

Notice of Meeting

Executive

Councillor Temperton (Chair),
Councillor Neil (Vice-Chair),
Councillors Bailey, Bidwell, Gillbe, Jefferies, Purnell and Wright

Tuesday 14 November 2023, 5.30 pm
Council Chamber - Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, RG12 1JD



Agenda

All councillors at this meeting have adopted the Mayor's Charter which fosters constructive and respectful debate.

Item	Description	Page
1.	Apologies	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
	<p>Members are asked to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary or Affected Interests in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p>Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.</p> <p>Any Member with an Affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.</p>	
3.	Minutes	3 - 22
	To consider and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 17 October 2023.	
4.	Urgent Items of Business	
	Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.	

Executive Key Decisions

The items listed below all relate to Key Executive decisions, unless stated otherwise below.

5.	New Waste Collection Truck	23 - 28
	A new waste collection vehicle is required for 2024/25 to be used across all waste collection services, particularly for garden waste which is at full	

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	capacity in many areas of the borough. Reporting: Damian James, Assistant Director: Contract Services	
6.	Housing Allocation Policy	29 - 112
	A new housing allocation policy is required to bring the policy in line with legislative changes and to address the current housing supply and demand challenges facing the borough. Government guidance states that all Housing authorities must have an allocation scheme for determining priorities, and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation; and they must allocate in accordance with that scheme. Reporting: Brian Daly, Head of Housing	
7.	Council Plan 2023-2027	113 - 148
	To present the Council Plan for 2023 to 2027 and to seek endorsement of the content prior to Council approval. Reporting: Katie Flint, Policy and Performance Lead	

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Hannah Harding, 01344 352308, hannah.harding@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, so that any special arrangements can be made.

Published: 6 November 2023

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS

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**EXECUTIVE
17 OCTOBER 2023
5.30 - 6.15 PM**

Present:

Councillors Temperton (Chair), Bidwell, Jefferies, Purnell and Wright

Present Virtually:

Councillors Bailey and Gillbe

Also Present:

Councillor Haffegge

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Neil

29. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive on 19 September 2023 together with the accompanying decision records be confirmed as a correct record.

31. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

Executive Decisions and Decision Records

The Executive considered the following items. The decisions are recorded in the decision sheets attached to these minutes and summarised below:

32. Overview and Scrutiny Review Reports- Enforcement Strategy and Child Criminal Exploitation

RESOLVED that

- i. the reports and their recommendations be noted.
- ii. on the report from the Education, Skills and Growth Panel, on Child criminal exploitation to note the recommendations and refer the report to the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning.
- iii. on the report from the Environment and Communities Panel, on Enforcement Strategy to note the recommendations and refer the report to the Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection.

33. Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2023 - 2033

RESOLVED that the draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 is agreed for public consultation as detailed in paragraphs 5.19-5.21 of the Executive Director of Place, Planning & Regeneration's report.

34. **Prevent Strategy 2023-26**

RESOLVED that the Executive approve and adopt the Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy 2024-27.

35. **Budget Update**

RESOLVED that

- i. the Council's predicted current year financial position summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Annex A is noted.
- ii. Endorses the actions agreed by the Corporate Management Team to help contain expenditure in the current year as set out under paragraph 5.4 are endorsed.
- iii. the Council's predicted medium-term financial prospects based on the assumptions detailed in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 and summarised in Table 2 is noted, which is subject to development of detailed draft budget proposals for 2024/25 and future years and to confirmation of the local government finance settlement in December.
- iv. the Executive will be asked at its November meeting to recommend to Full Council a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, that will provide funding from capital resources to secure additional capacity needed to drive transformation change to help secure a sustainable future financial position.
- v. the proposed use of the Council's funding to support delivery of affordable housing as set out in paragraphs 5.20 to 5.22 is agreed.

36. **Future of Downshire Homes Limited**

RESOLVED that

- i. to consolidate the ownership and management of the Council's housing portfolio by transferring (at market price) the Downshire Homes Ltd properties to the Council by March 2024 is agreed.
- ii. that the 4 properties currently occupied by tenants holding assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) are offered for sale to registered social landlords is agreed, noting that they will be included in the transfer of properties to the Council if sales cannot be secured in the timescale above.
- iii. to facilitate the consolidation in the most tax efficient way, supports the director(s) of DHL to progress a solvent liquidation of the company, through which its assets will transfer to the Council as shareholder and agrees to indemnify the directors, the company and the appointed liquidator against any potential claims arising from this act.
- iv. a key factor in the proposed approach will be the value of the existing loans from the Council to DHL compared with their original purchase price and funding from Council loans and that current expectations based on

indicative valuations of a sample of the properties are that the sums will broadly match;

- v. in the event that the value of the properties has increased materially at the time of the transfer compared with the original purchase price, its agreed that the Executive Director: Resources be authorised to use Council reserves to settle any resultant capital gains tax liability, as set out in paragraph 5.20.
- vi. the Legal Services Manager be authorised to conclude the appropriate legal agreements to enact the proposals above.

37. Bridgewell Supported Living

RESOLVED that:

- i. the progress to date on the design development is noted and the timetable in paragraph 5.27 is agreed.
- ii. the value improvement items to improve sustainability in paragraphs 5.11 is noted.
- iii. the revised strategic procurement plan for appointment of the provider of landlord services (Housing Association) and care services (Support Provider) for the provision of Bridgewell Supported Living scheme for adults with learning disabilities as laid out in paragraphs 5.16 to 5.20 are noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the additional cost of works for the new accommodation by £400k, changing the previous budget from £7.15m to £7.55m as detailed in paragraph 5.12.

38. 0-19 Public Health Nursing Contract

RESOLVED that

- i. Executive approve the award of the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service Contract to Provider A for a 5-year contract term with two 12-month optional extensions
- ii. Executive approves the budget (as provided in section 2.3 and detailed in section 9 of the confidential annex -) for the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service for the 7-year maximum contract period with a start date from 1st April 2024. This will be paid from the ring fenced Public Health Grant allocation to the Council to deliver the public health functions.

39. Occupational Health Provider Procurement

RESOLVED that

- i. the proposed re-procurement of an occupational health contract for the provision of occupational health service for staff who work for the council in any capacity, including schools is approved.
- ii. following the completion of the procurement process, the contract award be delegated to the Executive Director: Resources in consultation with the Executive Member, Finance and Business Change.

CHAIRMAN

Bracknell Forest Council Record of Decision

Work Programme Reference	I116970
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1. **TITLE:** Overview and Scrutiny Review Reports- Enforcement Strategy and Child Criminal Exploitation

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Delivery

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To present two Overview and Scrutiny Reports 'Enforcement Strategy' and 'Child Criminal Exploitation'.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** No

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the reports and their recommendations be noted.
- ii. on the report from the Education, Skills and Growth Panel, on Child criminal exploitation to note the recommendations and refer the report to the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning.
- iii. on the report from the Environment and Communities Panel, on Enforcement Strategy to note the recommendations and refer the report to the Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The presented scrutiny reviews were undertaken in the last administrative term but,weren't presented to the Executive, due to insufficient time in the municipal calendar.
- ii. However, these reports have now been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in their new term and the Commission has endorsed the reviews recommendations and asked for these to be presented to the Executive.
- iii. The comments from the relevant Officers have been incorporated into the review reports and no concerns have been indicated with any of the proposed recommendations. The views of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer have also been incorporated at the Commission meeting of the 6 July 2023.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Alternative options have been incorporated into the recommendations for the Executive.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Delivery

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	24 October 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I115313
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1. **TITLE:** Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2023 - 2033

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Place, Planning & Regeneration

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

Introduction and context for the Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

That the draft Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy 2024-2034 is agreed for public consultation as detailed in paragraphs 5.19-5.21 of the Executive Director of Place, Planning & Regeneration's report.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

To enable a public consultation process seeking the views of residents, businesses, and partner organisations on the strategy and the proposed action plan.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The alternative option is to rely entirely on external policies and strategies to help guide and shape the future support for our local economy. This approach would not focus specifically on the needs of Bracknell Forest's residents and businesses and may reduce the opportunities to achieve the council's objectives.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	

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**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I116167
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1. **TITLE:** Prevent Strategy 2023-26

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

Approval requested for the Prevent Strategy 2023-26

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Executive approve and adopt the Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy 2024-27.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the government's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The Home Office works with local authorities and a wide range of government departments, and community organisations to deliver the Prevent Strategy.
- ii. Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and its revisions places a duty on specified authorities to "have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" in the exercise of their functions.
- iii. In addition, the December 2019 update of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, introduced a new duty for local authorities to "provide support to people vulnerable or susceptible to being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism".
- iv. Bracknell Forest's response to both duties is the Prevent Strategy which draws together how it will work with partners to comply with the duties and prevent harm.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

No alternative options have been considered for the following reasons:

☐

- The duties are laid down in law
- A published strategy and action plan sets out our identified priorities as well as how we plan to tackle them
- Prevention and support for those at risk of radicalisation is a multi-agency process which is best co-ordinated through a strategy and action plan
- Acts of terrorism and radicalisation destroy communities and lives, causing deaths and injuries to many and leaving communities living in fear and

sometimes divided by hatred and confusion. Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: People

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	24 October 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I117023
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1. **TITLE:** Budget Update
2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources
3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To provide the Executive with an update on the current year's predicted spending against budget and an outline of future financial prospects.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes
5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the Council's predicted current year financial position summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Annex A is noted.
- ii. Endorses the actions agreed by the Corporate Management Team to help contain expenditure in the current year as set out under paragraph 5.4 are endorsed.
- iii. the Council's predicted medium-term financial prospects based on the assumptions detailed in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 and summarised in Table 2 is noted, which is subject to development of detailed draft budget proposals for 2024/25 and future years and to confirmation of the local government finance settlement in December.
- iv. the Executive will be asked at its November meeting to recommend to Full Council a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, that will provide funding from capital resources to secure additional capacity needed to drive transformation change to help secure a sustainable future financial position.
- v. the proposed use of the Council's funding to support delivery of affordable housing as set out in paragraphs 5.20 to 5.22 is agreed.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The recommendations are intended to ensure that the Executive is aware of the Council's current and predicted future financial position.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The Executive could choose not to support expenditure on the proposed priority areas. This is not recommended as the measures proposed are viewed as preventing more significant cost increases in the period ahead.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Resources

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	24 October 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I110505
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1. **TITLE:** Future of Downshire Homes Limited

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To consider different options and propose the most appropriate future management arrangements for residential properties purchased by Downshire Homes Limited, with funding provided by Bracknell Forest Council, recognising that a similar number of properties are owned directly by the Council. Operational management of both portfolios is provided by the Council's Housing Team.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. to consolidate the ownership and management of the Council's housing portfolio by transferring (at market price) the Downshire Homes Ltd properties to the Council by March 2024 is agreed.
- ii. that the 4 properties currently occupied by tenants holding assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) are offered for sale to registered social landlords is agreed, noting that they will be included in the transfer of properties to the Council if sales cannot be secured in the timescale above.
- iii. to facilitate the consolidation in the most tax efficient way, supports the director(s) of DHL to progress a solvent liquidation of the company, through which its assets will transfer to the Council as shareholder and agrees to indemnify the directors, the company and the appointed liquidator against any potential claims arising from this act.
- iv. a key factor in the proposed approach will be the value of the existing loans from the Council to DHL compared with their original purchase price and funding from Council loans and that current expectations based on indicative valuations of a sample of the properties are that the sums will broadly match;
- v. in the event that the value of the properties has increased materially at the time of the transfer compared with the original purchase price, its agreed that the Executive Director: Resources be authorised to use Council reserves to settle any resultant capital gains tax liability, as set out in paragraph 5.20.
- vi. the Legal Services Manager be authorised to conclude the appropriate legal agreements to enact the proposals above.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The transfer of stock from DHL to the Council is recommended on the basis that this will facilitate a more streamlined and simplified approach to managing temporary accommodation and the small volume of supported housing properties held in the DHL portfolio, reducing the administrative burden and additional overhead costs created by the current arrangement.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- i. Do nothing - retain housing stock both with the Council’s wholly owned housing company DHL and with the Council directly. This is not recommended since the proposed approach enables the benefits obtained by having the DHL housing stock to be retained at a lower overall cost to the Council.
- ii. Trickle transfer – to gradually transfer properties from DHL to the Council over time. This option has been discounted due to the additional costs that would be incurred in Stamp Duty Land Tax, which can be avoided by taking the recommended approach.
- iii. To transfer the Council’s directly owned housing stock to DHL. This is not recommended because the Council would need to undertake additional borrowing to on-lend to DHL for the company to fund the purchase of its properties for “best consideration”. In addition, the company needs to pay VAT on its expenditure which the Council does not, meaning that such a transfer would cost more than currently, with no added benefit.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Resources

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	24 October 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I116801
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1. **TITLE:** Bridgewell Supported Living

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Executive on the progress of the Bridgewell Supported Living project. The project was previously approved for delivery by Executive on 21 June 2022. Further decision is required relating to the capital cost of the building works and the re-approval of the strategic procurement plan for the procurement of the a) landlord service provider and b) the care & support service provider.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the progress to date on the design development is noted and the timetable in paragraph 5.27 is agreed.
- ii. the value improvement items to improve sustainability in paragraphs 5.11 is noted.
- iii. the revised strategic procurement plan for appointment of the provider of landlord services (Housing Association) and care services (Support Provider) for the provision of Bridgewell Supported Living scheme for adults with learning disabilities as laid out in paragraphs 5.16 to 5.20 are noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the additional cost of works for the new accommodation by £400k, changing the previous budget from £7.15m to £7.55m as detailed in paragraph 5.12.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. As per the rationale set out in the previous Executive report, the service is needed because without the new accommodation, a large cohort of vulnerable people are either already or will soon be living in accommodation not suited to their needs, or unable to be adapted to be suited to their needs. People have the right to suitable accommodation as well as independence. On completion of the project, residents will have an increase in independence and reduction of social isolation. They will be able to enjoy freedom and independence and are encouraged to be in control of their lives, ensuring that they are supported to manage their daily living skills to the best of their ability.
- ii. The added value of Supported Living is that parents / carers are enabled to better

juggle their roles in caring and paid work, leading to improved well-being, avoiding a detrimental effect on the family's financial circumstances. Ensuring the right accommodation with a person-centred care and support package will reduce escalation to costly residential placements.

- iii. Design and Build: the design and build contractor (Neilcott Construction) was appointed through competitive restricted tender in January 2023. They have developed the design and obtained planning permission. As the concept design progressed into a detailed technical specification, Neilcott obtained pricing from their supply chain, which exceeds the budget by £400k. Further details are given in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.15.
- iv. Provider Model: prior to commencing procurement activity, the Commissioning team has been working with Campbell Tickell (Subject matter expert consultancy) to undertake a detailed options appraisal of each of the commissioning models available for Bridgewell. Following this review, a change to the Strategic Procurement Plan is being requested that was previously approved by Executive in June 2022.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- i. Design and Build: The proposed design is for four households with 5-bedrooms and en-suites plus shared communal areas. In the concept stage, self-contained flats were considered but found not to be suitable. The groups that we are proposing have at least a moderate learning disability, their mobility is deteriorating, and they are getting older. The current cohorts being considered, are not able to participate to any significant extent in their meal preparation; some of them currently reside together. Some need support or at least monitoring while they eat. Cost reduction by decreasing the number of bedrooms to be built could lower the overall capital cost but it will increase the per square meter cost of the project, which will in turn incur abortive design cost. Changing the scheme dramatically at this stage, will also affect the planning permission.
- ii. Commissioning Model for procurement of the Housing provider and Support provider: The previously approved Strategic Procurement Plan (SPP) set out an approach to separately procure the a) housing provider through competitive tender and b) the care & support service provider through either the upcoming Supported Living Framework or via a separate compliant tender process. This would result in two separate unrelated procurement and contractual arrangements with two providers. Following a detailed commissioning review of this approach, it is now accepted that, this is not the most advantageous route to market, to ensure the service offers a seamless, high-quality service to tenants, value for money for the Council and is an attractive opportunity to prospective bidders.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: People

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	24 October 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I116265
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1. **TITLE:** 0-19 Public Health Nursing Contract
2. **SERVICE AREA:** Place, Planning & Regeneration
3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

Decision to award 0-19 Public Health Nursing Contract

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes
5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive
6. **DECISION:**

- i. Executive approve the award of the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service Contract to Provider A for a 5-year contract term with two 12-month optional extensions
- ii. Executive approves the budget (as provided in section 2.3 and detailed in section 9 of the confidential annex -) for the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service for the 7-year maximum contract period with a start date from 1st April 2024. This will be paid from the ring fenced Public Health Grant allocation to the Council to deliver the public health functions.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The full Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service was carried out as prescribed by the Bracknell Forest Council Procurement Manual. The tender was published from 09 June 2023 to 27 July 2023.
- ii. The tender was for a 5-year initial contract term from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029, with two 12-month optional extensions.
- iii. The outcomes of the moderated evaluation are set out below:
 - Provider A – The successful bidder and now the recommended provider.
 - Provider B – The unsuccessful bidder. The bid was scored below 40% threshold for the quality score and was not considered further.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- i. Not to commission the service. However, the Health and Social Care Act 2012 assigns local authorities in England the statutory responsibility for commissioning public health services for children and young people aged 0-19 years (including children aged up to 25 years with special educational needs and disabilities).
- ii. Failure to commission the service will not be in accordance with the statutory requirement.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	24 October 2023

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I116748
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1. **TITLE:** Occupational Health Provider Procurement

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Resources

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To agree to procurement commencing for the selection of an occupational health provider to directly follow on from the termination of the current contract, which terminates on 30 June 2024. The new contract will be effective from 1 July 2024.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the proposed re-procurement of an occupational health contract for the provision of occupational health service for staff who work for the council in any capacity, including schools is approved.
- ii. following the completion of the procurement process, the contract award be delegated to the Executive Director: Resources in consultation with the Executive Member, Finance and Business Change.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

The Council currently spends approximately £80,000 a year on its current occupational health service, which provides a variety of services, such as; preemployment screening, sickness referrals, ill-health retirement, management guidance and advice as well as health surveillance such as; statutory hearing tests, night worker assessments as well as immunisation, disablement advice, home visits, emergency planning advice, health related risk assessments, training and advice services, and health promotions when required. The provision of these services supports managers with staff absence management and employees early return to work which has a positive impact on sickness absence levels.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- i. Consideration has been given to securing a provider to supply both occupational health and counselling services, which was the approach undertaken the last time the service was procured. However, as there were no bids at that time to provide both services, separate procurements are being undertaken on this occasion.
- ii. If we were no longer to provide an occupational health service then this would be considered to have a negative impact on managing staff absence and would likely have an adverse impact on the level of days lost to sickness absence.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Resources

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
17 October 2023	24 October 2023

To: **EXECUTIVE**
14 NOVEMBER 2023

WASTE COLLECTION VEHICLE PURCHASE **Executive Director: Delivery**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The existing waste collection fleet is at full capacity and a new 26 tonne waste collection vehicle is required.

2 Recommendations

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Agrees to the purchase of a new 26 tonne waste collection vehicle in 2023 for delivery in 2024 subject to funds being approved by Council.**
- 2.2 **Recommends that Council approves a Supplementary Capital Approval of £0.205m with the associated borrowing costs being accounted for within the figures in section 5.15.**
- 2.3 **Agrees to a trial of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil for this vehicle subject to viability and a future report to the Executive.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Borough growth and an increase in households subscribed to the garden waste collection service has meant the existing garden waste rounds are beyond full capacity. A new vehicle will enable collection capacity to be increased for the garden waste service and also absorb some of the pressure the larger blocks of flats are putting on the refuse and dry recycling services.
- 3.2 The recommendation for a diesel vehicle is further explained within the body of the report.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternative fuel vehicle options were considered, however there are a number of significant risks to these at this time as outlined in 5.6 onwards.
- 4.2 Capping the garden waste subscriptions at 16,000 residents and moving to a renewal only service from the Autumn 2023. This is likely to cause complaints and result in garden waste being put into the green refuse bins although this option would avoid the need to purchase a truck in the short term.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 In 2019 the waste collection contract with SUEZ was extended, and a new collection fleet was purchased in 2019 for the refuse, dry recycling and garden waste services. The expectation at that time was that an additional 26 tonne truck would be required in the 23/24 financial year to accommodate borough growth. Those estimates were based on property forecasts from 2019. New properties were not completed as quickly as anticipated during the past four years and that delayed the need for a new vehicle slightly.

- 5.2 Since April 2019 the number of properties in the borough has increased by 3,600, with a further 740 expected to be completed by April 2024. Over the last four years the number of residents subscribing to the garden waste service has also increased from 12,800 up to 15,700. The garden waste service is carried out by two vehicles, each with a crew of 3. The increase of 2,900 properties have meant the properties those two vehicles collect from are now beyond a manageable level and a new vehicle is required.
- 5.3 Re-routing of garden waste collections has been done in some areas of the borough already to rebalance the workload and make collections as efficient as possible, and there is now no more work that can be done to reduce the property pass rate on certain days whilst keeping the service efficient. Currently refuse and recycling vehicles are helping collect garden waste once their usual round is complete. This isn't sustainable with the forecast housing growth.
- 5.4 With increasing numbers of large blocks of flats in central Bracknell needing weekly refuse and weekly dry recycling collections those services are also nearing capacity on some days of the collection cycle.
- 5.5 One new 26 tonne vehicle round is required for 2024/25. The proposal is that the vehicle is used across different services to relieve the pressure points; garden waste is the main service that is at full capacity with the existing two trucks. However, the vehicle would also be used for refuse and dry recycling where required.

Alternative Fuels

- 5.6 The existing waste fleet is all diesel powered. Alternative options have been explored: Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), Hydrogen, Bio methane and Electric.
- 5.7 HVO delivers a 90% reduction in carbon dioxide equivalent emissions when compared to diesel and can be used as a direct replacement for diesel, and no changes to vehicles are required. HVO can be added as a straight replacement for diesel or as a blend. Compared to diesel, HVO is 10% to 20% more expensive and due to the fuel having a lower calorific value there is a 5% to 10% drop in efficiency.
- 5.8 The main risks to HVO are around security of supply due to demand and making sure the source of the vegetable oil is known. The oil can either be from grown energy crops (palm oil) or from used cooking oils. If the oil is not sourced from sustainable sources, it can cause other environmental issues such as deforestation. The demand for HVO is increasing, which will only increase pressure on the supply chain.
- 5.9 A trial of HVO is recommended once a diesel truck is on the fleet in order to try and reduce emissions produced. A further report will be bought back to the Executive on the pros and cons prior to a trial commencing.
- 5.10 Hydrogen is another option that has been looked into and is a technology that is still advancing. The source of hydrogen used is important in terms of its carbon emissions; blue hydrogen is manufactured using fossil fuels and green hydrogen using renewable energy. An important consideration is storage. Hydrogen is not able to be stored in close proximity to residential property. At this time Hydrogen is not recommended as the Commercial Centre is very close to residential properties so storage would be a potential issue. Contingency arrangements would also be a concern as Hydrogen fuel stations are not readily available.

- 5.11 Bio methane is being used as an alternative fuel by some hauliers running fleets of large vehicles. This solution is more commonplace in delivery fleets and is the solution that Waitrose are increasingly using. This is not yet a proven alternative for domestic waste collection vehicles and needs further development.
- 5.12 Electric has also been considered; however, it is not recommended at this time. The use of electric waste collection trucks for domestic waste collections is still relatively new and it is felt the technology is not advanced enough for it to be considered as reliable as the diesel vehicles. Feedback from operational teams at other local authorities with electric trucks is that they have added operational pressures due to their limited range on a full charge. They only really become viable when there are one or two electric vehicles in a very large fleet of 30 or more diesel vehicles, or in very urban city type boroughs where mileage is minimal because the depot, the rounds and the tipping location are all very close together. The more rural and mixed urban/rural authorities report issues completing daily rounds. Not completing the collection rounds reflects badly on the waste collection service and risks reputational damage for the council. Longer term maintenance costs are also estimates and vehicle life on a domestic waste collection service is uncertain as there is not a long history of use. The battery would be very costly to replace, at circa £200k and the vehicle manufacturers estimate batteries last 5-7 years. The team aren't aware of a domestic waste service that has had an electric vehicle on their fleet long enough to know the true life of the battery and how much of its charging capacity it maintains in those latter years.
- 5.13 Having spoken to other local authorities and SUEZ, feedback has been that electric is not the right solution for HGVs, and other technology such as hydrogen and bio methane needs to be further developed. For electric vehicles to deliver the same reliability of service as a diesel vehicle two electric trucks would need to be purchased. Driver behaviour can influence range, however not enough to manage with one vehicle. The range of an electric collection vehicle is affected by too many external factors to make accurate estimates on achievable mileage, number of bin lifts and number of tips. The weight of bins and the external temperatures can hugely affect the productivity. In cold temperatures the vehicle range can drop by as much as fifty percent, so this would be a potential risk for up to six months of the year from November to April.
- 5.14 We do expect the technology on the alternative powered HGVs to move on in the coming years which would enable us to reconsider our fleet type again at the end of the current waste collection contract in 2027.
- 5.15 Electric vehicles are more expensive to purchase than diesel, the life of a diesel vehicle is at least 8 years and electric assumed to be a maximum of 7 years:

	Diesel	Fully electric
Capital £	205,000	900,000
Capital payments per annum £	37,085	178,882
Revenue £ (23/24 price)	130,000	135,000
Fuel per annum £ (current price)	13,000	1,800
Annual cost £ (23/24 price)	180,085	315,682

Lease costs have also been sought for comparison:

	Diesel	Fully electric
Lease cost per annum £	37,051	162,468
Revenue £ (23/24 price)	130,000	135,000
Fuel per annum £ (current price)	13,000	1,800
Annual cost £ (23/24 price)	180,051	299,268

- 5.16 Diesel vehicles are very similar in cost per annum to lease or to purchase. Electric is cheaper to lease than buy, however it would still be £119k more for electric trucks than a diesel vehicle per annum. If a diesel vehicle is purchased and used for BFC services for 8 years, it does then get sold on. For this a capital receipt of £5 -10k could be expected.
- 5.17 As well as costs shown above for electric vehicles there would also be the additional capital cost of £20-100k of installing the required charging points at the Commercial Centre as well as staff training for the maintenance.
- 5.18 Carbon dioxide equivalent emissions from an electric vehicle when out on the road are zero. A diesel vehicle on our garden waste collection service emits on average 26,500kg CO₂e per annum. There are potential emissions from the production of the electricity to charge the electric vehicle, but this will vary depending on how the electricity is produced.
- 5.19 Lead times on new waste collection vehicles are up to 12 months depending on the type of vehicle purchased so there is a need to place an order as soon as practically possible to ensure delivery during 2024.
- 5.20 The garden waste service is chargeable, residents pay £60 for a 240 litre bin, £56 for a 140 litre bin annually (based on 23/24 fees) and both of these are reduced by half to those on income related benefits. The council can charge for the collection of garden waste to cover costs of running the service. In recent years the income has increased due to an influx of new customers, currently there are 16,000 households subscribed to the service. The ongoing revenue costs of the new vehicle could be offset by including a £75k saving as part of the 24/25 budget build process and also raising the annual charge by £5 per bin to generate an additional amount of approximately £70k per annum. A chart outlining the estimated cost of the garden waste collection service for 2024/25 is below:

	Estimated cost for full year 2024/25 (£)
Expenditure, incl bins, collection contract costs and printing/postage	891k
Council staffing	43k
Corporate recharges	106k
TOTAL	£1,040,000

- 5.21 Other local authorities' charges for garden waste collection services vary considerably. Some, like Bracknell Forest, charge a one-off fee for a wheeled bin that then becomes the resident's property, whilst others have the cost of the container provision included in the annual subscription charge. Below is a chart showing a selection of other Councils' fees for garden waste collection and their garden waste bin purchase costs where applicable:

Local Authority	Charge for bin	Subscription charge per annum (23/24)	Other info or options
Bracknell Forest Council	£42	£60 240l bin, £56 140l bin	biodegradable sacks £1.20 each
Reading Borough Council	£50	£67.20 for up to 2 bins	reusable sack - £24 per annum for 2, £15 to buy sacks
Wokingham Borough Council	NA	£80	biodegradable sacks £1.20 each
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	NA	£75	
Slough Borough Council	£45	£50	
West Berkshire Council	no charge for 1st bin, additional bins £30 each	£58	£44 per annum for any additional bins collection charge
Buckinghamshire	NA	£55	
South Oxfordshire District Council	NA	£60	
Hart District Council	£40	£80 240l bin, £55 140l bin	

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 There are no specific legal issues arising from the recommendations in this report.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 The financial implications are contained within the report. The ongoing annual revenue costs relating to the new vehicle (to be included in the 24/25 proposals, if approved) can be offset by the inclusion of a saving relating to income budgets and an annual price increase on the garden waste collection service.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 NA

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 NA

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 There is a risk that the number of subscribers to the garden waste service could reduce, however this is considered unlikely as the kerbside collection is the most convenient way for residents to dispose of garden waste. DEFRA has also suggested that they may make garden waste collections free of charge, this would take the income away and service reconfiguration would be needed to contain the budget pressure.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to increase vehicle related emissions, however an additional vehicle will allow the garden waste collection service to continue to be available for new customer so avoid an increase in garden waste going into the refuse stream. Composting of garden waste produces lower CO₂e when compared to landfill or Energy from Waste.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 The accessible kerbside garden waste collection service enables people to get outside, do some gardening and dispose of the waste in responsible way. It is important to keep this service available to all. Contributing to recycling and composting are positive ways that all residents can influence climate change, knowing that their actions are contributing to improving the environment can be empowering and enhance wellbeing.

Background Papers

Not applicable

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To: EXECUTIVE

14 NOVEMBER 2023

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY FOR BRACKNELL FOREST

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 A new housing allocation policy is required to bring the policy in line with legislative changes and to address the current housing supply and demand challenges facing the borough. Parts of the existing policy are out of date and clearer wording on how some of the policies should be applied is needed.
- 1.2 This report sets out the main proposed changes to the policy, the rationale for these and the outcomes that they seek to achieve. It is proposed to incorporate these changes into a new housing allocations policy for 2024. Subject to further discussion and approval of the proposed changes, a period of internal and external consultation will be launched, with the aim of bringing a final version to Executive for approval in the New Year.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Executive are asked to:

- (i) **Approve the proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Policy**
- (ii) **Approve the proposed consultation plan to enable applicants, stakeholders, partner organisations, councillors, and the wider public to give their views on the proposed policy changes prior to presenting the findings and any subsequent amendments to the Executive for approval.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The current housing allocations policy is over seven years old and requires a refresh to take account of legislative changes, to support the Council's homelessness and housing strategies, and to address shortfalls in housing supply against demand in Bracknell Forest.
- 3.2 The proposed policy reflects and demonstrates the Council's ambitions, whilst also addressing the challenges of a limited supply of homes for allocation and an increased demand for social and affordable rented homes.
- 3.3 Stakeholder consultation is an important part of the development of a new Housing Allocations Policy, enabling residents, applicants, partners, Registered Providers of social housing, and officers and councillors to understand and comment on the proposed changes to the policy.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The current policy is out of date and no longer reflects the housing needs of the residents of Bracknell Forest and those seeking housing assistance in the Borough and so the option of doing nothing has not been considered.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 All housing authorities are required to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation, regardless of whether they own housing stock. The Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance sets out statutory guidance that local authorities must follow in framing their allocation policies.
- 5.2 The housing allocations policy sets out who qualifies to join the housing register, how they can apply, how their application will be assessed, and how their priority for rehousing will be determined. The current policy was drafted in 2016 with a minor update in 2021. It introduced a four-year residency requirement for those seeking to join the housing register. Qualifying applicants are placed into one of four bands, according to their level of housing need and priority, as determined by the policy. In April 2023, there were 1,900 households on the housing register, compared to 1,330 applicants three years previously. Over the same period, the number of homes available to let has steadily declined.
- 5.3 The housing service is committed to developing a new housing allocations policy which provides a fair, transparent, and easily understood approach to meeting the housing needs of the local area, makes best use of the stock available for allocation, and prioritises those in greatest housing need. The new policy also needs to take account of legislative changes such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to ensure that it is supporting work to prevent households from becoming homeless.

Proposed changes

- 5.4 The changes proposed in the new policy aim to deliver the following outcomes:
- Reduce waiting times for larger homes
 - Support homelessness prevention and reduction
 - Ensure statutory guidance is met
 - Support key groups in need
 - Reduce complexity and unfairness

The table below summarises the current issues and the proposed policy changes in relation to each of these objectives.

Key objective 1. Reduce waiting times for larger homes	
Issues	Proposed changes
The current policy allocates a separate bedroom for each child in the household (as well as to additional non-dependent adults), resulting in a high number of applications for larger family homes which are in short supply. This is out of step with national guidance.	Adopt the national bedroom standard which allocates a bedroom to each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • married or cohabiting couple • adult aged 21 years or more • pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex • pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex
The waiting time for larger family homes is disproportionately longer for families with 3+ children, compared to smaller properties.	The above proposal will reduce demand and waiting times for 3 and 4 bedroom homes by giving priority to families with dependent children living in the most overcrowded homes who cannot resolve their housing need in other ways.
The current policy allows households with adult, non-dependent children residing at home to apply for large, long term,	Remove non-dependent household members (aged over 21) from assessments of housing need (with mitigations where

<p>permanent social housing with the same priority as families with dependent children</p> <p>Under occupiers of social housing do not have sufficient priority and the current policy does not adequately encourage households to free up much needed larger family homes.</p>	<p>households have no other choice). Non-dependent household members will be able to apply for housing in their own right</p> <p>Ensure households seeking to downsize from large family social or affordable rented homes receive a high priority for rehousing</p>
Key objective 2. Prevent and reduce homeless applications	
Issues	Proposed changes
<p>There has been a significant increase in the number of housing applications made by homeless households over the last three years, which has increased demand on the housing register and rehousing times.</p> <p>The current 4-year residency requirement encourages households with a break in local residence, or with less than 4 years residence, to present as homeless in order to access social housing (homelessness legislation requires only a 6 month local connection).</p>	<p>Review the policy to ensure that it gives an appropriate level of priority to statutory homeless households, especially where they have been placed in suitably sized temporary accommodation, relative to other groups such as overcrowded households.</p> <p>Reduce the residency requirement from 4 years to 2 years which will help to reduce homelessness applications from households not meeting the criteria, whilst ensuring that the housing register continues to recognise and prioritise local residents.</p>
Key objective 3. Ensure statutory guidance is met	
Issues	Proposed changes
<p>Households that have undertaken actions that would previously have disqualified them from the housing register, e.g. anti-social behaviour or large outstanding rent arrears, cannot legally be excluded from the housing register if they fall within a group defined as having a statutory housing need ('reasonable preference' group).</p>	<p>Introduce an additional 5th band to allow the Council to comply with the statutory code of guidance by providing access to the housing register for those in a 'reasonable preference' group, whilst at the same time allowing them to be placed in a new band with a low priority for rehousing as a result of their actions.</p>
Key objective 4. Support key groups in need	
Issues	Proposed changes
<p>The current policy does not provide sufficient clarity or recognition with regard to the priority to be given to certain groups including care leavers, foster parents, parents of children in foster care, ex armed forces.</p>	<p>Clarify operation of policies to ensuring that care leavers assessed as more vulnerable and in need of social housing are given a high priority for rehousing.</p> <p>Clarify policy allowing households undertaking long-term fostering to apply for larger family homes, if required, in order to continue to foster children.</p> <p>Clarify policy allowing parents whose children are in foster care or looked after by the Council to include their children as part of their application where it is likely that they will return to live with them.</p> <p>Ensure policy gives sufficient priority to ex-armed forces personnel that have been medically discharged and other serving or</p>

	recently serving armed forces personnel, in line with Government guidance.
Key objective 5. Reduce complexity and unfair policies	
Issues	Proposed changes
<p>The current policy prioritises working households which means that other households, including vulnerable households, are disadvantaged by having to wait longer for rehousing, despite having a similar housing need.</p> <p>Applicants who have been on the register for six or more years currently receive additional priority, even though they may have little or no housing need.</p> <p>Households with high incomes and/or with sufficient asset and resources to meet their own housing need are currently able to join the housing register and apply for social housing.</p> <p>Under the current policy households can increase their priority by aggregating different needs to achieve a higher band level than warranted. This system also adds complexity to the assessment system.</p>	<p>Remove the priority given to working households which will increase the ability of vulnerable households to make successful bids for properties. Such policies have since been found to be unlawful under equalities legislation.</p> <p>Remove the additional priority given to households waiting for six years as it is unfair to households with a higher housing need.</p> <p>Introduce an income cap for those who can potentially resolve their own housing need which limits their ability to access social housing.</p> <p>Remove the current cumulative preference rule for those with more than one band reason. This will help to minimise 'band chasing' and make the process simpler to understand.</p>

5.5 The impact of these proposed changes has been assessed through data analysis, to quantify how many and which people are affected. Initial analysis has identified about 250 households that would no longer qualify for a larger home as a result of adopting the bedroom standard. A detailed equalities impact assessment has been undertaken focusing on those groups with protected characteristics. In some cases, exceptions and mitigations will be proposed to prevent adverse and unfair impacts on some groups.

5.6 The overall impact of the proposed changes is summarised below.

- Reduced average rehousing times for the most overcrowded households with dependent children.
- Recognition of the needs of armed forces personnel, care leavers, foster carers, parents with children in care.
- Reduced entitlement to larger homes for some households including those with non-dependent household members.
- Higher income households no longer able to apply.
- Removal of unfair and complex policies that favour working households, some long-term applicants and those who benefit from cumulative needs policies.

Consultation

5.7 Government guidance states that where major changes to the housing allocations scheme are being considered, the authority must bring these to the attention of those likely to be affected by the change. Authorities are also required to consult with registered providers with whom they have nomination arrangements about the proposed changes.

- 5.8 A structured consultation plan has been developed to provide opportunities for applicants, Registered Providers, councillors, voluntary organisations, other statutory organisations and the wider public to give their views on the proposed changes set out in the draft policy. This includes the following elements:
- An online survey that individuals and organisations will be invited to complete; it is proposed to run the survey from December 2023 to the end of January 2024.
 - Councillor session or other opportunity for councillors to provide comments.
 - Consultation workshops with registered providers and the Homeless Forum.
 - Invitation to key stakeholders to meet or submit written comments by email.
- See consultation plan in appendices
- 5.9 In addition, a detailed communications plan has been developed to promote the formal consultation as widely as possible. This will include:
- Use of Council's website, social media, and press releases
 - Internal and external promotion through publications such as Town & Country and Forest Views
 - Targeted emails to key contacts and organisations that represent various cohorts.
- 5.10 Once consultation is complete and the responses analysed, the proposed changes to the allocations policy will be finalised and presented to Executive for approval, in Spring 2024.
- 5.11 The 'go live' date for the new policy is proposed for Summer 2024 to allow for testing and transition from the current policy, including any required changes to housing IT systems.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 Government guidance [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-authorities) states that all Housing authorities must have an allocation scheme for determining priorities, and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation; and they must allocate in accordance with that scheme.
- 6.2 When an alteration is made to a scheme reflecting a major change of policy, an authority must ensure within a reasonable time that those likely to be affected by the change have the effect brought to their attention, taking such steps as the housing authority considers reasonable.
- 6.3 Before adopting an allocation scheme, or altering a scheme to reflect a major change of policy, authorities must:
- send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every private registered provider with which they have nomination arrangements, and
 - ensure they have a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals

Financial Advice

- 6.2 The main financial impact associated with the introduction of a new housing allocations policy is the cost of making changes to the housing needs IT system. This is provided through a contract with Abritas and the cost of the changes are not yet known. The option of moving to a new provider will also be explored if this proves to be simpler and more cost effective.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 As detailed in the report, a consultation plan will be developed to engage stakeholders, partners, Members, key service areas within the Council, applicants, and residents.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 In developing the new Allocations Policy, the council must have due regard for advancing equality and assess the impact of the proposed policies on groups included within the protected characteristics set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty. An initial equalities impact assessment has been undertaken to assess the impact on groups with protected characteristics, including race, disability, age, gender and so on.
- 6.5 The initial findings are that the adoption of the bedroom standard will impact more on households aged 25 to 44 years, female headed households, and women in maternity, as these groups are over-represented among households with two or more dependent children. The proposed exclusion of non-dependent household members from housing applications is likely to impact more on ethnic or religious groups where extended households that include non-dependent adults are more common. However, it is considered that the proposals are justified as they will ensure that overcrowded households with dependent children who are most likely to suffer negative impacts on their health, welfare and education, will be prioritised for rehousing. Mitigations will be included in the policy to take account of the circumstances of some households, such as those with a disabled member or where there are care needs.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 Managing the number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation is an ongoing risk for the Council. The new policy will retain the ability to make direct lets to homeless households to alleviate pressures in temporary accommodation, where necessary.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.7 The recommendations in Section 2 above are not expected to have any impact on emissions of CO₂.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 Access to good quality housing is recognised to be one of the key protective factors in maintaining health and well-being. The Housing Allocations Policy will support the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, by increasing rehousing opportunities for overcrowded households living in unsatisfactory conditions, which negatively impact on the health, welfare and education impacts of such families, and supporting more vulnerable households, including young people and those with poorer health, including mental health, to access suitable independent accommodation.

Background Papers

Draft Housing Allocations Policy
Equalities Impact Assessment
Consultation Plan

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Bracknell Forest Housing Allocations Policy

Draft October 2023 v3



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Draft

Section 1. Introduction to Bracknell Forest Council My Choice. (BFCMyChoice)

1.1 Introduction.

Section s166A(1) of the Housing Act 1996 requires that every local housing authority in England publishes an allocation scheme for determining priorities (and the procedure to be followed) in allocating social and affordable housing accommodation.

The Bracknell Forest Housing Allocation Policy describes how social housing is allocated through Bracknell Forest Council's My Choice (referred to as 'MyChoice' throughout this document). The Policy describes how the scheme operates, how to apply to our housing register, how we manage the register, who qualifies for social housing, your choice about where you wish to live, how we assess applications and how we allocate properties in a fair and transparent manner.

Bracknell Forest Council does not have its own housing stock and therefore works closely with Registered Providers (Housing Associations). The allocations scheme applies to properties in Bracknell Forest whereby Bracknell Forest Council has the right to nominate applicants to become a tenant of a Housing Association. The scheme prioritises those people most in need of social housing and is also open to existing social housing tenants who have an identified housing need to transfer to a different property.

The provisions of this Housing Allocation Policy will apply to all new applicants to the Council's Housing Register after the effective date for the implementation of this Policy. They will also apply to all existing applicants on the Council's Housing Register at the time of the effective date of this Policy. Any prior Allocation Policy published by this authority will no longer be valid.

A summary of the Housing Allocation Scheme is published and is available free of charge to any person who requires a copy. This document is the full version of the Allocations Scheme and is available for inspection at Bracknell Forest Borough Council Office, Time Square, Market St, Bracknell RG12 1JD. It can also be viewed on or downloaded from the website www.BFCMyChoice.gov.uk

1.2 The key aims and objectives for the Policy are:

- To ensure that social rented housing in the borough is let to those in greatest need and manage expectations about the availability of housing stock.
- To provide applicants with sufficient information to enable them to make informed choices.
- To support the best use of the social housing stock in Bracknell Forest.
- To ensure that vulnerable applicants are supported.
- To assist the Council in the prevention of homelessness and minimise the need for temporary accommodation.
- To ensure that for properties that have been adapted for people with disabilities, preference is given to households needing those adaptations.

In formulating this policy, the Council has also given consideration to the following key requirements for an allocations scheme:

- The scheme must meet the legal requirements placed on Bracknell Forest Council, namely, to give appropriate priority to applicants who fall within the Housing Act 1996 Part VI “reasonable preference” categories.
- The scheme should contribute to creating balanced and sustainable communities by offering choice to people about where they live.
- The scheme should be simple to understand, use and to make the process of nominating to Housing Associations as open and transparent as possible.

This policy does not cover offers of licences, non-secure, or assured shorthold tenancies granted to homeless households in pursuance of any member of the Council’s homelessness duties under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. This policy does not cover offers of tenancies excluded from an allocation scheme by virtue of S.159 (4A) and s.160 of the 1996 Act.

1.3 Legal context.

This is the Bracknell Forest Council Housing Allocation Policy as required by Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

In developing this policy, the Council has followed and fully considered the following housing legislation, regulations, statutory guidance, and strategies:

- 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.
- The 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”.
- Improving access to social housing for members of the armed forces: Statutory guidance issued by MHCLG June 2020.
- 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)’
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020:

- Right to Move guidance (DCLG, 2015)
- Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges or other Types of Temporary Accommodation, guidance (MHCLG, 2018)
- Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities (MHCLG, 2018)

In framing the allocations scheme regard has also been given to the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2021-2026, Tenancy Strategy 2013, Bracknell Forest's Housing Strategy 2023-2028, as well as the Equality Act 2010 and Care Act 2014.

The Council has considered the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, in accordance with the Children Act 2004, Section 11. This procedure and administration will accord with the objectives and actions set out in the Council's joint working protocols agreed by Housing and Children Services.

1.4 Reasonable Preference.

Bracknell Forest Council determines the priority that is applied to each application to the Housing Register. Where applicants meet the eligibility criteria and are also qualifying persons, they will be placed in the appropriate band based on an assessment of their housing need. This will ensure that the Council makes a nomination to a Housing Association to those in the highest need to meet our legal obligations.

The law sets out five groups of applicants to whom the Housing Allocations Policy must give reasonable preference:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and have been assessed by the Council as being owed a homelessness duty.
- People who are owed a duty by any housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192 (3).
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability.
- 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 to others)

1.5 Statement of Choice.

The demand for social and affordable housing in the Bracknell Forest Council area is high and far outstrips the supply that is available. We will balance providing choice and housing need to ensure that housing is offered in a way that helps best manage the housing stock whilst prioritising those with the greatest need of housing. This means that for many households, the chances of being offered a property by the Council are extremely low and other housing options may be more suitable.

Available properties will be advertised online at www.BFCMyChoice.org.uk. Property details will provide valuable information about the property to help applicants to make informed decisions about which accommodation they want to be considered for and where they wish to live. All nominations to Housing Associations will be made in accordance with the published Allocations scheme.

Whilst the aim of Bracknell Forest Council is to provide choice in the allocation of social and affordable housing in the Bracknell Forest Council area, there will be some situations where this will not be possible. In such cases, the home will be let as a direct offer, and not advertised in the scheme. The Council also recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances that are not covered by the Allocations Policy and in these cases the lead officer responsible for the Housing Service will have delegated authority to make decisions outside of the scheme as they consider appropriate. Any such decision will be fully documented.

1.5.1 Choice and Statutory Homeless Applicants.

All statutory homeless households as defined in the Housing Act 1996 Part VII who are owed a statutory duty by Bracknell Forest Council under section 188, 192, or 193 of the Act will be registered to bid at the point that the duty is accepted.

To discharge the Council's statutory duty to a homeless applicant Bracknell Forest Council will make one offer (known as a final offer). To be deemed as a final offer, the accommodation must be suitable and reasonable for the needs of the household.

1.5.2 Move-on from Supported Accommodation.

Bracknell Forest Council has protocols in place to assist applicants who are ready to move-on to independent accommodation. Those with move-on priority will receive one suitable and reasonable offer of accommodation to facilitate a move-on.

1.6 Housing Allocation Policy Contents and Information.

The allocation scheme requires that applicants participate in searching for housing. Our aim is to provide advice and assistance to ensure that no person is disadvantaged in the way that the scheme operates and to ensure that all applicants are informed about:

- How applicants can apply to the MyChoice scheme.
- Who is a qualifying person to register for MyChoice.
- Who is eligible to join MyChoice.
- How an applicant's assessment of housing need is made.
- How priorities are determined.
- What banding and size of property the applicant is eligible for
- How applications from statutory homeless households are assessed.
- How properties will be advertised.
- How successful applications are selected to be nominated to a Housing Association.
- How applicants can ask for a review of a decision made on their application
- How the policy will be monitored and reviewed.

- How the Council will comply with GDPR.
- What information and documentation are needed to verify their circumstances and when this information needs to be provided.
- The reasons for any suspensions or cancellations.

Where an applicant is assessed as being a non-qualifying person, the applicant will be given advice and information on other housing options open to them. An applicant has the right to request a review of decisions made on their application.

1.7 Equality Statement.

The Council is committed to ensuring that the Allocation Policy and the implementation of all associated guidance and procedures are 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.

1.8 Policy Review and Monitoring.

The Council will monitor the outcomes of lettings and review the policy on an annual basis to ensure that it is meeting all legal requirements and that the aims and objectives set for the policy are being met. Monitoring will be used to ensure that:

- Those in the 'reasonable preference' categories are given priority for housing.
- The Policy complies with the Council's Equality Act duties.
- There is overall customer satisfaction with the scheme.

A copy of the Corporate Equality Policy, Putting People First can be accessed by the website at:

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/strategy-and-policy-documents/community-learning-strategies-and-policies/equality-and-diversity>

The results of monitoring will be used to review this policy which may lead to minor amendments from time to time, for example when there are changes to relevant legislation. When this is necessary, changes will be authorised in accordance with the Council's corporate decision-making protocols.

Should any major amendments to the policy be needed in response to legislation or the annual review of lettings, these will only be made following consultation with all relevant stakeholders and fully ratified by the Council.

Section 2 Eligibility and Qualification Criteria

2.1 Who can join the Housing Register.

To register on MyChoice, an applicant must: -

- Qualify for the MyChoice scheme.
- Be eligible for an allocation of housing under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.
- Be aged 16 years or over and not on another household's application (upon allocation of a property an applicant aged 16 or 17 years of age will be required to have an adult who can hold a tenancy as a trustee until they are 18.)
- Where more than one eligible applicant wishes to have a shared application, they will become joint applicants. For a joint application, all applicants have to qualify and meet the conditions on eligibility. A joint application will not be accepted from a person from abroad who is deemed to be ineligible.
- Must be residing in the United Kingdom.

2.2 Eligibility for an allocation of housing

Under sections 160ZA (1), (2) and (4) of the Housing Act 1996 the Council 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 for an allocation of housing if they are:

- A person subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (unless he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State).
- A person who falls within a class of persons from abroad who have been prescribed by the Secretary of State as being ineligible to be allocated housing accommodation by a local housing authority.
- A person who falls into any other class of person prescribed by the Secretary of State as not qualifying to be allocated housing accommodation by a local housing authority.

The key 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 Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/667) implemented from the 24 August 2020.

The above is not a complete list. The latest eligibility regulations can be found in Appendix 1.

2.3 Persons who Qualify for BFCMyChoice.

In addition to the Government’s ‘persons from abroad’ rules setting out when a person is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation, the Localism Act 2011 and section 160ZA of the Housing Act 1996 Part VI provides local authorities with the power to determine for themselves what classes of persons are, or are not, persons qualifying to be allocated social housing in their areas.

The qualification rules for Bracknell Forest’s MyChoice schemes are set out below.

2.3.1 Qualification rule 1: The requirement to have an assessed housing need as defined in Bands A – E.

Applicants who do not meet the housing need criteria for an award of Bands A-E will not be admitted to the Housing Register.

The exception to the requirement to have an assessed housing need will be applicants over the age of 55 who are only willing to consider sheltered housing and do not have the financial resources and have no assessed statutory housing need. The exemption applies to accommodation classified as sheltered housing only and does not apply to other units of older person housing.

2.3.2 Qualification rule 2: Local connection through living in Bracknell Forest for a minimum of 2 years prior to the date of application.

To establish a local connection to Bracknell Forest, a period of residency by the applicant, must be demonstrated.

To qualify for the Housing Register an applicant or joint applicant must have been voluntarily resident in Bracknell Forest for a period of at least two years preceding the application date.

Once registered an applicant must continue to meet the residency qualification. If the applicant no longer meets this condition, they will be removed from the register as they will no longer qualify for inclusion due to no longer being resident.

If an applicant has lived in Bracknell Forest for 2 continuous years in circumstances in which they have been placed into temporary accommodation in the borough by another local authority, they will not qualify to join the Housing Register. The local authority that has placed the household into temporary accommodation in Bracknell

Forest will retain the legal responsibility for helping the applicant to obtain long term settled housing.

For the purposes of determining local connection for residence, the Council will accept the following circumstances as demonstrating normal residence:

- Residency in a non-traditional dwelling, such as a mobile home that is placed on an official managed site, or an official pitch.
- People who are forced to sleep rough in Bracknell Forest if they meet the qualification for residency.

The exceptions to the 2 years residency qualification rule are:

- Where an applicant is homeless, and Bracknell Forest Council has accepted the main section 192(2) housing duty under the Housing Act 1996, and they are not intending to refer the applicant to another Council.
- Where the Council has placed an applicant into temporary accommodation outside of Bracknell Forest.
- Where the Council agrees that on the evidence provided there are significant and special circumstances requiring a move into Bracknell Forest. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis following a request from the applicant or from the information submitted on their housing register application. Examples would include but are not limited to:
 - i. Reasons of safety, i.e. when an applicant is fleeing domestic abuse or other forms of violence and it is not safe to return to an area where they have a local connection.
 - ii. The applicant is on a witness protection programme and the Council has agreed that there is an essential reason why they need to move to Bracknell.
 - iii. Where the Council agrees there is an exceptional need to live in Bracknell Forest to provide or receive essential support.
 - iv. Verified Rough Sleepers in Bracknell Forest who are actively working with the Council's Rough Sleeper Team.
 - v. Where an applicant has left or will shortly leave an institution such as a prison, a secure unit or hospital, a rehabilitation centre or refuge, that is not in Bracknell Forest and the applicant was normally resident in the Council's area for a minimum of two preceding years before they were accommodated in that institution.
 - vi. The Council will consider any application from a gypsy or traveler household where the applicant may not meet the continuous period of residence rule due to travelling during this period. The Council will consider the facts of each case when deciding whether the rule should be waived.
 - vii. Care Leavers below the age of 25 where the Council has an ongoing duty to them as a care leaver, having been looked after by Bracknell Forest's Children's Services under section 29 of the Children's Act 1989, and who has been accommodated anywhere in the UK, will be treated as having a local connection.

Care Leavers who have been placed in the borough by another local authority for a considerable period may also be considered.

- Applicants that satisfy the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for the Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, These are:
 - i. Applicants who are serving members of the regular armed forces.
 - ii. Applicants who served in the regular armed forces with the 5 years immediately prior to their application.
 - iii. Members of the regular armed forces or reserve forces who suffer from a serious injury, illness or disability sustained as a result of their service.
 - iv. Applicants who are a bereaved spouse/civil partner of a former serving member of the regular armed forces and have recently ceased (or will soon cease) to be entitled to reside in services accommodation following the death of their spouse/civil partner.
 - v. The divorced or separated ex-spouse of a member of HM Armed Forces, who is currently serving or going through resettlement, will be exempt from a local connection criteria for a period of six months following the divorce or separation.
- Applicants who satisfy the right to move criteria.
- Older persons households over the age of 55 who are seeking supported or sheltered housing for those aged 55+ without a direct local connection to Bracknell Forest who have a need to move to the borough due to welfare reasons and do not have the financial resources to resolve their housing needs.
- A person from outside of Bracknell Forest and fleeing domestic abuse who at the time of application is living in Bracknell Forest, or who is in a refuge or other similarly provided emergency accommodation and would be at risk in the area(s) where they do have a local connection.
- A person who does not meet the local connection criteria but is owed a prevention or relief duty by Bracknell Forest Council.
- Rough Sleepers who have been working with the Council for a minimum of six months.

For the purposes of determining a local connection through residency the following living arrangements will not be considered:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan, motor caravan, or houseboat which is not placed on a residential site; or
- Occupation of a holiday letting which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday letting.
- Applicants placed in an institution, prison, hospital or in Bracknell Forest who otherwise have no local connection to the area.
- Applicants placed in temporary accommodation by another local housing authority.
- Residents in a bail hostel or other such accommodation

The above list is not exhaustive, and Bracknell Forest retains discretion to determine whether any individual applicants can establish a local connection or not based on each applicant's individual circumstances.

2.3.3 Qualification rule 3: Circumstances where an applicant has current or former social housing rent arrears or another relevant recoverable housing related debt and has reasonable preference.

For this purpose, a housing related debt is associated with either a current or former tenancy where this relates to any social housing provider in the UK. The definition of a housing debt will not include debts that are barred by statute. The debt will be considered statute barred where an applicant, or their representative, or someone else they held the account with, has not:

- Made a payment in the last 6 years.
- Written to the creditor acknowledging the debt in the last 6 years, defined as 6 years from the date the debt was last acknowledged and 6 years from the date rent arrears became due.
- Had a county court judgement (CCJ)

For the purposes of this qualification rule housing related debts include:

- Current or former tenancy rent arrears if a social housing tenancy.
- Outstanding re-chargeable repairs
- Current and former housing related service charge arrears
- Bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation charge arrears for a licence or a tenancy
- Failing to adhere to the terms of an agreed payment plan in relation to rent arrears or housing debt for a social housing tenancy or temporary accommodation.
- Any court costs associated with any of the above debts.

Housing related debts apply to both the applicant and to any members of their household that are included in the application unless it was an act of omission in good faith and the applicant was unaware of the relevant facts.

If accepted on to the housing register, the applicant will be placed into band E until the housing related debt has been resolved. Once resolved the applicant's application will be re-assessed in line with the allocation scheme and the effective date will be taken from the date they moved into the banding.

Although accepted on to the Housing Register, the Housing Association will decide whether to accept the Council's nomination.

2.3.4 Qualification rule 4: Unacceptable behaviour.

The qualification rule for unacceptable behaviour will apply where an applicant, or any member of their current or prospective household, has behaved in an unacceptable way that, in the view of the Council, means that at the time of their application or during their application they are not considered as a qualifying person.

The Council will use its discretion to determine what unacceptable behaviour is, and cases will be considered on an individual basis. Based on the facts of the case the Council will decide whether:

- a) The applicant should not qualify to be included on the Housing Register due to their (or a household member's) serious unacceptable behaviour, or
- b) Will be allowed to qualify but will be placed into a band E until the applicant (or household member) has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that their behaviour has changed.

The application will be placed into a band E until the unacceptable behaviour has been resolved. Once resolved the applicant's application will be re-assessed in line with the allocation scheme and the effective date will be taken from the date they moved into the new banding.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Having been evicted for anti-social behaviour or rent arrears on a previous tenancy within the last 5 years.
- Being verbally or physically abusive towards a member of the Council's staff or other professionals.
- Being subject to a court order for any other breach of tenancy conditions
- Conviction for illegal or immoral purposes.
- Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors.
- Committing criminal offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community.
- Being violent towards a partner or members of the family.
- Allowing the condition of their current property to deteriorate.
- Paying money illegally to obtain a tenancy.
- Unlawfully subletting their social housing tenancy.
- Applicants that have been convicted of housing fraud.
- Applicants that have been convicted of welfare benefit fraud where the conviction is unspent under the Rehabilitation Offenders Act 1974.
- Having unspent convictions where the assessment concludes that the applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant due to a significant risk to potential neighbours and/or communities.
- Being responsible for any racial harassment or other hate crime. Racial harassment and Hate Crimes are defined as racist, religiously aggravated, faith, gender, age, disability, and transphobic or homophobic or gender re-assignment harassment or hate crime. A hate crime or racist incident is defined as any incident which is perceived to be racist or hate crime related by the complainant or any other person.

The unacceptable behaviour disqualification rule will also apply to applicants currently on the register. An applicant's eligibility to remain on the Housing Register will be kept under review during their time on the register.

An applicant may be rendered non qualifying at any time during the process should the Council become satisfied that the rule relating to unacceptable behaviour should be applied to their case.

Any new application will normally only be reconsidered where it is made by the applicant directly, and where made, as a guideline, the Council will consider whether there has been any reasonable cause for complaint or concern against the applicant (or members of their prospective household) for a period of 12 months.

Where an applicant has resolved their behaviour to the satisfaction of the Council it may still be the case that the original Housing Association that dealt with the issue might decide that they do not want to consider rehousing their former tenant. However, this will not prevent an applicant from being considered for housing by another Housing Association.

2.3.5 Qualification rule 5: Financial resources

Social and affordable housing provided through MyChoice is for people who are considered to have insufficient resources to meet their own housing need by either renting privately or buying their own.

Applicants who are considered to have sufficient financial resources to buy or rent suitable accommodation in Bracknell Forest will not qualify for the Housing Register.

Households with a gross household income more than four times higher than the highest Local Housing Allowance level in Bracknell Forest are at the time of application or at the time of offer normally considered to be able to meet their housing need, through either renting privately or owner occupation.

The income thresholds per annum for households needing the following accommodation sizes in 2023/24 are:

1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms
£38,272	£47,869	£61,031	£76,589

These figures will be renewed on an annual basis in line with DWP guidelines.

Information on Local Housing Allowance rates are also available at: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk>

The capital, savings, and equity available to a household will also be assessed. If it is determined that a households can resolve their own housing need within their local housing market. A savings threshold of £16,000 will be counted towards income for applicants seeking general needs accommodation.

A combination of income and financial assets will be used for the purpose of a financial assessment.

When considering gross household income, the following types of income are fully disregarded:

- Attendance Allowance.
- Disability Living Allowance.
- Personal Independence.
- War pension.
- Savings, investments of any children.
- Any lump sum received by a member of the armed forces as compensation for an injury or disability on active service.

Although this qualification rule will mean that an applicant cannot join the Housing Register, it does not prevent them being considered for any low-cost home ownership schemes, such as rent to buy, shared ownership/equity, discounted market sale and starter homes or lower demand properties.

Information can be given on request regarding which Housing Associations or developers are currently operating any of the above schemes in Bracknell Forest and how applications can be made.

Applicants who do not qualify under the financial resource rules may be considered as an exception if:

- They are an existing social housing tenant within Bracknell Forest, and they are downsizing to smaller accommodation.
- They require sheltered housing accommodation where it has been identified that there is a medical or social need for this type of accommodation.
- They have a physical or mental health problem which would prevent the household finding suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.
- They require a specially adapted home that is either not available or affordable to buy or rent or is not eligible for or has been declined for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Applicants will be asked to provide evidence of their income and financial assets. If this is not provided an application cannot be assessed and will not progress.

2.3.6 Qualification rule 6: Homeownership, or legal interest in homeownership

Owner-occupiers and applicants who own other residential property (freehold or leasehold) anywhere in the world will not normally qualify for inclusion on the Housing Register. Applicants who have previously owned a property and have sold it will be asked to provide proof of the sale, together with evidence of the proceeds received from the sale and what has become of them.

Applicants who own or part own accommodation, or who have a legal interest in home ownership (for example through marriage or civil partnership in accommodation owned by their spouse or civil partner) also may not qualify.

Unless it is proven that they are unable to meet their housing needs from their own resources and require an adapted property or supported housing, owner-occupiers will not qualify for inclusion on the Housing Register.

Owner-occupiers may qualify for inclusion on the Housing Register if they fall within one of the following groups:

- They are over 55 and have been assessed as being unable to meet their housing needs from their own resources.
- They have a disability and require an adapted property and their current property cannot be adapted through a disabled facilities grant, and they have been assessed as being unable to meet their housing needs from their own resources.
- Where someone is a homeowner and statutory homeless due to domestic violence, and whose property has not yet been sold, a decision will be made as to whether to treat this as an exemption based on the facts and circumstances of each case.
- They are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to sustain their accommodation and do not have the resources to resolve their housing by purchasing another property or privately renting.

In reaching a decision, the Council will take the following into account:

- the applicant's income, capital, and any equitable interest they hold in their existing home and any other property.
- a current valuation of the property.
- the expected equity after a proposed sale of the property.
- their ability to get a mortgage for the size and type of property they require.
- the applicant's current financial circumstances and commitments.
- the supply and affordability of private rented accommodation or other forms of accommodation suitable for the applicant's specific needs.

If relevant documentation is not provided the application cannot be assessed and will not progress further.

Consideration will also be given to the supply and affordability of private rented or other forms of accommodation suitable for the applicant's needs and an assessment made whether the applicant's housing need can reasonably be met in the private sector.

The Council will also take into consideration any previous disposal of assets which will include disposals for nil (transfer of ownership) or below the market rate value.

Applicants whom the Council decides cannot afford to buy a property on the open market or meet their housing need through other housing options will be given a band E to recognise that they have reasonable preference.

2.3.7 Qualification rule 7: Fraud or giving False Information

Applicants who are found to have withheld or given false information may be removed from the register and will not be able to reapply for a period of 12 months. Decisions to remove the person from the register will be made based on the seriousness of the false information given, or an assessment of why important information was withheld.

Section 171(1) of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence for anyone, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (and therefore in seeking an allocation of accommodation) to:

- Knowingly or recklessly make a materially false statement on their housing application or
- Knowingly withhold information that the Council reasonable required him/her to provide.

Where there is a suspicion or allegation that an applicant, or any person acting on behalf of the applicant has provided false information the application will be suspended whilst the application is investigated to establish whether possible false and misleading information has been provided.

Following an investigation, if it is established that the applicant, or any person acting on their behalf did not provide false information the application will be reinstated to the housing register.

Should the Council decide that false or misleading information has been provided, the Council will take legal action against the applicant. Should a person be found guilty by a Court, the person is liable on summary conviction to a fine at the date of this scheme document of up to £5,000.

In addition, making a fraudulent application for housing may also constitute a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968 and/or the Fraud Act 2006.

Should anybody be found guilty of an offence Bracknell Forest Council will disqualify the person from registering on the Housing Register for a period of up to five years.

2.3.8 How exceptional circumstances will be considered for any of the qualification rules.

The Council retains the ability, in exceptional circumstances, to exercise its discretion when applying any of the qualification rules. It is for the applicant to request that discretion should be applied for exceptional circumstances and once requested this will be considered by a panel of senior operational managers from the Council. A request for a review of a decision that an applicant does not meet the qualification rule will be taken as a request for any exceptional circumstances to be considered. Any case given exceptional circumstances will have this fully documented on the housing database.

3. How the Housing Register works.

3.1 How to apply for the Housing Register.

People wishing to be considered to join the housing register must apply through the 'MyChoice' website: <https://www.bfcmychoice.org.uk>

On receipt of an application to the housing register, Bracknell Forest Council will consider whether the applicant/s are eligible and whether they qualify under the scheme.

Any applicant who needs help in completing their online application can contact the Housing Register and Allocations team on 01344 352045 or via email housing.register@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, where they will be guided through the process of making their application online.

An advocate (for example, family member, friend, or support agency) can complete the application form on behalf of a vulnerable person. The applicant's signature will always be required and permission to discuss the case with the advocate must be provided.

There is free access to the 'internet' at libraries, and at some community facilities. An office appointment can be made when an applicant has no access to the 'internet' or is unable to use the 'internet.'

Multiple applications to MyChoice are not allowed, and a person can be included on only one application.

3.2 Who can be included in the application.

3.2.1 Household members.

An applicant can only include in their application family members who are reasonably expected to reside with them and require rehousing with them. An applicant's household will normally comprise of the applicant or applicant and partner, along with any dependent children (if applicable) that are normally resident with the applicant.

In assessing the application, the Council will assess which persons reasonably require re-housing with the applicant. Any non-dependent adult over the age of 21 not in full time education may not be considered as part of the household as they are able to make an application in their own name.

Household members over the age of 21 who have always been living as one household will only be considered as part of the household if they are not able to live independently. In these cases, a formal assessment undertaken by a relevant professional will be required to support the request, at the time of application.

For the purpose, of assessing overcrowding, dependent children are expected to share rooms with other children in the same extended family regardless of whether they are siblings.

3.2.2 Carers.

If an applicant states that they need an extra room for a carer, the Council will carry out an assessment of the applicant's need and decide whether, or not, an extra room is required.

To qualify for an additional bedroom for a carer, the applicant must demonstrate that this care is provided by someone who would not otherwise live with the applicant, and if they are a relative or friend, they must be in receipt of Carers Allowance or Attendance allowance.

In addition, the Council's Adult Social Care service should be able to provide evidence that the applicant needs a live-in carer, and where such support is not currently provided, that the applicant would qualify for funding for a live-in carer.

Where the Council is satisfied that there is a need for a live-in carer who is not already co-habiting with another member of the household, the household will qualify for an additional bedroom.

3.2.3 Applicants with a medical or social need for a larger property.

In some circumstances, applicants may be able to apply for an extra bedroom due to their medical or social needs. In each case, the specific circumstances will be considered and evidence supporting the need for an extra bedroom will be required. In exceptional circumstances, an extra bedroom may be awarded where evidence is provided that a substantial amount of specialist equipment needs to be installed and this cannot be stored elsewhere.

If the household includes a disabled child who cannot share a bedroom with another child because of their disability, they may be considered for an additional bedroom. The following conditions must be met:

- The disabled child must be entitled to the middle or higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance; and
- The local authority must be satisfied that the child's disability means they cannot share a bedroom with another child. Evidence will be required from secondary care health professionals (e.g., Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services or by a specialist consultant) to confirm this.

If an extra bedroom is awarded this is purely for MyChoice and would not affect any decision made by the DWP.

3.2.4 Approved Foster Carer/Adopter with insufficient bedrooms.

Households undertaking long-term fostering may be eligible to include foster children as part of their application to enable them to qualify for a property with sufficient bedrooms. Long term fostering is classed as fostering for a period in excess of three years. To be included as part of the application it is essential that written confirmation of the fostering arrangement is obtained from Children's Social Care at the time of submitting an application.

Short-term fostering arrangements will not normally be included under these arrangements. However, they may be considered on a case-by-case basis, by the Housing Panel, where there are exceptional circumstances that warrant the provision of an additional bedroom.

3.2.5 Separated Parents and dependent children.

Applicants who have a shared residency order or have staying access for children will not automatically be considered for a property size that includes their children as household members. The Council will apply the test in Section 189(1)(b) of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to decide whether any child both lives with, and is dependent on, the applicant. Unless this test is passed an applicant will only be considered for the size of accommodation relevant to their circumstances.

The general principle is that a child needs one home of an adequate size. The Council will take into consideration the available supply of the type of accommodation requested, the demand from other households for that type of accommodation, and any under-occupation that may result where a child spends time with one parent and then another parent.

Decisions will be made on a case-by case basis and will be based on the local authority's decision as to which parent or guardian the child is dependent on in terms of their primary day-to-day care.

3.2.6 Split families.

Where a family is not currently residing together, but have previously lived together as a family unit, and there is a reasonable expectation that they should reside together, the family will be considered as a split family.

An assessment of need will be undertaken which will consider the current accommodation options available to the family and determine which accommodation option would best suit the family's need. In all cases, at least one of the applicants must have retained their local connection with Bracknell Forest.

3.2.7 Parents with dependent children who are in foster care or being looked after by Bracknell Forest Council.

When assessing bedroom entitlement, the Council may consider children who are currently in foster care or being looked after by the Bracknell Forest Council where there is a reasonable likelihood that any children may return to live with the applicant. In these circumstances, confirmation will be required from Children's Social Care that any looked after children will be able to live with the applicant when the applicant is rehoused in accommodation of a suitable size.

3.2.8 Special Guardianship.

Where a household has been granted a Special Guardianship and is being supported by Bracknell Forest Council's Children's Social Care service, one or more children may be included as household members within the housing application.

Where a child or children have been placed on an interim care order with a family member, supported by Bracknell Forest, the children will not be considered as permanent members of the household and will not be taken into consideration until the interim care order has been made permanent.

3.2.9 Joint Social Housing Tenants.

Where an existing social housing tenant applies for a transfer, a check will be undertaken to establish whether they are in possession of a sole tenancy. If the tenancy is in joint names and the application does not include all named tenants, the applicant will be registered as a first-time application. Unless there are specific circumstances that apply and are approved, no offer will be made which results in the under occupation of the remaining joint tenant of their existing property. Unless the applicant's existing tenancy has been lawfully terminated, they will not be considered for rehousing.

3.2.10 Right to Move.

To qualify for rehousing under the Right to Move, applicants must be an existing social housing tenant and be able to demonstrate that moving to Bracknell Forest would help to avoid hardship by enabling them to continue or take up work that they have been offered in the local area. The Council will need to establish that the tenant needs to move for work reasons and will take into consideration the nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home.

3.2.11 Councillors, members of staff and their relatives.

Any application for housing or re-housing that is received from elected Members, Council employees, or their close relatives must be disclosed at the time of application. A close family member is classed as a parent, spouse, sibling, or adult children.

Elected members, Council staff and their relatives are treated as any other applicant and will not gain any advantage or any preferential treatment in their application nor shall they be disadvantaged. Their application will be assessed in line with the Allocation Policy.

Staff members must not be involved in any area of the application of any family member or friend. Should any elected member, staff or family member be nominated for an offer of accommodation this must be approved by the Head of Service for sign off.

3.2.12 Non-Qualifying or Eligible Persons.

Following an assessment, if an application to join the housing register is not accepted the applicant will receive written confirmation of the Council's decision and how this decision was reached.

The applicant has the right to request a review of a decision not to accept them on to the Housing Register. See section 8 for further information on reviews.

3.3 Consent and Declaration.

All applicants will be required to sign a declaration, or to give informed consent, to confirm their understanding that:

- The information that they have provided is accurate.
- That they will notify the Council of any change in their circumstances.
- They consent to their personal information being provided to a Housing Association to which they have been nominated for accommodation under the allocations scheme.
- They consent to the Council making inquiries with any relevant person to assess their application.
- They consent to credit checking and to the use of referencing companies to confirm that the information they have given on the application form is correct.

3.4 Verification checks of Housing Register applications.

The Council's Housing Register and Allocations team will be responsible for processing applications and undertaking initial verification checks before applications are made active.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all the information requested to assess their circumstances, along with any supporting information or documents that are required.

Incomplete applications will not be made active until such time as the Council is satisfied that it has in its possession all the information it requires to complete its assessment.

All incomplete applications will be cancelled after a period of 28 days measured from the date information was requested if it has not been provided.

If an application is cancelled this does not prevent the applicant making a subsequent application at a later date. In such cases the effective date of registration would not be backdated to the earlier application date.

3.5 Notification of change in circumstances

Applicants must notify the Council of any changes in their circumstances which could affect their application. Examples of a change in circumstances include:

- someone leaving or joining the household.
- the birth of a child.
- a change of address.
- an increase in household income.
- a purchase/acquisition of a home, including through inheritance.
- a change in health of the applicant or a member of the household.
- the applicant being asked to leave their current accommodation.

Where there is any change in an applicant's circumstances, an applicant must update their housing register application via their MyChoice account. If, as a result of informing the Council of a change of circumstances, there is a change in the priority band in which they have been placed, applicants will be informed in writing. The onus is on applicants to inform the Council when there is a relevant change in their circumstances.

If the change in circumstances results in placement in a higher priority band, the effective date will be the date they moved into the higher band. If the applicant moves to a lower band there will be no change to their effective date.

3.6 Renewal of housing applications

All applicants are required to renew their application annually. The applicant will be sent a reminder to confirm that they still wish to be registered and that their circumstances have not changed.

Should their circumstances have changed, the applicant should notify the Council of the change of circumstances.

The applicant will have 28 days to renew their application from the date the request is sent.

If an applicant has not responded after 28 days a second reminder will be sent. Should no response to the second renewal request be received the housing register application will be cancelled and removed from the Housing Register. No further correspondence will be sent.

Any subsequent application to the Housing Register will be treated as a new application and will not be back dated to the date of the cancelled application.

3.7 The Suspending and Cancellation of an Application

3.7.1 Suspension of an Application

An application will be suspended if:

- An applicant has been asked for information to support an application and a reply has not been received within an agreed timescale.
- An applicant has changed address and not provided a change of circumstances form.
- An applicant has refused two properties and/or has failed to attend the viewing appointment. The applicant will be suspended from bidding for a period of 12 months.
- An applicant accepted onto the housing register on the grounds that the authority has accepted a homelessness duty has refused a final offer of accommodation. The applicant will be suspended from bidding until the housing register application has been re-assessed.
- An application will be suspended whilst a re-assessment of housing need takes place.
- An applicant has omitted to include information relevant to their application or information provided by the applicant has been found to be false or misleading. The application will be suspended from bidding for a period of 12 months.
- An applicant has not bid on a property for 12 months and there is no reasonable cause for them not bidding.

3.7.2 Cancellation of an Application.

An application will be cancelled if:

- The applicant has requested that their application be cancelled.
- The applicant has been housed as a result of a successful bid under the MyChoice lettings scheme or a direct let of a property.
- The applicant no longer qualifies for inclusion on the Housing Register.
- The applicant has been housed into the private rented sector under the Council's homelessness duties.
- The applicant fails to renew their housing application.
- The applicant has not provided the information requested to make an assessment on their application.
- The applicant has not responded to an offer of housing within an agreed timescale.
- The applicant has moved and not provided their new address.
- The applicant has given false or misleading information and been referred to the fraud department.
- The applicant has died.

In the event of an application being cancelled the Council may agree to re-instate the application and reinstate the effective date of the application if the applicant re-applies within 3 months. Should an applicant re-apply after this period this will be treated as a new application and a new effective date will be given if they qualify for housing.

Where an applicant, is considered to be potentially vulnerable, the local authority will contact the applicant, or, if appropriate, an agency that they are working with, to check their circumstances before cancelling the application.

Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision.

4. Assessment of Housing Need

4.1 How is housing need assessed?

Once an application has been received, the Council will make an assessment to establish the priority of the application. This assessment will take into account the applicant's existing accommodation, and any other accommodation that they may be entitled to occupy and any medical or welfare needs that they have.

An applicant is entitled to occupy accommodation as an owner, lessee, leaseholder or by virtue of a court order; an express or implied licence to occupy (i.e., lodger or living with family); or any other enactment or rule of law giving the right to remain in occupation.

The assessment of the application will determine:

- The number of bedrooms that the applicant is entitled to.

- The effective date of the application.
- Which of the priority bands the applicants is placed in, based on their welfare, medical or other housing need.

These are explained below.

4.1.1 Government Bedroom Standard

In making its assessment and deciding what size of property an applicant is entitled to, the Council will use the Government's Bedroom Standard, set out in Appendix 3.

This states that a bedroom is allocated for each of the following:

- A couple
- A single person aged 21 or over.
- Two children under 10 regardless of sex
- Two adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex.

In exceptional circumstances the Council may exercise discretion in deviating away from the bedroom standard. In all cases applicants will need to evidence that the property is affordable at the time of offer. Any deviation from the policy will be documented by the Senior Officer of the decision made. See Appendix 3 for the size of property that your household will qualify for.

4.2 Notification of the assessment.

When the Council has assessed the application, the applicant will receive a notification of the outcome of the assessment.

The notification will:

- Confirm whether the applicant is eligible and qualifies for the housing register.
- Confirm the unique reference number for the application.
- Confirm what band the applicant has been placed in.
- Confirm the size and if, applicable the type of property the applicant can bid for.
- Confirm the effective date which should be the same as the registration date for new applications.
- Provide details about how and when a change of circumstances should be notified to the Council.
- Provide information about requesting a review of the decision.

4.3 Deciding the Effective Date.

The Effective Date is the date used to determine the priority of the application and enables applications in the same band to be prioritised in date order from the date that they went into the band.

Where there is a change in banding following a re-assessment, the effective date will be amended to the date the application was awarded a higher banding. Where an

applicant is placed into a lower banding, they will keep the original date of application.

The effective date ensures that where applicants within the same band bid on the same property, the applicant with the longest waiting time will be prioritised and will be first to receive an offer of accommodation.

Where two applicants with the same band and effective date apply for the same property the applicant with the earliest registration date will be given priority for an offer of accommodation. If both applicants also have the same registration date the Team Leader for the Housing Register and Allocations Team will determine which applicant is given priority.

4.4 Priority Bands

Applicants will be placed into a priority band A-E, (A being the highest priority band) according to an assessment of need based on the information which has been provided on their housing application.

The criteria for the bands are set out in detail in Appendix 4. The assessment process is explained below.

4.5 Medical Assessments

Where an applicant's current housing is detrimental to their health, or a move to more suitable accommodation would have a positive effect on their health, they should complete a medical self-assessment form.

Medical priority will **not** normally be awarded where health problems are not affected by rehousing. Examples would be :

- Where the applicant has a health issue, that is not adversely affected by the accommodation that they currently occupy and would not be improved by rehousing, regardless of the severity of the condition.
- Where rehousing would only make a marginal improvement to the applicant's health condition.
- Where defects in the applicant's current accommodation can be rectified within a reasonable timeframe.
- Neighbour disputes and Anti-Social behaviour unless the Council is satisfied that the landlord, police, Anti-Social Behaviour team, or Environmental Health team have done everything possible to resolve the anti-social behaviour.
- Homeless households in temporary accommodation (4.5.1)
- Overcrowding, dealt with already in banding scheme.
- Where the health condition is of a temporary nature, rather than a long-term condition (e.g. pregnancy-related problems or a broken leg).
- Where the medical issue relates to an individual who is not part of the application.

Each case will be looked at on an individual basis.

4.5.1 Homeless Applicants

Homeless households who have been accepted for the main housing duty under the homelessness legislation and are being provided with temporary accommodation by Bracknell Forest Council (in pursuance of its homelessness duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) will not be entitled to a priority banding on medical or welfare grounds.

In this situation the household has a statutory right to request a review of the suitability of the temporary accommodation that has been secured for them. This will be conducted outside of the Allocations Policy and in accordance with current homelessness legislation. The Council will keep the suitability of the temporary accommodation under ongoing review and will respond to any change of circumstances that arises.

4.5.2 Assessing a medical need.

A Housing Officer will consider all the information provided and may consult a qualified medical advisor, if required. Extra information may be sought from other professionals to assess the extent to which the applicant's health is affected by their housing conditions and the expected benefits of providing suitable alternative housing.

The Housing Officer will look at:

- How the current accommodation is causing or affecting the medical condition.
- The severity of the effect that housing is having on the medical condition.
- The duration of the condition and any expected recovery time
- Whether other options are viable that could improve the situation
- Whether the medical condition would be alleviated or significantly improved by moving.

Applicants who have been awarded a medical priority due to mobility problems, are unable to manage stairs, and need ground floor accommodation, will not usually be considered for a property with either an internal or external staircase unless there are appropriate adaptations or a lift in place.

Where it is determined that the applicant has a medical condition, but that this is not significantly worsened by their current housing and would not be improved by a move to different housing, no medical priority will be awarded.

Following the assessment of their medical need and housing conditions, the applicant will be notified of the outcome of their application and the band in which they have been placed. More information on the bandings can be found in Appendix 4.

An applicant has the right to a review of the decision made on their application. Following the outcome of the review the Council will not undertake any further assessments for 12 months unless there has been a significant change in circumstances.

4.5.3 Reviewing Medical Priority Banding.

Applicants are required to inform the Council of all changes in their circumstances relating to their housing application, including their health or the health of any member of their household. Such changes may result in an increase or decrease in the level of priority awarded.

The Council reserves the right to review the applicant's priority banding on an appropriate periodic basis to ensure that this still reflects the medical need and will be reviewed at the time of offer. Where an applicant already registered notifies a change in their medical circumstances and/or the impact of their current housing on this, the applicant's priority will be re-assessed using the same process.

4.6 Assessing Welfare and Hardship Grounds.

Some applicants may need to move on welfare or hardship grounds that are unrelated to a medical condition. These applicants may need to move, not due to a medical need, but because they would suffer hardship if they were not able to move to a more suitable location within the borough.

All cases will be assessed individually and recorded to ensure that decisions are consistent and fair. Welfare and hardship grounds can include, but are not limited to:

- Where at least one person in a household is vulnerable and could not be expected to find their own settled or suitable accommodation, for example someone with learning difficulties who wishes to live independently.
- Where a move is required to provide or receive care or support. This could include foster carers, those approved to adopt who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child, or a child that was previously looked after by Bracknell Forest Council, and special guardians.
- Where an applicant needs to move to a different locality in order to give or receive care, to access specialised medical treatment, or to take up a particular employment, education, or training opportunity.
- Where an applicant has experienced Domestic Abuse and has spent a period of recovery in a refuge.
- Where an applicant has been discharged from hospital and cannot return home.

In all cases applicants will be advised of their right to request a review of the decision made on their application. Applicants who have been accepted for a main housing duty under homelessness legislation (Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) will not be considered for any additional priority on welfare grounds. Any request will be considered under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII.

4.7 Approved Move-On from Supported Housing.

For some applicants ready to move to independent accommodation from supported accommodation there may be a protocol in place between the Housing Provider and the Council. In consideration of the pathway to independence for that applicant, an assessment will be carried out to determine what type of housing is suitable to meet

their needs. If it is established that the client needs a more supported environment, they may be prioritised for move on to social housing.

In assessing the suitability of move on to social housing, the move on panel will look at whether the applicant has acquired the necessary skills to live independently, has managed their current tenancy, has a clear rent account for a minimum of 6 months, and would not be able to manage or not in suitable private rented accommodation.

4.8 Care Leavers under a Staying Put Arrangement.

Care Leavers under a Staying Put Arrangement may not have access to a move on from supported housing. To recognise the responsibilities of the Council as a corporate parent, Care Leavers within a staying put arrangement will be placed in band C and will be given an effective date from their 18th birthday, unless they have an earlier registration date. In this case the registration date will become the effective date.

4.9 Households owed a homelessness prevention duty.

Where an applicant has approached Bracknell Forest for assistance and the Council is satisfied that a prevention duty is owed, they will be assessed based on their existing accommodation and awarded the banding that reflects their current circumstances.

Where a suitable offer of accommodation has been made by the Council under the prevention duty and has been refused by the applicant without good reason, the Council will have discharged its duty to prevent homelessness and no further offer of accommodation will be made. Where an offer of accommodation has been accepted and the prevention duty has been discharged, the housing register application will be re-assessed to establish whether the applicant should remain on the housing register.

4.10 Households assessed as having deliberately worsened their circumstances.

The Council will consider whether an applicant has deliberately made their housing situation worse in order to improve their chances of rehousing through the housing register.

To reduce the likelihood of applicants moving deliberately into poorer accommodation in order to qualify for higher priority and quicker re-housing, applicants who are deemed to have deliberately worsened their circumstances will normally be placed in a band E for a period of 12 months. At the end of this period, the applicant can request that their application is re-assessed. All relevant facts and information available will be considered in the re-assessment process.

Some examples of worsening housing circumstances are given below:

- Applicants who have abandoned or voluntarily given up a social housing property.
- Moving without good reason to accommodation which is more overcrowded or is considered to be more unsatisfactory than their previous accommodation.
- Selling a property or giving notice on a tenancy without having alternative accommodation available to them.
- Allowing a property to become overcrowded by inviting additional households to move in.
- Applicants who have allowed family members 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.
- Moving out of a property against housing advice when the applicant was able to remain in the accommodation.
- Moving out of a property that has been adapted to meet the needs of a household member into accommodation without adaptations.
- Homeowners who have transferred their property to another family member within the last 5 years before making an application to the housing register.
- Applicants who have given up affordable and suitable private rented accommodation which they were able to maintain, to move in with other relatives/friends, or to move to a smaller private rented property creating a situation of overcrowding or sharing.
- Requesting or colluding with a landlord of family member to issue them with a Notice to quit.

Where an applicant has no, or no effective, control over their move to alternative accommodation, this should not be considered as a deliberate worsening of circumstances.

5 Finding a Home through Choice Based Lettings.

Applicants accepted onto the Housing Register can bid for available properties that are appropriate to their housing need. The key aim of a Choice-Based Lettings scheme is to enable people seeking rehousing through the housing register to exercise choice about where they live.

Some Housing Associations may decide not to advertise all of their available homes through MyChoice. This will depend on the level of nominations rights the Council has with the Housing Association. In some cases, a home may be excluded from advertising because the property will be needed for a direct let, temporary accommodation or an internal move for the Housing Association.

All applicants who are eligible and qualify for MyChoice will be able to bid on properties advertised on www.BFCMyChoice.org.uk

The property details provided in the adverts should enable the applicant to make an informed choice before they make a bid. There is no limit to the number of bids a person can make in a week.

5.1 Restrictive Labelling and how it is applied under this scheme.

Restrictive labelling may be applied to certain properties in order to prioritise them for particular types of applicants. This will be made clear in the advert for the property.

The reason for restrictive labelling is to help meet local needs and targets by making the best use of social housing stock. For example, the Council may restrict some properties to enable transfer applicants to be given preference or to reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation by giving preference to households accepted as homeless by the Council.

Some examples of restrictive labelling include:

- Transfer applicants only.
- Homeless applicants only.
- Ground floor accommodation needed.
- Larger households.
- Properties where a Local Lettings Plan is in place.
- Disabled or adapted properties.
- Properties designated for sensitive letting.
- Age restricted properties.
- Properties where pets are not allowed.

There are more details about some of these in the sections below.

Adverts will clearly indicate any restrictions on bidding and will detail any particular criteria that apply. Where restrictive labelling is applied, bids from applicants who do not meet all of the eligibility criteria for the property will not be considered.

5.2 Local Lettings Policies.

S166A (6) of the Housing Act 1996 enables housing authorities to allocate accommodation to particular people and there will be occasions when a local letting policy is needed to address issues such as child density, vulnerable households, and households in employment, in order to ensure that the housing development contributes towards a sustainable and balanced community in the local area.

Local lettings policies usually apply to new build developments with the aim of ensuring:

- a mix of household types/client groups.
- a range of households of different ages.
- a mix of people who are in paid employment and those who are not in paid employment.
- a balance of families with different numbers and ages of children.

Where a local lettings policy applies, this will be made available to applicants on request.

In all cases, local lettings policies will take account of the overall housing need in the area, whilst ensuring that vulnerable households are not unduly disadvantaged and that policies focus on ensuring tenancy sustainability.

5.3 Sensitive Lettings (single property).

On occasions, a Housing Association may ask for a sensitive letting for a property in order to address and manage localised issues within an area.

The request may be made to reduce the concentration of certain groups where this is creating housing management problems or having a negative impact on neighbours, or to promote a more balanced community by seeking to select/not select households with particular characteristics.

Where the Council agrees, a sensitive letting will be applied to match the property to a suitable household.

5.4 Bidding on an available home.

Properties are advertised on a weekly cycle. Weekly adverts are published on every Thursday at midnight and are available for applicants to make bids until the following Tuesday at Midnight. Applicants may express an interest through bidding on any advertised property that meets their needs.

Applicants can check their position on the list at the time of the bid, together with the total number of bids already placed by logging into their MyChoice account. This allows applicants to make informed decisions about their choice of property and the likelihood of being successful. For example, if they are making bids where they are consistently low down in the priority for properties, they may want to consider other property types or areas to increase their chance of a successful bid. Within the bidding period, applicants may withdraw bids and make further bids.

In certain circumstances applicants may bid for properties by proxy. Council staff and support agencies may be able to make bids on behalf of applicants if they are not able to use the bidding system or are not actively making bids. In order, to minimise stays in temporary accommodation, the Council may bid for properties on behalf of homeless households, to enable them to move into household's long-term accommodation.

Property adverts will usually include a photograph of the home and a full description. The description will include:

- Type of property.
- Whether the property is being let at an affordable rent or social rent.
- Any age restrictions.

- Any special criteria e.g. local lettings plan or sensitive lets.
- Number of bedrooms.
- The maximum size of household that can apply for the property (for example, 3-bedroom 5-person house).
- The location of the property by street and town.
- Floor level (if appropriate).
- Any adaptations (for example, disabled facilities).
- Access to the property (for example whether there is ground-level access, a ramp or lift).
- Type of parking (if any).
- Access to a garden (if any, or if shared).
- Heating Type.
- Rent and service charge.
- Type of tenancy.
- Services provided (for example, extra care).
- Information about the surrounding area.
- Whether pets are allowed.

Once the advert cycle has closed a shortlist of all bids will be produced.

5.5 Determining Priority between shortlisted applicants.

When applicants bid on a property they will be placed on a shortlist. Any applicant who bids on a property where they do not satisfy the advertised criteria will not be included on the shortlist.

Once the advertising period has closed, the housing system will automatically create a shortlist of applicants for each property, arranged in priority order (as determined by the allocations scheme).

For each property, advertised bids will be ranked in the following order:

- Priority Band (Band A will have a higher priority than Band B and so on).
- Effective date of band.
- Date of registration.
- Local connection.

The successful applicant will normally be the applicant who is eligible for the size and type of property being offered and who is in the highest band (at the point in time when the advert cycle closed). Where there is more than one applicant in that band, priority will be decided by the effective date of the application (relating to that band).

The top three applicants on the shortlist will be put forward or 'nominated' to the Housing Association that has the vacancy.

The prioritisation of shortlisted applicants will take into consideration any additional criteria stipulated by the Housing Association for the occupation of the property. Should the applicant with the highest priority on the shortlist not accept the property,

the property will be offered by the Housing Association to the next applicant on the shortlist, and so on, until the property is accepted.

5.6 Verifying and Nominating an Application.

5.6.1 Verifying a Nomination.

Before any nomination is made, the successful applicant's details will be checked to ensure that:

- They are still eligible and qualify for MyChoice.
- That there has been no material change of circumstances since their banding was assessed.
- They have been placed in the correct priority banding based on information provided by the applicant.
- They are suitable for the size and type of property.

The Council may conduct unannounced home visits to assist in the verification of applications. Applicants will also be required to provide documentary proof to confirm statements made in their application.

If an applicant is not able to provide the necessary information within the timescale given or the Council is not able to contact the applicant, the applicant will not be nominated to the Housing Association.

Where it is found that an applicant is no longer eligible or a qualifying person their application will be cancelled.

Where it is found that an applicant's circumstances have changed from the information held by the Council are incorrect, their application will be re-assessed.

If this re-assessment finds that their priority band is reduced, the applicant will no longer be nominated to the Housing Association and their application will be placed in the appropriate band.

Cases will be referred to the Council's legal service if it is evident that there has been a deliberate action to defraud the Council by not notifying the Council of a change in circumstances.

It is important for applicants to be aware that should they be successful in bidding on a property, and it has been established that they have rent arrears, the bid will not be accepted, and the application will be placed into a band E until the arrears have been cleared. Once the arrears have been cleared, the application will be re-assessed, and they will be placed in a new band (if appropriate) and the effective date of their application will be the date on which the arrears were cleared.

Where applications have been cancelled or have had their priority band reduced, the Council will write to the applicant informing them of the decision made and how that decision was reached. The applicant will also be notified of their right to review any such decision.

5.6.2 Making a Nomination.

The Council does not own any housing stock, and so all rehousing offers are made through nominations to the Housing Association advertising the property.

Some Housing Associations operate their own Allocations policy which may differ from MyChoice and on occasions, a nomination made by the Council will not be accepted by the housing association. In addition, some housing associations will undertake their own housing assessment including a financial assessment to ensure that the applicant can afford the property before making an offer of a tenancy.

Once the Housing Association has the details of the nominations made by the Council, the Housing Association will contact the applicant with a time to view the property. It is the responsibility of the applicant to attend the viewing at the stated time and respond to the timescales that the Housing Association requests to establish whether the first nominated applicant wishes to accept the offer of a tenancy. If the applicant does not contact the Housing Association or fails to attend the viewing the Housing Association reserves the right to withdraw any offer of a tenancy and to offer the tenancy to next person on the shortlist.

The Housing Association will inform an unsuccessful applicant of the reason behind their decision. The Council reserves the right to discuss any refusal of a nomination with the Housing Association if it believes the decision to be unreasonable or perverse.

5.6.3 Direct Match.

Whilst the aim of MyChoice is to provide choice in the allocation of social housing in Bracknell Forest, there will be exceptional situations where this is not possible. It may be necessary to nominate a particular household directly to a property to make best use of housing stock. In these situations where an applicant is directly matched to the property these properties will not be advertised on MyChoice. To ensure transparency, the Council will report on properties that have been as allocated through direct matches.

The following are examples of circumstances where a direct match may be made:-

- A homeless applicant owed a relief or main housing duty where they have failed to regularly bid on available properties on MyChoice.
- A homeless applicant where the Council has accepted a main housing duty and there is a strategic need to move the applicant.
- Where a property is needed to provide emergency accommodation for a homeless household.
- Where an existing social housing tenant living in Bracknell Forest has been assessed as needing an urgent move and this will avoid a homelessness application being made.
- A request made through the National Witness Protection Service.
- Where an applicant has been assessed by the Multi-Agency Protection Panel and it is decided that the Applicant should be offered social housing.

- Where a specially adapted property has been built, acquired, or adapted to meet the needs of a specific client.
- Where any delay in providing suitable accommodation would have a negative impact on the or the applicant.
- Where it is necessary to comply with a Court Order to fulfil an urgent statutory or legal duty.
- Where a certain type and location of property is needed to assist in a case of child protection or public protection.
- Where an applicant needs to move urgently because of a critical medical or welfare need where there are serious safeguarding implications.

5.6.4 Withdrawal of an advert or nomination.

There may be exceptional circumstances in which a housing association that has advertised a property or made an offer of a tenancy to an applicant needs to withdraw this property from MyChoice. This could be for the following reasons:

- An error has been made in the advertising criteria.
- The property has been advertised, but the existing tenant has rescinded their notice.
- There is a right of succession to the property.
- The property has been advertised but further inspections have established that the property needs major works which will take several months.
- The property has been advertised but needs to be withdrawn for an urgent case as a direct let.
- The Housing Association needs the property for an urgent management move.
- The nominee does not qualify under the Housing Association's own Housing Allocations Policy.

Withdrawal of an advert or an offer can be done right up to the point before a tenancy is signed.

6. Refusals.

6.1 Transfer or First-Time Applicants.

Where a transfer or first-time applicant has successfully bid on a property and has been made an offer of accommodation by the Housing Association, and they fail to accept it, and they have refused a total of two suitable offers, their applications will be suspended for a period of 12 months. During this period, the applicant will not be permitted to bid on any properties.

If an applicant successfully bids for a property but the Housing Association is unable to contact the applicant within a reasonable amount of time, the Housing Association will offer the property to the next eligible applicant on the shortlist. Lack of contact will be classed as a refusal for the purpose of suspending an application.

6.2 Homeless applicants.

If an applicant who is homeless and occupying temporary accommodation secured under s193 of the Housing Act 1996 Act Part VII is made an offer of accommodation and fails to contact the Housing Association or refuses a suitable direct match as a final offer the Council will discharge its homelessness duty.

The applicant will be invited to reconsider the offer and will be encouraged to accept this offer. Any applicant who refused a final offer of accommodation has the right to request a review of the suitability of the offer of accommodation.

If, following the conclusion of the review, the Reviewing Officer decides that the offer was not suitable, the applicant will receive one further offer of suitable accommodation.

Where an applicant refuses a final offer of suitable accommodation and does not take up the offer, the Council's duty to accommodate them in temporary accommodation will cease.

Subject to the outcome of any review the Council will instigate legal proceedings to recover possession of the temporary accommodation. The applicant will have to make their own arrangements for housing and their housing register application will need to be re-assessed.

6.3 Direct Matches.

If a transfer or first-time applicant refuses a direct match to a property, the Council will consider the reasons for refusing the offer of accommodation, including whether the offer was suitable to meet the needs of the applicant and their household.

Where the Council decides that the direct match was not appropriate, it will make one further offer of accommodation to the applicant. Should the applicant refuse any subsequent direct match, the urgency of the case may be reviewed and re-assessed to a lower band to reflect this.

7. Feedback on Lettings.

The main aim of the Bracknell Forest Choice scheme is to operate an open and transparent lettings system.

The result of lettings made through the scheme will be published on the MyChoice website by showing:

- Each letting made by size, type, and location.
- The number of applicants who have bid for each property.
- The band and effective date of the successful bidder.

This information will enable applicants to make informed decisions about which properties to bid for by giving them a better idea of which properties or areas attract

the greatest number of bids and how long they would normally have to wait for an offer. The results published do not contain any personal data relating to an applicant.

8. Request for a Review.

The Council is committed to making the correct decisions on all applications. The Council will notify the applicant in writing of the decision made and give full details of how that the decision was made.

Under section 166A(9) of the Housing Act 1996 an applicant has a legal right to request a review of any of the following decisions reached by the Council on their housing application:

- A decision that an applicant is not eligible.
- A decision that an applicant is not a qualifying person to join the housing register.
- A decision regarding the band an applicant has been awarded.
- The effective date awarded of going into a band.
- A decision to remove an applicant from the housing register.
- Any decision about the facts of the case that has been used to assess their application.
- Where an applicant considers that a decision has been based on incorrect information.

Requests for a review must be submitted in writing or e-mail, to the Council within 21 days of the date when the notification was received.

Review requests will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that the policy has been incorrectly applied.

The request should refer to the relevant section or paragraph of the policy. Cases where new or additional evidence is provided will be considered by the relevant team as a re-assessment of the application rather than a review.

8.1 How a request for a review will be dealt with.

Upon receiving a request for a review:

- The applicant will receive a notification that the review has been received and the review should be concluded within 56 days.
- The review will be carried out by a Senior Officer who was not involved in the original decision.
- The applicant may be asked to provide additional information to support their review.
- On completion of the review the applicant will be notified in writing of the outcome.

If further information is required, the review period may be extended with the agreement of all parties. Once a review has been completed, the applicant cannot

request a further review of the same decision unless there has been a material change in their circumstances.

9. Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing.

9.1 Data Protection.

Any information provided as part of the application process will be handled sensitively and subject the appropriate General Data Protection regulations.

Bracknell Forest Council shall comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Legislation and any equivalent or associated legislation in relation to the storing of computer records, processing and sharing of personal data in connection with this Allocation Policy.

To assess an application, the applicant's personal data will be used, and the Council will contact third parties to obtain and share information in order to comply with the statutory obligation of processing the applicant's housing/homelessness application or where disclosure of information is a legal requirement.

Applicants have the right to request any information held by the Council under a Subject Access Request.

9.2 Sharing personal information.

Personal information obtained from the applicant that applies to the housing register or homeless application will only be used in ways that the applicant reasonably expects in order for the Council to process their application.

The details provided by the applicant may be shared with third parties to comply with statutory obligations, which include but may not be limited to:

- Housing Associations
- Statutory and voluntary services, for example other housing providers, health trusts, police, probation service, social services, DWP, Housing Benefits, CAB
- GP's
- Private landlords/letting agents.
- For statistical and reporting purposes including government departments such as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Such reports will be statistical only and will not identify any individual.

9.3 Councillor or MP enquiries on behalf of Applicants.

The Council will provide Councillors and MPs with personal data about the Applicant if the Applicant provides permission to do so or if the Councillor or MP reasonably needs it to carry out their duties. However, the Councillor and/or MP must not use it for other purposes.

10. Complaints.

Complaints are separate to the circumstances where an applicant wishes to seek a review of a decision made on their application. A request for a review should be made under the review procedure set out above and not through the Council's complaints procedure.

Where an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way in which their application for housing has been conducted and wishes to make a complaint, this should be made using the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of the current complaints procedure is available on the Bracknell Forest Council website and can be accessed here: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/get-touch/complaints>

Where a complaint relates to how an applicant has been dealt with under this policy an applicant who remains dissatisfied after following the internal complaints process has the right to continue with their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman Service if they are unhappy with the response to their complaint.

The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent service run by Central Government to make sure that Councils provide the required standard of service to their customers.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about how the Council has done something, but they cannot question what has been done simply because someone did not agree with it. For further details contact: www.lgo.org.uk

Appendix 1

Immigration Control Persons from Abroad

Persons subject to immigration control

1.1 The regulations setting out which classes of persons from abroad are eligible or ineligible for an allocation are the [Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(SI 2006 No.1294\)](#) ('the Eligibility Regulations').

1.2 The term 'person subject to immigration control' is defined in [s.13\(2\) of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996](#) as a person who under the [Immigration Act 1971](#) requires leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom (whether or not such leave has been given).

1.3 The provisions of [section 7\(1\) of the Immigration Act 1988](#) and the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 have been saved for the purpose of housing legislation to protect the rights of EEA citizens, and their family members, who have citizens' rights pursuant to the Withdrawal Agreement.

This will ensure that EEA citizens, and their family members, who:

- 1) have acquired limited leave to enter and remain in the UK (also known as pre-settled status) by virtue of Appendix EU of the Immigration Rules ("the EU Settlement Scheme"); or
- 2) were frontier working in the UK prior to 31 December 2020.

will continue to be treated as 'persons not subject to immigration control' in the instances where they would previously have been, so that their eligibility for the allocation of social housing can be judged on the basis of [Regulation 4 of the Eligibility Regulations](#) as was the case prior to 31 December 2020.

1.4 EEA citizens, and their family members, who have been granted indefinite leave to enter or remain (also known as settled status) under the EU Settlement Scheme, do not need the savings to apply to them. Their eligibility should be judged on the basis of [Class C of Regulation 3 of the Eligibility Regulations](#), as is the case for persons subject to immigration control who have been granted indefinite leave to remain. In general, they should be eligible provided they can demonstrate habitual residence in the Common Travel Area.

For the purpose of this guidance references to "the Withdrawal Agreement" in this note are to the "[Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community \(2019/C 384 I/01\)](#)". Equivalent provisions are to be found in separation agreements relating to the [European Economic Area/European Free Trade Agreement](#) and the [EU/Swiss Free Movement of Persons Agreement](#), which are also given effect in domestic law by the [European Union \(Withdrawal Agreement\) Act 2020](#).

1.5 The following categories of persons do not require leave to enter or remain in the UK:

- (i) British citizens
- (ii) certain Commonwealth citizens with a right of abode in the UK
- (iii) Irish citizens, who are not subject to immigration control in the UK because the Republic of Ireland forms part of the Common Travel Area (see paragraph 3.14 (iii) below) with the UK which allows free movement.
- (iv) by operation of the savings provisions referred to in paragraph 3.9 above, EEA citizens, and their family members, who have established citizens' rights in accordance with Part 2 of the Withdrawal Agreement, i.e. those who were residents and exercised a right to reside in the UK derived from European Union law or any provision under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, and those who were frontier working, before 31 December 2020. Whether an EEA citizen (or family member) has exercised a particular right to reside in the UK or rights to be treated as a frontier worker will depend on their circumstances, at that particular time. For example, whether the EEA citizen is, for the purposes of [the Immigration \(European Economic Area\) Regulations 2016 \(SI 2016/1052\)](#) ('the EEA Regulations') (as preserved by the savings provisions) a jobseeker, a worker, a self-employed person and so on.
- (v) persons who are exempt from immigration control under the Immigration Acts, including diplomats and their family members based in the UK, and some military personnel.

For the purpose of this guidance, 'EEA citizens' means citizens of any of the EU member states, and citizens of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland.

1.6 Any person who does not fall within one of the four categories in paragraph 3.11 will be a person subject to immigration control and will be ineligible for an allocation of accommodation unless they fall within a class of persons prescribed by [regulation 3 of the Eligibility Regulations](#) (see paragraph 3.14 below).

1.7 If there is any uncertainty about an applicant's immigration status, it is recommended that authorities contact the Home Office.

Persons subject to immigration control who are eligible for an allocation of social housing.

1.8 [Regulation 3 of the Eligibility Regulations](#) provides that the following classes of persons subject to immigration control are eligible for an allocation of accommodation:

- (i) a person granted refugee status: normally granted 5 years' limited leave to remain in the UK.

- (ii) a person granted exceptional leave to enter or remain in the UK granted outside the provisions of the Immigration Rules; and whose leave to enter and remain is not subject to a condition requiring them to maintain and accommodate themselves, and any person who is dependent on them, without recourse to public funds. Exceptional leave to remain now usually takes the form of 'discretionary leave.'
- (iii) a person with current leave to enter or remain in the UK with no condition or limitation, and who is habitually resident in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland (the Common Travel Area): such a person will have indefinite leave to enter or remain and will be regarded as having settled status. However, where indefinite leave to enter or remain was granted as a result of an undertaking that a sponsor would be responsible for the applicant's maintenance and accommodation, the applicant must have been resident in the Common Travel Area for five years since the date of entry - or the date of the sponsorship undertaking, whichever is later – in order to be eligible. Where the sponsor has (or, if there was more than one sponsor, all of the sponsors have) died within the first five years, the applicant will be eligible for an allocation of accommodation.
- (iv) a person who has humanitarian protection granted under [paragraphs 339C – 344C of the Immigration Rules](#);
- (v) a person who has limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom on family or private life grounds under [Article 8 of the Human Rights Act](#), such leave granted under [paragraph 276BE \(1\)](#), [paragraph 276DG](#) or [Appendix FM](#) of the Immigration Rules, and who is not subject to a condition requiring that person to maintain and accommodate themselves, and any person dependent upon them, without recourse to public funds;
- (vi) a person who is habitually resident in the Common Travel Area and who has been transferred to the United Kingdom under [section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016](#) and has limited leave to remain under [paragraph 352ZH of the Immigration Rules](#);
- (vii) a person who is habitually resident in the Common Travel Area and who has Calais leave to remain under paragraph 352J of the Immigration Rules. (Effective from 1 November 2018);
- (viii) a person who is habitually resident in the Common Travel Area and who has limited leave to remain in the UK as a stateless person under paragraph 405 of the Immigration Rules;
- (ix) a person who has limited leave to enter and remain in the UK as the family member of a 'relevant person of Northern Ireland' by virtue of Appendix EU of the Immigration Rules;
- (x) a person who has limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom under Appendix Hong Kong British Citizen (Overseas) of the Immigration Rules, who is habitually resident in the Common Travel Area, and who is not subject to a condition requiring that person to

maintain and accommodate themselves, and any person dependent upon them, without recourse to public funds.

- (xi) a person who has been granted leave by virtue of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy or the previous scheme for locally employed staff in Afghanistan; and
- (xii) a person with leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom who left Afghanistan in connection with the collapse of the Afghan government that took place on 15th August 2021 and who is not subject to a condition of no recourse to public funds and has not been given leave to enter or remain as a result of an undertaking that a sponsor would be responsible for the applicant's maintenance and accommodation. However, a person who was sponsored will be eligible for housing assistance if the applicant has been resident in the Common Travel Area for 5 years since the date of entry (or the date of the sponsorship undertaking, whichever is later) or their sponsor(s) have died.
- (xiii) a person in the UK who left Ukraine in connection with the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 and had resided in Ukraine immediately before 1st January 2022, and who has been granted leave in accordance with Immigration rules made under section 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971.
- (xiv) a person in the United Kingdom who has limited leave to remain granted in accordance with Appendix Ukraine Scheme of the immigration rules pursuant to an application made by that person from within the United Kingdom.

Other persons from abroad who may be ineligible for an allocation.

1.9 By virtue of [regulation 4 of the Eligibility Regulations](#), a person who is not subject to immigration control and who falls within one of the following descriptions is to be treated as a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of accommodation:

- (i) a person who is not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (Subject to certain exceptions - see paragraph 3.17 below).
- (ii) a person whose only right to reside in the UK is derived from his status as a jobseeker (or his status as the family member of a jobseeker). 'Jobseeker' has the same meaning as in [regulation 6\(1\)](#) of the 'EEA Regulations';
- (iii) a person whose only right to reside in the UK is an initial right to reside for a period not exceeding three months under [regulation 13 of the EEA Regulations](#);
- (iv) a person whose only right to reside in the UK is a derivative right to reside to which they are entitled under [regulation 16\(1\) of the EEA Regulations](#), but only in a case where the right exists under that regulation because the applicant satisfies the criteria in regulation 16(5) of those Regulations;

- (v) a person whose only right to reside in the Common Travel Area is a right equivalent to one of those mentioned in sub-paragraph (ii) to (iv) above.

1.10 For the purposes of determining eligibility for an allocation of social housing, a person who is not subject to immigration control and who falls within categories (ii) or (iii) in paragraph 3.15 above should be treated as ineligible. This is regardless of whether such person has been granted limited leave to enter or remain in the UK by virtue of [Appendix EU of the Immigration Rules](#); or a family permit issued under the EU Settlement Scheme granting them limited leave to enter the UK by virtue of [the Immigration \(Leave to Enter and Remain\) Order 2000](#).

Persons exempted from the requirement to be habitually resident.

1.11 The following persons from abroad are eligible for an allocation of accommodation even if they are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area:

- (i) an EEA citizen who has been granted pre-settled status and is in the UK as a worker (which has the same meaning as in [regulation 6\(1\) of the EEA Regulations](#));
- (ii) an EEA citizen who has been granted pre-settled status and is in the UK as a self-employed person (which has the same meaning as in [regulation 6\(1\) of the EEA Regulations](#));
- (iii) a person who is treated as a worker for the purpose of the definition of 'qualified person' in regulation 6(1) of the EEA Regulations pursuant to regulation 5 of the [Accession of Croatia \(Immigration and Worker Authorisation\) Regulations 2013](#) (as amended), (right of residence of an accession State citizen subject to worker authorisation);
- (iv) a person who is a family member of a person referred to in (i) to (iii) above and has been granted pre-settled status.
- (v) a person who is in the UK as a result of their deportation, expulsion, or other removal by compulsion of law from another country to the UK.
- (vi) a person who is in the United Kingdom as a frontier worker for the purpose of the [Citizens' Rights \(Frontier Workers\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2020 \(SI 2020/1213\)](#) (as defined in paragraph 3.18 below);
- (vii) a person who is a family member of a person referred to in (vi) above and has a right to reside by virtue of having been granted limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, as a family member of a relevant EEA citizen, under the Immigration Act 1971 by virtue of Appendix EU to the Immigration Rules made under section 3 of that Act.
- (viii) a person who left Afghanistan in connection with the collapse of the Afghan government that took place on 15th August 2021.
- (ix) a person who left Ukraine in connection with the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 and had resided in Ukraine immediately before 1st January 2022 and is not subject to immigration control.

1.12 A person who is no longer working or no longer in self-employment will retain his or her status as a worker or self-employed person in certain circumstances. A

person who is no longer working does not cease to be treated as a 'worker' for the purpose of [regulation 6\(1\)\(b\) of the EEA Regulations](#), if he or she:

- (i) is temporarily unable to work as the result of an illness or accident or
- (ii) is recorded as involuntarily unemployed after having been employed in the UK, provided that he or she has registered as a jobseeker with the relevant employment office, and
 - (a) was employed for one year or more before becoming unemployed, or
 - (b) has been unemployed for no more than 6 months, or
 - (c) can provide evidence that he or she is seeking employment in the UK and has a genuine chance of being engaged, or
 - (d) is involuntarily unemployed and has embarked on vocational training, or
 - (e) has voluntarily ceased working and embarked on vocational training that is related to their previous employment.

1.13 EEA citizens who have established citizens' rights in accordance with Part 2 of the Withdrawal Agreement can be joined by close family members (spouses, civil and unmarried partners, dependent children and grandchildren, and dependent parents and grandparents) who live in a different country at any point in the future, if the relationship existed before/on 31 December 2020 and still exists when the family member wishes to join the EEA citizen in the UK. The family member will have 3 months from their date of arrival to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. If the family member is a third country citizen, they can apply for an EU Settlement Scheme family permit or EEA family permit. Information relevant to this can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/family-permit/>. 'Family member' does not include a person who is an extended family member who is treated as a family member by virtue of regulation 7(3) of the EEA Regulations. When considering the eligibility of a family member, housing authorities should consider whether the person has acquired indefinite leave to remain in the UK in their own right, for example, a family member at the point they are eligible and are granted settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

Appendix 2

Reasonable Preference

The Housing Act 1996 requires that the Bracknell Forest Housing Allocations scheme must give reasonable preference to certain groups of people. The Reasonable Preference groups are listed in Section 166A (3) of the Housing Act 1996 as follows:

- i. People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 (Homelessness) of the Housing Act).
- ii. People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under Part 7 (Homelessness) of the Housing Act 1996 because they are: - Homeless and in priority need but homeless intentionally.
- iii. People who are homeless and in priority need and not intentionally homeless.
- iv. People who are threatened with homelessness and in priority need and not intentionally homeless.
- v. People who are not intentionally homeless but not in priority need.
- vi. People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- vii. People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability).
- viii. 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.

However, in deciding how one applicant should be prioritised compared to another with similar needs, the Bracknell Forest Housing Allocation scheme will also take into account factors such as local connection, behaviour, and the financial resources available to each applicant.

For example, an applicant who: (i) falls into one of the reasonable preference categories and (ii) who has a local connection to a district area will be placed in a higher priority band than an applicant with similar needs who does not have a local connection to the district area.

Appendix 3

SIZE OF FAMILY - SIZE OF PROPERTY Government Bedroom Standard

Size of family	Size of property Required
Single	Bedsit/1bedroom
Couple	1 bedroom
Exceptional cases where 2 adults need to live together	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) with one child	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) with two children of the same sex under the age of 21	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) with two children of the opposite sex both aged under 10	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) with two children of the same sex and the oldest is aged 21 years or more and the eldest child is assessed as not being able to live independently or in full time education	3 bedrooms
Parent(s) with two children of opposite sex where the older child is aged 10 years or over	3 bedrooms
Parents with three children where two children can share (because they are (i) same sex both under 21 or (ii) different sex both under 10)	3 bedrooms
Parents with four children where it is possible for two pairs of children to each share a bedroom (because they are (i) same sex both under 21 or (ii) different sex both under 10)	3 bedrooms
Parents with three children where none of which can share (same sex over 21 and assessed as not being able to live independently or being in full time education, or different sex over 10)	4 bedrooms
Parents with four children where only two can share (same sex both under 21, or different sex both under 10)	4 bedrooms
Parents with five or more children with any children over the age of 21 assessed as not being able to live independently or being in full time education	4 bedrooms

In exceptional circumstances the Senior Housing Officer may exercise discretion in deviating from the Bedroom Standard. For example, where applicants require larger accommodation on health grounds, the Senior Housing Officer will consider this on a case by case basis, considering the advice of a qualified medical advisor.

In all cases applicants will need to demonstrate that the property is affordable at the time of offer.

Appendix 4

Housing Bands

Band A

1. Social Housing tenants (including successors) within the Bracknell Forest area who are under-occupying family accommodation and are wishing to downsize.
2. Social Housing tenants within the Bracknell Forest area who are living in a property that has been built or adapted for a person with a disability which is no longer needed.
3. Urgent medical. Households who are suffering severe, long term medical conditions (chronic or progressive) or a severe disability because they cannot physically access their home or essential facilities within their current home, and it is not possible for adaptations to be undertaken to enable access.
4. Applicants who are ready to be discharged from hospital who have somewhere to live but are unable to return to their accommodation due to their medical needs and whose accommodation cannot be adapted, nor do they have the assets to adapt their current accommodation or move to another property.
5. Applicants or a member of their household who are living within the Bracknell Forest area who have been referred by a statutory agency and the Council is satisfied that the household has an urgent need for rehousing because if they are not rehoused their life will be in serious danger, and where a homeless application is not appropriate.
6. Applicants assessed by the Safeguarding Board where there is a critical and serious threat to the wellbeing of a child and their accommodation is a major contributory factor to the risk.
7. Applicants where the Council has agreed on the recommendation of the MAPPa partnership that the applicant requires, and is suitable for, independent housing. They must qualify for the housing register and, after considering the evidence submitted, the Council must be satisfied that due to the nature and extent of the circumstances of the MAPPa case, accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on the multi-agency planning for that individual.
8. Families with children living in accommodation where there are two or more bedrooms short compared to their household bedroom need under the bedroom standard or the property is statutorily overcrowded. Where the household contains any non-dependent adult, they will be disregarded from this assessment.

9. An immediate prohibition order which is served due to the serious risk to life.
10. Two Registered Provider tenants living within the Bracknell Forest area, both giving up general needs accommodation who are wishing to move to one property as a household as joint tenants.
11. Homeless households who received a final offer of accommodation via Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 and moved into the accommodation who were subsequently successful in their request for a review.
12. Decants of Bracknell Forest owned property that is due for demolition or major repairs.

Band B

1. Families with children living in accommodation where they are one bedroom short compared to their household bedroom need under the bedroom standard.
2. Register Provider tenants within the Bracknell Forest area moving from 1 bed general needs accommodation to older persons accommodation.
3. Applicants with a proven social care need, where rehousing will support the delivery of another statutory service within the Bracknell Forest area. To be approved by a panel of Housing and Social Care Managers.
4. Bracknell Forest care leavers in housing need who are ready for independent living within an agreed move on protocol and annual quota.
5. Foster carers/Adoption with approval from Bracknell Forest's Children's Social Care service, and there is a need to move to a larger home to accommodate a looked after child within an agreed annual quota.
6. Corporate Parenting and Guardianships taken on by family members to prevent a child from becoming looked after by Bracknell Forest Children's Services with an agreed annual quota.
7. Move on from supported housing commissioned by Bracknell Forest Council where there is a move on protocol in place with an annual quota.
8. Armed Forces personnel who have been medically discharged.
9. Medical Severe. Applicants who need to move on medical grounds because their current home is having a severe impact on the health of a member of the household. By re-housing to more suitable accommodation this will help to reduce the impact and their health will deteriorate if the household is not moved to more suitable accommodation. Priority band B will only apply where the applicant is bidding on properties that will reduce the impact on the health of the member of the households.

Band C

1. Families with children living with another household and there is no overcrowding.
2. Homeless Applicants where the main housing duty has been accepted by Bracknell Forest Council.
3. Medical Adverse Impact. Applicants who need to move on medical grounds because their current home is having an adverse impact on the health of a member of his or her current accommodation and their health will not deteriorate in their current accommodation, but the adverse impact will be significantly reduced with a move to more suitable accommodation.
4. Singles or couples who are in insecure accommodation.
5. Verified Rough Sleepers working with the Council's rough sleeper team who are not being considered under a relief duty.
6. Applicants with a local connection who have been assessed as adequately housed but have had a prevention duty accepted by Bracknell Forest Council.
7. Safer Accommodation provided by Bracknell Forest Council or in a refuge and no homeless application has been made.
8. CAT 1 Hazards. Applicants who are living in insanitary or unsatisfactory conditions which would include properties affected by lack of amenities or services, severe damp, major structural defects, flooding, collapse of roof or statutory nuisance and these conditions cannot be rectified within a reasonable period. (As assessed by the Council against the relevant legislation including housing standards and relevant safety rating systems) decide banding.
9. Care leavers in a staying put arrangement supported by Bracknell Forest Council.

Band D

1. Applicants who are serving in the armed forces (or have served in the armed forces within the five-year period immediately preceding their application) and who do not satisfy any of the reasonable preference categories.
2. Applicants needing to move to the locality to give/receive support to avoid hardship.

3. Applicants in supported accommodation who are not part of the move on criteria.
4. Applicants who are in care under Bracknell Forest's Children's services who wish to register and are under the age 18.
5. Applicants who are owed a relief duty within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and who have been assessed by the Council and qualify with a local connection via Part VI.
6. Applicants who have applied for assistance to the Council under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 where the Council has reached a decision that they are homeless but not in priority need.

Band E

1. Applicants who are homeless within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and who have been assessed as being owed a prevention or relief duty by the Council, but they do not have a qualifying local connection.
2. Applicants who have applied for assistance to the Council under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 where the Council has reached a decision that they are homeless and in priority need but have been determined to be homeless intentionally s191(3).
3. Applicants who have been assessed as having worsened their circumstances.
4. Applicants who have unreasonably refused to co-operate (s193c (4)). This band applies to applicants who would ordinarily be deemed as unintentionally homeless and having a priority need but the relief duty has been ended due to their failure to co-operate. The relief duty will have been discharged in accordance with the non-co-operation procedure.
5. Applicants accepted under the Right to Move. Applicants who are able to demonstrate the need to move nearer their place of work within the Bracknell Forest area because they have secured or have permanent employment (over 16 hours per week average) in the area (evidence of the employment must be provided) and are currently a social housing tenant and would experience hardship if unable to move to the area.
6. Rent arrears or any housing related debt at time of application.
7. Rent arrears or any housing related debt at time of offer.
8. Owner occupiers who have a reasonable preference and do not have the resources to resolve their housing need.
9. Applicants who have had a change of circumstances and have not told the Council.

10. Applicants who are seeking aged persons accommodation due to having a high welfare and support need, and need to move to Bracknell Forest to receive family support but do not currently live in Bracknell Forest.

11. Applicants who have been evicted for rent arrears in the past five years.

12. Applicants who have been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the past five years.

13. Applicants living in Bracknell in a reasonable preference category who do not meet the residential qualification.



Appendix 5

Explanation of terms used in this policy.

Act	The Housing Act 1996
Allocation (Nomination)	The allocation (nomination) process by which a person becomes an assured or assured shorthold tenant of housing accommodation held by a registered provider
Applicant	The person making the application, whether as a single person or a couple
BFC MyChoice	The name of Bracknell Forests Housing Allocation Policy
Bracknell Forest	The administrative area of Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Change of circumstances	A change in household circumstances (e.g. address/accommodation, addition of an adult household member) that may affect BHC qualification and/or priority banding
Child/Dependent	A person under the age of 21
Disabled Adapted Properties	Disabled adapted properties are properties that have been specially built or adapted for people with disabilities
Effective Date	Date used to prioritise applications in a band based on the date that the band was awarded
First Time Applicant	Applicants who have been accepted onto our housing register as being eligible to apply for social housing
Homeless Applicant	Applicants found to be homeless, and where a homelessness duty has been accepted by Bracknell Forest Council
Household	The term "household" includes all eligible adults and dependent children included in the applicant's application. Short-term sharing arrangements or temporary part time arrangements will not normally be classified as a household member Section 3
Housing Association/Registered Provider	The official name for housing associations, and housing companies that are registered with Homes England
Housing Register	A database of applicants seeking social and affordable housing.

Nomination	The name put forward, by Bracknell Forest Council, from the housing register to be considered for a property owned by a Housing Association.
Reasonable Preference Categories	A list of groups that the Council must allow on to the housing register.
Registration date	The date the applicant's Housing application was received.
Right to Move	Social housing tenants who have a reasonable preference and need to move to Bracknell Forest to avoid hardship, and need to move because the tenant works in the borough, or they need to move to take up an offer of work
Social/Affordable housing	Housing that you rent from a Housing Association
Transfer Tenant	A transfer applicant is a secure tenant or an assured tenant of a Housing Association living in Bracknell Forest who has been accepted on to the housing register

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Housing Allocations Policy Consultation – Communications Plan. October 2023

Communication aims

To encourage the general public and specific stakeholders to have their say on proposals to introduce changes to the housing allocations policy.

Key messages

The Council is proposing changes to its Housing Allocations Policy

Please read the consultation documents and complete the online survey (or otherwise provide comments via email or paper version of survey) by [Closing date tbc].

Consultation responses will be considered by Executive when they decide on the proposed changes in Spring 2024.

Key milestones

Communications and Consultation Plans prepared and agreed	Early October
Report to CMT	18 October 2023
Report to Executive seeking approval to launch consultation	14 November 2023
Preparation of consultation documents (drafts)	31 October 2023
Complete work on survey and consultation webpage	15 November
Launch of communications and survey	Start December 2023
Closing date for online survey	End January 2024
Consultation report	Mid February 2023

Communications activity plan:

Channel	Key messages(s)	Activity description	Date	Owner
Council website	Have your say on proposed changes to the housing allocations policy. Complete the online survey.	Message on Homepage of Council's website Message in News items KS to organise using press release wording	Early December	KS
Council intranet	Staff invited to have their say on proposed changes to the housing allocations policy. Complete the online survey.	Article linked through to Intranet from Council website. KS to organise	Early December	KS

Forest Views	Staff invited to have their say on proposed changes to the housing allocations policy. Complete the online survey.	Publication is monthly (on intranet), with additional weekly publications (apart from the week the intranet version goes out). Consultation details and ways to get involved – based on press release wording KS to arrange	Mid Dec	KS/IS
Social Media	Have your say on proposed changes to the housing allocations policy. Complete the online survey.	Tweets - Agree frequency of messages in first week, subsequent weeks, and final week. Facebook posts – tba KS to organise.	Early December and throughout	KS/IS
Town and Country/ Town and Country Extra – news bulletin for residents	Have your say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy. Complete the online survey.	Town and Country (printed) - goes out 6 monthly and timings do not align. Town and Country Extra (online) - goes out fortnightly. Article providing consultation details and ways to get involved – based on press release wording. Item to be included at launch and again in January.	Early December and January.	KS/IS
Press Release		Media release – Similar wording to be used for all other communications. IS to provide KS with Executive report and comments/issues to highlight. KS to provide draft to check. Exec Member and Exec Director/AD quotes will need to be checked and approved. May consider a media pre-statement to anticipate press interest at Executive meeting.	Early December w/c 16/10/23	KS/IS

Member session	<p>Members invited to discuss and have their say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy.</p> <p>Members also encouraged to complete the online survey and link provided.</p>	<p>Investigate best channel to promote this – email or other means (Harry Rigg, Councillor services).</p> <p>Identify date.</p> <p>Agree format and prepare presentation and questions.</p> <p>Provide update on responses received thus far</p>	22 Jan 2024	BD/Philip Sadler Democratic Services
Registered Provider focus group	<p>RPs invited to discuss and have their say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy.</p> <p>RPs also encouraged to complete the online survey and link provided</p>	<p>Prepare list of RPs</p> <p>Identify contact names and emails</p> <p>Write email to relevant registered providers</p> <p>Agree format and prepare presentation and questions.</p>		IS
Homeless Forum	<p>Forum members invited to special meeting to discuss and have their say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy.</p> <p>Forum members also encouraged to complete the online survey and link provided.</p>	<p>Write email to Forum members</p> <p>Agree format and prepare presentation and questions.</p>		BD/IS
Email to Public Sector Agencies	<p>Have your say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy. Complete the online survey.</p> <p>Or provide email comments to drop box</p> <p>Please communicate the consultation to other relevant organisations.</p>	<p>Prepare list of organisations</p> <p>Identify contact names and emails</p> <p>Write email to relevant public sector agencies</p>	TBC	IS/BD
Email to relevant Council services	<p>Have your say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy. Complete the online survey.</p>	<p>Prepare and agree list of services</p> <p>Identify contact names and emails</p>		IS/BD

	<p>Or provide email comments to drop box</p> <p>Please communicate the consultation to other relevant organisations.</p>	<p>Write email to relevant public sector agencies</p>		
<p>Email to Voluntary Sector agencies and support providers</p>	<p>Have your say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy. Complete the online survey.</p> <p>Or provide email comments to drop box?</p> <p>Please communicate the consultation to other relevant organisations.</p>	<p>Prepare list of organisations</p> <p>Identify contact names and emails</p> <p>Write email to identified voluntary sector organisations</p>	TBC	IS/BD
<p>Email to Town and Parish Councils</p>	<p>Have your say on proposed changes to the housing applications policy. Complete the online survey</p>	<p>List of email addresses already available.</p> <p>Standard wording</p>		IS/BD
<p>Email to all housing register applicants</p>	<p>Have your say on proposed changes to the housing allocations policy. Complete the online survey.</p>	<p>Email to all housing register applicants using similar wording to press release.</p> <p>KS will provide standard wording offering translation.</p> <p>Need to include in email offer of assistance with completing online survey and non-digital paper version.</p> <p>IS to contact Library Service in advance of consultation to seek their assistance in helping people.</p>	TBC	KH/SB/IS /KS
<p>Consultation webpage</p>	<p>Have your say on proposed changes to the housing allocations policy. Complete the online survey.</p> <p>Please read the consultation documents which will tell you more about the housing allocations policy and the proposed changes and</p>	<p>IS to contact digital services re: set up of proposed consultation webpage.</p> <p>Book design work for branding of consultation documents at least 2 weeks in advance (with KS).</p> <p>BD to draft 'Guide to the Housing Allocations Policy' (KS advised not a Q&A document).</p>	<p>w/c 16/10/23</p> <p>31 October</p>	BD/KH/IS /KS

		<p>KH to draft proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy.</p> <p>KS will review both documents.</p> <p>Plain English/Accessibility tests</p> <p>Digital services to upload along with text and link to online survey.</p>	31 October	
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Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: 8 August 2023	Directorate: People	Section: Housing. Early Help and Communities
1. Activity to be assessed	Development of a new Housing Allocations Policy	
2. What is the activity?	X Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	X New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Ian Stone	
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Ian Stone, Kathryn Hobman, Lisa Jones	
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	<p>Government Guidance states that all housing authorities must have a housing allocation scheme. Bracknell Forest's current allocations policy was introduced in 2016.</p> <p>The housing service is committed to the development of a new housing allocations policy which will provide a fair, transparent, and easily understood approach to meeting the housing needs of the local area, making best use of the stock available for allocation whilst prioritising those in the most pressing housing need.</p> <p>The new policy aims to bring the policy in line with legislative changes, support the Council's Homeless prevention agenda, address current housing supply and demand challenges facing the borough, and improve wording and policies that are unclear or difficult to apply. The proposed changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of national bedroom standard in place of current entitlement to number of bedrooms Increasing priority for overcrowded households. Removal of non-dependent household members (aged over 21) from assessments of housing need. Increasing priority for under-occupying households Reducing priority for homeless households Reducing residency requirement from 4 to 2 years. New 5th band for 'reasonable preference' group with little or no need. Increasing priority for care leavers in housing need. Foster carers able to apply for larger family homes. Parents able to include children in care in applications. Increasing priority for ex-armed forces personnel that have been medically discharged and recognition for other armed forces personnel. Removal of priority given to working households. Removal of increased priority after six years. 	

7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Those affected will be current and future applicants on the Council's housing register – generally local residents who are unable to meet their housing needs through the housing market.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	What evidence do you have to support this? E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.	Y ✓	<p>N</p> <p><u>Adoption of national bedroom standard</u> The proposal does not disproportionately impact on disabled households. However, analysis has identified that there are approximately 30 household with a disabled member that will potentially be impacted by the change. Recognising that in many cases the need for an additional bedroom for a disabled member is fully justified, the policy will include appropriate mitigations to ensure that disabled households are not negatively impacted by the proposal.</p> <p><u>Removal of non-dependent household members (aged over 21) from assessments of housing need.</u> As above, this policy will include appropriate mitigations/exceptions for disabled people living with people who care for them to ensure that the proposal does not have an adverse impact.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for under-occupying households</u> Older households are more likely to be impacted by this policy and are more likely to include disabled people. The policy will offer appropriate rehousing options that will aim to improve the living situation for disabled under-occupiers.</p> <p><u>Reducing priority for homeless households</u> Disabled households are over-represented among homeless households and so may be impacted by this proposed change. Whilst it will result in longer average waits for rehousing, the majority of those impacted are adequately housed in temporary</p>	<p>Analysis of the Housing Register shows that disabled households accounted for 21% of applicants in 2021/22, increasing to 23% of all applicants in 2022/23.</p> <p>Disabled households are more like to be single and require a one-bedroom property. Analysis of the housing register shows that 72% of disabled applicants require a one bed property and 11% a two-bed property. 17% require a larger 3+ bed property. Some disabled people live with a carer, or may be adult or dependent members of a larger family households.</p> <p>In 2022/23, 24% of general needs properties were let to disabled households and over 50% of sheltered properties. In total, disabled households received 30% of all properties let.</p> <p>The 2021 Homelessness Strategy found that in 2019/20, 12.9% of homeless applicants reported physical ill health issues and disability and 14% of homeless applicants were claiming benefit on the basis of long term illness or disability.</p> <p>National research shows that disabled households are less likely to be in work.</p> <p>Some disabled households are living in specialist provision out of borough due to lack of appropriate provision in the borough and may in future seek rehousing in general needs accommodation, with support, in the borough.</p>

			<p>accommodation (compared to other households on the housing register, such as overcrowded households, who are often waiting in inadequate accommodation, and will benefit from the change).</p> <p><u>Reducing residency requirement from 4 to 2 years.</u> There will continue to be exceptions for disabled people that have been placed by Bracknell Forest in specialist accommodation out of area that want to be rehoused in the borough.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority to ex-armed forces personnel that have been medically discharged</u> The proposed policy will benefit those who have been medically discharged from the armed services due to a disability.</p> <p><u>Removal of priority given to working households.</u> Disabled households are less likely to be in work and so this change will have a positive impact by ensuring that they are not disadvantaged for rehousing compared to working households.</p> <p>The other proposed changes will not have a positive or negative impact on disability equality.</p>	
9. Racial equality	Y ✓	N	<p><u>Increasing priority for overcrowded households.</u> Increasing the priority for the most over-crowded households will benefit black and Asian households who are more likely to be overcrowded and increase their share of applications in band B.</p> <p><u>Removal of non-dependent household members (aged over 21) from assessments of housing need.</u> This policy may impact more on Asian and other ethnic groups where extended households are more common. In some cases, non-dependent household members may play a caring role within the household and so the policy will therefore include mitigations where care is being provided. In other cases, whilst it is recognised that the policy may have a negative impact on some ethnic communities that have traditionally lived as extended households, the policy is justified because of the overwhelming evidence of negative health, welfare and educational impacts on</p>	<p>2021 Census data showing ethnic breakdown of Bracknell Forest population: 86% white British or other, 7% Asian, 2.5% Black British, African or Caribbean, 3% mixed ethnicity, 1.5% other.</p> <p>Housing register. A breakdown of applicants by ethnicity shows: 83.4% white British or other, 2.6% Asian, 4.8% Black British, African or Caribbean, 3% mixed ethnicity, 2.2 other. Therefore, Black British, African or Caribbean households are slightly over-represented on the housing register and Asian households are under-represented.</p> <p>Analysis of the housing register shows that Black and Asian applicants are more likely to be overcrowded and are over-represented among those needing a larger home of three or more bedrooms. 6.2% of those needing a larger home are Black British, African or Caribbean households and 3.7% are Asian households</p>

		<p>overcrowded households with dependent children, which means that meeting the housing needs of this group is a higher priority. For those households negatively affected, non-dependent members over 21 will be able to apply to the housing register as single applicants and will receive priority where they are living in overcrowded households.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for under-occupying households</u> The proposed policy is likely to benefit older white households as under-occupying households are mainly older people and ethnic minority groups make up a lower share of the older population. However, the policy will release larger family properties which will benefit over-crowded households, among whom black and Asian groups are more highly represented.</p> <p><u>Reduced priority for homeless households</u> Black households are over-represented among homeless households and so may be impacted by this proposed change. Whilst it will result in longer average waits for rehousing, the majority of those impacted are adequately housed in temporary accommodation (compared to other households on the housing register, such as overcrowded households, who are often waiting in inadequate accommodation, and will benefit from the change).</p> <p>The other proposed changes will not have a positive or negative impact on ethnic equality.</p>	<p>(compared to 4.8% and 2.6% of all applicants respectively).</p> <p>Black households, in particular, are over-represented among homeless households. The 2021 Homelessness Strategy found that 5.2% of homeless applicants were Black British, African or Caribbean households, 1.7% were Asian, 2.3% were mixed ethnicity and 3% were other ethnic groups.</p> <p>Black British, African or Caribbean households are slightly under-represented in Bands A and B of the housing register. White households and mixed race households are slightly over-represented. Asian households are represented in line with their share of overall applications.</p> <p>Black and Asian households received a higher share of lettings relative to their share of applications in 2022/23. Other groups (white, mixed and other ethnic groups) have received slightly less than their share of applications.</p>
<p>10. Gender equality</p>	<p>Y ✓</p>	<p>N</p> <p><u>Adoption of national bedroom standard</u> A majority of those affected by the proposal are female applicants. This is not surprising as female applicants account for two thirds of all applications and female headed households make up a large proportion of those applicants with dependent children. However, whilst some female applicants with children may be negatively impacted by the policy, others will potentially benefit through shorter waiting times for rehousing. Overall, the policy will have positive and negative impacts on female applicants according to their household circumstances.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for overcrowded households.</u></p>	<p>A higher proportion of total applications on the housing register are from female applicants compared to male applicants. Female applicants make up 66% and males 34%.</p> <p>However, some caution needs to be applied in interpreting this as those recorded as female applicants include women that have made an application on behalf of a two adult households as well as lone female headed households.</p> <p>Women are over-represented in the homelessness statistics, with the Homelessness Strategy finding that women are at higher risk of homelessness.</p>

			<p>A significant proportion of overcrowded households are female headed households who will benefit from the change.</p> <p><u>Reducing priority for homeless households</u> Female applicants are over-represented among homeless households and so may be impacted by this proposed change. Whilst it will result in longer average waits for rehousing, the majority of female homeless applicants accepted in priority need are adequately housed in temporary accommodation (compared to other households on the housing register, such as overcrowded households, who are often waiting in inadequate accommodation, and will benefit from the change).</p> <p>The other proposed changes will not have a positive or negative impact on gender equality.</p>	<p>Female headed households (lone parent households) are highly represented among homeless applicants and those owed a duty.</p> <p>Older single people that are under-occupying are more likely to be female than male.</p> <p>Female headed households make up a large proportion of households fleeing domestic abuse who may be placed in refuge accommodation out of borough.</p>
11. Sexual orientation equality	Y	N ✓	<p>There is insufficient data or responses to identify any impact on sexual orientation equality as a result of the proposed changes.</p>	<p>Housing register analysis: 97% of applicants that responded to the question on sexual orientation identified themselves as heterosexual/straight. 2% of applicants described themselves as gay/lesbian and 0.7% as bisexual.</p> <p>There is some evidence nationally that young LGBT people have a higher rate of homelessness.</p>
12. Gender re-assignment	Y	N ✓	<p>There is insufficient data or responses to identify any impact on gender re-assignment due to the proposed changes.</p>	<p>There is no data available in relation to housing register applicants.</p> <p>National research suggests that Trans people may be particularly at risk of housing crisis and homelessness arising from transphobic reactions and harassment by family, neighbours and members of their local community.</p>
13. Age equality	Y ✓	N	<p><u>Adoption of national bedroom standard</u> The proposed policy will impact disproportionately on households aged 25-44 years as this age group is most likely to have two or more dependent children. However, whilst some applicants within this age cohort may be negatively impacted, others will potentially benefit through shorter waiting times for rehousing. Age does not determine which groups are</p>	<p>2021 Census data: Older people (65+) make up 15% of the local population (cf 19.4% in south east). This equates to 18% of the adult population (over 16). 14% of the population are young people aged 20-24. Working age people make up 68% of the local population (with those between 25-44 accounting for 36%) .</p>


	<p>likely to be positively or negatively impacted by the proposed policy.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for overcrowded households</u> A high proportion of overcrowded households are households aged 25-44 years and these applicants are most likely to benefit from the change.</p> <p><u>Removal of non-dependent household members (aged over 21) from assessments of housing need.</u> Removal of non-dependents will ensure that overcrowded households with dependent children will benefit through reducing waiting times. These households are most likely to be aged between 25 and 44 years.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for under-occupying households</u> The majority of these households are older aged 55-64 and 65+. Older people who want to move to a more suitable home will benefit through the increased priority. Among this group, some older people will be vulnerable, have medical and mobility issues and wheelchair or accessible accommodation or care and support needs. These older people will be prioritised for the limited specialist accommodation available.</p> <p><u>Reducing priority for homeless households</u> Young people are over-represented among homeless households and so may be impacted by this proposed change. Whilst it will result in longer average waits for rehousing, the majority of young people accepted in priority need are adequately housed in temporary accommodation (compared to other households on the housing register, such as overcrowded households, who are often waiting in inadequate accommodation, and will benefit from the change).</p> <p><u>Reducing residency requirement from 4 to 2 years.</u> There will continue to be exceptions for young people and care leavers who have been placed by Bracknell Forest in out of area specialist accommodation and older people who want to return to the borough for family support.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for care leavers.</u></p>	<p>Housing Register: Age of applicants. The vast majority of applicants (80%) are of working age (25-64), with 60% aged between 25 and 44 years. Younger applicants (19-24) account for 12.7% and older applicants (65+) for 6.3%.</p> <p>This means that older people are under-represented on the housing register with working age households, especially those between 25-44, heavily over-represented. Young people are slightly below their share of the population.</p> <p>Homelessness Strategy 2021: 18–34 year olds are significantly over represented in the homelessness figures, with the 35 – 45 year old age group also over represented. Young people aged 18–24 are almost 3 times more likely to become homeless than those aged 45–54.</p> <p>Older households are highly represented among under-occupying households.</p> <p>Older households may be living outside of borough but need to return for family support or following breakdown of family support elsewhere.</p> <p>Older people more likely to be vulnerable, have medical and mobility issues needing wheelchair or accessible accommodation. Older people more likely to have dementia and other care needs requiring specialist accommodation with care and support.</p> <p>Young people may be vulnerable and require support to manage a tenancy.</p> <p>Some young people will be care leavers.</p>
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			<p>The proposed change will positively benefit young people who are care leavers.</p> <p><u>Foster carers able to apply for larger family homes.</u> The proposed change will positively benefit young people in care.</p> <p><u>Parents able to include children in care in applications.</u> These proposed changes will benefit some young people under 18.</p> <p>The other proposed changes will not have a positive or negative impact on age equality.</p>	
14. Religion and belief equality	Y ✓	N	<p><u>Adoption of national bedroom standard</u> Analysis of household affected by the proposed change does not show a disproportionate impact on any religious group.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for overcrowded households.</u> Some religious groups live in larger households and may be more likely to experience overcrowding. And so will benefit from this proposal.</p> <p><u>Removal of non-dependent household members (aged over 21) from assessments of housing need.</u> This policy may impact more on some religious groups associated with larger extended households (Muslims and Hindus). However, there are mitigations as those non-dependent members over 21 can apply to the housing register as single applicants and would receive priority where they are living in overcrowded households.</p> <p>The other proposed changes will not have a positive or negative impact religion and belief equality.</p>	<p>2021 Census data: 48% Christian, 40% no religion; 6% no response, 1% Buddhist, 2% Hindu, 2% Muslim, 1% Sikh.</p> <p>There is research to suggest that some religious groups (Muslims and Hindus) are more likely to live in larger, extended households, which contain more non-dependent members, compared to others (e.g. Christians).</p> <p>Analysis of applicants affected by the proposed bedroom standard policy has looked at the religion of those affected: 0.7% Buddhist, 34% Christian, 9.3% Prefer not to say, 0.7% Hindu, 2% Muslim, 46.7% No religion, 6% Other.</p>
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y ✓	N	<p><u>Adoption of national bedroom standard</u> The proposed change will not impact on pregnant women. The change will impact on women in maternity with young children, as it will mean that some applicants with two or more young children will no longer be entitled to separate rooms and have lower priority under the new standard. It is therefore more likely to impact on women in maternity, some of</p>	<p>Pregnant women without children are not counted separately from single/couples without dependent children in homelessness data.</p> <p>Homeless pregnant households are usually considered to be in priority need.</p>

			<p>whom will find themselves negatively impacted by the proposed change. However, the policy change is justified as it will ensure that those facing the worst impact of overcrowding (including some women in maternity with young children) will benefit through shorter waiting times.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for overcrowded households.</u> The policy will ensure that the most overcrowded households are prioritised and rehoused more quickly including some women in maternity with young children.</p> <p><u>Reducing priority for homeless households</u> Pregnant women and those with young children are highly represented among homeless households and so may be impacted by this proposed change. Whilst it will result in longer average waits for rehousing, the majority of applicants accepted in priority need due to pregnancy or having young children are adequately housed in temporary accommodation (compared to other households on the housing register, such as overcrowded households, who are often waiting in inadequate accommodation, and will benefit from the change).</p> <p>The other proposed changes will not have a positive or negative impact on pregnancy and maternity equality.</p>	<p>Pregnant households will usually require an additional bedroom once their child is born.</p>
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y	N ✓	<p><u>Adoption of national bedroom standard</u> The proposed change will impact on some households with children who will no longer be entitled to separate rooms and some of these will be households that are married or in a civil partnership. However, the proposed policy change does not impact disproportionately on households that are married or in a civil partnership compared to those that are not.</p> <p><u>Increasing priority for overcrowded households.</u> As above, the policy will ensure that the most overcrowded households are prioritised and rehoused more quickly which will include some households that</p>	<p>2021 Census: 48.3% of people are married or in a civil partnership in Bracknell Forest – slightly higher than SE and England averages. 35.4% have never been married, 2% are married but separated, 9.4% are divorced and 4.9% widowed. 63% are living in a couple and 37% not. Overall, nearly half of Bracknell Forest households are married or in a civil partnership</p> <p>Census 2021. 26.8% and 33.8% of people lived in single person or two person households. 17.8% and 14.4% lived in three and four person households. 6.3% of people lived in households with five or more people.</p>

	<p>are married or in a civil partnership – but the latter has no effect on which households benefit or not.</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that the other proposed changes will impact on marriage and civil partnership equality.</p>	<p>Marriage and civil partnership are not recorded for applicants on the housing register.</p>
<p>17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.</p>	<p>Please explain</p> <p>Armed forces: The proposal gives additional priority to applicants who are serving or ex armed forces personnel, particularly those that have been medically discharged, and so this group will positively benefit.</p> <p>Households with higher incomes: The proposal places a cap on household income such that those earning above this cap will not be able to apply on the housing register; this is justified as such households are more easily able to meet their housing needs in the housing market, ensuring that the beneficiaries of the policy are low income households.</p> <p>Care-leavers: the proposed policy will ensure that those most in need of social housing for welfare or other reasons are awarded a higher priority.</p>	
<p>18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</p>	<p>Please explain</p> <p>1. <u>Proposed policy excluding non-dependent household members from housing applications</u>: potential negative impact on some ethnic or religious groups where extended households are more common. The policy is justified as it ensures that overcrowded households with dependent children are prioritised above those with non-dependent members because of the well-established negative welfare, health and educational impacts on children and their families in overcrowded households. Mitigations will be included in the policy to take account of the specific circumstances in some households with non-dependent members, such as caring responsibilities.</p> <p>2. <u>Proposed adoption of bedroom standard</u>. This policy will impact more on certain households such as working age households between 25 and 44 years, female headed households, and women in maternity as these groups are over-represented among households with two or more dependent children. As a result, households from these groups are more likely to be adversely impacted by the proposed change. The justification for the policy is that it responds to the huge demand for the limited supply of larger properties available, and growing waiting times for rehousing, by ensuring that those households with dependent children that are most likely to be negatively impacted by overcrowding are prioritised above other households. Generally, the proposed policy does not advantage or disadvantage households in the above identified groups – as some households will benefit through shorter waiting times whilst others will not. The policy is justified in terms of increasing the opportunity for rehousing of those households most negatively affected by overcrowding.</p>	
<p>19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?</p>	<p>Please explain</p> <p>Households with a disabled member are likely to be more negatively impacted than other households by the proposed policy excluding non-dependent household members from housing applications. It was identified that about 30 disabled</p>	

	households would be affected. In recognition of the different circumstances and needs of these households, the policy will include mitigations and exceptions for disabled households.		
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?	Y	N ✓	Please explain for each equality group
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	Consultation with applicants and a wide range of organisations and stakeholders will help in understanding the issues identified above, whether there are any additional equalities issues and impacts that need to be addressed and the particular mitigations that are needed.		
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?	Y	N ✓	<p>Please explain your decision. If you are not proceeding to a full equality impact assessment make sure you have the evidence to justify this decision should you be challenged.</p> <p>A thorough analysis of the equalities impact has been undertaken based on the detailed data available from the housing register and other sources. In relation to some groups, there is no or limited data available or the numbers are too small to identify any significant effect. In these cases it has been assessed that no additional information is available to inform the analysis and that any potential negative impacts are likely to be very small.</p> <p>The initial equalities that has been undertaken has identified some potentially negative impacts on some groups, but in all cases, a justification for the proposed policy has been provided and certain mitigations and exceptions have been included.</p> <p>If you are proceeding to a full equality impact assessment, please contact Samantha.wood@bracknell-forest.gov.uk or Harjit.Hunjan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk</p>
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
Action	Timescale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria
Development of appropriate mitigations and exceptions where necessary, to be included in public/stakeholder consultation.	Feb 2024	Ian Stone, Kathryn Hobman, Lisa Jones	Analysis of consultation responses and changes made to policies, mitigations and exceptions where appropriate
Continue to monitor impact of the policy following implementation	2024/25	Ian Stone, Kathryn Hobman, Lisa Jones	Equalities monitoring continues to show no significant negative impacts on any specific cohort, or where it does, the application of the policy is reviewed.

<p>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</p>	<p>The first action will be included within the consultation plan for the housing allocations policy. The second action is included within the housing service plan as part of the ongoing monitoring of housing and homelessness.</p>
<p>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</p>	<p>Please list: Detailed consultation on the policy proposals involving applicants, the wider public, voluntary and statutory organisations, Council Members, Town and Parish Councils, Registered Providers of Social Housing, etc. to inform potential need for changes in the wording or mitigations included in proposed policies.</p>
<p>26. Assistant Director/Director signature.</p>	<div data-bbox="1104 464 1626 544" data-label="Text">  </div> <p>Signature: Date: 5/10/23</p>

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To: **Executive**
14 November 2023

Council Plan 2023-2027
Assistant Director: Chief Executive's Office

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the Council Plan and new business change programme to Executive setting out agreed priorities for the period to 2027, following engagement and development with councillors and staff.
- 1.2 To propose that the Council adopts a flexible use of capital receipts strategy to maximise funding opportunities to support the delivery of the business change programme.

2 Recommendations

The Executive is asked to:

- 2.1 **Recommend to Council approval of the Council Plan attached as Appendix A;**
- 2.2 **Support delivery of the Council Plan and ensure the organisation remains resilient and sustainable by endorsing the proposed Business Change programme summarised in Appendix A;**
- 2.3 **Recommend that Council adopts with effect from 1 December 2023 a flexible use of capital receipts strategy as set out at Appendix B to provide funding needed to ensure the Council Plan and Business Change programme are successfully delivered.**
- 2.4 **Review and consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, included as Appendix D.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council Plan is essential to the organisation's policy framework and effective operations. It outlines the priorities for the Council in the coming four years' and focuses the work to be undertaken.
- 3.2 The development of the Council Plan is based on multiple layers of engagement and development; this has led to incorporating significant feedback into the structure and wording of the content. There has been feasibility testing as part of the development, to ensure that the content has longevity for the plan period and ambitious, but realistic deliverability.
- 3.3 The plan includes a core enabling priority to be an ambitious, resilient and sustainable organisation. Much of this will be delivered through the business change programme to ensure the organisation is fit for the future. The aspiration is to be the best organisation possible. The proposed flexible use of a capital receipts strategy in Appendix B will enable the council to use capital receipts to support and enable the

delivery of the business change programme's priorities and facilitate the delivery of savings and improved outcomes for service users.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternatives have been explored through the development of the plan and incorporated into the final version. Funding to support the Business Change programme could be sought from the Council's reserves, however the scale of financial pressures being faced suggests that those should be protected for alternative uses.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Council Plan sets out the overall ambition for what the council aims to achieve for, and with, residents, businesses and partners. It is a strategy document identifying priorities and how the council will measure progress and performance. The new plan will cover the period from 2023 until 2027.
- 5.2 The Council Plan provides a framework for a more detailed set of actions detailed in annual directorate service plans. These plans will include the operational tasks and initiatives linked to each of the themes and goals. Progress in delivering against the Council Plan goals will be reported through externally published quarterly reports.
- 5.3 The development of the new Council Plan has undertaken several phases, from insights collection and mapping, to refining and feasibility testing. Each stage involved a range of stakeholders including councillors, managers and data leads. It is now at the stage of a draft plan. It has been a priority to ensure that the plan is relevant for the coming four years; aspirational in the direction of travel but also feasible to deliver within the context of resources.
- 5.4 This plan does not sit in isolation and is complemented by a range of underpinning principles such as the commitment to equality, health, and climate; these strategies are all referenced. Achieving the goals of the plan and the best outcomes for residents will require a system approach, therefore joint working is a key foundation of delivering the plan.
- 5.5 The plan's enabling priority to be an ambitious, resilient and sustainable organisation will be delivered in large part through the business change programme to ensure the organisation is fit for the future. The programme will drive savings and increased efficiency across the organisation, as well as securing transformational change to benefit service users.
- 5.6 The council has funded its work on transformation and business change in previous years from earmarked reserves. The Government announced as part of its 2016/17 finance settlement new flexibilities allowing local authorities to use capital receipts received in a financial year to be used to fund qualifying transformational expenditure in that year. This programme has been extended in the intervening years and continues to be applicable until 2024/25, with a further extension considered likely.
- 5.7 The scale of current and future pressures on the council's revenue finances, from rising costs and demand and more recently its participation in the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme, suggests that an alternative funding strategy rather than using valuable earmarked reserves should now be pursued. It is therefore

proposed that the council makes use of the flexibility provided by Government by adopting the proposed Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, attached at Appendix B. In support of this, a schedule of potential asset sales is being produced by the Council's Property team, focusing on commercial property assets held within and outside the Borough boundaries.

Next steps

- 5.8 Development is underway on agreeing the first set of service plans. These service plans will cover the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, aligned with the budget cycle and these will include business change programme activity.
- 5.9 The first reporting period for the new Council Plan, and service plan commitments will be Q1 (April 2024 to June 2024), to be presented to Executive in September 2024. Until then, reporting will be based on the current service plans.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The Council Plan forms part of the Policy Framework and a decision on its implementation is therefore reserved to a quorate meeting of the Council. As set out in Appendix B, the standard prohibition on Council's using Capital receipts for Revenue expenditure is set aside by the application of Directions issued by the Secretary of State in 2003 to the extent highlighted in paragraph 5 of the Appendix.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 The financial implications associated with delivering the Council Plan priorities will be highlighted for inclusion in the Council's 2024/25 – 2026/27 budgets. The Business Change programme is expected to realise a number of financial and other benefits, as set out in Appendix B. Work to deliver the programme will require additional resources which are also estimated in Appendix B, which are proposed to be funded from capital receipts (asset disposals) using the flexibility available to councils that adopt a flexible use of capital receipts strategy.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 There has been significant engagement as part of developing the new Council Plan and the business change programme. This has been detailed throughout the report and the feedback included within the draft presented in Appendix A.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion issues are being considered as part of the process to create the new plan and change programme. An EqIA has been undertaken to consider the impact of the plan on people with protected characteristics and is attached at appendix C. No negative impacts were identified and overall the plan aims to reduce inequality and improve prosperity in the borough. Specific EqIAs will be undertaken for business change programme projects.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 The Council Plan is a key part of the council's framework for performance management. The strategic commitments agreed on, and the delivery against them, will form part of issues monitored within the risk management processes.

Climate Change and Ecological Implications

- 6.6 The plan identifies the importance and the role of the council in addressing climate change and biodiversity challenges. There are specific goals and key results identified to address and reduce carbon emissions and to enhance the local biodiversity. There will be a change programme focussed on enabling the delivery of our climate change and carbon reduction goals.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 The plan identifies the importance of health and wellbeing and the role the council has related to this. There are specific goals and key results identified to address the health and wellbeing of the population and monitor the local outcomes. Both physical and mental health are recognised within the plan, at universal and targeted tiers.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Katie Flint, Chief Executive's Office - 01344 352217
Katie.flint@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Abby Thomas, Chief Executives Office – 01344 353307
Abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Stuart McKellar, Executive Director Resources – 01344 352180
Stuart.mckellar@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Appendix A – Council Plan

[attached as separate document]

Appendix B – Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy

[attached as separate document]

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

[attached as separate document]

Appendix D – O&SC recommendations

[attached as separate document]



Council Plan **2023 – 2027**

Growing together, shaping tomorrow.

Putting residents first and working together to grow sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities.



Welcome

I am delighted to be setting out our commitments and aspirations for the next four years in this plan.

The plan is unreservedly ambitious and while we know it will be a challenge to achieve everything set out in it, a thriving community is at our core, so we must strive to make real and tangible progress in all areas.

When there are so many vital services provided by our teams, it is difficult to narrow down a few priorities, however, we have identified a set of key themes and goals to guide our work.

We are starting from a good position, the majority of our schools offer excellent education, we have varied and thriving businesses based here, and our natural environment is clean and accessible.

However, there are changes outside of our control that we will have to adapt and respond to as we deliver the plan. For example, the urgency of the climate and biodiversity emergency, national legislation changes, and technological advancement. We do not intend to just keep up with this, but embrace, innovate, and lead.

We also recognise that we will face challenges and changes within the borough over the next four years. The population is growing and demand for our services is increasing. We are experiencing, alongside residents, the financial challenges where costs are rising at an unsustainable rate. At the same time, our funding is not increasing to match rising costs and we continue to face uncertainty for future years of funding. We will need to continue to adapt and learn so that we can tackle these challenges and still deliver our ambitions.

However, communities in Bracknell Forest are strong. I saw first-hand during the pandemic how everyone came together. I am passionate about making sure residents are empowered and well-informed, so you can make your own choices and be independent. Our services must be inclusive and accessible, and we need to work directly with you to achieve this. We will be doing more in the coming years to connect with and listen to residents; working together to improve and deliver quality services.



Cllr Mary Temperton,
Leader of the Council

Our borough

Community

The local communities in Bracknell Forest are vibrant and diverse.



124,608
people in
Bracknell Forest



47 percent
increase

in residents from minority ethnicities, compared to 2011



77 percent
employed of working
age population



82 years male life expectancy
85 years female life expectancy

Place

Our borough is renowned for its excellent location for businesses, combined with extensive green spaces.



11 percent
residents live
alone

In the lowest
10 percent for
deprivation



2,302
households in
fuel poverty

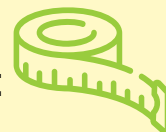


Trees cover
35 percent
of the borough

Adults

Most adults live a healthy and fulfilling life, in independence and choice.

65 percent
adults are obese



70 percent
adults are
physically active



13 percent
residents have a
common mental
health disorder

Children and Young People

Young people have wide ranging opportunities, facilities and activities to engage with. Our local schools are exceptional.



13.1 percent
pupils have
special
education
needs (including
EHCPs)



18.6 percent
children are obese



22 percent
population are
children

An extended community profile is included as an annex to the plan. For more detail and the latest data about our borough can be found on the [Berkshire Observatory](#) or the [Berkshire East Joint Strategic Needs Assessment pages](#).



The role of the Council Plan

The Council Plan sets out the overall ambition for what we want to achieve for and with residents, businesses and partners.

It doesn't include everything we do but it outlines the activities and actions that we will focus on. It sets out what we will prioritise as a council in the borough over the next four years.

Our vision for the borough is where...
we put residents first, working together to grow sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities.

The Council Plan for 2023 to 2027 will focus on three borough priorities to achieve this ambition:

- **Engaged and healthy communities**
- **Thriving and connected economy**
- **Green and sustainable environment**

To deliver these priorities, we have identified a series of operational principles for how we will work. This is also guided by our core values to be inclusive, ambitious and always learning. Therefore, the Council Plan sets out a fourth priority to be **an ambitious, resilient and sustainable organisation**. This will enable us to achieve our goals.

This is a key document for the council and the plan will be delivered through the annual service plans, the council's budget and specific strategies.

Growing together, shaping tomorrow



Borough priorities:

Engaged and healthy communities

Thriving and connected economy

Green and sustainable environment

Ambitious, resilient and sustainable organisation

Value · Residents · Climate · Quality · Partnership · Workforce

Underpinning principles

Throughout the plan there are cross cutting principles that will underpin the work that is delivered. These identify priorities across all the goals and themes of the plan and provide focus for the outcomes to be achieved.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Many of the priorities set out in the Council Plan relate directly to creating an inclusive borough and tackling inequalities. This commitment cuts across everything we do and goes beyond our legal responsibilities.

Within the principles of fairness and opportunity, we believe that:

- reducing inequalities benefits everyone in the borough
- strengthening community unity makes for a better borough
- understanding and promoting diversity improves people's lives

The [Bracknell Forest 'All of Us' Equality Strategy](#) sets out what the council intends to achieve in terms of equality and diversity and includes the council's equality objectives.

Health in all Policies

We recognise that the wider environment influences people's health. These wider determinants of health are important as they look beyond factors that only relate to the individual. We are therefore embedding a [Health in all Policies](#) approach for cross-departmental action to maximise the health benefits for the population and influence health through strategies, services and programme delivery. This work extends the health activity committed to within the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#). The priorities included within the Council Plan are framed in the context of improving the wider context for health and wellbeing

Climate and sustainability

There are several specific goals within the Council Plan related to the climate and biodiversity emergency. However, our work to address climate change extends beyond this and requires all services, partners and residents to be part of it. The council's [Climate Change Strategy](#) sets out goals to lead in making changes that benefit our environment and the climate as a whole.

Key strategies

The commitments within the Council Plan do not sit in isolation. They complement and extend priorities across a number of existing strategies. These strategies contain more detailed work to improve outcomes for residents and will continue to be reviewed and delivered alongside the Council Plan. These key strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Equality Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Climate action plan
- Economic Strategy
- Workforce Strategy
- Local Plan
- Local Transport Plan
- IT and Digital Strategy
- Housing and Homelessness Strategy
- Youth Services Strategy

Over the plan period further strategies will be developed including a culture strategy, leisure strategy and communities strategy.



Borough Priorities

Engaged and healthy communities

Within Bracknell Forest, there are vibrant and diverse local communities, and many parts of the borough have their own identity. Our role is to help create opportunities where people can succeed, be happy and feel safe. This will mean we can continue to build a healthy community.

During the pandemic, there was a huge community response where people came together. This demonstrated the potential and capability of what can be achieved when people feel empowered. It is important we make best use of community development and spaces for enriching and varied activities. Bringing people together to connect with each other will help maintain our high levels of community cohesion.

We have a range of quality facilities and places to foster good health, and overall quality of life is good in the borough. However, it remains important for us to recognise both physical and mental health needs across all ages and backgrounds, particularly where we know many are still experiencing health challenges following the pandemic. Working closely with our partners in the community and services like health will be vital to ensure the right support is available, and known, to those who need it.

We know that children are our future and therefore it is vital that they have the best childhood. This means quality education but also the wider opportunities to take part in youth activities. It will be important that we continue to build on this local provision so children can experience a range of opportunities to help them grow.

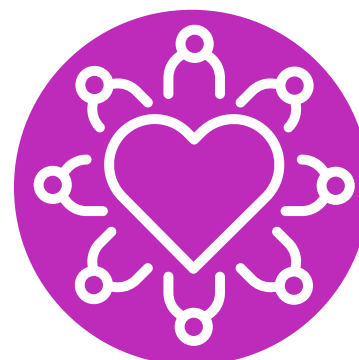
Our ambition for the borough is...

- Children have quality **education and opportunities** to fulfil their potential
- Every child is safe as they grow up, where support puts **family first**
- Residents can access **appropriate care**, suitable for a changing population
- The diverse and growing population is **healthy and active**
- Community development and spaces encourage a **cohesive and engaged** community
- Residents have a **safe and affordable** place to live

Our ambition for the borough is...	We will measure this by...
Children have quality education and opportunities to fulfil their potential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raising secondary attainment levels for disadvantaged pupils 2. Raising primary attainment levels for disadvantaged pupils 3. Increasing the proportion of children with an education, health and care plan who are educated within the borough 4. Increase all education settings rated good or outstanding 5. Increasing participation in universal youth service
Every child is safe as they grow up, where support puts family first	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving education outcomes for children in care 2. Reducing the number of children on a Child Protection Plan 3. Reducing the proportion of children who need to step up to statutory services
Residents can access appropriate care , suitable for a changing population	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing satisfaction of carers with social care support 2. Increasing long term support being delivered at home 3. Increasing care placements made to good or outstanding providers
The diverse and growing population is healthy and active	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing visits to the council's open spaces 2. A reduction in levels of smoking 3. Increasing weight loss through health programmes 4. Increasing effectiveness of community mental health support
Community development and spaces encourage a cohesive and engaged community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing visits to the libraries 2. Increasing the use of the Community Map for local activities 3. Increasing community volunteering
Residents have a safe and affordable place to live	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing affordable homes completed 2. Reducing the number of people who are rough sleeping 3. Reducing households living in temporary accommodation 4. A reduction in local crime

Key projects we will have achieved by 2027:

- Complete the construction and opening of Bridgewell, a new supported living service.
- Support the development of a new SEND School at Bucklers Park.
- Secure, through the Joint Venture, 169 housing units on the Market Steet site, including over 80 affordable homes.
- Complete, through the Joint Venture, new housing at the surplus land at the depot site.
- Deliver the new Thriving Communities health and wellbeing programme with partners and communities.
- Facilitate the delivery of a new Health facility in Bracknell town centre, developed and delivered with Frimley ICB.





Borough Priorities

Thriving and connected economy

The local economy includes many different aspects, such as businesses, jobs, skills, accommodation, and services. These shape the environment for what it's like to live and work here. Bracknell Forest is a popular place to live, and it is attractive for a range of industries from construction and distribution to science and technology. The borough is well connected, both with physical infrastructure as well as networks and internet.

Over the last 10 years, there has been significant regeneration of Bracknell town centre to create a lively and welcoming destination for visitors and residents. There is further ambition to extend the success through leisure and night time experiences. As a New Town, many of the neighbourhood areas surrounding the town centre were built at a similar time and we know that investment is needed to enhance these community hubs. Beyond this, the wider towns and villages within the borough also form anchors to our community and continuing to invest and work with these areas is important.

We have a strong foundation of local education for young people however, there are further opportunities to develop advanced level skills and link this to our local employment and businesses. Upskilling residents will open more opportunities to work within the borough, strengthening our economy.

Our ambition for the borough is...

- Resident **skills** are enhanced, meeting local **employment** needs
- Bracknell **town centre** continues to thrive and be a destination of choice
- Town, village and **neighbourhood centres** are thriving hubs for community activity
- **Businesses** have the space, environment, and support to adapt and grow

Our ambition for the borough is...	We will measure this by...
Resident skills are enhanced, meeting local employment gaps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A reduction in the proportion of residents who are unemployed 2. Increasing uptake of local apprenticeships and traineeships
Bracknell town centre continues to thrive and be a destination of choice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing visits to the town centre 2. An increase in the development of new homes within the town centre
Town, village and neighbourhood centres are thriving hubs for community activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing the attractiveness (cleanliness) of neighbourhood centres 2. Maintaining high occupancy of neighbourhood centre units
Businesses have the space, environment, and support to adapt and grow	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing sustainability of new businesses in the borough 2. An increase in the growth of new businesses 3. Maintaining high occupancy of council owned business units

Key projects we will have achieved by 2027:

- Facilitate the delivery of a new community hub in Warfield.
- Actively encourage and support the provision of meanwhile uses and activities for unoccupied space in Bracknell Town Centre (previous Bentall's site).





Borough Priorities

Green and sustainable environment

Our environment includes everything around us, our parks, our cycleways and our road networks. It also includes the air quality and increasingly extreme temperatures and weather events. The importance of our environment sits within the context of the changing climate and biodiversity emergency and the urgency to reach net zero.

Bracknell Forest has a beautiful natural environment, and we intend to enhance and protect this. We know that this will require a community wide effort and we must work together to move towards a sustainable carbon neutral future. But we also know that we need to lead and show what can be done, whether related to biodiversity, renewable energy or making green transport choices. We will need to be creative to identify new ways of doing things, working jointly with partners and residents.

It is important that accessing the environment and making climate friendly choices is available to all residents. This includes working with partners to ensure our bus routes are supported, footpaths are clear, and cycleways are safe. Our goals over the coming years intend to further encourage all residents to make the most of our brilliant local environment, whilst ensuring that it is sustainable for the future.

Our ambition for the borough is...

- There is collective action to address and adapt to the **climate and biodiversity emergency**
- Our **green spaces** and parks foster sustainability, biodiversity, and wellbeing
- Local **transport networks** provide choice in travel

Our ambition for the borough is...	We will measure this by...
There is collective action to address and adapt to the climate and biodiversity emergency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing the correct use of recycling 2. Increasing the average energy efficiency rating of the housing stock in the borough 3. A reduction in borough emissions 4. Increasing the installation of public electric vehicle charge points 5. Increasing new trees being supported to independent growth
Our green spaces and parks foster sustainability, biodiversity, and wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing biodiversity across the borough, funded by new developments 2. Increasing Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANG) and open space through the planning process 3. Increasing volunteering within the borough's parks and countryside
Local transport networks provide choice in travel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An increase in bus use as sustainable public transport 2. Increasing green miles travelled via walking and cycling 3. Increasing delivery of infrastructure through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Key projects we will have achieved by 2027:

- Investigate, and if feasible, implement new energy initiatives at the London Road closed landfill site including a solar array and charging hub.



Delivering our ambition

Many of the outcomes we are working towards cannot be delivered by the council alone. Reaching these goals will require a shared effort between residents, partners and local businesses. It is, however, important that we include these ambitious aims to help set a clear target for how we can further grow and develop as a borough. We must work more collaboratively in partnerships and with residents. The community will be at the heart of our decisions.



We must also ensure that we provide responsive, effective and efficient services. We must achieve best value for residents. We have therefore set out a core enabling priority to be an **ambitious, resilient and sustainable organisation**. Much of this will be delivered through our business change programme to ensure the organisation is fit for the future. Our aspiration is to be the best organisation that we can be.

Importantly, these foundations describe how we will deliver our plan. To achieve our goals:

- We deliver **quality** services, seeking ways to improve
- We prioritise finances effectively, delivering **value for money**
- We lead in reducing our **carbon footprint**
- We work directly and jointly with **residents**
- Our **workforce** is stable, connected, skilled and motivated
- Our **partnerships** maximise resources and skills

How will we work



What will we achieve



Our partners



The business change programme enables the delivery of the council plan and will ensure the organisation is financially sustainable and fit for the future. The programme's aim is to use ambitious solutions to achieve resilience and sustainability.

The programme will drive savings and increased efficiency across the organisation. The funding to enable the delivery of the programme will be found from a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Policy.

Five programmes of activity have been identified within the business change programme, these are:

- **Efficiency and digitisation** - delivering efficient, sustainable, innovative, digital enabled customer focussed services.
- **Workforce, retention, and recruitment** - ensuring we have the right capabilities, retaining an engaged and motivated workforce and growing our own talent.
- **Neighbourhood regeneration and assets** - building resilient communities and making best use of our property assets to support effective services and financial sustainability.
- **Climate change** - enabling the organisation to achieve our climate change and carbon reduction goals.
- **Corporate improvement** – an intensive corporate support and challenge programme to enable the turnaround of any service or function that has or is at risk of failure.

Each programme has specific outcomes and measures. Activity within the programme will be included within the annual directorate service plans, quarterly service reports and Corporate Performance Overview Report to report progress.

Beyond the direct work of the business change programme, we also know that we must continue to enhance our partnership working. There are already strong partnerships in place to help deliver borough wide change, this includes the Bracknell Forest Place Committee, Community Safety Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Board, Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board. We will continue to work with our partners towards the future of the borough, to achieve the best outcomes for and with residents, in line with our strategic priorities.

We will continue to improve our community engagement and expand our approach to working directly with residents too. This will include using co-production and co-design to involve residents in developing strategies and services.

Our values

Our values exist to guide how we work with residents and engage with communities and partners. We make our values real by demonstrating them in how we behave every day, this is us Being Bracknell Forest. Being Bracknell Forest means that we all sign up to and give our commitment to living our values in everything that we do.



Monitoring progress

Against each goal is a set of specific key results that will help us monitor the progress being made. These results are not all within the direct control of the council and a positive or negative direction of travel will not be purely associated with actions related to this plan. However, they will indicate whether the plan is looking at the right things and whether any changes or additional actions are needed.

The key results create the core insights of the council's quarterly reporting framework. Annual work commitments set out within each directorates service plans help deliver these results. Both these annual activities and the key results will be publicly reported every quarter through the [Council Plan Overview Report \(CPOR\)](#).

Place profile annex

Community

The local communities in Bracknell Forest are vibrant and diverse.

There are 124,608 people who live in Bracknell Forest, this has increased by 10% in the last 10 years. Bracknell Forest's population profile is similar to England's although, the proportion of working-aged adults in Bracknell Forest is slightly higher than England with notably higher proportions of 35 to 54 year olds. People aged 65 and over make-up 15% of Bracknell Forest's population, compared to 18% nationally.

Life expectancy is significantly higher than national rates at 82 years for men and 85 for women.

In 2021, nearly 78% of Bracknell Forest's population were from a white British background. 14% of residents were from ethnic minority groups (excluding white minorities), compared to 19% in England. The diversity in the population continues to increase with the proportion of all ethnic minority residents increasing by 47% in the last decade, to 22% of residents.

In September 2022, 77% of Bracknell Forest's working age population were in employment. The proportion of people in employment decreased during the pandemic and this drop was to a greater extent than the national average. The current level of employment is higher than the average for England and similar to the South East.

Place

Our borough is renowned for its excellent location for businesses, combined with extensive green spaces.

There are 52,060 residential properties in Bracknell Forest with a higher proportion of terraced (32%) and detached houses (24%). Property is generally more expensive than the England average, apart from flats and maisonettes. All property types in Bracknell Forest are less expensive than the South East average. The 2021 census showed an increase in the number of people living alone, both nationally and locally. In Bracknell Forest nearly 11% of people live alone with 29% of those aged 66 and over living alone.

Bracknell Forest is within the 10% least deprived local authorities in England. More than a third of the borough's neighbourhoods are in the 10% least deprived nationally. While none of Bracknell Forest's neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived areas in England, there are areas of higher deprivation, particularly within parts of Bracknell town. In June 2023, 2,302 Bracknell Forest households were identified as in fuel poverty.

Air quality in Bracknell Forest indicate similar levels of fine particulate matter, compared to England. The rate of Co2 emissions per person is less than the average for the South East and England. The borough is classed as urban however trees cover 35% of the borough, the second highest in England.

Bracknell Forest has lower rates of crime compared to similar authorities and the wider national average. There has been a small increase in crime since September 2020, returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Children and Young People

Young people have wide ranging opportunities, facilities and activities to engage with. Our local schools are exceptional.

Approximately 27,846 children and young people (aged under 18) live in Bracknell Forest, making up 22% of the total population. Currently, women of child-bearing age have an average of 1.7 children in Bracknell Forest compared to 1.6 in England. There has been an increased rate of births following the pandemic.

Bracknell Forest's childhood obesity rates have not significantly changed over the last 5 years. 18.6% of year six children are considered obese, this is lower than the England average of 23.4%. In 2020-21, 10.7% of Bracknell Forest's under 16s lived in relative low income families. 13.1% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), similar to the national and South East average. There is a significantly higher proportion of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) than the national average and across similar authorities.

Bracknell Forest pupil's school readiness and attainment levels at the end of reception are similar to other authorities, while indicators of attainment at the end of key stage one are above average. Attainment 8 scores (Key Stage 4) in Bracknell Forest's state-funded schools are similar to England's, but worse against equivalent authorities. Attainment 8 scores for disadvantaged pupils are lower than the average for the same cohort across England.

Adults

Most adults live a healthy and fulfilling life, in independence and choice.

65% of adults in Bracknell Forest were overweight or obese in 2021/22 this is slightly higher than the average for the South East (63%) and similar to the average for England.

70% of adults in Bracknell Forest were classified as physically active (150+ minutes activity per week) in 2021/22, similar to the South East average.

13% of Bracknell Forest's population aged 16 and over are estimated to have a common mental health issue such as depression or anxiety, compared to national (17%) and regional (15%) prevalence rates. Less than 1% of people in Bracknell Forest were recorded as having a serious mental health diagnosis on their GP Record.

For more detail and the latest data about our borough can be found on the Berkshire Observatory or the Berkshire East Joint Strategic Needs Assessment pages.

Key results definition annex

Each key result is represented by a specific measure. Each metric has been identified to provide some insight into the experience of residents in the local community. All the indicators relate to the role of the council, often several services will be working together towards each metric. Performance will be influenced by a range of factors, some outside of the council's control and will often require wider partner involvement.

Metrics on their own should not be taken in isolation as there are many elements that contribute towards each data set and the wider goal to be achieved. They are intended to provide a conversation starter across the system to seek the best outcomes for residents.

Engaged and healthy communities

Title of result	Metric for measurement	Ref
Raise secondary attainment levels for disadvantaged students	Attainment 8 for KS4 pupils considered disadvantaged	KR111
Raise primary school development for disadvantaged children	% of disadvantaged Children achieving expected standard+ (EXS+) combined Reading, Writing, Maths (RWM) by end of KS2	KR112
Increase the proportion of children with an education, health and care plan who are educated within the borough	% of Bracknell Forest children with EHCP (aged 5-16) with school placement in the borough	KR113
Increase the rate of EHCPs issued within the 20 week statutory time frame	% of EHCPs issued within 20 week statutory timeframe	KR114
Increase all education settings rated good or outstanding	Combined % Early years providers rated good or outstanding and % schools rated good or outstanding	KR115
Increase participation in youth services	Number of young people involved in universal youth service activities	KR116
Improve the career outcomes for children in care	% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 who are NEET	KR121
Reduce the number of children on a CPP	Child protection plan rate per 10,000	KR122
Reduce the proportion of children who need to step up to statutory services	% of early help caseload 'stepped up' to statutory social care following an early help assessment	KR123
Increase satisfaction of carers with social care support	Overall satisfaction of carers with social services (for them and for the person they care for) (Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework)	KR131

Title of result	Metric for measurement	Ref
Increase long term support being delivered at home	% long term support recipients not in residential care or nursing care	KR132
Increase care placements to good or outstanding settings.	% of care placements in good or outstanding settings	KR133
Increase visits to the Council's open spaces	Number of visitors to monitored open spaces	KR141
Reduce levels of smoking	% of smokers who have quit within four weeks of programme	KR142
Increase weight loss through health programmes	% of adults enrolled in the weight management service losing any weight	KR143
Increase effectiveness of community mental health support	% of clients continuing to live independently without primary or secondary mental health care provision at 3 months & 6 months checks post one to one support with Bracknell Forest Community Network	KR144
Increase visits to the libraries	Number of visits to Bracknell Forest libraries (physical visits to all libraries buildings, excl. home library)	KR151
Increase the number of Community activities captured on the Community Map	Number of community activities listed	KR152
Increase activity within our community centres	Number of groups using BFC owned community centres (average per centre)	KR153
Increase community volunteering	Number of volunteers registered with Involve for volunteering pool	KR154
Increase affordable homes completed	Additional affordable homes completed (Affordable rented and shared ownership).	KR161
Reduce the number of people who are rough sleeping	Number of people rough sleeping	KR162
Reduce local crime	Total recorded crime excluding fraud (crime rate per 1,000 for headline offences)	KR163
Reduce households living in temporary accommodation	Number of households in Temporary Accommodation	KR164

Thriving and connected economy

Title of result	Metric for measurement	Ref
Reduce unemployment rate	Unemployment rate of the working age, economically active population (%)	KR211
Increase number of apprenticeships and traineeships	Apprenticeship starts since start of academic year	KR212
Increase homes completed within the Town Centre	Net additional dwellings within Town Centre and the Parks ward	KR221
Increase visits to the town centre	Footfall within the town centre (% change since previous year)	KR223
Increase clean environment at neighbourhood centres	% neighbourhood centres passing the regular street cleansing checks - contract standards	KR231
Maintain high occupancy of neighbourhood centre units	% Occupied units on neighbourhood parades owned by the council	KR232
Increase sustainability of new businesses	Business survival beyond four years (%)	KR241
Increase growth of new businesses	Number of new businesses births in Bracknell Forest	KR242
Maintain high occupancy of council owned business units	% Occupied light industrial units owned by the council	KR243

Green and sustainable environment

Title of result	Metric for measurement	Ref
Increase the correct use of recycling	Recycling contamination rate (% of material collected from blue bins that is incorrect material)	KR311
Increase the average energy efficiency rating of the housing stock in the borough	Percentage of all homes that have a SAP rating of Band C or above. (incl. Park Homes)	KR312
Increase the installation of publicly available Electric Vehicle charge points	Number of publicly available chargepoints per 100,000 population	KR313
Reduce borough emissions	Total emissions for territorial emissions within council area (kT Co2e)	KR314
Increase new trees being supported to independent growth	Number of trees being supported during the quarter (to independence)	KR315
Increase SANG and open space provision through the planning process	SANG and other OSPV secured (hectares) where open space secured through planning process	KR321
Increase volunteering within the boroughs parks and countryside	Number of hours volunteering with parks and countryside activities	KR322
Increase biodiversity across the borough through new developments	Average % biodiversity net gain across new developments	KR323
Increase use of sustainable public transport	Number of journeys across TVB network	KR331
Increase delivery of infrastructure via CIL	Income received from CIL (Income received, liability notices, demand notices)	KR332
Increase green miles travelled via walking and cycling	Green travel miles recorded through the eco-rewards scheme	KR333

If you need a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us, please call 01344 352000 or email: customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.



Council Plan
2023 – 2027

Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2023/24 to 2024/25

Background and guidance

1. Capital receipts can only be used for specific purposes, and these are set out in Regulation 23 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 made under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 2003. The main permitted purpose is to fund capital expenditure, and the use of capital receipts to support revenue expenditure is not allowed by the regulations. The Secretary of State is empowered to issue Directions allowing expenditure incurred by local authorities to be treated as capital expenditure. Where such a direction is made, the specified expenditure can then be funded from capital receipts under the regulations.
2. As part of the finance settlement for 2016/17 the government announced new flexibilities allowing local authorities to use capital receipts received in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 to be used to fund transformational expenditure, which can include redundancy costs. This was extended in 2018/19 as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for a further three years until 2021/22.
3. In February 2021, the Secretary of State announced, alongside the local government finance settlement, the continuation of the capital receipts flexibility programme for a further three years, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 to give local authorities the continued freedom to use capital receipts from the sale of their own assets (excluding Right to Buy receipts) to help fund the revenue costs of transformation projects and release savings.
4. This strategy provides background information with regards the statutory guidance on the flexible use of Capital Receipts and its application within this authority.
5. Accordingly, the Secretary of State directs, in exercise of his powers under sections 16(2)(b) and 20 of the Local Government Act 2003 (“the Act”), that:
 - The expenditure for which the flexibility can be applied and treated as capital expenditure (known as ‘Qualifying Expenditure’), should be:
 - Expenditure properly incurred by the authorities for the financial years that begin on 1 April 2022, 1 April 2023 and 1 April 2024
 - Expenditure for which local authorities cannot borrow, for example revenue costs of the service reforms.
 - Up-front (set up or implementation) costs for a proposal that is designed to generate future ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs or the demand for services in future years for any of the public sector delivery partners; and
 - The expenditure for which the flexibility cannot be applied (Non Qualifying Expenditure), should be:
 - The ongoing revenue costs of the new processes or arrangements cannot be classified as qualifying expenditure.

- Cost incurred with respect to redundancy payments, except where such redundancy costs are necessarily incurred and limited to the amounts available as statutory redundancy payments.
6. An extract from the Government guidance on the flexible use of capital receipts is attached as Annex 2. The key determining criteria to use when deciding whether expenditure can be funded by the new capital receipts flexibility is that it is forecast to generate ongoing savings to an authority's net service expenditure.

Objectives and purpose

7. The Council Plan 2023 – 2027 sets out the Council's vision for Bracknell Forest, including the key priorities to be delivered over the medium term. It complements and extends priorities across a number of existing strategies which contain more detailed work to improve outcomes for residents. The Plan sets three overarching priorities, each of which is underpinned by specific ambitions:
- **Engaged and healthy communities**
 - **Thriving and connected economy**
 - **Green and sustainable environment**
8. We have set out a core enabling priority to be an ambitious, resilient and sustainable organisation and will deliver this through our business change programme. This includes five programmes of activity, as below:
- **Climate change** - enabling the organisation to achieve our climate change and carbon reduction goals.
 - **Efficiency and digitisation** – delivering efficient, sustainable, innovative, digital enabled customer focussed services.
 - **Workforce, retention, and recruitment** - ensuring we have the right capabilities, retaining an engaged and motivated workforce and growing our own talent.
 - **Neighbourhood regeneration and assets** - building resilient communities and making best use of our property assets to support effective services and financial sustainability.
 - **Corporate improvement** – an intensive corporate support and challenge programme to enable the turnaround of any service or function that is at risk of failure, initially focusing on the Council's participation in the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme to address deficits on the Dedicated Schools Grant
9. This flexible use of capital receipts strategy is intended to support the Council in delivering its objectives outlined against the themes during the period to end 2024/25 and beyond, assuming the Government extends the flexibility offered.

Historic Use of Capital Receipts Flexibility 2016/17 to Date

10. Since the flexibility was introduced, Bracknell Forest Council has chosen not to make use of it and has instead used earmarked reserves to fund its transformation and business change activities. Through these, a total of £12.5m in savings was secured against a target of £11m.

Future Use of Capital Receipts Flexibility 2023/24 to 2024/25 (and potentially to 2026/27)

11. This strategy earmarks sums totalling £2.05m million in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and highlights a further £2.9m million in the following two financial years for transformative change, through delivery of the Business Change programme. The value of expenditure capitalised must not exceed the amount set out in the plan, including any updated plans, provided to the Secretary of State. If capital receipts generated are insufficient to meet these commitments, other funding sources will need to be identified or expenditure reduced.
12. The projects in Annex 1 have been included in this strategy as being potentially eligible for capital receipts funding to support their delivery (subject to its availability and their approval), with a description of the project, project objectives, and potential planned use of receipts.
13. These projects (subject to their approval) will directly support the release of net financial benefits within the Council's budget plans. This list is not definitive and is subject to availability of this value of receipts. Should further or more priority projects with qualifying expenditure be identified, further revisions will be made to the strategy and will be requested through the relevant channels for resubmission in line with the council's Budget and Policy Framework Rules.

Disposals

14. Local authorities will only be able to use capital receipts from the sale of property, plant and equipment received in the years in which this flexibility is offered. They may not use their existing stock of capital receipts to finance the revenue costs of reform.
15. It is a condition that the disposal of assets by which the capital receipts are obtained must be disposals by the local authority outside the "group" structure. Here "group" has the same meaning as defined in "group accounts" in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, as issued by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), whether or not these transactions are consolidated into group accounts and irrespective of whether the authority produces group accounts.
16. Capital receipts when they are realised are primarily used to fund capital investment which has a relatively short economic life, such as IT investment where borrowing is not economical. In setting its capital programme budget each year, Bracknell Forest Council typically estimates that income of around £2m - £3m will be secured from a combination of Community Infrastructure Levy funding from developers and capital receipts from asset sales. These include proceeds from housing sales realised by Silva Homes under right to buy arrangements, which is the arrangement following the externalisation of the Council's housing stock to Silva Homes (formerly Bracknell Forest Homes) in 2008.
17. It is believed that sufficient capital receipts will be received during the current year to more than cover the amount proposed to be spent under this strategy in 2023/24, assuming its adoption from 1 December 2023. Work is being undertaken to develop a pipeline of asset disposals in future years to provide sufficient funding for the strategy.

Impact of 2023/24 Strategy on Prudential Indicators

18. The guidance requires that the impact on the council's Prudential Indicators should be considered when preparing a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy. The capital receipts assumed to fund the strategy have not currently been factored into the council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) by way of either reducing debt or financing capital expenditure. Therefore, there will be no change to the council's Prudential Indicators that are contained in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement which will be presented to Full Council in February 2024 for approval.
19. The prudential indicators show that this strategy is affordable and will not affect the council's operational boundary and authorised borrowing limit.
20. In using the flexibility, the council will have due regard to the Guidance on Flexible Use of Capital Receipts issued by the Secretary of State under section 15(1)(a) of the Act, the requirements of the Prudential Code, the CIPFA Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and the current edition of the Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice.

Governance

21. It is a condition that local authorities applying this direction must send details of their planned use of the flexibility to the Secretary of State for each financial year in which the direction is used.
22. This should be sent as soon as is practicable after the Council has determined and approved its strategy for the use of the direction but must be sent before the flexibility is used. Where local authorities update their plans during the financial year, an updated plan reflecting the changes must be sent to the Secretary of State. This requirement can be met by providing to the Secretary of State a copy of the authority's own planning documents.
23. By submitting the information set out to the Secretary of State the council will have met the condition; there is no further requirement to receive explicit consent in order to use the flexibility as set out in this direction. It is expected that the council will evidence compliance in full with this condition to their external auditors as necessary.
24. In future years the strategy will be presented annually alongside the budget to Full Council for approval.

Proposed Use of Capital Receipts Flexibility

ANNEX 1

Business Change Programme	Proposed Qualifying Expenditure				Description	Savings Targets (Cumulative)		
	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000		2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Neighbourhood Assets and Regeneration	34.2	211.2	217.6	224.1	Significantly reduce operating costs and generate income by taking a strategic planned approach to analysing and rationalising our property estate. Ensure an efficient and suitable property portfolio that suits the requirements of service delivery and minimises underutilisation.	250	200	250
Climate Change	32.5	108.9	112.4	116	Enabling the organisation to achieve our climate change and carbon reduction goals.	Financial targets initially included above with others to be identified		
Digital Efficiency	92	181.7	250.9	259	Focus on delivering efficient, sustainable, innovative, digital-enabled customer focussed services. Simplify and rationalise systems and data storage to maximise efficiencies and deliver better value from data insight.	250	300	450
Workforce Retention and Recruitment ¹	49.4	166.2	172.1	178.1	Build a thriving, diverse and engaged workforce that drives our organisational effectiveness. Be known for attracting, nurturing and retaining exceptional talent. Through this, increase the number of permanent, core employees and enable reliance on agency workers to be reduced.	1000	1000	1000
Corporate Improvement ²	200	305.3	160.7	166.3	Provide a corporate focus, support and challenge for services or functions that are identified as failing or at risk of failure. Initially focused on services to pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) and their families, working with schools and other stakeholders to improve services and reduce costs as required by the Council's current participation in the Safety Valve programme.	500	1000	3000
Business Change Delivery Capacity	141.9	526.7	486.3	556.5	Programme and project management capacity to support delivery of the Business Change programmes and realise their expected benefits, including the financial savings identified against them.	Supporting delivery of all programmes and their identified savings		
Total Potential Expenditure	550.0	1500.0	1400.0	1500.0	Total Target Savings	2000	2500	4700

¹ Target reduction from current £8m annual spend on agency staff. This will mitigate current pressures / overspends on staffing budgets but not initially enable budget reductions.

² Reductions to be identified on the current schools budget deficit. Scale and phasing to be determined through participation in the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme.

Extract from Government Guidance on Flexible Use of Capital Receipts

Types of qualifying expenditure

4.1 Qualifying expenditure is expenditure on any project that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years for any of the public sector delivery partners. Within this definition, it is for individual local authorities to decide whether or not a project qualifies for the flexibility.

4.2 Set up and implementation costs of any new processes or arrangements can be classified as qualifying expenditure. The ongoing revenue costs of the new processes or arrangements cannot be classified as qualifying expenditure. In addition, one off costs, such as banking savings against temporary increases in costs/pay cannot be classified as qualifying expenditure. Under the direction in force from April 2022, with respect to redundancy payments, qualifying expenditure will be limited to those amounts that are necessarily incurred as statutory redundancy payments provided the other requirements of qualifying expenditure are met. This restriction does not apply to other severance costs, including pension strain costs; the treatment of these costs remains unchanged from the previous direction.

Examples of qualifying expenditure

4.3 There are a wide range of projects that could generate qualifying expenditure and the list below is not prescriptive. Examples of projects include:


- Sharing back-office and administrative services with one or more other council or public sector bodies;
- Investment in service reform feasibility work, e.g. setting up pilot schemes;
- Collaboration between local authorities and central government departments to free up land for economic use;
- Funding the cost of service reconfiguration, restructuring or rationalisation where this leads to ongoing efficiency savings or service transformation;
- Driving a digital approach to the delivery of more efficient public services and how the public interacts with constituent authorities where possible;
- Aggregating procurement on common goods and services where possible, either as part of local arrangements or using Crown Commercial Services or regional procurement hubs or Professional Buying Organisations;
- Improving systems and processes to tackle fraud and corruption in line with the Local Government Fraud and Corruption Strategy – this could include an element of staff training;
- Setting up commercial or alternative delivery models to deliver services more efficiently and bring in revenue (for example, through selling services to others); and
- Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies (for example children’s social care or trading standards) to generate savings or to transform service delivery.

Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: 08/09/2023	Directorate: Chief Executive's Office	Section: Policy & Performance	
1. Activity to be assessed	Development and implementation of the Council Plan 2023-2027		
2. What is the activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Katie Flint		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Katie Flint, Harjit Hunjan		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	The Council Plan sets out the priorities for the council for the coming four years. It sets the strategic direction and ambition for the council. Many other strategies, plans and policies enable the delivery of the plan. The Council Plan creates a framework for a range of initiatives and projects (set out in the service plans), these are designed to provide positive outcomes for the wider community.		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Everyone in the borough, including residents, businesses and partners.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	What evidence do you have to support this? E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.	N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is specific inclusion of a goal for residents being able to access appropriate care, which includes support for disabilities. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	The plan recognises that 13% of Bracknell Forest's population aged 16 and over are estimated to have a common mental disorder such as depression or anxiety, compared to national (17%) and regional (15%) prevalence rates. Less than 1% of people in Bracknell Forest were recorded as having a serious mental health disorder on their GP Record. 70% of adults in Bracknell Forest were classified as physically active (150+ minutes activity per week) in 2021/22, similar to the South East average.

				There is reference to more detail on population data through the Berkshire Observatory or the Berkshire East Joint Strategic Needs Assessment pages. This provides much greater detail on different groups of people.
9. Racial equality		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	<p>The plan recognises that in 2021, nearly 78% of Bracknell Forest's population were from a white British background. 14% of residents were from ethnic minority groups (excluding white minorities), compared to 19% in England. The diversity in the population continues to increase with the proportion of non-white-British residents increasing by 47% in the last decade, to 22% of residents.</p> <p>There is reference to more detail on population data through the Berkshire Observatory or the Berkshire East Joint Strategic Needs Assessment pages. This provides much greater detail on different groups of people.</p>
10. Gender equality		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	There is a diverse population within the borough and this is recognised within the plan.
11. Sexual orientation equality		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	There is a diverse population within the borough and this is recognised within the plan.
12. Gender re-assignment		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	There is a diverse population within the borough and this is recognised within the plan.
13. Age equality		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals	The plan recognises that the proportion of working-aged adults in Bracknell Forest is slightly higher than England with notably higher proportions of 35 to 54 year olds.

			and communities related to this protected characteristic. There is reference throughout the plan to the importance of inclusivity across all age groups.	People aged 65 and over make-up 15% of Bracknell Forest's population, compared to 18% nationally.
14. Religion and belief equality		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	There is a diverse population within the borough and this is recognised within the plan.
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	There is a diverse population within the borough and this is recognised within the plan.
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality		N	No direct or disproportionate impacts. However, the plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is expected to be positive overall impacts on individuals and communities related to this protected characteristic.	There is a diverse population within the borough and this is recognised within the plan.
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.	The plan is intended to help all residents prosper. There is a diverse population within the borough and this is recognised within the plan. Communities is a specific theme within the plan including a goal related to cohesive and engaged communities. There is also recognition in the organisational theme that we must work jointly and directly with residents.			
18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?	n/a			
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?	n/a			
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?		N	n/a	

21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	<p>There will continue to be engagement with residents through a wide range of engagement, consultation and co-production opportunities. This will help identify local, specific needs, including across different groups of people. There will also be regular monitoring for the delivery of the plan which will help identify if any specific groups are disadvantaged, or barriers to the intended work.</p> <p>There will be significant operational activity that takes place to deliver the ambitions of the plan. The annual actions and activity are set out in the directorate service plans. These will be conducted with appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives and assessments as per the expectations of organisation.</p>		
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?		N	No specific group is disadvantaged by the implementation of this plan.
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
Action	Timescale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria
Continued strategic initiatives and activity to address equality, diversity and inclusion.	Ongoing	Harjit Hunjan	Ongoing
Actions committed to under the Council Plan (within service plans) will be measured regularly through the production of the Council Plan Overview Report (CPOR). Any barriers and risks are explored within this performance management process.	Ongoing (Quarterly)	Katie Flint	Ongoing
24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	All directorates.		
25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?	<p>Research conducted into the community needs via the community analysis for strategic planning. This included identifying different groups and local needs within the community.</p> <p>Wide engagement has taken place with staff and councillors to understand key issues being experienced by partners, residents and service users.</p>		
26. Assistant Director/Director signature.	Signature: 		Date: 12/10/23

Council Plan Annex – Scrutiny report

Overview and Scrutiny Commission 18 October 2023	
Having reviewed the Council Plan, the Commission would recommend to the Executive the following areas of focus, when reviewing the Council Plan:	Officer response to support Executive consideration:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 27 (Green and Sustainable Environment) That a new metric is added related to the amount of renewable energy generated on the council estate. 	<p>Possible metrics related to renewable energy have been explored for inclusion within the Council Plan. A new key result of increasing renewable energy generated through wind and solar could be added to the plan within the goal of “There is collective action to address the climate and biodiversity emergency”. It is recommended that the Executive consider the specific options below for measuring this key result and indicate a preference for one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kilowatts generated through council estate (report twice a year, or annually, due to seasonal fluctuations). Kilowatt capacity of renewable energy production across the council estate (report quarterly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 15 (Engaged and Healthy Communities) Retain all schools and early years settings to be good and outstanding however include reference to this being in line with the Bracknell Forest standard as set out in the improvement strategy. 	<p>The measure currently in the draft plan refers to a specific data set of combining percentage of early years providers rated good or outstanding and percentage schools rated good or outstanding, both referring to Ofsted.</p> <p>Whilst there is significant importance of the wider school improvement work, identifying a specific data set that could be measured quarterly for the four year period is limited as only maintained schools are part of the strategy. It may therefore be more appropriate that this is referenced within the directorate service plan (People directorate) as an action that can have specific/qualitative updates for reporting.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 19 (Green and Sustainable Environment) To explore a suitable performance measure related to climate change resilience within the plan, such as related to sewage releases. 	<p>All measures within the plan reflect indicators that the council has some influence over, albeit not always direct control. Sewage release is not an action the council can control.</p> <p>The opportunity for wider measures of resilience and adaptation to climate change has been explored including adaptations to roads, flood preparation etc. However, a suitable and specific metric could not be identified at this time that would provide constructive performance information. It is therefore recommended that activity and initiatives to address resilience to climate change are contained within directorate service plans.</p> <p>Specifically related to sewage releases, there is limited influence of the council. Conditions are attached to</p>

	relevant planning applications to ensure that there is suitable sewage treatment capacity. When considering drainage proposals as part of planning applications, the lead local flood authority ensures that the correct climate change assumptions are included in the modelling on which any proposed scheme is based.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 17 (Thriving and Connected Communities) To consider if there is appropriate emphasis or further inclusion needed related to ageing infrastructure that goes beyond routine maintenance. 	Data metrics have been explored related to aging infrastructure however there are limited measures to quantify this, particularly for the improvements to be made. It may be more appropriate to include activity and projects to address ageing infrastructure within the directorate level service plans. Specific activity would be contained within the Place, Planning and Regeneration, and Delivery service plans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose that at the end of the four year cycle the plan was brought back to the Commission with a summary report. 	No further comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 19 (Green and Sustainable Environment) Request an amendment to the goal of 'Local transport networks provide choice in travel' to local transport networks provide 'safe' choice in travel 	No further comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 27 (Green and Sustainable Environment) That KR341 be amended to include 'other operators' after TVB. 	Including wider bus routes was explored as part of the original development of the key result, to identify as comprehensive a metric as possible. However, the council does not regularly or consistently receive information for other operators, partly because there is not contractual arrangement. It is therefore not possible to have a reliable measure for all bus travel, only those related to TVB network routes. TVB bus routes cover approximately 60% of commercial bus routes in the borough and all council subsidised services.

Summary of key points of discussion

- The commitment to climate change and reaching net zero was acknowledged as positive. However, the importance of adding a metric regarding renewable energy was requested.
- O&S Commission members were happy with the ambitious targets within the plan but were keen to have the opportunity for the plan to return to the Commission in four years so that they could comprehensively review the performance.
- O&S Commission members acknowledged the importance of the point around children having quality education and opportunities to fulfil their potential but felt that this should be linked to Ofsted ratings and the Bracknell Forest standard.
- Whilst acknowledging that maintenance budgets cover infrastructure improvements the O&S Commission members were keen to ensure that the ageing nature of the infrastructure within the borough was considered and felt this could be an important aspect to link with development of new initiatives such as improvements in road maintenance.