already homeless and is owed a relief duty.
- d) Whether the applicant is intentionally homeless and thereby is owed a reduced preference.
- e) Whether a Safe Surrender Agreement prior to tenancy surrender prevented imminent homelessness.

Broadland and South Norfolk will use a toolkit to undertake the homeless assessment. They will then be placed in the relevant priority band. We use a toolkit to assess and interview homeless cases. If they are assessed as being owed a relief duty, we use a Temporary Accommodation Operational Manual to process the application further,

See associated document: Homeless (Part 7) Case Assessment and Interview Toolkit

See associated document: Temporary Accommodation Operation Manual

4.4.3 Temporary Suspension of Bidding

Applicant who have failed to qualify and are subsequently reassessed so that they now qualify will be treated as reduced preference. If you have reduced preference it means that you will be awarded the correct priority band for your circumstances, but your allocation will be held for the agreed period of time to enable stabilisation. This allows the applicant to demonstrate their ability to meet tenancy conditions in the future.

This will be achieved by:

Inactive to Bid:	The application is made inactive. There is a period of stabilisation which allows the applicant to improve their tenancy management skills and increase the probability of tenancy sustainment.
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We do not operate a reduced preference band, as this still allows a reduced preference applicant to receive an offer of accommodation. If they have failed to address the behaviour that led to their reduced preference award, they are a high risk of tenancy failure and this is not in keeping with the Accommodation Pathway Model.

Likewise, we do not allow them to bid and then bypass them for selection. This is not in keeping with a fair and transparent policy.

4.4.4 Transfer assessments

Social tenant applications (transfers) with a local connection will be accepted and assessed in accordance the following being met:

- a) Eligibility
- b) Qualification
- c) Housing need

Broadland and South Norfolk transferred their stock to two partner landlords operational in the area under a stock transfer agreement which preserves the rights of tenants to transfer using the Housing Register. This has been further expanded to allow all partner landlord tenant with a local connection to utilise the Housing Register to effect transfers.

4.4.5 Child of Tenant

This is a scheme which rehouses adult children within a household with the aim of alleviating overcrowding while allowing the family as a whole to remain in their community.

Specific Criteria:

- ❖ It would apply where the main household has already got an overcrowded priority.
- ❖ 18 years olds could potentially be given their own allocation subject to an application being submitted to be considered as a single person.
- ❖ The application of the 18 year would reflect the overcrowding priority award of the main household.
- ❖ It is subject to the agreement of the 18-year-old and parent/guardian.
- ❖ It must alleviate the overcrowding by at least one bedroom.
- ❖ The main household and child's application would be linked so that when the child is allocated, the main application is flagged for review. If overcrowding is the only priority and this has been fully alleviated, then the main application will be treated as rehoused and the application closed.
- ❖ If the main household has another priority need besides the overcrowding it will be reassessed as a change of circumstance.
- ❖ The 18-year-old must be deemed as ready to move and able to afford the property and sustain their tenancy.

4.4.6 Priority on Health Grounds

Priority on health or disability grounds will only be awarded after an assessment if someone in the household has a severe long-term limiting illness, or a permanent and substantial disability AND their health or quality of life is severely affected by the home they live in.

A priority medical award is not given on the basis of the medical condition or disability alone but upon the effect the housing circumstances are having on a long term and serious medical condition or disability. We will also consider if where you live now can be reasonably adapted to meet your needs. It may also be that there are combinations of serious health or disability concerns that mean that the health or quality of life of a household is being severely affected.

The Housing and Benefits Service will undertake the assessments and may ask qualified health advisers for advice and/or recommendations in relation to the condition and the impact their housing is having on that condition or that of the household. Occupational Therapist are usually used to assess housing requirements for mobility and physical disability cases. Any evidence you supply will be considered fully and further evidence may be requested.

Other recommendations that can be made on health grounds such as:

- a) The type of property that is most suitable and essential on health grounds. This can include access, space, location, or access to a garden.
- b) When a property with one of these features is advertised, preference for it may be given to applicants where a recommendation by health advisors has been accepted.
- c) Use of a garden for safe supervised outdoor play area by a child under 18 in your household with one of the following:
 - a permanent and substantial physical disability
 - severe long-term limiting illness
 - the severest forms of learning disabilities

- the severest forms of behaviour problems.
- d) Use of a garden for an adult in the following circumstances:
 - if they have a cognitive impairment that means they do not sense danger
 - at risk of wandering and so need constant supervision
- e) A garden may be recommended if:
 - if they have a severe, permanent and substantial disability or severe long-term limiting illness
 - limiting illness and caring for children is causing concern such that their continued residence is at risk
 - stress of caring for them is exacerbating the health problems
 - they have a sensory impairment and/or a guide dog and they live alone or only with others with disabilities.
- f) Extra space may be recommended if:
 - you, or someone in your household, has either a permanent and substantial disability, or a severe long term limiting illness, or the severest form of learning disabilities or behaviour problems and it is unreasonable for you to share a bedroom as it would seriously affect the sleep of those you would normally share with, to the severe detriment of their or your health
 - you are having health treatment at home that needs large machinery or a stock of health supplies to be stored e.g. you are having renal dialysis at home
 - you need a full-time Carer to provide support night and day
 - you have a permanent and substantial disability or long-term limiting illness or severe learning disability and need additional space for specialist equipment
 - you have a severe long-term limiting illness and sharing a bedroom will exacerbate your health problems e.g. you have an immune deficiency.
- g) Ground floor or category A or B wheelchair accessible on health/ disability grounds
- h) An additional recommendation that can be made is that an applicant must have ground floor on health or disability grounds or must have a ground floor property that is wheelchair accessible category A or B. This may be recommended if you have a permanent and substantial disability or severe long- term limiting illness that means that your mobility or exercise tolerance is so severely restricted you cannot safely manage any stairs.

4.4.7 Care Leavers

Young people in local authority care will work with Broadland and South Norfolk to navigate the Accommodation Pathway Model. They will enter the Market Place with the assistance of social services to set up an accommodation plan. All the tenancy preparation and support measures they required to sustain a tenancy will be explored together with the possible housing solutions. Once they are stable and ready to move their application will be activated. This will be no sooner than 6 months before they reach 18 years old. This will be done jointly with the Housing and Benefits Service and social services. It is usual for applicants coming through this route to be vulnerable and therefore it is especially important to get the assessment right. For their eligibility and qualification. **See Part 3**

4.4.8 Move On

Applicants in supported housing with a specialist provider will work with Broadland and South Norfolk to navigate the Accommodation Pathway Model. They will enter the Market Place with the assistance of their specialist provider to set up an accommodation plan. All the tenancy preparation and support measures they required to sustain a tenancy will be explored together with the possible housing solutions. Once they are stable and ready to move their application will be activated. This will be done jointly with the Housing and Benefits Service and the specialist provider. It is usual for applicants coming through this route to be vulnerable and therefore it is especially important to get the assessment right. For their eligibility and qualification. **See Part 3**

4.4.9 Elected Members or Employees and Close Relatives

Elected Members: The application will be assessed by a relevant manager of the Council. The award of priority (housing need band) must be authorised by the Council's Chief Executive Officer.

Current or Former Employees: The application will be assessed by a relevant manager of the Council. The award of priority (housing need band) must be authorised by the Council's Director with the responsibility for Housing.

4.4.10 Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers

Applications for these pitches are through the same route as applicants for Housing Register. A landlord reference is required. If it is their first pitch application and they have no reference, they will need to provide a guarantor, usually an existing pitch holder with a good record. They are assessed and awarded a priority need band. There may be an additional assessment of any site-specific factors. The assessments will be in accordance with Gypsy and Traveller Site Management Good Practice Guide (Published by Communities and Local Government July 2009) and will include consideration of the balance and mix in the community, therefore prioritising the long-term cohesion of the site.

Specific Considerations:

- a) Extra support with the process is offered to applicants where it is needed.
- b) The pitches are not advertised on the website and these are covered as direct lets. **See Part 5**
- c) A degree of limited discretion in allocating pitches is required and should not be automatically bound to the household with the highest priority. The Councils will have the discretion to offer pitches other than the one applied for to prevent the household residing on an unauthorised encampment.
- d) Sites are often occupied by extended family groups and this can help to ensure good community relations on the site. In some exceptional circumstances the Councils may, in consultation with the site manager, want to take account of factors which a pitch allocation may have in adversely affecting the suitability of the site as a social unit.
- e) If as a result of an assessment of their application, the landlord has good reason to be concerned about the risk of conflict with existing residents, they should take up this issue with the applicant, and carry out a risk assessment.

Refusal to allocate a pitch must be based on the merits of the application, without undue influence from those already on a site.

- f) The landlord will confirm the landlord reference with the applicant.
- g) The landlord reserves the right to withdraw any offer which may have been granted on the basis of incorrect information.

4.4.11 Housing Priority Bands

Each application will be assessed to determine the level of housing need of the household and placed into one of four bands:

Band	Priority Need
Band 1 Urgent	People with an urgent medical need inc. hospital discharge
	People with an urgent need for an adapted property
	If your home has been destroyed by a disaster
	Homeless and fleeing/threat of violence (with or without local connection)
	s193 Duty and in TA/s189 Relief Duty
	Witness Protection
	Threatened with Homelessness (next 12 weeks)
	High Medical Need
	High Welfare
Band 2	Current tenant in an adapted property they no longer need
	Current tenant willing to take a smaller property
	Disrepair/Unsafe Home/lacking essential amenities
	Overcrowded by 2 or more bedrooms (affordability test)
	Someone needing an adapted property
	Care Leavers
	Threatened with Homelessness (next 12 weeks)(no priority need)
	Medium Medical Need
	Medium Welfare Need
Band 3	Lack of Amenities
	Overcrowded by 1 or more bedrooms
	Tenant under-occupying by 1 or more bedroom (affordability test)
	Move On

	Intentionally Homeless
	Have a need to move to the Broadland or South Norfolk area where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.
	s193 Duty (not ready to move)
	TA (assessment in progress)
Band 4	Meet eligibility/qualification
	No Housing Need

Band Considerations:

Cumulative Need:

We do not operate a banded system with cumulative need. If you have more than one priority need (reasonable preference allocation). We will use your highest priority to place you in the correct band.

Time Waited:

You will be placed in the priority band in effective band date order. Those who waited the longest will be the highest in the list. **See 4.4.13** to see how we determine your effective band date.

Suspension of Bidding:

We do not operate a lower band for reduced preference. Instead we manage this within the administration of the housing register and bidding process. In this way we promote good tenant behaviour and sustainable tenancies. **See 4.4.3**

Adequately Housed:

You will be in band 4. If you are adequately housed. You will still get the benefit of any S.106 PROPERTIES, AND ANY TRANSFERS THAT BECOME AVAILABLE.

4.4.12 Determination of Effective Band Date

In order to determine your effective band date, and provided there is no delay in providing the information required within the time stipulated, we use the following:

- ❖ Your first assessment, we will use the date you submitted your application
- ❖ If you have a change of circumstances and your priority need changes and you go up a band, we will use the date your new priority was awarded.
- ❖ If you have a change of circumstances and your priority need changes and you go down a band, we will use the same effective band date you had in your original band.
- ❖ An assessment and award of priority cannot take place without the supporting evidence. If you fail to provide this at the point of submission or the date you advised us of the change of circumstances, we will use the assessment date as the effective band date.
- ❖ If you are statutory homeless, the effective band date will be the date we accepted a statutory duty under the homeless legislation.

- ❖ In the unlikely event more than one applicant bids for the same property and they have the same effective band date, we will consider the type of priority awarded and the urgency of the priority to determine who will be allocated the property.

4.4.13 Household Type and Property Size Allowed

The legislation states in order to allocate a property we must ensure all of the following:

- The size of the property must be suitable for the household need
- Landlords must make best use of their stock
- The property must be affordable for the applicant it is allocated to
- It should be possible for the applicant to sustain their tenancy if the property is allocated
- The household's circumstances must be fully considered
- The property is allocated in accordance with the Broadland and South Norfolk Allocation Scheme.

The table below shows how we allocate property size. For further clarification and definition of the room and space standards. **See Appendix 2: Allocation by Bedsize**

Household Type	Property Size	Conditions
Single Person	Any 1 bed property or 2 bed above ground Floor	2 beds will only be allocated where a property is deemed hard to let. It is allocated subject to affordability and sustainability.
Couple	Any 1 bed property or 2 bed above ground Floor	2 beds will only be allocated where a property is deemed hard to let. It is allocated subject to affordability and sustainability.
Carer	A bedroom will be allocated if the carer needs to reside in the property and is not already part of the permanent household	Subject to an agreed medical need for a Carer. Evidence of Housing Benefit and/or Disability Living Allowance will need to be at enhanced levels. Young carers treated as if they are 16+
Medical	A bedroom will be allocated if recommended as part of the medical need	Subject to an agreed medical need where the extra room may be needed to accommodate large equipment or there are serious mobility issues.
Child Residency	A bedroom will be allocated for a child resides as part of the household 4 nights per week or more and we have evidence they are part of the applicants household	Subject to evidence such as Child Benefit and/or Custody Order. We will allow the same children on more than one application.
Unborn Child	Provision will be made for an unborn child provided we have evidence	Subject to evidence of a MATB1 issued by NHS confirming the pregnancy. The unborn child will be treated as same sex. The overcrowding priority will not be awarded until the child is born

		and a birth certificate has been provided. The applicant will be able to bid without the overcrowding award. The date of birth will be used to determine the effective band date.
16+	Own Bedroom	The child is deemed in need of their own personal space.
Sex Separation	Children of the opposite sex will only be allocated their own bedroom when they are 10 years or older	This reflects the current benefits position.
Students	Living away from home will not be treated as part of the main household	Where a household normally includes a family member who currently lives away from home studying at college or university that family member may be considered part of the household for the duration of the initial course. This will usually be up to 3 years. Evidence of the end date of the course must be provided and a reassessment will be made following the end of the course. Post graduate study may not be covered by the above criteria. This ties in with Housing Benefit.
Under Occupation	Allow under occupation by 1 bedroom	This will only apply where a property is deemed hard to let and subject to affordability and sustainability.
Ground Floor	Ground floor units will be prioritised for medical need where possible but ultimately, we will make best use of stock.	We will advertise clearly to show how we allocate ground floor properties. We will seek to be fair to applicants and partner landlords. Some partner landlords may restrict upper floors when a household has children for safety reasons, and this will show in the advert.
Adapted	Adapted units will be prioritised for medical need applicants who require the specific adaptations in the property.	OT assessments will be used to assess the requirements of the household.

4.5 Notification



Once an application has been assessed the applicant will be notified in writing of the following:

- ❖ The band in which they have been assessed
- ❖ The size and type of property they qualify for
- ❖ How to access the Scheme Guide in order to bid for properties
- ❖ Their Housing Register number
- ❖ Their bidding reference number
- ❖ Their right of review of their band and property size/type eligibility
- ❖ Qualification under reduced preference where relevant, the conditions imposed and the reassessment process.

4.6 Cancellation of Applications

Applications will be cancelled for one or more of the following reasons:

- a) The applicant requests cancellation
- b) The applicant's circumstances change, and they are no longer eligible or no longer qualify
- c) The applicant has not responded to a review of their application within the 28 days requested.
- d) The applicant is found to have made a false or deliberately misleading statement, or to have withheld information in connection with their application.
- e) The applicant has not placed a bid for 12 months
- f) The applicant has not responded to contact from the Council within the 28 days requested.
- g) The applicant has failed to provide the evidence required to assess their application.
- h) If cancelled, the applicant will need to review and update their accommodation option plan. A review via the market place will take place to enable this.

4.7 Change in circumstances

A change in circumstances must be notified to the Council immediately together with any supporting evidence. Failure to do this could result in an applicant not being considered for a property. This is because priority is based on the applicant's current situation. A change in circumstances will mean that an application has to be reassessed.

4.8 Deliberate or worsening circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has knowingly and deliberately made their housing situation worse in order to gain a higher priority on the register, the assessment of their priority need will be based on the circumstances before their situation changed through their actions to deliberately worsen their circumstances.

Some of the examples are listed below:

- Applicants who have allowed family members or others to move into their property, who previously had suitable accommodation or the financial means to secure their own accommodation, and this has resulted in the property being overcrowded.
- Applicants who have moved from previously suitable or more suitable accommodation which it was reasonable for them to continue to occupy, into a less suitable property.
- Homeowners who have transferred their property to another family member within the last 5 years from the date they make their application to the Register.

- Applicants who have given up affordable and suitable private rented accommodation which they are able to maintain, to move in with other relatives or friends, creating a situation of overcrowding and/or sharing of bathroom/kitchen and/or a split household.
- Requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit.

5.1 The Allocation Process

The Key Stages



Property Identification: Notification by the agent or partner landlord of a property that is available to let

Expression of Interest: The applicant either bidding or agreeing to view a direct offer

Letting: Offer, viewing, resulting the offer and lettings types

Tenancy Sustainment: Sign up and continued supervision of new tenancies with support

5.1.1 Blended Allocations

The Broadland and South Norfolk Allocation Scheme combines allocations by direct lets and choice-based lettings as a blended system. The majority of properties are advertised through the choice-based lettings system. Applicants have their own accounts and access the system via online. They are able to bid for a property. The list of bidders are shortlisted and the highest priority applicants is usually put through to the partner landlord who owns the property.

However, there are times when the properties are not advertised, instead they are matched direct to an applicant and the applicant is nominated to the partner landlord who owns the property. These are called direct lets and they are used to manage the most urgent or specialised cases.

Matching and Shortlisting will prioritise active cases. Where this is exhausted the inactive list will be used and selection is subject to:

- Satisfactory progress during a stabilisation period
- Tenancy failure is low risk
- Agreement by the partner landlord.

5.1.2 Predicting Properties

The Councils will use information provided by the Allocation Scheme to predict the number, type and location of properties due for letting. This is undertaken on a strategic and operational level in order to meet the needs of the applicants the Scheme is designed to house.

Annual Lettings Plan:

Each year an annual lettings plan will be produced based on consultation with the Housing Enablement Team who are responsible for overseeing all the properties being built in the area. They will have expected handover

Supply and Demand Modelling:

dates which will be affirmed by the partner landlord who is building the properties. Based on averages in previous years it is also possible to predict how many properties already in management with the partner landlords will be expected to become empty (void). The plan is usually broken down into quarters and by partner landlord and then further as new build and relets. It should also be possible to assess whether they are specialist units such as Housing with Care, sheltered, adapted, or general use (general needs). Partner landlords will make properties available under agreement. In order to plan longer term, a supply and demand model is used to determine the types, size, numbers and locations where properties need to be developed. This is known as the supply. The demand is the number of applicants on the housing register and the type, size and location of the properties they need. The Housing and Benefits service will work with the Housing Enablement Team and the partner landlords to undertake this exercise. Ideally the model should aim to predict 3-5 years and longer if possible. The predictions are used by the housing developers to undertake scheme appraisals in the required areas.

5.2 Property Identification



When a partner landlord has a property that is available to let, they notify the Councils. Broadland and South Norfolk will monitor the number of properties they receive from each partner landlord and then determine whether they need to match it to an urgent applicant as a direct let or advertise it as a choice based letting. Each month end and quarter end, the totals will be reconciled against the predicted properties in the annual lettings plan and against the targets set for direct lets and choice-based lettings. There may be other targets which will also need to be factored into the allocation.

Therefore, the allocation of a property takes place on two levels:

- a) At letting type
- b) At applicant level

5.2.1 Direct Lets

Broadland and South Norfolk will make a direct let in the following situations:

- a) Where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency or to provide temporary accommodation for a homeless family.

- b) Where an allocation is required to ensure protection of the public, for example, following a decision made by a Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel meeting or to fulfil agreements made with offender management services, or where a customer has been referred as part of the witness protection scheme. These are usually referred to as sensitive lets. **See 5.2.8**
- c) Where a customer's home is being repaired and they need to be moved from the property on a temporary or permanent basis.
- d) Where the applicant has enjoyed an established occupancy of the property, has a reasonable expectation of a property of that type and would be a suitable tenant (e.g. former tenants of the property, non-secure or introductory tenants or carers or family members with no succession rights). A tenancy reference will be obtained to verify the decision.
- e) Homeless and in TA under s189B(2) relief duty or main duty – use of TA
- f) Urgent rehousing requirement: property, health, personal safety, discharge of homelessness duty the allocations needs to be undertaken quickly.
- g) Duty to house under s39 land compensation act 1973.
- h) Failure to bid.
- i) The applicant has exceeded the number of offers they are allowed, and their refusal has been deemed unreasonable.
- j) Adapted units.
- k) Vulnerable applicants where they would find bidding problematic.
- l) Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers.

If a direct let is needed for other reasons it requires the approval of the Allocation Scheme Panel will make the decision. **See Appendix 3: Terms of Reference for the Allocation Scheme Panel.**

5.2.2 Choice Based Lettings

The main method of allocation is via choice-based lettings and the majority of properties are advertised in order for applicants to be able to choose. There will be specific restrictions:

- Applicants can only bid for the property type and size they are allowed. **See 4.4.14**
- 80% of the properties advertised will be open for bidding by all applicants.
- 20% of the properties advertised will be targeted for social landlord tenant transfers only. **This will need to be reviewed if a CHR is introduced.**
- Targeted adverts for adapted units, those restricted under a local letting plan, rural letting scheme or s106 agreement.
- Applicants will be limited to 3 offers.
- Ensuring a balance between homeless applicants and other priority need with local demand in Band 1.

5.2.3 Advertising the Property

Properties identified for choice-based lettings are advertised online on the Allocation Scheme System for a period of 7 days from Wednesday to Thursday. This is called an advert cycle. The 7th day is the closing date.

Alternative housing options such as private rented, shared ownership properties and other solutions do not have an advert cycle. They remain on the website at all times.

5.2.4 Rent Regimes

This should be clear in the advert and/or offer letter where it is a direct let. There may be 3 types:

Social Rented: Properties built before the affordable rent programme; the rent is calculated as a formula rent under the rent standard. Tenure types will be Starter and Assured tenancies.

Affordable Rented: Properties built under the affordable rent programme; the rent can be up to 80% of the local market rent value. Tenure types will be Starter and Affordable Assured with some of them being fixed term tenancies of between 3 and 5 years. This is determined by the partner landlord's tenancy policy.

Fair Rented: These are generally for tenancies issued prior to 1989 or stock transfer properties. They only apply to social landlord transfers currently on a secure or preserved secure tenancy. The rent is registered every 2 years with the Rent Officer Service. Tenants on secure tenancies may not be able to transfer their tenancy to an Affordable Rented property unless the advert specifically states you can. If you bid for it and accept it, you will be expected to surrender your secure tenancy and sign up on an affordable assured tenancy. This will be discussed with you at the time and you may wish to seek independent advice.

5.2.5 Property Descriptions

The advert or direct offer letter should contain a clear description of the property.

- a) Photographs
- b) Type (house, flat)
- c) Tenure (social rented, private rented, shared ownership)
- d) Number and max occupancy of bedrooms
- e) Location
- f) Level of accessibility for those with mobility issues/wheelchair users
- g) Services provided (sheltered housing scheme manager, caretaker)
- h) Heating type
- i) Age restrictions
- j) Whether pets are allowed
- k) Availability of outside space (garden etc.) and parking
- l) Rent and service charges (split weekly/monthly) and rent regime. **See 5.2.4**
- m) Special information (location of bus routes/ other amenities)
- n) Property size category (known as the PPGC code)
- o) Targeted advert for transfers only or if a local letting provision only
- p) Permission to under occupy.

5.2.6 Local Letting Provision

Sometimes local lettings agreements are agreed with Broadland and South Norfolk either for a new development or existing properties. The table below outlines the types of local letting provision operating within this Allocation Scheme. These are monitored annually and measured for their impact on the main Allocation Scheme.

Local Letting Provision	Description
Local Letting Policies	Local Lettings Policies Section 167(2E) of the 1996 Housing Act enables housing authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories. Criteria in addition to the Allocation Scheme is considered when an allocation is made to a particular estate or community. They are used to achieve a wide variety of housing management and other housing policy objectives, and are usually developed where there is a wish to alter the balance of the community or ensure a balanced community at the stage where a new development is let. The partner landlord will gain approval from their own Board and the Allocation Scheme Panel. The planning department of the Councils will also be involved where the policy is being applied to a new development. The reason for its proposed introduction must be set out as follows: ▪ the particular issue that is affecting the community that requires the Local Lettings Policy ▪ the area it would cover including the number and types of properties ▪ how long the policy will be in place ▪ what they hope to achieve by its introduction ▪ what the policy contains ▪ the impact on the main Allocation Scheme
Rural Lettings Schemes	In areas which are officially defined as either villages or rural parish the rural lettings scheme may apply. The allocation will be made to the applicant with the highest priority, where there is equal priority, the allocation will be given to the applicant that demonstrates the greatest connection to the community which is assessed by: ▪ how long the applicant has resided in the community ▪ how long the applicant has been employment in the community ▪ how long the applicant has been involved in voluntary work within the community
Section 106 Agreements	Section 106 Agreement Letting Scheme Properties developed on sites that incorporate a Section 1064 agreement determining the allocation of housing on that site will be let in accordance with the terms of the agreement. Such agreements

	have been developed to ensure that secure mechanisms are in place to restrict the occupancy of the dwelling both on first occupation and in perpetuity to those who have a local community need for an affordable dwelling. The partner landlord will gain approval from their own Board, the Councils planning department and the Allocation Scheme Panel.
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5.2.7 Hard to Lets

Some properties are harder to let because they are less attractive to applicants who will either refuse them or fail to bid for them. This could be a number of reasons including, location, floor level, age, condition. Broadland and South Norfolk will consult with the landlord and if it is deemed hard to let, then it may be made available to a wider pool of people on the Housing Register. This would include households that can afford to under occupy by one bedroom. If after 2 advert cycles this is still not let, it may be offered to another Local Authority with permission from the partner landlord. Broadland and South Norfolk must ensure that it has been let to eligible applicants in priority need.

5.2.8 Sensitive Lets

Sensitive lets are rare and likely to be due to two main reasons:

1. Where we have to be careful with the applicant or a member of their household due a traumatic incident. We need to consider the location of the property or even the type of the property to ensure that the accommodation would not expose them to undue stress. In these cases, we will undertake a sensitive let as a direct offer.
2. Where the partner landlord informs us that a property has a management history which requires the careful selection of the next tenant to ensure harmony in the area where it is located. In these cases, we may have a targeted advert for transfers only as a choice-based letting or we will make a direct offer.

In both cases the priority order and time waited will be preserved. We will however be using additional selection criteria to manage the letting sensitively. Both types of cases must be presented to Allocation Scheme Panel for approval. If it is the applicant and their identity must be protected then, only the case specifics will be heard by the Panel.

5.2.9 Housing with Support or Extra Care

Some accommodation is designed specifically for older people or people who need a specific type of care or support. There is a charge in addition to the rent. The older people schemes are designed for those with a minimum age of 55 or 60. They may also have extra care provision. If the property is advertised as choice-based letting, the advert will be clear who can apply. Some schemes are not advertised and are subject to a direct let.

In exceptional circumstances, younger people may be considered for older people schemes, if they require support, and other types of accommodation are not suitable. This would be achieved through a direct let.

In both instances, the partner landlord will undertake a need and risk assessment of the applicant to ensure they meet the eligibility for the scheme.

5.3 Expressions of Interest



5.3.1 Bidding for Properties

Once an applicant has been assessed and provided there are no restrictions such as a reduced preference or they are not ready to move, they will be made active to bid and issued a choice based lettings scheme guide to help them use the system. This enables them to apply for an advertised property which meets the size and type they are permitted. They can bid for up to two properties a week, but they must do so before the closing date to be considered. The expression of interest is by bidding.

Bidding can be undertaken by:

- Phone
- Text
- Website

5.3.2 Assisted Bidding and Auto Bidding

Where someone is vulnerable or unable to bid for themselves and has no one to do it for them, we will allow you to register for assisted bidding. You provide us with your choices, and we do it for you. They placed using a function we call auto bidding. If you wish to change your choices, you need to contact us. We may need to reassess your application if your new choices do not match with your current priority need. The auto bids are like advance expressions of interest. You will need to be sure of choices so that the auto bidding system can bid for the type of home you are willing to accept.

5.3.3 Grouped Bids

In certain circumstances, properties that are advertised may be grouped into one single advertisement. This will include advertisements for new build properties and those properties made available following regeneration schemes, where properties will be grouped by property type and size. Schemes under 5 units will not be subjected to grouped bids. Where there are grouped advertisements, applicants who place one bid will be considered for all properties within the group.

5.3.4 Retrospective Bids

A retrospective bid request is a bid placed once the bidding cycle is closed. It is usually a request from an applicant, or their authorised representative, to include a new bid or withdraw an existing bid and replace it with another. It will only be considered if there was period during the bidding cycle where the bidding facility was unavailable for 30 minutes or more and the Housing and Benefits Service can confirm this. The Council places alerts on the system when the system is down and invites retrospective bids where necessary. If allowed, a retrospective bid can only

be placed by the Councils no later the close of business on the day after the closing date. By placing such a bid, the applicant is not guaranteed an offer. The applicant will need to contact the service by phone or come in person. The Councils will alert the partner landlord who owns the property, the shortlist will be suspended whilst this bid is processed and then the shortlist will be run again.

5.3.5 Shortlisting

When a closing date is reached for a choice based letting, the applicants who bid for the property will be shortlisted within 3 working days.

The shortlist will use the following parameters to prioritise:

- Broadland or South Norfolk local connection **See 3.2**
- Local letting provision **See 5.2.6**
- Targeted advert criteria **See 5.2.5**
- Reduced preference applicants who are inactive to bid should not appear on the list. **See 4.4.3**
- Bedsize and property type allowed **See 4.4.14**
- Adapted unit.

The successful applicant will be verified if they are to be selected for the property and it has not been done within the last month or the applicant shows an outstanding issue. The property must be deemed suitable to the needs of the applicant and there must be agreement by the partner landlord.

If an applicant has to be bypassed because there are circumstances which mean they do not suit the property or cannot be selected, a bypass reason must be put in the system. This is mandatory and ensures the decisions are fair and transparent. This will be preserved on the applicants offer history.

Typical bypass reasons are:

- Bid was placed before a change of circumstance was requested
- Failed tenancy reference – arrears
- Failed tenancy reference – ASB
- Failed tenancy reference – other
- Unable to afford
- Matching incorrect – review application
- Unable to contact using 2 different methods and making 3 attempts

If a shortlist is exhausted and it is not possible to select an applicant, the list may be run again to check there are no further applicants who have been missed.

Where it has not been possible to select an applicant, a matching exercise will be undertaken on applicants who are inactive to bid. If one of them matches, their stabilisation will be reviewed, and risk assessed. If the Councils feel they could now sustain their tenancy and the partner landlord agrees; then they will be selected for a direct offer subject to conditions around tenancy sustainment.

5.3.6 Direct Offer

Where a property or an applicant has been identified for a direct offer **See 5.2.1** a matching exercise will be undertaken to ensure the property is suitable for the applicant. It uses similar criteria to the shortlisting process undertaken for choice-based lettings. Officers will undertake the matching exercise in the Housing Register.

Once matched a list is generated. Bypass reasons are mandatory on a match list in the same way as they are for a shortlist. The successful applicant will be discussed with the partner landlord and following their agreement, an offer will be made. The expression of interest is by the applicant responding favourably to the offer.

5.4 Letting



5.4.1 Offer of Accommodation

All applicants selected for a property will receive a formal offer letter which serves two purposes:

- preserves the offer history whether they accept or refuse the property
- meets legal compliance

Broadland and South Norfolk will: Formally notify the applicant they have been selected for a property either by shortlisting as a choice based letting or matching as a direct let. This will usually be accompanied with direct contact by email or phone. It should not completely replace it.

Partner Landlord will: Formally offer the applicant the property; even if this has to be done retrospectively because of the quick turnaround of voids.

All formal contact around selection and offer is subject to the following:

- Applicants will usually be contacted within 3 working days of the closing date.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to keep the Councils of current contact details.
- Applicants have up to two working days to respond.
- If they fail to contact or to express an interest if they do, the Councils will go to the next applicant on the shortlist.
- Partner landlords will have their lettings procedures which will usually include an affordability check, a suitability assessment and a needs and risk assessment if they are providing specialist housing. Pitches for gypsies and travellers may be subject to further assessments. **See 4.4.11**
- The landlord has the final decision on whether they will accept the applicant for the property, however they are required to contact the Councils before rejecting them to see if there are more measures that can be put in place to make the offer more suitable.
- Selection and an offer may be withdrawn if it is found that the information supplied by the applicant was either false or incorrect or they have had a change in circumstances.

- h) All offers are subject to viewing.
- i) Once the formal offer is made the status of the applicant on the Housing Register will show as 'Under Offer'.

5.4.2 Limited Offers

Broadland and South Norfolk have a limited offer policy:

- homeless single offer; penalty discharge of duty and no reapplication unless circumstances change
- management transfers unlimited; no penalty required
- all other 3 offers only; penalty suspension for 6 months which could have the added requirement of a reapplication and new application date. This drops them down the time waited queue.
- An offer is deemed to be reasonable if matches area, bedroom allocation, floor level, property type for household, criteria for medical award, takes into account young children, and is an average standard or repair or more. Where an offer is agreed as not reasonable it will be withdrawn and will not count as one of the limited offers.

5.4.3 Viewings

There is no obligation on the applicant to take a property unseen. The partner landlord will contact the applicant to arrange a viewing. They will send an Officer to attend the viewing with the applicant. Following the viewing the applicant will be expected to either accept or refuse the property. If they refuse, they will be referred back to the Council and another applicant known as a nomination will be requested. If the partner landlord pulled the shortlist themselves, they will go to the next suitable applicant on the shortlist and repeat the offer process until the property is accepted. If it proves hard to let. **See 5.2.7**

There are three types of viewing:

Single Viewing:

One applicant views the property at any one time. This will be used primarily for sensitive lets.

Multiple Viewing:

More than one applicant will view at the same time. All the applicants will be verified. Only the top applicant is offered formally. The remainder are given viewing letters only. If the top one refuses, the next one is formally offered etc. Any who failed to get a formal offer will be withdrawn. There are no penalties for having it withdrawn in this situation.

Accompanied Viewing:

This may be single or multiple. The applicant is accompanied by either an advocate, a Support Worker, a Homeless Officer or an Occupational Therapist. It is usually offered where the applicant is likely to need extra assistance around the viewing in respect of vulnerability, mobility need, and navigation around their rights under the homeless duty.

5.4.4 Resulting the Offer

Recording the outcome of the viewing/offer is called resulting the offer. It is mandatory in order to preserve the offer history and property history. It also serves to allow management of the Councils and partner landlord partnership arrangement.

The partner landlord will obtain a formal record of the outcome. The table below outlines each type of result and the ensuing action.

Outcome	Action Required	Applicant Status
Withdrawn - multiple viewing	▪ No penalty ▪ Automatic system function	▪ Offer history preserved
Withdrawn - other	▪ Partner landlord refuses applicant ▪ Councils withdraw ▪ Housing register review initiated. See 6.3.1	▪ Offer history preserved ▪ Housing Register review with review period ▪ May require an investigation. ▪ Under review and inactive to bid allow a review and/or investigation to take place

Accepted	▪ Acceptance recorded ▪ Provisional tenancy start dated recorded ▪ Monitored for sign up	▪ Offer history preserved ▪ Status changes to accepted ▪ Inactive to bid
Refused – homeless	▪ Refusal recorded ▪ Limited Offer maintenance See 5.4.2 ▪ Statutory review initiated See 6.3.2	▪ Offer history preserved ▪ Statutory review with a review period ▪ Under statutory review and inactive to bid ▪ The review will pick up changes in circumstances and penalties as a result of a single offer.
Refused – other	▪ Refusal recorded ▪ Limited Offer maintenance See 5.4.2 ▪ Exceed limited offer penalty evoked ▪ Change of circumstances.	▪ Offer history preserved ▪ Change of circumstance prompts a Housing Register review with review period ▪ Number of offers remaining ▪ Penalty action if limited offers exceeded

5.4.5 Publicising Lettings

Our performance around lettings is publicised:

- **Annually;**
 - **Quarterly;**
 - **Weekly;**
- will show:

on the property page of the choice-based lettings system we

- ❖ Areas where properties were let
- ❖ Number of bids each property had
- ❖ Band and effective band date of the successful applicant came from for each property
- ❖ No personal information will be disclosed

5.5 Tenancy Sustainment



Our Accommodation Pathway Model ensures that anyone who approaches us for housing, or a housing related matter will be sent through the key stages of:

- Marketplace
- Prevention
- Stabilisation
- Resolution

The Allocation Scheme is designed to sort our longer-term solutions for people, and this means making it possible for them to stay in the home of their choice and one that meets their need. We therefore ensure that at each of the key stages of the model we will do everything practically possible to promote tenancy sustainment.

The table below describes the tenancy sustainment measures that are/could be adopted in order to achieve tenancy sustainment.

Marketplace	▪ Accommodation Option Plan is designed for the household ▪ Affordability and household size will be considered ▪ Specific health needs will be considered ▪ Age will be considered ▪ Support and care needs will be considered ▪ Previous tenant history will be considered ▪ Professional reports will be considered
Prevention	▪ Each case presenting in high priority need will be assessed to see if there is prevention solution with the provider of their existing home ▪ Support and care assessment will be undertaken to see if more or different is needed ▪ Living skills will be promoted to allow tenancy management learning ▪ Families will be prioritised alongside single people if they are reaching crisis point ▪ Referring agents will be required to undertake a hands-on approach ▪ Safe Surrender Agreements put in place before a failing tenancy is surrendered. See 3.6

Stabilisation	▪ Discharge of duty will only take place if the applicant is completely unwilling to engage in the previous key stages of the model ▪ All temporary solutions will be quantified and qualified in order to set a tenancy sustainment standard and promote learning ▪ People who are not ready to live independently will undertake a period of stabilisation to see if this will remedy the situation. They will not be able to bid for social housing during this time. ▪ Support and skills will be introduced to promote learning and redressing of any negative tenancy behaviour ▪ Reduced preference cases will be subject to a mandatory period of stabilisation to ensure they address the behaviour which resulted in the assignment of preference assignment. They will be unable to bid for social housing and may not qualify for other housing options either as private landlords will have similar requirements to partner landlords. ▪ The existence of a Safe Surrender Agreements prior to tenancy failure, shows the applicant is prepared to take responsibility and negotiate stability prior to surrendering the tenancy. It allows the Councils to assess their application with this in mind and will likely allow them to qualify without the need of reduced preference. This in turn enables the current priority need, to be addressed much earlier and factored into the Accommodations Options Plan. See 3.6
Resolution	▪ All types of housing solutions will be considered with recourse to tenancy sustainment implications ▪ Partner landlord and other housing providers in partnership with the Broadland and South Norfolk will be required to work with the Councils to provide a hand holding period for applicants who have support and care identified and require longer to settle in. During this time, their application will remain open but suspended subject to a satisfactory assessment with input from the applicant themselves and any agencies involved. If the assessment is successful and they are managing their tenancy effectively, their application will be closed retrospectively. The tenancy start date will be used as the closure date to ensure performance is not penalised. ▪ Applicants being referred to the rent deposit schemes, and other such private housing options may experience a longer period of stabilisation as private landlords are less likely to be partners. ▪ The partner landlords usually have a tenancy support or sustainment service which will support the new tenancy and this should be flagged as a requirement for all applicants who have undergone a mandatory stabilisation period and for those who are already identified with support and care provision. ▪ Both Councils and the partner landlords will have the final decision in whether to accept a level of risk in relation to tenancy sustainment with an applicant. ▪ The Councils and the partner landlords will seek to provide a guarantee where practically possible with applicants which meet the threshold of high risk.

6.1 Decisions

The administration of the Allocation Scheme requires Broadland and South Norfolk to make key decisions in relation to an application to join the Housing Register.

- a) The decision that confirms or denies your eligibility to join. **See Part 3**
- b) The decision that confirms or denies your qualification. **See Part 4**
- c) The decision that awards your priority housing need. **See Part 4**
- d) The decision to reassess your application as reduced preference. **See Part 3**
- e) The decision to reassess your priority housing need following a change of circumstance. **See Part 4**
- f) The decision to cancel your application. **See Part 4**
- g) The decision to deny your review. **See Part 6**
- h) The decision that deems your refusal of a property as unreasonable. **See part 5**
- i) The decisions to refuse a duty under the homeless legislation. **See Part 4**

If you disagree with a decision in relation to your application, you have the right to request a review. In order to ensure you are heard by the correct officer, it is important to understand the following:

- ❖ If you provide evidence that you did not provide for your assessment. ***This is a change in circumstance. See 4.7***
- ❖ If you think we failed to follow our policy or stated process, or you simply feel we could have handled your application better. ***This is a complaint. See 6.2***
- ❖ If you disagree with a homeless decision under Part 7 of the legislation. ***This is a statutory right of review.***
- ❖ If you disagree with your priority award under Part 6 of the legislation. ***This is a statutory right of review.***
- ❖ If you have completed a period of stabilisation on reduced preference. ***This is a housing register review.***
- ❖ If you take legal action and the judge agrees with you and directs the Councils accordingly. ***This is a judicial review***
- ❖ If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of your right of review. ***You may appeal.***

6.2 Complaints

If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the management of their application, other than where a review can be made, they should follow the Council's published complaints procedure, available on the Council's website at **URL to be supplied** or on request.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the action the Council takes, they can send a written complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman who can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH
Tel: 0300 061 0614
Website: www.lgo.org.uk

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint against a partner landlord, they should contact:

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London
Tel: 0300 111 3000
E mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

6.3 Reviews

There are several types of reviews:

Housing Register Review	This review is initiated by the Councils in order to maintain applications on the housing register.
Statutory Right of Review	This is the right of review requested by the applicants because of a decision made in relation to their application.
Judicial Review	This a review undertaken by the Courts because something has come to light in a case where legal action has been taken.

6.3.1 Housing Register Review

Broadland and South Norfolk undertake the current Housing Register reviews:

Band 1 Reviews:	These applications will be reviewed every 4 weeks. This ties in with homeless prevention and relief duties. These are critical cases and should not retain the highest level of priority indefinitely as factors in relation their circumstances usually change rapidly.
All other bands:	These applications will be reviewed every 12 months. Good practice dictates these are undertaken annually in order to maintain the accuracy of the Housing Register.
Spontaneous Reviews:	These arise from time to time as a result of being alerted either by an allocation or because we have been contacted by another agency in relation to the application.
Reassessment Reviews:	Applicants on reduced preference who have completed a period of stabilisation in relation to their behaviour will have a review when it ends in order to assess their ability to sustain a tenancy. If they have failed, they may no longer qualify. If they succeed, they will qualify, and action will be taken to allow them to bid in the awarded band.

In order to undertake Housing Register reviews, we will:

- a) Set the correct review period on their initial assessment and all subsequent reassessments.
- b) Our Allocation Scheme will flag the application on its review date.
- c) This will be assigned to an Officer to review.
- d) They will write to the applicant or contact them by their preferred method to confirm if their circumstances remain the same.
- e) The applicant has 21 days to respond.
- f) If they fail to respond their application is cancelled.
- g) If they confirm the circumstances remain the same, the correct review period is reset.
- h) If their circumstances have changed, they will be asked to provide the evidence and their application is reassessed as a change in circumstances. Their new review period is set following the reassessment.
- i) With reassessment reviews for reduced preference applicants, a tenant reference will be obtained from their current landlord in relation to their behaviour during their stabilisation period. References from other agencies may also be obtained if the reason for their reduced preference is not tenancy related. If the reference is favourable, they will be made active to bid and this will be confirmed in writing. If they have failed their reduced preference will be removed and they will no longer qualify to be on the Housing Register and their application will be cancelled.

6.3.2 Statutory Right of Review

If you are not satisfied with a decision you may request a statutory right of review which would cover:

- The information we used to make the decision
- Whether the information was fully considered
- The reason for the decision
- The decision itself.

The following steps should take place for a Statutory Right of Review:

- a) The applicant or their representative should make the request within 21 days of the decision preferably in writing. The request should state why they disagree with the decision and if necessary, provide the necessary information they felt should have been considered.
- b) The request will be logged and acknowledged. It will state how long the review will take. The reviews will be carried out within 28 days of the request being received. If more time is required, an extension will be requested with the applicant.
- c) The review will be assigned to a senior Officer who did not make the original decision.
- d) If the information was not previously provided for the original decision, the review will be closed, and the applicant will be advised in writing that this now being treated as a change in circumstances.
- e) If the senior Officer feels that the applicant is correct or partially correct the outcome will be to uphold the review and the application will be reassessed.
- f) If the senior Officer feels the original decision is correct, they will deny the review and the original decision stands.
- g) The review outcomes will be recorded.
- h) The applicant will be advised in writing within 14 days of the decision.
- i) If the review needs more time, the applicant will be advised in writing that an extension is required.

- j) If the applicant is still not satisfied, they may appeal the decision. **See 6.4**

6.3.3 Judicial Review

Where an individual or organisation feels the Councils Allocation Scheme is unfairly prejudicial or their case has been dealt with a prejudicial manner, they may wish to take legal action. They should seek independent advice before doing so.

The case will be heard in Court before a judge. Both sides will appoint counsel. If the judge decides the case against the Council to be partly or fully substantiated, the Councils will be formally advised of the verdict and will need to respond through their counsel. The result may be an alteration to the Allocation Scheme and/or a reassessment of the applicant's case. These are termed judicial reviews.

6.4 Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the statutory right of review, you may request an appeal. Appeals are heard by the Allocations Scheme Panel. Both sides get the chance to represent their point of view before the panel. The terms of reference for the Allocations Scheme Panel are detailed in **Appendix 3**

The following steps should take place for an Appeal:

- a) The applicant or their representative should make the request within 14 days of the review decision preferably in writing. The request should state why they disagree with the decision and if necessary, provide the necessary information they felt should have been considered. They should indicate whether they want an oral hearing i.e. appear before the Panel or have it heard by written submission.
- b) The request will be logged and acknowledged.
- c) The appeal will be assigned to a senior Officer who did not make any of the original decisions. Their role is to collate the papers and service the Panel.
- d) If the information was not previously provided for the original decision, the appeal will be closed, and the applicant will be advised in writing that this now being treated as a change in circumstances.
- e) The Officer will convene the Panel within 14 days of receiving the request. In exceptional situations a longer period may be agreed.
- f) Only 3 representatives of the Allocation Scheme Panel are needed to hear an appeal.
- g) The Panel will meet. In attendance will be the senior Officer. If an oral hearing was requested the applicant or their representative and a Council Officer from the Housing and Benefits Service will also attend.
- h) The Panel may feel that the applicant is correct or partially correct the outcome will be to uphold the appeal and the application will be reassessed.
- i) The Panel may feel that the original decision is correct they will deny the appeal and the original decision stands.
- j) The appeal outcomes will be recorded.
- k) The applicant will be advised in writing within 14 days of the Panel decision.
- l) If the applicant is still not satisfied, they may contact the ombudsman. **See 6.2**. Alternatively, they may seek independent advice.

Appendix 1: Lettings outside of the Allocation Scheme

Lettings where an allocation takes place which a tenancy or licence is created that are outside of the Broadland and South Norfolk Allocation Scheme include:

- a) **Introductory or probationary tenancies:** Where an introductory/probationary tenancy becomes a secure or assured tenancy
- b) **Family Intervention Tenancies:** Introduced by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Family Intervention Tenancies are a form of residential tenancy without security of tenure. They may be offered by either a local housing authority or a registered provider to anyone who is a tenant of a secure (or assured) tenancy subject to a possession order on the grounds of anti-social Behaviour or domestic abuse or anyone who (if they had a secure or assured tenancy) could have had such a possession order made against them.
- c) **Succession:** Under S89 of the Housing Act 1985 (secure tenancies), under S133 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (introductory tenancies) or under S90 of the Housing Act 1985 (fixed term tenancies).
- d) **Non-Secure tenancies or temporary accommodation:** Any accommodation that is provided to meet an interim duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
- e) **Temporary decants:** Secure or Introductory tenants of a local authority or assured or assured shorthold tenants of Registered Providers who need to be moved temporarily whilst major work is carried out on their home.
- f) **Demoted tenancies:** Following a successful application for a demotion order under sections 14 and 15 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- g) **Mutual exchanges:** Between existing tenants under S92 of the Housing Act 1985 or under S158 of the Localism Act 2011.
- h) **Assignment:** To a person who would be qualified to succeed the tenant under S92 of the Housing Act 1985 (secure tenancies) or S134 Housing Act 1996 (introductory tenancies).
- i) **Conversion of an introductory tenancy:** to a secure tenancy under S125 Housing Act 1996).
- j) **Transfers of secure or introductory tenancies by a court order:** Made under certain provisions contained within matrimonial, family, children, and partnership legislation.
- k) **Land Compensation Act:** Allocation to a person entitled to rehousing under section 39 of the Land Compensation Act 1973.
- l) **Re - Purchased Homes:** Allocation to a person whose home is repurchased under sections 554 or 555 of the Housing Act 1985 (defective dwellings).
- m) **Transfers:** Within the same partner landlord (registered provider) stock, where the unit has not been made available to the Councils under current partner arrangements.

Appendix 2: Allocation by Bedsize

A bedroom is defined under the legislation and regulation as:

The Room Standard: The room standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a dwelling and the number of rooms available as sleeping accommodation is such that two persons of opposite sexes who are not living together as partners must sleep in the same room. Children under the age of ten excluded from this definition. A room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality either as a bedroom or as a living room.

The Space Standard: The space standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a dwelling is in excess of the permitted number, having regard to the number and floor area of the rooms of the dwelling available as sleeping accommodation. A child under the age of 1 year and a child aged 1 year or over but under ten shall be reckoned as one-half of a unit. A room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality either as a living room or as a bedroom.

No account shall be taken for the purposes of either standard of a room having a floor area of less than 50 square feet.

Floor Area of Room (square feet)	Number of Persons
110 or more	2
90 or more but less than 110	1.5
70 or more but less than 90	1
50 or more but less than 70	0.5

This table below provides guidance on the size of home that different types of household can bid for on the Broadland and South Norfolk Choice Based Lettings website. Further information may be provided by the partner landlord on the website when a property is advertised. Use the key below to explain the symbols.

Key	
	Number of bedrooms allowed for this household type
	Number of bedrooms allowed for this household type, subject to the ages and sex of the children: - Two children under the age of 10 are usually expected to share a bedroom - Two children of the same sex are usually expected to share a bedroom until they are 16 - Once a child is 16 a separate bedroom is allowed
D	The Councils will award the extra bedroom as a discretionary allowance, but it is subject to affordability and the ability to sustain their tenancy even if they are on benefits and subject to the bedroom tax.
*	Some partner landlords may only allow households with children to bid on houses

Household	Bedsit	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+bed
Single person			D	D		
2 Adults – Couple (inc.: same sex couples)			D	D		
2 Adults			 *	D		
1 Adult plus 1 Child				D		
1 Adult plus 2 Children						
1 Adult plus 3 Children						
1 Adult plus 4 or more Children						
Couple plus 1 Child				D		
Couple plus 2 Children						
Couple plus 3 Children						
Couple plus 4 or more Children						

Note: Households with access to children who do not live with them as part of the permanent household will only be able to bid for the property size they have been allocated as part of their priority award. **See 4.3.2 and 4.4.14**

Appendix 3: Terms of Reference: Allocation Scheme Panel

The role of the Broadland and South Norfolk Allocation Scheme Panel is to:

- Approve a direct let for an applicant does not meet the criteria list in 5.2.1
- Approve a sensitive let requested by either Council in relation to an application or a partner landlord in relation to a property. Simple cases will be heard by 3 panel members via an online platform and the decision ratified at the next full panel meeting. Complex cases or cases where the decision will have a negative impact on the household will be heard by the full panel.
- Consider and approval Local Lettings Policies partner landlords may wish to introduce.
- Hear appeals where an applicant has exercised their right to a review, remains dissatisfied with the outcome and wishes to take it further.

The panel members are:

Housing and Benefits Managers (joint administrator responsibility)

Senior Officer, Saffron Housing Trust

Senior Officer, Clarion (Circle Wherry) Housing

Senior Officer, Cotman Housing Association

Senior Officer, Orbit Housing Association

Senior Officer, Flagship Housing Group

Senior Officer, Broadland Housing Association

A Panel is quorate with 3 or more members

A chair will be elected for appeal panels.

The Panel will process requests and appeals by ensuring the following:

- a) A member may present a request from their own organisation, but they must excuse themselves from the decision as a clear conflict of interest.
- b) A member can be part of the panel to hear an appeal if they were involved in the original decision.
- c) Requests and appeals must be submitted to Broadland and South Norfolk by **email address to be supplied**
- d) Submissions must be in the format of the proforma which can be download from the website. **URL to be supplied**
- e) Panel members should have the papers for a request or appeal at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.
- f) The Panel must give due consideration and fair treatment in relation to:
 - The decision to have their appeal heard orally or by written submission
 - The appellant to be accompanied by one person to advocate on their behalf
 - Time for all parties to have sight of the papers in relation to a request or appeal
 - Necessary time for an investigation where necessary
 - Request for adjournments from the applicant if it is deemed reasonable
- g) Business discussed by the panel is confidential to panel members only. Named parties may request a copy of the decision. These will only be released at the discretion of the panel and with personal data other than the named parties redacted or removed.
- h) Approval requires a majority vote and the meeting to be quorate.
- i) The chair will be responsible for conveying the decision of a panel.
- j) The Panel decision is final.

THE VISION FOR A BEST IN CLASS HOUSING OFFER AND DRAFT ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Addendum to the vision for a best in class housing offer and draft allocation policy – following questions at informal briefings by Councillors it felt useful to provide a more detailed briefing to better inform the considerations of the committee

1 Background

- 1.1 Currently the system used by South Norfolk Council is Arbitas. This system has been in place for nine years in its current form. It has received during that time no significant upgrades beyond those required to allow for change in legislation. The current version of the system is 7.1 and the current market offer is 10. Whether or not a new policy is implemented, an upgrade of the system is required to allow continuous improvement of the service. To allow the development of a best in class housing model as described, investment in the system is a necessary requirement.
- 1.2 Significant market testing has been undertaken to allow officers to understand the best quality and produce of product available for the council to meet its intended operating model.
- 1.3 Work is already underway to upgrade the housing system. Costs are outlined below and show that implementation will yield a saving over a four-year period of time against current costs. Capital costs are allocated against existing capital project budgets for 20/21. It is likely capital costs can be absorbed into this budget, but councillors should note that spend but will place an additional budget pressure.

2. COSTS AND GOVERNANCE

- 2.1 The overall cost for the IT system to replace both South Norfolk and Broadland Council current systems is as follows
- 2.2 The initial cost will be £86,769 which will come out of capital expenditure. This works out as the following (55/45% split):
 - 1.1.1 South Norfolk Council £47,722
 - 1.1.2 Broadland District Council £39,046
- 2.3 This will be unbudgeted spend this financial year, members are asked to endorse this expense to enable longer term savings.
- 2.4 The annual support maintenance of the system will be £17,353. This works out as the following (55/45% split):
 - 2.4.1 South Norfolk Council £9,543
 - 2.4.2 Broadland District Council £7,808

Savings

- 2.5 By procuring a joint system between the two Councils to enable a best in class offer, we will be able to maximise the benefit of two Councils, one team. The table below compares the cost of the existing system compared to proposed system and the savings this will bring.

- 2.6 The purchase of the new system not only provides the support to the best in class approach but will also yield a saving over four years.

	Proposed system		Current system		Savings 4-year difference
	Cost	Rolling total	Current budgeted yearly costs	Rolling total	
Year 0	47,722	47,722	0	0	
Year 1	9,764	57,487	22,500	22,500	
Year 2	9,764	67,251	22,500	45,000	
Year 3	9,764	77,015	22,500	67,500	
Year 4	9,764	86,780	22,500	90,000	3,219

3. Conclusion

To note the costs and work as part of the main report to establish fit for purpose systems to enable a best in class housing model and new allocations policy.