



# CABINET

8 March 2023

A meeting of the CABINET will be held on Thursday, 16th March, 2023, 6.00 pm in Town Hall, Market Street, Tamworth

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## A G E N D A

### NON CONFIDENTIAL

**1 Apologies for Absence**

**2 Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 14)**

**3 Declarations of Interest**

*To receive any declarations of Members' interests (pecuniary and non-pecuniary) in any matters which are to be considered at this meeting.*

*When Members are declaring a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in respect of which they have dispensation, they should specify the nature of such interest. Members should leave the room if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in respect of which they do not have a dispensation.*

**4 Question Time:**

To answer questions from members of the public pursuant to Executive Procedure Rule No. 13

**5 Matters Referred to the Cabinet in Accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules**

**6 Homelessness Strategic Update (Pages 15 - 70)**

*(Report of the Portfolio Holder for Homelessness Prevention and Social Housing)*

**7 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To consider excluding the Press and Public from the meeting by passing the following resolution:-

*“That in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meeting and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, and Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public”*

At the time this agenda is published no representations have been received that this part of the meeting should be open to the public.

**8 Commercial lease update (Pages 71 - 94)**  
*(Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Risk and Customer Services)*

Yours faithfully



**Chief Executive**

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**Access arrangements**

*If you have any particular access requirements when attending the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on 01827 709267 or e-mail [democratic-services@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:democratic-services@tamworth.gov.uk). We can then endeavour to ensure that any particular requirements you may have are catered for.*

**Filming of Meetings**

*The public part of this meeting may be filmed and broadcast. Please refer to the Council's Protocol on Filming, Videoing, Photography and Audio Recording at Council meetings which can be found [here](#) for further information.*

*If a member of the public is particularly concerned about being filmed, please contact a member of Democratic Services before selecting a seat.*

**FAQs**

*For further information about the Council's Committee arrangements please see the FAQ page [here](#)*

To Councillors: J Oates, R Pritchard, M Bailey, T Clements, S Doyle, A Farrell and  
M Summers.

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## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 23rd FEBRUARY 2023**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Oates (Chair), Councillors T Clements, S Doyle and A Farrell

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), Joanne Goodfellow (Assistant Director Finance), Zoe Wolicki (Assistant Director People) and Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager)

Councillor D Cook, Vice Chair of Corporate Scrutiny and Councillors C Cooke and M Cook were in attendance

### **110 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Bailey, R Pritchard and M Summers

### **110 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Bailey, R Pritchard and M Summers

### **111 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

*(Moved by Councillor T Clements and seconded by Councillor A Farrell)*

### **112 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **113 QUESTION TIME:**

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 1 Under Schedule 4, 13, Mr H Loxton will ask the Portfolio Holder for Engagement, Civic Pride and Pride in Place Councillor T Clements the following Question:**

It was very encouraging to read about the first meeting of Lichfield District Youth Council earlier this month. The meeting was attended by 30 young people, and they will meet monthly going forwards. This gives young people a voice, allows their views to be heard and encourages engagement on decisions which impact them. It brings about an interest in local democracy, and may even see these young people go on to become councillors in the future. Bearing all that in mind, could you please confirm if there are currently any plans in place for a Tamworth Borough Youth Council?

**Councillor Clements gave the following answer:**

Thank you Mr Loxton for your question.

I too had heard and read about our neighbouring council's decision to introduce the youth council. I wholeheartedly support your comments that these young people may well be our next community leaders. Being part of a youth council is a great introduction to local politics but it is also an opportunity for the Council to engage with Tamworth youth. A youth council would give young people the chance to discuss relevant issues, engage with decision makers and contribute to improving the lives of young people within Tamworth.

So for me it is a winning situation all round. By generating interest now this will pay dividends when those youngsters become informed residents in their own right.

In my portfolio I would love to see this council bring back the youth council and I am already currently working with officers to make the necessary arrangements. This will take time and resources to establish and encourage it and then clearly it will need ongoing support.

But I am fully supportive of the reintroduction of a local youth council that would be a forum that represent the views of young people in Tamworth. It would be run by young people living in Tamworth, for young people, giving young people a voice and enabling them to make their views heard in the decision-making process.

**Mr Loxton asked the following Supplementary Question**

Really good to hear that and you are voting on the budget next week, is there any funding in the budget set aside for a Youth Council

**Councillor T Clements gave the following response.**

Not at this present time because we are only just doing this now because we are going through this now so we are going to have to look for funding for next year. That's not saying we can't get it off the ground we can look at doing something ourselves and look for funding for future years.

Report of the Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to update Cabinet and to make recommendations to it following consideration of matters by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, following consideration of the outcomes of the Leaseholder Charges Communications Working Group at the Committee's meeting on 8 February 2023.

Following its consideration of the above item, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee agreed to make recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

**RESOLVED** that the Committee recommended:

1. That the council look at using an independent assessor for works to confirm costs were correct.
2. That an assessment be done for all repairs in advance of leaseholders being asked to contribute to repairs.
3. To reinforce the council's communications when residents buy a council house, including what responsibilities and obligations were on the owner occupier.
4. That the communications relating to the leaseholder works be reviewed and simplified.
5. That the contractor hold at least two face-to-face consultation drop-ins to enable residents to understand the process.
6. That the specific 44 leaseholder roofs be assessed straight away.
7. That the council consider a mechanism such that the affected 44 leaseholders were not faced with increased costs as a result of the delay in works being commenced.

*(Moved by Councillor M Cook and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)*

Councillor J Oates thanked the three Councillors for attending and thanked the working group for the work undertaken on this piece of work.

It was decided to move each recommendation separately.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet

1. Agreed to a one-off look for this piece of work, with an independent assessor to assess if the costs are correct

*(Moved by Councillor A Farrell and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)*

2. Agreed that the Portfolio Holder would consider the implications of assessing all repairs in advance of leaseholders being asked to contribute and bring the report back to the next available Cabinet meeting.

*(Moved by Councillor A Farrell and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)*

3. Review the council's communications when residents buy a council house, including what responsibilities and obligations are on the owner occupier.

*(Moved by Councillor A Farrell and seconded by Councillor J Oates)*

4. Review communications and include the information from the whole capital programme in the communications.

*(Moved by Councillor A Farrell and seconded by Councillor J Oates)*

5. Referred back to Corporate Scrutiny that the Committee look at the process for requesting at least two face to face drop ins with residents before any work commences and Scrutiny should consider whether this is for all works or works over a certain monetary threshold.

**This recommendation was not moved or seconded**

6. Agreed that if any of the 44 Leaseholders roofs haven't been assessed they will be assessed immediately.

*(Moved by S Doyle and seconded by Councillor J Oates)*

7. Agreed that the affected 44 leaseholders would not be faced with increased costs as a result of the delay in works being commenced.

*(Moved by Councillor A Farrell and seconded by Councillor J Oates)*

## **115 CORPORATE VISION, PRIORITIES PLAN, BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24**

Report of the Leader of the Council to approve the Vision Statement, Priority Themes, Corporate Priorities and Plans and their inclusion in the Corporate Plan and to approve the recommended package of budget proposals to enable the Council to agree the:

- General Fund (GF) Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2023/24;



- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2023/24;
- 5 Year General Fund Capital Programme (2023/28);
- 5 Year HRA Capital Programme (2023/28);
- 3 Year General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2023/26);  
and
- 5 Year HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2023/28).

To comply with the requirement of the Council's Treasury Management Policy in reporting to Council the proposed strategy for the forthcoming year and the Local Government Act 2003 with the reporting of the Prudential Indicators and the requirement to prepare an annual Corporate Capital Strategy.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

endorsed the following recommendations to proceed to Council for approval

1. the Vision Statement, Priority Themes, Corporate Priorities and Outcomes for 2023/24 (Appendix A);
2. the proposed revisions to Service Revenue Budgets (Policy Changes) (Appendix C);
3. the sum of £59,581 be applied from Council Tax Collection Fund surpluses in reducing the Council Tax demand in 2023/24 (Appendix E);
4. the sum of £260,300 be applied to Business Rates Collection Fund deficits in 2023/24 (Appendix E);
5. that on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, the Cabinet calculated the Council Tax Base 2023/24 for the whole Council area as 23,376 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")];
6. that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2022/23 is £4,602,501 (Appendix E);
7. the following amounts as calculated for the year 2023/24 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
  - a. £48,785,510 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act (Outgoings excluding internal GF Recharges);
  - b. £44,183,009 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act (Income excluding internal GF Recharges);
  - c. £4,602,501 being the amount by which the aggregate at 7(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax

- requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31A(4) of the Act);
- d. £196.89 being the amount at 7(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (at 5 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;
8. the Council Tax level for the Borough Council for 2023/24 of £196.89 (an increase of £5 (2.60%) on the 2022/23 level of £191.89) at Band D;
  9. an aggregate Council Tax (comprising the respective demands of the Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority) of £2,012.94 at Band D for 2023/24 be noted (£1,922.11 in 2022/23) (Appendix H);
  10. the Council Tax levels at each band for 2023/24 (Appendix H);
  11. the sum of £1,207,869 be transferred from General Fund Revenue Balances in 2023/24 (Appendix E);
  12. the Summary General Fund Revenue Budget for 2023/24 (Appendix E);
  13. the Provisional General Fund Budgets for 2024/25 to 2025/26, summarised at Appendix G, as the basis for future planning;
  14. minimum level for balances of £500k to be held for each of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, General Capital Fund and Housing Capital Fund;
  15. Cabinet be authorised to release funding from the General Contingency budget and that the release of funding for Specific Contingency items be delegated to the Corporate Management Team in consultation with the Leader of the Council;
  16. proposed HRA Expenditure level of £17,517,810 for 2023/24 (Appendix D);
  17. rents for Council House Tenants for 2023/24 be set at an average of £99.66 (2022/23 £93.14), over a 48 week rent year (including a capped 7% increase in line with the Governments updated Rent Standard for 2023/24);
  18. rents for Council House Tenants due for 52 weeks in 2023/24 be collected over 48 weeks;
  19. the HRA deficit of £823,480 be financed through a transfer from Housing Revenue Account Balances in 2023/24 (Appendix D);
  20. the proposed 5 year General Fund Capital Programme of £10.809m, as detailed in Appendix I to the report;
  21. the proposed 5 year Housing Capital Programme of £37.958m, as detailed in Appendix J to the report;
  22. to delegate authority to Cabinet to approve/add new capital schemes to the capital programme where grant funding is received or there is no net additional cost to the Council;
  23. the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy and Annual Investment Statement 2023/24 (as detailed at Appendix N);

24. adopt the revised clauses from, and the Cipfa *Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice* and *The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* as updated in 2021;
25. the Prudential and Treasury Indicators and Limits for 2023/24 to 2025/26 contained within Appendix N;
26. adoption of the Treasury Management Practices contained within ANNEX 8;
27. the detailed criteria of the Investment Strategy 2023/24 contained in the Treasury Management Strategy within ANNEX 4; and
28. the Corporate Capital Strategy and associated Action Plan (as detailed at Appendix O).

*(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor A Farrell)*

## **116 QUARTER THREE 2022/23 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Report of the Leader of the Council to provide Cabinet with an overview of Council performance, risk and financial health-check towards achieving the strategic projects detailed within the Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The information contained within the report covers performance for the third quarter of the financial year (October to December 2022). Corporate Scrutiny considered the report on 8th February 2023.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet endorsed the contents of the report and

Remove the Corporation Street Gateway Project as a corporate project and review that project as a gateway.

*(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor T Clements)*

## **117 FHSF QUARTERLY UPDATE**

Report of the Leader of the Council to update the Committee on the progress of the Future High Streets Fund programme.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet endorsed the report.

*(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)*

## **118 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24**

Report of the Leader of the Council to seek approval for the proposed increase to fees and charges payable and introduce some additional fees, affecting two or more Wards and involving income over £100k.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet

1. implement the annual inflationary increase for the fees and charges and implement new charges commencing on 1st April 2023 as detailed in Appendix 1;
2. endorse increases in the charges applied for goods sold through the catering bar and shops throughout the year as these are based on cost price plus a margin.

*(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)*

#### **119 COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS COMPLAINTS AND MANAGING UNREASONABLE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR POLICIES**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Risk and Customer Services to seek Cabinet approval for the Compliments, Comments and Complaints and Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policies.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet

1. approved the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy for implementation on 1 April 2023;
2. approved the Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy for implementation on 1 April 2023.

*(Moved by Councillor S Doyle and seconded by Councillor T Clements)*

#### **120 WRITE OFFS 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 DECEMBER 2022**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Risk and Customer Services for Cabinet to endorse the amount of debt written-off for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st December 2022.

Councillor Doyle thanked Mike Buckland for the work on the report.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet

endorsed the amount of debt written-off for the period of 1st April 2022 to 31st December 2022 (Appendix A-E) and approved the write-off of irrecoverable debt for Business Rates of £83,075.98 (Appendix F).

*(Moved by Councillor S Doyle and seconded by Councillor T Clements)*

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Leader

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Thursday, 16 March 2023

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Homelessness Prevention and Social Housing****Homelessness Strategic Update 2023****Exempt Information**

None

**1.0 Purpose**

**1.1** To update and set out achievements to date from the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2025<sup>1</sup>.

**1.2** To update on existing approvals for the Council's SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) and winter relief response.

**1.3** To propose a Homeless Hub in line with Council's strategic ambitions.

**1.3** To update the Council's new Temporary accommodation charging policy and framework with effect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and approve the recommended options.

**1.4** Approval to write off historic bed and breakfast arrears in line with the temporary accommodation charging policy as detailed in the report.

**2.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

**2.1** Acknowledges the strategic achievements progressing the homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy. (Annex 1)

**2.2** Acknowledge and approves the continued support for the winter relief project and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) response as set out in the report to cabinet on 11/11/2021.

**2.3** Approves the development of a Homeless Hub in accordance with the principles set out in the report noting Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny considered on the 29/11/2022 and 24/01/2023;

**and**

Delegate final approval of the Homeless Hub specification for procurement to the portfolio holder for Homelessness Prevention and Social Housing.

**2.4** Approves the updated temporary accommodation charging policy, including, the write off of historic bed and breakfast arrears and the application of recovery of outstanding temporary accommodation debt post 2018 charging in line with the new framework.

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<sup>1</sup> [Housing policies | Tamworth Borough Council](#)

**3.0 Executive Summary**

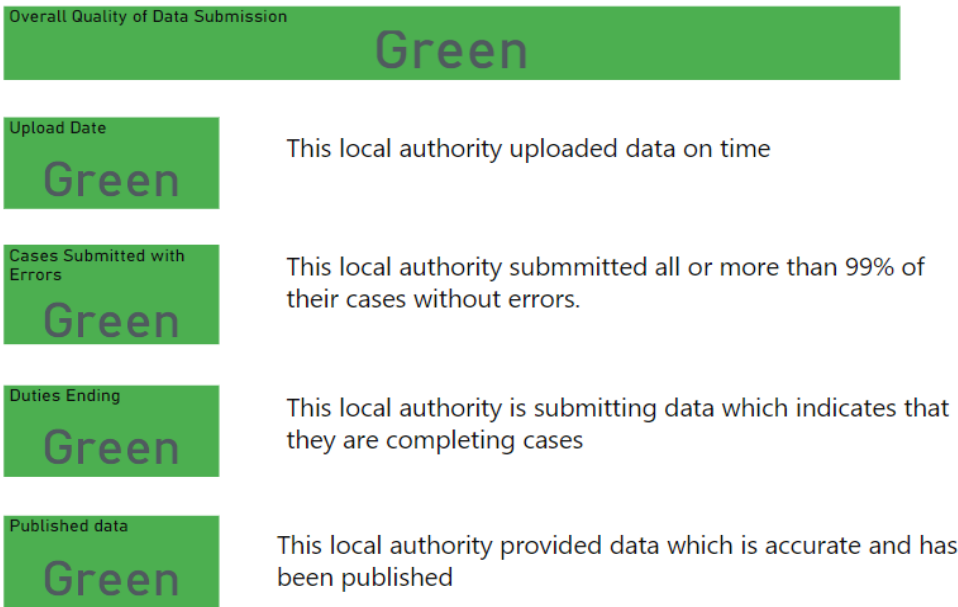
**Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy update**

3.1 The Government’s national focus remains eradicating rough sleeping and preventing homelessness by 2027. A Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping strategy was made a mandatory document for all Local Authorities to have, as stated in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. In September 2022 the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published its updated “**End Rough Sleeping for Good**”<sup>2</sup> Strategy which remains a manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping in this parliament. This means rough sleeping is prevented wherever possible and where this cannot be prevented, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.

Tamworth continues to monitor best practice and works closely with HAST (Homelessness Advisory Support Team) to implement latest legislative developments. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023 the code of guidance was updated for both homelessness and allocations of which officers are currently aligning this with existing policies.

Tamworth launched its current strategy in June 2020. The overarching aims are to reduce homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping. Preventing homelessness is a golden thread supporting residents access to suitable accommodation and the support they need is part of Tamworth’s core strategic purpose. It is further linked to two key corporate priorities, **Infrastructure and living in Tamworth**<sup>3</sup>. Building resilient communities is integral to ensuring our most **vulnerable** members of the community are supported and signposted to sustainable housing solutions.

The Government published its [latest dashboard on homelessness on 28/2/23](#) – and Tamworth can report positively that it continues to comply with required data submissions – shown below.



<sup>2</sup> [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)  
<sup>3</sup> [CORPORATE PLAN 2022-2025 | Tamworth Borough Council](#)



**Our five priorities are as follows:**

1. Prevention and early intervention through working with partners and stakeholders
2. Develop rapid pathways for rough sleepers.
3. Improve the supply of and access to affordable and supported housing.
4. Offer a high quality and innovative service to homeless households.
5. Improve health and well-being aspirations.

**3.2** This update reflects the top achievements from our five-year delivery plan with more in-depth analysis found in **Annex one** and a RAG rating of the action plan in **Annex two**. **This information was specifically requested by Councillor S Goodall at Health and wellbeing Scrutiny on 24/01/2023.**

Strategic Priorities	Achieved	Continuing to develop
<p>Priority 1 <i>Prevention and early intervention through working with partners and stakeholders</i></p>	<p>Updated the Council’s allocation policy in 2020 to reflect the HRA duties owed to homeless applicants.</p> <p>Revised the allocations policy further in 2021 to reflect Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Social Housing White Paper and further guidance for Veterans.</p> <p>Established links with DWP, Humankind, New Era, MPFT and Better Way Recovery to provide a joined-up approach.</p> <p>Move on pathways developed as good links retained with supported accommodation providers.</p>	<p>Currently finalising 16-17 year old protocol with Children’s Services with cross county pledges.</p> <p>Work with partners such as other registered providers of social housing to implement a pre-action protocol on possession claims by social landlords.</p>
<p>Priority 2 <i>Develop rapid pathways for rough sleepers.</i></p>	<p>Working with partners and stakeholders successfully launched RSI 4 initiative between June 2021- July 2022 and providing ‘housing first’ and support services to those most vulnerable in the community, enabling rehousing and tenancy sustainment to those in need.</p>	<p>Homeless Hub aspirations in the community are to assist those rough sleeping or threatened with homelessness whether singles or families and build on strong community connections already in place.</p>

	<p>Have continued with a dedicated outreach officer in the team.</p> <p>Verified rough sleepers are given band 2 on the housing register and engaged with.</p> <p>Continued work and delivery of the winter relief in collaboration with Heart of Tamworth Community services.</p>	
<p>Priority 3 <i>Improve the supply of and access to affordable and supported housing.</i></p>	<p>Continue to work with RPs such as Optivo on s106 agreements for new affordable housing, based on the needs of the community and continue to have nomination provision in place and put into planning agreements.</p> <p>Housing Strategy in place.</p> <p>Move on protocol in place for supported housing providers.</p>	<p>Develop with private sector housing a landlords' forum and develop tenancy-ready schemes for households willing to consider private rented sector.</p>
<p>Priority 4 <i>Offer a high quality and innovative service to homeless households.</i></p>	<p>ICT development of the Homeless software and access to the Housing register and applications online and digital agenda have been responded to.</p> <p>Training programme for staff for continued professional development in place.</p> <p>Continue to have single figures in B&amp;B due to robust prevention tools as acknowledged by DLUHC.</p>	<p>Continue to develop customer steering group to oversee quality issues</p>
<p>Priority 5 <i>Improve health and well-being aspirations.</i></p>	<p>Developing strong links with MPFT and mental health</p>	<p>Continue to develop opportunities to the Councils out-of-hours homeless service for those vulnerable households often</p>

	<p>Trained staff are mental health first aiders and have had suicide training.</p> <p>Commissioned a mental health worker in the team as part of RSI 4.</p> <p>Collaborative work with HoT registering those most vulnerable with GPs.</p> <p>Robust response to Covid – 19 and protect and vaccinate initiative.</p> <p>Personalised budgets for those former rough sleepers.</p>	<p>requiring reassurance and assistance in times of crisis.</p>
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**4.0 Winter Relief / Severe Weather Emergency Protocol update**

**4.1** As in previous years Tamworth has activated its winter relief programme with the Heart of Tamworth Community project (HoT) following existing approvals from Cabinet 11/11/21 to authorise a further 3-year scheme with one of our anchor charitable organisations. This collaborative working aims to reach those most vulnerable within the community.

Services provided by Heart of Tamworth are a dedicated worker for 28 hrs per week providing floating support services such as befriending, delivery of food parcels to those in temporary accommodation (TA) if needed, access to toiletries and hygiene packs, weekly phone calls, supporting clients with benefit claims, service charges, GP registrations, and forms for ID and the Housing Register. They work with the housing solutions outreach officer to assist with reports of rough sleepers. Through their befriending service and working intensively with the client they encourage service users to consider their long-term housing options and possibly end the cycle of rough sleeping through the creation of positive pathways away from the streets.

**4.2** This year due to the cost-of-living crisis it was agreed for the project to run for a further month until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 to ensure those most vulnerable get the assistance and support that is needed from this project. The cost to the authority has been minimal for these services and Housing solutions have always used their SWEP (Severe weather emergency protocol) funding that it receives from DLUCH of £6400.00. This year there will be a slight increase to cover costs for the extra month, therefore the total amount paid will be £8533.00 and is met from existing budgets.

## **5.0 Homeless Hub 2023- 2025**

**5.1** The aim of the Homeless Hub is to prevent homelessness by tackling early intervention through advice, signposting, information, and support to those rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness. It supports strategic ambitions that are set out in the Council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2025.

**5.2** As part of HASTs routine visit in July 2022 they continued to recognise strengths within the service. Officers took the opportunity to set out how it tailored access to services following the Councils introduction to smart working as part of its recovery and reset agenda. **The concepts around tailored access to services for vulnerable clients face-to-face were explored with a range of voluntary and statutory partners and are the basis of the proposed Homeless Hub.**

**5.3** HASTs observations were that this in-person contact would reduce the likelihood of hindering the Council's ability to build rapport, maintain the ability for customers to self-help as well as promote emotional cognisance to recognise acute and complex domestic abuse which are often better identified through in person assessment. The proposed Homeless Hub therefore, not only contributes to supporting the Council's wider vulnerability offer but would also ensure full compliance with the code of guidance.

**5.4** Feedback from HAST reflected the positivity and maturity of Tamworth's statutory and voluntary partnership arrangements. HAST further highlighted Tamworth's clear and robust prevention toolkit which is successful in assisting keeping temporary accommodation numbers low.

**5.5** Similarly in line with national trends HAST also were pleased to see that Tamworth are improving preparedness and resilience to the likelihood of seeing an increase in presentations due to cost-of-living pressures and challenges will be to maintain the effective use of grant funding the service receives.

**5.6** The Homeless Hub will be another opportunity to support vulnerable households. If approved, it is proposed that a partner-led service will be commissioned through the Council's procurement process. The over-riding principles of this will include co-location work for our hybrid officers to work in the community in partnership with stakeholders to maximise the Council's prevention and relief figures.

Further elements of the commissioned service will include:

- Access to advice services and sign posting, referrals to appropriate agencies.
- Support services that promote new ways to prevent homelessness, access accommodation, (Homeless champions) and early intervention.
- Provide weekly outreach/satellite surgeries.
- The provider to collaboratively work with Housing Solutions and a range of public sector bodies such as probation, DWP, drug and alcohol services (New Era)
- To capture data and report on trends and issues that are causing rooflessness and homelessness to assist with informing future prevention strategies, resources, and any missed opportunities.
- Target specific service users and groups within the community with a range of needs from being drug and alcohol dependent to mental health and for those who ordinarily either won't engage with services or easily disengage.
- Family drop-in surgeries and advocacy support to all

- Debt advice and joined up working with Health and support services will be offered to develop skills and increase opportunities.
- A service to show how working with partners in local government and voluntary and community organisations enables comprehensive provisions of services for those most in need.
- The hub may provide that drop- in centre approach offering group activities, food, showers, and other activities that gain enable people to regain accommodation, empower them to engage and tackle the reasons for homelessness.
- To ensure those accessing are already aware of the Council’s prevention toolkits, such as housing solutions fund, rent in advance, deposit schemes, landlord reconciliation, home visits, the Council’s allocations policy (Band 2 for rough sleepers and band 1 for 6 months mediation for parental evictions).
- To increase the Council’s prevention figures via commissioned activity which will coincide with Council’s longer-term R&R plans for its permanent customer services arrangements.
- Duration will be for two years to start April 2023 until the end of the Strategy March 2025. (Funding has been identified for these two years and renewal will be based on delivery and continuing availability of resources).

Further evidence of how the hub supports and links to our strategic priorities can be found in **Annex 3**.

**5.7 The Homeless Hub has been considered on two occasions<sup>4</sup> by Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny [29/11/22](#) and again on the 24/01/2023. The collective feedback has been incorporated into the report and influenced the development of the Homeless Hub proposals.**

## 5.8 Options Considered

Options	Benefits	Risks
1. Do nothing	<p>The Council’s front door offer remains at the assembly rooms.</p> <p>The Council’s remote access for clients is fit for purpose and working.</p> <p>The Council continues its other homeless prevention activities such as TAC sessions at heart of Tamworth one morning a week.</p> <p>No financial implications</p>	<p>DLUHC recommending face to face appointments with vulnerable clients. This is currently being achieved with visits to the B&amp;Bs or Council’s TA but there may be missed opportunities.</p> <p>Not fully assisting those most vulnerable within the community.</p> <p>No benefits for the community of Tamworth or achieving strategic ambitions.</p> <p>Prevention and relief figures will not increase if homeless</p>

<sup>4</sup> Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny 24<sup>th</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020

		forums and a more targeted model is not used.
2. Homeless Hub with HoT community project & St Johns and Sacred Heart	<p>Partners have approached to offer a hub.</p> <p>There are likely to be incentives and value for money opportunities given existing working arrangements i.e room rates and shared staffing costs already in use for SWEP.</p> <p>Staffing and TAC surgeries already provided on an informal basis at these community hubs.</p>	<p><b>This can not be recommended as it would breach the Council's financial regulations around procurement and testing commercial market interests as the Homeless Hub represents a new service offer.</b></p> <p>Existing partners will of course have the opportunity to express an interest in any subsequent commissioning.</p>
<p>3. Homeless Hub offer described and procured.</p> <p><b>Recommended option</b></p>	<p>Interest already established as above with HoT.</p> <p>Procurement would ensure the financial and procurement regulations are adhered to and followed.</p> <p>Building on 'Housing first' principles that are already in place following on from RSI and winter relief projects.</p> <p>Complements the Council's approach to R&amp;R by providing partner-led community outreach.</p> <p>Scope for seamless service delivery and enable some risk transfer in service delivery.</p> <p>Stakeholder interest and buy in for more services aimed at those most vulnerable in the community.</p> <p>Improves access to skills and resources that the partner has.</p>	<p>Time and costs involved in the procurement and award of contract plus contract management.</p> <p>Reputational risk as service is outsourced, customer expectations and lack of expertise and knowledge may affect legislative decisions officers are making on homeless cases, plus public scrutiny.</p> <p>Potential concerns over loss of direct control of the hub being with one provider. To mitigate this the contract would be 1+1 years.</p> <p>Any additional costs that may incur</p>

Performance will be monitored and managed by HS manager.	
Council influence can be preserved through controls via the contract in place.	
The competitive nature of procurement should ensure the most economic price.	
Based on current models of the winter relief, the Council has evidence of what it would like.	

## **6.0 Bed and Breakfast Write-Offs**

**6.1** The development of the Homeless Hub creates an opportunity to reflect and review the wider policy framework around the provision, management, and impact of our homelessness and temporary accommodation charging policy and procedures. Effective and equitable implementation of a revised policy requires systematic review of the previous policy, and any legacy arrears.

**External support has been commissioned to focus on the Council’s temporary accommodation proposals before Cabinet. In addition, due diligence has also been undertaken by the Council’s legal advisors to ensure that the options recommended comply with legislative and regulatory best practice.**

**6.2** Bed and Breakfast charges have existed in some form since 1991 and as a result have generated a complicated inheritance of historical arrears, almost all of which is now unrecoverable based on a combination of statute barred debt, uneconomical recovery, and known errors or bugs in the ICT system Orchard.

**6.3** Though actual figures vary daily, there were, as of November 2022 (the report date used for analysis) a total of £327,724.15 in account arrears on the Orchard Housing Management System associated with ‘stays’ in Bed and Breakfast emergency accommodation since 1991.

**6.4** Significant investment has been made in the organisation, investigation, and consolidation of all outstanding arrears, a report on which is provided at Annex 4. The report provides analysis and recommendations for the prudent, equitable, and legal management of historical arrears culminating in recommendation 4 of this report.

**6.5** While **Annex 4** provides background and justification for the recommended option to write-off of all Bed and Breakfast arrears to date, this report is mindful to present legally viable options for Cabinet’s considerations. **Additionally, this Annex 4 is available via the Portfolio Holder and is not included as it is a confidential document and therefore not uploaded:**

Option	Benefits	Risks
<p><b>Option 1: Recommended Option</b></p> <p><b>Write-off all Bed and Breakfast arrears from 1991 to 2022/23.</b></p> <p>Total arrears are approximately £330,000 and are made up of a combination of statute barred, potentially challengeable, and uneconomical debt. However, there remains potential for a small percentage of this debt to be recoverable and options for this are outlined under Option 2.</p> <p>83% of the total arrears, £270,000 is statute barred debt, meaning the Council no longer has legal recourse to recover these monies.</p> <p>The remaining £60,000 is also considered unrecoverable, though as a result of technical error, and potentially challengeable debt. Also, this amount is uneconomical to collect given the resourcing issues.</p> <p>The post 2017/18 debt of £60,000 results from a technical error, being corrected in 2017/2018 that related to the B&amp;B charge of £98.08 frozen from 2011 and not previous LHA rates. However, recovery of this debt is challengeable, as this has not been actively pursued and benefits are not able to retrospectively credit accounts which would mean inequitable hardship on clients. It is therefore recommended to approve</p>	<p>The development of the Homeless Hub represents an opportunity to move forward with homeless prevention towards a progressive, supportive approach to our most vulnerable residents. Writing-off this historical, uneconomical and / or potentially challengeable debt supports the holistic individualised approach being proposed for the Homeless Hub.</p> <p>The new Temporary Accommodation Charging and Recovery Policy is streamlined, places emphasis on individual recovery, mental health support, and financial independence without the additional burden of charges being imposed while homeless. The new policy proposes to eliminate “Service Charges” for temporary accommodation from 2023/24.</p> <p>Analysis of historical arrears highlights several potential legal challenges to recovery of these arrears. While there is <u>no evidence</u> of charges being raised illegally, there remains a legal requirement to evidence billing and recovery procedures from initial charge and throughout the recovery process. Technical error, consolidation of accounts and missing data from previous systems combine to make it difficult, if not impossible, to evidence these processes now.</p>	<p>There is a risk that writing-off debt in this manner sets a precedent for debt recovery. This risk has been considered, and there are mitigations in place internally as well as through regulation to prevent this risk being realised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The billing and recovery of other resident or individual-acquired debt falls within its own legislative framework, including routine write-off of unrecoverable debt. In the main, this includes collection and recovery of Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates. There is little-to-no risk of Temporary Accommodation write-offs affecting this area of revenue management.</li> <li>- The Council’s constitution provides that all write-offs above £10,000 are approved through Cabinet governance, meaning there are appropriate prudential measures in place already to prevent future high-value write-offs becoming more frequent as a result of this one-off approval.</li> </ul> <p>In practice, there are greater risks in not writing-off these historical arrears, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential legal challenges as the Council is unable to provide evidence of clear billing and recovery processes as a result of system and technical errors.</li> </ul>



Option	Benefits	Risks
<p>write-off of all temporary accommodation debt to clear the path for a new charging and recovery policy, and new framework for the management of temporary accommodation support and account management.</p> <p><b>Recommended Option</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a financial risk to pursuing micro-debt as it is uneconomical to recover and does not represent prudent use of our housing solutions resources</li> <li>- There is a risk of exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Residents placed in emergency accommodation are by default vulnerable, and commonly represent complex multi-faceted vulnerabilities including domestic abuse, mental ill-health, substance misuse, and financial mismanagement / debt in other areas. Previous policy drives towards charges creating an opportunity to demonstrate financial discipline and motivation in individuals is discredited by contemporary social policy analysis, with evidence to demonstrate enforced financial responsibility for vulnerable people is counter-intuitive.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Option 2: Write off all statute barred debt, and remain committed to the recovery of non-statute barred debt</b>, which will involve an increase, or reallocation of staffing resources to the investigation and case management of micro-debt on a case-by-case basis. This report outlines this activity will require 1FTE officer dedicated to this activity at a cost to the Council of around £30k per</p>	<p>The Council's historical arrears for temporary accommodation have been data cleansed at a high level and the remaining non-statute barred debt is now organised into a known dataset of 374 accounts, making the overall workload lower, and as a minimum ring-fenced to a caseload of most recent, and therefore more recoverable debt.</p> <p>Dedicating resource to case management of the</p>	<p>As with Option 1, there is a risk of exacerbating existing vulnerabilities in pursuing the remaining non-statute barred debt balance.</p> <p>Acknowledging the additional administration required to legally enforce the remaining non-statute barred debt, eliminates (or as a minimum reduces greatly) the risk of legal challenge to debt recovery activity going forward. Each account pursued will be</p>

Option	Benefits	Risks
<p>annum, not including on-costs. This could be limited to a data cleansing exercise of 1FTE resource for six months, but would still incur a cost furthering the argument the debt is uneconomical to recover.</p> <p>As with Option 1, this option writes-off the £270,000 of statute barred debt.</p> <p>Within this option, Cabinet are advised to acknowledge while some debt is likely to be recovered, when individual cases are investigated they will need to meet recovery criteria of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. within a statutory recovery period i.e. debt created, acknowledged, billed, and managed actively within the last six years.</li> <li>b. debt or account levels with clear evidence of charges, and accurate and legal billing processes having been followed</li> <li>c. the debt is at a level at which it is economical to recover.</li> <li>d. the debtor is traceable, has some recourse to service the debt, and does not fall within definitions of vulnerability outlined in our policy framework including our vulnerability strategy.</li> </ul> <p><b>This option is not recommended to Cabinet,</b> based on ever-decreasing levels of recoverable debt making this option uneconomical. The new policy charging and recovery procedures acknowledge historical</p>	<p>remaining 374 accounts, will provide robust assurances that any debt pursued going forward is legal, economical to recover, and is genuine debt owed to the Council, eliminating the risks of pursuing unrecoverable debt.</p>	<p>done so with assurances and evidential requirements in place, providing a solid footing for debt recovery.</p> <p>The main risk with Option 2, is the financial risk of investing more resource into debt recovery than will be recovered as a result, making the recovery of this caseload uneconomical. Analysis of the temporary accommodation arrears caseload involved a series of filtering and percentage checks; the team analysing this issue were able to categorise the caseload and provide assurances that their analysis has been robust, accurate, and proportionate. In summary, should this exercise find accounts fitting debt recovery criteria, this is highly likely to be at levels deemed uneconomical to recover.</p>

Option	Benefits	Risks
technical errors and commits resource to ensuring these errors are a. prevented, b. if unpreventable, identified and resolved quickly.		

## **7.0 Temporary Accommodation charging policy and framework**

**7.1** To accompany the recommendation to write-off historic Bed and Breakfast arrears, this report presents an updated Temporary Accommodation Charging and Recovery policy at **Annex 5**.

7.1.1 A Full community impact assessment has been completed and is shown in Annex 6. **The charges to customers for temporary accommodation are capped at housing benefit levels.** In the case of B&B the charge to the client will be £98.08 per week with the remaining cost being met from general fund/HPG budgets and for self-contained units, it will be kept at the usual social/affordable housing rent levels.

**As the charges for emergency (B&B) accommodation are capped in line with the above levels this does not cover the full cost, which can be on average £500.00 per week. Therefore, Cabinet is asked to approve based on continued subsidy. If the true cost of the service was levied this would be inequitable a) regulations set a cap for benefit purposes and b) recovery would be limited and collection costs therefore disproportionate.**

**7.2** The aim of the new charging and recovery policy is to provide a supporting framework for **vulnerable tenants** who have been housed in emergency accommodation, and to prevent the future accumulation of arrears.

**7.3** The 2023 Temporary Accommodation Charging and Recovery Policy provides a flexible framework for the reasonable management of arrears, placing emphasis of responsibility on the tenant to make relevant claims to benefits, and on the housing solutions team to provide a supportive and holistic service, supporting the aims of the Homeless Hub.

**7.4** The policy also clarifies the terminology between a service charge fee with an administration fee for the provision of emergency accommodation. This option presents a streamlined administration process, recognises exacerbated vulnerabilities, and has the potential to prevent any significant B&B arrears accruing in the future. The option to include a charge is presented as potentially cost neutral to service users who have recourse to funds such as benefit and Discretionary Housing Payments.

**7.5** Simply, the charges are categorised as follows (see Annex 5 for full details).

- Emergency accommodation (Nightly room rate) can be expensive, and it is not reasonable to pass these charges in full to Licensee in emergency accommodation. **Therefore, the Council has applied a weekly charge of [£98.08](#) for all emergency (nightly paid) accommodation which the Council will adjust in line with any Government/benefit amendments.**

This weekly figure aligns with the maximum Housing Benefit subsidy the Council is able to claim and that the Housing Benefit team will pay towards the charges for emergency accommodation. This figure is set by Government in the management of Housing Benefit subsidy, and **should this figure change, this policy will be automatically updated in line with Government charging updates, as this is likely to be routine.**

- For Self-Contained Units, as these are in council stock the charge to the client is the social housing rental weekly charge and they are given a non-secure license agreement whilst in these properties.
- Service Charges are recoverable as per the policy, but as these are [ineligible for housing benefit](#) and as Tamworth does not provide the typical services listed i.e Laundry and hot food, **is not levying them.** However, the new policy has confirmed that it will levy an administration charge under the [Councils discretionary housing benefit arrangements](#). Local Authorities can interpret support for 'housing costs' where a claimant is unable to meet their own costs. Housing costs are not defined in the Discretionary Financial Assistance (DFA) Regulations 2001 and purposefully allows for broad interpretation. Usually covering things associated with a new tenancy, such as emergency B&B support and pursuing settled accommodation.

## 8.0 Resource Implications

8.1 The table below shows that the Homeless service costs just over £1m. Income supporting this service, shown over-leaf, confirms this expenditure is offset by just over £500K which comprises a range of government grant, efficiency savings & contributions from reserves and income. The table showing reserves of just over £600K illustrates that although the Government have only been awarded a two-year settlement (2023/2025) there is opportunity for the Council to draw on this as required.

Based on predicted outturn for 2022/23		
<b>HOMELESSNESS AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY EXPENDITURE</b>		
SALARIES - <i>budget partially established from HPG</i>		£ 244,430.00
HOMEWORKING ALLOWANCE		£ 1,150.00
PAYMENTS FOR TEMPORARY STAFF - <i>budget established from HPG</i>		£ 65,000.00
CAR ALLOWANCES		£ 6,950.00
EQUIPMENT FURNITURE & MATERIAL		£ 1,100.00
MOBILE PHONES		£ 477.01
RESTART- ROUGH SLEEPERS - <i>budget established from HPG</i>		£ 9,970.00
STAFF TRAINING - <i>budget established from HPG</i>		£ 100.00
HOMELESSNESS TRAINING - <i>budget established from HPG</i>		£ 2,422.47
PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE		£ 2,050.00
MFT LICENCE/MTCE/IIMP		£ 11,970.00
PROVISION FOR BAD DEBTS		£ 19,800.00
BED AND BREAKFAST COST		£ 98,000.00
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION - <i>budget established from HPG</i>		£ 67,000.00
SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTO - <i>budget established from HPG</i>		£ 15,380.00
COST OF HOMELESS HOSTELS		£ 86,510.00
SOLUTIONS FUND - <i>budget established from HPG</i>		£ 35,000.00
CONTRACT PAYMENTS		£ 80.00
RECHARGES		£ 356,860.00
		<b>£ 1,024,249.48</b>

For 2023/24 and 2024/25 the Government confirmed a two-year settlement of £260,704 and £268,215 for Homelessness Prevention Grant funding which has been built into the Council’s budget setting process<sup>5</sup>.

Based on predicted outturn for 2022/23		
<b>HOMELESSNESS AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY INCOME</b>		
	GOVERNMENT GRANTS (HPG & WINTER PRESSURE)	-£ 291,326.00
	CONTRIBUTION FROM RESERVES	-£ 111,010.00
	SAVINGS-SERVICE REVIEW	-£ 30,000.00
	BED & BREAKFAST INCOME	-£ 37,000.00
	INCOME FROM HOMELESS HOSTELS	-£ 86,510.00
		<b>-£ 555,846.00</b>

<b>HELD IN RESERVES AND RETAINED FUNDS:</b>		
	FLEXI HOMELESS SUPPORT GRANT	-£ 336,735.00
	ROUGH SLEEPING INITIATIVE PROJECT	-£ 11,400.00
	FINANCIAL AND DEBT ADVICE	-£ 72,850.00
	B&B WRITE OFFS	-£ 207,080.00
		<b>-£ 628,065.00</b>

There are multiple commitments for some of the reserves, i.e. 2 posts for 2 years fixed term salaries, contribution to CAB contract for Financial and Debt Advice, etc. The requirement for the reserves will be reviewed as part of the year end process - however the reserve for B&B write offs of £207,080 will not be required going forward and can be returned to balances.

8.2 The financial impact of the proposed recommendations are summarised below:

Area	In 2023/24	Detail
Homelessness Strategy	c£126K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding available from HPG to achieve ambitions in the Strategy (already committed to Homelessness Prevention, Solution Funds, Etc.)</li> <li>£260,704 (HPG) less £60,000 (Hub) less £74,840 (B&amp;B cost to HPG)</li> </ul>
Homelessness Hub	c£60,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be met from HPG / reserves.</li> </ul>
Temporary accommodation write-off 1991 – 2023	c£330,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This cost fluctuates daily because it is not a static debt; and the final report as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, if approved by Cabinet will reflect the exact amount.</li> <li><b>As this write-off was anticipated it is already provided for in the council’s bad</b></li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup>

\*Based on predicted outturn for 2022/23 – reflects actual position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, rather than budgeted. \*

		<b>debt provision and does not have to be met from budget set out at 8.1.</b>
Temporary Accommodation charging policy 2023 – onwards	c£74,840	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From table below you will see the Council has significantly reduced its spend on bed and breakfast.</li> <li>Whilst the Council enjoys this position it is able to fund this service, where clients qualify for housing benefit via a combination of HB relief on £98.08 p/w and by sourcing DHP on the admin charge with the remainder been met from HPG allocation.</li> <li>Assuming annual B&amp;B charges remain at an estimated £98K p/a. It is assumed c£75K would be met from HPG with the remaining £23K coming from HB/DHP.</li> <li>Where clients are not eligible for benefits (less than 10 over the last two years) then these will be required to pay.</li> </ul>

**Historic Bed and breakfast costs – see below.**

Year	Actual Total B&B Cost	Total B&B Income (rent charges, adjustments, and including HB shown in column 4)	Housing Benefit payments	General Fund Cost	HPG Cost
2016-17	£389,864.86	-£386,779.81	-£281,898.54	£3,085.05	n/a
2017-18	186,615.75	-£184,522.27	-£131,654.24	£2,123.48	n/a
2018-19	£75,312.86	-£37,043.36	-£21,592.75	£38,269.50	n/a
2019-20	£82,806.22	-£29,115.83	-£15,957.21	£53,690.39	n/a
2020-21	£93,817.85	-£33,037.31	-£16,242.50	£60,780.54	n/a
2021-22	£104,585.89	-£35,200.85	-£19,900.57	£69,385.04	n/a
Est 2022-23	£98,000.00	-£37,000.00	-£10,200.00	0	£61,000

**Going forward – estimated bed and breakfast costs and funding arrangements.**

Year	-Estimated cost	Total HB claim @ £98.08 rate	Total DHP assumed @ £20.10	General Fund	HPG Journal year end for offset difference
2023/24	£98,000	£19,220.00 (based on £500 per week)	£3,940.00	£0	£74,840.00
2024/25	£98,000	£19,220.00	£3,940.00	£0	£74,840.00

**8.3 Cabinet should be aware that the estimated annual B&B costs remain uncertain due to external factors beyond the council’s control and therefore, will be subject to an annual review as part of the council’s budget setting process. Should emergency accommodation requirements increase then clearly those costs need to remain dynamic.**

**Equally, HPG allocations continue to be based on performance and are subject to Government review. Should the settlement change then the council may not be able to use HPG to subsidise costs. Equally should Housing benefit regulations change and there be in-sufficient Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to funds the administrative charges then this would also have a negative impact and would have to be reassess.**

**9.0 Legal/Risk Implications**

9.1 As the report represents a range of proposals the risks have been summarised below:

**Strategic Risks**

<b>Risk Area</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Strategy Updates	Further key actions are not delivered.	SMART delivery plan is reviewed, and Key performance indicators will be updated on corporate systems and also in line with HCLIC requests from DLUHC.
Winter Relief (SWEP)	Significant increase in citizen expectations to deal with rising homelessness	Comprehensive partnership working with the third and voluntary sector to support the project.
Homeless Hub	Reputational risk of citizen and stakeholder expectations not been met.	Will be subject to financial and procurement regulations and process

**Temporary Accommodation Risks**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
The council does not write-off Bed and Breakfast arrears and continues to pursue recovery of all accounts in arrears that are not statute barred.	The council risks challenge to recovery of arrears as internal review has found system errors or bugs, lack of evidence of a sundry debt process being followed and the majority of arrears accounts being considered uneconomical to recover.	This report recommends writing off all Bed and Breakfast arrears and starting the new policy process in April 2023 with a clean caseload following an updated and evidence-based process.

The council does not adopt a new Temporary Accommodation Charging and Recovery Policy. The council can continue to operate using the 2018 policy and this does not affect the housing of people in line with our statutory obligations, or the tenant's rights to accommodation or benefits.	Operating under the existing 2018 policy does not make provision for an evidence-based recovery process, and does not provide clarity to tenants over charges levied and the options available to them for payment. The current policy includes a service charge not eligible for payment by Housing Benefits, but the new policy addresses this gap in provision and provides clarity on rent, charges, and payment options.	The council's strategic aims and plans for the Homeless Hub provide the ideal opportunity for a new Charging and Recovery policy and practice and this is recommended.
Bed and Breakfast usage increases	External factors impact resulting in a return to historic levels, this will impact on funding.	Recognition of this is understood and will be built into the annual budget setting process with associated policy changes as required.
HPG funding	The Governments allocation changes adversely impacting on Tamworth.	This is beyond the council's control and should this happen will require a budget review.

## 10.0 Equalities Implications

10.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed and is shown at Annex 6. Full regard has been given across all protected characteristics and affordability levels have been closely aligned to housing benefit regulations.

## 11.0 Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

11.1 The detail in the report does not place any additional burden on the council's environmental and sustainability objectives.

## 12.0 Report Author

Tina Mustafa – Assistant Director Neighbourhoods

Sarah Finnegan – Head of Homelessness and Housing Solutions

## List of Background Papers

## Appendices

Document Annex	Purpose
1. Achievements to date from strategy	Full version of individual successes against key priorities.
2. SMART Plan with RAG rating	Examples of performance and monitoring.



3. Homeless Hub links to strategy	How the key principles are entwined with our strategy
4. Report on historic Bed and Breakfast arrears (copies <b>available for internal inspection only</b> , via the Portfolio holder for Homelessness Prevention and Social Housing and S151 officer, as this contains confidential information)	Explanation of arrears accumulation, examination of the debt caseload, and exploration of the options available to the council for the lawful recovery of arrears.
5. Proposed Temporary Accommodation Charging and Recovery Policy 2023	Confirmation of the council's policy intentions going forward for the management of charges and payments for emergency accommodation.
6. Equality Impact Assessment	To map the impact on service users.

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Key Priorities from 2020- 2025	Achievements to date
<p><i>Priority 1: Prevent and have Early Intervention of Homelessness Through working with partners and Stakeholders.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Band 1 – 6 months mediation in the Allocation policy for parental eviction</li> <li>➤ Revised the Allocations policy in 2021 to recognise the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Social Housing White Paper and further guidance for Veterans.</li> <li>➤ Band 2 award given for verified rough sleepers in the allocations policy.</li> <li>➤ Specific bandings in the allocations policy reflecting the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) duties.</li> <li>➤ Quarterly meetings with Through care to provide early intervention for care leavers.</li> <li>➤ RSI project – Rough sleepers advertising campaign</li> <li>➤ Links with the DWP armed forces champion for Veterans</li> <li>➤ Currently finalising the 16- 17 Protocol with Children’s Services for those homeless or threatened with homelessness.</li> <li>➤ Monthly meetings take place with probation, i.e planning for releases or those out in the community where it may break down.</li> <li>➤ Commission the Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) for additional sessions within the Community on a weekly basis in conjunction with the charitable sector</li> <li>➤ Joint commission the TAC money advice service with Partnerships and landlord function which assists with eviction suspensions etc.</li> <li>➤ Use the Housing Solutions fund for preventions e.g rent in advance, deposits.</li> <li>➤ Trained accredited mediators in the team.</li> <li>➤ Have recruited an outreach officer to work with local churches and partners for early intervention in case someone beds down.</li> <li>➤ Duty to refer – the service receives wider agency referrals from RPs and Housing associations on their tenants threatened with homelessness.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Established links with Job Centre and have a SPOC</li> <li>➤ Established links with the discharge nurse at Good Hope hospital.</li> <li>➤ Established links and good working practice with HumanKind and New Era and Better Way recovery</li> <li>➤ Mental Health links have evolved, established worker from Midlands Partnership Trust (MPFT) now working alongside the team directly.</li> <li>➤ Following County initiatives with regard to complex care pathways</li> <li>➤ Collaborative working with the Ukraine resettlement team at County and partnerships team</li> <li>➤ RSI team in place from 2021- 2022 providing housing first principles on sustaining tenancies.</li> <li>➤ Interlinking work carried out with Council tax for success via the Household support fund and reduced client's liability for more affordability in the future.</li> <li>➤ Duty to refer active referral early intervention pathway for partners.</li> <li>➤ Interlink departments with joint commissioning between Income/ Council Tax/ Benefits and Housing Solutions</li> <li>➤ Referrals to supported accommodation units.</li> <li>➤ Personal Housing Plans (PHPs)</li> <li>➤ Tamworth Vulnerability Partnership (TVP) supporting tenancy sustainment.</li> <li>➤ Move on Protocol with supported accommodation providers.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Priority 2: Develop Rapid Pathways for Rough Sleepers</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Completed successful advertising campaign and posters for those rough sleeping.</li> <li>➤ Continuation of the free phone number</li> <li>➤ Successfully completed RSI 4 from June 2021-July 2022.</li> <li>➤ Submitted End Rough Sleeping to DLUHC</li> <li>➤ Successful partnership working in place with local police teams, wardens, Heart of Tamworth and TCIC other charities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Full time dedicated outreach officer added to the service who works with local partners statutory and voluntary and other churches in Tamworth.</li> <li>➤ Embedded partnership working with Humankind on Rough sleepers with multi-dual diagnosis, along with multi-disciplinary team meetings.</li> <li>➤ Delivered winter relief projects with Heart of Tamworth, providing covid- secure wrap-around support.</li> <li>➤ Delivered additional Housing Options surgeries at local churches.</li> <li>➤ Supporting rough sleepers though joint visits with police and support services</li> <li>➤ Assisted via “Everyone In” initiative rehoused multiple reoccurring rough sleepers and worked with them via Neighbourhood Coach and mental health worker to sustain tenancies longer term.</li> <li>➤ Personalised Budgets for Rough Sleepers funded from Homeless Prevention Grant, e.g assistance with ID, white goods, essentials they may need to get back into employment.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Priority 3: Improve the supply of and access to Affordable and Supported Housing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ s106 agreements- working closely with RPs the development of the housing strategy and planning.</li> <li>➤ Acquisitions- expanding property types to meet housing need in the area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Working with key partners and RSLs via nominations</li> <li>➤ Exploring commissioning options for support once in a home in-order to increase sustainment.</li> <li>➤ Move on protocol for supported Housing providers.</li> <li>➤ Have continued to build on links to supported accommodation for clients out of area.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Priority 4: Offering a High Quality and innovative Service to homeless household and those threatened with homelessness.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Training programme for staff for continued professional development in place.</li> <li>➤ Personalised Housing Plans for all clients owed a duty under HRA.</li> <li>➤ Continued to have single figures in Bed and Breakfast</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ No Families kept in Bed and breakfast longer than 6 weeks.</li> <li>➤ No 16–17-year-olds placed in Bed and breakfast</li> <li>➤ Continued submissions Performance, DLUHC DELTA returns.</li> <li>➤ Using the data to inform service delivery.</li> <li>➤ DLUHC advisors via HAST visited the service in October 2022 “robust prevention toolkit” and continued low numbers in temporary accommodation.</li> <li>➤ Tamworth commended further by DLUHC youth homelessness advisor.</li> <li>➤ Excellent collaborative working with Statutory agencies and voluntary sector.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Priority 5: Improve health and Wellbeing aspirations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Duty to refer- working directly with the hospital as a key point of contact and close work with discharge staff at hospitals.</li> <li>➤ Working with MPFT and established links with Mental health hospitals.</li> <li>➤ Trained staff that are mental health first aiders</li> <li>➤ Suicide training for all staff</li> <li>➤ Robust response to Covid-19</li> <li>➤ Working with New Era tackling Domestic Abuse Rapid referral channels via mental health and A&amp;E</li> <li>➤ Commissioning mental health worker 2021- 2022</li> <li>➤ Providing good quality TA for those who are homeless which meets individual needs including level access facilities, supported units and accommodation options centrally located to access town centre services.</li> <li>➤ Embedded relationships with Humankind (Substance misuse)</li> <li>➤ Collaborative work delivered with Heart of Tamworth register clients with GPs.</li> <li>➤ Delivered Protect and Vaccinate e.g uptake with Covid Vaccinations</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <b>Personalised budgets assisted to buy cookers and fridges to promote healthier eating.</b></li><li>➤ <b>Supported through revised Relief Duty Banding under Allocations Policy 2020</b></li><li>➤ <b>Delivered and recruited a ‘temporary accommodation coordinator’ role within the team to support those clients in TA.</b></li></ul>
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Homelessness and Housing Solutions Service  
Directorate Neighbourhoods

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 - 2025

SMART Delivery Action Plan- Appendix 1

Homelessness & RS Strategy

Action Plan 2020-2025

Specific Action	Measurable (outcome)	Achievable	Resources	Time	Lead Officer	RAG rating for review 2023
1.Prevent and have early intervention of homelessness through working with partners and stakeholders	Assist those at risk of friends and family asking them to leave which is one of our highest reasons for approach	Trained mediators in the team (links to priority 1 &4)  Allocations policy permits band 1 for 6 months mediation programme (links to priority 1&3)	2 X Officers trained mediators £3K per course- Staff training £5K p/a  Allocations policy is 2020 and will be reviewed	2021- ongoing  2021-2022	Head of Service  Homes Manager	
	Move on pathways.	To continue to prevent repeat homelessness and rough sleeping, we will develop move on pathways for sustainable accommodation and support needs.	Partner joint working and third sector connections.  Housing Solutions fund £50K to support cases for rent in advance.  If rough sleepers are verified obtain a band 2 status on the Council's housing register.	2021- ongoing	Homeless Prevention Manager	

	Pre-action protocols with Registered Providers, Housing Associations and other statutory services	Work with our partners to create and implement a local pre-action protocol on possession claims by social landlords Current work on going with SCC social services on 16/17 yr old protocol and assistance from DLUHC	Allocations policy 2020 gives all confirmed care leavers, ready for move on Band 1 status.  Eviction prevention panel with RPs/HAs	2021 – on going	Homes Manager	Pre-action youth protocol with County and DLUHC in progress.
	Focus on Prevention of Evictions	We will work with landlords and tenants to resolve difficulties through, for example, dispute resolution mechanisms, mediation. Agreements between tenant and Landlords.(behavioural etc) Re-design homelessness and stop the revolving door  Assist with rent arrears if facing financial; hardship and	Team training and mediators in the team, look to increase.  Housing Solutions Fund £50K P/A	2021 – ongoing  2021	Homeless Prevention Manager  Head of Service & (All managers)	

		<p>difficulties</p> <p>Referrals to Tamworth Advice Centre for debt and money advice</p> <p>Helping households in the owner-occupied sector with financial problems</p>	<p>Housing Solutions part Commission TAC £20K PA</p> <p>Team members assisting and trained, Mortgage rescue schemes in-light of covid tba</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>2021- ongoing</p>	<p>Head of Service, Referral &amp; Compliance manager</p> <p>Head of Service &amp; Homeless Prevention Manager</p>	
	Opening up the Homeless (HRA)Jigsaw Software to third parties	<p>To enable partners and third sector who engage with clients to obtain and assist clients with their cases. To prevent gaps in service provision for the clients. Also will aid the duty to refer under the HRA 2017</p> <p>Deliver staff training on prevention tools (to both internal and external colleagues who may be able to signpost)</p>	<p>£9K p/a</p> <p>Staff training on new legislation and case law £5K</p>	2021- ongoing	Homeless prevention Manager & Compliance and Referral Manager.	

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Specific Action	Measurable (outcome)	Achievable	Resources	Time	Lead Officer	RAG rating for review 2023
2. Develop rapid pathways for rough sleepers	Commissioning a 'Housing First' service for those with multiple high needs	Working with partners and stakeholders, we will explore the relevance of 'Housing First' as a potential pathway for rough sleepers with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles. Soft-test marketing will be done.	£50K for 1 year, using FSHG.	2022-2025	Head of Homelessness & HS & All Managers	Completed RSI 4 for 1 year from June 21- July 22.
	Provision of emergency accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reduce even further the use of bed and breakfast accommodation,</li> <li>-Use of Council Stock</li> <li>-Ensure that our allocations and lettings policy fast tracks rough sleepers into our</li> </ul>	<p>B&amp;B Budget p/a now reduced to £100K reduced from £250K p/a</p> <p>TA pays for itself creating revenue.</p> <p>Allocations policy fast tracks RS. RSs receive band 2.</p>	2021- ongoing	Head of Service & All Managers	

		<p>accommodation and that of registered providers</p> <p>-Continue to support the provision of appropriate emergency accommodation during winter periods / severe weather</p>	<p>SWEP budget £6K p/a</p>			
	<p>Advice &amp; Support / Outreach service &amp; Homeless Hub</p>	<p>Help and assistance to rough sleepers and vulnerable households to access accommodation and support is fundamental, staff complete out-reach services and aspiration of a Homeless Hub within the community. Build on 1 to 1 support.</p> <p>Work with Public Health and the Clinical Commissioning</p>	<p>Partners and Third sector</p> <p>£20K Outreach service p/a</p>	<p>2022- 2025</p>	<p>Head of Service &amp; All Managers</p> <p>Public Health England &amp; CCG.</p>	<p>Request for sign off progression in Cabinet report 23'.</p>

		Group to explore links between poor health and homelessness and identify ways of tackling these				
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Specific Action	Measurable	Achievable	Resources	Time	Lead Officer	RAG rating for review 2023
3. Improve the supply of and access to affordable and supported housing	Planning agreements (national levy)	Availability of new affordable rented housing for homeless households could be enhanced by incorporating a nomination provision into planning agreements	Government's Planning White Paper proposes replacing planning agreements with a national levy	2022- 2025	Head of service & all Managers	
	Private renting	Improving our offer to landlords opens up opportunities of accessing a wider range of accommodation.  We have three	Housing Solutions fund £50K p/a	2021- ongoing	Head of Service & All Managers	

		specific actions: -Use our landlords' forum to highlight our offer -Operate a tenancy-ready scheme for households willing to consider the private rented sector -Enhance the role of our temporary accommodation service to include joint working with tenants and landlords	Our local housing strategy includes a number of additional relevant proposals on addressing issues in the private rented sector.  Preventing evictions is highlighted under priority one			
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Specific Action	Measurable	Achievable	Resources	Time	Lead Officer	RAG rating for review 2023
4. Offer a high quality and innovative service to homeless households and those threatened with homelessness	Quality assurances	Ensuring appropriate access to services (including advice and support) depends on having robust mechanisms for checking quality.	Staff training £5K for relevant case law and legislation updates.	2021- ongoing	Head of Service & All Managers	



		<p>Our specific actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Staff training (including updates) on issues such as trauma management and conflict resolution</li> <li>-Use of a customer steering group to oversee quality issues</li> </ul> <p>External reviews eg Government's homelessness and support advisers (HAST)</p>	New corporate portal			
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Specific Action	Measurable	Achievable	Resources	Time	Lead Officer	RAG rating
5. Improve health and well-being aspirations.	Support needs of people presenting themselves as homeless highlights the significance of (i) mental health and (ii) physical ill-health and disability.	<p>Using data and information also linked to priority 2</p> <p>We will continuously analyse data from sources such as the annual rough sleeper count and the severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP)</p>	<p>I.T software,</p> <p>Staff training</p> <p>KPIs</p>	2021 on going	Head of Service & Compliance & Referral Manager	On track and working well with MPFT

	Addressing mental health issues- data shows highest issue	<p>As part of our response to covid-19, we have flagged up to customers mental health support services such as South Staffordshire Network for Mental Health.</p> <p>We will enhance our joint working with partners on addressing this issue.</p> <p>Targeted mental health resource into the team.</p>	<p>Use of Human Kind/New Era SCC</p> <p>£30K p/a</p>			
	<p>Helping vulnerable customers access emergency services</p> <p>Tackling domestic</p>	<p>Vulnerable households often require the assurance of being able to contact organisations in times of crisis via our Out-of-hours service (OOH)</p> <p>Working with our community safety partnership, we will promote the Staffordshire Smart Alert service to vulnerable customers. (links to priority 4)</p>	<p>Staff costs in OOH claims per year £6600 per year 19/20</p>		Head of Service & All Managers	<p>Working well, options considered for OOH, internal discussions underway on feasibility.</p>

	abuse	<p>Domestic abuse is both one of the immediate reasons for homelessness as well as one of the support needs for those presenting themselves as homeless (see evidence base)</p> <p>We will work with our partners in developing and implementing policies to address this issue.</p>	<p>Part of DV forum in Staffordshire</p> <p>Previously made successful bids for Pathways to continue its service.</p>	<p>Predicted £196K spent of £264,250.00</p>	<p>Head of Service &amp; All Managers</p> <p>Partnerships Team</p>	
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**Key Housing and Homelessness strategic priorities that support a Homeless Hub.**

(Annex 3)

<p><b><u>Priority One - Prevention and early intervention through working with partners and stakeholders</u></b></p>	<p>Drop-in service</p>	<p>Advice and support for households and people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping</p> <p>Expand the current service at the Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) to include mental health support / signposting and extend job and training advice and homelessness prevention support</p>	<p>Will be supported by the Homeless Hub</p>
<p><b><u>Priority Two - Develop rapid pathways for rough sleepers</u></b></p>	<p>Advice and support services</p>	<p>Help and assistance to rough sleepers and vulnerable households to access accommodation and support is fundamental.</p> <p>We, therefore, have three specific actions:</p> <p>Work with the third sector / voluntary sector (eg Heart of Tamworth and TCIC).</p>	<p>Supported by a hub</p>

		<p>As part of the community safety partnership, make links with the street warden scheme and local policing teams.</p> <p>Explore the concept of a 'Homeless Hub' based on our homelessness team and its services</p>	
<p><b><u>Priority three:</u></b> <b><u>Improve the supply of and access to affordable and supported housing</u></b></p>	<p>Supported housing / floating support/ housing first principles adopted</p>	<p>Our evidence base shows that homeless households have a diverse range of support needs as well as accommodation.</p> <p>We, therefore, will work with our partners in putting together a hybrid package of support to help households better access "move-on" accommodation</p>	<p>Supported by the hub and will link to tenancy-ready schemes and winter relief projects already operational</p>
<p><b><u>Priority four:</u></b> <b><u>Offer a high quality and innovative service to homeless households and those threatened</u></b></p>	<p>Customer access to services</p>	<p>The overall theme of this action is to support vulnerable users to access services to prevent and relieve homelessness.</p> <p>The specific actions include:</p>	<p>Links to reset and recovery programme and part of broader customer services approach</p>

<p><u>with homelessness.</u></p>		<p>Supporting vulnerable households on digital inclusion so as-to directly access / use e-forms and customer portals.</p> <p>Work with third sector organisations to support their vulnerable customers to access services online and in person</p>	
<p><b><u>Priority five: Improve health and well-being aspirations.</u></b></p>	<p>Addressing mental health issues</p>	<p>With mental health needs being a high support need that most clients approach with, we will enhance our joint working with partners (MPFT), MIND on addressing this issue</p>	<p>This could be widened through the hub</p>

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### 1. Introduction

Tamworth Borough Council will actively manage Licensees' who reside in emergency accommodation provided by the Authority when discharging its homeless functions. However, when a resident leaves Emergency Accommodation provided under s188 or s193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended 2002) and moves into long term settled accommodation, leaving a debt on their rent account, the debt they owe Tamworth Borough Council (TBC) becomes 'Former Tenant Arrears'. This policy sets out how the Council will deal with these debts.

This policy applies to all former residents of emergency accommodation provided by Tamworth Borough Council in response to its statutory duties under s188 and s193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended 2002) and sits alongside Tamworth Borough Councils procedures for the collection of former tenant arrears from Council managed properties where the tenant leaves owing rent arrears or other related debts to the Council.

This policy aligns with our [Housing Strategy 2020-25](#), our [Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020](#), and pays due regard to a range of national legislation, and it is the responsibility of the council, and its officers, to be mindful of and comply it when making relevant decisions. This includes:

- Sections 188, 193, 206, 208 and 210 of the Housing Act 1996
- The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

- The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003
- The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Localism Act 2011
- Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989
- Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004

## 2. Types of Temporary Accommodation

**2.1. Bed and Breakfast** - The Council uses emergency bed and breakfast placements for roofless on the day or needed during out-of-hours and uses local providers for nightly paid accommodation. Clients when entering into this type of accommodation are placed under a S188 interim duty under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII (as amended). The Council continues to have low numbers in B&B and remains on track of having no families in this type of short-term accommodation for no longer than the Government target.

**2.2 Self-Contained Units-** These are units which are sourced from the Council's own stock. We use on average 20 units at one time. This can increase due to SWEP responses or any other emergency such as the Covid – 19 outbreak and 'Everyone In' Government initiative which saw these increase, however they remain a static figure all year round. We have a culmination of 1 – 3 beds that the Council uses for clients to remain in either under S188 duty or the S 193 (2) main duty in which clients remain in these properties until their final offer of accommodation whether that be Council stock or an offer in the PRSO is sourced, and the duty is discharged. For this accommodation the charge to client is the social housing rental weekly charge and they are given a non-secure license agreement whilst in these properties.

## 3. Charges

Licensees' placed in emergency accommodation will be required to pay two charges: rent and an administration charge.

4. **Rent** – emergency accommodation can be expensive and it is not reasonable to pass these charges in full to Licensee in emergency accommodation. Therefore, the Council has set a weekly charge of [£98.08](#) for all emergency (nightly paid) accommodation. This weekly figure aligns with the maximum Housing Benefit subsidy the Council is able to claim and that the Housing Benefit team will pay towards the charges for emergency accommodation.

This figure is set by Government in the management of Housing Benefit subsidy, and should this figure change, this policy will be automatically updated in line with Government charging updates, as this is likely to be routine.

When accepting emergency accommodation, the Housing Solutions team will meet with the tenant and detail the support available to them and will provide guidance

and support to make an application to Housing Benefit. Universal Credit at present does not cover the housing element of exempt accommodation, specifically emergency accommodation, and so any tenant making a claim to Universal Credit will also need to notify the DWP of their intention to claim and make a claim direct to the Housing Benefit team at Tamworth Borough Council.

Claims should be made as soon as possible, and the tenant will be provided with information, and access to 1-1 support to make a claim. Copies of information are appended to this policy.

#### 5. Service Charges

The Council can levy a service charge for ancillary charges such as breakfast, laundry and similar. However it has chosen not to do this as they are currently benefit ineligible but will consult with licences where government legislation changes.

#### 6. Administration Charges

The Housing Act 1996 places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide temporary accommodation for applicants during the period between initial application and decision to accept or reject the application and if accepted, until the conditions for discharging duty are met. The council has a right, under the same Act to make reasonable charge for the accommodation.

Charges for the administration of emergency accommodation are set at £20.10 per week per household. These charges are payable weekly, monthly, or at the end of the license agreement providing the is no longer than Government targets for duration.

As part of the agreement to accept emergency accommodation, Licensee will be asked to make an application for Discretionary Housing payment &/or identify their preferred payment method and plan, and will be given information to set up a standing order, and methods of payment online, in person, and over the telephone.

Any tenant making a claim for Housing Benefit to cover the rent charge, will also be provided with an application for a Discretionary Housing Payment, along with support and guidance to complete this application.

The new policy has confirmed that it will levy an administration charge under the [Councils discretionary housing benefit arrangements](#). This charge is interpreted as a 'housing costs' where a claimant is unable to meet their own costs. Housing costs are broadly defined, usually covering things associated with a new tenancy, such as emergency B&B support and pursuing settled accommodation – the list is not exhaustive.

## 7. Notice of offer

Within two working days of being offered emergency accommodation, the housing solutions team will provide the tenant with a statement of rent and administration charges. This statement details the weekly rent payable, the amount and frequency of the administration charge and a full explanation for the administration charges and the tenant's right in relation to both charges.

The notice of offer will also include information on support available. This will include details on how to apply for Housing Benefits and Discretionary Housing Payments, how and where to find financial counselling, mental health support, and support to find longer-term accommodation. The notice of offer will include details of recovery of outstanding balances, but the emphasis will remain on preventing arrears, accessing Housing Benefits and other avenues of financial support, and encourage regular dialogue between the tenant and the housing solutions team should there be any issues in making any payments.

## 8. Arrears during a tenancy

Time spent in emergency accommodation should be limited and as brief as possible. During time spent in emergency accommodation, the housing solutions team will be in regular contact with the tenant and will provide ongoing support and assistance for financial support such as making a claim to Housing Benefits. If the tenant has not yet made a claim, the housing solutions officer will discuss options and barriers to claiming and will make arrangements for a Housing Benefit claim appointment with the Council's customer services team.

The accumulation of arrears during a tenancy threatens the security of the place in emergency accommodation, and the housing solutions team aims to prevent terminating a stay in emergency accommodation by providing access to financial advice and support to claim Housing Benefit.

## 9. Balance at the end of tenancy

It is the responsibility of the Housing Solutions Officer to ensure a clear rent account is achieved prior to the termination of the accommodation. Where the rent account is clear a letter will be issued with a rent statement to this effect advising the customer that their account is clear and that there are no arrears outstanding.

When leaving emergency accommodation, the Housing Solutions team will contact the tenant to inform them of any outstanding arrears for either rent or administration charges. During this contact, any outstanding claims for Housing Benefit or Discretionary Housing Payments will be reviewed, and if a claim has not yet been made, the tenant will be given support to make a claim.

The Housing Solutions Team will confirm, in writing, the amount owed, the options available to the former tenant for making claims to Housing Benefit and Discretionary Housing Payments, and will be given an outline payment plan for payment if a claim is not made which meets the arrears, or a claim is made but does not cover the charges in full.

A letter will be sent to the forwarding address of the tenant.

If, after 28 days, no payment is received, the former tenant will receive a second reminder for all outstanding balances and again urged to make any outstanding claims for benefits.

If after a further 28 days, no contact or payment has been made, the account will move to account recovery.

## 10. Post-tenancy Arrears

Collection and recovery of arrears. It is important to be seen by residents that all debts will be pursued; this sends out a clear message that the authority takes a firm approach to the collection of debts.

The former licensee debt recovery process starts when a client's period of occupation has ended and they have left the emergency accommodation. The stages below provide an outline of the recovery process with further detail as shown in the flow chart.

Each outstanding balance will be considered on a case-by-case basis and the following will be considered by the Councils corporate income recovery team when proceeding with recovery of outstanding arrears. The housing solutions officer will pass over the former licensee account with details of payment planning and the following steps will then be reviewed by the sundry debtor team.

1. The level of arrears. Any arrears under £150 may not be economical to recover. The officer will need to take payment history, levels of vulnerability, and current housing and income into account when considering recovery. Should it be considered unrecoverable, the account balance will be written off, with approval for all individual write-off delegated to the head of homelessness and housing solutions.

2. Arrears over £150 will be pursued:

It is Tamworth Borough Council's intention to minimise former tenant arrears from emergency accommodation through the effective management of handling of current arrears, however, a certain amount of former tenant arrears will inevitably accumulate. Tamworth Borough Council will investigate the reasons for any arrears and where possible will take the necessary action to use an enforcement agency for any amount £150 or over to recover the debt. The process for this includes:

- a. A final written notice will be sent to the former tenant requesting payment in full, or the establishment of a payment plan with an accompanying upfront payment.
- b. Payment plans will be for no longer than 12 months, and will consider the income and capability to pay using an income and expenditure form provided. In exceptional circumstances, the Council will accept a lower

offer of payment, and this will be discussed and agreed by the housing solutions officer and the former tenant.

- c. Should the former licensee not respond to the final written notice, or not enter into a payment plan, the Council will consider instructing a debt collection agency after a period of six months. Considerations for vulnerable Licensee, and the level of arrears will be made and all former Licensee will be informed of the intention to instruct a debt collection agency or pursue further recovery options.
- d. Any arrears not sent to a collection agency may be considered for write-off or alternative recovery such as through attachment orders, County Court Judgements and orders placed on property. This will be done only in cases where arrears are over £1,000, where all attempts at alternative recovery have been exhausted and there is no known levels of vulnerability preventing the former tenant from paying their arrears.

Recovery options available to the Council include:

- Small Claims Court and associated enforcement,
- Department of Work and Pensions arrears direct payments,
- tracing agencies,
- enforcing money judgements and recovering all associated costs.

The Council will accept a minimum weekly payment of the sum that could be collected via direct payments from the Department of Work and Pensions, currently £3.70 per week as an acceptable method of repaying debt via instalments. However, this is the minimum amount for those on income related benefits such as Universal Credit.

## 9. Management of arrears balances

The housing solutions team will conduct an account check at 4-week intervals to identify any payments made against arrears from Housing Benefits, or from the former tenant either as a lump sum or as part of an agreed payment plan.

The housing solutions team will write to the former tenant at intervals of 12 weeks for a maximum of 24 months from the end of the tenancy. Letters sent will outline the current arrears balance, payment options, financial advice, and details of how to make payments.

## 10. Accounts in credit

It is the responsibility of the Housing Solutions Officer to ensure a clear rent account is achieved prior to the termination of the accommodation. Where the rent account is clear a letter will be issued with a rent statement to this effect advising the customer that their account is clear and that there are no arrears outstanding.

If there are any credits on the account and there are no arrears on other housing accounts for the former tenant then this credit will be offered to the former tenant as a payment with options to credit a current rent account if they hold one.

## 11. Disputes

If any part of the debt is disputed, the correct balance should be verified before any further action is taken. The former tenant or their nominated representative will receive a letter of explanation along with an offer of a payment plan.

## 12. Complaints

Complaints about this policy, or the administration of any arrears balances will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's complaints procedure.

## 13. Referring case for 'Write Off'

Write offs will be actioned in accordance with the Housing Solutions Service Write off Procedure and in line with the following criteria: .

- Tenant Declared Bankrupt Official documentation must be received and kept on file, copy to be supplied with write off request.
- Debt Relief Order When the twelve-month moratorium period has passed arrange for the sum(s) in the sub account(s) to be written off as the Council cannot pursue these sums any further. (see separate procedure on Debt Relief Orders)
- Outstanding Credit On an account and the current address for former tenant is not known/unable to trace. The credit will remain on the system for a period of 18 months.
- Unable To Trace No forwarding address can be traced for a period of 18 months. All traces have been completed in accordance with the procedure document.
- Uneconomic To Pursue The debt is below £150 and is uneconomical to pursue.
- All Recovery Action Has Been Exhausted Incorporating cases returned by the Debt Collection Agency which are unable to trace/collect or when it is uneconomic to pursue through legal recourse.
- All relevant recovery procedures have been completed without success and the likelihood of further recovery is considered negligible.
- Special Cases Where there is a special reason for the debt to be written off, then a declaration form should be completed by a nominated representative and held on file.
- Statute Barred The debt is six or more years old and the circumstances are such that it is inappropriate to seek leave of the court to enforce the debt.
- Re-instated Cases Circumstances may occur which lead to a fresh opportunity to recover debt previously written off. Written confirmation of the debt will be sought from the debtor and a payment arrangement agreed. However, the debt will not be re-instated into the system (written on) until payments under the agreed arrangement have been made to a level where the Housing Solutions Service is satisfied that they are sustainable. It will then be the responsibility of the Housing Solutions Officer to re-instate the debt.

## 14. Review

As a general rule, the policy should be reviewed every two years unless legislation is introduced to warrant an earlier review, next review is due April 2025.



# Community Impact Assessment

Part 1 – Details		
What Policy/ Procedure/ Strategy/Project/Service is being assessed?	Homelessness Prevention: Emergency Accommodation Charging Policy	
Date Conducted	March 2023	
Name of Lead Officer and Service Area	Tina Mustafa, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods and Recovery and Reset Programme Director.	
Commissioning Team (if applicable)		
Director Responsible for project/service area	Rob Barnes, Executive Director Communities	
Who are the main stakeholders	Community of Tamworth	
Describe what consultation has been undertaken. Who was involved and what was the outcome	<p>People experiencing or homelessness are a group defined their circumstances at the time, and as such formal consultation is difficult. Our housing solutions teams have been filtering ad-hoc lived experiences into the policy-formation period.</p> <p>The policy has been proposed based on legislative requirements and contemporary social policy through a paid consultant specialising in local government revenue income and social inequality policy. Additional consultation internally has been conducted with finance, partnerships, and housing teams, as well as external legal advice.</p>	
Outline the wider research that has taken place (E.G. commissioners, partners, other providers etc)	<p>As outlined above, the housing solutions team commissioned an external consultant to conduct policy analysis and the resultant policy has been further validated through external legal advice through South Staffordshire legal services.</p> <p>The portfolio holder for housing has been consulted, as have internal teams whose work on vulnerability in particular overlaps.</p>	
What are you assessing? Indicate with an 'x' which applies	A decision to review or change a service	X
	A Strategy /Policy/Procedure	X
	A function, service or project	X
	New	

What kind of assessment is it? Indicate with an 'x' which applies		
	Existing	X
	Being reviewed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Being reviewed as a result of budget constraints / End of Contract	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Part 2 – Summary of Assessment

Give a summary of your proposal and set out the aims/ objectives/ purposes/ and outcomes of the area you are impact assessing.

Who will be affected and how?

Vulnerable people experiencing homelessness, and who are housed in emergency accommodation under the Council's statutory obligations will benefit from this policy. The updated policy bring clarity to fees and charges, and eligibility to financial support. People being supported by this new policy will benefit financially as the policy has been designed to ensure financial assistance is maximised.

Decisions around the performance of the service under this policy are made with due regard to the Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty and other obligations such as the Disability Discrimination Act 2017 as amended which provides for equality of access to public services.

Through our impact assessments, risk assessments and engagement work, it is intended that there will be no negative impact for any section of the community and equality of access to our services will remain.

Are there any other functions, policies or services linked to this impact assessment?

Yes  No

If you answered 'Yes', please indicate what they are?

Peripheral services include the administration of housing benefits, however this policy does not impact the eligibility or administration of benefits, only the support a vulnerable person experiencing homelessness will receive.

## Part 3 – Impact on the Community

Thinking about each of the Areas below, does or could the Policy function, or service have a direct impact on them?

Impact Area	Yes	No	Reason (provide brief explanation )
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Gender Reassignment		X	
Marriage & Civil Partnership		X	

Pregnancy & Maternity		X	
Race		x	
Religion or belief		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Sex		X	
Gypsy/Travelling Community		x	
Those with Caring/Dependent responsibilities		x	
Those having an offending past		X	
Children	X		Households with children who experience homelessness will be supported by this policy.
Vulnerable Adults	X		The majority of people who experience homelessness are vulnerable adults, and the policy has, on the whole, been designed to maximise support for them.
Families	X		As above.
Those who are homeless	X		The service offer does not change, nor does the Council's statutory obligations to provide emergency accommodation to people experiencing homelessness. This policy is designed to continue the support provided to people who are homeless.
Those on low income	X		As above, people who are homeless are more likely to be living on a reduced income and this policy is designed to support them, their families, to maximise access to financial assistance, and to support them into more permanent accommodation.
Those with Drug or Alcohol problems	X		As above, people who are homeless are more likely to experience problems with drugs and alcohol and the policy is designed to support them – information provided as part of the support measures will include supporting signposting.
Those with Mental Health issues	X		Increased prevalence of mental ill-health is also present in the housing insecure community, and the policy has considered the mental health impact of financial management e.g. rent payments, during vulnerable periods such as when a person experiences homelessness. The policy has been designed to lessen vulnerabilities and provide support.
Those with Physical Health issues People with underlying health conditions		X	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 70s</li> <li>• Pregnant women</li> <li>• All groups to shield</li> </ul>			
Other (Please Detail)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

#### Part 4 – Risk Assessment

**From evidence given from previous question, please detail what measures or changes will be put in place to mitigate adverse implications**

Impact Area	Details of the Impact	Action to reduce risk
<p>There is a risk people who are experiencing homelessness will incur a financial burden when they are housed by the Council in emergency accommodation under its statutory obligations under the Housing Act 1996. This includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Vulnerable adults</li> <li>• Families</li> <li>• People who are homeless</li> <li>• People on low incomes</li> <li>• People with drug and/or alcohol dependency problems</li> <li>• People experiencing mental ill-health</li> </ul>	<p>People in exceptionally vulnerable positions may experience homelessness, and as part of the Council's wider homeless prevention strategies, and statutory obligations to provide emergency accommodation, there is a financial implication in the form of rent. Rather than add to an already vulnerable situation, the Council's new emergency accommodation charging policy reduces or eliminates any financial impact for vulnerable people, reducing the impact of this risk in most cases to zero.</p>	<p>All staff will be trained on implementation of the new policy</p> <p>New information will be made available both online and in leaflet form to people in emergency accommodation</p> <p>The homelessness prevention team will provide assistance to claim relevant financial assistance</p> <p>The policy has in-built measures to protect against debt accumulation should other measure to provide assistance fail.</p>

**Part 5 - Action Plan and Review**

Detail in the plan below, actions that you have identified in your CIA, which will eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and/or foster good relations.

**If you are unable to eliminate or reduce negative impact on any of the impact areas, you should explain why**

Impact (positive or negative) identified	Action	Person(s) responsible	Target date	Required outcome
Financial support for people experiencing homelessness (positive)	Post-cabinet implementation of the policy will include staff training and awareness raising for partners and signposting organisations with the aim of ensuring vulnerable people have access to the right support.	Housing Solutions Manager	June 2023	Publication of new information and delivery of staff training.

Date of Review (If applicable) April 2024 .....

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