

AGENDA



CABINET

MONDAY, 4 MARCH 2013

11.00 AM

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, ST PETERS HILL,
GRANTHAM**

Beverly Agass, Chief Executive

MEMBERS: Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal (Leader/Portfolio: Policy, Strategy and Strategic Partnerships), Councillor Paul Carpenter (Deputy Leader & Portfolio: Governance & Communication), Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright (Portfolio: Grow the Economy and Economic Development), Councillor John Smith (Portfolio: Green, Healthy and Arts), Councillor Mike Taylor (Portfolio: Strategic Resources - Well Run Council) and Councillor Terl Bryant (Portfolio: Good Housing)

Committee Support Officer: Lucy Bonshor 01476 40 61 20
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Members of the public are entitled to attend the meeting of the Cabinet at which key decisions will be taken on the issues listed on the following pages. Key decisions are marked *.

- 1. APOLOGIES**
- 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2013**

(Enclosure)

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

4. HOUSING STRATEGY

Report HNS01/13 from the Head of Housing & Neighbourhoods. **(Enclosure)**

5. ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Report HNS02/13 from the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods. **(Enclosure)**

6. MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET BY THE COUNCIL, SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OR THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

7. ITEMS RAISED BY CABINET MEMBERS INCLUDING REPORTS ON KEY AND NON KEY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS.

8. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED FROM NON CABINET MEMBERS

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, DECIDES IS URGENT



MEETING OF THE CABINET
18 FEBRUARY 2013 - 10.00 AM – 11.46 AM

PRESENT:

Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
Councillor John Smith
Councillor Mike Taylor
Councillor Teri Bryant

Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal - Chairman

Chief Executive (Beverly Agass)
Strategic Director Corporate Focus (Daren Turner)
Strategic Director Community & Environmental Focus
(Tracy Blackwell)
Head of Finance (Richard Wyles)
Head of Legal & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer
(Lucy Youles)
Planning Policy & Partnerships Service Manager
(Karen Sinclair)
Environmental Health Service Manager (David Price)
Environmental Protection Team Leader (Pete Rogers)
Head of Community Assets (Paul Stokes)
Cabinet Support Officer (Lucy Bonshor)

Non-Cabinet Members : Councillor Nick Craft

CO41. MINUTES

The decisions from the meeting held on 21st January were agreed as a correct record of the decisions taken.

CO42. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

None disclosed.

CO43. *SOUTHERN QUADRANT MASTERPLAN - PREFERRED OPTION

Decision:

That Cabinet approves the following:

- a) **Notes the comments received in response to the public consultation on the Draft Southern Quadrant Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as set out in Appendix 1 to report PLA966.**
- b) **The proposed changes to the Draft Southern Quadrant Masterplan SPD set out in Appendix 2 to report PLA966.**
- c) **The Southern Quadrant Masterplan SPD, as amended in accordance with recommendation b) above, is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.**
- d) **The Southern Quadrant Masterplan SPD to take effect following the end of the call in period and it be applied to all qualifying planning applications registered as valid after this date.**

Considerations/reasons for decision:

- 1) Report PLA966 from the Portfolio Holder for Grow the Economy and Economic Development.
- 2) The adoption of the Southern Quadrant SPD would support all the Council's priority themes.
- 3) The purpose of the Masterplan SPD was to provide developers intending to bring forward major development proposals within the Southern Quadrant with clear guidance in terms of delivering a distinctive and high quality scheme.
- 4) The responses received following the widespread consultation carried out in October 2012 which included the local community and businesses in the area, Lincolnshire County Council, relevant local service providers, relevant Parish Councils and relevant national, regional and local organisations. Drop in sessions were also held for members of the public to discuss the plans.
- 5) Comments made by Members at the meeting about the quality of some of the responses made during the consultation period.

Other options considered:

Do not adopt as an SPD – the alternative would be to rely upon the policies within the adopted Core Strategy for guiding future development of the site. Those policies will not provide the level of detailed guidance given by the SPD for the development of the Southern Quadrant.

CO44. *COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE

Decision:

That the Community Right to Challenge Scheme as attached to report LDS087 be adopted.

Considerations/reasons for decision:

- 1) Report LDS087 from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
- 2) The Community Right to Challenge was one of a number of new rights for communities introduced by the Localism Act 2011.
- 3) The Community Right to Challenge provides a way for communities to help shape and run local services. Regulations and statutory guidance have been introduced. The Regulations:
 - specify information required in an expression of interest
 - specify grounds whereby an expression of interest may be rejected
 - state which kinds of services are excluded from the right
- 4) The draft scheme had been drawn up in association with Procurement Lincolnshire. The District Council works in partnership with Procurement Lincolnshire to carry out efficient and effective procurement of goods and services.
- 5) The draft scheme was considered by the Communities Policy Development Group at its meeting on 10th January 2013 who did not propose any changes to the scheme.
- 6) Comments made by Cabinet Members and the Head of Legal and Democratic clarifying parts of the document.

Other options considered:

The Council has no other alternative but to make provision for the management and administration of the process to consider expressions of interests received for the provisions of services.

CO45. *AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA

Decision:

That approval is granted to designate an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) that combines the existing two separate AQMA at Manthorpe Road/Brook Street and Wharf Road with the High Street and London Road, Grantham to produce a single AQMA as shown edged in red on the plan attached to report ENV577.

Considerations/reasons for decision:

- 1) Report ENV577 from the Environmental Health Service Manager.
- 2) Local authorities had a statutory duty to review and assess air quality within their districts in accordance with section 82 of the Environment Act 1995 and for them to designate by order an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) to assist in securing improvements to air quality where repeated exceedances of air pollutants had been identified.
- 3) Ongoing monitoring had identified, modelled actual exceedances of nitrogen dioxide in areas other than those which already had an AQMA which cover Brook Street/Manthorpe Road and Wharf Road, Grantham.
- 4) Having one declared AQMA would enable the Council to take a holistic approach with one Air Quality Action Plan to manage air quality across the town rather than duplication of reporting a number of separate AQMAs.
- 5) A questionnaire would be sent out to all residents that were within the proposed extended air quality management area and those that live just outside the proposed boundary to seek ideas to inform the AQMA.
- 6) In the preparation or revision of an action plan the following persons must also be consulted, the Secretary of State, the Environment Agency, the Highway authority, every local authority that is contiguous to the authority's area, the County Council and such other public authorities as we may consider appropriate
- 7) Comments made by Cabinet Members at the meeting.

Other options considered

There were no other options other than to reject the consultant's reports and DEFRA's advice. However, comprehensive monitoring data and computer modelling has identified that there are breaches of air quality and signing the order will enable the Council to discharge its statutory duty and is in line with the Council's priority of "Keeping SK Clean Green and Healthy".

CO46. *BUDGET REQUIREMENT FOR 2013/14

General Fund Budget 2013/14

Decision:

General Fund (Revenue)

That Cabinet recommends parts a. to c. to Council:

- a. **to set a General Fund budget requirement of £14.068M for 2013/14 shown at Appendix A to report HOF219 (inclusive of special**

expenses) which will include the additional items listed in Appendix B to report HOF219 and the savings listed in Appendix C to report HOF219.

- b. to approve a Council Tax increase of £5 (for a Band D equivalent) for 2013/14
- c. to note the indicative base estimates for 2014/15 and 2015/16 as detailed in the summary at Appendix A to report HOF219.;

Capital Programme

That Cabinet recommends parts d. to e. to Council:

- d. to approve the General Fund Capital programme for 2013/14 to 2017/18 detailed at Appendix D page 1 to report HOF219
- e. to approve the Capital Financing statement detailed at Appendix D page 2 to report HOF219

Reserves and balances

That Cabinet recommends part f to Council:

- f. to note the movements in Revenue and Capital reserves and balances detailed in Appendix E to report HOF219.

Treasury Management and prudential indicators

That Cabinet recommends part g. to Council:

- g. to approve the Treasury Management Strategy provided at Appendix F to report HOF219.

Consideration/reasons for decision:

- 1) Report HOF219 from the Strategic Director Corporate Focus and the Head of Finance in relation to:
 - Budget estimates for 2013/14
 - The District's basic amount of Council Tax 2013/14 following the Government's announcement that South Kesteven had been identified as a low quartile council tax base charge and therefore had the opportunity to increase its Council Tax base by a maximum of £5 for 2013/14 (based on a Band D charge).
 - The grant settlement the Council received for 2013/14 and future forecast decreases in the level of funding anticipated from Government.
 - The Capital programme for 2013/14 – 2017/18
 - Treasury Management and Investment Strategy
- 2) The budget for 2013/14 and indicative budgets for 2014/15 to 2015/16 had

been prepared in line with:

- the Council's priorities and the corporate plan
 - the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan which incorporated the budgetary principles of continuing to protect front line services.
 - Service Strategies and Plans
 - Asset Management Strategy
 - The economic context and recent grant announcements
 - Investment in priorities and the prudent use of reserves and balances
- 3) The proposals have regard to accounting requirements and external factors affecting the budget:
- Prudential code
 - Changes to the business rates and the introduction of the Council Tax support scheme
 - The economic climate
 - Investment income and fees and charges
 - The Actuary review of the Pensions Fund.
- 4) Consultations that had been undertaken both with the four main business clubs of the District and the public. Heavy advertising of drop in sessions in Grantham and the Deepings had been undertaken with text editorials being sent to the larger papers circulating in the district. There had also been a facility on the website to make representations about the council tax proposals. (It was noted by the Cabinet Members that the response to the consultation had been poor even though it had been heavily advertised in the space of time available.)
- 5) The Portfolio Holder Strategic Resources commending the budget for recommendation by the Cabinet to Council and thanking the Strategic Director Corporate Focus and the Head of Finance and their team for all the hard work in putting the budget together in the short time period that was available due to the late settlement, also the work undertaken by the Resources PDG.
- 6) Comments made that no Member outside of the Resources PDG had approached the Portfolio Holder Strategic Resources to discuss the budget.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS BUDGET 2013/14

Decision:

Housing Revenue Account

That Cabinet recommends part a. to d. to Council:

- a. to set dwelling rent increases in accordance with Government guideline rent providing an average rent of £74.32 (and an average rental increase of 4.57%)**
- b. to set an increase in garage rents of 2.6% (RPI)**
- c. to increase service charges by 2.6% (RPI)**
- d. to approve the Housing Revenue Account for the year 2013/14 (including the items at Appendix A to report HOF223 in the report) and indicative years 2014/15 and 2015/16 shown at Appendix B in report HOF223.**

Investment Programmes

That Cabinet recommends parts e. to f. to Council:

- e. to approve the Housing Investment programme for 2013/14 to 2017/18 including the allocation of £3M for additional housing stock detailed at paragraph 5.4 and shown at Appendix C page 1 to report HOF223**
- f. to approve the Capital Financing statement detailed at Appendix C page 2 to report HOF223**

Reserves and Balances

That Cabinet recommends part g. to Council:

- g. To note the movements in HRA revenue and Capital reserves and balances detailed in Appendix D to report HOF223.**

Considerations/reasons for decision:

- 1) Report HOF223 from the Strategic Director Corporate Focus and the Strategic Director Community & Environment.
- 2) The Council's current policy to keep in line with the Government's guidance on rent restructuring.
- 3) The September 2012 inflation figure was 2.6% which the draft determination had been based upon convergence within three years by 2015/16.
- 4) Welfare reform changes concerning the level of housing benefit being paid to social housing tenants and the under-occupancy provision and their likely impact on the HRA.
- 5) The HRA budget and indicative budgets for 2014/15 to 2015/16 had been drawn up to take account of the relevant Council's strategies, policies and financial context including:
 - The Corporate Plan
 - The Housing Business Plan
 - Service Strategies and Plans
 - HRA Asset Management Strategy
 - The economic context and recent grant announcements
 - The 2012/13 HRA forecast outturn
- 6) The current HRA budget proposals had been prepared within the context of the existing Housing Business Plan and the recent refinancing changes.
- 7) A correction made by the Head of Finance to b. and c. of the recommendation.
- 8) Comments made about having a more simplistic format in the future to improve the clarity of information.

DATE DECISIONS EFFECTIVE:

Decisions CO43, CO44 and CO45 as made on 18th February can be implemented by Wednesday 27th February 2013, unless subject to call-in by the Scrutiny Committee Chairman or any five members of the Council from

any political group.

Decision CO46 stands referred to Council on Friday 1st March 2013.

**South Kesteven District Council, Council Offices, St. Peter's Hill, Grantham,
Lincolnshire NG31 6PZ**

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REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: HEAD OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT NO: HNS01/13

DATE: 4 MARCH 2013

TITLE:	Housing Strategy	
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	Key Decision – the Housing Strategy has the potential to affect all wards of the District	
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Cllr T Bryant, Portfolio holder for Good Housing	
CONTACT OFFICER:	Ian Richardson, Head of Housing & Neighbourhoods e-mail – i.richardson@southkesteven.gov.uk Tel: 01476 406063	
INITIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS:	Carried out and Referred to in paragraph (7) below	Full impact assessment Required:
Equality and Diversity	<i>Completed 15th February 2013</i>	<i>No.</i>
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:	This report is publicly available via the Your Council and Democracy link on the Council's website: www.southkesteven.gov.uk	
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Housing Strategy 2010- 2013 http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1621 Equality Analysis http://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=164&MId=2803&Ver=4	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Note the outcomes of the consultation process;
- b) Approve the the Housing Strategy for 2013-2018

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present the draft Housing Strategy for approval.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Consultation

The draft strategy has been prepared following consultation with councillors, customers and other stakeholders. At the Housing Consultation event on 5 December 2012 we consulted representatives of partner agencies, including Registered Providers and developers, support providers, police, tenants and others. A separate consultation event on 29th January provided the opportunity to receive feedback from private landlords. Communities PDG has influenced the content of the strategy, as has the Community Focus Forum, and a random sample of tenants and prospective tenants has been consulted through a postal survey.

The focus of consultation on the strategy was the strategic priorities which will shape the housing agenda in the district over the life of the strategy. The consultation began with three proposed priorities:

1. High quality new affordable homes available to buy or rent
2. Improved housing standards across all neighbourhoods
3. Access to housing and well being services

During the course of consultation, feedback from the Communities Policy Development Group suggested that the wording of the second priority should be amended to make clear that the aim is to raise standards in all parts of the District and across all tenures. A fourth priority was also suggested, to emphasise the importance of sustainability; both in terms of the sustainability of communities and neighbourhoods and in terms of environmental sustainability.

The revised and recommended priorities, and their desired outcomes, now read as follows:

1. High quality new affordable homes available to buy or rent

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ More social housing available to rent from SKDC and registered providers

- ✓ More affordable housing to buy or rent or being offered on a shared equity basis
- ✓ Additional homes to meet the needs of clients with particular needs.

2. Improved housing standards across the district and for all tenures

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ Improvements to the quality of housing and environment in our neighbourhoods
- ✓ Improved management of the homes owned by SKDC
- ✓ Improvements to the quality of private sector housing
- ✓ Households being assisted to remain safely in their homes
- ✓ An increased supply of good quality private rented accommodation
- ✓ Increasing proportions of houses reaching affordable warmth standards.

3. Access to housing and wellbeing services

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ Ensuring housing options and advice are available to assist households in finding housing
- ✓ Ensuring that social housing, provided by both SKDC and Registered Providers in the district, is fairly and effectively used to meet housing needs
- ✓ Availability of services to help vulnerable households remain safely in their homes and live life to the full.

4. Promotion of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ Neighbourhoods which are well integrated with transport links, have good access to employment and amenities and which have a reducing impact on the environment
- ✓ Well managed neighbourhoods in which citizens enjoy the best possible quality of life in homes which are affordable in use and meet their housing needs and where crime and anti-social behavior do not adversely impact on the quality of life.

Development of the Strategy

The drafting of the strategy has reflected the following:

- ✓ The national context
- ✓ The Lincolnshire context
- ✓ The South Kesteven context
- ✓ The related policies and strategies, within and beyond SKDC, which will impact on or influence delivery of the strategy

The intention is that the style and format of the strategy will differ from previous versions and from the 'word' format of the version appended to this report:

- ✓ The strategy will be published in both 'hard copy' and 'web' versions and will be attractive and design-led; incorporating photographs and graphics, consistent with an emergent corporate style which aims to make such documents more accessible, attractive and relatively succinct
- ✓ The 'core' strategy, deliberately concise, will be supplemented by a document of supporting evidence – including, for example, data about demographics, housing markets, etc. – and a 'delivery plan' which are intended to be dynamic documents, updated during the life of the strategy to reflect any changes to underpinning evidence and to provides information about the specific initiatives being undertaken to deliver the strategy

Once Cabinet has approved the strategy, the design work necessary prior to publication will be undertaken.

Implementation

The strategy has a proposed life of five years and the delivery plan will be updated to ensure that actions are taken, reviewed and adapted to best achieve the strategic priorities during the life of the strategy.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None: it is a requirement that the Council has a strategy to identify and meet the housing needs of the district.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct resource implications resulting form this recommendation.If approved, the delivery of the strategic priorities will have resource implications which will be managed in accordance with corporate budgets and the project management framework.

6. RISK AND MITIGATION

Risk has been considered as part of this report and any specific high risks are included in the table below:

Category Risk	Action / Controls
None	None

7. ISSUES ARISING FROM IMPACT ANALYSIS

An equality assessment was carried out on 15th February 2013 and there are no issues arising from that assessment.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications resulting from this recommendation.

9. COMMENTS OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

The financial implications arising from the implementation of the delivery plan will be considered in conjunction with other financial proposals as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.

10. COMMENTS OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

S. 8 of the Housing Act 1985 requires that every local housing authority will consider housing conditions in their district and the needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation. In addition, the provision of a Housing Strategy is a statutory requirement in accordance with s.87 of the Local Government Act 2003. It also assists the good governance of the Council for the delivery of housing provision. Any strategy should be produced in accordance with guidance issued under s.226 of the Housing Act 2004.

11. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICES

None.

12. APPENDICES:

APPENDIX NO.	TITLE
1	Draft Housing Strategy

Appendix 1

Draft Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018

Foreword

The socio-economic climate in 2013 follows a period that is being widely acknowledged as one of the most challenging since the 1930s. This strategy, responding to that challenge, is focused on meeting the housing needs and aspirations of the district. In doing so, it recognises the wider implications that housing can have: in terms of its contribution to economic development and regeneration, to the health and wellbeing of people and communities and to achieving sustainable solutions which mitigate adverse impact on the environment. South Kesteven District Council has a vision for the future and recognises the role that housing has to play in delivering on that vision.

(A 'vision' page will be included in the published version, to a similar format as page 3 of the Economic Development Strategy 2012 - 2016)

Introduction

The South Kesteven Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018 updates and replaces the strategy for 2010 -2013. The Strategy is the product of consultation with a range of stakeholders and draws upon multiple data sources in setting out an ambitious vision for the future of the District within the context of the corporate priority of ***creating the environment to support good housing for all.***

Supporting that corporate priority are four strategic housing priorities:

- Priority 1: **High quality new affordable homes available to buy or rent**
- Priority 2: **Improved housing standards across the district and for all tenures**
- Priority 3: **Access to housing and wellbeing services**
- Priority 4: **Promotion of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities.**

The creation of the environment to support the delivery of good housing for all does not take place in a vacuum: the District Council, as the local strategic housing authority, operates against a background of national housing, economic and social welfare policies which are significantly influential.

SKDC's Housing Strategy is also informed by, and should be considered alongside:

- ✓ The Lincolnshire Housing Strategy 2009 -2014, developed and agreed by the County's District Councils together with the County Council and key housing partners in the public and private sectors;
- ✓ The Lincolnshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy, which will inform the commissioning of a wide range of support services, many of which will be valuable in supporting independent living;
- ✓ The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, identified in the East Midlands Regional Plan and undertaken together with neighbouring authorities, providing information about the existing housing stock; demand for new market housing and for affordable housing; local housing costs and incomes
- ✓ Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework which aims to 'deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.'

- ✓ SKDC's Core Strategy 2010, which provides the spatial policy framework for development and change in the district, and;
- ✓ The Housing Land Supply document, 2012-2017, which identifies specific sites which the Council considers are likely to contribute to the development of new housing over the five year period.

SKDC recognises that housing is important not only in providing shelter and security but also in helping to shape places, neighbourhoods and communities and in having an impact on health, education, employment and independent living. Furthermore, the potentially beneficial impact of housing on the local economy should not be overlooked: the housing strategy can contribute positively to the district's economic development strategy.

The housing market makes a significant contribution to the economy through house building, improvement and maintenance together with the associated investment in support services as people buy and sell their properties. The growth plans for the district anticipate the development of 7,500 homes in the 'sustainable urban extensions', referred to as the North West Quadrant/Poplar Farm and the Southern Quadrant; creating employment and skills development opportunities over a number of years encouraging people to live and work in the district.

Wherever we live and whatever the quality, nature and type of our housing, housing will be central to our overall wellbeing as individuals, families and communities. We cannot overstate the importance, therefore, of ensuring that we do our very best to assess housing needs, to create the conditions in which those needs can be met and to deliver the homes, communities and related services which our citizens need and to which they aspire.

South Kesteven has an ageing population and increasing numbers of people with disabilities and limiting long term illnesses. These needs are reflected in the further challenge of supporting the delivery of the County Council's Health & Wellbeing Strategy; promoting health improvement and independent living. The housing strategy has an important role to play in creating the conditions and delivering actions which improve the quality of housing and ensure the effective delivery of support services.

In the local context of our district, South Kesteven District Council's Housing Strategy strives to respond effectively to these challenges. Success in delivering on the strategic aims will depend crucially upon both our effectiveness as enablers, in supporting our strategic partners, and as developers and managers of that housing which is in the ownership of the Council. The extent to which, together, we deliver the strategic outcomes will be judged not only by the Council and its corporate partners and stakeholders but by the extent to which citizens of the district, and those who aspire to live in South Kesteven, are satisfied with their homes and communities and are able to use those homes and communities as springboards to unlocking their potential to live full, happy and independent lives.

The National Context

This strategy is being produced in a climate of significant change, the effects of which are likely to be felt for some time to come. Those effects will impact on South Kesteven both in its capacity as strategic housing authority and as landlord and will impact on our strategic partners as they seek to develop and manage housing for sale and for rent. Crucially, the impact will also be felt by many existing and prospective tenants and home buyers.

This climate of change is being influenced by the government's national strategy for housing, set out in 'Laying the Foundations', by the National Planning Policy Framework, the Localism Act 2011 and the raft of welfare reforms being phased in from April 2013. The 'Social Sector Size Criteria' and 'Universal Credit' will, during the life of this strategy, certainly have an adverse impact on landlords and tenants; the uncertainty is about the extent of that impact.

A sustained period of economic downturn has been responsible for a cooling of the housing market; with house price reductions, a slow-down in the production of new homes and significantly reduced movement amongst home buyers who are frustrated by the relative lack of mortgage finance and the need for larger deposits than has been customary in recent decades. Potential house buyers and movers are adopting risk-averse strategies in the face of uncertainty about job security, income growth and the property market. This has led to pressure on the private rented market and social housing providers. The stated objectives of 'Laying the Foundations', published in November 2011, included driving up the level of housebuilding, helping new home owners and boosting consumer confidence: there is scant evidence to date of these outcomes having been achieved. Furthermore, the Government's current Affordable Housing Programme runs until March 2015 and there are no commitments to fund affordable housing beyond that date. More positively for South Kesteven, the Government's arrangements for self-financing of Housing Revenue Accounts, implemented in March 2012, present the possibility of a brighter future for council housing in the district and the potential of the New Homes Bonus also presents opportunities for further investment in the district.

The Government's 'Green Deal' initiative has attracted significant publicity. The cost of loans provided to fund improvements designed to reduce energy consumption and deliver more affordable warmth need to be evaluated against the savings in energy costs which are achieved throughout the period of the loan. Further complications relate to loans being attached to individuals rather than to properties, presenting potential complexities when individuals move to or from a property subject to an outstanding loan. During the life of this strategy, attention will be given to extracting real benefits from the Green Deal in full knowledge of the wider implications. To do so would be consistent with the aim of reducing fuel poverty.

However good housing conditions are, nationally, locally or for individual households, those conditions need to be capable of being enjoyed by the occupiers. The demographic changes being experienced nationally, and felt locally, include an ageing population, living longer and often with challenges to continued independent living presented by disability or illness. The number of households is increasing not only with population growth but by the trend towards smaller households and the diversity of the population is increasing, not least with the opening up of Europe to increased movement by economic migrants. All of these factors have implications for the provision and management of housing and for the relationships between strategic housing authorities and those responsible for health and social welfare.

In summary, the national context for housing is one in which we are facing the toughest challenges in living memory.

The Lincolnshire Context

The current Lincolnshire Housing Strategy, for the period 2009 – 2014, provides an indication of the enduring nature of the prevailing economic conditions; stating in the foreword that *'this strategy is launched in uncertain times – a challenging international economic position, a recession in the United Kingdom and a significant downturn in housing market activity across the country.'*

The Lincolnshire Housing Strategy identified four priorities:

- ✓ To increase the supply of affordable housing across Lincolnshire
- ✓ To increase the supply of affordable homes in rural communities
- ✓ To meet the challenge of our ageing population, and
- ✓ To assist vulnerable households.

The outcomes sought by the County strategy are stated as:

- ✓ More high quality affordable housing in both urban and rural communities
- ✓ Closer working between partners to provide a more effective service for local people, including a well-informed evidence base
- ✓ A wider range of choices for older, vulnerable or homeless people
- ✓ Communities, economies and existing homes that are more sustainable.

The South Kesteven context: the State of the District

We are heading towards having 60,000 homes in South Kesteven; with more than six thousand homes in council housing, a very similar number in the private rented sector, more than two thousand provided by housing associations and almost forty-four thousand homes in the owner-occupied sector. The age profile of South Kesteven's housing is more modern than the national average, with 63% built after 1944, but 60% of the private rented sector is pre-1914. The nature of the stock is also worthy of note; with a higher proportion of detached homes and bungalows than the national average and no high-rise flats.

South Kesteven is ranked in the top 40% nationally in terms of the affordability of home ownership and for levels of home ownership but for many households on lower incomes home ownership remains unrealistic. The District has seen a relatively low growth in average house prices between 1999 and 2012 of 56.8%. By comparison, average prices changed nationally by 80.13%. That said, house prices in South Kesteven, in common with much of the national market, have fallen since 2010 and are currently approximately 7.1 x earnings, compared with 5.8 for East Midlands and 6.7 nationally. This impacts on the need for affordable housing provided by the Council, registered providers (housing associations) and by the private rented sector. This need has been assessed as a requirement for an additional 667 affordable homes each year, whilst in the three year period 2008-2011 669 new homes were achieved; demonstrating that provision, for a variety of reasons, is falling well short of need. Housing completions in South Kesteven fell by 44% over the four years from 2007/8 - 2011/12 and whilst housing associations have maintained a modest but important programme of new housing, there has been no new council housing for a number of years, although change is anticipated under the arrangements made possible by the re-financing of the Council's Housing Revenue Account. It will be important to ensure that any new house building across all tenures and market sectors, and particularly in the district's growth areas of North West Quadrant/Poplar Farm and the South West Quadrant, provide appropriate responses to both the range and extent of identified housing need.

It is also important to ensure that the best possible use is made of existing housing and so this strategy must provide the framework, across tenures, to support the bringing back into use of empty homes and the rapid re-letting of rented housing and the improvement of housing conditions. There are many empty properties above shops or forming part of a commercial development which could be brought back into use or converted for residential accommodation. The housing market across the district also displays local variation, with something of a polarisation of prices, the north of the district being generally more affordable than the south, and with a mismatch between the size and types of housing provided and the emergent needs. In essence, housing tends to be a durable and relatively inflexible asset which, locally, provides less housing for smaller households than is required; a situation which will be compounded in council and housing association homes by the introduction of the 'social sector size criteria', making unaffordable any potentially available housing with more bedrooms than Government prescribes as necessary for a household in receipt of benefit.

Challenges are also presented by the need for affordable rural housing. An insufficient supply of affordable housing, to rent or to buy, in many of the villages in the district is often compounded by problems of access to transport and to amenities such as shops and schools. This can prevent young people and first time buyers being able to buy homes in the village

they grew up in and where their family still live. This can lead to older family dependants sometimes being isolated as their family home is further away in more affordable areas. With energy prices continuing to rise at rates ahead of earnings, fuel poverty is a real concern and must be addressed by the housing strategy. If the cost of heating homes and the amount of energy consumed can be reduced in all tenures, not only do the occupiers benefit from more affordable warmth but there are environmental benefits flowing from reduced carbon emissions. SAP (energy efficiency) ratings for housing are typically affected by the age and type of construction and supplementary measures to reduce heat loss, such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing. Average SAP ratings in the district (2012) were 80 (housing associations), 61 (council housing), 54 (owner-occupied housing) and 43 (private rented sector). Ratings of below 65 are considered to be an indicator of likely fuel poverty. As stated earlier, the extent to which the government's 'Green Deal' initiative is likely to assist households in overcoming fuel poverty is currently unclear and will need to be maintained.

The ageing population of the district also presents challenges for the housing strategy. The proportion of the population of the district who are over the age of 65 is forecast to increase from 19.2% (2012) to 28% by 2020. We know that frailty, both physical and mental, increases sharply with age and this will present challenges not only in terms of the suitability of housing design, layout and ease of use but also in terms of support needs and access to amenities if independent living is to be achieved and the best possible quality of life to be experienced. Meeting the needs of disabled people presents similar challenges: 3.9% of the population of working age is registered disabled and many such people would benefit from aids and adaptations in their home or from more appropriate housing than they currently enjoy. Many households in the district, specifically those who are older or otherwise vulnerable, might also be affected during the life of this strategy by changes to the commissioning and delivery of support services. These services, funded by the County Council under the government's Supporting People programme, are currently subject to review and changes to both delivery arrangements and eligibility criteria are anticipated.

Strategic Priorities

Consultation with stakeholders on the development of this housing strategy has demonstrated, as summarised in the introduction, support for four strategic housing priorities:

- Priority 1: High quality new affordable homes available to buy or rent
- Priority 2: Improved housing standards across the district and all tenures
- Priority 3: Access to housing and wellbeing services
- Priority 4: Promotion of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities.

Taking each of these in turn:

Priority 1: High quality new affordable homes available to buy or rent

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ More social housing available to rent from SKDC and registered providers
- ✓ More affordable housing to buy or rent or being offered on a shared equity basis
- ✓ Additional homes to meet the needs of clients with particular needs.

Potential solutions might include:

- ✓ Increased investment in the delivery of new affordable housing; with continuing investment by registered providers and the welcome prospect of new Council housing

- ✓ Collaborative projects to develop housing through creative use of assets and funding sources
- ✓ The development and management of adaptable homes to meet the needs of particular client groups.

Priority 2: Improved housing standards across the district and for all tenures

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ Improvements to the quality of housing and environment in our neighbourhoods
- ✓ Improved management of the homes owned by SKDC
- ✓ Improvements to the quality of private sector housing
- ✓ Households being assisted to remain safely in their homes
- ✓ An increased supply of good quality private rented accommodation
- ✓ Increasing proportions of houses reaching affordable warmth standards.

Potential solutions might include:

- ✓ Revisions to private sector renewal policies, strategies and schemes and achieving the potential benefits of 'retrofit' programmes and Council Tax policy; both to improve the affordable warmth of homes and to reduce the number of empty homes in the district
- ✓ Encouraging private landlords to ensure their properties are fit and fully utilised through an appropriate balance of positive support and enforcement
- ✓ Maximising the number of empty homes brought back into use
- ✓ Maximising the investment in improvements to the Council's existing housing stock
- ✓ Applying learning from the sustainable neighbourhoods project in order to improve the way SKDC manages and sustains tenancies and estates.

Priority 3: Access to housing and wellbeing services

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ Ensuring housing options and advice are available to assist households in finding housing
- ✓ Ensuring that social housing, provided by both SKDC and Registered Providers in the district, is fairly and effectively used to meet housing needs
- ✓ Availability of services to help vulnerable households remain safely in their homes and live life to the full.

Potential solutions include:

- ✓ Working with partners to ensure services are delivered to improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable households
- ✓ Developing allocations policies framed to most effectively meet the housing needs of the district
- ✓ Maximising the initial and ongoing benefit derived from investment in adaptations in order to support independent living and the wellbeing of communities
- ✓ Through delivery and/or support of County Council funded Supporting People contracts; aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

Priority 4: Promotion of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities

This priority aims to deliver outcomes including:

- ✓ Neighbourhoods which are well integrated with transport links, have good access to employment and amenities and which have a reducing impact on the environment
- ✓ Well managed neighbourhoods in which citizens enjoy the best possible quality of life in homes which are affordable in use and meet their housing needs and where crime and anti-social behavior do not adversely impact on the quality of life.

Potential solutions include:

- ✓ Maximising the benefit derived from investment of available resources in the improvement of housing conditions across all tenures – for example creating employment and skills development opportunities for local people
- ✓ Improving housing management and community safety services
- ✓ Supporting, in partnership with the County Council, continued independent living for older and vulnerable people
- ✓ Delivery of the Sustainable Urban Extensions; providing up to 7,500 new homes, reflecting Grantham's status as a Growth Area
- ✓ Encourage town centre housing above shops and promote the vitality of our town centre and evening economy.

Delivering our Priorities

The detailed actions associated with the delivery of the strategic priorities will be contained in a Delivery Plan which will be updated throughout the life of the strategy to incorporate and report on actions taken and benefits realised. The delivery plan will be subject to periodic monitoring and review; both in relation to delivery of strategic housing priorities and to ensure that housing is able to make a positive contribution to the broader strategic vision for South Kesteven.

The North West and Southern Quadrants are part of Grantham Growth; an ambitious programme of investment to deliver 7,500 new homes and up to 4,000 new jobs by 2026. The planned growth in residential development provides Grantham with an opportunity to realise its full potential as a sub-regional centre, particularly with regard to delivering sustainable economic growth and creating new jobs in the knowledge economy.

As a result of Grantham's designation as a New Growth Point, key development sites have been identified in and around the town, not only for housing but also for commercial, employment and retail development together with social and physical infrastructure required to meet the needs of an expanding population and in promoting economic growth within the district.

North West Quadrant

- 130 hectares situated 1.5 km west of Grantham, conveniently near to the A1 and A52 interchange
- Identified for housing (up to 3,500 houses) and community facilities in adopted Core Strategy
- The site will be developed in two phases. Outline planning permission was granted in June 2011 for Phase 1 at Poplar Farm (eastern part of NWQ) comprising up to 1800 new homes (including affordable housing at 21% provision across the site), a school and community facilities, open spaces and a new link road (Pennine Way) and rail bridge, which will create a direct road link from Gonerby Hill Foot through the development to the Muddle Go Nowhere pub (Phase 1 was originally allocated in the 1995 Local Plan)
- Detailed planning permission granted for first two phases providing 204 homes to be developed by David Wilson Homes and Bellway (start on site expected next few weeks)

- The new homes will be a mixture of privately owned and affordable two, three and four bedroom homes with some shared ownership
- The delivery of Phase 2 of the North West Quadrant is anticipated post 2016. A planning application for this phase has not yet been submitted.

Southern Quadrant

- Lies on the southern edge of the built up area of Grantham between the A1 and A52. The land is situated 1.5 km south of the town centre
- Potential for up to 4,000 new homes, alongside local shops, schools and community facilities and the construction of a new southern relief road linked to a new junction on the A1
- Includes new employment area. The first phase was granted planning permission in August 2010 for three high quality industrial/distribution facilities and a new dedicated junction onto the A1. An adjoining site of 29ha is allocated in the draft Grantham Area Action Plan for the development of a prestige business park of small to medium sized enterprises within Use Classes B1, B2 and/or B8
- A 'masterplan', setting out the development principles for the urban extension, has been prepared by the Council in conjunction with the landowner (Buckminster Trust Estate) and is due, following public consultation with local residents and businesses, to be adopted by the Council on 18th February 2013 as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- A planning application for the southern relief road is expected to be submitted in the spring of 2013, followed by an application for the rest of the Southern Quadrant development later in the year.

Other developments

New housing development in Bourne should be restricted to that already committed via planning approval at the date of adoption of the Core Strategy. Development rates in Stamford and The Deepings should be maintained at a modest level to meet the needs of these market towns and to support the provision of additional community infrastructure, in accordance with Circular 05/05 and Policy SP4.

Plans provide for a modest level of development within the more sustainable villages, identified in the Core Strategy as Local Service Centres, to enable them to continue to function as sustainable local centres.

New housing development in all other areas will be restricted to affordable housing to meet local needs, including agricultural and forestry workers accommodation and conversions carried out in accordance with policy SP1 (spatial strategy).

New Council Housing

The re-financing of the Housing Revenue Account, in March 2012, has created headroom within the business plan for new investment in council housing for the district. Work is currently in progress to establish the level of possible investment and to prioritise development of Council-owned sites and investment of £3m is planned by March 2015 to kick-start the building programme.

Asset Management Strategy

The Council's strategy for investment in its housing stock is currently subject to review. The aim is to ensure that the Council's housing stock remains fit for purpose and is of the best

possible quality, now and into the future, with investment planned to improve and maintain housing and to dispose of or replace that housing which reaches the end of its useful life or for which further improvement is uneconomic. These decisions will be influenced by market conditions and by housing need; particularly taking account of the changing social demographics of the district. The review of the Asset Management Strategy is due to be completed in September 2013 and the actions flowing from this will be reflected in the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan.

Private Sector Housing Conditions

The Council will aim to balance the limited capacity to invest in the improvement of conditions in private sector housing with enabling access to initiatives such as Green Deal and in taking enforcement action where appropriate. The Council recognises the important role of the private rented sector in meeting housing need and aims to forge closer and more effective working relationships with the private rented sector. The strategies and policies specifically related to private sector housing are planned for review during 2013 and, again, detailed actions flowing from the review will be reflected in the Delivery Plan.

Monitoring and Review of the Strategy

The delivery of the strategy and assessment of effectiveness will be the subject of on-going review and outcomes will be reported as appropriate.



South Kesteven District Council

**Equality Analysis
(Stage 1)**

**Housing Strategy
V1**

Service Area: Housing	Lead officer: May Read	Date of Analysis 15.02.13
	Assessors: Liz Bishop	
	Neutral Assessor: Carol Drury	

1. Name and description of policy/service/function/strategy :

Housing Strategy-

The strategy sets out the strategic priorities which will shape the housing agenda in the district over the life of the strategy. The priorities are:

1. High quality new affordable homes available to buy or rent
2. Improved housing standards across the district and for all tenures
3. Access to housing and wellbeing services
4. Promotion of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities

Is this a new or existing policy?

New- replaces existing strategy

2. Complete the table below, considering whether the proposed policy/service/function/strategy could have any potential positive, or negative impacts on groups from any of the protected characteristics (or diversity strands) listed, using demographic data, user surveys, local consultations evaluation forms, comments and complaints etc.

Equality Group	Does this policy/service/function/strategy have a positive, or negative impact on any of the equality groups? Please state which for each group	Please describe why the impact is positive, or negative. If you consider this policy etc is not relevant to a specific characteristic please explain why
Age	Positive	Access to affordable homes for younger households may be made possible by the strategy. The policy recognises the ageing population and the need to meet housing needs of this group.
Disability	Positive	The strategy recognises the housing requirements of people with disabilities and long term illnesses and the

		need to plan for homes to meet these needs. This also links with the older population referred to above, as age is often linked to disability, illness or mobility problems.
Race	Neutral	The strategy sits alongside other strategies and needs assessments, including the Lincolnshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2007.
Gender Reassignment	Neutral	
Religion or Belief	Neutral	
Sex	Neutral	
Sexual Orientation:	Neutral	
Pregnancy and Maternity	Neutral	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Neutral	
Carers	Positive	The strategy recognises the housing requirements of people with disabilities and long term illnesses and the need to plan for homes to meet these needs. By association this may have a positive impact on carers.

Other Groups (e.g. those from deprived (IMD*) communities; those from rural communities, those with an offending past)

Rural

Positive

The strategy recognises the particular needs of rural communities and refers to plans to support development of sustainable villages.

*(IMD = Indices of multiple deprivation)

3. What data/information did you use to inform the outcomes of the proposed policy/service/function/strategy? (Note any relevant consultation who took part and key findings)

Consultation on the strategy and other contributory policies has been carried out with the following groups:

- Wide range of stakeholders at a Consultation Event 05.12.12
- Communities PDG 10.01.13
- Community Focus Forum
- Private sector landlords

Summary of feedback:

- Support for developing new social housing to rent; many stakeholders have concerns about the affordability of accommodation for their client groups
- Support for making improvements to the housing environment and reducing anti social behaviour through improved neighbourhood management
- Support for prioritising access to social housing for those in housing need
- Concern that the support needs of vulnerable households should continue to be met in the face of funding arrangement changes
- Concern about the impact of welfare reform on households ability to remain in their homes

If there are any gaps in the consultation/monitoring data, how will this be addressed?

Over the lifetime of the strategy a range of projects will be implemented, each subject to reporting and monitoring processes. Success of the strategy may be measured by things such as the delivery of new homes to rent or buy and visible improvements in neighbourhoods.

4. Outcomes of analysis and recommendations (please note you will be required to provide evidence to support the recommendations made): Please tick one of the options.

- a. No major change needed: equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or for negative impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken

X

If you have ticked option (a) go to stage 3

- b. Adjust the proposal to remove barriers identified by equality analysis or to better promote equality. Please complete the questions in the box below.**

b.1 In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your proposed policy/service/function/strategy to minimise or eliminate the negative equality impacts?

b.2 Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

If you have ticked option b go to Stage 2

- c. Adverse impact but continue Please provide an explanation in the box below that clearly sets out your justification for continuing with the proposed policy/function/service/strategy. You should consider in stage 2 whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact.**

If you have ticked option c please go to Stage 2

- d. Stop and remove the policy/function/service/strategy as equality analysis has shown actual or potential unlawful discrimination**

Stage 3 to be completed alongside completion of the initial delivery plan, in 2013.

Signed (Lead Officer): May Read, Housing Options Team Leader

Date completed: 15.02.13

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: HEAD OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT NO: HNS02/13

DATE: 4 MARCH 2013

TITLE:	Allocations Policy	
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	Key Decision – potential to affect residents of all wards	
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: NAME AND DESIGNATION :	<i>Cllr Terl Bryant, Portfolio holder for Good Housing</i>	
CONTACT OFFICER:	<i>May Read, Housing Options Team Leader</i> m.read@southkesteven.gov.uk 01476 406251	
INITIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS:	Carried out and Referred to in paragraph (7) below	Full impact assessment Required:
Equality and Diversity	<i>Completed 12.02.13</i>	<i>No.</i>
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:	This report is publicly available via the Your Council and Democracy link on the Council's website: www.southkesteven.gov.uk	
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Stage 1 Equality Assessment: http://moderngovsvr/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=164&MId=2803&Ve r=4	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Note the outcomes to date of the consultation process;
- b) Approve the the revised allocations policy

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present the draft Allocations Policy for approval.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Consultation

The draft policy has been prepared following consultation with councillors, customers and partners. At the Housing Consultation event on 5 December 2012 we consulted representatives of partner agencies, including Registered Providers, support providers, police, tenants and others. Communities PDG have had the opportunity to influence content of the policy at their meeting in January 2013 and consultation has also taken place with the Community Focus Forum. A random sample of tenants and prospective tenants has been consulted through a postal survey. The questions we asked all parties were around the key principles of :

1. Local connection- How do we want to define 'local connection'? Should priority be given to local people?
2. Should we aim to meet housing aspirations or only urgent need?
3. Do we want to reward economic or community contribution?
4. How do we want the scheme to operate? Should we move away from a 'points' based scheme to a banding scheme?

Feedback received from the events and groups are attached at appendices 1 to 3.

Broadly there was support for giving some priority to local households, but not totally excluding those without a local connection. The recommended policy outcome is as follows:

- A requirement that an applicant has lived here for 6 of last 12 months or 3 of last 5 years, to be given priority based on housing need
- Applicants without a local connection will be accepted but placed in the proposed 'band 4' of a system revised to use banding rather than points
- Those with a connection through family may be given priority based on housing need

Generally, consultees thought we should focus on meeting priority need, but that applications from those with no identified housing need should continue to be accepted. As a result, such applications will be registered, but placed in the lowest band.

Consultees considered that rewarding economic contribution with greater priority on the housing register may have advantages, but there were concerns about negative impacts on those not in work, or unable to make a 'community contribution' through no fault of their own.

Communities PDG were not in favour of rewarding community contribution, their views being based on the difficulty of defining the type and level of contribution to reward.

The recommended policy outcome is as follows:

- Include 'employment' as a ground for having a local connection, with a requirement, where this is the basis for establishing local connection, of 12 months employment in the district prior to granting the 'local connection'
- Include hardship as a result of costs of getting to work within the 'welfare' categories

The Communities PDG were supportive of moving away from a points based scheme, to a banding scheme, on the grounds that it can offer us a more transparent way of explaining the policy and priority for housing.

We have shared the draft policy document with Registered Providers to allow them the opportunity to review and make comment, as required by legislation. Feedback received and our response is included at appendix 4.

The draft policy has been discussed by the Housing Steering Board and approved for recommendation to Cabinet.

The key differences between the current and draft policies are:

- Households with no local connection to the district will not have their housing needs assessed and will be placed in the lowest band. Currently such households can be awarded priority based on their housing circumstances.
- Priority for 'keyworkers' does not feature in the draft policy as it does in the current policy. The current definition of 'keyworker' includes public sector workers. It was agreed during consultation with Communities PDG that such households do not require greater help accessing affordable housing than other households.
- The draft policy reduces the variation in grades of priority and focuses on housing needs; the draft policy does not award priority for matters unrelated to housing need, such as low level medical problems, or old age.
- The draft policy proposes a banding scheme, rather than a points based one. The policy sets out in each 'band' descriptions of the housing circumstances which would warrant a household being placed in that category. It is the hope that this will help applicants to recognise more clearly how their housing circumstances have been assessed, and also the relative priority they have. For example, an applicant placed in band 4, would understand that they have low priority, compared to higher bands.

The table below illustrates some of the differences between the current and draft policies in how applications are assessed.

Case example	Draft 'banding' policy	current points based policy
Applicant with local connection awaiting accessible or supported accommodation before they can be discharged from hospital	Emergency band	50 local connection 300 severe medical points 150 discretionary points Total= 500. very high priority
Homeless household to whom the council has accepted a legal duty to accommodate	Emergency band	550 points awarded: 500- homelessness 50- 10 years + residency Total= 550 points, very high priority
RSL tenant with local connection wishing to move to a smaller property	Band 3	50 local connection points Very low chance of an offer
Family with local connection living in overcrowded situation lacking one bedroom	Band 2	400 points awarded: 50 local connection points 350 overcrowded Total= 400 points, realistic chance of an offer
Family overcrowded, and sharing with friends having given up a tenancy which was suitable for them	Band 4	350 overcrowded 50 local connection Total= 400 points, realistic chance of an offer

The similarities between the current and draft policies include:

- A commitment to meeting housing needs, and prioritising reasonable preference groups
- Acceptance of applications from people with no identified housing needs

Policy testing

We have compared the assessment of samples of applications using the current and draft policy. Observations are that:

- The draft policy more transparently gives highest priority to homeless households which we have a duty to accommodate
- The draft policy more clearly links priority to housing need. The discretionary award of points for circumstances not linked to housing will end, which may mean that a few households may see priority reduced significantly

- In the draft policy the effective date of applications within bands becomes more critical as there are fewer variations in priority.

Implementation

It is envisaged that a project group will be established to assist implementation of the revised policy, once approved by Cabinet. Matters to consider are IT/database requirements, review of application forms and advice material, and timescale. Initial discussions have been held with ICT Support to identify key implementation activities and timescale. An implementation timetable of three months would seem appropriate at this stage.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None: it is a legal requirement that the Council has a policy for the allocation of its housing. Retaining the points scheme or moving, as recommended, to a banding scheme are the only options to have been considered.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct resource implications resulting from this recommendation. If approved, the implementation project may identify resources requirements which will be managed in accordance with the project management framework.

6. RISK AND MITIGATION

Risk has been considered as part of this report and any specific high risks are included in the table below:

Category Risk	Action / Controls
None	None

7. ISSUES ARISING FROM IMPACT ANALYSIS

An equality assessment was carried out on 12.02.13 and there are no issues arising from that assessment. A stage 3 assessment will be completed six months following implementation to establish whether there have been any unforeseen outcomes of the policy for equalities groups.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications resulting from this recommendation.

9. COMMENTS OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

There may be some financial implications linked to the ICT implementation of this policy. Although funding has not yet been quantified it is anticipated that the implementation costs will be modest and managed within existing resources.

10. COMMENTS OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Subject to the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 (the Act), a housing authority may make such provision for the allocation of housing in such a manner as it considers appropriate. The Act requires that every authority shall have a scheme for determining priorities and the procedure to be followed in allocating housing accommodation.

11. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICES

None.

12. APPENDICES:

APPENDIX NO.	TITLE
1	Communities PDG 10.01.13 Feedback
2	Stakeholder consultation feedback 5 December 2012
3	Housing Strategy Survey Results 31 January 2013
4	Feedback from Registered providers and our response
5	South Kesteven District Council Allocations Policy DRAFT

Appendix 1

Communities PDG 10.01.13

Feedback

Allocations Policy

1 Local Connection

Consultees were keen that something like the status quo should continue- that applicants with family resident in the area, or those who have lived here previously, might have the opportunity to return. The particular value of family connection in rural areas was referred to. Continued acceptance and registration of applications from those with no assessed housing need for a particular locality was supported, reflecting the fact that we might sometimes have low demand properties to let.

2 Housing need v housing aspirations

Consultees were of the view that, whilst the primary aim is to address housing needs, there should be continued acceptance and registration of applications from those with no assessed housing need; reflecting the fact that we might sometimes have low demand properties to let.

3 Rewarding economic or community contribution

Consultees did not want to include 'voluntary contribution' as a basis for granting additional priority as this is considered too difficult to evaluate and manage.

Consultees were uncertain about rewarding 'work', mindful of the practical difficulties of achieving a fair scheme and concerned about the message it might give to those who have recently lost jobs or are struggling to find work.

4 Change to scheme type

Consultees supported moving to a 'banding scheme', rather than retaining a 'points scheme'; largely based on extensive discussion they have had on this in recent years.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder consultation event

5 December 2012

Summary of feedback

Stakeholder representation from wide range of agencies provided us with the following feedback:

Allocations Policy

Stakeholders were asked to consider the following questions:

Should applicants with no local connection be accepted onto the register, and if so, should they have any priority?

Stakeholders considered that applicants with no local connection should be accepted on to the register, but that consideration should be given to other factors, including their housing history, support needs and previous tenancy conduct when assessing applications. Stakeholders recognised that there is a need to manage expectation and avoid excessive burden in managing the housing register.

Should we aim to meet housing aspirations or only housing need?

Stakeholders thought that those in greatest housing need should be prioritised. It was also considered that previous unacceptable behaviour should be taken into account when assessing applications and that greater use should be made of mutual exchange for existing tenants who are not in housing need.

Stakeholders further considered that, where possible, the wider impact on sustainable communities should be taken into account; recognising the contribution made to the achievement of mixed, sustainable and thriving communities by the economically active. No prescriptive mechanisms for achieving this were suggested for inclusion in the policy framework.

Question- should we try to reward economic and community contribution in some way? How might we do this?

Stakeholders considered that the policy should have some regard for economic contribution, but qualified this support with concerns that those not working through no fault of their own should not be disadvantaged.

There were concerns that transport to work should be taken into account (referring to poor transport links in rural areas); helping people to move to towns where there is more likely to be employment.

Stakeholders recognised the challenge of taking such an approach- almost a moral or means tested approach to allocations – and no prescriptive mechanisms for achieving this were suggested.

Appendix 3

Housing Strategy Survey Results 31 January 2013

The Housing Strategy survey, including questions relating to the Allocations Policy, was sent to a random selection of 1450 current tenants and 1000 randomly chosen housing register applicants. 11.9% (292) surveys have been returned.

Question	No who answered question	Yes	No
Do you think someone should be living, working or have family in the area to be accepted onto the housing register?	284	81.7%	18.3%
Do you think we should only accept housing applications from people who have a priority need to move home?	276	60.5%	39.5%
Do you think we should give additional priority to people who are working or have an offer of employment in SK?	267	67.4%	32.6%

Appendix 4

Feedback from Registered Providers.

Providers of social housing in the district were given the opportunity to comment on the draft policy document.

Comment	Response
<p>you may want to clarify in the four bedroom house eligibility that if a person has four children they may not necessarily qualify for a 4 bed house as the children can share two to a room so it depends on the sexes and ages of the children.</p>	<p>Suggestion accepted. Guidance on who 3 bedroom houses may be offered to (section 10 of policy) amended.</p>
<p>band 3 seems a little low for under-occupying social housing tenants as if they are affected by bedroom tax they may well be in such financial difficulty as to be in serious need of a move (although I appreciate the statement that there is a lack of properties).</p>	<p>The suitable banding for such households in all social housing has been carefully considered. At present the Council is developing plans for how it will support council tenants affected by reductions in housing benefit as a result of under occupation. Plans will include support to enable mutual exchanges. Priority for downsizing has been extended to include all social housing tenants, not simply council tenants. At present we do not know what the demand is likely to be; should every affected tenant make an application to move, we could not meet the demand. There are many households in private rented accommodation also managing situations where they have to 'top up' the rent if housing benefit does not meet the total costs. The situation will be monitored, and upon policy review after 12 months the impact of the policy decision will be assessed.</p>
<p>Would we consider offering 3 bedroom homes to households with 2 children of same sex where one is over 16</p>	<p>Yes- policy states <i>Where there is low demand for a particular property the Council will use its' discretion in identifying potential suitable tenants.</i></p>
<p>Nominations- where SKDC policy differs from the receiving Registered Provider, what would happen?</p>	<p>Sentence included in nominations section stating that in making nominations we will have regard to that provider's allocations policy.</p>
<p>Will we consider reviewing nominations arrangements/agreements for making nominations within specified time periods etc</p>	<p>Yes- we can include in the implementation project brief, as it will link in to our internal processes</p>

Appendix 5

South Kesteven District Council

Allocations Policy

DRAFT

Contents

Introduction

1. Eligibility
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Allocations Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out the Council's scheme for managing allocations of social housing in the South Kesteven district.

Allocations of accommodation will include:

- selection of people to be secure or introductory tenants of the Council
- nominations of people to be an assured or introductory (starter) tenant of a Registered Provider (for example, a housing association).

This policy aims to make the best use of social housing vacancies to meet housing needs and all applications will be assessed based on current housing need. Households who do not have an immediate need for accommodation can join the housing register; however they will have no priority and as a result be unlikely to be offered accommodation. Appropriate advice will be available to all customers seeking housing.

1 Eligibility

Some people are not permitted (eligible) by law to apply for social housing if they are from abroad or are returning from abroad. Applicants who are unsure about their eligibility should seek detailed advice from the Council's Housing Solutions team.

Applicants considered to be ineligible for the housing register will be notified of the decisions and the reasons given in writing. Please read section 17 for more details on decisions.

2 Transfers

Council tenants and tenants of Registered Providers (or Housing Association/Registered Social Landlords (RSL)) are eligible for the housing allocations scheme and their applications will be assessed in accordance with this policy. Tenants of the Council and of Registered providers within South Kesteven are considered to have reasonable preference for accommodation (as defined by the Housing Act 1996, part VI, S166A) and are treated the same as new applicants.

The Council recognises that the 'social sector size criteria' introduced by the Welfare Reform Act in April 2013, which defines the number of bedrooms to be taken into account for Housing Benefit purposes, might introduce affordability challenges for affected tenants. The relative lack of availability of smaller properties limits the extent to which such households might be assisted with a transfer to a smaller home: in such circumstances affected tenants should also seek advice about the possibility of a Mutual Exchange.

3 Disqualifications and reduced priority

The council may decide that some groups of people do not qualify for the scheme, or should be awarded reduced or no priority. These groups of people are listed below.

In such cases the council will decide whether the applicant will be:

- refused access to the housing register
- accepted onto the housing register but placed in the lowest band
- accepted onto the housing register and housing needs assessed

The merits of each application and any exceptional circumstances will be considered and the applicant will be informed in writing of the decision and reasons for the decision. The applicant may request a review of the decision. See section 17 for more details on decisions and reviews.

Households with sufficient resources to meet housing needs

Households with sufficient resources to meet their own housing needs may not be accepted on to the register or awarded priority. Resources may include ownership of a property or assets sufficient to secure suitable housing. The value of property or assets and the household's housing needs will be taken into account in this assessment.

This applies to all homeowners with the following exceptions:

- applicants aged 60 years or over, seeking supported accommodation
- applicants with an identified medical or support need seeking supported housing.

Details of how the assessment is carried out are available from Housing Solutions.

Households guilty of unacceptable behaviour

The Council may decide not to accept an application or to award no priority where the applicant, or a member of their household who is to be re-housed with them, is considered by the council to have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour that, if the person were a secure council tenant or living with a council tenant, would constitute sufficient grounds to entitle the council to a possession order.

Rent Arrears and housing related debts

The Council may decide not to accept an application or to award priority where an applicant owes substantial amounts of rent which is/was lawfully due to a private or public sector landlord. 'Substantial' is defined as unpaid rent due exceeding the value of eight weeks rent due.

The Council may decide not to accept an application or to award priority where an applicant owes South Kesteven District Council outstanding debts for repairs, rent in advance loans or rent deposit assistance.

Affordability and adherence to repayment plans will be taken into account when considering applications from those with rent arrears or housing related debts.

Where there is evidence of a history of rent arrears or housing related debts owing to a landlord, the Council may decide not to accept an application or to award priority.

4 Local connection

Applicants who meet the following criteria are considered to have a local connection and will have their housing needs assessed in accordance with the priorities within this policy:

- residence- He/she has been normally resident in the district for a minimum of six months preceding the application or has been resident for three years out of the preceding five years.
- employment- He/she has been in paid employment (not necessarily permanent) in the South Kesteven district for the preceding 6 months, for at least 17 hours per week on average
- family- He/she has a close family member who has normally resided in the district for the preceding five years. Family connection will normally mean that the applicant has a parent, adult child, brother or sister residing in the district.

Exceptions to this:

- homeless households for which SKDC has accepted a main duty to accommodate (Housing Act 1996 Part 7. S193)
- qualifying armed forces personnel (see section 9 below)
- 16/17 year olds and care leavers being looked after by Lincolnshire County Council within the district

Applicants who do not have a local connection as defined above may join the register; however, their application will have no priority awarded and as a result they are unlikely to be offered accommodation.

Applicants who have a local connection, but no housing need, will have no priority awarded and as a result they are unlikely to be offered accommodation.

5 Applicants aged less than 18 years

Young people under the age of 18 may access certain, but not all, housing and may not hold a tenancy.

It is possible for people under the age of 18 years to accept an offer of accommodation provided an adult or organisation is prepared to accept the tenancy in trust (be a trustee) until the young person reaches the age of 18 years.

Applications from young people aged 16- 18 years will be accepted and assessed in the following circumstances:

- SKDC has reasons to believe the young person is homeless or threatened with homelessness (as defined by the Housing Act 1996), and/or;
- Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services have made a referral for assistance and satisfactory support plans are in place until the person reaches the age of 18

6 Choice

Applicants can express preferred choice of areas in which they would like to be offered accommodation; these choices will be at the level of towns and villages for most of the district and at estate level in Grantham (where there is more housing and estates tend to be larger than elsewhere in the district). The application form lists the areas from which choice/preference can be made.

Extending choice will extend opportunities for housing and so applicants will be encouraged to include a wide range of areas in their choices.

Where SKDC owes a household a main housing duty under the Housing Act 1996, Part 7 (s.193), one 'final offer' of accommodation will be made through the allocations scheme in a location considered to be suitable and appropriate to the household's needs. If the applicant refuses the offer or accommodation and the Council considers the refusal to be unreasonable, the applicant may remain on the housing register and express preference for areas in which they would like to be offered accommodation. However their application will have reduced priority as the Council will no longer have a legal duty to provide accommodation.

Please see section 8 for further details in relation to offers of accommodation to homeless households.

7 Household Members

Normally the following people will be considered to be household members:

- applicant's own children. In determining whether a child can be considered as part of the household, the following will be considered:
 - Does the child have accommodation available to them which it is reasonable for them to continue to occupy?
 - Does the child have a main residence?
 - Who predominantly cares for the child?
 - Existence of any Court order pertaining to the child's residency
 - Which parent receives child benefit for the child
- a partner who is living in a relationship with the applicant and has been doing so for 12 months or more, or is married or in a civil partnership.
- other dependent children to whom the applicant has a legal care responsibility (such as a residence order) amounting to more than 50% of the time may be considered as part of their household.
- where there is shared care with an estranged partner on a 50/50 basis, a decision will be taken by a senior officer based on the merits of the case.
- a resident carer, where the applicant can demonstrate that a resident carer is needed. The council would seek confirmation of the need from the applicant and relevant professionals.

Adult relatives of the applicant would ordinarily be expected to make separate applications. There may be exceptions in cases where household members have care responsibilities.

8 Homeless households

The allocations scheme may be used to make an allocation of accommodation to a person to whom SKDC has accepted a homelessness duty as defined by Housing Act 1996, part 7, s.193.

Where an offer of accommodation is made through the scheme in order to fulfil a homelessness duty, the applicant will be informed that the allocation is regarded as a 'final offer' to end the homelessness duty, regardless of whether the applicant accepts or refuses the offer of accommodation.

In these circumstances the applicant will be advised that the authority considers the offer to be suitable and reasonable for their needs.

If a homeless applicant refuses the offer or accommodation and the Council considers the refusal to be unreasonable, they may remain on the housing register and express preference for areas in which they would like to be offered accommodation. However their application will have reduced priority as the Council will no longer have a legal duty to provide accommodation.

The applicant has a statutory right to seek a review of the suitability of the offer of accommodation. The review procedure is set out in section 17.

9 Armed Forces Personnel

Exemption from local connection criteria

Certain qualifying armed forces personnel and their households are exempt from the local connection criteria as set out at section 4. Their applications will be assessed based on housing needs. The qualifying persons are as follows:

- a) those who are currently serving in the regular forces or who were serving in the regular forces at any time in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing
- b) bereaved spouses or bereaved civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- c) existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.

Additional preference

Households who meet the following criteria will be placed in the banding above that in which they would ordinarily be placed, based on their needs.

Persons who fall within the defined reasonable preference categories (overcrowding, homeless, unsanitary conditions), have urgent housing needs and who meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. the person is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service;
2. the person formerly served in the regular forces; at any time in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing
3. the person has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service;
4. or the person is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service.

10 Bedroom and property eligibility

Each household will be eligible for a separate bedroom for the following:

- each adult or couple
- each two children of the same sex under the age of 16
- each two children under 10 years regardless of gender

- any further children in accordance with the preceding two points
- a non resident carer who provides overnight care for a disabled person

Overriding medical and welfare factors will be taken into account when determining any additional bedroom requirement. Guidance will be sought from a medical practitioner or relevant professional.

The Council aims to make best use of available properties to meet housing needs. When allocating housing the Council will do so using the guidelines below.

The guidelines outline the household types which will be prioritised for particular property types, in order of priority.

Where there is low demand for a particular property the Council will use its' discretion in identifying potential suitable tenants.

Property type	Priority to be given to household type in the following order
1 bedroom flat (any floor)	1. Single person or couple
2 bedroom flat (any floor) or house	1. Household with 2 children of same sex, or 2 children of opposite sex aged under 10 2. Household with 1 child 3. Single person or couple
1 or 2 bedroom bungalow	1. Household with recognised need for ground floor accommodation
3 bedroom house	1. Household with 3 or 4 children, subject to the age and sex of the children 2. Household with 2 children of opposite sex where 1 or both children is over 10 years of age
4 bedroom house	1. Household with 4 or more children 2. Household with 3 children, subject to the age and sex of the children

11 Adapted properties

The Council aims to make best use of properties designed or adapted to wheelchair standard or to otherwise meet the needs of disabled persons. The Council will do this by prioritising for such properties applicants with an assessed need for such facilities.

The Council encourages social housing tenants to consider moving to alternative accommodation where their household no longer require the adaptations within their home. Applications from such households will be given high priority.

12 Nomination Agreements with Registered Providers

The Council works in partnership with Registered Providers who may seek nominations for social housing vacancies within their housing stock or who are required to seek nominations in accordance with (s.106) planning requirements. The Council will use this allocations scheme in determining households to nominate to Registered Providers in such circumstances.

13 Worsened circumstances

Applications may not be prioritised in circumstances where an applicant is deemed to have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances in order to increase their priority for housing. For example, this may apply where a person has given up accommodation suitable for their needs, to move into a home which is overcrowded.

The merits of each application and any exceptional circumstances will be considered and the applicant will be informed in writing of the decision and reasons for the decision. The applicant may request a review of the decision. See section 17 for more details on decisions and reviews

14 Administration and Assessment

Making an application

An application pack can be obtained by visiting or telephoning the SKDC Customer Contact points in Grantham, Bourne or Stamford. Normally an applicant will be offered the opportunity of an interview to check or complete their application. Alternatively customers can post or deliver their completed application form to the Council.

The application will be assessed in accordance with this policy and we will notify applicants in writing of the outcome of their housing application.

Regular review

The housing register and each application held on the register will be subject to periodic review. The Council will contact applicants to confirm the data held in relation to their application and whether the applicant wishes to remain on the register.

15 Change in circumstances

Applicants should keep the Council informed of any change in their circumstances which will affect their housing need. For example:

- An increase or reduction in members of the household (such as a child leaving home)
- A change of address (including relevant details of the new home)
- Any change in medical or mobility needs

16 Making an offer of accommodation or nomination

The Council will make offers of accommodation or nominations in a timely manner to minimise the time a property is vacant. This may mean that an offer of accommodation is made to an applicant before the outgoing tenant has vacated the property.

The Council may have particular agreements with Registered Providers (Housing Associations/ RSLs) about how nominations of potential tenants are made. These agreements may include timescales and number of applicants to be nominated. When making nominations to Registered Providers we will have regard to that provider's allocations policy.

Officers will select potential suitable applicants for each property using the housing register database. Applicants' details will be checked as part of this process. Any offer will be subject to validation of the applicant's housing need and eligibility and receipt of satisfactory landlord or other references, where appropriate. Where details emerge after the offer has been made which may affect their housing need or eligibility, the offer may be reviewed or withdrawn and the assessment of their application reviewed.

An offer of accommodation to a current council tenant will be subject to completion of a satisfactory property inspection.

Applicants will be entitled to **two** offers of accommodation. If an applicant refuses a second offer of accommodation the priority of their application will be placed in band 4 for 6 months. Applicants already in the lowest band (band 4) will remain in that band.

Wherever possible the Council will make offers of council accommodation by telephone. If it is not possible to contact the applicant by telephone the Council will write to the applicant. The applicant will be asked whether they wish to accept or refuse the offer, subject to viewing. The applicant will be given five days to provide an initial response and failure to respond will result in the offer being considered a refusal.

The applicant will always be invited to view the property with an officer ('accompanied viewing') before making a final decision whether to refuse or accept an offer.

The Council reserves the right, in the interests of effective housing management, to offer a property to more than one applicant ('multiple offers') at the same time, subject to being clear about the relative priority of each applicant. (For example, if a property is offered to three applicants at the same time, each applicant will know if they have first, second or third priority.)

The Council may withdraw an offer of accommodation prior to the tenancy agreement being signed, where:

- The applicant has made a false declaration or failed to provide up to date information/references and this substantially alters their eligibility for the property offered
- The information available at the time the offer was made was incorrect and it is subsequently discovered that the property is no longer suitable for the applicant

17 Decisions and Reviews

We will notify applicants in writing of the outcome of their housing application. Where a decision has been made that they are not eligible for an allocation or within a class of person qualifying for an allocation, the notification will explain the reasons for the decision.

An applicant has a right to request a review where the following decisions have been made:

- A decision that he or she is not eligible (see section 1 of this policy)
- A decision that he or she does not qualify (see section 3 of this policy)

An applicant may also request a review of a decision concerning the facts of his or her case which are likely to be, or have been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate accommodation. This includes the following decisions:

- The type of property the applicant is considered for
- The applicant's medical condition or welfare needs
- the band to which an application is allocated
- other factors used to determine whether an applicant is entitled to reasonable preference
- the suitability of an offer of accommodation
- A decision to reduce the priority of an application to band 4 following refusal of a second offer of accommodation.

In these circumstances the applicant should explain why they are seeking a review.

All requests for a review of a decision should be made within 21 days of the date of the decision. The request should be made in writing to the Housing Solutions Manager

The review will be carried out by a nominated officer who has not been involved in the original decision and who is senior to the officer who made the decision.

The Council will make a decision within 21 days of receipt of the written review request. If any further information is required to enable the review to be properly carried out, the 21 day period may be extended by agreement between the Council and the applicant.

The officer carrying out the review will consider any written representations made by the applicant or on their behalf and will carry out the review on the basis of the facts known at that time. The officer will endeavour to speak with or meet the applicant in person in order to enable the applicant to express their view.

18 Monitoring

Officer decisions

Regular reviews will be carried out of decisions made by officers in relation to housing applications and offers of accommodation in order to ensure that a quality service and fair access to the service are maintained.

Equalities

The Council will seek to ensure that its policy is operated in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community.

All applicants for housing will be asked to provide equalities information which will be treated confidentially. Provision of this information is not a requirement however it does help the Council monitor access to the service and to ensure that access is fair for all communities.

Notification of decisions will generally be in writing; however where we are aware that an applicant may need information providing in a different way, we will take reasonable steps to communicate in a way that best suits their needs.

19 Prevention and detection of fraud

The Council is keen to ensure that information provided in support of a housing application is truthful and accurate. It is an offence for anyone seeking housing to knowingly or recklessly give false information, or withhold information reasonably required by the Council, such as information on rent arrears or debts owed to South Kesteven District Council or other landlords.

The Council will use sanctions at its disposal to encourage applicants not to give false information or withhold information required in the application process.

The Council will take action against tenants holding a tenancy acquired as a result of providing false information. For example, The Council can seek possession of a tenancy granted as a result of a false statement.

20 Review of policy

The policy will next be reviewed 12 months after implementation.

21 Banding details

Priority within bands is determined by the length of time the application has been within that band.

If an applicant believes they have not been placed into the correct band according to this policy, they may ask for a review of the decision, as set out in part 17 of this policy.

Emergency band

Any case agreed by management to have an exceptional need to move. This includes households in the following situations:

- Applicants awaiting accessible or sheltered housing before they can be discharged from hospital
- Households including someone with a life threatening condition directly linked to unsuitable housing conditions
- Council tenants who need to move urgently as a result of property condition
- Households at serious risk of harm in their current accommodation
- Social housing tenants occupying properties with significant adaptations and the household no longer requires the adaptations

These cases will be reviewed by a manager on a regular basis.

Households where SKDC has accepted a duty to accommodate (s193 duty, commonly referred to as homeless priority cases). Such cases will be eligible for 1 'final offer' of accommodation (part 7; Housing Act 1996). Refusal of an offer will normally result in demotion to band 1.

Band 1

Homeless households where SKDC has discharged a s193 duty to accommodate as a result of the applicant refusing suitable private or public sector accommodation (demoted from Emergency band).

Households living in accommodation considered by the Council's private sector housing team to be unsuitable for habitation due to instability, disrepair etc

Overcrowded households who lack two or more bedrooms. This includes:

- providers of foster care or adopters who need larger accommodation to enable them to provide the care.

Household with an urgent need to move on welfare grounds. This can include households in the following situations:

- Applicants experiencing severe hardship as a result of the costs of getting to work or to an apprenticeship scheme from their current address.
- Separated families living apart as a result of their housing circumstances

Households with an urgent need to move on medical grounds. This will apply to households where there is a need to move to ground floor or adapted accommodation on physical health/mobility grounds <u>and</u> current accommodation does not meet those needs, nor can it be economically adapted.
Households with an urgent need to move on mental health grounds, where it has been identified by a relevant professional that remaining the present accommodation would be harmful to the individual's mental health.
Band 2
Households ready to move on from short term or supported accommodation or care. This includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care leavers supported by Lincolnshire County Council in the district • tenants of short term supported accommodation (this does not include the Council's own temporary accommodation)
Overcrowded households who lack one bedroom
Homeless households who are not in priority need and not homeless intentionally.
Households with an identified need to move to ground floor or adapted accommodation on physical health/mobility grounds <u>and</u> current accommodation does not meet those needs nor can it be economically adapted
Households with an identified need to move on welfare grounds. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young person with disabilities wishing to live independently • Applicants experiencing or expected to experience hardship as a result of the costs of getting to work or to an apprenticeship scheme from their current address.
Households with an identified need to move on mental health grounds, where it has been identified by a relevant professional that moving to alternative accommodation would significantly improve the individual's mental health.
Band 3
Social housing tenants, where the tenant wishes to move to smaller accommodation.
Households threatened with homelessness as a result of being required to leave accommodation as a result of receiving a notice to leave from a landlord or a possession order from a Court. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households ready to move on from rehabilitation. Any decision to provide accommodation will be subject to risk assessment • Assured Shorthold tenants who have received a s.21 Notice from their landlord

Households the Council considers are homeless intentionally
Households with no identified housing need but a need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• move closer to family in order to give or receive support, or;• gain access to necessary amenities to support their continued independent living.
Band 4
Households who are adequately housed, including those with a local connection
Households with no local connection
Households with reduced priority



South Kesteven District Council

**Equality Analysis
(Stage 1)**

**Allocations Policy
V2**

Service Area: Housing	Lead officer: May Read	Date of Analysis 12.02.13
	Assessors: Liz Bishop	
	Neutral Assessor: Carol Drury	

1. Name and description of policy/service/function/strategy :

Allocations Policy- the policy sets out the council's scheme for managing allocations of social housing in the district. The policy aims to make best use of social housing vacancies to meet housing needs. The policy sets out how all applications will be assessed based on current housing need.

Is this a new or existing policy?

New- replaces existing policy

2. Complete the table below, considering whether the proposed policy/service/function/strategy could have any potential positive, or negative impacts on groups from any of the protected characteristics (or diversity strands) listed, using demographic data, user surveys, local consultations evaluation forms, comments and complaints etc.

Equality Group	Does this policy/service/function/strategy have a positive, or negative impact on any of the equality groups? Please state which for each group	Please describe why the impact is positive, or negative. If you consider this policy etc is not relevant to a specific characteristic please explain why
Age	Positive	The policy has a positive impact on 16- 18 year olds. A person under 18 may not hold a tenancy but the policy states how the council will help affected young people under 18, despite this barrier.
Disability	Positive	The policy prioritises people with mobility needs for ground floor accommodation. Very high priority is given to households who no longer need the adaptations in their home, to release it for someone who does need the facilities.

		There is a link to the Tenancy Policy- where a tenant dies and their home was adapted to meet their needs, but the successor to the tenancy does not need the adaptations, the council can request that they move to alternative accommodation, to release the accommodation for someone who does need it.
Race	Negative	There will only be a negative impact where person is not eligible for housing assistance as defined by law.
Gender Reassignment	Neutral	No impact noted
Religion or Belief	Potential Negative	Changing demographics may result in instances where accommodation may be offered which does not meet household's needs on religious or cultural grounds. In such instances refusal of an offer of accommodation would be managed with sensitivity.
Sex	Neutral	No impact noted
Sexual Orientation:	Neutral	No impact noted
Pregnancy and Maternity	Positive	The policy recognises the need for a bedroom for a new born child.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Neutral	No impact noted

Carers	Positive	The policy recognises that a bedroom may be required for a <i>resident</i> carer within a household.
Other Groups (e.g. those from deprived (IMD*) communities; those from rural communities, those with an offending past)		
Any applicant not resident in the area for 6 months or more	Negative	Such applicants are not eligible to have their housing need assessed (they would be placed in the lowest band) until they have been resident for 6 months. Any such applicant who is homeless may be eligible for assistance where we choose to disregard local connection.
Those with offending past	Negative	Such applicants may not be accepted on to the register if they have been guilty of anti social behaviour, or an offence which could potentially lead to the loss of a council tenancy. In such circumstances the applicant will be advised of the decision, and there is a review process in place should they wish to appeal the decision.
Homeless households	Positive	The needs of homeless households are recognised. Those the council has a legal duty to accommodate have very high priority, but those we have no duty to help are also awarded some level of priority.

*(IMD = Indices of multiple deprivation)

3. What data/information did you use to inform the outcomes of the proposed policy/service/function/strategy? (Note any relevant consultation who took part and key findings)

The following feedback has been taken into account in developing the policy:

Feedback from Stakeholder Consultation Event- 5 December 2012:

- Stakeholders considered that applicants with no local connection should be

accepted on to the register, but that consideration should be given to other factors, including their housing history, support needs and previous tenancy conduct when assessing applications. Stakeholders recognised that there is a need to manage expectation and avoid excessive burden in managing the housing register.

- Stakeholders thought that those in greatest housing need should be prioritised. It was also considered that previous unacceptable behaviour should be taken into account when assessing applications and that greater use should be made of mutual exchange for existing tenants who are not in housing need.
- Stakeholders further considered that, where possible, the wider impact on sustainable communities should be taken into account; recognising the contribution made to the achievement of mixed, sustainable and thriving communities by the economically active. No prescriptive mechanisms for achieving this were suggested for inclusion in the policy framework.
- Stakeholders considered that the policy should have some regard for economic contribution, but qualified this support with concerns that those not working through no fault of their own should not be disadvantaged.
- There were concerns that transport to work should be taken into account (referring to poor transport links in rural areas); helping people to move to towns where there is more likely to be employment.
- Stakeholders recognised the challenge of taking such an approach- almost a moral or means tested approach to allocations – and no prescriptive mechanisms for achieving this were suggested.

Feedback from Communities PDG 10.01.13

- Consultees were keen that something like the status quo in relation to local connection should continue- that applicants with family resident in the area, or those who have lived here previously, might have the opportunity to return. The particular value of family connection in rural areas was referred to. Continued acceptance and registration of applications from those with no assessed housing need for a particular locality was supported, reflecting the fact that we might sometimes have low demand properties to let.
- Consultees were of the view that, whilst the primary aim is to address housing needs, there should be continued acceptance and registration of applications from those with no assessed housing need; reflecting the fact that we might sometimes have low demand properties to let.
- Consultees did not want to include 'voluntary contribution' as a basis for granting additional priority as this is considered too difficult to evaluate and manage.
- Consultees were uncertain about rewarding 'work', mindful of the practical difficulties of achieving a fair scheme and concerned about the message it might give to those who have recently lost jobs or are struggling to find work.
- Consultees supported moving to a 'banding scheme', rather than retaining a 'points scheme'; largely based on extensive discussion they have had on this in recent years.

Housing Strategy Survey Results 31 January 2013

The Housing Strategy survey, including questions relating to the Allocations Policy, was sent to a random selection of 1450 current tenants and 1000 randomly chosen housing register applicants. 11.9% (292) surveys have been returned.

- 82% thought that someone should be living, working or have family in the area to be accepted onto the housing register
- 60% thought we should only accept housing applications from people who have a priority need to move home
- 67% thought we should give additional priority to people who are working or have an offer of employment in the district.

If there are any gaps in the consultation/monitoring data, how will this be addressed?

CORE relet data will be used to monitor the households we are accommodating and ensure the outcomes are those intended by the policy.

A stage 3 assessment will be completed 6 months after implementation, and the policy will be formally reviewed 12 months following implementation.

4. Outcomes of analysis and recommendations (please note you will be required to provide evidence to support the recommendations made): Please tick one of the options.

a. No major change needed: equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or for negative impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken

If you have ticked option (a) go to stage 3

b. Adjust the proposal to remove barriers identified by equality analysis or to better promote equality. Please complete the questions in the box below.

b.1 In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your proposed policy/service/function/strategy to minimise or eliminate the negative equality impacts?

b.2 Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

If you have ticked option b go to Stage 2

c. Adverse impact but continue Please provide an explanation in the box below that clearly sets out your justification for continuing with the proposed policy/function/service/strategy. You should consider in stage 2 whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or

plans to monitor the actual impact.

If you have ticked option c please go to Stage 2

d. Stop and remove the policy/function/service/strategy as equality analysis has shown actual or potential unlawful discrimination

Signed (Lead Officer): May Read, Housing Options Team Leader

Date completed: 12.02.13