

Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 1HG



Despatched: 17.04.2019

I hereby summon you to attend the meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks commencing at 7.00 pm on 30 April 2019 to transact the under-mentioned business.

Chief Executive

AGENDA

There are no fire drills planned. If the fire alarm is activated, which is a continuous siren with a flashing red light, please leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.

Apologies for absence

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 26 February 2019 and 26 March 2019. (Pages 1 - 18)
2. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting
3. Chairman's Announcements
4. To receive any questions from members of the public under paragraph 17 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.
5. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public under paragraph 18 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.
6. Matters considered by the Cabinet
 - a) Housing Allocations Policy (Pages 19 - 98)
 - b) Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022 (Pages 99 - 154)

7. To consider the following reports from the Chief Executive or other Chief Officers on matters requiring the attention of Council:
 - a) Amendments to the Constitution: Governance Committee and Councillor Absence (Pages 155 - 160)
 - b) Amendments to the Constitution: Licensing Sub-Committee Hearing Procedures (Pages 161 - 174)
8. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.
9. To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.
10. To receive the report of the Leader of the Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting. (Pages 175 - 176)
11. To receive reports from the Chairmen of the Audit and Scrutiny Committees on the work of the Committees since the last Council meeting.
 - a) Audit Committee Annual Report 2018/19 (Pages 177 - 180)
 - b) Scrutiny Committee Annual report to Council - 2018/19 (Pages 181 - 186)

EXEMPT ITEMS

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, Members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the appropriate Contact Officer named on a report prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you require a copy of this agenda or any of the reports listed on it in another format please do not hesitate to contact the Democratic Services Team as set out below.

For any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact:

Democratic Services (01732 227000/ democratic.servces@sevenoaks.gov.uk)

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2019 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Mrs. Bosley (Chairman)

Cllr. Edwards-Winser (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Ball, C. Barnes, Barnes, Mrs. Bayley, Bosley, Dr. Canet, Carroll, Clack, Clark, Coleman, Dickins, Dyball, Edwards-Winser, Eyre, Firth, Fleming, Grint, Hogarth, Horwood, Mrs. Hunter, Kelly, Layland, London, Lowe, Maskell, McArthur, McGarvey, McGregor, Mrs. Morris, Parkin, Parson, Pearsall, Pett, Piper, Purves, Raikes, Scholey, Searles, Miss. Stack, Thornton and Williamson

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Brown, Esler, Gaywood, Halford, Hogg, Lake and Reay.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

With the consent of the Council, the Chairman advised she would bring forward consideration of agenda item 9 to before agenda item 6 (b).

22. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 November 2018.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 November 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

23. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting

No additional declarations of interest were received.

24. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced the sad passing of former Councillor and past Chairman Clive Bruce, who had passed away peacefully following an operation on 19 January 2019. Clive was Chairman of the Council in 2004/2005 and represented Ash Cum Ridley between 1987 and 2007. The Chairman also advised that in January the former Leader of the Council and Sevenoaks Kippington Ward Councillor, Frances Kitson had also died. She asked Members to join her in a moments silence as a mark of respect.

The Chairman reported that the Christmas period had been enjoyable and busy and she and her consort had spent a very different Christmas Day and one they would always remember, visiting patients in Sevenoaks Hospital, spending time in the

CCTV room and lunching with Age UK at Hollybush and elderly people who would otherwise have been on their own.

A very successful evening had been held at the Indoor Bowls Centre in January, not only Raising funds for the Silas Pullen Fund, but guests had really enjoyed the taster sessions and it had become quite competitive. She was proud to announce that to date the wonderful sum of £12,455 had been raised for the Silas Pullen Fund. Members showed their appreciation.

The Chairman reported that she was proud to have been part of Sevenoaks District Council at the Community Awards Evening where the fantastic volunteers in the district were acknowledged and the Leader's unique way of comparing certainly added something special to the event. She wished to record her thanks to the team of staff members who organised and managed the evening so superbly.

With her focus on community wellbeing she advised that she had supported the launch of the 6th Every Step Counts walk in January, with snow on the ground around Greatness Park. She was pleased to announce that a seventh Every Step Counts group was planned in Hextable.

On Sunday she had held her Civic Service in 'our little church in the woods' in West Kingsdown which had been well supported by colleagues: Mayors and Chairmen from across Kent and Surrey; Councillors; Past chairmen; and members of the local community. This had been followed by 'Afternoon Tea' in the Village Hall. She thanked all who had been able to come.

25. To receive any questions from members of the public under paragraph 17 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No questions had been received.

26. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public under paragraph 18 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No petitions had been received.

27. Matters considered by the Cabinet

- a) Council Tax Discounts for Empty and Uninhabitable Dwellings

Councillor Fleming moved and Councillor Scholey seconded the recommendation from Cabinet, which recommended amendments to the level of Council Tax discount for unoccupied and unfurnished dwellings, and dwellings undergoing or requiring major structural repair.

Resolved: That with effect from 1 April 2019

- a) the Council Tax discount for unoccupied and unfurnished dwellings be reduced from 100% for up to 3 months to 100% for up to 1 month (Class C

Council - 26 February 2019

of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012);

- b) the Council Tax discount for unoccupied dwellings undergoing or requiring major structural repair be reduced from 100% for 12 months to 0% for 12 months (Class D of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012); and
- c) in accordance with Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 the additional amount payable for Council Tax be increased from 50% to 100% for dwellings that were unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than two years.

28. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

One question had been received from a Member in accordance with paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

Question 1: Cllr. Dr. Canet

Given that we have seen at least two periods of recession, in property values since the 1990s, a strategy which relies on borrowing (even at below market Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates) to fund the property income needs to make allowance for the risk of capital losses as well as the costs of acquiring and managing properties.

What risk analysis has the Council completed to ensure that investing in property - which some industry experts believe to be at or past peak values- will not expose the council to financial risk?

Given that there are risks inherent in any commercial investment strategy, Shouldn't the Council be looking to achieve community and social benefits from its investments, for example in a worthwhile quantity of affordable housing investment in Sevenoaks District?

Response: Leader of the Council

You are quite right that investing in property does come with specific risks and as with any investment, the risks and rewards should be fully considered.

The Property Investment Strategy Update report contains a risk analysis that shows differences to the one reported to Council a year ago reflecting the changing views of the property market. The Audit Committee analysed the risks of the strategy after it was first agreed and continue to review it each year as the Property Investment Strategy is an area detailed in the Strategic Risk Register. An audit of the strategy was also completed in 2017/18. In addition, the Scrutiny Committee

set up a Property Investment Strategy Member Working Group which concluded that the benefits of the strategy do outweigh the risks.

Thorough due diligence is carried out for each potential investment to reduce the risks as much as possible. Our current holdings are reviewed on a regular basis and it is recognised that there is likely to be a time when there are business reasons to dispose of assets currently owned.

The main aim of the strategy is to produce income to replace Government support to allow us to provide excellent services to our residents and therefore achieve community and social benefits. The Council has Quercus Housing whose aim is to use s106 funding to provide affordable housing in the district and we are in the final stages of due diligence for a 14 unit property that was likely to provide ten affordable housing units and 4 market units.

None of the assets currently held in the strategy have been funded by external borrowing but it is recognised that future assets may be. This is why we are looking to revise the strategy criteria to ensure that the Council does still receive a good return after paying any interest on a loan.

Supplementary question: Cllr. Dr. Canet

Cllr Dr Canet stated that she remained concerned as it was different times commercially and politically, that this was a risky strategy and was concerned that investing within a 50 mile radius was still being considered.

Response: Leader of the Council

The Leader responded that it remained a 50 mile radius in order to spread the risk around a wider geographical area.

29. Matters considered by the Cabinet (cont:)

(b) Property Investment Strategy Update

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Scholey seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought approval of amendments to the Property Investment Strategy.

Resolved: That the following amendments be made to the Property Investment Strategy

- a) the income yield be amended to 3%+ above the Council's average treasury management return (currently 0.7%) when not borrowing or internally borrowing, and 3%+ above the borrowing rate (currently 2.6% for 30 years) when externally borrowing, based on an average over 10 years. (Flexibility may be applied to those opportunities that show an acceptable social return on investment);

Council - 26 February 2019

- b) the lot size be amended to £1m - £10m subject to multiple tenants for lots over £5m; and
- c) investment opportunities be restricted to those within a 50 mile radius of the Council's Argyle Road offices or within Kent and Medway, recognising that this may need to be changed in future if legislation is amended.

(c) Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Scholey seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought approval of the Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20.

Resolved: That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20, be approved.

(d) Capital Strategy 2019/20

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Scholey seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet, which sought approval of a Capital Strategy for 2019/20 in line with the new CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

Resolved: That the Capital Strategy for 2019/20 be approved.

(e) Calculation of Council Tax Base and other tax setting issues

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Scholey seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report set out details of the calculation of the District's tax base for council tax setting purposes.

Resolved: That

- a) the report of the Chief Finance Officer for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2019/20 be approved;
- b) pursuant to the report of the Chief Finance Officer and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District Council as its council tax base for the whole area for the year 2019/20 shall be 50,772.34;
- c) pursuant to the report of the Chief Finance Officer and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District

Council as the council tax base for 2019/20 for the calculation of local precepts shall be:

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Tax Base</u>
Ash-cum-Ridley	2,460.65
Badgers Mount	334.28
Brasted	778.50
Chevening	1,450.74
Chiddingstone	602.66
Cowden	435.77
Crockenhill	660.41
Dunton Green	1,323.31
Edenbridge	3,556.04
Eynsford	945.99
Farningham	664.59
Fawkham	283.39
Halstead	782.28
Hartley	2,555.38
Hever	610.42
Hextable	1,666.94
Horton Kirby & South Darent	1,299.56
Kemsing	1,839.00
Knockholt	634.77
Leigh	948.18
Otford	1,709.88
Penshurst	835.95
Riverhead	1,249.06
Seal	1,253.83
Sevenoaks Town	9,637.63
Sevenoaks Weald	615.09
Shoreham	685.46
Sundridge	932.07
Swanley	5,607.45
Westerham	2,068.71
West Kingsdown	2,344.35

- d) any expenses incurred by the Council in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere in its area by a parish or community council or the chairman of a parish meeting shall not be treated as special expenses for the purposes of section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(f) Budget and Council Tax Setting 2019/20

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Scholey seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought approval of the proposed budget and required level of Council Tax for 2019/20, and proposed a net expenditure budget of £15.251m in 2019/20 (£14.687m in 2018/19).

The Leader spoke to the motion stating that Members had before them another balanced 10 year budget, an achievement that remained unique within Local Government and an achievement recognised again this year, following on from previous year's success with an international award for Leadership & Management, a win in which the council's clarity of vision and boldness of purpose alongside financial self-sufficiency was recognised as delivering the high quality of services our residents deserve.

He stated that he could guarantee, with absolute certainty, that the budget in front of Members tonight would also be unique across local government in the positivity of its messages: investment in services, not cuts; increased investment in assets not cuts. No-one looking at the council's track record or future plans could deny we were a seriously different council. He further stated that there was no getting away from the fact these were incredibly difficult times for the local government sector, with the council's own figures bearing this out. In the last 10 years Sevenoaks District Council's revenue support grant had fallen by over five million pounds. In simple terms that meant the direct grant funding for every man, woman and child within the District had reduced from £55.95 in 2010 to zero, absolutely nothing the previous year. Risks remained, the uncertainty of the fair funding review and business rate retention was real and certain parts of the council's financial future remained beyond the council's control.

Despite this, all had been done to put the council in absolutely the best possible position for the future. The property investment portfolio was growing, and performing well and the ambition to provide the district's first new social rented housing for thirty years was on track.

He reported that the previous year he had spoken about current and future plans, and stated that the council was now days away from the new long stay car park in Sevenoaks opening and plans were being brought forward in Swanley for a new leisure centre and business hub as the council looked to build out the aspirations of its communities which was only possible due to the hard work and diligence put in by members and officers, for which he expressed his thanks.

He stated that self-sufficiency and a property portfolio were never going to be the end of the story, they gave the opportunity to make decisions which best served

the communities represented. Members knew that he strongly believed that the council should always balance the make-up of the money available to spend. The main three pillars that remained after the removal of government support were Council Tax, Savings and Investment income, and over reliance on any one of the three he believed destabilised the council as an authority and put at risk the ability to deliver the positive agenda set out.

He advised that the secretary of state had made it clear at the dispatch box, that he believed council tax increases should keep pace with inflation and he made this possible by confirming the referendum limit at 3%, which followed a theme over the last few years as councils moved away from direct government support. For Sevenoaks it would mean an increase of £6.21, as proposed taking the total Sevenoaks District Council Tax figure to £215.01, or £4.00 a week.

The work that members and officers at Sevenoaks District Council had done and the outcomes achieved had gained the council national and international recognition. Whilst awards were not why anyone present came into local government they did act as a yard stick with which to measure performance against others and to coin a phrase ‘keep us honest’ not allowing backsliding or any resting on laurels. The Council would, over the coming years, need to go further, faster, and would need to both learn from others and lead.

He concluded by saying that whilst there would undoubtedly be challenges ahead, the future was not without risk, some of which fell outside of the council’s control, and all that could be done was to make sure the council was fit for, ready for, and up for these challenges. The work done and the work the council continued to do, supported by the balanced ten year budget before members was the solid foundation that made him believe that the Sevenoaks District would not just survive but would thrive in the future. He commended the budget to members.

The vote was taken by all those present throughout the debate.

For	Against	Abstention
Cllr. Abraham		
Cllr. Ball		
Cllr. C. Barnes		
Cllr. J. Barnes		
Cllr. Mrs Bayley		
Cllr. Bosley		
Cllr. Mrs. Bosley		
Cllr. Dr. Canet		
Cllr. Carroll		
Cllr. Clack		
Cllr. Clark		
Cllr. Coleman		
Cllr. Dickins		
Cllr. Dyball		
Cllr. Edwards-Winser		
Cllr. Eyre		

Council - 26 February 2019

Cllr. Firth Cllr. Fleming Cllr. Grint Cllr. Hogarth Cllr. Mrs. Hunter Cllr. Kelly Cllr. Layland Cllr. Lowe Cllr. Maskell Cllr. McArthur Cllr. McGarvey Cllr. McGregor Cllr. Mrs. Morris Cllr. Parkin Cllr. Parson Cllr. Pearsall Cllr. Pett Cllr. Piper Cllr. Purves Cllr. Raikes Cllr. Scholey Cllr. Searles Cllr. Miss. Stack Cllr. Thornton Cllr. Williamson		
41	0	0

It was therefore

Resolved: That

- a) the Summary of Council Expenditure and Council Tax for 2019/20 set out in Appendix E to the report, be approved;
- b) the 10-year budget 2019/20 to 2028/29 which was the guiding framework for the detailed approval of future years' budgets set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved, including the growth and savings proposals set out in Appendices C-D to the report, and that where possible any variations during and between years be met from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve;
- c) the Capital Programme 2019/22 and funding method set out in Appendix H to the report, be approved;
- d) the changes to reserves and provisions set out in Appendix J to the report, be approved;
- e) the Capital Programme 2019/22 be approved, and Asset Maintenance 2019/20 budget of £672,000 be approved;

- f) it be noted that at the Cabinet meeting on 10 January 2019 the Council calculated as its council tax base for the year 2019/20:
- (i) for the whole Council area as 50,772.34 being Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended, (the “Act”); and
 - (ii) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as in Appendix M to the report;
- g) the council tax requirement for the Council’s own purpose for 2019/20 (excluding Town and Parish precepts) be calculated as £215.01;
- h) the following amounts be calculated for the year 2019/20 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
- (i) £57,526,904 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Town and Parish Councils.
 - (ii) £42,195,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (iii) £15,331,904 being the amount by which the aggregate at (h)(i) above exceeds the aggregate at (h)(ii) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (iv) £301.97 being the amount at (h)(iii) above (Item R), all divided by (f)(i) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including Town and Parish precepts).
 - (v) £4,415,343 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Town and Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (as set out in Appendix L to the report).
 - (vi) £215.01 being the amount at (h)(iv) above, less the result given by dividing the amount at (h)(v) above by the amount at (f)(i) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Town or Parish precept relates.

Council - 26 February 2019

- i) that it be noted that for the year 2019/20 the Kent County Council, the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner and the Kent & Medway Towns Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below:

<u>Valuation Bands</u>	<u>Precepting Authority</u>			
	Sevenoaks District Council £	Kent County Council £	Kent Police & C.C. £	Kent & Medway Towns Fire Authority £
A	143.34	866.28	128.77	51.84
B	167.23	1,010.66	150.23	60.48
C	191.12	1,155.04	171.69	69.12
D	215.01	1,299.42	193.15	77.76
E	262.79	1,588.18	236.07	95.04
F	310.57	1,876.94	278.99	112.32
G	358.35	2,165.70	321.92	129.60
H	430.02	2,598.84	386.30	155.52

- j) that the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown as set in Appendix P to the report, as the amounts of council tax for the year 2019/20 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings; and
- k) that the Council's basic amount of council tax for 2019/20, shown in (h)(vi) above, is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

30. Matters considered by other standing committees/Council working groups

- (a) Amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy following consultation

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Mrs Morris seconded, the recommendations from the Licensing Committee which sought approval of amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy.

Councillor Mrs Morris wished to record her thanks to Officers and Members for all their work at Committee and hearings for the past four years.

Resolved: That the draft amended Hackney Carriage and Private Hire policy be approved.

(b) Monitoring Officer's Annual Report

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Ball seconded, the recommendations from the Standards Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

(c) Amendments to the Constitution: Licensing Sub-Committee Hearing Procedures

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Pett seconded, the recommendations from the Governance Committee.

Resolved: That

- a) 'Part 8 - Licensing Committee' of the Council's Constitution be amended as set out in Appendix A to the report; and
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, to draft further amendments to Part 8 of the Council's Constitution to include hearing procedures under the Gambling Act 2005 and the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, Public Health Act 1875 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, for consideration at Council on 30 April 2019 after consultation with the Chairman of Governance.

(d) Member Working Group - Income Strip Funding

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Scholey seconded, the recommendations from the Member Working Group - Income Strip Funding (ISF) with additional wording on recommendation (c) adding the words 'including those in the Property Investment Strategy' at the end.

Councillor Fleming expressed his thanks to the Working Group, and officers, stating that it was one of the great strengths of the Council that it was fortunate enough to have highly skilled Members who could look and understand a system that was at the cutting edge of funding for Local Authorities.

Councillor Scholey stated that Income strip funding arrangements were relatively complex arrangements and he also wished to thank the members of the working group for their diligence and expertise in working through the details of the advice received from professional advisors.

He explained that in essence income strip funding arrangements were designed so that a pension fund or insurance company could lend money to organisations with implied government backing to purchase property in a manner where the funder has no risks or responsibilities related to the property. They were for periods of 30 to 50 years and the financial return to the funder increased in line with an agreed

measure of inflation, typically RPI. In return for the security of government backing, inflation protection and lack of other responsibilities the funders could offer to provide money at a low rate of return. This could be a very useful source of funding for schemes where, for example, education and local authorities were confident the income generated from the property will reliably increase at a rate sufficient to pay the funder.

Examples of uses of income strips were funding of college halls of residence and regeneration schemes within a local authority area. Reef offered the Council an opportunity to use the income strip concept in a novel way. They proposed to use the funding mechanism as a purely property investment vehicle to purchase and manage an aparthotel in Aldgate, close to the City of London. Initial examination of the proposal indicated it could generate a valuable income stream for the council with the option to buy the property for £1 in 50 years. However, the devil of all schemes lay in the detail.

At its meeting in May 2018 Council requested that a working group be set up to look at the commercial and legal details of the proposal and to report back. A summary of the investigations undertaken was included with the agenda papers and all members were invited to review and discuss the details with members of the working group on 29 January 2019. The working group now felt in a position to make the following recommendations to Council: The working group viewed ISF as a sound financial mechanism which the council could use in the right circumstances to fund income generating developments within its own area, preferably developments involving regeneration; Members and officers of the council now had a sound understanding of the legal and commercial strengths and weaknesses of ISF and were in a position to construct a scheme when a suitable opportunity arose; ISF was not a mechanism the council should use for property investment outside the district boundary, and in particular should not proceed with the Reef proposal.

In response to a question, Members were advised that the working group was a working group of Council and therefore only reported to Council, and the working group had invited all members to attend one of their meetings on 29 January 2019.

Resolved: That

- a) the report from the Member Working Group be noted;
- b) an aparthotel at 21 Commercial Road, Aldgate not be acquired using an income strip funding deal; and
- c) Income strip funding be included as a possible funding method for future property schemes including those in the Property Investment Strategy.

31. To consider the following reports from the Chief Executive or other Chief Officers on matters requiring the attention of Council

(a) Pay Policy Statement

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded the report which set out the elements of senior officer pay that enabled the Council to attract high quality officers whilst protecting value for money to the community. Approval by Council and publication on the Council website improved transparency and accountability whilst ensuring adherence to the Localism Act 2011.

Resolved: That the Pay Policy Statement be adopted and published on the Council's website.

32. To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

No motions had been received.

33. To receive the report of the Leader of the Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting.

The Leader of the Council reported on the work that he and the Cabinet had undertaken in the period 5 November to 8 February 2018.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.42 PM

CHAIRMAN

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2019 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Mrs. Bosley (Chairman)

Cllr. Edwards-Winser (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Ball, C. Barnes, Barnes, Mrs. Bayley, Bosley, Brown, Dr. Canet, Carroll, Clack, Clark, Coleman, Dickins, Dyball, Esler, Eyre, Firth, Fleming, Hogarth, Kelly, Lake, Layland, London, Lowe, Maskell, McArthur, McGarvey, McGregor, Mrs. Morris, Parson, Pearsall, Pett, Piper, Purves, Reay, Scott, Scholey, Searles, Miss. Stack and Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Gaywood, Grint, Halford, Hogg, Horwood, Mrs. Hunter, Kitchener, Krogdahl, Parkin and Raikes.

34. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting

Councillor Mrs Morris advised that she did not have an interest in Agenda Item 2(a) (Minute 35 below). However, there appeared to be some public perception that she did, therefore she would remove herself from the room during consideration of this item and left the Chamber.

35. Matters considered by the Cabinet

- (a) Local Plan - Results of the Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation, agreement to submit the proposed submission version for examination

Members' attention was brought to a tabled replacement page 4 of the report, which set out the tabled information more clearly but provided no new information.

Councillor Fleming moved and Councillor Piper seconded the report which sought agreement to the submission of the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan for examination.

Before the commencement of the debate, the Chairman advised she would initially take any questions of factual clarification.

Cllr Clark asked that with reference to the report, whether officers had held meetings with the promoters of developments on the large sites in and around Ash, Fawkham and Hartley, including: MX52 & MX53 (Land at Corinthians Sports Club

and Banckside, Hartley) MX61 (Land south of Redhill Road, Ash) and ST2 - 37 (New Ash Green Village Centre) and, if so, what the outcome was.

His second question was that, noting the overwhelming number of comments from individuals and statutory bodies which opposed the proposed development on the additional strategic site MX61 south of Redhill Road, Ash, what circumstances might persuade the Council to give favourable consideration to an application for inappropriate development on any part of this land.

Councillor Fleming replied that officers offered meetings to the promoters of all the Greenfield 'exceptional circumstances' sites listed in the draft version of the Local Plan. The purpose of the meetings had been to inform promoters of the procedural aspects of the examination, such as timetable, the examination process and next steps. Promoters had also been given an opportunity to inform officers on any updates to their proposals for information purposes, on the basis that there was no scope to make changes to the current version of the plan prior to submission. It was also noted that should the Planning Inspector decide on any main modifications to the plan after the hearing sessions, these would be subject to a further round of public consultation prior to adoption.

In response to the second question, he stated that the National Planning Policy Framework set out what should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and made clear that planning applications should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However the Framework did not define what those circumstances might be, so it was up to the decision maker to consider each application on its individual merits. As such, to set out now what those circumstances might be could well be considered to be predetermining the outcome of any future application, which would be unwise. It should be noted that this site was not included in the submission version of the Local Plan, and that the consultation was only to seek views of stakeholders/general public, so that the Council was better informed regarding the specifics of the site.

Cllr Edwards-Winser advised that he had concerns regarding the expansion of the Vestry Estate. He asked where the terminology for 'Poorly Performing Green Belt' had originated from as it was not one of the five reasons stated in the Ove-Arup report, nor did it exist in the NPPF. In the Council's own assessment, the area had rated strongly for purposes 1, 2 and 3, and he wanted some clarity as to why it had been included in the local plan. He also stated that if the Vestry increased in size, then the resultant traffic would almost certainly increase and asked why the infrastructure had not been addressed in the plan.

He also queried why all the commercial buildings in the plan were allocated to the Vestry when it was hardly mentioned in the Economic Needs Study until the conclusion and recommendation, and whether it would be better to have the units spread across other suitable sites in the district to prevent unnecessary travel.

Councillor Fleming responded that the Council's Green Belt Assessment (Ove Arup report) split the whole district into parcels and classified them as either strong, moderate or weak performing Green Belt, based on the 5 purposes (or 'reasons') outlined in national policy (the NPPF). It also identified a small number of weak

performing sub-areas, and the Bartram Farm area fell into this category. The evidence base report outlined that the area was ‘functionally attached to the settlement as opposed to the wider countryside and played no role in preventing encroachment and its relative enclosure limited its contribution to preventing sprawl or maintaining the gap between Sevenoaks and Otford. It was acknowledged that the wider parcel was not classified as weak performing, but its proximity to Sevenoaks and the Vestry Estate along with the enclosure of the site by road and rail corridors, had led to it being considered an appropriate allocation. Infrastructure had been addressed in the Plan as it was central to the strategy that sites came forward with infrastructure to meet existing community needs, not just the needs of those who would live in the new homes. It was important to recognise that this was about a Local Plan allocation not a planning application. If the allocation was adopted in the new Local Plan, any future planning application would still need to demonstrate (through a Transport Assessment) that the proposed development was compatible with the local transport network or what mitigation measures needed to be put in place. The Economic Needs Study identified the level of employment provision required over the Plan period and did not focus on the sites suitable for this provision.

He added that Bartram Farm was not the only ‘new’ commercial site in the Plan, there was also: Sevenoaks Garden Centre; Sundridge (opposite Dunbrik); and the Park and Ride site, Otford Road. In addition to this, the Plan sought to retain all of the existing employment land base, and this was distributed across the District.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Fleming spoke in support stating that he was proud of the process and consultation undertaken and thanked Members and Officers for all their hard work over a number of years. It had not been an easy process with central government policy of increased housing in conjunction with the pressure already felt by the South East, on top of which the District had 93% Green Belt. However, the Council had listened and achieved this stage by following the process set out.

Councillor Piper stated that it had been a long journey and thanked the Advisory Committee for their help over the years. The Council had carried out more consultation than some of its neighbouring boroughs and districts and more than legally required, which had led to a good number of responses of which most were favourable. The Green Belt had been around for 70 years and the District had 93%, putting immense pressure on the remaining 7%. From the initial Call for sites and over 400 greenfield Green Belt responses, it needed to be remembered that only 2 exceptional circumstances sites with one for review after 5 years were actually being put forward. Up until the Regulation 19 consultation the process had had to be neutral which had not proven popular, but it had been essential that the Council had been seen to have a fair and transparent process for all stakeholders. He believed that the Plan before Members was balanced, sound and preserved the Green Belt.

Councillor Thornton as Vice Chairman of the Planning Advisory Committee read a statement supporting the recommendations from the Chairman of Planning Advisory Committee who could not be present, and along with the Chairman added

her own thanks to officers stating that the evidence led process had resulted in this proposed submission.

During the debate some concerns were raised which Cllr Fleming responded to by advising that planning permissions were able to deliver strategic infrastructure. The concerns raised with regards to: the increased and ageing population; homes for life; affordability; social and private lettings etc.. had already been addressed in the Council's adopted Housing Strategy which was almost unique in the country in addressing these issues even down to ward by ward level, and the Local Plan. The Local Plan before Members provided 76% of the housing required for the Plan period 2015-35, and in addition to this protected 99% of the existing 93% Green Belt within the District.

Resolved: That the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan be submitted for examination.

(Having declared that she would remove herself from the room during consideration of this item, Cllr Mrs Morris left the Chamber before the start of this item and did not take part in the debate or voting thereon.)

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.34 PM

CHAIRMAN

Item 6(a) - Housing Allocations Policy

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Cabinet (Minute 55, 6 December 2018)

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health presented a report which sought approval of the revised Sevenoaks District Housing Allocations Policy to incorporate changes in legislation and to ensure that social housing allocations prioritise those with the greatest housing need.

The Head of Housing explained the report. She advised that the Housing & Health Advisory Committee had considered the report and suggested revised recommendations to Council, which were included in a supplementary agenda.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council, to approve the Housing Allocations Policy subject to

- a) 3.1 (a) under 'Local Connection' being amended to read
 - 'a) Having lived permanently in Sevenoaks District continuously for 6 out of the last 12 months, or 3 years in total out of the last 5 years'to bring it in line with the Homelessness Code of Conduct; and
- b) the Council's definition of Local Essential Workers' criteria, as set out within the draft Local Plan, be included in 3.2 'Employment in Sevenoaks District.'

NB. The attached policy at Appendix B to the report has been updated as above.

This page is intentionally left blank

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Council - 30 April 2019

Report of	Chief Officer, Communities & Business
Status	For Consideration
Also considered by	Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 27 November 2018 Cabinet - 6 December 2018
Key Decision	No

Executive Summary: It is necessary to revise the Sevenoaks District Housing Allocations Policy to incorporate changes in legislation and to ensure that social housing allocations prioritise those with the greatest housing need. Members are asked to approve the Housing Allocations Policy, set out at Appendix B.

This report supports the Key Aims of providing the right support at the right time and reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing for all.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer Hayley Brooks, Ext. 7272

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee: That Members agree the recommendation to Cabinet below.

Recommendation to Cabinet: That Members recommend to Council approval of the Housing Allocations Policy.

Recommendation to Full Council: That Members approve the Housing Allocations Policy.

Reason for recommendation: The Council has a legal requirement to produce a Housing Allocations Policy in line with current housing and homelessness legislation. Updates are required to the existing Policy due to legislative changes and to reflect the current demands for social housing.

Introduction and Background

- 1 All local authorities with responsibility for housing are required by law to publish a Housing Allocations Policy, which sets out how social housing properties will be allocated to those in priority need. The Council must

Agenda Item 6a

ensure that the District's Housing Allocations Policy complies with all legislative requirements, case law, national and local housing policies.

- 2 When producing this Policy, this Council must ensure that it clearly details how social housing will be allocated, to comply with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). The Localism Act 2011 introduced significant amendments to Part 6 of the Housing Act, giving housing authorities greater powers when allocating social housing locally, based on local housing and priority needs.
- 3 This Council's Social Housing Register and waiting list is operated by West Kent Housing under a series of Service Level Agreements. This arrangement has been in place since the social housing stock transfer in 1989. This Council remains legally responsible for the District's Housing Allocations Policy. This includes ensuring the Policy is up to date and adhered to, when social housing is allocated through the Housing Register.
- 4 The Housing Allocations Policy was last approved by Cabinet on 3 August 2006, with minor wording amendments in 2014 and 2016 approved by Portfolio Holder Decision. The draft version of the updated Housing Allocations Policy was approved for consultation by Members of the Housing and Health Advisory Committee on 27 February 2018.

Updated Housing Allocations Policy and Consultation

- 5 Following Member approval of the draft Policy in February 2018, a six week public consultation was held between 26 March 2018 and 7 May 2018 to seek the views of partners, housing applicants and members of the public on the proposed changes to the Policy.
- 6 The consultation asked people to comment on the changes and state whether they agreed or disagreed with each Policy change. An overview of the main changes include:
 - Eligibility and Qualification - updates to existing criteria including local connection, income limits, exclusions and exemptions;
 - Allocating properties - adding clearer criteria for bidding and offers;
 - Priority needs - Updates to the Banding scheme criteria and definitions for those with a housing and priority need.
- 7 An online survey was widely promoted to key partners and sent to over 90 key voluntary sector organisations, statutory agencies and housing providers. The survey was also sent to all current Housing Register applicants on the waiting list for social housing, published on the Council's website and featured in the Council's In-Shape magazine. Hard copies of the survey were posted out on request.
- 8 As part of the consultation, workshops were held with 18 representatives from key partner organisations including housing associations, voluntary

sector organisations and Members. Their comments have been taken into consideration for the final version of the Policy.

- 9 In total, the Council received 163 responses to the survey, with 86% completed by individuals and 13% completed by organisation representatives. Overall, 88% of the responses stated that they agreed or selected 'maybe' to the changes and 8% disagreed (the remaining 4% of answers stated 'not applicable').
- 10 A summary of the consultation survey responses to each question is attached at Appendix A.
- 11 The updated and final version of the Housing Allocations Policy is attached at Appendix B.

Implementation of the revised Policy

It is intended that the new policy will be used to allocate new applications to the register with effect from 1st May 2019 and to reassess existing registrations when they become due for their Annual Review.

Any future minor changes or amendments, to ensure the Policy complies with current legislation and operational procedures, would be made through a Portfolio Holder Decision, approved by the Council's Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing.

Key Implications

Financial

The Housing Register is operated by West Kent Housing as part of a new Service Level Agreement at the cost to this Council of £88,000 per annum. This Council is part of the Kent Homechoice Partnership and contributes £10,861 per annum to the partnership for the online Choice Based Lettings System (online bidding and application system for social housing properties). The system is provided by Locata for all Kent local authorities and housing providers.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

As a local housing authority, this Council has a legal duty to provide and publish a Housing Allocations Policy in order to comply with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

The updated Housing Allocations Policy also takes into account the Government's Code of Guidance for allocating housing. As well as the Council's duties within the Equalities Act 2010, Localism Act 2011 and the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Risk Assessment Statement - The following risks have been assessed with the knowledge and detail available to the Council at the time of writing this report:

Agenda Item 6a

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Comments and controls
That the Housing Allocations Policy does not comply with housing and homelessness legislation resulting in a possible legal challenge by applicants	1	4	4 Low	The revised Policy takes account of the Government's Code of Guidance for allocating housing and relevant legislations, as stated above.
That the new Policy is perceived to lack transparency and fairness by applicants.	1	4	4 Low	Public, applicants and partner consultations were carried out prior to the Policy being adopted. Detail within the Equalities Act and Code of Guidance were included in the updated Policy. Updated Policy includes clear processes for assessing applications to promote transparency and fairness. It also sets out a clearer outline of review and appeal processes for applicants.
That the new Policy may change the way in which applications are processed.	2	4	8 High	Clearer operational processes and definitions will make the procedures more efficient. Close working with the managing agent will ensure that the updated processes are in place for all applicants.
That the new Policy may change the way in which priority need is assessed, which may impact on those with lower needs.	2	3	6 High	New Policy provides clearer definitions for banding and priority categories in line with legislation. New removal and qualification rules ensure that only people with genuine housing needs are accepted onto the Register. This will result in the waiting list being shorter and vacant properties more available to those with priority housing needs.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from

different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

The updated Housing Allocations Policy will result in clearer definitions and transparency for those with an identified housing need, including reasonable preference groups and protected characteristics. This will provide greater opportunities for people with an identified housing need to join the Sevenoaks District Social Housing Register as well as prioritising those with the greatest need. The Equalities Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix C.

Resource (non financial)

Applications for the Sevenoaks District Housing Register are managed by West Kent Housing's Allocations Team who work closely with this Council's Housing Advice Service. Any changes to the Policy should be managed within existing resources.

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

The updated Policy emphasises and provides clearer definition relating to those who are in the greatest need and require social housing. This Policy highlights 'reasonable preference' groups as identified in Section 166A(3) Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This includes people who may be in priority need of housing due to safeguarding related issues such as: people occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory living conditions; those with welfare and medical issues relating to a disability; people suffering hardship; and urgent re-housing due to violence. The amended Branding criteria ensures that priority is given to these groups.

Council Housing Officers work closely with West Kent Housing to refer customers using the Council's Safeguarding Policy in relation to any safeguarding concerns. All staff are trained in Safeguarding and keep their knowledge up to date, as well as working closely with the Council's Safeguarding leads.

Conclusions

The Sevenoaks District Housing Allocations Policy has been updated following a consultation period and Members are asked to recommend that this Policy is approved and adopted by this Council.

Appendices

Appendix A - Summary of Consultation Responses

Appendix B - Updated Housing Allocations Policy

Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Communities and Local Government - Allocation of accommodation: guidance to local housing authorities in England](#)

[Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 \(as amended\)](#)

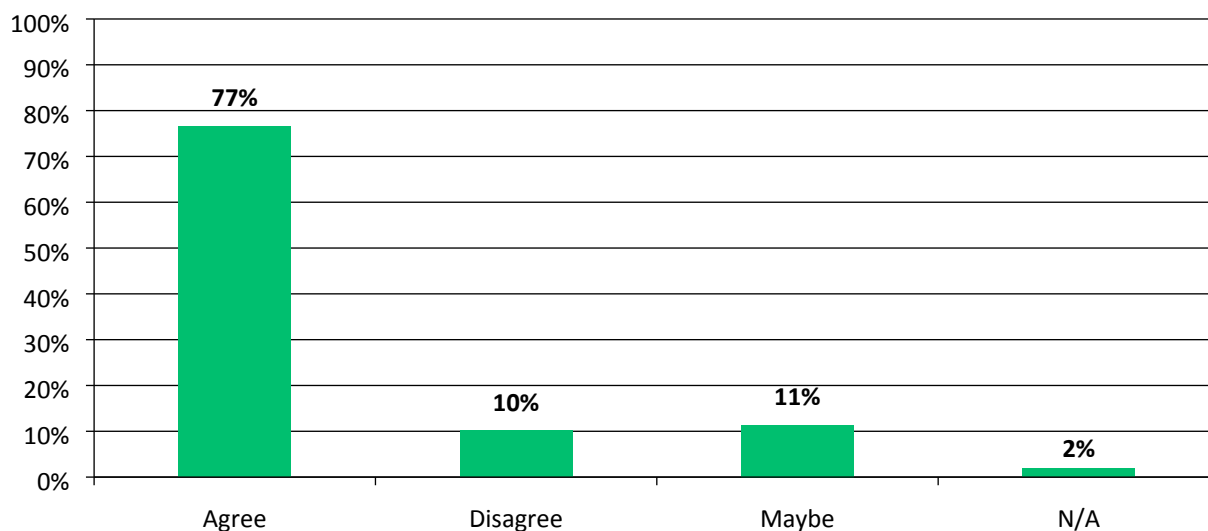
Agenda Item 6a

Lesley Bowles
Chief Officer Communities & Business

Appendix A
 Summary of Sevenoaks District Housing Allocations Policy
 Consultation Results 2018

Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Local Connection Criteria (Section 3.1) ?



Comments:	Response and actions taken:
1. Think it is important to include Grandchildren when looking at family with caring need.	Wording in section 3.1(c) has been amended to be 'typically but not exclusively relating to...'
2. More clarification is needed on point e under ex armed forces and the reasoning why. For example, those dismissed for inappropriate conduct should not be considered.	The armed forces criteria is set out in section 4.1. If inappropriate conduct is a concern, then the factors under section 5.3.4 would be applied when assessing suitability to be a tenant
3. Close connection rules are far too strict and don't allow for unmarried relationships.	See point 1 above.
4. I think for people who have no living family at all (and there cannot be lots of those) the family connection to move to another area should be waived.	The other qualifying factors set out in Section 3 would then apply including local connection, employment, older people and Right to Move.
5. Caring for a relation is important if they are in need of support including getting shopping, if they can't get their shopping on their own. This should be considered a need, it goes without saying that anyone who can't manage to go shopping would also struggle with hospital/doctors appointments and would need help with paying bills.	Comment noted. Wording in 3.1(c) amended from '(i.e. to carry out shopping once a week)' to '(e.g. occasional or infrequent help with a task)'. This would be assessment on a case-by-case basis. Wording changed to clarify this further.

Agenda Item 6a

Appendix A

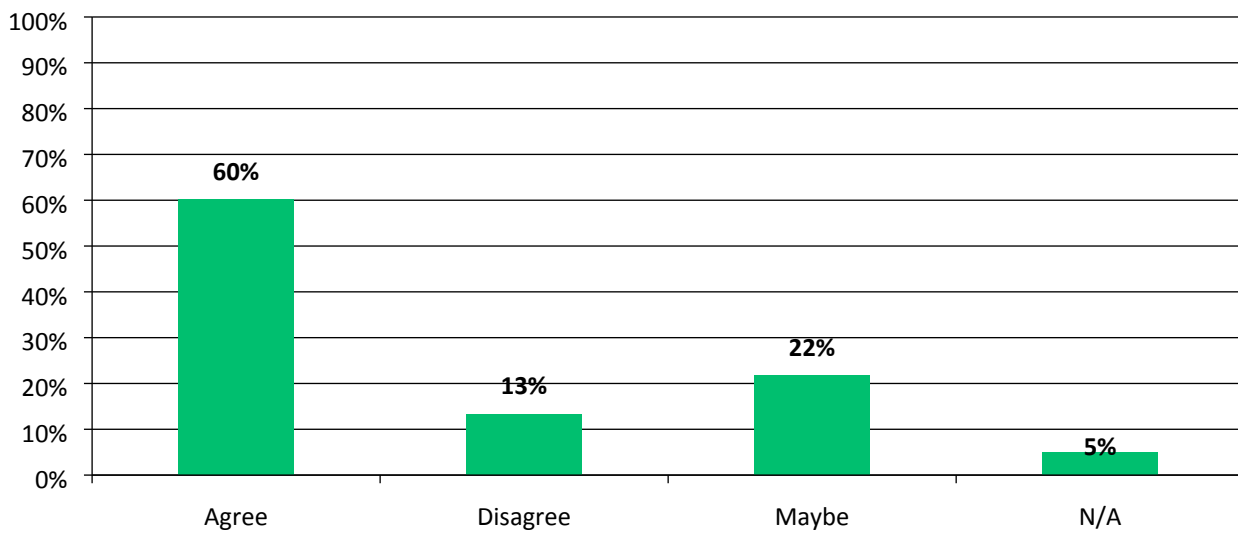
<p>6. Why should British Nationals need to connections of 2/3 years (in some cases of at least 5 years) in lieu of non-Nationals entering the UK (legally or illegally) and able to choose anywhere they wish to live?</p>	<p>Section 5.2.1 sets out Immigration Status. The qualifying criteria in section 3 would apply to everyone with an eligible immigration status to enter or remain in the UK - as defined in s.13(2) of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and under the Immigration Act 1971. The Council would work with the Home Office for anyone who does not have this immigration status.</p>
<p>7. Removes duty to house those needing to move to the area to take up offer of employment. This is not fair because it means you'd have to turn down a job because you live too far away and have no means of moving closer.</p>	<p>Section 3.5 has been introduced which puts a greater emphasis on qualifying for social housing under 'Right to Move' for work related reasons - as set out in The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/ 967).</p>
<p>8. Should include people who contribute to the community in other ways e.g. volunteering.</p>	<p>Comment noted. Section 3.2 (Employment) - following wording added: '(e) Where an applicant can provide evidence that they are unable to engage in paid work, a community contribution including substantial voluntary work or employment related training, both within the District, would be considered on a case-by-case basis to meet this criteria.'</p>
<p>9. The over 60's may not be able to work 16 hour a week.</p>	<p>Section 3.2 employment - This relates to adults of a working age only, for details relating to older people see sections 3.4, 4.2 and 6.7. Also see point 8. above added for people unable to engage in paid work.</p>

Summary of other comments:

10. I particularly support the increase from a 6 month residency requirement to a two year one. I also agree that holiday lets and bed and breakfast do not qualify as residency.
11. I agree that housing should be for people with a genuine connection to the area.
12. I feel that is the right thing to do and feel people with health issues & diagnosed mental health illness cases should be looked into & given more priority. Yes, the changes seem fair.
13. I think some kind of local connection priority needs to be acknowledged, for local people who want and need to stay where they have been raised. If they have always lived in a specific village, hamlet or town or if an applicant has multiple generations of family from a specific place which they want to stay/return to and they can provide evidence of this history then they need to be given some kind of a mention in regards to local connections. In many of these cases, local people are very invested in these villages and the villages need their support.
14. If you are 75 years old and a single person, wanting to be near your children and being lonely that should be taken into consideration.
15. I agree although some older people have lived in the area for more than 2 years but may not have any family but friends who care for them who have lived in the area.
16. It is important for people's mental health to live near to our relatives. If close relatives live here, the level of support they/we need should be irrelevant.
17. Councils need to be open to a wider variety of people with different circumstances and not become stricter.
18. I don't agree with the being employed in Sevenoaks district, I had to take the first job that came.
19. I still have family members living the area, but now I wish to return to the area in my retirement I am told that is not a local connection? Extremely unfair.
20. If your parents or close relative had recently bought and sold a property in a different area. Then the 5 year connection may be valid. You would still be in same position needing social housing but discriminated against because your parents have moved away.

Question 2

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Employment Criteria (Section 3.2)?

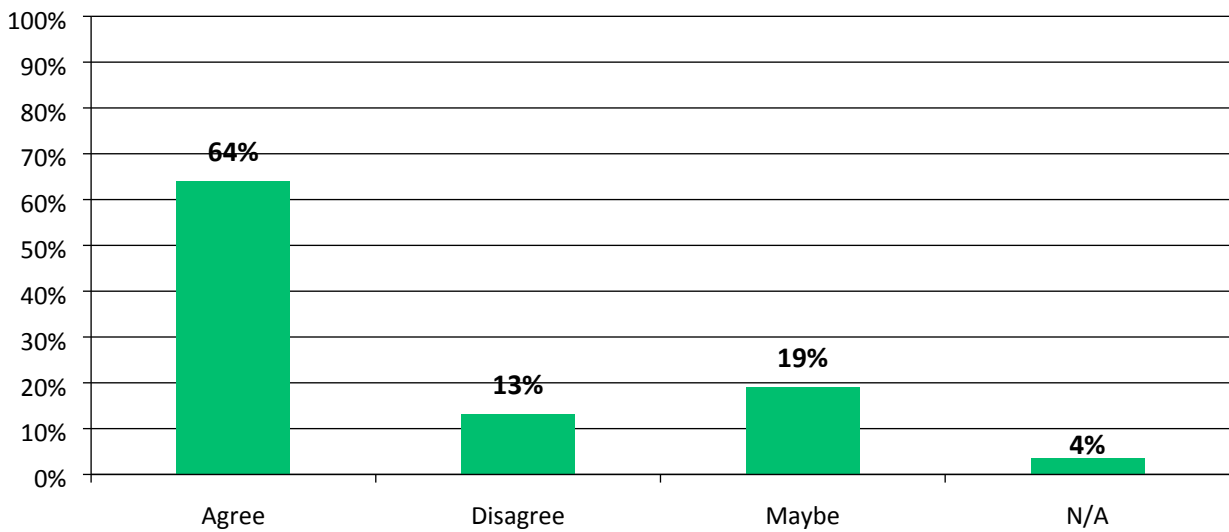


Comments:	Response and actions taken:
1. An allowance should be made if your employer moves the place of employment to SDC. You should be able to apply immediately otherwise it may result in people losing their employment, as the distance to travel to work is too expensive or just too far to travel.	Section 3.5 has been introduced which puts a greater emphasis on qualifying for social housing under 'Right to Move' for work related reasons - as set out in The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/ 967).
2. I disagree with the point re temporary contract. This implies someone on a 12 month temporary contract will be applicable. Fixed long term contracts of over 12 months should be acceptable but not temporary contracts 12 months or less.	Any changes in income levels or to employment contracts would be re-assessed as part of the Annual Review progress with each applicant on the Housing Register. The Governments code of guidance urges councils to support households in low paid employment and incentivise applicants to take up employment.
3. It doesn't mention those that are retired and have lived in the area for over 25 years and are being asked to move because the current property is unsuitable.	Please see Section 4.2 regarding over 55 year olds.
4. Unless disabled and cannot work.	Comment noted. Section 3.2 wording amended to include other community contributions to be taken into account. Medical and disabilities would always be taken into account when assessing applications.
Summary of other comments:	
5. Good to have people living and working in the area. 6. Employment or self-employment 99.9% of the time is always a positive and any help or advice that will support that is a positive. 7. I strongly agree with this. In addition, it would be good for those people who really need to live in this area. 8. I agree with the proposed changes as it considers different types of employment contract as well as self-employment.	

9. Good luck proving the hours you've worked for the last six months if you're on a zero hour contract!
10. I agree with all except the ability to get housing in Sevenoaks based on working only 16 hours per week. Surely, such a small amount of work could be found in almost any area, unless the persons being considered had disability, which stopped them working for more than 16 hours per week.
11. I do not agree with this, as there are not enough jobs in the district to supply this need. The proximity to London makes it easier to get work there and earn more money but enjoy living in the district of Sevenoaks. People work in London to afford to employ local people who are plumbers, electricians etc.
12. Think limiting work area to just Sevenoaks district is a short sighted.
13. I agree there must be a connection but people may not work in the district but have childcare in the district.
14. Seems fair policy but worry that people can get fraudulent documents.
15. I agree that social housing should be offered to working people to give them a start at least being able to save to buy.
16. All depends on how long they have had the 16 hrs or full time employment, open to abuse for those that could get those hours just to get the move they want then give it up once their aim has been achieved.

Question 3

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Income Limit Criteria (Section 3.3)?



Comments:

1. It is essential that household income per person is included in the Income Limit Criteria.

Response and actions taken:

As set out in Section 3.3, the income considers all household members to give a combined income across all members of the household.

Summary of other comments:

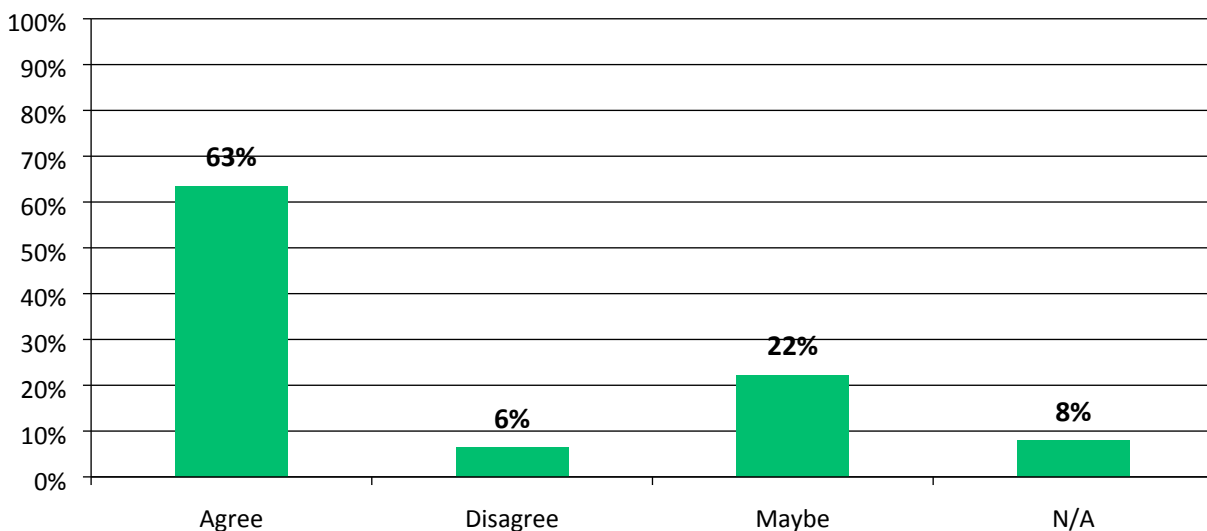
2. I support the income distinction between one bed property and properties for families.
3. Agree that if they can afford to privately rent or buy then they should be doing so, social and affordable housing stock needs to be given to those who can't afford to do so.
4. I feel social housing should help those on the lowest income as private rents are beyond their budget.

Appendix A

5. The original income was low compared to the national living wage. If both parents worked full time, it would push them slightly over the limit.
6. Even on a maximum gross income of £30,000 to £40,000, sometimes this isn't enough for private rent/buying a property in this district.
7. Don't agree with the amount £30,000 for one bed need. This may stop people downsizing and freeing up family homes.
8. People earning £30,000 per annum are well able to afford to rent privately, or obtain a mortgage, so should not be able to obtain social housing.
9. £30,000 for a one bedroom need is more than ample to rent privately or affordable rent only.
10. £40,000 should be affordable rent only as that amount is higher than most people having to cope on low wages or benefits.
11. With current house prices and difficulties to get a mortgage, the minimum income is too low.
12. This will cause people to not get high-end jobs.
13. I think all benefits should be taken into account as monies going to the household as a person's wages are all counted.
14. I think £30,000 and £40,000 respectively are on the low side considering today's cost of living.
15. These income limits seem very high - maybe too generous!
16. I think the total income should include all and any benefits, not just certain ones.
17. Because of the cost of basic living is increasing sharply, maybe raising the amounts to £5k more is more realistic.
18. Again, sometimes affordability criteria are relaxed in exceptional circumstances by housing associations.

Question 4

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the 'Right to Move' wording (Section 3.5)?



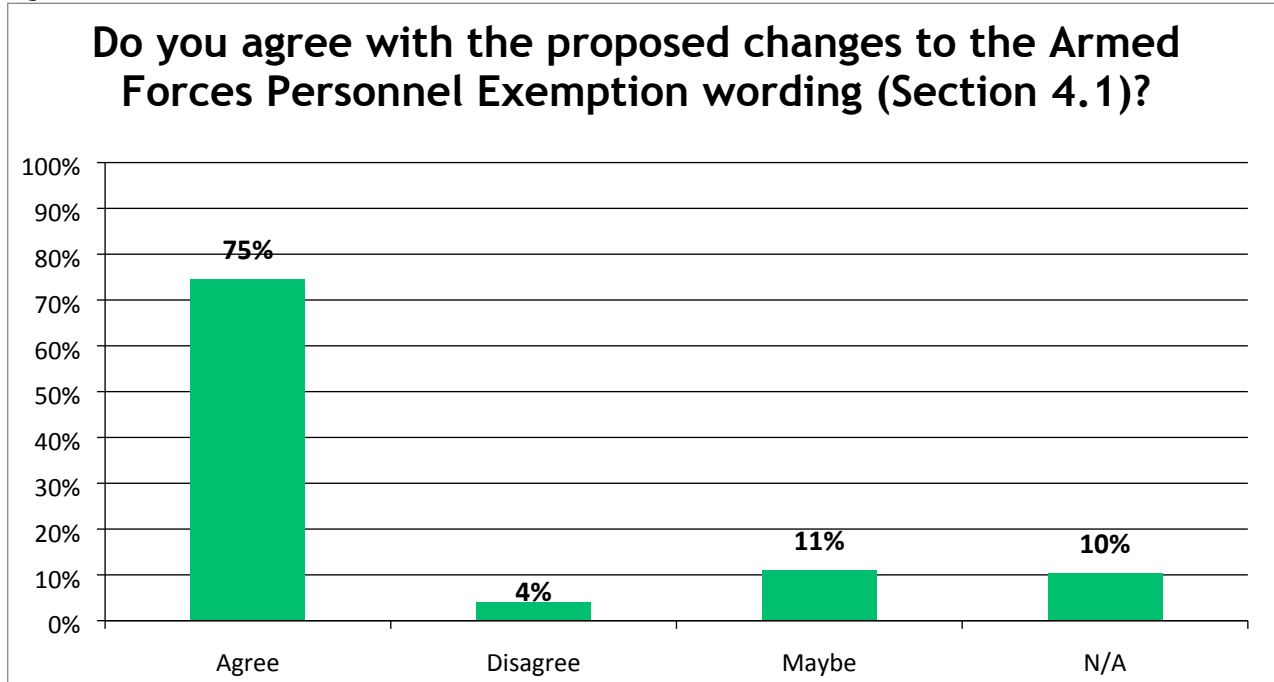
Comments:	Response and actions taken:
1. I fail to understand the 'Right to Move' criteria. In my opinion, they have no real purpose that would benefit the applicant.	The Government's Code of Guidance states: The Government wants to increase opportunities for hardworking households. That is why we have announced an intention to

Appendix A

Comments:	Response and actions taken:
	introduce a Right to Move for social tenants seeking to move to take up a job or be closer to their work, across local authority boundaries.
2. Should only be if full time work, not just for 16 hours.	Comment noted. The range of factors outlined in section 3.5 will be considered on a case-by-case basis. This section also states the work should be for at least 16 hours per week. The following wording has been added to clarify this: 'These factors will be taken into account when considering each applicant on a case-by-case basis.'

Summary of other comments:
<p>3. To live near the workplace will help too as parking is not good in Sevenoaks District and people can use the public transport or walk to get to work.</p> <p>4. If helps keep people in employment and helps with child care etc.</p> <p>5. This is a much fairer opportunity for working families; so much of my time I could spend with my family is wasted travelling to and from work.</p> <p>6. As long as clause c is always explored and checked out before any consideration.</p> <p>7. Maybe, if the place they are looking into moving to had poor transport links.</p> <p>8. Also if the education of children will be affected. It's no good only taking childcare into consideration because it costs money.</p> <p>9. Need to move could include someone suffering ill health and needs to be near family who will help to look after them thus saving social services input.</p> <p>10. In addition, working hours should be taken into consideration alongside time taken to travel. For example, do they need to travel during peak hours or not as this will impact both time taken, and potentially cost (train).</p>

Question 5



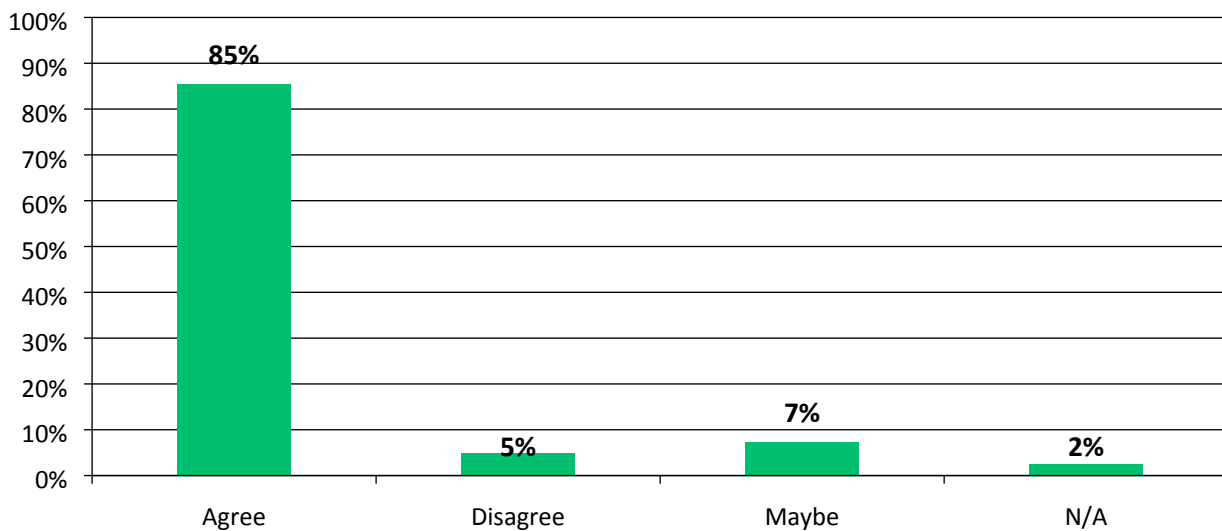
Summary of other comments:
1. This policy shows a recognition of the service members of armed services have given and I support the policy of treating them and their families as local residents to help them secure housing.

Appendix A

2. Their priority should not outweigh those of a greater need.
3. Armed forces personnel should be given immediate access to housing when needed as they risk their lives for us to live safely.
4. Not much medical or rehabilitation support services near here.
5. My husband is ex forces. That doesn't seem to matter to most councils.
6. Need to look after Armed Forces personnel who have contributed to the defence of this Country.

Question 6

Do you agree with the proposed changes to Unacceptable Behaviour wording (Section 5.3.4)?

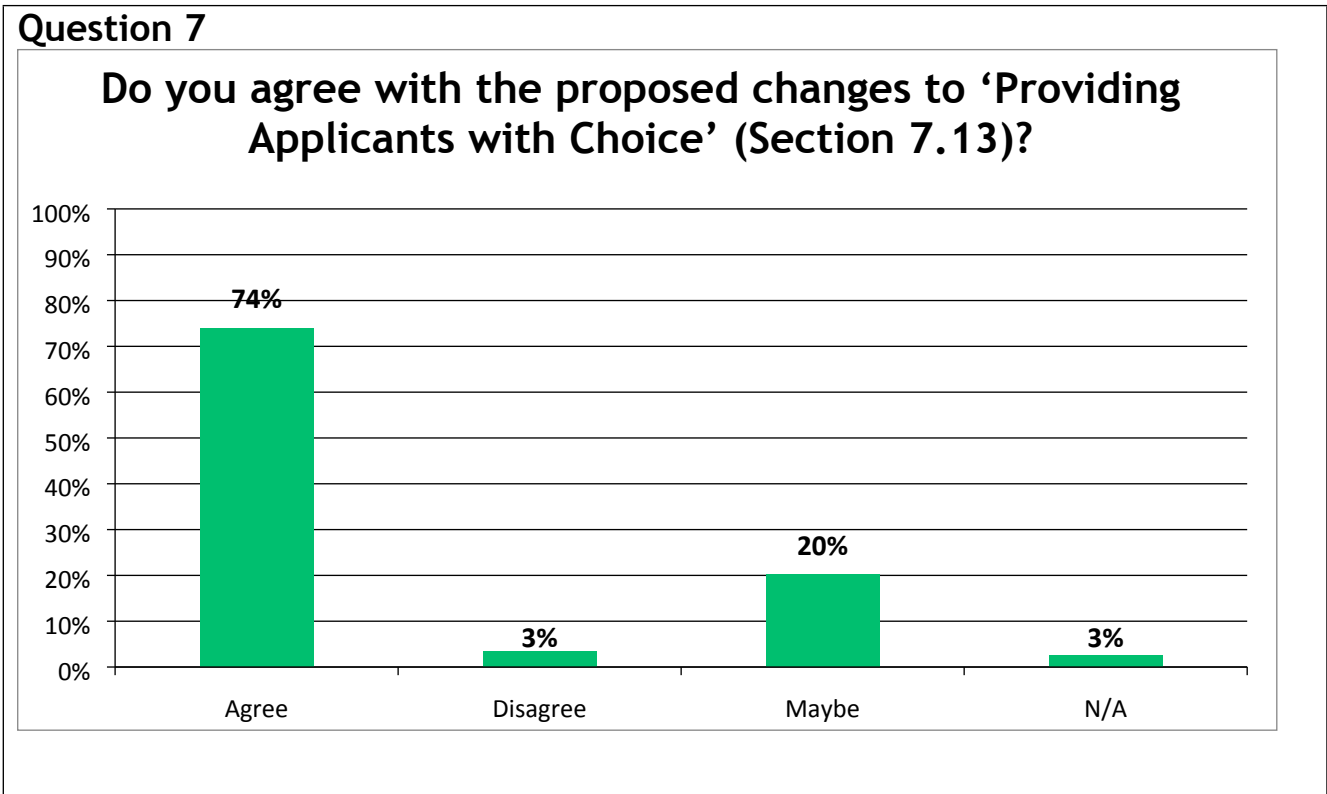


Comments:	Response and actions taken:
1. I suggest a clause that tenants need to keep their animals under control so; keeping dangerous dogs are a ground for eviction if others are put at risk.	Comment noted. Where dogs are allowed, appropriate controls are used in tenancy agreements operated by each housing provider.
2. I agree, but would like to see this inclusive of verbal abuse and verbal aggression shown towards staff members.	Comment noted. Point i) includes abuse and aggression towards members of staff. The wording has been amended to include verbal abuse and to clarify the organisations involved.
3. Ref 3.0 a and b refer to the tenancy applicant as he instead of he or she or gender neutral.	Comment noted. This wording has been amended to 'the applicant'.
4. Make domestic abuse an example of ASB to reinforce its importance.	Comment noted. Wording has been strengthened to include nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or any other persons, which includes anti-social behaviour, abuse, discrimination and harassment.
5. I agree with the bad behaviour but not the debt. Sometimes people fall on hard times and it shouldn't be held against them.	Comment noted. This section includes: 'It is important that the applicant demonstrates they are taking reasonable steps to address the debts.' It also recognises the following exception in point iv: 'except where this has been verified by the Council as being through no fault of their own. '

Appendix A

<p>6. Temporary mental health problems, bereavement, loss of job, loss of relationship. Are there no second chances?</p>	<p>This section states the following exception in point iv: ‘except where this has been verified by the Council as being through no fault of their own.’ The wording has been strengthened by adding ‘This would be assessed based on supporting evidence provided by the applicant and considered on a case-by-case basis.’</p>
--	--

<p>Summary of other comments:</p>	
<p>7. Applicants should appreciate being offered a home and good behaviour within their family and community they live in is vital. 8. If they’re not fit to be a tenant then they shouldn’t be a tenant, simple. This type of housing is a privilege to the under privileged, they need to be appreciative of it or they simply don’t deserve it. 9. If they are paying off rent arrears and trying, they should have chance to reapply. 10. Eviction also should be implemented quicker to make available to new tenants who deserve a place. 11. Applicants should not be able to apply again if they do this sort of thing, it will happen again anti- social behaviour & violence is not acceptable, one warning only it’s their responsibility to keep to the rules. 12. If people need housing then they need housing, you can’t have an area deciding it will only house nice tenants. 13. The section regarding rent arrears would need careful scrutinizing. 14. Only if the person has made no attempt to catch up on rent arrears, sometimes people lose their job. Sometimes a crossover of new job means no income for up to 2 months. Benefits won’t pay out due to new job, if they have made no attempt to rectify a situation or are entered in a payment plan then fine.</p>	



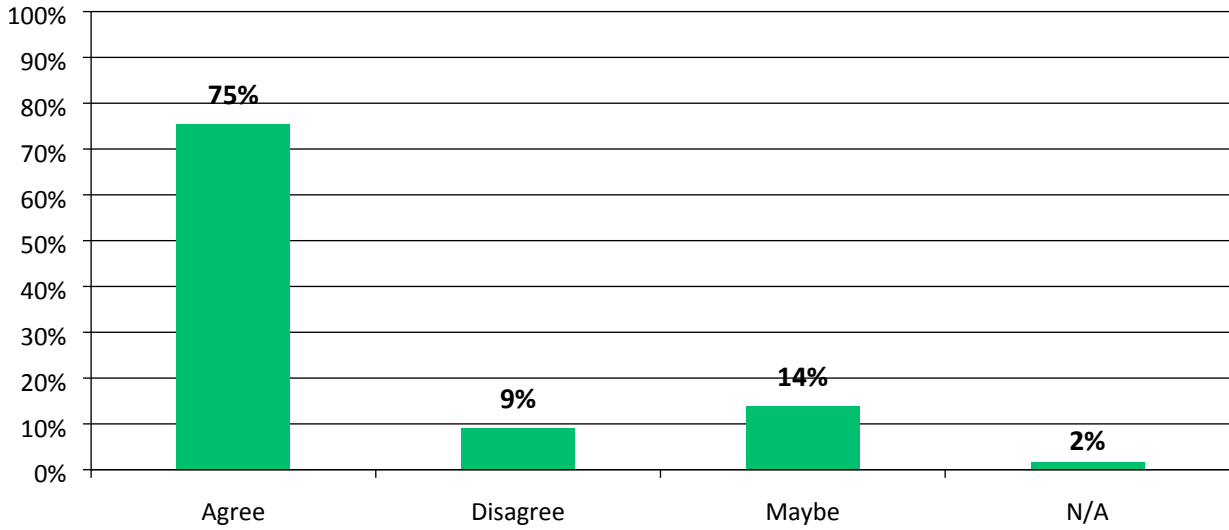
<p>Comments:</p>	<p>Response and actions taken:</p>
<p>1. I agree in the case of A bands, B bands however have been over allocated. These</p>	<p>Comment noted. This updated Allocations Policy aims to provide further clarify on</p>

Appendix A

Comments:	Response and actions taken:
bands are obvious and open abuse of the system.	banding allocations as well as ensuring that the allocation process is fair and transparent. It is important that social housing priorities those in greatest housing need.
2. This effectively removes choice from homeless people. It allows you to put them in unsuitable housing, because if they do not accept they will not be housed at all. This could be setting people up to fail.	Bids are only placed within preferred locations as selected by the applicant. The Register operates a choice based system, set out in Section 7.13. Only suitable and reasonable offers would be made, to ensure applicants are offered appropriate housing to their needs.
3. Again, I am surprised that no direct mention is given to those fleeing domestic abuse.	Commented noted. New section at 4.3 added for applicants fleeing domestic abuse or violence, outlining their priority status and exemptions to the local connection rules.
Summary of other comments:	
<p>4. Applicants who have applied for Social Housing will need to make their own research of the area, to go and see the house from the outside. Check parking, transport links, what the community offers before deciding if they want to bid for the property.</p> <p>5. It should be made clear that every effort will be made to house people locally. Failure to do this can cause mental health problems due to removal of support networks. It also makes it difficult for people to remain in employment in the local area. Wherever possible children should be allowed to remain at their own school and not have to move to a different area, unsettled children will not fulfil their potential and may disrupt the learning of others in the class.</p> <p>6. Yes, I agree as if people are in band A and are offered a property they should take it. People in Band B and band C etc. may get a chance as band C never comes out for a property on Kent home choice.</p> <p>7. Why should people have to be or become homeless, also why should certain people be put first into homes because of vulnerability when they have only just been put in an area for so called safety. They like others should wait until the people on list before them should be housed.</p> <p>8. If they are genuinely homeless, a home is Home, refuse it then get off the register.</p> <p>9. I think applicants in band A and B must evidence they are making bids on all suitable homes or risk losing their banding as applicants are currently being too picky in which areas they wish to bid on and what type of homes they would like to live in.</p> <p>10. Homeless people should have the same right to turn down property as any other person. Under these rules, your house could be unfit for habitation, meaning anyone would turn it down, but you could force a homeless person to live there.</p> <p>11. If temporary housing is a financial burden on the council, the solution is to build more council housing, not deny basic rights to our most vulnerable people.</p> <p>12. There are justifiable reasons why an offer may not be accepted this should not automatically remove you from the list maybe it's too far to walk to the local primary school and you don't own a car for example.</p> <p>13. While I agree with most of the above. I think if there's a very good reason why a place is not suitable (we don't get to see the inside of houses) so for example, say if there mould and an asthmatic looked around but couldn't take that property for health reasons then I don't think they should be punished.</p> <p>14. More consideration must be given to single people especially single males without children.</p>	

Question 8

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the ‘Refusal of Offers’ wording (Section 7.7)?



Comments:

Response and actions taken:

1. I do not agree with having a maximum offer of two homes before removing a person from the register. Applicants are only shown a photo of the outside of the house. Not all medical needs are black and white. Further information would help people choose which home they bid for and would hopefully alleviate bidders whom feel a house isn't suitable after viewing it.

Comment noted. Section 10.1 wording has been strengthened to make allowances for people with disability, housing, medical needs and to consider other exceptional circumstances.

2. As long as there is an appeal procedure.

Comments noted. An appeals process is in place, wording has been added to Section 10.1 to make this clearer.

Summary of other comments:

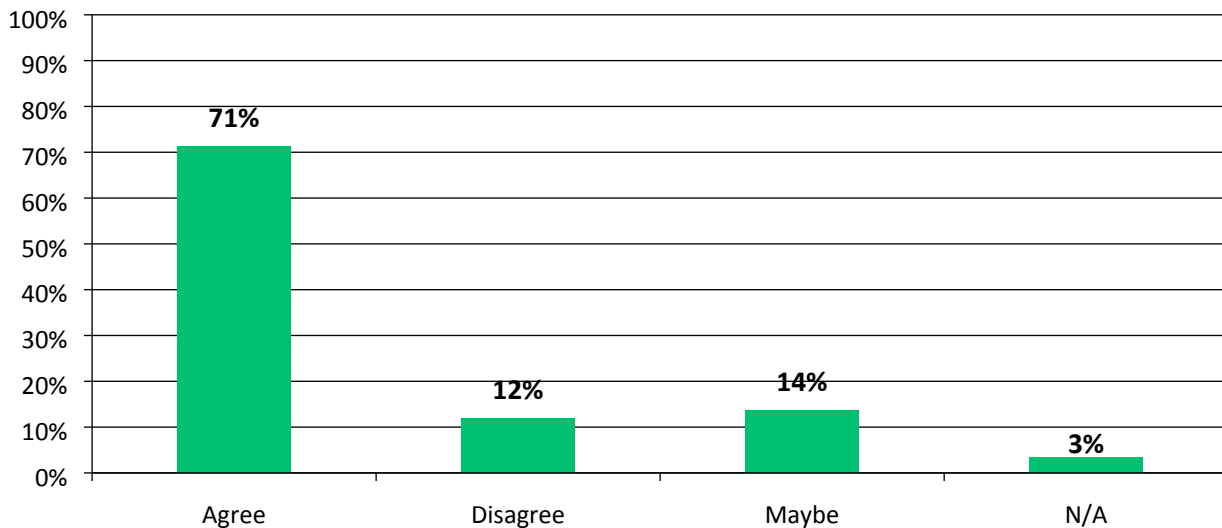
1. Applicants need to give good reason for refusing the offer - they placed the bid.
2. Actively bidding, being responsible and taking everything into consideration when placing the bid should definitely be at the forefront of all applicants by bidding for a property. They're not genuinely interested in it wastes the time of the people who shortlist all the bids making the entire process longer meaning waiting times are extended...people need to bid responsibly.
3. Yes, I agree if people aren't taking properties, they're not in their highest needs. As some people would take the first property council officers offer them.
4. If genuinely homeless surely if they have no extra needs e.g. disability, then this seems fair.
5. If an applicant seriously wants to live in the area and bids for properties only to then turn them down, they are preventing other genuine applicants from being considered for that property and wasting time considering their applications.
6. People shouldn't even be allowed two chances.
7. If a property is refused, it can easily be offered to another bidder in the queue.

Appendix A

8. There is not nearly enough information on the Homechoice site to allow us to make an informed decision. No pictures of the inside. Give us more information upfront and people won't bid on unsuitable properties.

Question 9

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Banding System (Section 7.2)?



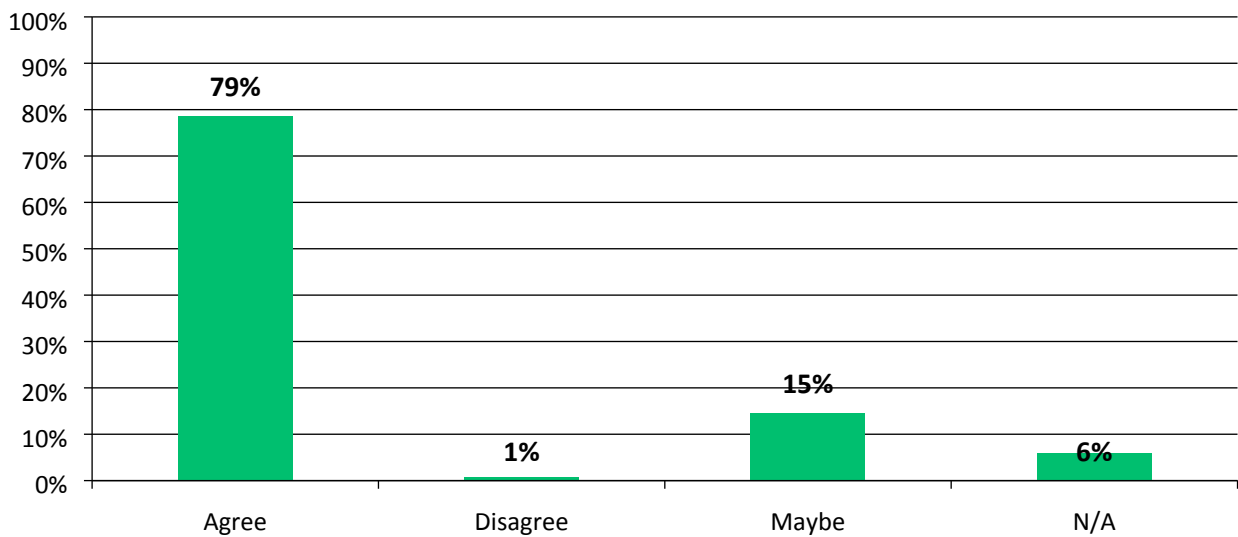
Comments:	Response and actions taken:
1. As long as medical evidence is taken into account.	Comment noted. Yes, medical priority is taken into account and detailed within Section 7.2.
2. If fleeing domestic abuse is addressed.	Comment noted. Yes fleeing domestic abuse or violence is prioritised within Band A - urgent need to move (detailed in Appendix 2).
3. I think they should have a band for working parents to encourage people to get into employment.	Comment noted. The 'Right to Move' category has been added to the banding, in line with new national Code of Guidance. This gives priority based on employment needs (detailed in Section 3.5).
4. You use the word 'normally' and I think it useful to highlight the type of exceptional circumstance that would allow someone to be treated differently to the norm.	Comment noted. The word 'normally' has been removed from Section 7.2. Wording has been amended to provide clearer definitions.

Summary of other comments:
5. Agree as band A should accept properties that Kent home choice offer them as gives band b and c etc. to be offered a property.
6. As will help people in every band to be offered a property.
7. The banding system doesn't work; you need to be homeless to understand what a lot of us go through. It doesn't take in any consideration of your mental health and what you're personally going through.
8. Agree with the banding. However, I think how you decide which band people get is completely wrong.
9. Placing urgent needs before medical needs is wrong. Putting those just registered before longer registered is unfair.

10. I think consideration should be given to all aspects of the individual applicant’s situation not just the highest need, they may have varying issues, which should give band plus elements of bands.
11. The proposal is to remove Band E. Removal of this band will potentially have an impact on how quickly an empty sheltered home can be let, which will cause rental loss to the housing provider and may necessitate identifying future tenants outside of the housing register.
12. Priority within a band will not always be decided by the Housing Association based on length of time.
13. Great distress has been caused to people on the waiting list when they see people in the same band being allocated housing ahead of them who have not been on the waiting list as long. It looks very unfair.
14. Don't feel bandings are always correct.

Question 10

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Homelessness and Housing Advice wording (Section 8)?

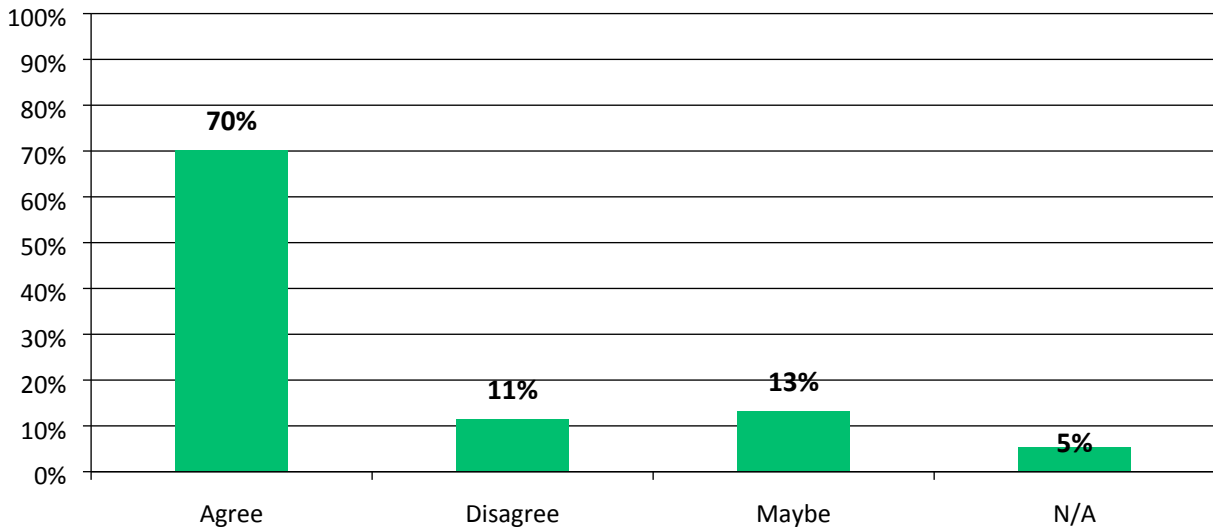


Summary of other comments:

1. Any advice that is beneficial to someone in need and can be given fairly and willingly is always a good thing.
2. Priority must be given to people who are currently homeless, not to people who may become homeless and homeless people.
3. It gives a clear procedure for both, the District and the applicant.
4. There are many reasons why people end up homeless it causes so much stress if the local authorities leave it until the last minute to decide if you qualify for housing. Once you receive notice, things should start to move having to move when you don't want to is stressful enough.
5. If the homeless is valid and not the parents "evicting" their children as we all know this is the best way of claiming homelessness.

Question 11

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the ‘Refusal of Suitable Offers’ section (Section 10)?



Comments:

1. As long as needs are taken into account and there is a robust appeal process.

Response and actions taken:

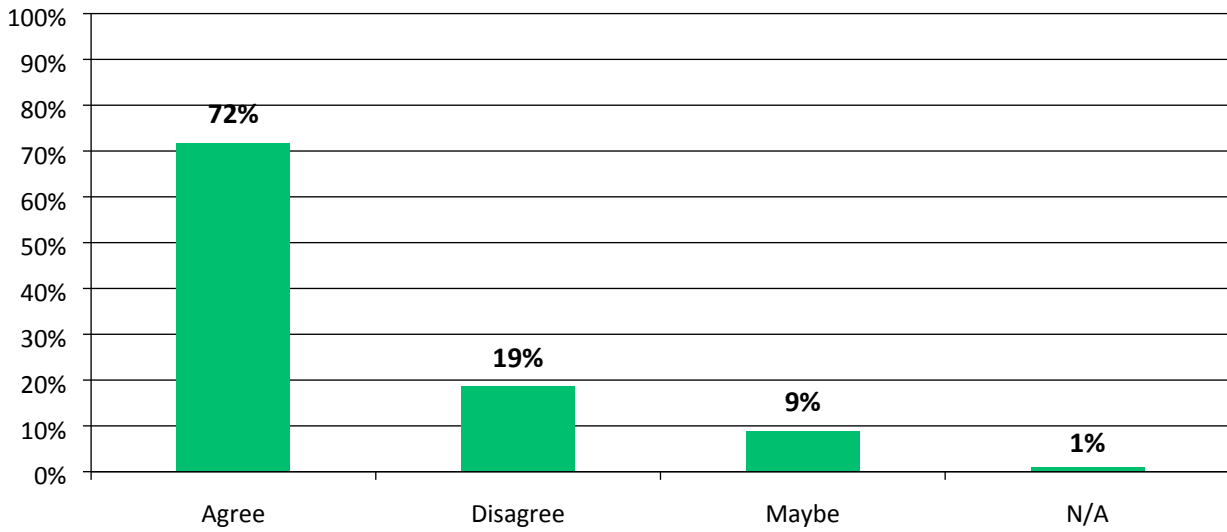
Comment noted. There is a review and appeal process in place, the wording in 10.1 has been amended to strength this wording.

Summary of other comments:

2. If you're homeless and offered a home, I can't think of any reason that you would refuse a property within the district that you've approached and asked for help.
3. A more common sense approach to housing needs.
4. The procedure is balanced.
5. All people should have the same right to refuse. No one should lose their place on the register because they turned down unsuitable accommodation.
6. I think two strikes even with an urgent need is fairer.
7. 12 months is harsh, 6 months exclusion is more substantial.
8. Depends on people's circumstances.
9. "Refusal of suitable offer" and "Removal from register" are two completely separate sub headings, although interlinked have very different meanings.
10. Fair enough but should be sent post not dependant totally on e-mailed as sometimes problems can occur if technology goes wrong.

Question 12

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the ‘Failure to Bid’ section (Section 10.2)?



Comments:	Response and actions taken:
1. Applicant will need to explain why they are not bidding.	Comment noted. This would be discussed with the applicant, including during the Annual Review, wording amended to make this clearer in Section 6.10.
2. In a number of cases, when a prospective applicant expresses an interest in a property, housing associations advise them to contact the Local Authority and join the register. They will often be waiting for a specific property or village, and so may not bid on anything else as a result. This can lead to them remaining on the register for some time, and running the risk of removal from that register and inability to re-join. We would hope exceptional circumstances would be considered.	Commented noted. Exceptional circumstances wording has been added to Section 10.2.
3. I can only bid when properties in the right town/area become available. The properties I am permitted to bid for are few and far between....only FIVE in the last 12 months. If no properties become available in the town in a 12 month period, then I will be unable to bid on anything. It would be extremely unfair if my application were removed from the register in this case.	Comment noted. The Register operates a Choice Based Lettings system, so any bids are placed based on the applicant’s preferred locations. We will also encourage applicants to select as many locations as reasonably possible to maximise their opportunities for housing selections. All applicants would be contacted before removal to discuss the circumstances on a case-by-case basis. The wording in sections 10.1 and 10.2 has been amended to clarify this.
4. If applicant does not bid in any time period, they should be left on Housing Register without time penalty - properties offered may not be suitable.	The properties offered are based on the bids placed by that applicant, as part of the Choice Based system detailed in Section 7.13.

Appendix A

<p>5. Sometimes, no suitable properties are available to bid on within three months. This is because most of your properties are for over 55's, or too far away from where I work. I should not be punished because you do not have enough housing.</p>	<p>Comment noted. We recognise that the demand for social housing far outweighs the need. All applicants would be contacted before removal to discuss the circumstances on a case-by-case basis. The wording in sections 10.1 and 10.2 has been amended to clarify this.</p>
<p>6. I think the proposed 'failure to bid' is a joke. In nearly 2 years there has hardly been any properties that would be suitable for my medical needs. If I don't bid, it's because the property would not be suitable. I thought all housing register applicants had freedom of choice, hence they choose which property they bid on. Sometimes I do not see a property in the area that I need live for periods longer than 3 months. This should be looked at.</p>	<p>Comment noted, see response to point 3 - 5 above.</p>
<p>7. There may be circumstances where a person finds it hard to place a bid due to family crisis or illness or homelessness and reduced access to internet. There is no mention of what would happen in this circumstance.</p>	<p>Comment noted. See response to point 5 above regarding exceptional circumstances being taken into account and discussing this with applicant before they are removed.</p>
<p>8. You can't bid if there is not the size property or area you need so this is unfair on people and people are not always aware of this, so this is very unfair should be no time limit and should not have to re-register.</p>	<p>Comment noted. See response to point 5 above regarding exceptional circumstances being taken into account and discussing this with applicant before they are removed.</p>
<p>9. If you need a ground floor accommodation because you find it difficult to go up the stairs with bags of shopping, none of the above comes up, how can you bid?</p>	<p>Comment noted. See response to point 5 above regarding exceptional circumstances being taken into account and discussing this with applicant before they are removed.</p>

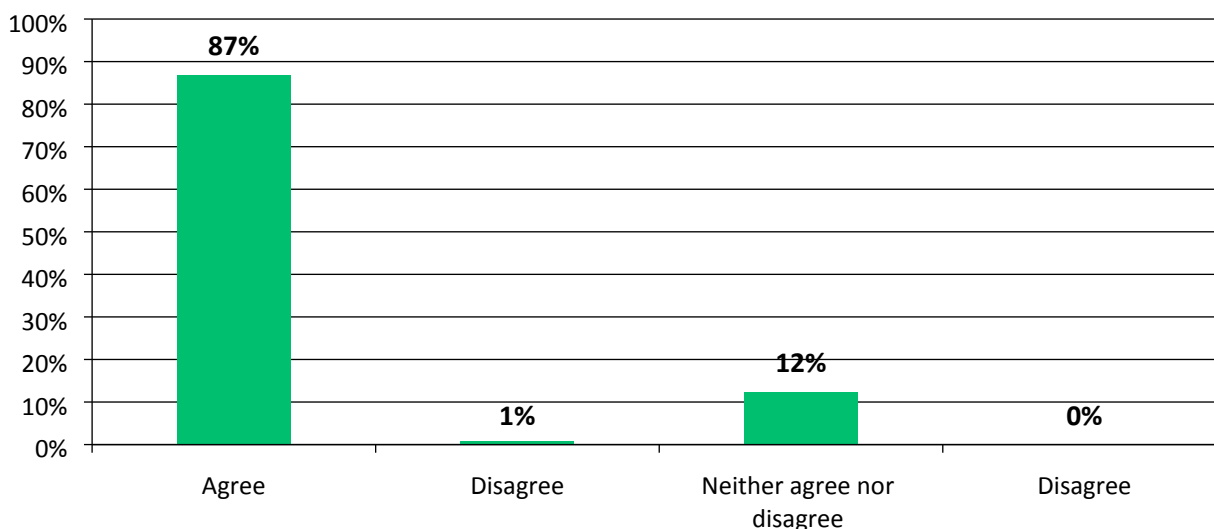
Summary of other comments:

- 10. I support this as it stops people, not in real need, of clogging up the system.
- 11. I agree totally, in our circumstances we have lost out on a few properties to people in band A or B for a considerable amount of time.
- 12. The applicants have to be engaged. The Housing register has to become a dynamic list.
- 13. If the applicant is registered for a local needs property only (can only bid for local needs housing), there may not be a vacancy within the 12 month period.
- 14. If there are properties available which are suited to the applicant and they do not bid for them then yes. The lack of houses does mean that without the properties available bidding history can appear sparse.
- 15. I also feel that if given a priority, yes it should be used at any given suitable opportunity, but if the applicant is made to feel they are bidding on properties, which they're not entirely happy to, but are doing so in fear of losing their "promotion" I don't feel that's fair.
- 16. Allowances need to be made for victims of domestic abuse who are very likely to miss deadlines as they try and 'sort things out' with the perpetrator or blame themselves or allow themselves to be persuaded to go back into the abusive relationship. It can take many cycles of violence before the victim is truly ready to go through with a move out of area and to cut ties.
- 17. I don't see why a person in their 80's should bid every year. They do not know how their health is. Whilst happy in their present accommodation, in two years they may need to move. 80 year olds are not able to search the registry with ease on a computer.

18. I find very little properties that I am eligible for in Swanley i.e.1 bed flat, as most that come up are for over 55's. So in a nutshell, there may be cases when no bidding has been done because no eligible properties in that area are available.
19. I do agree that a person should keep bidding to show they are looking but the new system stops you showing that if no eligible places come up.

Question 13

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the 'Giving False Information' section (Section 10.3)?



Comments:

1. If it is a criminal offence, as well as being removed from the register, should they not also be reported to the police and potential criminal charges posed against them?

Response and actions taken:

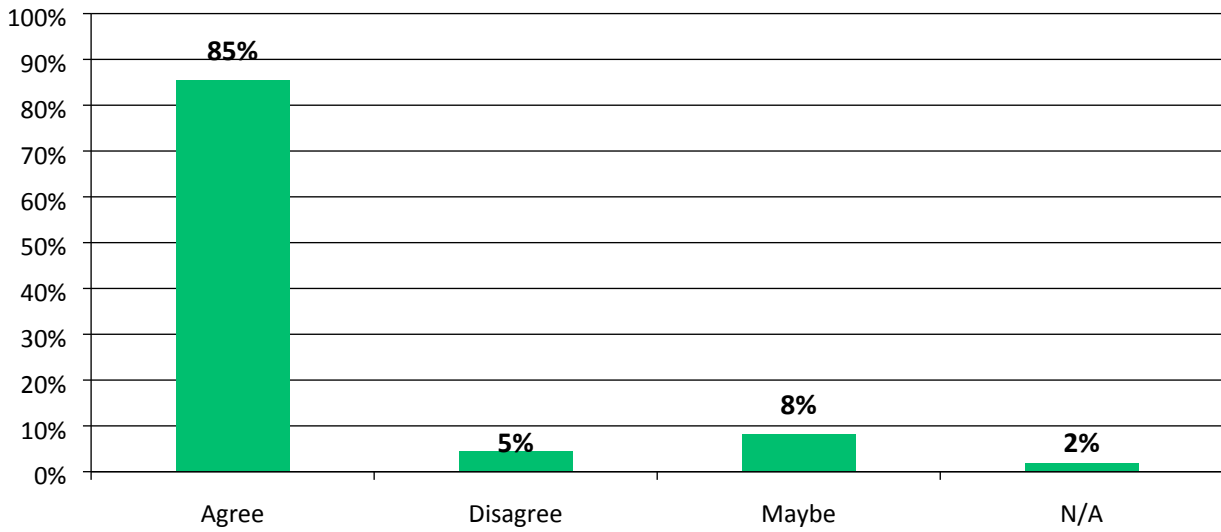
Comment noted. Wording has been added to Section 10.3 to include criminal prosecution proceedings.

Summary of other comments:

2. This should be reviewed regularly.
3. Should not be allowed to go back on the register for cheating the system, and taking away chance for genuine cases no obligation to let them back in 12 months. How do you know it's not going to happen again.
4. If someone gives false information, they should be unable to re-apply forever, not just for a period of 12 months.

Question 14

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the 'Confidentiality' section (Section 11.1)?



Comments:	Response and actions taken:
1. The new data protection rules will cover this.	Comment noted. Wording for the new GDPR regulations has been added to Section 11.
2. This does not comply with GDPR. People have a right to be informed about where you are sending their data and why. People should not be penalised for refusing to share information with third parties.	Comment noted. See response above in point

Summary of other comments:

- 5. Keeping confidentiality in all circumstances and the need to be forthcoming with any information outweighs the Data Protection Act. If there is a need to supply information and it's justified and serious then yes.
- 6. Consent to data sharing should always be optional and never result in removal from a housing register.

This page is intentionally left blank



Sevenoaks District Housing Allocations Policy

2019

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction and Background.....	1
1.1.	What is an Allocation?	1
1.2.	Legal Framework.....	1
2.	Eligibility to join the Housing Register.....	2
2.1.	Who can join the Sevenoaks District Housing Register (SDHR)	2
2.2.	16 and 17 year olds and Care Leavers	2
3.	Qualifying to join the Register	3
3.1.	Local Connection.....	3
3.2.	Employment in Sevenoaks District	4
3.3.	Income and Asset Thresholds.....	5
3.3.1.	Income Limit Summary.....	6
3.3.2.	Capital Assets and Savings Limits	7
3.3.3.	Limited Exceptions - Income and Asset Thresholds	7
3.4.	Older People’s properties	8
3.5.	Right to Move Applicants	8
3.6.	Rural Exception Site Homes and Parish Connection	9
3.7.	Alternative Affordable Housing Options	10
4.	Exemption to the local connection rules	11
4.1.	Armed Forces Personnel.....	11
4.2.	Over 55’s wishing to downsize	11
4.3.	Threats of violence and/or domestic abuse.....	11
4.4.	Exceptions process	12
5.	Exclusions – Non-qualification rules	12
5.1.	Housing Register exclusions	12
5.2.	People who WILL be excluded from joining the housing register.....	12
5.2.1.	Immigration Status	12
5.2.2.	No Local Connection.....	13
5.3.	People who MAY be excluded from joining the housing register	13
5.3.1.	Home owners.....	13
5.3.2.	Help to Buy Shared Ownership.....	14
5.3.3.	Financial limits	14
5.3.4.	Unacceptable Behaviour.....	14
6.	How to Apply for Social Housing.....	15
6.1.	How to join the Housing Register	15
6.2.	Assessing Applications.....	16
6.3.	Data Sharing and Declaration.....	17
6.4.	Applicant checks	17

6.5.	Joint applications	18
6.6.	Households with access to children/shared residency order	18
6.7.	Housing for People Aged 55+	18
6.8.	Notification of Registration	18
6.9.	Change of circumstances	18
6.10.	Reviewing and Renewing Housing Applications	19
6.11.	Cancelling Applications	19
6.12.	Short Term Interim Rented Properties.....	20
6.13.	Deliberate Worsening of Circumstances	20
6.14.	Misrepresentation, False Statements and Withholding Information	21
7.	The Allocation Process.....	21
7.1.	How are applicants selected for allocation?	21
7.2.	The Banding system	22
7.3.	Banding Allocation Exceptions	23
7.4.	Type of property allocated to an Applicant	24
7.5.	What are other considerations and exceptional circumstances	25
7.6.	Making an offer of a Property	25
7.7.	Refusals of Offers	26
7.8.	Local Lettings Plan.....	26
7.9.	Sensitive Letting (property).....	27
7.10.	Social and Welfare Priority	27
7.11.	Special Circumstances (applicant).....	27
7.12.	Specially adapted Properties.....	28
7.13.	Providing Applicants with Choice.....	28
8.	Homelessness and Housing Advice	29
9.	Requesting a Review and Making a Complaint	29
9.1.	The Review Process	29
9.2.	Making a Complaint.....	30
10.	Removal from the Register.....	32
10.1.	Refusal of Suitable Offers	32
10.2.	Failure to bid.....	33
10.3.	Giving False Information	33
11.	Applicant Information and Rights	34
11.1.	Confidentiality	34
11.2.	Data Protection and Information Sharing	34
11.3.	Equal Opportunities and Monitoring.....	35
11.4.	Treating all applications fairly.....	35
11.5.	Right to information	36
12.	Glossary	36
13.	Appendix 1 - Definitions	37

Agenda Item 6a

14. Appendix 2 –Banding Criteria	40
15. Appendix 3 – Documents required for Housing Register application	45
16. Appendix 4 – Social and Welfare Priority Assessment Panel.....	47

1. Introduction and Background

1.1. What is an Allocation?

Sevenoaks District Council is a local housing authority. This policy sets out who qualifies for social housing in the Sevenoaks District and how we will make this assessment. It covers how applicants can apply for and access social housing, the priority they will be given and the order in which any offer of social housing will be made.

Sevenoaks District Council no longer owns its own social housing, having carried out a transfer of its housing stock to West Kent Housing Association in 1989. This Allocation Policy therefore applies to all social housing properties to which we have rights of nomination (whether by way of a legally enforceable arrangement or not).

West Kent Housing is appointed as the ‘Managing Agent’ for the Sevenoaks District Housing Register (SDHR) and administer the Sevenoaks District Housing Register and the Kent Home Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme on behalf of this Council. The Housing Allocations Team at West Kent Housing is responsible for assessing new applications and will assess whether an applicant qualifies for the Housing Register using this policy to assess housing needs and will award any priority Band to an application if the criteria set out in this policy are met.

1.2. Legal Framework

This Council, as a local housing authority, has a legal duty to develop and publish a Housing Allocations Policy. The legal requirements for this duty, including the Housing Act 1996 Part VI (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), Localism Act 2011, the Equalities Act 2010 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, have been considered when developing this Policy. This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated if there are any changes to relevant legislation or operational processes. Minor changes or amendments can be made at any time to update the Policy and approved by the Council’s Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing.

The Government’s code of guidance has also been considered when drafting this Policy including:

- a) Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England (2012, DCLG/MHCLG) “the Code”;
- b) Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (DCLG/MHCLG, December 2013) “Supplementary Code”.

The following statutory regulations have also been considered when developing this Policy:

- a) Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997, SI 1997/483;
- b) Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002, SI 2002/3264;
- c) Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294;
- d) Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/1869;
- e) Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/2989;

Agenda Item 6a

- f) The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015;

To ensure this Policy meets all data protection requirements, it is regularly monitored and reviewed. This Council is committed to ensuring that this policy is non-discriminatory and that customers can access the service taking account of any vulnerability or other specific housing needs. This includes reasonable preference categories (as defined in Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996) and protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010), as well as being provided with a Statement of Choice through the Kent Homechoice System (www.kenthomechoice.org.uk) .

In accordance with The Local Authority Order 1996 (SI 1996 No 3205), Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) has contracted out the management of the register to West Kent Housing under a series of Service Level Agreements.

2. Eligibility to join the Housing Register

2.1. Who can join the Sevenoaks District Housing Register (SDHR)

Subject to the exclusions outlined in section 5 below, anyone living in the United Kingdom who is over the age of 16 can apply to join the housing register if they:

- a) have a genuine reason for seeking affordable housing in Sevenoaks District;
- b) have a local connection to the Sevenoaks District (see section 3.1 for full details);
- c) are applying for a social housing property to use as their only or principal residence;
and
- d) are capable of maintaining a tenancy.

Local housing authorities may only allocate accommodation to people who are defined as ‘qualifying persons’ under the Housing Act 1996. The Government has granted all housing authorities, including this Council, the power to decide the criteria of people who are, or are not, classed a qualifying person for the register. It should be noted that individual Registered Housing Providers might have their own letting and eligibility rules.

Sevenoaks District Council is part of the Kent Homechoice Partnership that advertises vacant properties in this District using an online Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Some exceptional circumstances, as outlined in this Policy, may mean that properties are advertised or allocated in partnership with the relevant housing provider.

Once an applicant has been accepted onto the Housing Register, a decision will be made as to the size of property they are eligible to bid for under the Kent Homechoice Lettings Scheme using the National Bedroom Standard.

All applications to the register should be made by completing an on-line application available at <http://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk/register.aspx>.

Those without access to the internet should contact The Housing Options Team, West Kent Housing Association, 101 London Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1AX for assistance.

2.2. 16 and 17 year olds and Care Leavers

Applicants aged 16 and 17 can join the Housing Register. If they are successfully offered a property, the tenancy will be held in trust until they reach the age of 18. There is no legal

necessity for a guarantor for this age group, but a guarantor (such as a parent, legal guardian, social worker or relative) would be beneficial to ensure the young person is able to successfully manage being a tenant. If a 16 or 17 year old is successful for a tenancy, they will be referred to Kent County Council to assess if they require any additional support, particular at the outset of the tenancy. Standard affordability criteria's will apply.

Care leavers and 16/17 year olds applying to join the Housing Register will be considered in accordance with the relevant Kent Housing Group protocols in place between Kent County Council and Kent district and borough councils.

3. Qualifying to join the Register

Only those who:

- Can demonstrate a local connection to the District through current or past residency, employment, family associations or other special circumstances and;
- Have been assessed as having an identified housing need, and;
- Are not currently suitably housed

are eligible to apply for inclusion on the Sevenoaks District Housing Register, full details on the qualifying criteria and definitions are set out below.

Suitability/adequacy of current home

Only those who are not currently suitably/adequately housed will be eligible to apply to join the Housing Register. An applicant will be considered to be suitably/adequately housed if all the following apply:

- The number of bedrooms in the home is sufficient for the household, in accordance with the Bedroom Standard (see paragraph 7.4);¹
- The household spends 35% or less of their gross household income (including any benefits other than those excluded benefits listed in paragraph 3.3) on the rental costs of their home;
- The applicant and their household are able to reside together (except as set out in paragraph 6.6);
- The property is fully accessible to all members of the household;
- The property is located within the Sevenoaks District

If an applicant's circumstances means that any one of the elements listed above are missing, the applicant will not be considered to be suitably/adequately housed as part of this Policy.

3.1. Local Connection

An applicant can only join the Housing Register if they have a local connection to the Sevenoaks District and are assessed as having a housing need, as defined by this Policy.

There are a number of defined exceptions to the local connection qualification rules. Full details can be found below.

To demonstrate a local connection to the District, applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria:

¹ In accordance with the 'Bedroom Standard' formulas in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 and the Housing Benefit Regulations

Agenda Item 6a

- a) Have lived permanently in Sevenoaks District for at least 6 months during the previous 12 months, or 3 years in total out of the last 5 years.
- b) Be in paid full or part time employment in Sevenoaks District, for a minimum of 16 hours per week. See section 3.2 below for further details. This relates to adults of a working age, for details relating to older people see sections 3.4, 4.2 and 6.7.
- c) Have close family (typically but not exclusively relating to mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter) that has lived in Sevenoaks District for a minimum of the last 5 years and the circumstances are that they need to give or receive essential care and/or support for the foreseeable future. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide documentary evidence to show the level of required support to demonstrate it is significant and ongoing and is not short term or low level (e.g. occasional or infrequent help with a task). This would be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This may include older people needing to move to the District to be closer to family and/or social networks; this would also be considered and assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- d) Applicants to whom the Council has accepted a full homelessness duty under section 193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996.
- e) A local connection is automatically applied for any serving or ex armed forces personnel or War Widows/Widowers, see section 4.1 below for full details on the criteria.
- f) A local connection is automatically applied for applicants fleeing domestic abuse or violence. Documentary evidence may be required to support the application. See section 4.3 below for full details.

For the purposes of determining a local connection, the Council will not consider a holiday let, including bed and breakfast accommodation booked for holiday purposes, as a local connection.

There may be times when it is not appropriate to apply the local connection provision set out within this Policy. In these circumstances, the Council and the Managing Agent can on behalf of the Council, exercise discretion not to apply the local connection provisions in exceptional circumstances. Each case will be assessed on its merits.

For properties on Rural Exceptions Sites, different local connection criteria will apply. See Section 3.6 for full details.

3.2. Employment in Sevenoaks District

Working age applicants will be considered to have employment in the District and therefore may meet the local connection criteria if they are:

- a) In paid full or part time permanent employment for 16 hours or more per week and their actual working location is within Sevenoaks District; or
- b) Working in Sevenoaks District on a temporary or zero-hour employment contract that has been in place for at least 6 months and can demonstrate they have worked at least 16 hours per week since starting the employment contract;
- c) Self-employed applicants are required to demonstrate that their permanent base of operations is within the Sevenoaks District, even if their work requires them from time to time to work outside of Sevenoaks District;
- d) The employment must be the actual place of work in Sevenoaks District and not employment based on a head office or regional office situated in the District but from which they do not work. For those with a caseload or have a roving remit (e.g. district nurses, social workers, police officers, etc) the applicant will need to obtain written

- confirmation from their employer that a substantial (a minimum of 64 hours per month) amount of their day-to-day duty falls within the District;
- e) Where an applicant can provide evidence that they are unable to engage in paid work, a community contribution including substantial voluntary work, employment related training and registered foster carers. See the criteria below for full details.
 - f) Priority will also be given to applicants who meet the ‘Local Essential Worker’ criteria, as set out in the Sevenoaks District Local Plan².

To qualify for the Register through an employment connection, at least one adult member of the household must be employed at the point of application and at the point of nomination for a property, in accordance with validation process of the relevant housing provider. The applicant must provide evidence that a permanent job offer has been accepted and meets the above criteria. It will be the applicant’s responsibility to provide documentary evidence to satisfy this Council that the work or job offer is genuine. Appropriate evidence could include:

- a contract of employment
- wage/salary slips or bank statements covering the last three months;
- Tax and benefits information – e.g. proof that the applicant is in receipt of working tax credit (if eligible).

Where the employment status of an applicant does not meet the criteria in 3.2 a) to d) above, a decision on local connection will be made by the Managing Agent in consultation with the Council.

This criterion only relates to adults of a working age, for further details relating to older people see sections 3.4, 4.2 and 6.7.

For details, relating to employment can be found under the ‘Right to Move’ section of this Policy (Section 3.5).

Community Contribution

Where an applicant can provide evidence that they are unable to engage in paid work, a community contribution including substantial voluntary work, employment related training and registered foster carers. This contribution must be within the District and would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

To qualify for the Register through a community contribution, at least one member of the household must meet the following criteria:

- Carry out volunteering or community activities for at least six months; and
- For a minimum of 64 hours per month, up to the time of application; and
- For at least six months up to when a property is offered.
- Volunteering must be with a recognised not-for-profit organisation, charity or faith-based community group/organisation.
- Provide required evidence that the contribution meets this criteria.
- Be able to provide at least one reference to confirm the circumstances of the volunteering/community activity and to determine the future longevity of this activity.

3.3. Income and Asset Thresholds

² For full details of the criteria and definitions, see the Council’s Local Plan at <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/localplan>

Agenda Item 6a

Maximum income limits have been set as part of this Policy and anyone above these limits will not qualify to access the Housing Register. This is to ensure that social housing is allocated to those in the greatest need due to their housing priority and affordability.

The Council has the authority to decide who will or will not qualify to join the Register as part of its housing duties³, this includes whether an applicant has financial resources available to meet their needs. An applicant may not be deemed as a ‘Qualifying Person’ if:

- The household income exceeds the income limited (benefits are included with the exception as set out below);
- Have the means to purchase property on the open market or via shared ownership.
- Have the means to privately rent suitable accommodation for a minimum of one years.

The income and saving/asset limits, together with the exceptions, are set out in this Policy below.

Due to the pressure on social housing in this District, those with sufficient assets and/or income will not be allowed to access the Housing Register as they can pursue other housing options. If an applicant is unsure if they qualify because of their household income and asset thresholds, they should contact the Council’s Housing Advice Service or the Managing Agent for further advice. If they are above the thresholds and unable to access the Register, Housing Officers at Sevenoaks District Council can assist with other available housing options. The Housing Advice Team can be contacted on 01732 227000.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to provide all financial information and supporting evidence relating to all members of the household and to update the Managing Agent of any changes from the original housing application immediately. Any person who knowingly withholds or falsifying any financial information, on their housing application about their total household finances, may be guilty of committing a criminal offence and could face a conviction or fine if prosecuted. This will also result in a disqualification or suspension from the Housing Register, withdrawal of a tenancy offer or further legal action. See Section 6.14 for full details.

3.3.1. Income Limit Summary

A household cannot qualify if they have a total gross household income that exceeds that set out below. Income that is assessed will include both gross earned income and income from benefits (excluding disability related benefits). This is the total combined income across all members of the household and is based on the household size and bedroom need⁴:-

Household size	Maximum Income Limit (per annum)
1 bedroom need	£30,000
2 or more bedroom need	£40,000

This gross income of all household members will determine eligibility and will include:

- Gross wages or income;

³ In accordance with Section s.160ZA (6)(a) Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) which allows the authority to decide who will be or will not be a qualifying person and section 166A (5)(a) of the Housing Act 1996

⁴ In accordance with the ‘Bedroom Standard’ formulas in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 and the Housing Benefit Regulations

- Any regular cash deposits from others;
- All Benefits and Allowances received by all members of the households (including those that are means tested but excluding disability related benefits). Exclusions from this calculation are listed below.

Financial payments excluded and therefore not included within this calculation are:

- Guardians or Fostering Allowance;
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA);
- Attendance Allowance (AA);
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP);
- Armed Forces war pensioners' mobility supplement (AFIP);
- Armed Forces Independence Payments;

These are all payments designed to help people with the extra costs they have to incur because of a disability or some other specific living arrangement. Therefore, other payments of this nature may also be excluded and considered on the evidence provided by the applicant. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the relevant evidence and documents to enable the income calculation to be undertaken.

3.3.2. Capital Assets and Savings Limits

In addition to the income limits above, applicants applying for general needs properties cannot have capital assets or savings that exceed £16,000 in total across all members of the household (for all general needs household sizes). This figure is in line with the current housing benefit savings limit. Assets include equity in any home owned.

Applicants applying for housing that is designated specifically for those aged 55+ (including sheltered, supported housing and extra care schemes) may have savings and/or assets up to the value of £350,000.

3.3.3. Limited Exceptions - Income and Asset Thresholds

Fostering/adopting - Applicants who are approved foster carers or a prospective adoptive parent with appropriate supporting documentation, who do not meet the financial limits, but who can clearly demonstrate that they are not able to access the open housing market, may be considered for inclusion on the register. A full financial assessment will be undertaken and the application considered by the Social and Welfare Panel (see Appendix 4 for Social and Welfare Panel details). Confirmation in writing will be requested from the relevant County Council or adoption agency.

Help to Buy (Low Cost Ownership Schemes (LCHO)) - This restriction does not prevent applicants being considered for any Help to Buy schemes as set out in section 5.3.2 (e.g. Shared Ownership and Intermediate Rentals). The rules for being accepted onto the Help to Buy Register are different and are applied on a scheme by scheme basis. These rules also apply for Rural Exceptions Site Homes, see Section 3.6 for full details.

If the gross annual household income exceeds the Income and Asset limits in this Policy, but is £80,000 or less (the current government set 'Help to Buy limit'), the applicant may apply to Register under 'Help to Buy', see <https://www.helptobuyese.org.uk/>, to access Help to Buy products, i.e. shared ownership and intermediate rental homes. The rules for being accepted onto the Help to Buy Register are different from those applying to this Register. Those with a gross annual household income of over £80,000 will not be eligible to access any affordable housing options through Help to Buy or the Kent Homechoice System. The gross income amount is subject to change in line with the government's 'Help to Buy' limits.

Agenda Item 6a

The Help to Buy gross annual household income limit also applies to Rural Exceptions Site Homes, regardless of tenure, see Section 3.6 for full details.

Special Circumstances - The Managing Agent in consultation with the Council may choose not to apply these criteria where the applicant or a member of their household, despite having the financial means to resolve their housing situation, cannot resolve the situation in a reasonable period of time and their housing needs are so urgent and exceptional as to require social housing.

Vulnerability - Vulnerable clients whose income exceeds the financial limits but who have documentary evidence to show that they cannot access private rented accommodation or LCHO may be assessed by the Social and Welfare Panel to be able to join the Housing Register.

3.4. Older People's properties

Anyone who is over the age of 55 and meets the qualification to join the Housing Register can apply for sheltered or supported housing (specifically for this age group) if they:

- are either aged 55 or over or;
- can provide evidence that their projected income is anticipated to fall below the current income limit at the time of retirement.

The size of the housing specifically designed for over 55's (including sheltered or Extra Care), may include one bedroom more than they require e.g. enabling the applicant to bid on two bedroom sheltered housing even if they only have a one bedroom need. Any offer is subject to an affordability assessment to ensure ongoing rental costs can be met.

The support and housing needs of an applicant will be assessed by the sheltered housing team of the relevant housing association. Where it is identified that an applicant is bidding on accommodation that is not suitable for their needs, an assessment will be made to support them to identify a suitable home. Individual housing associations may vary this age criteria.

Applicants for extra care housing schemes in the District will be assessed by a Joint Allocations Panel who will consider the applicant's care, support, social and housing needs. The Panel will include representatives from Sevenoaks District Council, Kent County Council, housing association and care provider. On occasions, extra care properties may be advertised and allocated outside the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

If required, the Managing Agent will support the applicant to apply and bid on properties advertised via the Choice Based Lettings scheme. Where applicants are a current tenant of a housing association, this support should be provided by their existing landlord.

3.5. Right to Move Applicants

The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/ 967) and corresponding statutory guidance, allow existing social housing tenants to be allocated social housing across local authority boundaries within England for work related reasons. This may include a need to move to be closer for work or to take up a job offer.

The onus is on the applicant to provide the information needed to evidence the ‘Right to Move’ to alleviate hardship. In determining hardship, this Council will take into account:

- a) Distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home;
- b) The availability and affordability of transport, taking into consideration the level of the applicant’s earnings;
- c) The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home;
- d) Other personal factors, such as medical conditions and child care, which would be affected if the tenant could not move;
- e) The length and type of the work contract;
- f) Whether failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve the applicant’s employment circumstances or prospects, for example, by taking up a better job, a promotion, or an apprenticeship.

Priority will be given to Local Essential Workers, as defined in the Sevenoaks District Local Plan (www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/localplan). These factors will be taken into account when considering each applicant on a case-by-case basis. It will be up to the applicant to provide evidence to support their application. Work that is short term and voluntary (unpaid) is not included. The work should be for at least 16 hours per week and for at least the minimum wage, or an apprenticeship, and expected to last for at least a year.

3.6. Rural Exception Site Homes and Parish Connection

Some properties or developments have a specific local connection requirement in their planning or funding conditions, such as rural exceptions sites and those developed under planning agreements. In these cases, there will be restrictions on who can bid for the home and this will be made clear in the advert for the vacant property. This type of qualifying criteria is usually agreed as part of planning or funding conditions (known as a Section 106 Agreement). In these circumstances, local connection criteria will usually mean connection to a village or parish rather than the district as a whole.

Applicants who are only interested in Rural Exceptions Sites homes must clearly state this on their Housing Register application form. Such applicants will not be considered for any social housing properties advertised through the Housing Register for Sevenoaks District. Income limits and restrictions for Rural Exceptions Site Homes will comply with the ‘Help to Buy’ limits, as set out in Section 5.3.2, i.e. an annual gross household income of £80,000 or less.

The District Council’s Local Plan (Policy SP4) establishes the local connection criteria for Rural Exceptions Site homes⁵. This criterion is then set out in the planning permission (Section 106 agreement) applying to each Rural Exceptions Site home. These are available from the District Council’s Housing Policy team on 01732 227000 or email: housing.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

An applicant can demonstrate a local connection for a home on a Rural Exceptions Site if they:

- Live in the Parish and have done so continuously for the last three years to date; or
- Have lived in the Parish for at least five out of the last ten years to date; or
- Have been a member of a household currently living in the Parish and have close family resident in the Parish for a minimum of 10 years continuously; or

⁵ For full details of the criteria and definitions, see the Council’s SP4 Policy within the Local Plan at <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/localplan>

Agenda Item 6a

- Are employed full time in the Parish on a permanent basis or those who will be taking up such employment and whose main place of work is within the Parish; or
- Are providing an important service in the Parish requiring them to live locally.

The Section 106 agreement will set out which is the primary Parish (i.e. normally, this is where the homes are located). Applicants from the primary Parish will have priority over all other applicants on the Housing Register who have made a bid for the vacant home. All applicants from the primary Parish will then be considered in order of the Banding Criteria. The current Policy is that the home will be allocated to the applicant with a local connection to the primary Parish, who has the highest Banding and earliest date of registration under the Housing Register.

If no applications are received from those with a local connection to the primary Parish, applications will then be considered from those with a local connection to a Neighbouring Parish (these are specified in the Section 106 Agreement). All such applicants will be considered in the same way as described above.

If no applications are received from those with a local connection to the primary Parish or Neighbouring Parishes, the Council may consider:

- Applications from all other applicants from the Housing Register who have made a bid for the vacant home;
- Use other means of identifying a suitable application for the property, as there are no interested, relevant or suitable Register applicants;
- Offering a direct let from a Registered Housing Provider's waiting list or advertising the properties using other methods.

The District Council's Local Plan is being updated and a new Plan is due to be adopted in the summer of 2019. Priority will still be given to those with a local connection to the primary Parish. However, how applications are then considered may change and this Policy will be updated to reflect any changes within the new Local Plan.

All applicants for Rural Exceptions Site homes will need to provide proof of their local connection to the Parish/Neighbouring Parish. Very strict turnaround times apply when homes become vacant. Applicants must therefore be ready to provide proof of their local connection when asked to do so by the housing association landlord within 3 working days of a request being made. Failure to do so may result in an application being rejected or overlooked. Due to the very strict turnaround times, it is therefore recommended all correspondence and proof of connection is done via email.

3.7. Alternative Affordable Housing Options

Often renting privately can be a quicker route to accessing rental properties that are affordable, particularly as the demand for social housing far outweighs the supply. The Council may offer applicants a property in the private rented sector, subject to eligibility and affordability. These offers are subject to specific regulations put in place by the Council to protect the health and safety of tenants. Other affordable housing solutions are subject to availability and where applicants can be matched to available affordable and suitable homes, for a longer term or an interim period.

As part of the Council's housing advice and support duties, Register applicants may be contacted with alternative housing options suitable to their needs, such as low cost home ownership options (Help to Buy) and private sector renting, as opportunities arise. This may include help to access a private rented property, for a minimum of six month, with a tenancy or lease arrangement with a private landlord or alternative housing provider.

The Council may be able to assist an applicant with their upfront financial costs, such as a deposit or required rent in advance, subject to eligibility and affordability assessments. Further details about these Schemes are available at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/housing. From time-to-time the Council may contact Register applicants to offer them further affordable housing opportunities including affordable and private rental properties, rural exception properties and shared ownership, which is often a quick route to finding the right home.

4. Exemption to the local connection rules

4.1. Armed Forces Personnel

One exception to the District's local connection criteria is Armed Forces Personnel⁶ or War Widows/Widowers meeting the criteria below. The following people are able to apply to the Housing Register in this District regardless of whether or not they meet the District local connection criteria. This exception is set by housing legislation⁷ and has not been decided locally. This includes:

- Those who are currently serving in the regular forces or who were serving in the regular forces at any time in the 5 years proceeding their application to the Housing Register;
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased to be, or will cease to be, entitled to reside in Service Family Accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly connected to their service;
- Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to live in the District because of a serious injury, illness, medical condition or disability that is wholly or partly connected to their service.

4.2. Over 55's wishing to downsize

If an applicant is aged over 55 and currently living in Sevenoaks District wishes to downsize, they may be considered for sheltered or supported housing (specifically designated for this age group) even if they do not meet the local connection rules. This will apply to all applicants over 55, including homeowners and tenants. The income and asset limits for over 55's will apply, see Section 3.3.2 for full details. This would ensure that their required support and housing needs are met and to release another property in this District.

Households applying for extra care housing will be subject to a Joint Allocations Panel when allocating properties. See section 3.4 above for full details relating to properties for older people.

4.3. Threats of violence and/or domestic abuse

⁶ as defined by S.374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006

⁷ The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1879)

Agenda Item 6a

Applicants who are victims of domestic abuse, at risk of threats of domestic abuse/violence or those who escaping domestic abuse, may be exempt from requiring a local connection. The Council will support an applicant who is homeless and require urgent re-housing as a result of violence or threats of violence. This includes intimidated witnesses and those escaping serious anti-social behaviour or domestic violence or abuse.

A person has a homelessness priority need if they are vulnerable as a result of having to leave accommodation because of violence from another person, or threats of violence from another person that are likely to be carried out. An assessment of this risk will be carried out as part of any homelessness approach made to the Council, under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 assessment of priority need.

In cases involving violence, the safety of the applicant and ensuring confidentiality is the paramount concern. Advice and guidance on local services including the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), specialist refuges and support services will be available from the Council's Housing Advice Service.

4.4. Exceptions process

Sevenoaks District Council retains the authority to exercise its discretion when making decisions with regard to someone being accepted or banded awarded on the Housing Register. This will be related to 'exceptional circumstances' which is defined as an additional social and/or welfare need above the housing need which has been evidenced by the Housing Officer, support or partner agency. See Appendix 4 for further details regarding social and welfare needs.

5. Exclusions – Non-qualification rules

5.1. Housing Register exclusions

Some people are excluded from the Housing Register either due to government regulations or because the Council has decided to exclude them. This could be because they are not considered suitable to be tenants (because of their previous recorded conduct) or because the Council has to prioritise the use of housing stock.

We cannot nominate someone for housing if they are ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by being subject to immigration control or a person from abroad who is ineligible⁸. See section 5.3 below for further information.

If it is considered that an applicant is not eligible to apply for the Housing Register, the Managing Agent will inform them in writing of this decision, stating the grounds for the decision, within the Notice of Determination letter. This letter will include how the applicant can request a review of this decision. If the applicant is affected by these exclusions, they can contact the Housing Advice Service at the Council for further advice.

5.2. People who WILL be excluded from joining the housing register

Current legislation states or allows that the following are ineligible to join the Housing Register and they **will be excluded**:

5.2.1. Immigration Status

⁸ Housing Act 1996, s.160ZA (1), (2) and (4) and Regulations 3 and 4 Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294

- People from abroad subject to immigration control or regulations, or people prescribed as ‘ineligible’ by Regulations made by the Secretary of State.
- A person from abroad who is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 will be ineligible, unless they are of a class of persons prescribed by the Secretary of State who are subject to immigration control but are eligible for an allocation.
- Certain persons from abroad, who are not subject to immigration control, and fail the habitually resident test in the Common Travel Area (as defined in the Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance for local housing authorities).
- Any application identified as falling under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 will be assessed in accordance with the Act.

The Council reserves the right to seek independent advice and assistance to resolve the issue of eligibility. This may mean contacting the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate.

5.2.2. No Local Connection

- Details of local connections are set out in section 3.1.
- Applicants who do not have a local connection with the District will be excluded from the Sevenoaks District Housing Register. They may still be able to access housing advice and support through the Council’s Housing Advice Service. An exception to this is Armed Forces Personnel or War Widows/Widowers meeting the criteria set out in section 4.1 and applicants fleeing domestic abuse or violence, as set out in section 4.3.
- Anyone who is aged over 55 and living in the District already, who wishes to downsize to a smaller property may apply to the Register, even if they do not meet the local connection rules. For example, they have lived in the District less than six months. However, they will only be considered for accommodation specifically designated for this age group and the financial limit rules will apply. This is to assist with freeing up family sized properties in the District.
- Applicants with a local parish connection to a Rural Exceptions Site property, who do not meet the District local connection criteria, will only be eligible to place bids on properties where they meet the criteria and parish connection, as set out in the site specific Section 106 Agreement. Such applicants will not be considered for general properties advertised within the District (see section 3.6 for full details on exception sites).

5.3. People who MAY be excluded from joining the housing register

5.3.1. Home owners

If an applicant (including anyone in the household covered by the application) owns a property, they are not eligible to join the Register (this includes properties owned and rented out to other persons and or properties in other countries). The exemption is **unless** the applicant can demonstrate there are exceptional financial and personal circumstances that prevent them from living in this accommodation or securing other suitable accommodation to meet a housing need. For example: they have insufficient resources to pursue Help to Buy (low cost home ownership) and/or a medical condition or disability, or other vulnerability including risk of homelessness due to mortgage arrears following illness or job loss). This will be assessed the Managing Agent in consultation with the Council on a case-by-case basis.

Agenda Item 6a

Owner occupiers aged 55 and over whose savings and assets fall within the limits (set out in section 3.3), and they meet the local connection criteria, can apply to the Register, but will only be considered for housing designated for this age group (this includes sheltered or extra care housing).

5.3.2. Help to Buy Shared Ownership

All applicants are required to provide details of their income and assets. If applicants exceed the financial limits for the Register but have sufficient funds to access home ownership options, then the housing advice service can advise accordingly. Those with an income that exceeds the current government 'Help to Buy' limit of £80,000 will not be able to register for LCHO and will not be eligible for any form of affordable housing. This income limit will also apply to applicants for all Rural Exception Site Homes in the District, irrespective of tenure.

Help to Buy is a range of home ownership products designed to assist people who cannot afford to buy a property on the open market.

Local Help to Buy Agents are appointed by the Government to administer the schemes to support how to access these low cost home ownership (LCHO) options. Other options available may include Help to Buy, shared ownership, Intermediate Rents, Local Essential Worker properties and shared equity. For details of the Help to Buy Agent, to register under the Help to Buy and to see available properties, visit www.helptobuyese.org.uk.

5.3.3. Financial limits

Applicants will be required to provide proof of income and assets for all members of the proposed household over the age of 16. Savings and financial assets will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not the applicant is able to secure suitable housing.

Applicants with a household income above the financial limits, as outlined in Section 3.3 of this Policy, will not qualify to be included on the Housing Register. Applications who are assessed as having savings and/or financial assets (including capital), which are sufficient to allow them to meet their housing needs, will not qualify for the Housing Register.

5.3.4. Unacceptable Behaviour

This will apply where the applicant (including any member of the current or prospective household) has a history of serious unacceptable behaviour or former rent arrears, which in our view makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant⁹.

We will determine whether the behaviour and/or former or current rent arrears means that they cannot qualify for the Register. We will not be restricted to applying a test of whether the behaviour would entitle the landlord to a Possession Order (if the applicant were a tenant).

Whether the behaviour and/or former or current rent arrears means that the applicant cannot qualify for the Register will be decided by a register officer working for the Managing Agent. A right to have a review will then be carried out by a senior officer for the Managing Agent in consultation with Sevenoaks District Council.

⁹ In accordance with s160ZA (8) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002

Reasons for non-qualification, including but are not limited to anti-social behaviour, where:

- i. The Applicant, or any member of the household, has assaulted or been unnecessarily aggressive to a member of staff. This may include an officer employed by Sevenoaks District Council, housing association or partner agency involved in the application. This exclusion may include where an injunction is being sought or has already been obtained. This type of behaviour may include, but not limited to: violence; verbal abuse; threats of violence or other aggressive behaviour or;
- ii. Nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, or any other persons, which includes anti-social behaviour, forms of abuse, discrimination and harassment;
- iii. The Applicant, or any member of the household, have knowingly given false or misleading information or withheld information that has been reasonably requested;
- iv. The Applicant has rent arrears and a recoverable housing related debt (except where this has been verified by the Council as being through no fault of their own). This includes failing to uphold repayments as part of a housing debt repayment plan;
- v. The Applicant has been non-compliant with a current or former tenancy agreement. This may include obtaining a tenancy by deception, allowing the condition of a property to deteriorate, using the property for illegal, criminal or immoral behaviour, including aiding and/or abetting these activities.

As rent arrears or recoverable housing-related debt may prevent the applicant from being considered for an allocation of a property, it is important that the applicant demonstrates they are taking reasonable steps to address the debts. This would be assessed based on evidence provided by the applicant and considered on a case-by-case basis.

For further advice and support can be provided by the Housing Advice Service at Sevenoaks District Council on 01732 227000 or email housing@sevenoaks.gov.uk. For independent advice and support, contact a local Citizens Advice service.

Applicants who are excluded will be informed in writing and will be advised of their statutory right to request a review of this decision; see section 9.1 for further details of the review process.

For the applicant to be able to re-apply for the Register at a later date, it is important that you can demonstrate that you have taken reasonable steps to address the issues within the original exclusion.

6. How to Apply for Social Housing

6.1. How to join the Housing Register

Any applicant interested in joining the Register can undertake the pre-assessment process on the Kent Homechoice website at www.kenthomechoice.org.uk to find out whether they qualify. If an applicant qualifies to join the Register, they must apply through the Kent Homechoice website by completing the online application form, this is a choice based lettings scheme, and it is used all across Kent. They must include on the application all members of the household, i.e. people who live with them, or would reasonably be expected to live with them.

Applicants who are verified as meeting the eligibility and qualification rules will be registered on Kent Homechoice. It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure that the information provided on the application form is correct and all the required supporting

Agenda Item 6a

documents must be provided within 28 days of making the application or within an appropriately agreed timescale. See Appendix 3 for details of the required documents. The applicant will then receive a registration letter and a Welcome Pack that contains a user guide. The letter will also state the Band according to the housing needs, the size of property they are eligible for and a unique Kent Homechoice reference number. This letter may be sent electronically to the applicant's email address on the Register application.

Once registered, the applicant can bid on advertised social housing properties in the area of their choice within Sevenoaks District.

The Managing Agent is able to set up an auto-bid process on behalf of the applicant if required, and this can be discussed directly with the Managing Agent. This enables bids to be made automatically in the areas specified by the applicant.

Failure to bid on suitable and reasonable properties within the applicants chosen and preferred areas within a 12 months' period may result in the applicant being removed from the Housing Register; see section 10.2 for further details.

Any applicants without access to the internet can contact the Allocations Team, West Kent Housing Association, 101 London Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1AX, or call 01732 749400 for assistance with applying and bidding on the Register.

6.2. Assessing Applications

In order to assess the applicant's housing need, a housing register officer will use a needs based Banding System scheme, Banding A to D. The full details of the Banding system are set out in Section 7.2 and Appendix 2 of this policy.

The Bands are awarded to reflect the applicant's housing need, based on the information provided on the application and supporting documents. The housing needs reflected in the highest Band (A) indicates the greatest need for housing. Usually an application may be linked to several factors across different priority bands; the highest factor that applies to applicant's circumstances will determine which Band they are placed in. For example, an applicant with an emergency medical condition will go into Band A, even if their other circumstances are linked to a lower band.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all the required information and supporting documentation are provided to within 10 working day from request. Incomplete applications will not be made active until such time when all information has been received to complete an assessment. If the application is incomplete, it will be cancelled after a period of 28 days from the date the information was requested.

A cancellation of this nature does not prevent the applicant from making another application at a later date. In these cases, the effective date of registration will not be backdated to the earlier application date.

If the applicant is a current or previous tenant, a reference may be requested from the current or previous landlord. If applicable, references may also be requested from a recent landlord. Where a landlord does not reply, a reminder will be sent and, if still not forthcoming, any other information or records available will be checked to try to determine whether there have been any concerns over the way an applicant may have conducted their tenancy.

The applicant will not be disadvantaged if, despite every effort, it is not possible to obtain a reference from current or previous landlords.

6.3. Data Sharing and Declaration

As part of the online Register application, the applicant will be required to sign a declaration to:

- a) Confirm that the information given is correct and that any changes of circumstances will notified the Managing Agent or Council;
- b) Give consent to allow enquiries to be made concerning their eligibility for housing and level of priority;
- c) Give consent to allow information to be provided to other partner organisations in the scheme.

To determine eligibility for the Housing Register, the Managing Agent or Council will make any enquiries they deem necessary in order to assess the application. This may include information sharing with professionals such as health professionals, Kent County Council, other Council departments and the Police etc. By submitting personal information on the Housing Register application form, the applicant is giving permission to share information with other housing providers and statutory agencies as needed to process and verify the application, in accordance with Kent Data Sharing Protocols.

6.4. Applicant checks

In the interests of assessing an applicant's eligibility to join the Register, all members of the prospective household will be requested to disclose any pending court cases or unspent criminal convictions.

The Managing Agent or Council may use any information disclosed during the application, assessment and allocation of property processes to find out whether the applicant qualifies for joining or remaining on the Register.

Where a criminal conviction is spent¹⁰, this will not be taken into account. The assessment will reflect whether there is evidence of any current serious unacceptable behaviour regardless of any previous convictions of this nature.

If during the assessment process, it is felt that there is a need for a police check, the Disclosure and Barring Service may be contacted for information. This is to establish if there has been any involvement in serious crimes that constitutes as 'unacceptable behaviour' within the non-qualification criteria of this Policy.

Information gained will not automatically exclude the applicant from the Register. It may also be used to make informed decisions about any nomination for vacant property. All assessments will be carried out in accordance with the data protection and information sharing policies and legal requirements.

6.5. Joint applications

Joint applications will be accepted and will be treated as one application. The housing need of the full household will be considered in assessing housing needs. When allocating to two or more persons jointly, at least one of the persons must qualify and all of them must be

¹⁰ In accordance with the 'spent convictions' definitions outlined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974

Agenda Item 6a

eligible (see section 3 for details). However, in relation to the housing associations that are part of this Policy, some individual association may decide whether to allow a joint tenancy depending on their own rules.

6.6. Households with access to children/shared residency order

As part of the assessment process, the applicant will record whether children live with them part of the week, whether or not this arrangement is set by the court or not. All children should be detailed on the application; however, applicants should be aware that this does not automatically mean they will be guaranteed an additional bedroom(s) for the child/children.

Social housing is a scarce resource and therefore social housing can only be allocated to those who have a housing need. In certain situations, a child will have a permanent place of residence with another parent and it will only be in exceptional circumstances that it would be reasonable to expect a child who has a home with one parent to be provided with another home¹¹.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they provide evidence of any court order or residency order and proof of child benefit and tax credits as part of the application process.

6.7. Housing for People Aged 55+

Some housing within the District is advertised and offered to specific target groups. The need for supported/sheltered properties for people aged over 55 is a priority in this District as the older population increases. See section 3.4 above for further information.

6.8. Notification of Registration

When an application has been fully assessed, the applicant will be notified in writing and this notification will include the following information:

- Whether they qualify for the register and, if not, why not;
- If the applicant does qualify, they will be notified of the registration date and unique Kent Homechoice registration reference number to enable the applicant to start bidding on properties, and;
- The allocated Band according to the assessed housing need and the type of property the applicant can bid for;
- Details of the applicant's right to request a review of the decision. This may include querying the allocated banding or in certain other specified circumstances (see the review section 9.1 below for further details).

6.9. Change of circumstances

It is the applicants' responsibility to let the Council or Managing Agent know of any change of circumstances for any and all members of the household and, where requested, provide proof of that change. Notification of a change in circumstances should be done as soon as possible and within 2 weeks of any change. Registered applicants should fill in the online change of circumstances form available at www.kenthomechoice.org.uk and submit evidence. Examples of a change in circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- a. A change of address or contact details, for any members of the prospective household;

¹¹ Holmes-Moorhouse v Richmond upon Thames 2009

- b. A change in medical condition or disability (either existing or newly diagnosed);
- c. A request for additional family members or other people wishing to be added to the application (This will be subject to an assessment and the rules set out in this policy);
- d. Any family member or any other person(s) on the application who is no longer part of the household; and
- e. Any significant changes in income, savings or assets that may require a reassessment of the application.

It does not follow that every change in circumstance will result in a change in priority. The information provided by the applicant will be used to reassess their priority and may result in no change to priority band, change to higher or lower priority or may result in your application being removed from the register if you no longer qualify under this policy.

The applicant will not actively be considered for social housing whilst the change of circumstance is being verified and we undertake to assess the change of circumstances as quickly as possible. Checks will be made on an application's current circumstances before an offer of a tenancy is made. Failure to notify the Managing Agent of a relevant change in circumstance may result in the application not being valid at the time of offer and they will not be offered a property.

6.10. Reviewing and Renewing Housing Applications

Every applicant on the Housing Register will have their application reviewed annually or more frequently, as required. This will be on a rolling basis depending on the operational processes adopted at any time for reviewing the Register. A letter will be sent to all applicants requesting confirmation of the current circumstances and whether they wish to remain on the Register, this may be sent electronically to a given email address. Failure to complete the annual review will result in the application being cancelled and the need to re-apply. If a reply is not received within 28 days of the date sent, the application will be cancelled in line with 6.11 below.

As part of the annual Review, the Managing Agent may discuss the applicant's bidding and offers, which may relate to the terms and restrictions detailed of this Allocation Policy, as outlined in Section 7 and 10.

The Allocations Policy is monitored to make sure that allocations made reflect current housing needs and meet legislation requirements. This policy will be reviewed and updated regularly, particularly when changes in legislation and/or operational processes are required, to ensure the Housing Register continues to meet local housing needs.

6.11. Cancelling Applications

An application will be cancelled from the Housing Register in the following circumstances:

- a) At the request of the applicant;
- b) If the applicant (including all household members) become ineligible under one of the eligibility and qualification rules;
- c) When the applicant has been housed;
- d) On failure to reply to a review letter or requests for further information within a given time period;
- e) Where it is discovered that the applicant has given false or misleading information;
- f) If the applicant fails to bid on any properties, which are suitable to the household size and within preferred locations within a 12 month period.

Agenda Item 6a

- g) If the applicant refuses two suitable and reasonable offers of a property, for which the applicant has placed a bid.

In circumstances b), e), f) and g), the applicant will be notified in writing including the reason why the application has been cancelled and detailing the right to request a review of the decision. It is the applicant's responsibility to inform the Managing Agent of any changes which may result in the application being cancelled.

6.12. Short Term Interim Rented Properties

On occasions, where a property is hard to let, some homes may be available for short term lets for people with exceptional circumstances or who are waiting on the Housing Register and are assessed by the Council to be homeless and in priority need. These types of properties including temporary or emergency night paid accommodation provided by a housing association, private landlord or alternative housing provider.

6.13. Deliberate Worsening of Circumstances

Where there is evidence that someone has deliberately made their housing situation worse in order to gain a higher priority on the Register, the assessment of their needs will be based on the circumstances before their situation changed through their deliberate worsening of their circumstances.

Examples of this may include, but not limited to:

- Allowing family members or others to move into a 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 from previously suitable or more suitable accommodation which it was reasonable for the applicant to continue to occupy, into a less suitable property;
- If the applicant was a Homeowner and has transferred their property to another family member within the last 5 years from the date of application to join the Housing Register.
- Giving up affordable and suitable private rented accommodation, which could have been kept to move in with other relatives or friends, creating a situation of overcrowding and/or sharing of bathroom/kitchen and/or a split household;
- Requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit.
- Where a customer fails to report or to cooperate with the landlord to get repairs done to the property which worsens the housing condition or where advice has been provided of appropriate actions the tenant needs to take to reduce or prevent a condition such as condensation but fails to do so which exacerbates a medical condition

These are examples only. There will be other circumstances considered to decide whether someone has deliberately worsened their circumstances. The Managing Agent in consultation with the Council reserve the right to review and make a decision based on the information provided by the applicant. Further information may be requested from other sources (including family members and/or landlords) before a decision is made.

6.14. Misrepresentation, False Statements and Withholding Information

Applicants must supply full information about their circumstances, and must provide supporting evidence where required to do so. It is an offence to provide false information, or

to withhold information, in order to fraudulently obtain a tenancy (Section 171, Housing Act 1996).

Any person who knowingly withholds any information about their housing application or deliberately provides false information, will be guilty of committing a criminal offence, and could face a conviction.

If an applicant has knowingly given false information, the Managing Agent in consultation with the Council will:

- Suspend or disqualify the applicant from the housing register and/ or;
- Withdraw any offer of a tenancy and/ or;
- Work with the landlord to take County Court action for misrepresentation and/or eviction from a tenancy.

7. The Allocation Process

7.1. How are applicants selected for allocation?

Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria and are validated for the Register will have their individual housing needs assessed and their application will then be placed in a band according to their circumstances and housing priority. Each year the total amount of vacant social housing stock varies. Applicants and nominations for homes are made in accordance with the rules in section 7 of this policy. Allocations of a home is made by the relevant housing association/landlord in line with their own Eligibility Policy.

Nominations to the landlord who make the offer are made in line with the banding system. The banding system gives preference to those most in need. Properties will be offered to the bidder in the highest band who has the earliest Banding Date; some exceptions may apply to this process due to exceptional circumstances.

Further validation of the application details may be undertaken by the landlord, in line with their own Eligibility Policy, before an offer of accommodation is made. This is to determine that the applicant is still eligible to receive the nomination for a property and circumstances are up to date.

As part of this Policy, vacant homes will be advertised for two Kent Homechoice bidding cycles. If after two bidding cycles an applicant is not allocated to a property because either

- a) no eligible bids have been received for the property
- or
- b) those who have been offered the property have refused it

other means of identifying a suitable application for the property will be considered to minimise the time the property is vacant. This may include a direct let from a Registered Housing Provider's waiting list or advertising it using other methods.

7.2. The Banding system

The banding system will be used to decide when to make an offer of accommodation and to whom. On occasions, properties may be allocated outside of this system in exceptional circumstances and as agreed by the Council and the Managing Agent. These exceptions are

Agenda Item 6a

outlined below. Once an application has been verified and all documents received, the Managing Agent will allocate an A to D banding criteria based the applicant's housing needs based on their identified reasonable preference groups¹²

There are 4 bands and properties will be allocated in the following order based upon housing need:

Band A: Urgent need to move	These are applicants in need of the highest priority with an urgent need to move.
Band B: High Priority	These applicants in need of a high priority need to move.
Band C: Medium Priority	These applicants have a medium priority need to move.
Band D: Low Priority	These applicants have a low priority need to move.

Priority for an offer of housing is determined by the band and then the length of time the applicant has been placed in that Band. Medical priority, and any other exceptional circumstances including social and welfare needs, will be assessed by the Managing Agent with the option of referring the case to an independent medical advisor if considered appropriate. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide any supporting evidence to support additional priority or medical needs. Examples of exceptional circumstances are outlined in Section 7.5. The process for assessing social and welfare priorities are detailed in Appendix 4.

See Appendix 2 for the full definitions for each priority group awarded a banding. Usually, an application is linked to several factors across different priority bands but the highest factor will determine the band.

Applicants for older people's extra care housing schemes in the District will be assessed by a Joint Allocations Panel who will consider the applicant's care, support, social and housing needs. The Panel will include representatives from Sevenoaks District Council, Kent County Council, the relevant housing association and care provider. On occasions, extra care properties may be advertised and allocated outside the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

The Banding criteria's are set out below, for full detailed descriptions for each criteria, please see Appendix 2 of this Policy:

Banding System A-D	Housing Need Priority Group or Circumstance
Band A Urgent Need to Move	Imminent risk of serious harm, violence or domestic abuse
	Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order
	Management transfers including major works, non-successor (priority need) or other urgent management reasons
	Statutory overcrowding
	Emergency medical condition, welfare need or disability
	Young people in care
	Releasing adapted housing
Band B High Priority to Move	Agricultural workers (Rent Agriculture Act)
	Homeless households in TA for over 6 months

	Qualification under Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and with a priority need
	Serious Medical, Welfare or Disability needs
	Hardship - support or employment including Right to Move and Local Essential Workers
	Under-occupying in social housing
	Overcrowding in social housing and in priority need
	Serious hazards assessed in private sector housing
	Downsizing to move into housing specific for older people (for over 55's) and is a current resident in Sevenoaks District
	Members of the Armed Forces
	Parental eviction – at home for over 12 months
	Applicants in supported housing
Band C Medium Priority to Move	Homeless households in TA under 6 months
	Made and eligible for homeless application but not in priority need
	Rough Sleepers (verified)
	Parental eviction – unable to remain for 12 months
	No or shared access to facilities essential to health and wellbeing
	Overcrowding (as defined by the Bedroom Standard) with no priority need (as defined by Housing Act 1996)
	Non-successor tenant with no priority need
	Intentionally homeless
	Non critical or serious Medical, Welfare or Disability needs
	No access to a kitchen
Band D: Low Priority to Move	Need to share kitchen, bathroom, WC or living room
	Local connection qualification for making a considerable community contribution
	Rural Exception Site applicants with a Parish Connection
	Older people (over 55's) with low social and housing needs moving into housing specific for older people
	Not currently suitably/adequately housed
	Applicants banding reduced permanently or for a period of time

7.3. Banding Allocation Exceptions

Priority within a Band will be determined by the length of time the application has been placed in that Band and most allocations will be made to people in the highest band, and then by the time they have waited within that Band.

In some exceptional circumstances, an offer will be made to someone outside of the priority band and 'time registered' procedure. This is where there is an urgent need for an individual household to be housed or where there is an operational or financial need to house certain categories of applicants, or where the vacancy is for a Rural Exceptions Site home.

For example, if there are additional preferences due to an exceptionally urgent need for housing, an applicant may be placed at the front of the priority band and made an offer of housing as soon as possible. A decision whether a need to be housed is exceptionally urgent would be made by the Managing Agent in consultation with the Council. Examples of the circumstances, but are not limited to:

- A need to move due to a fire or flood or severe storm damage to a home;

¹² as defined in Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996

Agenda Item 6a

- An imminent risk of violence and/or are to be housed through a witness protection programme;
- An applicant needs to house urgently as part of a multi-agency protocol such as a Public Protection arrangement (MAPPA), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) etc.;
- Where an applicant is homeless and in temporary accommodation that would not be suitable for more than a short period of time or where there is a need to move out of temporary accommodation to manage the budgetary impact on the Council as a whole.
- Where a vacant adapted property or a property designed to disability standards becomes available, it may be offered if an applicant has an established need for this property type, regardless of the date they were registered or banding.

In some circumstances, qualification criteria for a property will be restricted to households that meet specific criteria. Restrictions may apply to:

- properties subject to a local lettings policy;
- properties situated on rural exception sites;
- properties subject to an agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Further details of exceptions to the banding criteria and local connection rules can be found in this Policy. The Managing Agent in consultation with the Council has the authority to allocate properties in exceptional circumstances outside the current banding system.

7.4. Type of property allocated to an Applicant

The Council wants to make the best use of affordable housing properties that become available in the District. When deciding the size and type of property for which applicants are eligible, the Government's National Bedroom Standard¹³ will apply. A summary of how a property size is calculated can be found below.

When bidding for properties, there are a number of very important considerations that an applicant should take into account. These include property size, location and affordability. Any additional exceptional circumstances will be taken into account, it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide relevant supporting evidence.

Applicants should note that not all types of accommodation are available in all of the towns and villages in the Sevenoaks District. Therefore, to maximise opportunities of being offered a property, it is important that an applicant bids for all types of properties that meet their housing needs in their preferred locations. **Applicants who do not bid on any suitable properties within a 12 month period and/or decline two reasonable offers on properties, including where an applicant has placed a bid AND the property meets their bedroom size within their preferred areas, this will result in the applicant being removed from the Housing Register, see section 10 for full details.** Alternatively, if the applicant has been awarded an urgent (Band A) or high priority (Band B) and fails to bid or accept suitable properties, this priority banding may be removed at the discretion of the Managing Agent in consultation with the Council.

National Bedroom Standard Summary

¹³ In accordance with s.169 of the Housing Act 1996

The National Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Bedroom Calculator¹⁴ will be used when calculating the number of bedrooms that an applicant is entitled to. This will calculate the size of the property based on the gender, ages and number of occupants for each household. The following rules will apply:

The LHA Bedroom Standard, as used to calculate Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, allocates a separate bedroom to each:

- married or cohabiting couple;
- single adult (16 or over);
- Two children under 10 (regardless of sex);
- Two children under 16 of the same sex.

National exceptions will apply when calculating bedrooms, sharing arrangements and spare bedroom subsidy. Such as approved foster carers, children or couples with a disability or medical condition etc, see <https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit/what-youll-get> for full details.

7.5. What are other considerations and exceptional circumstances

Other considerations and exceptional circumstances may be taken into account when assessing the bedroom and household size requirements of an application for a property. These include, but are not limited to:

- Where an applicant has been identified as requiring a live-in carer (by Kent County Council Social Care Service), a need for a spare bedroom would be taken into account, subject to affordability checks;
- Prospective foster carers or adopters who would require an extra bedroom to accommodate a foster or adoptive child;
- Where a property has been substantially adapted for the needs of a disabled person, the property will only be allocated to applicants if their household would benefit from those adaptations;
- Where an additional room may be required for medical or welfare reasons, applications may be assessed by the Social and Welfare Panel;
- Housing designated for older people will only be available if the applicant is over the age of 55. However, the age criteria may vary for exceptional circumstances, including high support and care needs, and may differ for individual Registered Housing Providers.

7.6. Making an offer of a Property

Once an applicant has bid on a property and the advert closes, the details of the applicants who have bid on the property are passed to the relevant housing provider (who owns the property). Prior to an offer being made, the housing provider will contact the successful applicant to carry out further verification on eligibility and priority based on the housing provider's own Eligibility Policy.

Once verification is completed, the successful applicant will receive an offer of a tenancy in writing from the Registered Housing Provider (the landlord) which will include details of the weekly rent and any service charges. Once the applicant has been offered a property, they will be unable to place any further bids on other properties.

¹⁴ LHA Bedroom Calculator can be found at <http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/bedroomcalculator.aspx>, as part Schedule 4 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013, details available at www.gov.uk

Agenda Item 6a

In certain situations, the offer will not be made, or, if made, may be withdrawn if:

- Since joining the scheme, the applicant has become ineligible;
- On verification of their details, the priority band has been incorrectly awarded due to the information received by the applicant, or due to mistakes in the assessment of the application itself;
- The circumstances of the applicant have changed since the priority band was awarded or they are no longer entitled to the same level of priority;
- The landlord has a good housing management reason not to offer a property;
- The applicant does not meet the landlord's affordability criteria.

If the applicant does not reply to an offer within 2 working days of receiving an offer, then the offer will be deemed to have been refused and the property will be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist who qualifies for that offer.

All offers will be formally made in writing. Notification in writing may be made by letter, e-mail or, in an urgent situation, by text.

7.7. Refusals of Offers

Unless the applicant is being housed under the homelessness legislation (see section 8), the applicant may refuse a maximum of two suitable and reasonable offers of accommodation¹⁵. If both offers are considered suitable and reasonable and are refused, the applicant will be removed from the register and will not be able to re-apply for 12 months.

Before any applicant is removed, checks will be made to determine if both the offers were reasonable in relation to the applicant's housing needs, taking into account any additional disability, physical or medical needs or exceptional circumstances. The Applicant will have the right to request a review of the decision to be removed from the Register. See section 9.1 on the review process.

It is within the discretion of the Managing Agent in consultation with the Council to waive this removal.

Full details regarding 'Refusals of Offer' and 'Removal from the Register' can be found in Section 10.

7.8. Local Lettings Plan

The Housing Register may sometimes use Local Lettings Plans (LLP) to nominate a property. A Local Lettings Plan is an agreement between a housing provider/developer and the Council about how properties will be allocated. It is used to facilitate sustainable communities:

- Where there have been particular management problems identified in an area;
- When nominating a new or refurbished development to ensure the creation of a balanced and sustainable community. This could include, for example, consideration of child density levels. In these circumstances an updated Nominations Agreement may be required between the housing provider and the Council during the development phase;

¹⁵ 'suitable offers' is defined by the Homelessness (suitability of accommodation) (England) Order 2012)

- To fulfil requirements under Planning Agreements (also known as section 106 conditions);
- To assist with wider strategic objectives of the Council, e.g. to remedy under-occupation of existing social rented homes, prioritise Local Essential Workers, provide a better mix of tenures and provide further options for affordable housing such as Intermediate Rents and Help to Buy.

The introduction of a Local Lettings Plan is subject to the Registered Provider/Housing Association obtaining the agreement of the Council's Chief Officer responsible for housing allocations. The advert for the vacant property will show if a LLP applies. The Council will monitor to ensure that allocations reflect the Local Lettings Plan and do not discriminate on equality grounds. Details of LLP's in place are available from the Council.

7.9. Sensitive Letting (property)

An individual property may be a 'sensitive let'. This could be where there is a confirmed history of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity at that property involving the previous tenant or members of their household. A property will only be named a sensitive let with the approval of a senior manager for the Managing Agent or Council.

Properties let sensitively will be allocated as part of Local Lettings Plan in place between the relevant housing providers and the Council. Sometimes, preference may be given to those with a local parish connection and this will be clearly stated in the advert for the vacant property. The introduction of a Local Lettings Plan is subject to the Registered Provider/Housing Association obtaining the agreement of the Council's Chief Officer responsible for housing allocations. More information on these policies are detailed in section 7.8. above

7.10. Social and Welfare Priority

The Social and Welfare Panel is able to consider and make decisions on applications relating to register eligibility, exemptions and banding when information on the application does not clearly fit within the assessment criteria, and additional social and/or welfare priorities may be taken into account. The Panel is made up of representatives from the Managing Agent, Sevenoaks District Council and the Registered Housing Provider. The Panel meets at least monthly to consider the supporting evidence and documentation provided by a relevant support worker or professional (this may include Housing Officer, Social Worker, Education Welfare Officer etc.) to consider urgent social and welfare priorities.

For further details on the Social and Welfare Panel can be found in Appendix 4.

7.11. Special Circumstances (applicant)

Under some special circumstances, it may be necessary to consider other priorities when assessing a person's need for housing. This will be decided at the time of application and/or when the Managing Agent or Registered Provider/Housing Association receives relevant information, usually having considered the advice of relevant professionals and in agreement with the applicant. This would generally be when the applicant would be at risk of harm if housed in a particular location, or may pose a risk to others.

Examples could be where there has been a breakdown in a violent relationship, or where someone is at serious risk of harm because they have acted as a witness in court, or where we

Agenda Item 6a

have information from the Police or Probation Service that they may be a risk to the community¹⁶.

Applicants are entitled to details of any criteria attached to their housing application, although provision will be made to ensure that confidentiality is not breached that would put others at risk. If a bid made under Choice Based Lettings (CBL) results in an applicant being at risk, the Managing Agent will discuss the suitability of the offer with the applicant. This may result in the offer of accommodation not being made. If a bid under the CBL scheme is made that may place an applicant at risk, the suitability of the offer will be discussed and a decision may then be made not to make such an offer of accommodation.

7.12. Specially adapted Properties

Some homes have been specially adapted to meet people's needs or have the potential to be adapted to meet people's needs. This includes homes for the disabled and for older people. To ensure we match people to appropriate homes and make the best use of the accommodation, properties currently adapted or suitable for adaptation will be advertised for those with a recognised need. The Council, in partnership with the housing provider, reserve the right to allocate such a property outside of the Choice Based Lettings scheme, band and date order system in order to best match that property to an applicant who requires an adapted property. This includes where a vacant property has been identified as suitable for an applicant's disability, physical or medical needs because home adaptations could be put in place to make the property accessible, through the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). The property will be assessed in advance of an offer for suitability and required alterations and/or adaptations by the relevant housing provider and the Council.

7.13. Providing Applicants with Choice

As far as possible, the Council wishes to give choice to anyone who is looking to obtain an offer of social housing. This is why the Council operates a Choice Based Lettings scheme to give applicants the best possible choice over where they may wish to live. However, this must be set against the need to resolve a situation where there is an urgent need to provide settled or alternative housing. For example, where there are homeless households to whom there is a statutory duty to provide housing. Therefore, in certain circumstances, choice may be limited.

In very exceptional circumstances, the Council or Managing Agent may make a direct offer of suitable accommodation at any time in order to resolve a threat of homelessness, homelessness itself, or to reduce the financial burden on the Council of the cost of temporary accommodation:

- a. If an applicant is accepted by the Council as statutorily homeless and owed a duty to house¹⁷;
- b. If an applicant is granted homeless status¹⁸; or
- c. If an applicant has been awarded Homeless Prevention banding under this policy.

Please note that if an applicant falls into the categories listed above and refuse a suitable offer of accommodation, they will lose the allocated A or B priority banding.

¹⁶ This includes data received as of the Serious and Organised Crime and Policing Act 2005 (SOCAPA 2005, Chapter 4) which states that a public authority "must take reasonable steps to provide the assistance requested".

¹⁷ & ¹¹ Housing Act 1996, sections 193(2) or 195(2)

¹⁸ Under section 166A (3) (a) (people who are homeless within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996

An offer of suitable accommodation made will also bring to an end any statutory homeless duty owed¹¹. **The applicant will be warned of this consequence at the point the property is formally offered.** It is unlikely that the applicant would then receive a second offer within 12 months given lower banding. However, if they do receive such an offer and refuse that second offer, this applicant will be removed from the Register for a minimum period of 12 months.

8. Homelessness and Housing Advice

It is important to be aware that not all housing problems can be dealt with through the Housing Register, or at least not in a short term or immediate timescale. For example if someone is homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, issues with a current landlord or disrepair of a property.

If someone is homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days, the Council's Housing Advice Service can assess a person's needs, as part of their duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). As part of this service, a Housing Advice Officer will work with the individual to assess their housing situation and complete a Personalised Housing Plan to help prevent them from becoming homeless. This may include supporting the individual into alternative suitable housing, liaising with the current landlord or family member, assessing affordability to maximise income or placing the individual in emergency or temporary accommodation if they are homeless and assessed as having a priority need.

The Council is able provide housing advice and assist with other housing options. This may include help to access a private rented property, for a minimum of six month, with a tenancy or lease arrangement with a private landlord or alternative housing provider. The Council's Private Sector Letting Scheme (PSL) may be able to assist a customer with their upfront financial costs such as a deposit bond or required rent in advance, subject to eligibility and ongoing affordability. Further details about PSL are available at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/housing.

From time-to-time the Council may contact Register applicants to offer them further affordable housing opportunities including access affordable and private rental properties and shared ownership, which is often a quick route to finding the right home.

Someone requiring housing advice about housing problems, housing options or wish to make an application as homeless, should contact the Housing Advice Service at Sevenoaks District Council, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG, tel: 01732 227000.

9. Requesting a Review and Making a Complaint

9.1. The Review Process

Any applicants have the right to appeal a decision made in relation to a housing application to join the Register and any subsequent decisions. The applicant has a right to ask for a formal review of the decision within 21 days of receiving the notification letter.

An applicant has a legal right to a review of a decision in the following circumstances if they:

- a) Do not agree with the allocated Band, or with a banding change;
- b) Consider that a decision has been reached based on incorrect information;

Agenda Item 6a

- c) Disagree with a decision made on the basis of immigration status;
- d) Disagree with a decision made based on serious unacceptable behaviour;
- e) Disagree a decision regarding being removed from the Register – as set out in Section 10.

If an applicant wishes to request a review of a decision, the process is set out below:

- i. The applicant will be notified in writing of any decisions made in respect of the application stating their right of review;
- ii. If an applicant wishes to seek a review, they must request a review of a decision within 21 days of being notified in writing, unless there are exceptional circumstances outside this timescale. The applicant must give reasons why they wish to have the decision reviewed, including where they believe an incorrect decision has been made, based on the facts.
- iii. The review request must be in writing (email is acceptable) stating the reasons for the review. The request for a review should be addressed to:
 - Housing Allocations Team
 - West Kent Housing Association
 - 101 London Road
 - Sevenoaks
 - Kent TN13 1AX
 - Email: housing.register@wkha.org.uk
- iv. A manager for the Managing Agent or Council, who has not been involved in making the original decision, will carry out the review. The review process should be completed within 56 days of the request for a review. Any extension to include timescale will be agreed with the applicant.
- v. The review will be considered on the basis of the allocation scheme, any legal requirements and all relevant information. This will include information provided by the applicant on any relevant developments and submitted evidence since the original decision was made.
- vi. Aim to complete the process and inform them in writing of the decision within 21 working days of receipt of the request and supporting information, after taking into account any additional information that is provided. Alternatively, if additional time is required for the review, this will be agreed with the applicant within the 56 days. It is the responsibility of the applicant requesting the review to provide additional documented evidence to be considered as part of the review process.
- vii. If you do not agree with the review decision, you may appeal to the County Court on a point of law, within 21 days of the review decision.
- viii. The applicant may also raise their dissatisfaction through the West Kent Housing Association's Complaints Policy, which is detailed on their website at www.westkent.org.
- ix. If the applicant wants to make a complaint as part of this work, it is the applicant's right to direct complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman, the Housing Ombudsman or other appropriate bodies. This will not prejudice any Review appeal or onward decision. See section 9.2 below for full details.

9.2. Making a Complaint

To make a complaint about this Policy, complaints should first be made using the Stage 1 and 2 of the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of the current procedure is available on the Council's website at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk.

If the applicant is still not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, a further complaint can be made direct to the Local Government Ombudsman service. The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent service run by central government to make sure that Local Authorities provide the required standard of service to customers.

The Ombudsman will deal with a complaint if a customer feels they have been treated unfairly as a result of maladministration.

All complaints to the Ombudsman must be in writing. Applicants can request assistance from their local Councillor or get someone else to write on their behalf. The contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman are:

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint about how the Managing Agent has handled a housing application or the operational process of an application, please use West Kent Housing Association's Complaints Policy which is detailed on their website at www.westkent.org, in the first instance before using the Council's Complaint's procedure as detailed above.

10. Removal from the Register

10.1. Refusal of Suitable Offers

The bidding process forms part of a choice based lettings process and therefore all bids placed by applicants or officers are within the preferred locations selected by the applicant, as part of the Register application process (as detailed in Sections 6 and 7.13).

Where an applicant has placed a bid on a property and then refuses two offers of a property and the properties are considered to be suitable and/or reasonable¹⁹ in a 12 month period, they may be removed from the Housing Register and will not be able to reapply for a period of 12 months. Please note: These offers include properties that match your specified housing need and will include all types of properties in your preferred locations such as flats, houses, bungalows and maisonettes.

All applicants will be contacted by the Managing Agent before removal to discuss this matter and if required offer further housing advice and support. Any exceptional circumstances including allocated property size, any additional housing and/or medical needs of the applicant will be considered.

Exceptional Circumstances

Additional number of refusals may be allowed if a property does not meet the applicant's disability, physical or medical needs or in other exceptional circumstances. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. If a property requires additional adaptations to support the applicant's disability, physical or medical needs, the housing association may assess the property's suitability for appropriate new home adaptations through the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

The following exception will apply in relation to the refusal of two suitable and reasonable offers of a property, as part of the Housing Allocations process:

Homelessness Duty Exception

If an applicant is owed a main homelessness duty²⁰, the two offer policy does not apply and the refusal of one suitable and reasonable offer may end the homelessness duty owed by the Council. This is also likely to result in the Council discharging their statutory homelessness duty for the applicant, as the offer has been refused. This includes bids made by Council Housing Officers, on behalf of the applicant, where there is an urgent or immediate need to provide suitable and affordable housing to an applicant at risk of homelessness. This forms part of the Council's main housing duty¹⁷.

Band A Exception

The two refusal rule will not apply if an applicant has been awarded an 'urgent need to move' priority banding A on the Housing Register, as the housing need is classed as an urgent and immediate. In this instance, the applicant may be removed from the Register if they refuse one suitable and reasonable offer. Alternatively, on assessment of the refusal, the applicant's priority banding may be removed and a lower priority banding awarded, if the applicant no longer has an urgent need to move.

This exception will apply if the property is deemed, by the Council or the managing agent, to be suitable and reasonable and therefore meets the urgent housing needs. This includes

¹⁹ 'suitable offers' is defined by the Homelessness (suitability of accommodation) (England) Order 2012)

²⁰ 'main homelessness duty' as defined in section 193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996

where the bid has been placed by the Council on behalf of the applicant. As above, exceptional circumstances will be taken into account.

Please note: The bids are placed by Officers or applicants within the preferred locations pre-selected by the applicant, as part of their application through the Choice Based Letting System (detailed in Section 7.13).

Any decision to waive the removal from the Register rule for refusing two offers due to exceptional circumstances, for any of the above, will be made by the Council or Managing Agent in consultation with each other and the applicant. It is the responsible of the applicant to provide any additional supporting evidence to justify this waive.

The applicant will be informed in writing with 14 days of refusal with the opportunity to appeal this decision.

10.2. Failure to bid

If an applicant does not bid on any property within a period of 12 months, the applicant will be removed from the Housing Register and will not be able to reapply for a period of 12 months, unless they can demonstrate exceptional circumstances. All applicants will be contacted by the Managing Agent before removal to discuss this matter and if required offer further housing advice and support.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide supporting evidence as part of exceptional circumstances. The Managing Agent in consultation with the Council have the authority to waive this removal.

Note: If the applicant is granted a priority or urgent band (A or B), the applicant may lose this priority banding if they are not bidding within a reasonable period of time, which could be as little of 3 months. In this instance, the housing application would be re-assessed to allocate the new lower banding based on the housing needs.

Exceptional Circumstances

Additional number of bids could be allowed if a property does not meet the applicant's disability, physical or medical needs or in other exceptional circumstances. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Other exemptions will apply as set out in Section 10.1 above.

The failure to bid will not apply if the applicant has joined the Housing Register for access only to Rural Exceptions Site properties. It is recognised that the applicant will only bid on these types of property when they become available, based on the applicant meeting the specified criteria and local connection to the relevant parish. See Section 3.6 for full details.

10.3. Giving False Information

It is a criminal offence if an applicant knowingly gives false statements, withholds information and fails to disclose change of circumstances relevant to an application. This is in connection with the Council exercises its allocating social housing functions²¹. An offence is also committed if an applicant allows a third party to provide false information on their behalf. This includes:

²¹ As outlined in the Housing Act 1996, Part 6 Section 171

Agenda Item 6a

- (a) It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly to make a statement which is false in a material particular, or
- (b) Knowingly to withhold information, which the Council has reasonably required the applicant to give, in connection with the exercise of these functions.

If an applicant is found to have withheld or given false information and are removed from the Register, they will not be able to reapply for a minimum period of 12 months. Decisions to remove anyone from the register will be made based on the seriousness of the false information given and an assessment of why the information was withheld.

Where a criminal offence has been committed relating to false or fraudulent information, the Council will work with the Police to take action to prosecute the applicant. This offence may result in a conviction or fine. The Council will also consider possession proceedings in partnership with the relevant housing provider, under Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Housing Act 1996, s 146), where an applicant has given false information and obtained a tenancy.

11. Applicant Information and Rights

11.1. Confidentiality

Information received in relation to an application will be treated in confidence in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018. Confidential Information held about customers will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:

- Where the individual has consented to the disclosure;
- Where it is necessary to process their application;
- [sub-processors]
- Where the Council is required by law to make such a disclosure;
- Where disclosure is made in accordance with a recognised Information Sharing Protocol;
- for reasons of public protection; or
- otherwise in accordance with our Privacy Notice at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/privacy.

11.2. Data Protection and Information Sharing

The Managing Agent and Council will ensure that all information provided by an applicant, and by third parties in relation to an application, is treated in strictest confidence. In doing so, this will comply fully with legal requirements²².

Your personal data will be dealt with in accordance with the Privacy Notice on the application form, the Council's general Privacy Notice (which can be found at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/privacy) and this Policy. Together they set out what personal data we will collect on you, how it will be used, and how it will be shared.

The processing is necessary under the Public Task purpose and is necessary for the Council to perform a task in the public interest or for its official functions, and that task or function has a clear basis in law. All applicants will be asked to sign a declaration as part of their

²² Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR, in relation to the way the Council stores and processes the information we hold on applicants, and with s.166(4) of the Housing Act 1996.

Register application form to give consent to share personal information about them or any member of the household, in relation to the processing of their application.

Where an applicant does not consent to their information being shared, this may result in an application not being complete and consequently, unless there is an exceptional reason for not consenting, the applicant will not be admitted onto the Housing Register.

The applicant's information may be shared irrespective of whether consent has been obtained in exceptional circumstances. These circumstances will include:

- a) In accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act²³
- b) For the purposes of the prevention or detection of crime and fraud.
- c) Where there is a serious threat to the applicant or a third party, including staff or contractors.
- d) Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of the proposed landlord or any nominated support organisation, to ensure the health and safety of the applicant, a member of the household or a member of staff.

11.3. Equal Opportunities and Monitoring

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to ensuring that its policy and procedures in the letting of property are non-discriminatory and that all customers 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 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

To identify the needs of our customers, the application form will have specific questions relating to vulnerability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disabilities and other relevant criteria. This information will be used to monitor the impact of the policy on minority and specific needs groups and to make such amendments as may be required, to ensure no group is disadvantaged by the policy.

Under the Equality Act²⁴, this Council is 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, in their exercise of a public function. To comply with our duties in the Equality Act, 'reasonable preference' categories are given priority for housing and the overall customer satisfaction with the scheme is monitored.

11.4. Treating all applications fairly

Decisions about housing applications and the allocation of housing are usually carried out by Council Officers rather than elected Councillors. However, this does not prevent Councillors from seeking or providing information on behalf of their residents, with written consent from the applicant to act on their behalf.

In order to ensure that we treat all applicants fairly, applicants must disclose whether the application for housing is from a Councillor or employees of the Council or a partner Housing Association. Canvassing is not allowed. These applications will be assessed in the normal way, but an offer of housing must be approved by a manager at Sevenoaks District Council with responsibility for housing.

11.5. Right to information

²³ Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 115

²⁴ Equality Act 2010, section 149

Agenda Item 6a

You are entitled to request copies of personal information that the Council holds about you. Further details about your rights can be found in our general Privacy Notice at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/privacy. You may make this request by writing to the Data Protection Officer at the Council Offices or by emailing data.protection@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we make certain information about our services publicly available through our Publication Scheme. If the information you are after is not already available then you may make a request to the Council. Further details about making a request can be found on our website.

12. Glossary

AA	-	Attendance Allowance
AFIP	-	Armed Forces war pension
CBL	-	Choice Based Lettings Scheme
DBS	-	Disclosure and Barring Service
DCLG	-	Department of Communities and Local Government
DFG	-	Disabled Facilities Grant
DLA	-	Disability Living Allowance
HERO	-	Housing, Energy, Retraining and Options
KCC	-	Kent County Council
LCHO	-	Low Cost Home Ownership (Help to Buy)
LLP	-	Local Lettings Plan
MAPPA	-	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement
MARAC	-	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MHCLG	-	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
PIP	-	Personal Independence Payment
PSL	-	Private Sector Lettings Scheme
SDC	-	Sevenoaks District Council
SDHR	-	Sevenoaks District Housing Register
SLA	-	Service Level Agreement
TA	-	Temporary accommodation
WKHA	-	West Kent Housing Association

13. Appendix 1 - Definitions

Accommodation	A shared dwelling or property are behind a door that only that household can use and there is at least one other such household space at the same address with which it can be combined to form the shared dwelling.
Adult	An adult is a person aged 18 or over who has legal control over their person, actions and decisions and is therefore regarded as independent, self-sufficient and responsible.
Affordable Housing	Accommodation provided by ‘Registered Housing Providers’ or other providers approved by Sevenoaks District Council.
Allocation	A housing authority allocates accommodation (under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996) when it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by that authority; • nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority; • nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider or other providers approved by Sevenoaks District Council.
Assured tenant	A person with an assured shorthold tenancy, including of an Affordable Rent property.
Child	A dependent child is defined as being under 16 years of age, or under 18 and in, or about to begin, full-time education or training. A 16 or 17 year old may not be seen as dependent if they are living independently, have been excluded by parents or are leaving care etc.
Common Travel Area	Includes the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland.
Council	Sevenoaks District Council
District	The whole locality area for the Council of the Sevenoaks District.
Employment	Paid employment in the District.
Rural Exceptions Site	A site outside the normal development boundary of a village or market town that has been granted planning permission to provide accommodation for local people in perpetuity. Allocation arrangements are specified in a Section 106 Agreement.
Guarantor	Person who holds the responsibility to ensure rent is paid as well as any losses, expenses or damages where the young person fails to carry out their obligations under the agreement.
Homeless	An individual who lacks housing including a person whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (Shelter) that provides temporary living.
Household	One person or a group of people who have the accommodation together as their only or main residence to make up a household.
Housing Register	A list of applicants who are eligible to apply for housing in the District.
Intentionally homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a person deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence ceases to occupy accommodation (or the

Agenda Item 6a

	<p>likely result of being forced to leave accommodation) and;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the accommodation is available for the person's occupation; and • it would have been reasonable for the person to continue to occupy the accommodation.
Local Essential Worker	<p>A 'Local Essential Worker' is someone employed in the District and in one of the following occupations, as defined in the Sevenoaks District Local Plan as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector employees providing frontline services in areas including health, education and community safety and can include NHS staff, teachers and school support staff, police, firefighters, military personnel, social care and childcare workers (as per NPPF definition); • Council employees who provide frontline services (including County, District or Town/Parish); • Private sector employees and the self-employed providing frontline services in care and includes teachers and school support staff, health care, social care and childcare workers; • Private sector employees and the self-employed who provide frontline services in amenities and includes cleaners, kitchen/catering staff, shop workers, hairdressers, local transport and agriculture; and • Any other frontline occupational group experiencing recruitment or retention issues - such issues being first evidenced to the satisfaction of the District Council and inclusion as a local essential worker is at the sole discretion of the District Council.
Managing Agent	<p>'West Kent Housing Association' who manages the Sevenoaks District Housing Register on behalf of Sevenoaks District Council as part of a Service Level Agreement.</p>
Secure tenant	<p>A person with a flexible tenancy granted under s.107A of the Housing Act 1985</p>
Statutory homelessness	<p>Statutory duties on local housing authorities to ensure that advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is available free of charge</p>
We/our	<p>This is intended to mean Sevenoaks District Council</p>

14. Appendix 2 –Banding Criteria

Banding A-D	Criteria	Housing Need – Full Description
<p>Band A</p> <p>Urgent Need to Move</p>	<p>Imminent risk of serious harm, violence or domestic abuse</p>	<p>Applicants with an exceptional need to move. This includes those owed a homelessness duty, or who would be owed a homelessness duty if assessed, as a result of being a victim of serious violence, harassment, intimidation or where threats of violence are likely to be carried out.</p> <p>It also includes domestic violence, witnesses to crime or victims of crime, racial or homophobic harassment. Applicants who qualify under this category are not required to have a local connection.</p> <p>The Council may bid on properties, on behalf of applicants in this category as part of the Council’s main Homelessness Duty²⁵. The refusal of one suitable and reasonable offer will apply; see Section 10.1 for full details.</p>
	<p>Statutory overcrowding</p>	<p>Applicants who are statutorily overcrowded as defined by the Housing Act 1985.</p>
	<p>Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order</p>	<p>Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Where the applicant’s property is subject to demolition or subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order for redevelopment.</p>
	<p>Emergency medical condition, welfare need or disability</p>	<p>Applicants with an emergency associated with their medical condition(s), welfare needs, or disability that is critically affected by their housing circumstances.</p> <p>This must be supported by Police, MAPPA Process, (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements produced by the National Offender Management Service) Social Services or medical professional. This category includes Service Personnel who need to move into suitable adapted accommodation because they have sustained serious injury, a medical condition or a disability during their service.</p> <p>Note: A case may be referred to an independent medical advisor for advice if appropriate. Emergency medical, Welfare or disability priority may need to be assessed and verified by the Social and Welfare Panel (See Appendix 4 for full details).</p>
	<p>Young people in care</p>	<p>Young people in care and considered ready to move out of care by Kent Social Services. See Section 2.2 for full details.</p>
	<p>Releasing adapted housing</p>	<p>A tenant of one of the Housing Register partner Registered Providers/Housing Associations who would release an adapted social housing property by moving. See Section 7.12.</p>
	<p>Management transfers including major works, non-successor (priority need) or other urgent management reasons</p>	<p>A tenant of one of the SDHR Partner Registered Providers/Housing Associations where the social landlord requires the tenant to move due to major works or other urgent management reasons. This includes those who are occupying a social housing property as a non-successor with a priority need and a decision is taken to rehouse them.</p>
	<p>Agricultural workers</p>	<p>Farm workers who need <u>immediate</u> housing under the Rent (Agriculture) Act as recommended by the Agricultural Dwelling</p>

²⁵ ‘main homelessness duty’ as defined in section 193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996

Bandin g A-D	Criteria	Housing Need – Full Description
		Housing Advisory Committee.
Band B High Priority to Move	Homeless households in Temporary Accommodation (TA) over 6 months	<p>Homeless households owed a full homeless duty by Sevenoaks Council under sections 193 (2) and have been accommodated in temporary accommodation for a period of 6 months– <i>note these applicants might be made a direct offer in any area that is suitable.</i></p> <p>Households in this category will be made one suitable offer only, in line with Section 10 of this Policy.</p> <p>The Council may bid on properties, on behalf of applicants, in this category as part of the Council’s main Homelessness Duty²⁶. The refusal of one suitable and reasonable offer will apply, see Section 10.1 for full details.</p>
	Parental eviction – at home for over 12 months	A priority need household as defined by the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) who was at threat of homelessness, but has been able to remain in the parental home for over 12 months since the initial threat of homelessness.
	Qualification under Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Applicants where it has been decided that they qualify as part of this Council’s duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Council is satisfied they will be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, within 56 days and have a priority need. Therefore the Council has accepted a 56 day Prevention Duty, this timescale may be extended by the Council.
	Serious Medical, Welfare or Disability needs	<p>Applicants with a serious medical condition, welfare need, or disability that is seriously affected by their housing circumstances</p> <p>Note: An award of Band B medical or Welfare or disability priority can be assessed and verified by the assessing officer but some cases may to be assessed by the Social and Welfare Panel (See Appendix 4 for full details).</p> <p>A case may need to be referred to an independent medical advisor for advice if appropriate.</p>
	Overcrowding in social housing <u>and</u> in priority need	<p>A social housing tenant in the District who is overcrowded (unless caused deliberately) in their two bedroom home according to the Bedroom Standard, as set out under section 4.8 of the Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England</p> <p>In addition, there is a reason to believe that the household would be considered to be in priority need according to the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and a move would free up a social home.</p>
	Under-occupying in social housing	<p>A tenant of one of the Housing Register partner Registered Providers/Housing Associations who are under-occupying their home and need to move to a smaller property.</p> <p>Note: This is not applicable to households who are making another member of the household homeless in order to downsize.</p>
	Applicants in supported housing	Applicants in Supported housing who have been assessed by the Council as being ready to move on from that accommodation and where the Council agrees that their circumstances are such that social

²⁶ ‘main homelessness duty’ as defined in section 193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996

Bandin g A-D	Criteria	Housing Need – Full Description
		housing will only offer an appropriate housing move on solution.
	Serious hazards assessed in private sector housing	<p>Where an authorised officer from the Council has determined that a private rented property contains one or more serious Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and there is no prospect of the issues being remedied in a period of time that the Council considers reasonable.</p> <p>Households living in private rented housing where their conditions give rise to an imminent risk of serious harm, and where the Local Authority has served a Prohibition Order or Emergency Prohibition Order under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004, and the view of the local authority is that the conditions or circumstances that gave rise to that order cannot be resolved.</p> <p><i>Note: It is for the Council’s housing application assessing officer to decide with advice the seriousness of the hazard.</i></p>
	Downsizing to move into housing specific for older people	A resident over the age of 55 who is already living within Sevenoaks District, who needs to downsize and move into older person’s specific accommodation within the District for medical, health or wellbeing reasons. See Section 4.2 for details.
	Members of the Armed Forces	Members of the Armed Forces persons who are serving in the regular forces who will be discharged within three months and have served for five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation. In line with Section 4.1 of this Policy.
	Hardship and Employment	<p>Hardship on support grounds: Applicants that have demonstrable evidence that they provide or receive substantial and on-going support to or from relatives or friends and need to move in order to deliver that support as detailed in Section 3.1 This will only be considered where there are significant medical or welfare issues including grounds relating to disability.</p> <p>Employment Hardship: Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and customers will need to show that they need to move to take up or continue an employment opportunity not available elsewhere and need to move in order to take up this employment, as detailed in Section 3.2. They will only be considered where they do not live within a reasonable commuting distance. In line with Section 3.5 (Right to Move) of this Policy and includes Local Key/Essential Workers (as defined in the District’s Local Plan).</p>
Band C Mediu m Priority to Move	Made and eligible for homeless application but not in priority need	<p>An applicant where a decision on their Homeless Application to Sevenoaks Council is that they are eligible, homeless but not in priority need.</p> <p><i>Note: For this award to continue the applicant must still be homeless whilst on the register and still be homeless at the point of any offer.</i></p>
	No or shared access to facilities essential to health and wellbeing	<p>Applicants without access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bathroom/shower room within the building in which they live. • A WC within the building in which they live. • Hot or cold water supplies, electricity, gas or heating.

Bandin g A-D	Criteria	Housing Need – Full Description
		(Note: Applicants who have access to shared facilities in shared accommodation will not qualify under these criteria).
	Non-successor tenant with no priority need	A tenant of one of the SDHR Partners including Registered Providers/Housing Associations, where the social landlord requires the person to move due to irregular occupation of a social property as a non-successor who is not considered to be in priority need as defined by the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
	Homeless households in Temporary Accommodation (TA) under 6 months	Homeless households owed a full homeless duty by Sevenoaks Council under section 193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and have been accommodated in temporary accommodation for a period of less than six months– <i>note these applicants might be made a direct offer in any area that is suitable.</i> The Council may bid on properties, on behalf of applicants in this category as part of the Council’s main Homelessness Duty. The refusal of one suitable and reasonable offer will apply, see Section 10.1 for full details.
	Parental eviction – unable to remain at home for 12 months	A priority need household as defined by the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) who has been asked to leave the parental home and is unable to remain for a further minimum of 12 months.
	Rough sleepers (verified)	Applicants where it has been verified by the Council that they are rough sleeping in the Sevenoaks District and meet the local connection rules.
	Overcrowding with no priority need	Households who are overcrowded as defined by the Bedroom Standard under section 4.8 of the Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England with no priority need (as defined by the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)). This can include applicants in social housing or a private rental property, both with no priority need.
	Intentionally homeless	An applicant where a decision on their Homeless Application to Sevenoaks Council is that they are eligible, homeless, in priority need but are intentionally homeless. <i>Note: This award will only be for the period that the Council is under an intentional homeless duty. This is normally for 1 month, being the period that under this duty a household that is intentionally homeless is owed an advice and temporary accommodation duty.</i>
	Non critical or serious Medical, Welfare or Disability needs	Applicants with a medical condition, welfare need, or disability that is affected significantly by their housing circumstances but not at a critical or serious impact level. <i>Note: An award of Band C medical or Welfare or disability priority can be assessed and verified by the assessing officer and will not normally need to be assessed by the Social and Welfare Panel (See Appendix 4 for full details).</i> Note: A case may be referred to an independent medical advisor for advice if appropriate.
No access to a kitchen	Applicants without access to a kitchen. Note: Applicants who have access to shared kitchen facilities in shared accommodation will not qualify under this criterion.	
Band	Over 55 years old	Applicants aged 55 years and over who want to move into sheltered

Bandin g A-D	Criteria	Housing Need – Full Description
D: Low Priority to Move	who want housing specific for older people	housing, or other housing specifically designated for this age group, and have an identified housing and/or social need to move. This includes older people needing to move to be closer to family and/or social networks and therefore this qualifies the applicant for a local connection.
	Making a considerable community contribution	Applicants who have a qualifying local connection of ‘making a considerable community contribution’ and who meet the financial limits, but who do not have a housing need recognised in the other priority bands.
	Need to share kitchen, bathroom, WC or living room	Applicants who need to share a kitchen, bathroom, WC or living room with people who are not part of their household. This could, for example, be a young couple or adult “children” who wish to set up their own home but circumstances require them to continue living in their family home or live in a house in multiple occupation with all or some shared facilities re the bathroom, kitchen and toilet.
	Not currently suitably/adequately housed	Applicants who are not currently suitably/adequately housed. For example, a couple who wish to establish their first independent home together but have low priority need to move.
	Banding reduced for a period of time	The Council has the right to reduce an applicant’s priority under its allocation scheme. Example reasons for this may include, but are not limited to a change in circumstances, failure to bid or not accepting the agreed amount of reasonable offers or fails to provide documentary evidence to support a higher priority banding.
	Rural Exception Site Housing with a Parish connection	Applicants who have been accepted onto the Housing Register as they meet the criteria and definition of local parish connection for Rural Exceptions Site properties. This includes where applicants do not meet the Allocation Policy local connection criteria. See Section 3.6 for full details.

Please Note: Applicants who can demonstrate more than one type of housing need will be placed in the highest Band that applies.

15. Appendix 3 – Documents required for Housing Register application

Proof of an applicant’s identity, current address, household details and finances are required before the application can be accepted onto the Housing Register to verify the information provided. This list include, but not limited to, the following documents requirements:

Required documents	Examples
Proof of identity At least one proof of identity must include a photograph	Birth certificate Valid Passport
Current proof of residence One of the following for each person aged over 16 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent card/book • Recent bill or credit payment book for gas, electricity, water supply or telephone • Confirmation from Employer or DSS • Tenancy Agreement • Full UK driving licence • Council tax bill • Notice to quit, Section 21 or Property repossession order if applicable
If the applicant is a Council or Housing Association tenant	Copy of the tenancy agreement
Proof of Income All of these are relevant for each member of the household over 16 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last three months’ wage slips (or 13 weeks if paid weekly) or latest tax return if self employed • Proof of all benefits received i.e. income support, DLA, etc. • Disbursement details (if there has/will be a house sale in last 3 years)
Proof of Financial details	The most recent three months’ full bank statements for every account held by each person aged over 16 years. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank, building society, savings and post office accounts. Each statement <u>must</u> show all transactions with account and applicant details clearly visible. Therefore summary statements, screen shots or balance sheets may not be accepted. Further evidence may be required.
Proof of any other assets held	Copies of other assets including stocks, shares and bonds – including any assets owned outside the UK. A current valuation of any property owed including outside the UK.
Proof of income from child benefits or equivalent	Children living with the applicant - Proof of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefit • Child Tax and Working Tax Credits

Agenda Item 6a

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Custody or Residence Order• A letter from a Solicitors confirming that they acted for the applicant in relation to a dispute regarding custody/ residence of children & how it was resolved• Confirmation from DSS or Social Services
Maternity Certificate	If pregnant, a copy of the Maternity Certificate (MAT B1) which a doctor/midwife will provide at the 26 weeks pregnant stage.

16. Appendix 4 – Social and Welfare Priority Assessment Panel

The purpose and frequency of the Panel

Social and Welfare Panel is able to consider and make decisions on applications, exemptions and banding when information on the application does not clearly fit within the assessment criteria, and additional social and/or welfare priorities may be taken into account.

The Panel meets at least monthly (more frequently if required) to consider the supporting evidence and documentation provided by a relevant support worker or professional (this may include Housing Officer, Social Worker, Education Welfare Officer etc.) to consider urgent social and welfare priorities. Any evidence will be sent to Panel representatives in advance for consideration.

Panel Representatives

The Panel will consist of the following representatives:

- Sevenoaks District Council - Housing Advice Team Leader or relevant representative with responsibility for Housing;
- West Kent Housing Association Senior Officer or their relevant representative;
- Additional members co-opted as and when required.

Panel Process

A written assessment and supporting evidence is considered by the Panel to establish whether a social and welfare priority should be awarded, as the evidence indicates an exceptional reason for a change in priority banding or housing. **All options for resolving the applicant's difficulties will be considered before any additional priority may be awarded.**

Some examples of social and welfare priority that may be considered by the Panel include:

- Urgent welfare needs in order to deal with child protection issues arising under the Children Act;
- To provide further protection and reduce the risk level to vulnerable adults or children, as the current home could contribute to deteriorate to the household member at risk;
- Where an applicant requires a type of special housing provision such as where additional care or support is required for a long term medical condition or disability;
- Families with a child with medical or behavioural difficulties, which may require an additional bedroom or a particular type of accommodation;
- Requiring additional space to accommodate a carer or to foster/adopt (confirmation in writing will be requested from the relevant County Council or adoption agency);
- The need for rehousing due to irreconcilable neighbour disputes when all other options have been exhausted including mediation etc. This may include acts (or attempted acts) of violence, threats, witnesses of crime, harm, intimidation and harassment.
- Applicant requests for exceptions to this Policy, such as increase affordability due to a change of circumstances (ill health, loss of work etc.) or to alleviate hardship;
- Requests for a transfer or rehousing where there has been a bereavement or personal tragedy in the property or area;
- Applicants that may be excluded from this Policy but where exceptional circumstances need to be considered to establish qualification.

Monitoring and Outcomes

All decisions and reasons for that decision will be recorded and the applicant informed of the decision. Additional evidence or information may be required before the Panel can make a final decision. In exceptional cases, an applicant may be asked to attend the Panel to provide clarification on their case.

A review date will be set (at least annually) to ensure that the priority award remains valid; the applicant at review may be required to re-apply for a Panel assessment. If the applicant has been awarded an 'urgent need to move' priority banding is A, they will be removed from the Register if they refuse 1 suitable and reasonable offer which meets the urgent housing needs and is within their preferred locations. Applicants who have been awarded as an urgent priority banding of A will be reviewed on a six monthly basis to see if any help or support is required with bidding and to ensure this urgent priority awarded is still valid and appropriate.

It is the applicant's responsibility to notify the Managing Agent of any changes in their housing and/or social and welfare circumstances to enable priority to be re-assessed. Failure to notification may result in the loss of any priority banding.

This page is intentionally left blank

EqIA Template – for DECISIONS

Appendix C

This template should be completed alongside proposals that will be subject to decision by Councillors.

Summary of decision to be made:	Final Sevenoaks District Housing Allocations Policy		
Lead Officer (job title):	Hayley Brooks, Head of Housing and Health		
Date the final decision is due to be made:	26/02/2019	Date this assessment commenced:	1/10/2018
Is the decision relevant to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty?			Yes / No
Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation			Yes / No
Advance equality of opportunity			Yes / No
Foster good relations			Yes / No
If the answer is yes to any of the above, proceed with the assessment. If the answer is no, please say why and summarise any evidence:			
For each of the following characteristics, summarise any existing data, consultation activity, interpretation of the impacts and actions that can be taken to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts:			
Characteristic:	Data and consultation	Summary of impact	Actions
Disability	Sevenoaks District Housing Needs Survey 2017, Health Profiles, 2011 Census, Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy, West Kent Homelessness Strategy	The updated 'reasonable preference' criteria and clearer definitions and processes for the applicants relating to banding priorities will ensure openness and transparency for people who may have a disability.	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Carers	As above	Enhanced wording which supports the role of carers as part of a social housing application ensures that carers needs are considered at all times	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Race	As above	None - the allocations policy aims to treat all applicants equally irrespective of race	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Gender	As above	None - the allocations policy aims to treat all applicants equally irrespective of gender	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Age	As above	Updates within the 'reasonable preference' criteria ensures 16/17 care leavers and over 55 year olds with an identified housing need are given priorities and will provide	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider

EqlA Template – for DECISIONS

Appendix C

		greater clarity and transparency.	
Religion / Belief	As above	The allocations policy aims to treat all applicants equally irrespective of religion or belief	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Sexual Orientation	As above	The allocations policy aims to treat all applicants equally irrespective of sexual orientation	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Pregnancy / Maternity	As above	The current allocations policy prioritises pregnancy and maternity as a protected characteristic, no changes are recommended to this.	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Marital or Civil Partnership Status	As above	The allocations policy aims to treat all applicants equally irrespective of this status	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Gender reassignment	As above	The allocations policy aims to treat all applicants equally irrespective of gender reassignment	WKEP Aim: Other actions as a service provider
Summary of impacts : (to be included in committee reports)	<p>Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people.</p> <p>The decisions recommended through this paper will result in clearer definitions and transparency within the updated Housing Allocations Policy for those with an identified housing need, including reasonable preference groups and protected characteristics. This will provide greater opportunities for people with an identified housing need to join the Sevenoaks District Social Housing Register as well as prioritising those with the greatest need.</p>		
Please tick the outcome of this assessment:	No impact	Adjust the policy	Continue the policy Stop and remove the policy
Date assessment will be reviewed:	01/11/2018		

Item 6(b) - Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Cabinet (4 April 2019, Minute 88)

The Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development presented the report which sought approval of the final draft of Community Plan for the period 2019-22. The Community Planning and Projects Officer explained that the document and its supporting Action Plan had been developed following comprehensive consultation with Members, residents, town and parish councils, a wide range of voluntary and community organisations and partner agencies.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that the final draft Community Plan and strategic level action plan for the period 2019-22 be agreed.

This page is intentionally left blank

COMMUNITY PLAN PRIORITIES FOR ACTION 2019-2022

Council - 30 April 2019

Report of Lesley Bowles, Chief Officer Communities and Business

Status For Decision

Also considered by Cabinet - 4 April 2019

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: The long-term Community Plan vision remains in place until 2028. However, the current three-year action plan will expire at end of March 2019.

This report seeks approval of the final draft of Community Plan for the period 2019-22. The document and its supporting Action Plan has been developed following comprehensive consultation with Members, residents, town and parish councils, a wide range of voluntary and community organisations and partner agencies.

The results of the public consultation are appended and have been taken into consideration in the final draft. The action plan and associated success measures are the result of discussion with partner agencies about realistic delivery of the aspirations in the Community Plan.

This report supports the Key Aim of Safe and Caring Communities, Green and Healthy Environment and a Dynamic and Sustainable Economy

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Roddy Hogarth

Contact Officer Alan Whiting, Ext 7446

Recommendation to Cabinet: To recommend the final draft Community Plan and strategic level action plan for the period 2019-22 to Council.

Recommendation to Council: Members are asked to approve the Community Plan and strategic level action plan for the period 2019-22.

Reason for recommendation: The Community Plan sets out the strategic direction for the District and is a multi-agency document, delivered by a range of partner agencies and organisations.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The long-term Community Plan vision remains in place until 2028. However, the current three-year action plan will expire at end of March 2019. Whilst the District Council is responsible for co-ordinating this work, the Community Plan is a multi-agency strategy, delivered in partnership with many agencies and therefore covers a wide range of issues and services.
- 2 A thorough consultation programme took place during the second half of 2018, which helped to identify local priorities for action. In total, 659 people responded to our consultation survey, which included 154 responses from young people in years 11, 12 and 13 at Knole Academy.
- 3 The consultation together with examination of local data, including the emerging Local Plan and the draft Council Plan, helped us to produce a draft Community Plan setting out how we will deliver the communities priorities in the period 2019-22. Between 21 January and 1 March 2019, local people and key stakeholders were given a chance to make comments the draft Community Plan 2019-22.
- 4 Comments received during the response to the draft Community Plan for the period 2019-22 from members of public and key stakeholders, are summarised at Appendix A1. This also sets out how we have considered those views in the final draft document. This included 38 comments to a short survey about the draft Community Plan 2019-22. 13 respondents made comments and a further 25 stated that they there happy with the document or made no comments.
- 5 Appendix A2 sets out the response to the draft Community Plan 2019-22, from the Sevenoaks District Senior Action Forum (SDSAF). Appendix A3 sets out a summary of responses to the points raised by the SDSAF.
- 6 The final draft of the Community Plan is attached at Appendix B and takes into account comments received during the public consultation stage.
- 7 The public consultation stage was used to agree strategic actions and ensure there are appropriate operational level partnership performance indicators to enable the Council to demonstrate realistic delivery of the aspirations. The key success measures for the Community Plan 2019-22 are attached as Appendix C.
- 8 Please note the public consultation draft does not represent the final design. Members will be presented with design concepts at the time the final plan is submitted for approval.

Key Implications

Financial

Delivery of the Community Plan is through each agency’s own resources. In some cases, work will be dependent upon external funding sources and appropriate funding bids will be made.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Risk	Impact	Control
Key outcomes not being delivered	Medium to High	Partners quarterly monitoring will identify at an early stage outcomes that may not be delivered, so that alternative strategies or revised actions can be agreed. This will also identify whether partners are unable to meet objectives due to reasons beyond their control.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people.

The Community Plan has been assessed as not having an adverse impact. It includes an Equalities and Inclusion statement which partners are expected to consider in all decision-making and service delivery.

Conclusion

Members are asked to approve the Community Plan and strategic level action plan for the period 2019-22.

Agenda Item 6b

Appendices

Appendix A1 - Summary of consultation results

Appendix A2 -Response from Sevenoaks District Senior Action Forum (SDSAF)

Appendix A3 - Summary of responses from SDSAF

Appendix B - Community Plan 2019-23 Final Draft

Appendix C - Community Plan key success measures

Background Papers

Equality Impact Assessment.

Lesley Bowles

Chief Officer Communities and Business

Appendix A1 - Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)

Agenda Item 6b

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
Resident	General	It would be useful to see the consultation results from the last time. Also, for each section it would be good to have a baseline against each of the aims and what steps are going to be taken to get to where we want to be. Make sure examples in the plan are not Sevenoaks dominated	The details of the consultation has been presented to Sevenoaks District Council and is available to for the public to view as part of the Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee papers dated 11 December. Baseline data will be agreed for the monitoring. Statistics and information in the plan represent strategic and district-wide information.
Resident	Caring	Section should reference people with disabilities and actions to improve their lives	Actions are already included in the Community Plan, including Priority 1, Caring Communities "Supporting people to lead safe, independent fulfilling lives". Text has now been amended to include appropriate references to disability on pages 13 and 14 of the Community Plan.
	Safe	More action against low-level rule breaking, especially use of mobile phones by drivers, parking on zig-zags, waiting on double-yellow lines.	Increased focus on dangerous and illegal parking within Priority 5, Safe Communities. In addition, the Community Safety Partnership Action Plan 2019-20, looks at all types of crime.

**Appendix A1 - Agenda Item 6b
Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)**

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
Business	Caring	Encourage developers to build more resident suitable housing at all income brackets e.g. wider doors, step free access internally and externally	This is already captured as part of the Local Plan and delivery of the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy, "Wellbeing Starts at Home". This is set out in the Caring section of the Community Plan.
	Green	Make the roads safer and easier for cyclists. Increase the density of electric vehicle charging points. Provide incentives for commuters. Solve the problem of commuter street parking in all residential areas	There is an increased focus on dangerous and illegal parking within Priority 5, Safe Communities. The provision of electric vehicle charging points is already considered as part of Priority 1, Sustainable Communities.
	Healthy	Reduce the speed limit to 20mph in built up areas and enforce. Encourage developers to build new houses that are suitable for a warming environment and make all new builds to passivhaus standard.	Speeding vehicles are addressed in Priority 5, Safe Communities. The Green Environment theme looks to the emerging Local Plan, which addresses energy use in new homes. The Council's Housing Strategy, also looks at energy efficiency of existing housing stock.
Resident	Safe	Ensure cyclists do not cycle on footpaths and pavements designated for pedestrians	The Community Plan focuses on promoting safe and high quality cycling routes within Priority 1, Sustainable Communities.
	Green	Study further the detrimental effects of noise and light pollution from street lights and aircraft	Noise and light pollution already feature in Priority 3 of Green Environment.
	Safe	Parking enforcement outside Edenbridge Primary School on Croft Lane	Increased focus on dangerous and illegal parking within the Community Plan - Priority 5, Safe Communities.

Appendix A1 - Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)

Agenda Item 6b

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
Resident	Healthy	Provision of a fit for purpose leisure centre in Edenbridge	Priority 3, Healthy Communities sets out the following action "Support the retention of existing sport and leisure, unless it can be re-provided, taking into account local needs and improvements in quality through the Local Plan".
Resident	Safe	Concerned for the elderly by the number of people who cycle on the pavement.	The Community Plan focuses on promoting safe and high quality cycling routes within Priority 1, Sustainable Communities.
	Green	The planning policies including building on some green belt are at variance with green environment policies.	The Community Plan takes into account the emerging Local Plan. Both the Local Plan and the Community Plan set out measures to protect the Green Belt.
	Healthy	The planning policy of cramming more and more people into a smaller space will increase loneliness and the lack of a second bedroom may prevent an elderly person being cared for through an illness or after a fall	The Community Plan reflects the emerging Local Plan. This is based on a comprehensive community consultation and engagement process. Older peoples' housing needs are reflected within the Caring Communities and Healthy Environment theme of the Community Plan. The actions in the Community Plan reflect the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy, which recognises the need to promote and support independence.

Appendix A1 Agenda Item 6b Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
	Safe	More traffic calming, better lit pedestrian crossings (preferably light controlled). More police presence	This is the responsibility of Kent County Council. There are also measures within Priority 5, Safe Communities, o make roads and pavements safer for vulnerable people" as well as "street lighting refurbishment".
	Caring	In conjunction with the proposed new Medical Practice it would be good to have in the home care to keep people away from hospitals	The Community Plan incorporates measures to support independence through the Better Care Fund and through Social Prescribing initiatives as set out within Caring Communities and Health Environment themes of the plan.
	Green	I don't want to see Edenbridge disappear under concrete, there are too many proposed planning applications without infrastructure thought	This is a comment on the Submission version of the Local Plan. Priority 1 of Sustainable Economy theme of the Community Plan addresses the infrastructure issues mentioned "Make it easier for people to travel to key local services and improve infrastructure".
	Healthy	We need our green spaces protected. Sencio Leisure Centre in Edenbridge needs investment to help residents keep healthy in conjunction with the proposed new medical centre/practice	The Community Plan Green Environment Theme seeks to protect and improve green and open spaces. Keeping people healthy and the prevention agenda are key theme of the Community Plan, particularly reflected in the Caring Communities theme and Healthy Environment theme of the plan.

Appendix A1 - Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)

Agenda Item 6b

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
Resident	Sustainable	Why have the Bellway homes not had solar panels fitted? I would have thought it would be a must that any new developments have this facility as a planning regulation	This is comment on the Submission version of the Local Plan. Delivery of the Local Plan Policies are reflected in the Community Plan, particularly in the Green Environment theme of the plan.
Resident	Sustainable	Priority 2 can you provide numbers of planned housing-by type	The Community Plan is a strategic document reflecting the delivery of Sevenoaks District Council's Housing Strategy "Wellbeing Starts at Home", addresses the detail of housing delivery.
	Safe	More attention should be given to 'designing out crime' by improving street and car park lighting, more open footpaths and pavements and control of 'on the pavement' parking	Safe Communities - Priority 5 addresses issues about street lighting and dangerous and taking enforcement action on dangerous and illegal parking.
	Green	Street tree planting to be increased and better foot way routes through our parks and woodlands	Priority 3, Healthy Environment includes action to improve the quality of and access to open spaces, public rights of way, and cycling routes through the Local Plan.
	Healthy	Publish pollution levels for high street and such public areas and encouragement for allotment uptake	Priority 2, Green Environment ensures new development will take account of the Local Plan and Sevenoaks District Council's Air Quality Action Plan. Healthy Environment section takes into account the need to encourage access to green and open spaces.

**Appendix A1 - Agenda Item 6b
Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)**

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
Resident	Dynamic	More support for local business and products - better local market	Measures to support business are already set out in the Community Plan. Priority 1, Dynamic Economy seeks to Promote economic growth and investment and Priority 4, set out to "Keep existing businesses, encourage new businesses and tourism."
	Sustainable	Temporary accommodation near high streets for start-up businesses	Priority 4, Dynamic Economy looks to the Local Plan to "use planning policies to encourage the re-use of existing retail units, where appropriate, to ensure active frontages."
Town/Parish Co	Sustainable	No comment regarding supporting a Lower Thames Crossing. This is desperately needed in the north of the district as the roads are often grid locked due to Dartford Bridge being closed or blocked.	Priority 1, Dynamic Economy looks to the Local Plan to ensure that Sevenoaks District Council works with neighbouring Local Authorities to taken into account the impact of major developments outside the District.
	Safe	More policing in out lying villages and more traffic warden visits	This is reflected in the Community Plan. Priority 1, Safe Communities "Make the work of the Police and partners more visible in local communities".
	Green	Protect the Green Belt, e.g. Pedham Place	This is a core principle of the Local Plan and the Community Plan.

Appendix A1 - Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)

Agenda Item 6b

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
Resident	Healthy	Easy access to Doctors' surgeries for outlying villages	Priority 3, Healthy Environment seeks to "address the gap in General Practice primary health care services through the NHS Health and Social Care Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) process."
Access Group Member		There is a line towards the end stating availability in other formats and support via other languages. Excellent, but that guidance is in the wrong place?	Information now included at the beginning of the document as well.
Access Group Member	Equality inclusion statement	Says the right things and encouraging that disability is listed within the equality and inclusion statement on page 6.	No comment required
	Healthy Environment	Page 23: "Encourage people with disabilities to take part in sport and volunteering". This needs to be combined with accessibility of opportunity for this to happen and it would be good if it was explicit that providers need to be disability friendly alongside other measures such as enabling disabled people to physically get to leisure centres, etc.	The Community Plan is underpinned by accessibility. Any new facilities would be expected to be fully accessible to meet Submission version of the Local Plan and the Community Plan.

Appendix A1 Agenda Item 6b Summary of Public Consultation Responses (including those who responded to the survey and wanted to make a suggestion)

Respondent	Theme	Summary of response	Action Taken/ Response
		<p>Really pleased to see on Page 20 under improving skills for employment: “Assess residents employment support needs, provide joined-up support and signpost people to appropriate services to meet their needs, particularly those needing the most support to access jobs and training.” This needs to then be joined up on the other end by improving employers’ understanding of how they can be disability confident and how they can use schemes such as Access to Work to enable more disabled people into work in the local area as well as retaining employees who develop disabilities whilst in role.</p>	<p>This will form part of the work of the Sevenoaks Supporting Local Strategic Partnership People into Employment Group. This can be done in coordination with the Access Group.</p>
	<p>Dynamic and Sustainable</p>	<p>General point re: both sustainable and dynamic economy: work with local business to support them in becoming disabled friendly as this will benefit both the local economy as well as disabled people.</p>	<p>This will be reflected at the level of the Local Strategic Partnership Supporting People into Employment Group, with working to help those with disabilities access employment and training opportunities.</p>
	<p>General</p>	<p>Social isolation is mentioned in the document. Social prescribing might be a part solution to this and other issues raised in the plan.,</p>	<p>Social prescribing principles have already been captured in the Community Plan, particularly under the Caring Communities and Healthy Environment themes of the Community Plan.</p>

Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Email: comms@sdsaf.org.uk

Response to Consultation on Sevenoaks District Council's Community Plan Priorities 2019-2023

Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum Committee would like the Council to consider the following comments and feedback on the Public Consultation Draft. These observations are made in the spirit of constructive collaboration in order that the Council may consider a more rounded Plan which will ensure that the needs and wishes of the older residents in the Sevenoaks District are taken into consideration when formulating longer term plans.

LAYOUT

From a 'green environment' perspective much of the content in this 30 colour draft comprises large graphics and the Council might be better advised to reduce the length of the document by half, in these cash-strapped times, whilst retaining the factual content. For example, the illustration on page 4 might have been better used to show a detailed map of the Sevenoaks District as opposed to its links to the Continent which have little or no bearing on the services the Council provides to its residents.

Page 6: The second bullet point relates to a Digital Marketing campaign targeting young people and people under 40 years of age and we wonder whether this was rather 'ageist' and would like to know how people over 40 were 'targeted' and what the results of that targeting were, to ensure that your research reflected the thoughts and wishes of the whole population.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Priority 2

Would the Council consider including under We will:

Initiate and fund a programme to educate the public to help them to reduce the possibility of them becoming a victim of crime (thus freeing up police resources for other duties).

Priority 3

Much is said about the online safety of Children but there is little or no mention of any initiative to ensure the elderly, who are also at a very high risk around online safety, to be helped to avoid becoming victims, and for the sake of equality it would be helpful if the Council and its partners could embrace this older demographic in their services as well.

Priority 5

Improving road safety...

Many elderly people experience difficulty in crossing roads, particularly where vehicles are travelling at high speed and where there is increasing traffic density. We feel that it would be helpful if SDC and its partners supported residents' requests for crossing points, either traffic islands or lights (as many motorists seem prone to ignore zebra crossings) in areas where issues have been raised, e.g.

Agenda Item 6b

on the A25 between Riverhead and Bat & Ball where there are no designated places for pedestrians to cross.

CARING COMMUNITIES

With regard to the third paragraph, we appreciate the lack of income is making it difficult for families. However the increased cost of living, the lack of meaningful interest on savings and the cost of care is also having a negative impact on the lives of many older people on limited means, and it is regrettable that this group are not mentioned in this section.

Priority 1

Support people to lead safe, independent and fulfilling lives

The third bullet point is hard to understand and it is not clear what the Council and its partners will do.

There is no mention of the provision of public toilets in this section, the lack of which prevents many people (not only the elderly, but those with special needs) from leading independent and fulfilling lives and it would be reassuring to know that this is on the Council's agenda.

Did you know... on Page 15

Refers to "Kent's Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care estimates that 30% of beds in care homes are occupied by people who could be better treated in their own homes or supported", yet there is no mention of what SDC and/or its partners intend to do to ameliorate this situation. Could the Plan include mention of how this could be achieved, as it would then free up 30% of scarce care home capacity?

GREEN ENVIRONMENT

Mention is made of Gatwick Airport expansion, however no mention is made of Biggin Hill airport which does cause noise and air pollution to many in the flightpath over Sevenoaks.

Priority 3

Following discussions with the Planning Team about the overall target for 14,000 new homes for the District and the distinct lack of 'ring fenced' developments of a right size for downsizers, it would appear that SDC very little power to insist that developers build what the community needs rather than what the developer wants to build, and feel that more robust measures need to be adopted which would help older residents downsize, freeing up larger properties for growing families.

SDSAF feels that there should be more detail about its intentions to improve the quality and use of the existing housing stock which would not only improve the health of resident whilst at the same time reducing the use of medical facilities but also help them financially by reducing fuel bills.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Priority 2

Page 22: 4th Bullet Point

SDSAF responded in detail to the draft Local Plan and was concerned that there appeared to be a distinct lack of detail around plans to 'support new housing designed for older people, and for people with physical disabilities, including specialist retirement accommodation and register(ed) care homes'. It would seem therefore that the contents of the Community Plan are not being extrapolated into the Council's other plans.

Priority 3

Page 23: 4th Bullet point

With regard to a wider range of services such as leisure linking to the health prevention agenda in order to have a good impact on health and wellbeing the cost of access to these services is a barrier to some people in their participation and perhaps SDC could liaise with SENCIO to encourage increased discounts for those on pension credit or benefits so that they could access the facilities less expensively say at 'off peak' or times of low usage in the leisure centres. This would be of benefit to all parties.

DYNAMIC ECONOMY

Page 26

Priority 1

With regard to using Planning Policies to restrict the scope of permitted development rights on all office accommodation it seems perverse that on the one hand the Government has imposed ambitious housing targets on all local authorities, the buildings in Tubs Hill had been underoccupied for many years, as has the BT building, yet the Community Plan will prevent conversion of these apparently 'unleasable' buildings.

Priority 2

The content of the draft Local Plan seemed to overlook the provision of social and affordable housing in the District. As Priority 3 in Caring Communities in this Plan highlights there is a lack of provision for those on lower incomes and it would be helpful if SDC's Community Plan could include in this section 'Ensure provision of social affordable housing' to enable the NEETs, interns and apprentices in the area to be able to afford to live and remain here, as this demographic could be the workers on whom others depend to provide vital services.

Priority 4

Page 27

SDC could perhaps add to this section 'Encourage and support the installation of electric charging points in the Sevenoaks District which would enable local and also those visiting or passing through the area to recharge their cars' (which whilst doing so they might boost the local economy).

The Did You Know? comment at the foot of page 27 is rather a concerning, random generalisation and it is not clear what relationship this has to the section on a Dynamic Economy.

Namely that between 2018-2036 there will be a 0.7% reduction in the working age population at a time when we have an increasing STRAIN on our economy from adult social care due to an ageing population.

It is disappointing that the the Plan has expressed the presence of older people in the District as a 'strain'. If this statement is to remain in the Plan it would be appreciated if you could explain why this statistic was placed in this section, detail the actual costings of the 'strain', who will be paying for this strain, and specify:

- a) How many of the ageing population actually pay for their own care
- b) The proportion of Council Tax receipts which older people pay
- c) How the employment of gardeners, painters, cleaners, etc., contributes to the local economy
- d) How much older people spend in the local economy supporting local business
- e) The value of the volunteer work the ageing population carry out and its contribution to society
- f) How much older people pay in tax, VAT, water rates and lastly inheritance tax.

Agenda Item 6b

It is without doubt that increasing age brings health challenges, but it should be borne in mind that every one of the residents of Sevenoaks, should they be lucky enough to enjoy a long life, will one day become a member of the ageing or aged population with equal rights.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Page 30

Priority 1

SDSAF were involved with the Big Conversation and were sadly unimpressed with the proposals in it, namely a new pilot service between Stansted and Sevenoaks, the details of which are still awaited. The poor yet expensive bus services around the area cause isolation and hardship to both the elderly and the low paid and work in partnership with KCC' does not seem to be producing the result of reducing car use and new initiatives.

With regard to providing community grant funding to promote voluntary and community transport schemes, SDC needs to work with communities and parishes to enable them to formulate bids to access these grants.

Priority 2

Provide a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures

'Ensure that new housing creates mixed, balanced and inclusive communities, including housing for older people and people with physical disabilities, through the emerging Local Plan'.

Again, there was little evidence of how the Council are ensuring this as the draft Local Plan specified hardly any bespoke housing for older people.

General Comment

The Community Plan lacks detail of timetable by which these priorities will be achieved and goes into insufficient details about how they will be achieved and how success or failure will be measured and reported. We feel that this essential so that any achievements can be carried through and replicated into future plans and conversely any areas of failure can be investigated and a different strategy adopted in future.

Community Plan reference within Appendix A2	Summary of comment and response
Layout	The draft does not represent the design of the document.
Introduction	It is a three year plan and will cover the three year period 2019/20 - 2021/22. The draft has been amended accordingly.
Page 5	Agreed. KCC has updated used was from 2017 base year for housing led population forecasts and has now been amended to 2019 - 2028 at 13,500.
Page 5	Agreed. KCC Housing Led forecasts have been updated in line with updated KCC data.
Page 6	Reference to Digital Marketing Campaign. It was agreed that we needed to target the under 40s due to significant under-representation from these groups in previous consultations. Efforts to engage Older People included circulating information to the Sevenoaks Senior Action Forum and taking into account SSAF feedback. The survey results show that 17.9% of responses were from 55-64 and 16.12% from Over 65s. The data for under 18s and 18-24s still shows this group is underrepresented which is why targeted work with the Orchard's Academy and through digital marketing was undertaken.
Safe - Priority 2	The suggested inclusions for Priority 2 do not take into account the Community Safety Partnership and action plan which are reflected in the Community Plan at the strategic level. Funding for the Community Safety Action Plan is available from a number of sources and looking at targeting partner resources to address the issues identified in the Community Safety Strategic Assessment.
Safe - Priority 3	There is explicit reference to scams within this Priority, which affect all age groups and include online activity.
Safe - Priority 5	KCC holds the budget for road and pavement safety improvement measures. Actions within this Priority include "Make roads/pavements safer for vulnerable people".
Caring Communities	Projections have now been amended in line with updated KCC figures.
Caring Priority 1	The third paragraph on page 13 reflect childhood poverty whilst the final paragraph the final paragraph reflects the needs of older people. The issues also reflect the points raised during the consultation.

Community Plan reference within Appendix A2	Summary of comment and response
Caring Priority 3	The statistic about the "Kent Accommodation Strategy" highlights the need to support preventative work to keep people out of GP surgeries and emergency hospital admission. The Community Plan is themed around prevention and include delivery of the Health Improvement Action Plan and the new Housing Strategy, "Wellbeing starts at Home". In addition, there are strong ties between Caring Communities and Healthy Environment themes in prevention work and supporting people to remain independent.
Green Environment - What you said	These are references to key issues raised during the public consultation. The Community Plan already reflects noise and light pollution issues. In addition, Biggin Hill and Gatwick are mentioned in Dynamic Economy - Priority 1, which takes account of major developments outside of the District.
Green Environment - Priority 3	With regard to having more details to improve the quality and use of existing housing stock, this is contained in the new Housing Strategy, "Wellbeing Starts at Home" which is reflected in the Community Plan.
Healthy Environment - Priority 2	The fourth bullet point in Priority 2 reflects Policy H1 in the Submission version of the Local Plan.
Health Environment - Priority 3	Sencio Community Leisure already offer a concession scheme.
Dynamic Economy - Priority 1	This is a comment on the Submission version of the Local Plan. Local transport plan comments are all contained in the Sustainable Economy theme of the Community Plan.
Dynamic Economy - Priority 2	Sevenoaks District Council's Housing Strategy "Wellbeing Starts at Home" is reflected in the Community Plan. The strategy recognises young people as a vulnerable group and includes priorities relating to supporting young people with their housing and support needs.
Dynamic Economy - Priority 4	The provision of electric vehicle charging points in included within Priority 1 of Sustainable Communities.
Dynamic Economy - Did you Know section	The first bullet point has been reworded to remove the word "strain" and replace with "increasing demand on social care services due to an ageing population". This link between a shrinking working age population, and the increased demand for social care is about the capacity of the working age population to provide services, work as carers etc. The Community Plan has explicitly sought to set out how valued older people are to their local communities, including the following in Dynamic Economy Priority 2: "Work with the University of the Third Age and the Sevenoaks District Older People's Forum to support adults to remain economically active and provided with opportunities to reskill."

Community Plan reference within Appendix A2	Summary of comment and response
Sustainable Economy - Priority 1	The Community Grant scheme funding is widely publicised and we would welcome the opportunity of working with the SDSAF to help publicise them more widely in the future.
Sustainable Economy - Priority 2	These issues are reflected in the Submission version of the Local Plan and the Council's Housing Strategy, both of which are also reflected in the Community Plan.
General comment	The Community Plan will include key strategic success measures drawn from the plan. The partnership monitoring is the way in which the plan is held to account and each year, the Local Strategic Partnership produce an Annual Report setting successes and what has been achieved or not achieved.

This page is intentionally left blank

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Final Draft



Contents

Introduction	Page 3
About the Sevenoaks District	Pages 4-5
Who did we consult?	Pages 6
Equality and Inclusion Statement	Page 6
The Sevenoaks District Community Partnership: who are we?	Page 7
Safe Communities	Pages 8-11
Caring Communities	Pages 12-15
Green Environment	Pages 16-19
Healthy Environment	Pages 20-23
Dynamic Economy	Pages 24-27
Sustainable Economy	Pages 28-31
How to get in contact	Page 32

**This publication is available in
large print. For a copy please call
01732 227000**

If you need help communicating with us or understanding the document, we can arrange for an interpreter to help you. Please contacting us on 01732 227000 stating you language and preference

Appendix B: Final Draft: Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Introduction

The Community Plan creates a long-term vision for the Sevenoaks District and sets out the community's priorities for action.

We are pleased to present the priorities for the three years 2019-2022. This is based on widespread consultation with local people and our partners.

The Sevenoaks District Local Strategic Partnership delivers the Community Plan. The Partnership is made up of public sector organisations together with voluntary, community and faith sector representatives. It is co-ordinated by Sevenoaks District Council.

The priorities set out in this document help us to deliver our 15-year vision:

Safe Communities

A safer place to live, work and travel



Caring Communities

Children are enabled to have the best start and people can be supported to live independent lives



Green Environment

People can enjoy high quality urban and rural environments



Healthy Environment

People have healthy lifestyles, access to quality healthcare and health inequalities are reduced



Dynamic Economy

A thriving local economy where businesses flourish, where people have skills for employment and tourism is supported



Sustainable Economy

People can live, work and travel more easily and are empowered to shaped their community



About the Sevenoaks District



- Train services to London take just under **30 minutes** from Swanley and just over **30 minutes** from Sevenoaks.
- **1 hour** by car to Dover port.
- **40 minutes** by car to London airports.
- **9 miles** from Swanley to Ebbsfleet International station.

Agenda Item 6b

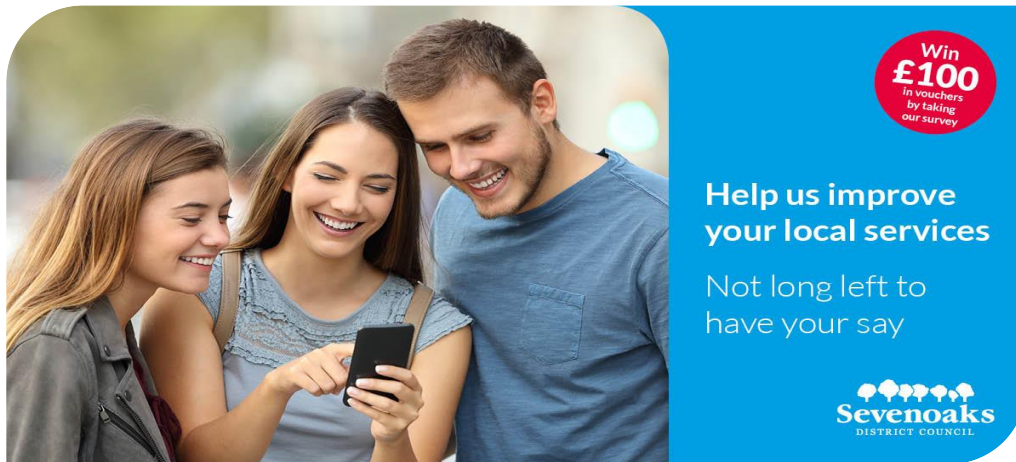
**Appendix B: Final Draft: Sevenoaks District Community Plan
Priorities for Action 2019-2022**



- **93%** of the District is designated Green Belt.
- **60%** of the District is in the Kent Downs or High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- **11%** is covered in Ancient Woodland
- **Six** main settlements – Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge, Westerham, New Ash Green and Otford.

- Sevenoaks District is perceived to be affluent but this masks local pockets of urban and rural deprivation. For example, Swanley St Mary's ward falls within the 10% most deprived wards in Kent and the South East (2015, Indices of Multiple Deprivation).
- 11.6% of children under 16 (2,465) live in low-income families in receipt of Child Tax Credit where rural deprivation is more isolating than poverty in the towns. The majority of children living in poverty (73.9%) live in lone parent families.
- According to the Kent County Council Housing led population forecast projections, the population of Sevenoaks District is forecast to grow by more than 13,500 by 2028.
- The 2017 Mid-year population estimates (Office for National Statistics) show that Sevenoaks District has a population of 119,400 residents and the third lowest population density in Kent measured as **3.1 persons per hectare**.
- According to Kent County Council the number of people over 65 is forecast to rise by **41.1% by 2036 (10,400)** and the number of people over 85 is forecast to rise by **97.2% by 2036 (3,500)**.

Who did we consult?



To help identify our priorities for the District over the next three years, we consulted a wide range of residents, community representatives, statutory groups and voluntary and community groups at events and forums across the District. This included:

- All residents consulted through our District-wide In Shape magazine;
- Digital marketing campaign targeting young people and people under 40 years of age;
- 659 survey responses;
- Including 154 survey responses from young people in years 11,12 and 13 at Knole Academy, Sevenoaks;
- Eight stakeholder workshops with statutory, voluntary and community groups, patient participation groups, and representatives for the Sevenoaks District Access Group.

Equality and inclusion statement for the Local Strategic Partnership

We recognise that everyone has a contribution to make to our society and a right to access services without being discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their:

- Race
- Disability
- Gender
- Age
- Religion/ belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Transgender
- Caring responsibility
- Employment status

We will work to ensure that all services provided by partners or funding offered will conform to these standards and expectations.

Appendix B: Final Draft: Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

The Sevenoaks District Local Strategic Partnership

Who are we?

The Sevenoaks District Community Partnership co-ordinates the monitoring and delivery of the Action Plan. It is made up of representatives from the following organisations:



Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley
Clinical Commissioning Group



West Kent
Clinical Commissioning Group



Kent Fire &
Rescue Service



Places to live. Space to grow.





Safe Communities

A safer place to live, work and travel

Insert Picture

What you said

“I feel the need for more connection with younger people...”

“People like to see a Police presence in the area and know that they will be responded to if there are issues”

“Parking on pavements restricts accessibility and makes it more dangerous for pedestrians”

Appendix B: Final Draft: Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Safe Communities

The award winning Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership brings together all the key agencies in the District who have an impact on crime, anti-social behaviour and perception of crime.

The Community Safety Unit (CSU) is based in Sevenoaks District Council Offices and responds daily to anti-social behaviour and other community safety priorities in the District. The CSU now includes three dedicated Police Community Support Officers who are addressing Domestic Abuse, Vulnerable Adults and Vulnerable Young People. The CSU also has access to an additional Local Community Policing Team, which can be deployed to tackle local issues in the District.

By working together, the Community Safety Partnership has achieved one of the lowest crime rates in the county, and the lowest level of anti-social behaviour in the county. The Community Safety Partnership has now set up a Community Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). The focus of the Community MARAC is to help those at most risk of harm.

The CSU are able to use a variety of powers to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, including powers to disperse anti-social behaviour, Community Protection Notices to stop a person, business or organisation committing anti-social behaviour, and Closure Power Orders to allow quick closure of premises which are being used, or likely to be used, to commit nuisance or disorder. The CSU have also set up Organised Crime Groups, which address organised crime and serious crime within communities.

What you said

From our consultations, we know residents are most concerned about:

- More visible policing - seeing and being more aware of Police and Community Safety activity in local communities.
- Reducing anti-social behaviour and supporting young people, particularly by providing activities and focusing on support and prevention.
- The need to focus on the District's crime issues and to disrupt behaviours in places of concern.
- Poor parking and parking on pavements making it difficult for people with access issues and people using pushchairs.
- Improving street lighting.
- Improving road safety and reduce speeding vehicles.
- Improving communication about what has been done successfully to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Providing support for and take action to prevent people from becoming repeat victims of crime, including people who suffer domestic abuse.
- Continuing to provide youth work and fun activities.
- Helping young people stay safe online, safe from bullying, and cyber-bullying.
- Recognising the link between alcohol misuse and community safety issues, including domestic abuse.

Page 129

Safe Communities - Your Priorities

Priority 1

Make the work of the Police and partners more visible in communities

We will:

- Deliver targeted community safety campaigns and make more people aware of Police and community safety activity in their local communities.
- Continue to facilitate Partners and Communities Together Panels (PACTs).
- Increase engagement with schools and older people around mental health, especially around addressing anti-social behaviour and community safety concerns.
- Communicate Community Safety Partnership successes to the local community.
- Consider police and emergency services facilities as part of the Sevenoaks District Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the Local Plan.

Priority 2

Work to keep crime at a low level and to respond to perception of crime

We will:

- Produce an annual assessment of crime and take action to safeguard local people and repeat victims of crime.
- Coordinate partnership work to tackle and prevent risk-taking behaviour relating to substance misuse and alcohol.
- Take action reduce and deter acquisitive crime and organised crime in the District.
- Through the Local Plan, ensure new development is designed to minimise threats and improve public safety.

Priority 3

Support vulnerable and repeat victims of crime and anti-social behaviour

We will:

- Identify repeat criminal and anti-social behaviour and provide early intervention.
- Continue to fund and evaluate domestic abuse support projects.
- Continue to raise public and professional awareness of Domestic Abuse.
- Identify those who are vulnerable to scams and distraction crime and ensure that training for professionals and safeguarding measures are put in place to protect people.
- Take action to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults, including those at risk of radicalisation, modern slavery, human trafficking, child sexual exploitation and from gangs.
- Promote online safety and online safeguarding champions through the work of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board.
- Deliver safeguarding training through the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board to improve awareness of safeguarding issues.
- Improve communication around key safeguarding issues.
- Work with Housing Associations to address low-level anti-social behaviour and through improved tenancy procedures

Appendix B: Final Draft: Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Priority 4

Tackle anti-social behaviour

We will:

- Coordinate action on high to medium risk victims, perpetrators and problem locations through the Community Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process.
- Continue to set up Task and Finish Groups to deliver a focused approach on reducing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- Work with partners and use powers to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour at individual sites where crime and anti-social behaviour is occurring.
- Increase the use of ASB powers including the use of Closure Orders, Community Protection Notices and Criminal Behaviour Orders.
- Target work around nuisance dogs, dangerous dogs and dog fouling.
- Continue to commission and provide positive activities for children and young people.
- Provide youth work and youth outreach support and respond to service feedback from partners.
- Influence voluntary and community provision through the District Council's Community Grant scheme.
- Target initiatives to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying and review mental health support available to victims.

Priority 5

Tackle speeding vehicles and improve road safety for all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders

We will:

- Take enforcement action on dangerous and illegal parking.
- Continue to support the "Speedwatch" campaign.
- Make roads/pavements safer for vulnerable people.
- Meet 90% of routine pothole and highways repairs carried out within 28 days.
- Put in place a programme of street lighting refurbishment based on age and condition information.
- Put in place a drainage-cleaning programme that protects roads and footways from the adverse effects of standing water.

Did you know?

During 2017/18, Sevenoaks District had the second lowest level of recorded crime across Kent, an improvement compared with the previous year when the District had the third lowest level of crime.

There were 1,619 incidents of anti-social behaviour in the Sevenoaks District recorded during 2017/18. This is the lowest level of anti-social behaviour recording in Kent during that period.

The Sevenoaks District Community Safety Unit won the Team Contribution Award at the West Kent Division Awards held in May 2018.



Caring Communities

Insert picture here

What you said

“I’d like more education about drugs, and about how to invest and use money wisely at school”

“Work with health and care agencies to support people in their own homes and keep them out of hospital”

“Provide services in the outlying areas and continue to support local groups, such as over 60s”

Caring Communities

The public sector is currently struggling with funding for essential services at a time of rising costs of social care. The growing number of older and frail people is increasing demands on services, as people are living longer. By 2036, we expect a 33% increase in the number of older people and a 97% increase in those over 85 years of age.

This also places challenges for our local services, with General Practitioner (GP) practices who find themselves, their services and infrastructure struggling to cope with an increased number of patients. The Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (2018 update) estimates the size of the challenge, with an estimated £2.76 billion required for health and social care infrastructure in Kent between 2017-2031, of which £939 million is identified as a funding gap. In West Kent, the expected funding gap is £279.9 million.

We know that in some areas of the District, a lack of income is making it difficult for some families. The Local Strategic Partnership, including Kent County Council and health partners, will work together in the District to ensure that children, young people, and their families are able to access appropriate services.

The new Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) set out some of the biggest changes to homelessness legislation since the Housing Act 1996. There is now an emphasis on providing free information, advice, and support at an earlier stage and for a longer period, for anyone who needs help or is threatened with homelessness. In addition, the government's programme of welfare reform as we move towards the full roll out of Universal Credit will present a challenge to those seeking to help vulnerable residents.

We want to support those who can to remain in their own homes, including people with disabilities and combat homelessness at an early stage, putting in place repairs and adaptations needed to prevent falls and help residents to maintain their independence. We also want to focus on tackling poor quality housing that is linked to poor health.

What you said

From our consultations, we know residents are most concerned about:

- Making sure that we are coordinating services around the individual.
- Considering the impact of loneliness and isolation.
- Improving communication about services available to residents in the District.
- Making sure deliver services are delivered in rural locations where people find it hard to access support and advice.
- Continuing support through Disabled Facilities Grants and the Better Care Fund.
- Advice for young people at school at drugs and money management.
- Supporting people to stay out of hospital and supporting local groups providing activities.
- The need for more social housing for local people.
- Supporting attendance at schools.
- Providing support for parents, particularly with children's health and development.

Caring Communities - Your Priorities

Priority 1

Support people to lead safe, independent and fulfilling lives

- Consider health and social care needs as set out in the Sevenoaks District Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the Local Plan
- Adapt residents' homes while they are in hospital so they can be discharged as soon as they are clinically ready
- Support people, including people with disabilities, through the One You, One You Your Home and Care Navigators to reduce loneliness and isolation, help people remain independent in their own homes, reduce emergency admissions to hospital and access to their General Practitioner (GP) services
- Support the towns and villages in the District to become dementia friendly and provide support for carers and families of people living with dementia
- Coordinate care navigator services across the District to ensure that wider ranges of residents are offered support for the non-medical reasons that they visit their GP.
- Work in partnership to make sure that the Better Care Fund provides innovative health and care solutions based around people's needs and in line with Sevenoaks District Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy.
- Deliver actions in the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy "Wellbeing Starts at Home" (2017) to support people to remain independent in their own homes
- Use the District Council's Community Grant Scheme to support groups, which provides social opportunities, and reduce loneliness and isolation of vulnerable people.
- Improve communication about support and services available to residents in the District.
- *Tackle the housing causes of health and wellbeing issues (see Priority 2 - Healthy Environment).*

Priority 2

Improve outcomes for children and young people

We will

- Provide advice for children and young people on substance misuse in schools and through of intervention programmes arranged by the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership.
- Provide debt and financial advice for young people in schools.
- Provide outreach youth services for children and young people.
- Fund projects through the Sevenoaks District Local Children's Partnership Group that focus on key priorities, including, mental health, school attendance and healthy weight.
- Continue to provide support for parents and carers through Kent County Council's Early Help programme.
- Continue to provide family fun days during summer holidays for children and young people and their families.
- Consider education infrastructure needs as set out in the Sevenoaks District Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the Local Plan.

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities 2019-2022

Priority 3

Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households

We will

- Tackle non-medical causes of ill health, including housing, debt reduction, financial capability, energy savings and skills and employment through the work Sevenoaks District Council’s HERO (Housing Energy Retraining Options) and SuperHERO advice services.
- Work proactively with those likely to be affected by future welfare reform and support people to access appropriate benefits.
- Ensure advice services reach rural and deprived communities.
- Provide grant support for projects providing free debt advice and debt reduction.
- Support people to maintain their tenancies and prevent homelessness.
- Provide early help support services for parents and carers affected by poverty or who have health, mental health and emotional issues which mean that their access to services or a child’s development is affected.
- Support the implementation of the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy.
- Deliver actions in the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy “Wellbeing Starts at Home” (2017) to meet the needs of vulnerable and low-income households, and measures to improve the quality and use of existing housing stock, including mobile homes.
- Investigate Housing First and private rental model to improve access to housing and provide support with health and social support issues.

Did you know?

There has been a steady increase in the number of households housed in emergency and temporary accommodation in the Sevenoaks District over the last three years.

Since it began, HERO has helped over 2,000 residents plan a future for themselves and their family; reduced debt arrears by about £600 per person; and supported 40% of clients to receive the correct welfare and benefit payments.

Kent’s Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care (Better Homes: Greater Choices) estimates that 30% of beds in care homes are occupied by people who could be better treated in their own homes or supported.



Green Environment

We want Sevenoaks District to be a place where people can enjoy clean and high quality urban and rural environments

Insert Picture

“Ensure housing..fits in with the surrounding buildings”

“Encourage and educate people on the environment and recycling”

“...protect our landscape and look at how we can improve our local environment”

“...maintain weekly recycling and waste collection as this is so important”

Green Environment

Residents in our District continue to want us to protect, conserve and enhance the Green Belt, landscape and natural environment. During 2017, Sevenoaks District Council sent surveys to every home in the District asking residents views on the “Issues” facing the area over the next twenty years and suggested “Options” for dealing with them. Over 15,000 responses were received and incorporated into the emerging Sevenoaks District Local Plan. The emerging Local Plan seeks to restrict development within the Green Belt in order to protect the special character of the District.

Government is increasing pressure on local authorities to build more homes to meet local needs and to encourage economic growth. The Local Plan will seek to find a balanced strategy for sustainable growth within our constrained district. We will be doing this by building within existing settlements and on previously developed land. We will only be building on the Green Belt in “Exceptional” circumstances, where developers are proposing social and community benefits for existing communities.

What you said

From our consultations, we know residents are most concerned about:

- Maintaining a weekly rubbish and recycling service.
- Protecting the Green Belt and ensure there is high quality development though the Local Plan.
- Making sure that infrastructure and environmental needs are considered as part of any new development.
- Using the Local Plan to protect residents from noise and light pollution, particularly with emerging issues such as Gatwick Airport expansion.
- Looking at ways of improving the way we can promote green and open spaces, parks and amenities.
- Take into account the impact of future further expansion at Gatwick Airport.
- Promoting more responsible dog ownership.
- Raising awareness of open spaces, green spaces, parks local amenities and leisure facilities.
- Maintaining public footpaths and bridleways.

Green Environment - Your Priorities

Priority 1

Protect our high quality natural environment, including the Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and biodiversity

We will:

- Use planning policies to protect our high quality natural environment, including the Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and biodiversity that form our unique character.
- Prioritise development within the boundaries of existing settlements, including building at higher density on non-Green Belt land.
- Ensure that proposals within the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) conserve and enhance the character of the landscape with regard to the relevant AONB management plans.
- Work with communities, landowners and local groups to protect landscape, wildlife and heritage, e.g. Darent Valley Heritage Landscape Partnership.

Priority 2

Maintain a clean local environment

We will:

- Protect a weekly rubbish and recycling service.
- Take action to reduce waste.
- Continue to tackle waste and detritus.
- Take enforcement action on fly tipping through camera deployment and increase partnership and community action.
- Encourage and promote recycling and support national recycling targets and campaigns
- Improve communication and information sharing with partners on environmental crime issues, including graffiti, littering and dog fouling.
- Promote a well-maintained Public Rights of Way Network to make it better for leisure and daily use.
- Ensure that the design and location of new development must take account of the need to improve air quality through the Local Plan and in line with Sevenoaks District Council's Air Quality Action Plan.

Priority 3

Ensure new development is designed to a high quality and takes into account the distinctive local character and the impact on the environment

We will:

- Use planning policies to ensure that new homes have a locally inspired distinctive character, integrate with surroundings, reinforce existing connections and create new ones, and take advantage of existing topography and landscape features.
- Ensure new development takes into account relevant design guidance, including Design Review, Supplementary Planning Documents, the Kent Design Guide, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and relevant AONB Management Plans.
- Use planning policies to ensure new development satisfies Local Plan requirements relating to residential amenity, noise and outdoor lighting.
- Use planning policies to ensure that new development provides means of access for vehicles, pedestrians and well integrated car parking.
- Support climate change mitigation and adaption measures through the Local Plan.
- Improve the quality and use of the existing housing stock to improve local energy efficiency and raise awareness of the Sevenoaks District Switch and Save scheme.
- Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding through the Local Plan and ensure that measures to mitigate the effects of flooding are installed where appropriate.
- Promote and protect blue and green infrastructure (blue landscape elements are linked to water) and safeguard places for wildlife and nature through the Local Plan, including the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Did you know?

Sevenoaks District Council is the only Council in the county to maintain a weekly rubbish and recycling service. This allows Sevenoaks District Council to send less than 2% of waste to landfill.

Sevenoaks District Council has the busiest Planning Team in the county of Kent. This reflects the dynamic nature of the District and the pressures on it too.

During 2017/18 a Sevenoaks District Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study was undertaken as well as a Playing Pitch Strategy endorsed by Sport England. These now form part of the supporting evidence for the Local Plan.



Healthy Environment

We want Sevenoaks District to be a place where people have healthy lifestyles and where health inequalities are reduced

Insert Picture

What you said

“Reduce loneliness and isolation”

“Provide better coordination for holistic health and care services, making partners work around the needs of the individual”

“Focus on prevention and increase preventative activities, rather than having to deal with people at the point of crisis”

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Healthy Environment

Sevenoaks District Council has produced a new Housing Strategy, “Wellbeing Starts at Home” (2017), that recognise that our homes have an impact on health, as it is the place we spend the majority of our time. We want to use all of our public health and place-shaping tools to create environments that support wellbeing. We believe that our homes can have a significant impact on peoples’ health and homes that are badly maintained, full of hazards, cold and damp, will cause our health to suffer.

Health is not just about health care it is about lifestyle choices, decent housing, social networks, and access to leisure and open spaces. We want to create healthy communities and environments supported by services and infrastructure.

We recognise that social isolation and loneliness are key issues that have a negative effect on health, and that people need to connect with their local communities. The rural nature of our District means that many older and vulnerable people are still finding it difficult to access key health services by public transport.

We are working to transform health and social care services based around the needs of the individual. We are also aware of the continued impact on health and social care services of an increasingly frail and ageing population, together with an increase in the number of people suffering from dementia.

The NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) for Kent and Medway sets out how health services need to change over the next five years to achieve the right care for people for decades to come. It is about making sure that services are prevention focused and coordinated around the needs of the individual, and that all partners’ services think about health care needs.

What you said

From our consultations, we know residents are most concerned about:

- Finding it difficult to access services, particularly General Practitioner and hospital appointments.
- Needing a preventative approach to healthy lifestyles and investment in leisure services and infrastructure.
- Supporting vulnerable people to remain independent and helping them take more responsibility for their own health.
- Promoting the benefits of active travel, e.g. everyday walking and cycling in support of health and mental health.
- Loneliness and isolation harming health and wellbeing.
- Providing suitable accommodation for older people, particularly support services and accommodation for people with dementia.
- Providing more joined up support for the frail and elderly.
- Promoting more joined up patient-centred working.
- Making better use of technology to support people’s health care needs.
- Supporting voluntary and community groups who are providing services.

Healthy Environment - Your Priorities

Priority 1

Reduce health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing for all

We will:

- Develop a campaign to tackle the stigma attached to loneliness and isolation and provide staff training on support services available to residents.
- Use the Local Plan to ensure new development is designed to improve mental health and reduce loneliness.
- Carry out Health Impact Assessments for new development as defined in the Local Plan and ensure mitigation of impacts on health, wellbeing and safety.
- Work with health partners to focus on an integrated place-based approach to health and wellbeing and aim to strengthen individual and community resilience.
- Transform the health and social care workforce by promoting independence and self-care (based on Kent County Council's Esther Model);
- Deliver One You initiatives that have an impact on obesity, long-term conditions, mental health and physical activity, loneliness and isolation.
- Work in partnership to support people with health and long-term conditions to prevent them progressing to high and very high levels of frailty.
- Carry out annual physical health assessments and provide follow-up care for people with serious mental illness.
- Work with partners to build the capacity of mental health crisis support services to meet local community needs.
- Work with partners in the Sevenoaks District Health Action Team to identify and address gaps in services through the Health Inequalities Action Plan.
- Work with General Practitioners and other health partners to identify and provide coordinated services for the most vulnerable through the NHS Multi-Disciplinary Team process.
- Use a variety of communication methods, including digital marketing, to take health and wellbeing information to residents.

Priority 2

Tackle the housing causes of health and wellbeing issues

We will:

- Through Sevenoaks District Council's Housing Strategy, "Wellbeing starts at home", help older and vulnerable people remain independent and self-care, by health proofing housing and using assistive technology to improve support.
- Deliver innovative health and housing programmes to provide aids, adaptations and devices and to enable people to live more independently and provide support for them to return home from hospital as soon as they are clinically ready.
- Tackle the housing causes of ill health through the work of the Council's HERO (Housing Energy Retraining Options) and SuperHERO advice services.
- Support new housing designed for older people, and for people with physical disabilities, including specialist retirement accommodation and register care homes (particularly dementia-specialist) both market and affordable through the Local Plan.
- Identify grants and other funding opportunities to improve housing and support independent living.

Priority 3

Encourage access to health services for all

We will:

- Consider health and social care needs set out in the Sevenoaks District Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the Local Plan.
- Assess and address gaps in General Practice primary health care services through the NHS Health and Social Care Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) process and establish a single primary care strategy for Kent and Medway.
- Work with partners to develop community hubs to offer holistic and more joined up health services based on a person-centred approach.
- Ensure that a health in all policies approach that links a wider range of services such as leisure and housing advice services to the health prevention agenda to have an impact on health and wellbeing.
- Provide training for front line health and social care staff in “Active Signposting” to ensure patients are directed to the most appropriate help.
- Encourage people with disabilities to take part in sport and volunteering.
- Support the retention of existing sport and leisure, unless it can be re-provided, taking into account local needs and improvements in quality through the Local Plan.
- Ensure new development takes into account open space and infrastructure.
- Support proposals to improve the quality of and/or access to the District’s open spaces, Public Rights of Way and cycling routes through the Local Plan.
- Support active lifestyles through Kent County Council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan and actions to increase health and wellbeing benefits.
- Support and promote voluntary and community transport schemes.

Did you know?

People with serious mental illness face a shorter life expectancy by an average of 15-20 years, are 3 times more likely to smoke, 3½ times more likely to lose all teeth, at double the risk of obesity and diabetes and 3 times the risk of hypertension.

Being lonely means you are 3.4 times more likely to suffer depression, 3.5 times more likely to need residential care, 1.8 more likely to end up visiting a GP and 1.6 times more likely to end up in Accident and Emergency.

From 2014/15-2016/17, the recorded dementia prevalence rate in the Sevenoaks District was 0.8% of patients on GP registers (all ages). This is in line with the Kent average but represents an increasing trend from 2012/13 (0.6% average for Kent)



Dynamic Economy

We want Sevenoaks District to be a place with a thriving local economy, where businesses flourish and people have skills for employment

Insert Picture

What you said

“Target and support those who want to work but need help overcoming barriers”

“Continue to provide support for businesses in the District, including developing business centres and business hubs”

“Look at the challenges and opportunities from Brexit, particularly given our close connection with London”

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Dynamic Economy

Sevenoaks District Council's Economic Development Strategy 2018-2021 sets out five themes for Economic Development. These include growth and investment to regenerate key market towns, infrastructure to serve our communities, visitor economy to maintain the District as a key destination for visitors, skills to ensure residents and businesses can gain the skills they need and enterprise, to ensure our District continues to be a place where businesses can prosper and grow.

It also looks at our District's economic strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. One of our most significant challenges continues to be the pressure on employment sites for housing and the extension of permitted development rights to allow conversion of offices to housing. There are also concerns about the varying quality of mobile and broadband coverage across the District and changes in the retail sector because of online shopping that are affecting our high streets.

The emerging Sevenoaks District Local Plan is also working to support a vibrant and balanced economy. It does this through measures to protect employment sites and have planning policies in place to create employment opportunities and vibrant town and local centres as well as protecting existing tourism attractions and encouraging tourism in urban and rural areas.

As economic growth is linked to housing, affordability of housing, transport and supporting infrastructure in our District are significant issues affecting businesses and their ability to recruit and retain staff.

What you said

From our consultations, we know residents are most concerned about:

- Businesses needing good movement of goods and services and people and better transport infrastructure to support this.
- Helping local business to employ local apprentices to improve work opportunities of local people and allowing young people to have a great start to their working life.
- Regenerating New Ash Green, Swanley and Edenbridge.
- Opportunities for more informal overnight stay accommodation to support tourism.
- Accessibility and quality and connectivity of transport services affect how we attract and retain businesses.
- Looking at how we are supporting more vulnerable groups into pathways to employment and training.
- Making sure local shops are viable to meet the needs of the local communities they serve.
- Continue providing support for businesses.
- Creating opportunities to develop business hubs and business centres.
- Supporting local people with skills is essential, particularly given we have no higher or further education facilities in the District.
- Looking at broadband speed and reliability as well as mobile phone networks and thinking about the impact on rural economy.
- Look at Brexit threats and opportunities for business in the District.

Dynamic Economy - Your Priorities

Priority 1

Promote economic growth and investment

We will:

- Identify and retain sites for employment, in the District and protect office accommodation through the Local Plan to support the economy.
- Through our planning policies, support the development of new employment allocations, and other new employment units for small to medium sized businesses in suitable locations.
- Use planning policies to restrict the scope of permitted development rights on all office accommodation and relating to office space conversions to residential conversions.
- Encourage investment and promote “inward investment” to secure new employment and retail sites and buildings in the District.
- Work to secure investment and regeneration in towns and large villages, including Swanley Town Centre and New Ash Green and Edenbridge.
- Use Planning Policies to focus on employment needs and place-making within the major towns in the Sevenoaks District.
- Work with neighbouring Local Authorities to take into account the impact of major developments outside the District, including Gatwick, Biggin Hill, Ebbsfleet and Dartford’s London Resort.

Priority 2

Improve skills for employment

We will:

- Assess residents employment support needs, provide joined-up support and signpost people to appropriate services to meet their needs, particularly those needing the most support to access jobs and training.
- Develop and implement supported internship programmes working with young people registered with an Education and Health Care Plan.
- Create links between Employer Guilds and key statutory and voluntary sector partners to look at opportunities in key sectors, including construction, health and social care, financial services, land based and creative and media.
- Support initiatives that prevent people from becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) or support people who are NEET into pathways to work, education or training.
- Develop stronger relationships with education and training providers through the work of the Local Strategic Partnership Supporting People into Employment Group.
- Delivering the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network to secure our future workforce and championing training in the workplace for older people.
- Promote apprenticeships, degree level apprenticeships, and other pathways to careers.
- Participate in regular skills fairs.
- Work with the University of the Third Age and the Sevenoaks District Older People’s Forum to support adults to remain economically active and provided with opportunities to reskill.
- Look at opportunities for supported housing initiatives linked to education and skills.

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Priority 3

Improve broadband connectivity and support people to be more digitally aware

We will:

- Use planning polices to ensure that new development is technology ready, including the provision of high quality telecommunications and broadband connections.
- Develop a partnership digital inclusion strategy mapping support available to residents in the community.
- Work with the West Kent Partnership to implement high-speed (5G) broadband services across West Kent and address local issues with mobile phone coverage.

Priority 4

Keep existing businesses, encourage new businesses and tourism

We will:

- Support new and existing businesses through a “team around the business” approach.
- Work with Visit Kent and Produced in Kent to promote and market the District’s tourism offer.
- Work with the agencies to look at opportunities for funding opportunities for rural business through the West Kent Partnership
- Use planning policies to encourage the re-use of existing retail units, where appropriate, to ensure active frontages (e.g., retail, community, food and drink usage and fronts of residential units are located long major routes and adjacent to areas used by the public).
- Use planning policies to support the provision of sustainable tourism development.
- Support tourism sector initiatives to develop a wider overnight stay accommodation choice.
- Work with Visit Kent, Produced in Kent and other to promote tourism.

Did you know?

In the period 2018 and 2036, there will be a 0.7% reduction in the working age population at a time when we have an increasing demand on social care services due to an ageing population.

91% of businesses in the District have fewer than 10 employees.

There are 30 large employment sites in the District, which provide land for accommodation, warehousing and industrial uses

The Sevenoaks Visitor Economy represents £230 million to the local economy, with 3.9 million visitors and 5,032 jobs.



Sustainable Economy

Where people can live, work and travel more easily
and are empowered to shape their communities

Insert Picture

What you said

“More affordable housing, I am 24 and work full time yet any housing is way out if my budget”

“We've seen in our locality a lot of removal, reduced and changed bus services which have directly impacted on accessing GP surgeries, shops, schools etc...”

“Provision of electric car charging points will be more important for the future”

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Sustainable Economy

Sevenoaks District provides excellent transport connectivity, particularly to London and the London airports. However, residents have told us that they continue to have particular issues accessing key local services and facilities. A new Strategic Transport Assessment is currently in development and will provide information about transport implications for the emerging Sevenoaks District Local Plan. The Local Plan will also have regard to Kent County Council's refreshed Growth and Infrastructure Framework (2018) and the Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth Without Gridlock (2016-2031) which sets out transport priorities for the Sevenoaks District.

The Local Plan looks to ensure that communities are well connected and supported by appropriate infrastructure. The Local Plan will make provision for integrated and improved transport infrastructure. We also need to make sure we make the best use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for the benefit of residents.

Sevenoaks District Council's Housing Strategy, "Wellbeing Starts at Home" (2017) is based on a comprehensive district-wide Housing Needs Study. It recognises that house prices in the district are still not affordable for many people. The strategy aims to support innovative schemes to give young people a chance to own their own home in the District where they grew up. Together with the Local Plan, which will provide for housing choices, it is recognised that there needs to be more thought, more options, more supply and better design to make downsizing more popular for older people and free up homes for families, provide supported accommodation for older and vulnerable people and affordable housing in rural areas. Residents are also concerned that new housing is supported by appropriate infrastructure.

Local services need to respond to the needs of the residents we all serve, and residents need to have a chance to be involved in shaping the services and issues that affect their local community.

What you said

From our consultations, we know residents are most concerned about:

- Needing more frequent and timely public transport services, improved access to local services and facilities, particularly hospitals and GPs and schools, more services at evenings and weekends and improved transport connectivity.
- Ensuring that infrastructure is a key consideration in new developments, particularly transport infrastructure.
- Improving access to services in villages and rural areas.
- Need for more affordable housing, including housing for young people whose income cannot match the cost of housing in the area and housing to meet the needs of older people.
- Do more work to bring empty properties back into use and work with private landlords to bring more private sector rentals onto the market.
- More partnership working to encourage and support community activities.

Sustainable Economy - Your Priorities

Priority 1

Make it easier for people to travel to key local services and improve infrastructure

We will:

- Produce an Infrastructure Delivery Plan that supports the implementation of the Local Plan and how and when necessary infrastructure schemes will be delivered throughout the plan period.
- Ensure that through the Local Plan, where new development creates a requirement for new or improved infrastructure, that developers will provide or contribute to that requirement.
- Work in partnership with Kent County Council, Highways England and other transport delivery partners to mitigate adverse travel impacts from new development, promote sustainable modes of travel and encourage initiatives, which seek to improve health and wellbeing.
- Produce a new Transport Strategy for the District based on the Strategic Transport Study (commissioned by Sevenoaks District Council) to facilitate improvements to transport in the District.
- Consider the transport infrastructure needs set out in the Sevenoaks District Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the Local Plan.
- Use planning policies to make provision for integrated and improved transport infrastructure, including electric vehicle charging points through direct improvements and/or developer contributions.
- Promote safe and high quality pedestrian and cycling routes to key local services, transport interchanges such as bus and rail services through the Local Plan and the Sevenoaks District Cycling Strategy.
- Use the Community Infrastructure Charging scheme to provide funding for infrastructure to address funding gaps to deliver local and/or strategic schemes.
- Continue to use S106 (of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) for site-specific, on-site infrastructure improvements, including open spaces, highways and sustainable transport improvements.
- Provide community grant funding and promote voluntary and community transport schemes.

Priority 2

Provide a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures

We will:

- Deliver the Sevenoaks District's Housing Strategy, "Wellbeing Starts at Home" and deliver actions to provide a good mix of decent housing across tenures.
- Ensure that new housing creates mixed, balanced and inclusive communities, including housing for older people and people with physical disabilities, through the emerging Local Plan.
- Ensure that new housing contributes to the delivery of affordable housing (including social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing) through the emerging Local Plan.
- Increase the amount of private rented housing in the District.
- Explore measures with a view to reducing under-occupation and over-crowding and support people wanting to downsize through the District Housing Strategy.

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities for Action 2019-2022

Priority 3

Help people to shape their local communities

We will:

- Ensure that local people are placed at the centre of our services and that they are involved in designing and shaping services and the issues that affect them or their local areas.
- Work with local communities on community-led housing initiatives.
- Support Neighbourhood Plans through the Sevenoaks District Local Plan.
- Through the Local Plan, encourage community-based participation in shaping public spaces and in a way that improves social, economic and cultural opportunities.
- Support work that enhances community connections to tackle loneliness and social isolation.
- Support the voluntary, community and faith sectors in community activities and local initiatives that support the Sevenoaks priorities set out in the Community Plan.
- Create opportunities for people to be involved artistically and culturally and to exercise and improve their health and wellbeing, in the tranquil and inspiring Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the District.
- Work to support community assets and increase community resilience.
- Engage local residents in the remodelling of Local Care systems for health and wellbeing.
- Set up a voluntary sector forum for voluntary, community and faith groups.

Did you know?

House prices in the Sevenoaks District are up to 17 times higher than the average yearly wage, making it almost impossible for younger people to step onto the housing ladder.

During 2017/18, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Board agreed a total value of £1.26 million for infrastructure projects in the Sevenoaks District, including Swanley Station improvements.

The headline housing need for the Sevenoaks District is currently 698 homes to be built every year (figure provided by central government and subject to change). This is quadruple the existing target of 165.

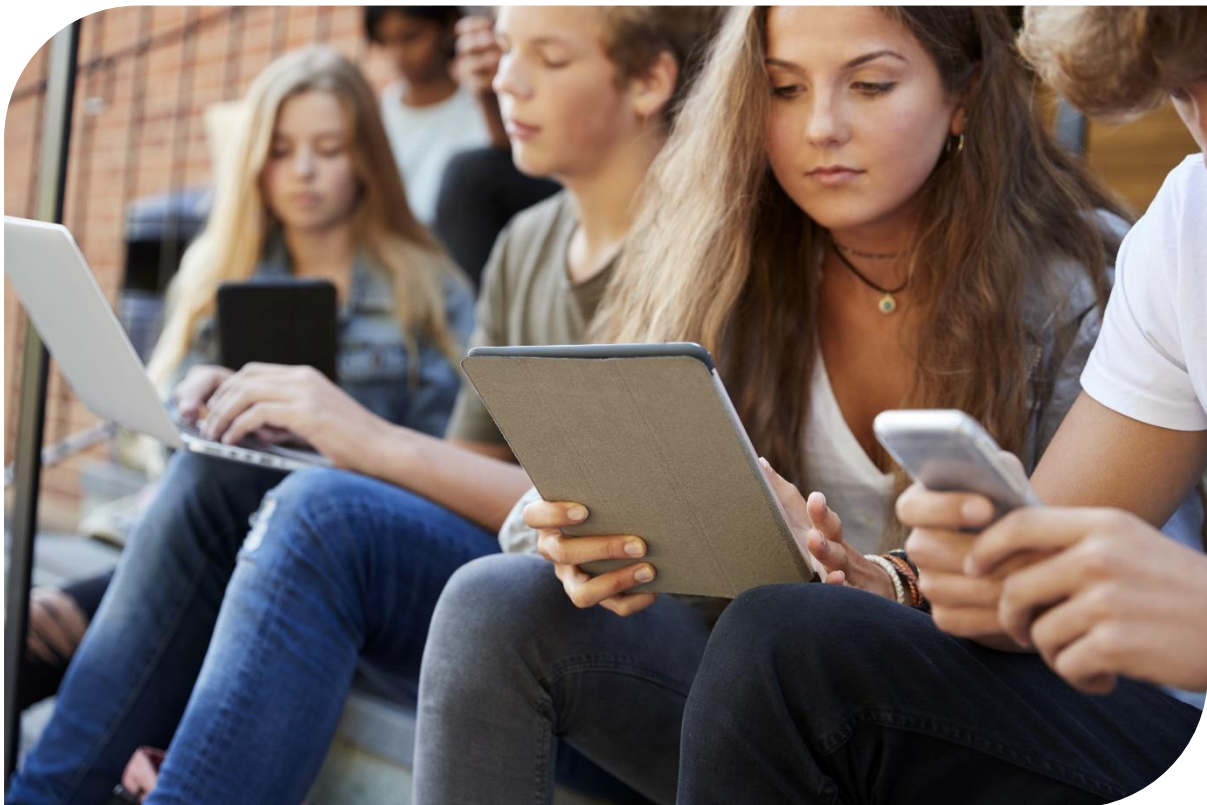
Public Consultation Draft

For more information or to get in contact

Telephone 01732 227000

Website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/consultations

Email community.plan@sevenoaks.gov.uk



This publication is available in large print. For a copy please call 01732 227000

If you need help communicating with us or understanding the document, we can arrange for an interpreter to help you. Please contacting us on 01732 227000 stating you language and preference

Safe Communities

1. 85% of actions in the Community Safety Partnership action plan achieved each year.
2. Keep overall crime amongst the lowest in the county and aim for an improvement in that position.
3. Maintain the low number of ASB incidents (no higher than 3rd in the county).
4. Road safety measures undertaken to prevent people from being killed or seriously injured on local roads.
5. Enforcement action taken against dangerously or illegally parked cars.

Lead Agencies: Community Safety Partnership/Kent Police/Kent County Council

Caring Communities

1. Increased number of people supported to live independently.
2. Reduced loneliness and social isolation through social prescribing schemes.
3. Sevenoaks Local Children’s Partnership Group (LCPG) to produce set of indicators focused on LCPG priorities, with at least 75% of core indicators on target.
4. The number positive outcomes where homelessness has been prevented.
5. Deliver actions in the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy, “Wellbeing Starts at Home” to meet the needs of vulnerable and low-income households and improve the condition of existing stock.
6. Improve opportunities for vulnerable people through the Community Grant Scheme.

Lead Agency: Sevenoaks District Council and Sevenoaks Local Children Partnership Group

Green Environment

1. Planning policies used effectively as monitored through the Local Plan to protect our high quality natural environment, including Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and biodiversity.
2. Use and enforce Planning Policies set out in the Local Plan to ensure new development is designed to a high quality and takes into account distinctive local character and impact on the environment.
3. Weekly refuse service collection maintained.
4. Recycling campaigns delivered.

Lead Agency: Sevenoaks District Council

Healthy Environment

1. Produce new Health Inequalities Action Plan with 75% of actions achieved in the first year rising to 80%.
2. 85% of success measured in the District Deal to be on target.
3. Service improvements delivered through a health in all policies approach.
4. Actions delivered in Sevenoaks District Council’s Housing Strategy, Wellbeing Starts at Home, focused on supporting the Council’s health outcomes and supporting people to remain independent.

Lead Agency: Sevenoaks Health Action Team

Dynamic Economy

1. Deliver actions against the key themes set out Economic Development Strategy (2018-21) for Growth and Investment, Infrastructure, Visitor Economy, Skill and Enterprise.
2. Develop smart action plan for the Local Strategic Partnership Skills Sub-Group and deliver positive outcomes.
3. Digital inclusion strategy developed and deliver positive outcomes.
4. Funding secured for business support programmes and rural businesses.

Lead Agencies: Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council

Sustainable Economy

1. Projects delivered through the CIL infrastructure plan.
2. Deliver actions in the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy, “Wellbeing Starts at Home” to provide a good mix of decent and affordable housing.
3. A new Transport Strategy for the District produced, which facilitates improvements to transport in the district.
4. Increased number of people who are helped to shape their local community.

Lead Agencies: Sevenoaks District Council, Kent County Council and the Local Strategic Partnership

This page is intentionally left blank

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION: GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE AND COUNCILLOR ABSENCE

Council - 30 April 2019

Report of Chief Officer Corporate Services

Status For Decision

Key Decision No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Anna Firth

Contact Officer Martin Goodman, Ext. 7245

Recommendation to Council: That the amendments to the Constitution as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

Introduction

- 1 The Governance Committee (12 February 2019, Minute 11(c)) resolved that ‘the Head of Legal and Democratic Services draft a report recommending to Council that the terms of reference for the Governance Committee be extended to include delegated authority to approve in advance Member non-attendance at meetings of the authority which would otherwise exceed the period of 6 months set out in s.85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, unless he receives legal advice indicating such a delegation would be unlawful.’
- 2 This report sets out the Head of Legal and Democratic Services findings and recommended amendments.

Background

- 3 On 6 November 2019 (Minute 6) the Governance Committee established a working party of five Members to draft a Councillor Absence Policy and report on progress to the next meeting.
- 4 At its meeting on 12 February 2019 and due to the fact the Governance Committee was not due to meet again before the end of the municipal year, rather than hold an extraordinary meeting the Committee decided to delegate authority to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to report directly to Council.

Agenda Item 7a

- 5 The Committee had discussed measures that could be put in place to support Councillors who may be seeking an extended (more than 6 months) leave of absence from Councillor duties. It was suggested that full Council could delegate the responsibility for hearing these cases to a committee or subcommittee, ideally the Governance or Standards Committee. Extraordinary meetings of the chosen Committee could be called more easily than a full Council meeting.
- 6 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services had advised that the responsibility to consider Councillor absence should not be delegated to Cabinet and the extension of an absence would need to be approved in advance of the 6-month deadline to enable a Councillor to continue serving past this date. Members were advised that any proposed delegation should only be made in accordance with legal advice.
- 7 It had been noted that Councillors were not employed by the Council but rather elected by their constituents and consideration should be given to covering an absent Councillor's local responsibilities.

Legal Position

- 8 With regards to Member absence the law is quite clear. Under section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 if a councillor fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his/her last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he/she shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by Council before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority.
- 9 Section 86 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires an authority to declare a vacancy in such circumstances.

Amendments required

- 10 Amendment of Part 9 to the Constitution (Terms of Reference of the Governance Committee) to insert a new paragraph in the following terms:

Members' Attendance

1.7 Delegated authority from Council to the Governance Committee to approve in advance reasons for failure to attend any meeting of the authority or executive throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of a Member's last attendance as set out in s.85(1) and s.85(2B) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Key Implications

Financial

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Instances of vacation of office by virtue of failure to attend meetings are relatively rare due to the number of opportunities available for Members to be recorded as having been present. Other than as set out in the report there are no legal implications and no hazards arise which necessitate a risk assessment. It should be noted that the delegation of power proposed in this report does not preclude Council from exercising the same power.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Appendices

Appendix A - Proposed amended Part 9 to the Constitution

Background Papers

[Sevenoaks District Council Constitution](#)

[Section 85\(1\) and \(2A\) of the Local Government Act 1972](#)

Jim Carrington-West

Chief Officer Corporate Services

This page is intentionally left blank

PART 9 - GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

1. Terms of Reference of the Governance Committee

Regulatory Framework

- 1.1. To review the number of meetings and Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee.
- 1.2. To consider the Council's compliance with its own and other published standards and controls.

Constitutional Matters

- 1.3. To advise the Council on all matters relating to any review of the Council's decision-making arrangements.
- 1.4. To advise the Council on all matters relating to any review of the Council's Constitution.

Members' Allowance Scheme

- 1.5. To receive the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel and make recommendations for change the Members' Allowance Scheme to the Council and, if required, to the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

Electoral Arrangements

- 1.6. To advise the Council on all matters relating to:
 - (a) Parliamentary, County, District and Parish/Town Council elections and referenda, including European Elections and England and Wales Police and Crime Commissioner Elections;
 - (b) the revision of parish boundaries;
 - (c) the overall number of Members of the District Council;
 - (d) the preferred number of Members for each District Council Ward;
 - (e) the number of Wards for the District of Sevenoaks;
 - (f) the names and boundaries of District Council Wards;
 - (g) carrying out Parish Governance Reviews under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007; and
 - (h) any matters ancillary thereto.

Members' Attendance

1.7 Delegated authority from Council the Governance Committee to approve in advance reasons for failure to attend any meeting of the authority or executive throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of a Member's last attendance as set out in s.85(1) and s.85(2B) of the Local Government Act 1972.

2. Membership of the Committee

2.1. The Governance Committee will comprise 7 elected Members, one of which shall serve as Chairman, that follow the political proportionality of the Council. The membership of the Committee can be found at Appendix H - Membership of Council Committees, Cabinet and Advisory Committees.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION: LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE HEARING PROCEDURES

Council - 30 April 2019

Report of Chief Officer Corporate Services

Status For Decision

Key Decision No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Anna Firth

Contact Officers Vanessa Etheridge, Ext. 7199 / David Lagzdins, Ext. 7350

Recommendation to Council: That ‘Part 8 - Licensing Committee’ of the Council’s Constitution be amended as highlighted in Appendix A and by the insertion of the wording in Appendix B.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Officers recently undertook a review of Licensing Committee procedures, initiated by the possibility of requiring a hearing for a Sex Entertainment Venue application. Part 8 of the Council’s Constitution was found to be lacking a tailored sub-committee hearing procedure.
- 2 Due to reporting timescales it was not possible to present Governance Committee and Council with the necessary amendments for all forms of hearing. Therefore, a view was taken to prioritise a hearing procedure for Sex Establishment licences in order for it to be agreed at Council on 26 February 2019 where delegated authority was requested and granted to complete the amendments in order to have them drafted ready for consideration at this meeting.
- 3 Following the agreed amendments made at Council on 26 February 2019, some further minor amendments/clarifications are proposed and attached as Appendix A.
- 4 In response to the delegated authority given on 26 February 2019, procedures for hearings under: The Gambling Act 2005 (Proceedings of Licensing Committees and Sub-committees) (Premises Licences and Provisional Statements) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007; and, Town Police Clauses Act 1847, Public Health Act 1875 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, have been prepared after consultation

Agenda Item 7b

with the Chairman of the Governance Committee, and are attached for approval at Appendix B.

Key Implications

Financial

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Council is occasionally required to hold Licensing Sub-Committee hearings to consider a range of applications. However, these applications are often under different statutory regimes and therefore must take account of different factors. For example, some decisions are considered to be administrative in nature, while others are quasi-judicial.

Should a Sub-Committee fail to follow a procedure that is appropriate for the matter before them then the risk is increased that the Sub-Committee will fail to consider all material facts in an appropriate way. This increases the risk that the Council's decisions will be found unsound, if challenged.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Human Rights

Matters considered by a Sub-Committee may engage rights including the right to a fair hearing (Art. 6) and the right to the protection of property (including licences) (Protocol 1 Art. 1)

Appendices

Appendix A - Amendments to Part 8 of the Council's Constitution

Appendix B - proposed additions to Part 8 of the Council's Constitution

Background Papers

[Sevenoaks District Council Constitution](#)

[Gambling Act 2005](#)

[The Gambling Act 2005 \(Proceedings of Licensing Committees and Sub-committees\) \(Premises Licences and Provisional Statements\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2007](#)

[Town Police Clauses Act 1847](#)

[Public Health Act 1875](#)

[Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#)

Jim Carrington-West

Chief Officer Corporate Services

This page is intentionally left blank

PART 8 - LICENSING COMMITTEE

1. Licensing Committee

1.1 Composition: Thirteen Members of the District Council reflecting the political proportionality of the Council

1.2 Terms of Reference

- (a) Except as provided in the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005, the discharge of all functions of the District Council as licensing authority prescribed by those acts;
- (b) the issue, renewal, transfer, suspension and revocation of hackney carriage, private hire vehicle, driver and operator licenses;
- (c) the discharge of relevant functions relating to the licensing of sex establishments
- (d) the discharge of relevant functions relating to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; and
- (e) the discharge of all other functions relating to licensing and registration in so far as they are the responsibility of the District Council.

2. Licensing Hearing Sub-Committees

2.1 Each municipal year the Licensing Committee will establish Licensing Hearing Sub-Committees. The Chief Executive will call a meeting of one of the sub-committees whenever there is business to be transacted.

Composition: Each Sub-Committee will contain three Members of the Licensing Committee. Any member of the Licensing Committee may act as a substitute on any of the Licensing Sub-Committees.

2.2 Terms of Reference

Licensing Act 2003:

- (a) determination of application for the grant/ renewal of a personal licence where an objection notice has been given by the Police;
- (b) consideration of Police objection notice following conviction of personal licence holder;

- (c) determination of application for the variation of a designated premises supervisor where a notice has been received from the Police;
- (d) determination of application for the transfer of a premises licence where a notice has been received from the Police;
- (e) determination of application for:
 - (i) premises licence;
 - (ii) club premises certificate;
 - (iii) provisional statement;
 - (iv) variation of premises licence / club premises certificates;
 - (v) review of a licence following an application by a senior police officer;

where relevant representations have been made;

- (f) determination of application for the review of a premises licence/club premises certificate;
- (g) determination on review of premises licence following closure order;
- (h) consideration of Police or Environmental Health objection notice given in response to a temporary event notice; and
- (i) consideration of Police notice given in response to an interim authority notice.

Gambling Act 2005:

- (a) determination of application for the grant/ variation/ transfer/ reinstatement of premises licence where relevant representations have been received.;
- (b) determination on review of premises licence;
- (c) determination of application for provisional statement where relevant representations have been received;
- (d) consideration of notice of objection to temporary use notice;
- (e) determination of application for the grant/ renewal of family entertainment centre gaming permit, club gaming permit, club machine permit, licensed premises gaming machine permit, gaming

Part 8

machine permit where relevant representations have been received;
and

- (f) cancellation of club gaming permit, club machine permit, licensed premises gaming machine permit where relevant representations have been received.

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (as amended by Section 27, Policing and Crime Act 2009

- (a) determination of application for the grant/ renewal/transfer/variation or revocation of a sex shop, sex cinema or sexual entertainment venue licence

Town Police Clauses Act 1847, Public Health Act 1875 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

- (a) to exercise the Council's powers and duties in relation to the licensing of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, including the licensing of vehicles, drivers and operators, the control of numbers of hackney carriages, the licensing of private hire operators and the granting of permits for small buses where the matter has been referred by the delegated officer.

Procedures at Sub-Committees of the Licensing Committee

3. Licensing Act 2003

- 3.1 Hearings shall be conducted in accordance with this Procedure Note **which the Sub-Committee may vary at their discretion if considered in the public interest and subject to** The Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005 **subject to the right of the Sub-Committee to vary that procedure at their absolute discretion if considered in the public interest.**
- 3.2 The quorum for a Sub-Committee shall be two members.
- 3.3 At the commencement of each hearing the Sub-Committee shall elect one of its members as Chairman.
- 3.4 The order of business at hearings shall be:
 - (a) Election of Chairman.
 - (b) Declarations of interests.
 - (c) Chairman explains the procedure to be followed at the hearing, including the setting of equal time limits for all parties and the granting of adjournments.

Part 8

- (d) Chairman ascertains who is assisting or representing the parties.
- (e) Officer presentation of report
- (f) Applicant (or his/her representative) addresses the Sub-Committee.
- (g) Applicant questioned by members. At the discretion of the Sub-Committee, other parties may be permitted to question the applicant.
- (h) Any representatives of Public or Statutory Bodies who have made representations in respect of the application (or their representative) address the Sub-Committee. No issues other than those relevant to their representations may be raised.
- (i) Members question each party at the conclusion of their address. At the discretion of the Sub-Committee, the applicant may be permitted to question other parties.
- (j) Other persons who have made representations in respect of the application (or their representative) address the Sub-Committee. No issues other than those relevant to their representations may be raised.
- (k) Members question each party at the conclusion of their address. At the discretion of the Sub-Committee, the applicant may be permitted to question other parties.
- (l) Sub-Committee may offer the parties a short adjournment to discuss in the absence of the Sub-Committee whether a solution acceptable to all the parties can be put to the Sub-Committee.
- (m) Applicant (or his/her representative) makes closing address.
- (n) Sub-Committee may grant a short adjournment. The parties may not speak to members regarding the application during adjournments.
- (o) The Sub-Committee considers the application and motions put to accept or reject the application in the terms requested or to grant the application subject to specified conditions. Reasons are to be given for motions.
- (p) The parties will **usually** be informed of the decision at the Hearing **with a decision notice issued** ~~or~~ thereafter in accordance with Regulation 26 of the 2005 Regulation, **along with details of any applicable appeals process.**

4. Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982)
 - 4.1 Hearings shall be conducted in accordance with this Procedure Note **which the Sub-Committee may vary at their discretion if considered in the public interest and subject to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (as amended by Section 27, Policing and Crime Act 2009) subject to the right of the Sub-Committee to vary that procedure at their absolute discretion if considered in the public interest.**
 - 4.2 Objectors' names or addresses will not be revealed to an Applicant without consent. However, attendance at a hearing by any Objector implies consent (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Schedule 3, para10 (17))
 - 4.3 The quorum for a Sub-Committee shall be two members.
 - 4.4 At the commencement of each hearing the Sub-Committee shall elect one of its members as Chairman.
 - 4.5 The order of business at hearings shall be:
 - (a) Election of Chairman.
 - (b) Declarations of interests.
 - (c) Chairman explains the procedure to be followed at the hearing, including the setting of equal time limits for all parties and the granting of adjournments.
 - (d) Chairman ascertains who is present, including all parties, representatives and witnesses.
 - (e) Presentation of report by Licensing Officer
 - (f) The Sub-Committee will hear from:
 - a. the Applicant (or his/her representative);
 - b. any Public or Statutory Bodies who have made representations;
and
 - c. any other objectors

- (g) All parties may use witnesses and supporting documentation, so long as these have been detailed to the Sub-Committee prior to the hearing.
- (h) No Public or Statutory Body or other objector may raise issues other than those relevant to their written objection, unless with the agreement of the Sub-Committee and provided that the Applicant is permitted an opportunity to deal with the objections.
- (i) Members will ask questions of each party (including their representative or witness) after they have spoken. At the discretion of the Sub-Committee the Applicant will be entitled to ask questions of the other parties or their witnesses after they have spoken. At the discretion of the Sub-Committee the other parties will be entitled to ask questions of the Applicant or their witnesses after they have spoken.
- (j) Sub-Committee may offer the parties a short adjournment to discuss in the absence of the Sub-Committee whether a solution acceptable to all the parties can be put to the Sub-Committee.
- (k) Applicant (or his/her representative) makes closing address.
- (l) Sub-Committee may grant a short adjournment to deliberate. The parties may not speak to Members regarding the application during adjournments.
- (m) The Sub-Committee considers the application and motions put to accept or reject the application in the terms requested or to grant the application subject to specified conditions. Reasons are to be given for motions.
- (n) The parties will **usually** be informed of the decision **at the Hearing with a decision notice issued before the end of in writing within 7 working days starting the day after the last day of the hearing, along with details of any applicable appeals process.**

NB. Subject to approval the wording in Appendix B would be inserted here.

References to the “Applicant” should be read as “Licensee” when appropriate.

5. The Gambling Act 2005 (Proceedings of Licensing Committees and Sub-committees) (Premises Licences and Provisional Statements) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007
- 5.1 Hearings shall be conducted in accordance with this Procedure Note which the Sub-Committee may vary at their discretion if considered in the public interest subject to The Gambling Act 2005 (Proceedings of Licensing Committees and Sub-committees) (Premises Licences and Provisional Statements) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007.

(Application for a premises licence under section 159; Application to vary a premises licence under section 187; Application for a premises licence to be transferred under sections 188 and 189; Application for a licence to be reinstated under sections 195 and 196; Application for a provisional statement under section 204; Review of a premises licence under section 201)
- 5.2 The agenda will be published 10 working days before the date of the hearing
- 5.3 The quorum for a Sub-Committee shall be two members.
- 5.4 At the commencement of each hearing the Sub-Committee shall elect one of its members as Chairman.
- 5.5 The order of business at hearings shall be:
 - (a) Election of Chairman.
 - (b) Declarations of interests.
 - (c) Chairman explains the procedure to be followed at the hearing, including the setting of equal time limits for all parties and the granting of adjournments.
 - (d) Chairman ascertains who is present, including all parties, representatives and witnesses.
 - (e) Presentation of report by Licensing Officer
 - (f) In turn, beginning with the applicant, each party (or their representative) may

- a. address the Sub-Committee and call witnesses on any matter relevant to the application/review;
- b. receive questions from the Sub-Committee; and
- c. receive questions from other parties, where this is considered appropriate by the Sub-Committee.

(Cross examination will not usually be permitted unless the Sub-Committee considered that it is required to properly consider the issue.)

- (g) All parties may use witnesses and supporting documentation, so long as these have been detailed to the Sub-Committee prior to the hearing.
 - (h) Sub-Committee may offer the parties a short adjournment to discuss in the absence of the Sub-Committee whether a solution acceptable to all the parties can be put to the Sub-Committee. The parties may not speak to members regarding the application during adjournments.
 - (i) Applicant (or his/her representative) makes closing address.
 - (j) Sub-Committee may grant a short adjournment to deliberate. The parties may not speak to Members regarding the application during adjournments.
 - (k) The Sub-Committee considers the application/review and motions put to accept or reject the application in the terms requested or to grant the application subject to specified conditions. Reasons are to be given for motions.
 - (l) The parties will usually be informed of the decision at the Hearing with a decision notice issued before the end of 5 working days starting the day after the last day of the hearing in accordance with Regulation 13 of the 2007 Regulations along with details of any applicable appeals process.
6. Town Police Clauses Act 1847, Public Health Act 1875 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- 6.1 Hearings shall be conducted in accordance with this Procedure Note which the Sub-Committee may vary at their discretion if considered in the public interest.
 - 6.2 The agenda will be published 5 working days before the date of the hearing
 - 6.3 The quorum for a Sub-Committee shall be two members.

- 6.4 At the commencement of each hearing the Sub-Committee shall elect one of its members as Chairman.
- 6.5 The order of business at hearings shall be:
- (a) Election of Chairman.
 - (b) Declarations of interests.
 - (c) Chairman explains the procedure to be followed at the hearing including, if necessary, limiting the time given to the parties and witnesses (to allow all parties to have a fair hearing but preventing any one person dominating the proceedings) for all parties and the granting of adjournments.
 - (d) Chairman ascertains who is present, including all parties, representatives and witnesses.
 - (e) Presentation of report by Licensing Officer
 - (f) The Sub-Committee will hear from:
 - a. those opposed to granting the license / those seeking the review (or their representative(s)) together with their witnesses; and
 - b. the Applicant (or their representative(s)) together with their witnesses.
 - (g) All parties may use witnesses and supporting documentation, so long as these have been detailed to the Sub-Committee prior to the hearing. New information shall only be accepted at the Hearing if agreed by the Sub-Committee, if it would not cause significant undue prejudice to the other parties and if the other parties are given an appropriate opportunity to consider it and produce any response.
 - (h) It is expected that witnesses will not be present for any part of the hearing until they have addressed the Sub-Committee and responded to any questions. This shall not apply if the witness is:
 - the Applicant; or
 - attending on behalf of a Public or Statutory Body.

- (i) Members will ask questions of each party (including their representative or witness) after they have spoken. The Applicant will be entitled to ask questions of the other parties or their witnesses after they have spoken. At the discretion of the Sub-Committee the other parties will be entitled to ask questions of the Applicant or their witnesses after they have spoken.
- (j) Sub-Committee may offer the parties a short adjournment to discuss in the absence of the Sub-Committee whether a solution acceptable to all the parties can be put to the Sub-Committee.
- (k) Those opposed to granting the licences / those seeking the review (or their representative(s)) make closing address.
- (l) The Applicant (or his/her representative) makes closing address.
- (m) Sub-Committee may grant a short adjournment to deliberate. The parties may not speak to Members regarding the application during adjournments.
- (n) The Sub-Committee considers the application and motions put to accept or reject the application in the terms requested or to grant the application subject to specified conditions. Reasons are to be given for motions.
- (o) The parties will usually be informed of the decision at the Hearing with a decision notice issued in due course along with details of any applicable appeals process.

Cllr Fleming - Leader's Report

Date: 11 February 2019 - 5 April 2019

February 2019	Event	Comments
11 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NALC Conference - London 	
13 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making it Happen Community & Voluntary Awards - Sevenoaks 	
14 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Innovation Working Group - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement & Innovation Board Lead Members' Meeting - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet - SDC 	
18 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Programme Board - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re Edenbridge Leisure Centre - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re Fort Halstead - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving better design: what can councillors do? - SDC 	
19 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Cllrs Canet & Purves - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy & Performance Advisory Committee - SDC 	
21 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Lesley Bowles as Deputy Cex - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re Communications Strategy - SDC 	
24 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman's Civic Service - West Kingsdown 	
26 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness Seminar - speaker - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent & Medway Business Fund Investment Advisory Board - Maidstone 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council - SDC 	
27 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of Long Service Award - SDC 	
March 2019		
4 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edenbridge Annual Town Meeting - Edenbridge 	
5 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness Commission Meeting - Chair - London 	
6 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Government Commercialisation Conference - Speaker - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re NAVCA - London 	
7 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top 50 Employers Breakfast - Sevenoaks 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Councillors' Forum - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Executive - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Business Rates & Fair Funding Review Task & Finish Group - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quercus 7 Trading Board & Quercus Housing - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet - SDC 	
8 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Granicus - London 	
11 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan Briefing pre Council - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fly the Flag for the Commonwealth - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re pay-as-you-go Rail Consultation - SDC 	

Agenda Item 10

18 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sevenoaks Annual Town Council Meeting - Sevenoaks 	
19 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent & Medway Business Fund Investment Advisory Board - Maidstone 	
20 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Plan Meeting - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCN Members' Board - London 	
23 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Next Generation Module, speaker - Warwick 	
25 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Programme Board - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent in Me - Presentations Skills Course - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent & Medway Economic Partnership - Maidstone 	
26 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Induction - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Council Leaders' Meeting - Maidstone 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council - SDC 	
27 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Andrew Larner of iESE and Cllr Tutt - SDC 	
28 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Improvement & Innovation Board - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Informal Performance Support Panel - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with KCC re supported housing - SDC 	
29 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with residents re Edenbridge Leisure Centre - Edenbridge 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with residents re Stangrove Estate - Edenbridge 	
April 2019		
1 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Innovation Working Group by phone 	
3 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Control Committee - Sevenoaks 	
4 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet - SDC 	

AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

Council - 30 April 2019

Report of Cllr Grint, Chairman of the Audit Committee

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by: Audit Committee - 28 March 2019

Introduction and Background

- 1 This is my report to the Council on the work of the Audit Committee during the year 2018/19.
- 2 The Audit Committee is responsible for discharging the functions conferred by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Committee met four times during the year. The key responsibilities include approving the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts, approving the Annual Governance Statement, approving the Annual Internal Audit Plan and monitoring and reviewing the work of Internal Audit, and reviewing the arrangements for the management of business risks.
- 3 In line with its Terms of Reference, the Audit Committee has met regularly during the course of the year. As Chair of the Committee, I have held regular briefings with Officers. Details of the range of issues considered by the Committee over the course of the year are set out below:

Internal Audit

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| July 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual Self-Assessment Review of the Effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service 2017/18• Internal Audit Annual Report 2017/18• Internal Audit Recommendations Outstanding• External Review of Internal Audit - Update |
| October 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal Audit Progress Report |
| January 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal Audit Progress Report |
| March 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal Audit Progress Report• Internal Audit Plan 2019/20 (including the future of the Internal Audit service)• Revised Audit Charter |

Governance, Risk & Anti-Fraud

- July 2018
 - Audit Committee Terms of Reference
 - Counter Fraud and Compliance Report 2017/18
 - Review of the Effectiveness of the Audit Committee
- October 2018
 - Affordable Housing Company - Risk Assessment (presentation by Lesley Bowles, Chief Officer Communities and Business)
 - Members' Allowance Scheme Monitoring
 - Strategic Risk Update
 - Member Development Proposal
- March 2019
 - Annual Governance Statement 2018/19

Accounts and External Audit

- July 2018
 - Statement of Accounts 2017/18
- January 2019
 - External Audit - Housing Benefit Subsidy 2017/18
 - External Audit - Annual Audit Letter 2017/18
- March 2019
 - Statement of Accounts 2018/19 - Establishment of Member Working Group
 - External Audit - Annual Audit Plan

- 4 The Audit Committee maintains a constructive dialogue and effective working relationship with the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton. The audit partner and audit manager from Grant Thornton have attended 3 of the 4 Audit Committee meetings during the year.
- 5 Training of Audit Committee Members is important so as to ensure that they can add value to the discussions at the Committee. A Member Development Proposal was presented at the October meeting and Members agreed to have regular training sessions to ensure they are knowledgeable about the items in the Committee's Terms of Reference. The following training has taken place:
 - Grant Thornton provided a briefing on 'Assurance on Value for Money' on 8 January 2019.
 - Officers provided a briefing on 'Procurement and Contract Procedures' on 28 March 2019.

- 6 Further training will be scheduled at future meetings.
- 7 In addition to the core work of the Committee, a Member Working Group took place in June 2018 to review the draft Statement of Accounts. Its findings were reported back to the full Audit Committee at its meeting in July. The external auditors commented favourably on Members' involvement in the Annual Accounts process.
- 8 Russell Heppleston commenced as the Interim Audit Manager in August 2018. Russell has brought in some new ideas regarding the committee reports which has helped with Member engagement. The Internal Audit Service is currently in the process of being restructured which should add more value to the Council going forward.
- 9 It is my opinion that the work of the Committee has had a positive impact on the overall control environment within the Council. The Committee has developed good working relationships with officers and External Audit, and has offered constructive comments on a range of issues. The Committee continues to develop and improve its understanding of the many technical issues presented to it.
- 10 I should like to thank all members of the Audit Committee for their personal contribution to the work of the Committee over the past year. I should also like to thank Officers, in particular Adrian Rowbotham, Russell Heppleston and Lisa Nyon for the help and support they have given the Committee during the year.

Cllr John Grint
Chairman, Audit Committee

This page is intentionally left blank

Scrutiny Committee Annual Report to Council - 2018/19

Remit of the Scrutiny Committee

1. As per Appendix C of the Council's constitution, "Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules":

1.1 The Council is required by Law to discharge certain overview and scrutiny functions. These functions are an essential component of local democracy. The Scrutiny Committee contribute to the Council's Performance and also hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions.

1.2 The Scrutiny Committee allows a wider involvement in Council business by involving non-councillors from the wider public section, voluntary groups and community groups to help them in their work. They may make reports and recommendations to the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery.

1.3 The Scrutiny Committee also monitors the decisions of the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee can "call-in" a decision of the Cabinet which has been made but not yet implemented. They may recommend that the Cabinet reconsider their decision. They may also be consulted by the Cabinet or the Council on forthcoming decisions.

1.4 Scrutiny should be carried out in a constructive way and should aim to contribute to the delivery of efficient and effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of local inhabitants. The Scrutiny Committee should not shy away from the need to challenge and question decisions and make constructive criticism.

"The Scrutiny Committee will comprise a permanent Chairman and Vice Chairman, and 9 other elected Members that follow the political proportionality of the Council. No Members of the Committee may be members of the Cabinet, their deputies or members of any of the Cabinet Advisory Committees."

Approach

2. Throughout the course of 2018/19, the Scrutiny Committee has drawn up and followed a work plan that has focussed on four key areas. These are:

- **Inviting Cabinet Portfolio Holders** to each meeting of the Scrutiny Committee where possible to discuss particular areas of focus/challenge and concerns members may have;
- **Inviting a number of external representatives** to attend Scrutiny Committee to discuss particular areas of concern and their activities within the district;
- **Setting up In-Depth Scrutiny working groups** as task and finish groups to investigate particular areas in detail, reporting back to the Committee so that recommendations can be agreed and reported to Cabinet.

Agenda Item 11b

- **Reviewing performance of services** in relation to agreed performance indicators, in particular focusing on red flag indicators. These are discussed at meetings, with explanations being provided by Officers. Matters of serious concern are referred to the Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet as appropriate.

This approach has ensured that the Committee has scrutinised both the work of SDC and other public bodies across the district, per the Committee's above terms of reference.

Work Covered

3. Based on the above approach, the following is a summary of work carried out during 2018/19 by the Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holders

4. Portfolio Holders were asked to provide an update on recent work and future challenges to the relevant meeting, and were subsequently asked a number of questions by Members of the Committee regarding specific challenges and their approach and views. Portfolio holders attended as follows:

Scrutiny Committee	Portfolio Holder	Area of Committee Focus
July 2018	Cllr Michelle Lowe Housing and Health	Quercus Housing Health and Wellbeing West Kent Housing
July 2018	Cllr Peter Fleming Policy and Performance	Swanley Sites Corporate Plan
November 2018	Cllr John Scholey Finance	Property Investment Asset Maintenance Programme
February 2019	Cllr Anna Firth Legal and Democratic Services	Licensing Partnership Legal Successes Member Training
February 2019	Cllr Roddy Hogarth Economic and Community Development	Sevenoaks High Street Swanley Town Station Sevenoaks Community Safety Unit
April 2019	Cllr Robert Piper Planning	TBC
April 2019	Cllr Michelle Lowe Housing and Health	TBC

External Invitees

July 2018

5. Representatives from Citizens Advice in North and West Kent and Edenbridge and Westerham in attendance.

6. Representatives from Edenbridge and Westerham and North and West Kent Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) gave a presentation on the work of Citizens Advice within the district.

7. Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Budget allocations
- Criteria for clients accessing CAB services
- Impacts of Universal Credit
- Volumes of website users
- Staffing resources

November 2018

8. Chief Inspector Tony Dyer, Sevenoaks District Commander of Kent Police in attendance.

9. Chief Inspector Dyer gave an overview of crime levels within the Sevenoaks District area. The Chief Inspector explained that Sevenoaks District has **the first or second lowest recordings for most if not all crime categories in the County**. The Sevenoaks District had also seen a reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour and had the **slowest increase in recorded crime in the County**.

10. Members were reassured that the perceived increases crime were a result of the Crime Data Integrity Inspection, affecting the way crime was reported and recorded. The roll out of Crime Data Integrity Inspections also made comparisons with other Councils outside of Kent difficult, however the Police would commence comparisons in 2019.

11. Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Strategy relating to visible policing
- Current focus of resources and priority areas
- The 101 service
- Use of PCSOs

February 2019

12. Frank Czarnowski, Chief Executive of West Kent Housing in attendance.

13. A presentation was given covering the organisations 6 key objectives relating to customers, homes, older people, growth, community and viability.

14. Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

Agenda Item 11b

- Anti social behaviour
- Plans for West Kent Housing garages
- The process for tenants moving including overlapping rent payments
- Property turn around times and waiting times

In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group

15. At its November 2018 meeting, the in-depth scrutiny working group presented its final report which looked at matters relating to staff recruitment and retention.

16. Councillor Brown presented the final report as Chairman of the In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group. The working group had been investigating a range of areas including staff turnover, sickness absence, approach to recruitment and staff benefits. Meetings had been held with a number of Officers and an external recruitment agency.

17. The Chairman noted that salaries were given as the primary reason by staff for leaving the Council, with competition from London and the private sector. Certain areas were identified as more problematic to recruit for, and Market Related Payments (MRPs) were offered in some circumstances.

18. The working group made a number of recommendations to improve staff recruitment and retention, set out in full in the report, which were further discussed by the Committee.

19. A copy of the report of the working group, considered by the Scrutiny Committee can be found at:

<https://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s35915/In%20Depth%20Scrutiny%20-%20Staffing%20Report.pdf?J=5>

20. Members agreed that the report should be referred to Cabinet following the inclusion of feedback from Committee Members.

21. Cabinet then considered the report from the Scrutiny Committee at a subsequent meeting. Cabinet thanked the Committee for the work that had been put in and referred the recommendations to officers to look at further and take forward as appropriate.

Other

22. The Chairman would like to thank his vice-chairman, other committee members and Officers for the work they have put in over the year.

**Councillor Cameron Brown
Chairman - Scrutiny Committee
2nd April 2019**

This page is intentionally left blank