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Please ask for:  
Alison Marston

26 August 2022

Dear Councillor

You are requested to attend a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET to be held on Tuesday 6 September 2022 at 5.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

Yours faithfully



Governance Service Manager

**AGENDA**  
**PART 1**

1. **APOLOGIES**

2. **MINUTES**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 August 2022 (previously circulated).

3. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS**

Up to thirty minutes will be made available for questions from members of the public on issues relating to the work of the Cabinet and to receive any petitions.

4. **ACTIONS STATUS REPORT (Pages 5 - 6)**

Report of the Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) on the status of actions agreed at the last Cabinet meeting.

5. **NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 9**

6. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS**

To note declarations of Members' disclosable pecuniary interests, non-

disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on the Agenda.

7. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

To consider the following items for decision in the current Forward Plan:-

- (a) Medium Term Financial Strategy (Forward Plan Reference FP1133) (Pages 7 - 18)

Report of the Chief Executive which summarises the review of the MTFS as the opening stage of the 2023/24 Budget Setting process.

- (b) Assisted Transfer Scheme (Housing) (Forward Plan Reference FP1139) (Pages 19 - 32)

Report of the Chief Executive on the changes to the Assisted Transfer Scheme (AST) that is currently offered to council tenants and to rename the policy the Rightsizing Transfer Scheme (RTS).

8. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET PANEL

To consider a recommendation from the meeting of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 18 August 2022:-

- (a) Introduction of Resident Permit Parking Schemes, and other waiting restrictions, in various roads, High Dells and Hilltop, Hatfield (Pages 33 - 38)

Recommendation from the meeting of Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 18 August 2022 on the Introduction of Resident Permit Parking Schemes, and other waiting restrictions, in various roads, High Dells and Hilltop, Hatfield.

9. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Cabinet is asked to resolve:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for Items 11 and 12 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100(A)(3) and Paragraph 3 (private financial or business information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## PART II

11. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION WITH RESIDENTS ON PROPOSAL TO CONSIDER REDEVELOPMENT OF A HOUSING SCHEME, WELWYN GARDEN CITY (Pages 39 - 46)

Exempt report of the Chief Executive on the outcome of consultation with residents on proposal to consider redevelopment of a housing scheme in Welwyn Garden City.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF A CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT NATURE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Circulation: Councillors T.Kingsbury (Chairman) N.Pace  
S.Boulton (Vice-Chairman) B.Sarson  
S.Kasumu F.Thomson  
T.Mitchinson

Corporate Management Team  
Press and Public (except Part II Items)

**If you require any further information about this Agenda please contact Alison Marston, Governance Services on 01707 357444 or email – [democracy@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@welhat.gov.uk)**

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# Agenda Item 4

Part I

Main author: Alison Marston

Executive Member: Cllr Nick Pace

Not Ward Specific

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET – 6 SEPTEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE)

## ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 In order to ensure that actions identified at meetings are completed, this report lists the actions from the last Cabinet meeting, those responsible for completing each action and its current status.

### 2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members note the status of the following actions which were identified at the last Cabinet meeting on 9 August 2022:-

Minute	Action	Responsible	Status/ Date Completed
28.1	Disregard of War Pensions Policy	Farhad Cantel	The Council's disregard of war pensions procedure when calculating housing benefit and council tax support was agreed by Cabinet and recommended to Full Council.

During the period 1 August 2022 to 26 August 2022, the following decisions were taken by Cabinet Members exercising their individual delegated powers in accordance with paragraph 18 of the Cabinet Procedure Rules within the Constitution.

	Action	Responsible	Status / Date Completed
2022-31	Procurement of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) Vehicles and Associated Cameras. (Decision taken 5 August 2022)	Kirsten Roberts	It was agreed to award the contract for the supply of two ANPR vehicles and associated cameras to APCOA Parking (UK) Ltd.
2022-32	Evaluation of planned maintenance (mini competition) tenders (Decision taken 5 August 2022)	Andrew Harper	Officers are working on Leaseholder consultation.
2022-34	Award of contract for a HR & Payroll System (Decision taken 19 August 2022)	Richard Baker	A direct award through the g-cloud framework to Zellis UK Limited (Zellis) for the migration to, and provision of, a HR and Payroll cloud based system for 2 years, with the option to extend by up to two years, a year at a time was agreed.

2022-36	Establishment of Customer Services Project Board (Decision taken 17 August 2022)	Kirsten Roberts	It was agreed to set up a cross party Customer Services Member Project Board.
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## Part I

Main author: Richard Baker

Executive Member: Cllr Stephen Boulton

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET – 6 SEPTEMBER 2022  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

### **Review of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

#### **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 – 2025/26 was approved by Cabinet in January 2022 and it was subsequently approved by Full Council in February 2022. This report summarises the review of the MTFS as the opening stage of the 2023/24 Budget Setting process.
- 1.2 Since the MTFS was set, the council has closed its accounts for 2021/22, and resulted in a net decrease in General Fund balances of £220k equal to the budgeted decrease.
- 1.3 Despite the pressures of the pandemic, the Council started 2022/23 in a strong financial position with general revenue reserves of £6.7m, which is a direct result of robust financial management and our excellent record in achieving efficiency savings. The last Peer Review report also commented positively on how the council has managed our finances and that the Council is in a strong financial position and has a proven track record of delivering savings.
- 1.4 When the last MTFS was approved by Full Council, savings of £1.5m were required to close the budget gap in 2023/24 and at the time the Council needed to find another £0.4m of efficiency savings to close the indicative budget gap in 2024/25.
- 1.5 Although initial additional pressures from COVID-19 have decreased, the ongoing scale of the impact on the economy and public finances resulting from COVID-19 in the medium-to long-term is unknown. In particular, some council income streams have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.
- 1.6 The Council's modernisation programme is being reviewed and reset, and a new transformation programme will be launched in the coming months. Work is continuing to ensure that we can deliver effective and efficient services that meet people's needs within a sustainable budget. Cashable savings from the programme will continue to be built into the budget setting process going forward.
- 1.7 The HRA also remains in a strong position with reserves at the start of 2022/23 amounting to £2.6m. In particular, we have not seen rent collection levels being materially impacted by COVID, however there are concerns that collection levels may be impacted by increased costs of living such as utilities.
- 1.8 The local government financial position remains unclear beyond the current year. In particular, the government had previously suggested a two year settlement would be consulted upon over the summer, but this now seems unlikely. It is thought that the funding formula may not be changed as significantly as previously assumed, however this is unclear given the current political position.
- 1.9 This report sets out the broad principles and objectives for setting the next Budget and also examining the key issues and pressures facing the Council in the medium term.

- 1.10 Due to the unprecedented times and challenges the council is facing (with increasing utilities costs, high levels of inflation and wage pressures), a scenario based approach has been taken to the financial forecasts to highlight some of the key risks in inflationary forecasts and uncertainties faced on funding and other matters.
- 1.11 It should be noted that while the Council has been proactive in identifying savings required for future years, and the council's transformation agenda will play a central part to ensure our financial sustainability going forward, there are significant budget gaps to close and the coming year will be extremely challenging.

## **2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the contents of this report and to approve the principles to be adopted for the 2023/24 budget setting process as highlighted in section 3.3.6, in particular the 2023/24 budget setting process should focus on closing the indicative budget gap.

## **3 Explanation**

### **3.1 Financial Position (approved by Full Council in February 2022)**

- 3.1.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by the Council in February 2022 shows that the Council delivered a nearly balanced budget for 2022/23 but that the Council had challenging savings targets to meet over the next three years.

- 3.1.2 Table 1 below summarises the indicative budget gap in the MTFS agreed by Full Council in February 2022:

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000
Cost of Services*	13,350	13,175	12,899	11,972
Other Income and Expenditure	-13,277	-11,661	-12,518	-11,593
<b>Budget gap (single year)</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1,441</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>379</b>
<b>Budget gap (cumulative)</b>		<b>1,514</b>	<b>1,895</b>	<b>2,274</b>

\* Cost of services assumes previous years savings target has been met

### **3.2 Changes in Budget Assumptions since February 2022**

#### **COVID-19**

- 3.2.1 Since the MTFS was last approved COVID-19 has continued to have an impact on the council's finances, particularly affecting income. In 2020/21 and for the first three months of 2021/22 this was partly compensated for by the government's income guarantee, however this support ended in June 2021.
- 3.2.2 There have been no further government announcements on further pandemic support funding from the government, and there are no further government data collections to understand the impacts on local authorities. The final return was submitted in April 2022 for the 2021/22 financial year.
- 3.2.3 The quarter one monitoring for 2022/23 identified £1.1m of pressures for 2022/23, of which £390k is associated with reduced income which is partly attributable to recovery from the pandemic.



- 3.2.4 It is too early in the year to be able to determine how income streams are recovering, and whether they will return to pre-pandemic levels. The pandemic has impacted behaviours and the workplace, so there may be ongoing reductions to parking, for example in the form of reduced season tickets as many organisations are now looking to home working or hybrid working becoming the norm. Income at Campus West has not returned to pre-pandemic levels and it is uncertain whether the decrease in income will continue in the medium and longer term.
- 3.2.5 The council has closed its annual accounts for 2021/22, and there was an adverse variance on the General Fund net cost of services of £3.105m. Of this, £4.052m related to variances directly attributable to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and £0.947m related to other favourable variances. These were funded by income from the Sales, Fees and Charges losses compensation scheme, business support grants released from reserves, additional contributions to reserves for grants received and incomplete work, and additional drawdowns from the COVID earmarked reserve. After additional earmarked reserve drawdowns and other variances, there was a net contribution from the General Fund Reserve of £220k.

### **Cost of Living and inflationary increases**

- 3.2.6 As has been widely reported nationally, the cost of living continues to increase and longer term projections are uncertain. Of particular concern to the Council are the price rises in utility costs and general inflation.
- 3.2.7 An increase in utility costs of £175k was factored into the budget, however as at the end of Quarter 1 we are forecasting an additional £700k increase in the cost of utilities for 2022/23.
- 3.2.8 The latest forecasts indicate that CPI inflation could be 8.7% at Quarter 3. Many of our contracts have inflationary provisions linked to rates between August and January and therefore increasing inflation has a significant impact on the Council's budget.
- 3.2.9 The economic uncertainties and pressures are causing rises in interest rates, which may have an impact on the cost of capital schemes in the future.

### **Spending Review (SR)**

- 3.2.10 The Government will be consulting on a settlement over the summer. This has been announced as a two year proposal. However, given the current situation in government, there are concerns as to whether this will happen.
- 3.2.11 Given the state of the economy and the additional inflationary pressures faced by the Treasury, it is widely expected that this will have a severe impact on the level of local government funding in future years.

### **Fair Funding Review (FFR)**

- 3.2.12 The Government has previously indicated their desire to review the funding baseline for local authorities and the fair funding review was due to be implemented in 2021/22. This has now been delayed until at least 2023/24.

### **Reforming Business Rates Retention (RBRR)**

- 3.2.13 The Government has been consulting in the past few years on the reform of the business rates retention system and how the 75% business rates retention system should look like.
- 3.2.14 The reform looked at a number of the key factors, such as the frequency at which the system should be 'reset', the level at which safety net is set, and the

apportionment of income between preceptors. During 2019, it was announced that the reform of the business rates retention system would be deferred to 2021/22.

3.2.15 However, the government announced that the 75% business rates retention system would not be implemented in 2021/22 and has been delayed until at least 2023/24.

3.2.16 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is in a Business Rates Pool in 2022/23, however it is not known whether pooling arrangements will continue in the future and if so, there is no guarantee that the Council would be in the Hertfordshire pool in the future.

3.2.17 The last MTFS included assumptions that the reset would take place in 2023/24, and included £500k transitional protection in 2023/24.

3.2.18 Welwyn Hatfield has experienced a relatively high business rates growth in the past few years, prior to COVID-19. It was expected that the business rates baseline would increase in the event of a reset, meaning that it will be harder to achieve a higher business rates growth in the future, other things being equal. This will mean that the amount of business rates retained locally is likely to be reduced should the baseline be revised upwards.

### **New Homes Bonus Reform**

3.2.19 The MTFS assumes the last year of legacy payments associated with prior years was in 2021/22, and that there is no further funding from 2023/24.

### **Council Tax Referendum Limits**

3.2.20 The 2022/23 Council Tax Referendum Limits for district councils were set at the higher of £5 or 2%. It is unknown at this stage what the referendum limits would be for future years, but our MTFS currently assumes an annual 1.5% council tax increase for 2023/24 onwards.

### **Pay Award**

3.2.21 The council forms part of the National Joint Council (NJC) pay agreement. The pay award for the current year has not been settled yet and will remain an uncertain position until an agreement is reached nationally.

3.2.22 The latest offer by employers for 2022/23 was £1,925 per employee, which equates to an average increase of 6% for the council. The 2022/23 budget assumed a 2.5% pay award. Unions are seeking views from union members on this. The last MTFS assumed a 2.5% pay increase for future years.

### **Housing Company- Now Housing Limited**

3.2.23 No changes have been made to the Housing Company forecasts at the current time, whilst the implications of the changes to the minimum revenue provision legislation are considered (reported to Cabinet Housing Panel in July 2022). A separate report will be presented on this once the implications have been worked through.

### **Current Forecasts**

3.2.24 Based on the factors above the latest medium-term forecast has been updated and the revised position is shown below. It is important to note this does not include any ongoing impacts associated with the pandemic, such as lost income from parking.

3.2.25 Owing to the considerable uncertainties outlined in the report, a slightly different approach to the MTFS has been taken in this year. Taking into account the issues identified in the report, the updated MTFS illustrates three levels of budget gap - a standard approach, an upside risk and a downside risk.

3.2.26 The Standard approach considered the usual approach to inflation forecasts, such as using the Office for Budgetary Responsibility forecasts for CPI, RPI and RPIX.

3.2.27 For each aspect of uncertainties faced, such as utilities, inflation, wages, funding and other factors, an upside risk scenario has been undertaken which shows what would happen if increases were not as high as the standard forecast position. The downside risk scenario shows a potential position if inflation and increases are higher than the standard position.

3.2.28 These three levels are shown in the table below, which includes the budget gap identified in February 2022 for comparison.

	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Budget gap - Upside risk	3.419	3.888	3.835
<b>Budget gap - Standard Approach</b>	<b>4.479</b>	<b>5.769</b>	<b>6.492</b>
Budget gap - Downside risk	4.991	6.510	7.222
Budget gap (February 2022)	1.514	1.895	2.274

3.2.29 The budget gap for 2023/24 identified using the standard approach is £4.479m, compared to £1.514m identified in February 2022. However, the gap could range between £3.419m and £4.991m. The budget gap for the three year position could be between £3.835m and £7.222m.

3.2.30 The biggest drivers behind the increased gap are:

- Utility costs have continued to rise
- Inflation is forecast significantly higher than previously. The council has nearly £15m of contracts which will be impacted directly by inflation.
- Employee costs – changes here are agreed at a national level, the 2022/23 proposed increase is on average 6%, against a budgeted increase of 2.5%.
- Borrowing – the increases in the borrowing rates mean the cost of borrowing is increasing
- Funding – government funding remains highly uncertain

3.2.31 The following table the impact of these factors on the budget gap, and how the position has changed since January 2022, and demonstrates the impacts are mainly due to the cost of living crisis outside of the councils control

	£m
<b>Budget gap forecast for 2023/24 as at January 2022</b>	<b>1.514</b>
Cost of living impacts - pay award (additional 3.5% for 2022/23 and additional 1% for 2023/24)	0.513
Cost of living impacts - utilities and fuel	1.014
Cost of living impacts - Inflation on contracts	1.355
Cost of living impacts - Inflation on supplies and services	0.190
Cost of living impacts - Inflation on borrowing	0.044
Management restructure	(0.100)

Recharges and other minor changes	(0.051)
<b>Revised Budget Gap (Standard Approach) as at August 2022</b>	<b>4.479</b>

3.2.32 It is important to note that there are still risks which could make these scenarios worse, including ongoing reductions in car parking and Campus West income, assumed income from the new crematorium being lower than forecast.

### **3.3 Options to Address the Budget Gap**

3.3.1 The Council's financial strategy remains to support an affordable level of council tax by reducing costs, maximising income, sharing good practice, simplifying delivery processes and shrinking the Council's administration cost.

3.3.2 In light of the continued uncertainties and risks set out in section 3.2, consideration will be given to a range of options for services to deliver savings for the 2023/24 budget setting process.

3.3.3 The use of reserves will be considered as part of the budget setting process; however this will need to balance the need for a minimum reserve level that the Council must retain to meet any unanticipated costs arising in any given year, and ensure an adequate level of reserves is maintained for delivery of corporate aims and objectives.

3.3.4 We achieved a good outturn on the 2021/22 financial position, so are in a strong starting position as we move into the budget setting process.

3.3.5 Notwithstanding the above, the Council has challenging targets to meet the savings required over the term of the MTFs, proposals will be worked through with member portfolio holders and Cabinet over the autumn months.

3.3.6 In order to ensure progress can be made at the pace required to deliver the financial challenge, it is recommended that the 2023/24 budget setting process should adopt the following principles:

- Review the Policy on Reserves and Balances to ensure that it supports the delivery of the corporate priorities, COVID recovery and the council's modernisation agenda.
- Budget growth (including one-offs growths) should be the last resort and they are primarily reserved for invest to save projects.
- Frontline services will be protected wherever possible, and savings should be considered as part of transformation programme to make the services more efficient and effective for our residents. Given the extraordinary pressures on the council this year, it is acknowledged there may need to be difficult decisions taken in relation to front line services.
- Services will need to find savings/income to fund budget pressures.
- As in previous years, all the budget growth will be subject to approval by Cabinet.
- Improve income generated through fees and charges following a review on the existing fees and charges policy. All (non-statutorily set) fees and charges will increase by a minimum of inflation except in exceptional circumstances (where there is a clear case for not doing so).
- Expected savings from the transformation programme as approved by the Transformation Board will be removed from services budgets and put forward

as savings proposals.

- Savings proposals must be submitted with a view to find ways to address the budget gap beyond 2023/24.

### **3.4 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

3.4.1 The budget and longer term forecasts were prepared on the basis of the following high level principles:

- The Council will maintain existing stock to at least decent homes standard.
- The Council will continue with its aim to maintain stock levels at around 9,000 dwellings.
- The Council will continue to develop new homes through its Affordable Housing Programme, to fully make use of the retained right to buy receipts available to it and replace those properties sold through Right to Buy.
- The Council will continue to take a balanced approach to its level of Housing debt, borrowing to support development and ensuring some flexibility is maintained for any future legislative or policy changes.

3.4.2 No material changes have been made to the current assumptions in the HRA forecast.

3.4.3 There may be requirements to increase certain budgets within the HRA, both in capital and revenue, to ensure stock is adequately maintained. This follows the work being done on the asset grading model, which is likely to lead to a rephasing of capital spend in the programme and may lead to greater spend in the next five years. There will be a need to ensure that adequate resource is available to deliver and oversee the programme of works. Any such increases will be considered as part of the budget setting process.

3.4.4 A summary of the forecasts for the HRA as approved by Full Council in February is shown in the Appendix 2. The HRA has a good track record in rent collection and despite the current challenging circumstances, the rent collection is not adversely impacted.

3.4.5 However, it should be noted that some of the other non-rent income was impacted in 2020/21 and 2021/22 due to COVID-19 although is now returning to normal.

### **3.5 Capital Programme and Borrowing**

3.5.1 The Capital Programme has been structured to enable delivery of the Council's Business Plan and the HRA Business Plan over the medium to long term.

3.5.2 The Programme includes all of the capital schemes within both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue for 2022/23 to 2026/27.

3.5.3 Although there are some schemes expected to be re-phased from 2022/23, which are reported through the regular budget monitoring reports, it is not anticipated at this stage that this will impact on the Council's finances over the five-year period, as the funding of the schemes will also be re-phased in line with project expenditure.

3.5.4 There are risks around the cost of capital projects increasing, with shortages of some materials in the construction industry, and general inflationary increases in construction and goods. An example is in the rising cost of steel. Capital schemes are being closely monitored, and we are working closely with contractors to minimise these risks.

- 3.5.5 During 2020, the Government consulted on borrowing activity, in particular, the introduction of restrictions for investment activity. They then introduced changes which restricted borrowing activity, although the council was unaffected as we have no capital projects which are wholly for investment returns. The Government also lowered borrowing rates following these changes, which the council is benefitting from.
- 3.5.6 The majority of the Council's borrowing requirement is generated through the Housing Revenue Account, which has seen an increase in the level of right to buy sales in 2021/22 compared to a reduced number in 2020/21. In order to maximise the use of the receipts it can retain, the Council is committed to the continuation of the Affordable Housing Programme (AHP). This programme will create income generating assets, which will cover the cost of external borrowing.
- 3.5.7 The Council will continue to borrow externally for the HRA to support the continuation of the AHP, and to refinance part of its current debt, but will take advantage of the historically low interest rates and minimise interest costs through utilising a mix of short and long-term borrowing in line with the Treasury Management Strategy.
- 3.5.8 During 2021, the council took its first loan of £20m against the general fund capital financing requirement. This loan was taken at a very low rate of 1.57% which has been locked in for 20 years. There have been no further loans against the general fund. The capital financing requirement at 31 March 2022 was £43.294m, and the remainder continues to be funded through internal borrowing.
- 3.5.9 Current forecasts show the Capital Programme as affordable, but do highlight that the General Fund capital balances will be significantly reduced by the end of the programme. This will need to be considered in the longer term context, and will form part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

### **3.6 Next Steps**

- 3.6.1 The Council's budget setting process integrates service and financial planning into a single, seamless process and aims to ensure that resource allocation both reflects corporate priorities and is affordable.
- 3.6.2 Over the autumn months, officers will be preparing assessments of their service that take into account the Council's policies, priorities and performance, national policy, service and budget risks, and value for money.
- 3.6.3 The resulting growth and savings options will include an assessment of their service and financial impact, achievability, sustainability and equalities impact. These options will be reported to Cabinet in January 2023 together with overall proposals for the Council's budget.

## **4 Risk Management Implications**

- 4.1 There continues to be a high level of uncertainty from a funding perspective. There are also the ongoing impacts from the pandemic which are still unknown. The national cost of living and inflationary increases will have significant effects on the Council's budget and the extent of these are unknown. The Council has been prudent in its assumptions, basing forecasts on previous information and the most up to date information available. These uncertainties do however lead to a high level of risk that the savings requirement could be impacted by national announcements.

## **5 Security & Terrorism Implications**

5.1 There are no security or terrorism implications arising from this report.

## **6 Legal Implications**

6.1 The Council has a legal duty to set a lawfully balanced budget. This paper provides a forward forecast of the budget gap at a point in time, that the Council should meet to deliver a lawfully balanced budget.

6.2 The MTFs sets out the framework for setting future budgets and levels of Council Tax. Members are reminded that the Council must take into account the advice of the Section 151 Officer on the robustness of the future budget proposals and the adequacy of reserves. This advice will be presented to Council alongside the budget proposals in February 2023.

## **7 Financial Implications**

7.1 The financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

## **8 Procurement Implications**

8.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

## **9 Climate Change Implications**

9.1 There are no direct climate change implications to consider.

## **10 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

10.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications to consider.

## **11 Link to Corporate Priorities**

11.1 The subject of this report directly linked to the delivery of all of the Council's objectives.

## **12 Human Resources Implications**

12.1 The subject of this report directly linked to the delivery of all of the Council's objectives.

## **13 Communications and Engagement**

13.1 Part of the 2023/24 budget communication and engagement plan includes engaging with all members early and the first budget seminar is scheduled to be delivered to all Members in September 2022. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) will be asked to establish a budget Task and Finish Panel, which will meet monthly and report its recommendations through OSC, Cabinet and Council. Engagement with public and businesses will be put into place once more details about the budget proposals are available.

## **14 Equality and Diversity**

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in connection with the proposals as there are no equalities or diversities issues arising from the report.

Name of author Richard Baker  
Title Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)  
Date 4 August 2022

**Appendix A – General Fund Medium Term Forecasts**

	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
		Q1 forecast			
Employees	14,229	14,557	15,014	16,922	16,398
Premises	3,840	4,610	5,206	5,485	5,687
Transport	96	116	107	109	111
Third Party Payments	14,572	14,668	16,218	17,191	17,707
Transfer Payments	23,929	23,929	23,929	23,929	23,929
Supplies and Services	4,643	6,192	4,932	5,148	5,287
Income	-42,432	-43,158	-43,160	-43,900	-44,166
Recharge to the HRA	-5,527	-5,447	-6,151	-6,520	-6,716
Cumulative Savings	0		0	-4,479	-5,769
<b>Net cost of Services</b>	<b>13,350</b>	<b>15,467</b>	<b>16,095</b>	<b>13,885</b>	<b>12,468</b>
Income from Council Tax	-11,535	-11,641	-11,823	-12,119	-12,422
Business Rates Income	-3,930	-3,930	-2,950	-3,127	-3,221
Plus/Less collection fund deficit/(surplus)	-940	-940	1,935	0	0
Estimate for transitional protections	0		-500	0	0
New Homes Bonus Grant	-712	-712	0	0	0
Lower Tier Funding	-131	-131	0	0	0
Services Grant	-201	-201	0	0	0
Less Interest & Investment Income	-30	-30	-30	-30	-30
Net Interest from Now Housing	-100	-100	-150	-200	-250
Plus capital financing - MRP, finance Leases and interest payable	1,584	1,584	2,179	2,210	2,241
Parish Precepts	1,787	1,894	1,832	1,877	1,924
Contribution (from) / to Earmarked Reserves	931	195	-2,109	-1,206	13
Contribution (from) / to Working Balances	0	-78	0	0	0
<b>In Year Savings Requirement</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1,377</b>	<b>4,479</b>	<b>1,290</b>	<b>724</b>
<b>Cumulative Savings Requirement</b>			<b>4,479</b>	<b>5,769</b>	<b>6,492</b>

GF Reserve if gap not met	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
		Q1 Forecast			
Opening Balance	6,682	6,682	4,860	381	-5,388
Planned Use	-73	-73	-4,479	-5,769	-6,492
Known pressures at Q1 2022/23		-1,381			
NJC pay award offer		-368			
Closing Balance	6,609	4,860	381	-5,388	-11,880



## **Appendix B – Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Forecasts**

	<b>2022/23 Budget £'000</b>	<b>2023/24 Forecast £'000</b>	<b>2024/25 Forecast £'000</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Rental Income	(52,150)	(54,345)	(56,346)
Non Dwelling Rents	(391)	(399)	(407)
Charges for Services and Facilities	(2,543)	(2,617)	(2,689)
Other Income	(245)	(250)	(255)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(55,329)</b>	<b>(57,512)</b>	<b>(59,697)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Repairs and Maintenance	9,188	9,321	9,700
Management, Special Service and Rates/Taxes	15,372	15,522	15,863
Allowance for Doubtful Debt	490	518	544
Depreciation	16,352	16,547	16,801
Other Expenditure	29	30	31
<b>Total Revenue Expenditure</b>	<b>41,096</b>	<b>41,939</b>	<b>42,938</b>
<b>Other Items of Income and Expense</b>			
Interest Payable	7,559	8,308	8,754
Interest Received	(52)	(96)	(90)
Revenue Contribution to Capital	6,839	7,346	7,990
<b>Net (surplus)/deficit</b>	<b>(154)</b>	<b>(114)</b>	<b>(104)</b>

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## Part I

Main author: Lydia Bradbury

Executive Member: Cllr Fiona Thomson

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET - 6 SEPTEMBER 2022  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

### **ASSISTED TRANSFER SCHEME (HOUSING)**

#### **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report recommends changes to the Assisted Transfer Scheme (AST) that is currently offered to council tenants and to rename the policy the Rightsizing Transfer Scheme (RTS).
- 1.2 The current AST offers tenants who are downsizing from a property that is at least one bedroom more than they need, payments of up to £4,000. The payment is based on the property size they are moving from and to and whether they are moving to sheltered accommodation or general needs.
- 1.3 The scheme is currently targeted towards pension age households and payments to anyone under pension age are limited to a maximum £500. The proposed scheme will be based on need and will be more inclusive, as it will be for all ages.
- 1.4 At the end of April 2022 there were 160 households on the council's housing needs register who had expressed a wish to move to smaller accommodation. The Housing Allocations Scheme gives additional priority to applicants who are seeking to downsize, to help facilitate these moves. It is important that we maximise these opportunities by having the right financial support in place, where needed.
- 1.5 Surveys of applicants on our housing needs register, who are registered to downsize, have shown that whilst the moving expenses are of concern, they are not the only factor considered by tenants who wish to downsize; other important factors are the availability of suitable accommodation in the right area and practical help and support with the moving process.
- 1.6 However financial consideration is a factor, and we recognise that the costs associated with moving, whilst not necessarily the only consideration, can be a barrier to downsizing, especially where not moving could cause financial hardship due to benefit restrictions such as the under-occupation charge and benefit cap.
- 1.7 Comparison with other stock holding local authorities' schemes has shown the council's scheme to be much more generous and more favourable to the over 60's.
- 1.8 It is recommended that the scheme is changed, so that a minimum payment of £750 is made to any tenant who is downsizing and is eligible for the scheme, plus an additional £250 per additional bedroom released.
- 1.9 As the council will be letting its flagship new development, Minster House, in the Autumn, which should appeal to many downsizers, the current annual budget will be increased by means of virement during 2022/23. This will ensure that anyone seeking to downsize, who is eligible for the proposed scheme, can get the help.

## **2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 It is recommended that
- 2.2 Cabinet notes the review of the Assisted Transfer Scheme and approves the changes to this scheme and rebranding, which are set out in this report.

## **3 Explanation**

- 3.1 The council has had an Assisted Transfer Scheme in place for many years. The scheme aims to provide a financial incentive to encourage council tenants who are under occupying family sized homes, to move to smaller accommodation.
- 3.2 The need to maximise the use of our homes, through encouraging downsizing, has never been more important. The demand for larger homes is increasing and there are currently more than 100 households registered on our housing needs register who require four or five bed accommodation to address their housing need. Many of these families are living in very overcrowded situations.
- 3.3 In addition, there are almost 500 families in need of 3 bed homes the housing needs register. Families in Band B, including homeless families living in temporary accommodation, are often waiting for more than a year for a suitable offer of a three-bedroom home.
- 3.4 The current scheme, set out in Appendix A, has not been changed for several years, but has recently been reviewed. A project group is reviewing relevant policies and processes that have an influence on whether a tenant may move to a property that is more suitable to their needs.
- 3.5 The current policy of making discretionary financial payments to tenants who are willing to move to smaller accommodation significantly favours pension aged tenants. However, we know that there are many tenants who are younger but are living in accommodation too big for their needs.
- 3.6 Figures in May 2022 showed that there are 173 tenants who are under-occupiers and consequently subject to the underoccupancy charge (bedroom tax), in our family sized properties. The under-occupation charge is only levied on tenants who are below pensionable age. Of these 173 households, 70% are subject to a reduction in housing benefit, with 54 households having a 25% reduction in payments and 199 a 14% reduction.
- 3.7 Of these households, 47 are in receipt of discretionary housing payments (DHP), which they receive in addition to housing benefit, to try and bridge the gap between the rental charge and the benefit entitlement. As these payments are discretionary, they could end at any point, thus placing the households in financial uncertainty. Whilst the council receives a limited annual DHP grant from the government, it is usually topped up with funds from the Housing Revenue Account, as demand is higher than the available fund.
- 3.8 The total number of under occupiers below pensionable age is likely to be higher than 173, as it will include tenants who are not in receipt of benefit, and we will be updating our records on this as part of the project to conduct tenancy reviews.

- 3.9 The current scheme is not 'means tested' and generous payments are made to those who may have the finance to meet all the costs associated to moving comfortably. It is allocated on a first come first served basis and when the budget is spent there is no more to offer other households.
- 3.10 The 'cost of living' crisis, particularly rising fuel bills, may also be a factor which increases the appetite for downsizing. We therefore expect demand for the ATS to increase.
- 3.11 In the newly proposed Rightsizing Transfer Scheme, the financial incentive will be lower, but significant enough to assist with moving costs where needed. This will ensure that the budget can be used more effectively and will be available to support more tenants to take up the option of a move.
- 3.12 From the information the team has gathered about removal costs, we have calculated the average cost of removals, sometimes this included packing too, was £660. Therefore, it is proposed that each eligible tenant downsizing and releasing a minimum of one bedroom will receive a payment of £750, then an additional £250 for each extra bedroom released. This will help with, if not completely cover, the cost of removals. This is one of the biggest costs associated to moving and the second main barrier identified in our survey was the thought of packing everything up and moving it to a new home.
- 3.13 In exceptional circumstances, in addition to the proposed financial sum, officers will consider other ways of helping vulnerable customers to move. This could be practical help and support with issues such as booking removals and packing services, disconnecting, and reconnecting utilities and handyman services.
- 3.14 We have begun a new campaign publicising rightsizing and we plan to hold more events like one recently held at the Jimmy Macs club at the Hive in Hatfield. Practical help and support can be provided by the Housing Options Officer (Older People) and the Decant Officer, who can 'hand hold' tenants through the moving process.
- 3.15 Minster House
- 3.16 In October 2022 we plan to start letting our flagship new Sheltered housing development at Minster House, Hatfield. One of the key objectives of this development is to provide high quality sheltered housing, which will be suitable for older tenants who are willing to consider downsizing.
- 3.17 Minster House has 91 apartments and we have started to collate expressions of interest from customers. We currently have 75 households registered with an interest in the scheme (prior to any advertising through Choice Based Lettings) and of these 33 are currently tenants occupying family sized property, which is too large for their current needs.
- 3.18 The current budget available to support the ATS (£40,000) is unlikely to be sufficient to provide financial support to all the tenants who have expressed an interest in Minster House, even if the proposed changes to the scheme are agreed. Therefore, the budget for 2022/23 will be increased under officer delegated virement, to ensure that help can be provided to customers who need it, and that maximise the opportunity to recover family sized homes.

## **Implications**

### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

- 4.1 The Council have a legal obligation under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) to meet local housing need and reduce homelessness.
- 4.2 We are a stock holding authority and we own the majority of the affordable and social housing in the borough; therefore, it is imperative that we do all we can to encourage and enable our tenants to downsize when their situation change. The proposed Rightsizing Transfer Scheme would be reviewed annually and this review would include analysing its impact on rightsizing.

### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

- 5.1 The current budget to support the Assisted Transfer Scheme is £40,000; £8500 has been spent to date, leaving a balance of £31,500
- 5.2 It is proposed to amend the financial award for each tenant, as set out in Paragraph 3.12.
- 5.3 Due to the likely increase in demand for this scheme created by the first letting of Minster House, Hatfield, the current budget will be increased by £20,000. Budgets have been identified within the HRA to accommodate this and will be vired under offer delegations in line with the Financial Regulations.

### **6 Risk Management Implications**

- 6.1 There is a risk of reputational damage if we keep the current scheme as it is, as it is likely that some tenants will receive large payments and others will receive nothing, as the budget will have been spent.
- 6.2 Failure to manage the incentive scheme so that all those interested in moving to Minster House, or other smaller accommodation, could mean that we have some tenants remaining in larger homes who cannot meet their rent commitments, and this could lead to a loss in revenue generated for the general fund.
- 6.3 Failure to address housing needs could lead to legal challenge

### **7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

- 7.1 There are no obvious implications arising from this scheme.

### **8 Procurement Implication(s)**

- 8.1 There are no obvious procurement implications arising from this scheme.

### **9 Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 9.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this scheme.

### **10 Human Resources Implication(s)**

- 10.1 There are no Human Resources implications arising from this scheme.

### **11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

- 11.1 We could improve the wellbeing of our residents by assisting them, with the RTS, to move to accommodation which better suits their needs, for instance level access accommodation, sheltered accommodation or smaller accommodation which does not overwhelm them physically or financially.
- 11.2 The creation of more available family homes, as a result of the promotion and use of the RTS, would improve the wellbeing of local residents on our housing needs register who as a result had the opportunity to move into suitable sized accommodation.

## **12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

- 12.1 Members of Cabinet Housing Panel have been consulted on the proposed changes and are supportive of the proposals.
- 12.2 Once it is agreed to cease the AST and replace it with the RTS we will promote its use through our Neighbourhood Officers and other staff members. It does not require consultation with tenants.

## **13 Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Strategic Aims:
- a) **Quality homes through managed growth** and specifically to provide high quality housing, thriving neighbourhoods and sustainable communities.
  - b) **A sense of community where people feel safe** and specifically to the achievement of 'designing and maintaining attractive neighbourhoods which our communities can enjoy and take pride in'.
  - c) **A well-run council which puts our customers first** and specifically to the achievement of 'put our customers at the centre of what we do and how we design our services'.

## **14 Equality and Diversity**

- 14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been done and identified that the proposed changes will have a positive impact overall, as the number of tenants who can be assisted will be broader and it will meet the needs of all age groups.
- 14.2 As the amount of each grant available will be less for pensioners, there will be a small negative impact, however this can be mitigated using discretion to provide more assistance, where a tenant is particularly vulnerable or in significant financial hardship.

Name of author	Lydia Bradbury
Title	<i>Housing Portfolio Manager</i>
Date	18th July 2022

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Assisted Transfer Scheme

Appendix B - proposed Rightsizing Assistance Scheme

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## **ASSISTED TRANSFER SCHEME**

### **Introduction**

The council aims to make best use of the housing stock and the Assisted Transfer Scheme is to encourage tenants who are under occupying their council homes to downsize to smaller accommodation.

The scheme is discretionary and the final decision on an assisted transfer must be made by the Neighbourhood and Enforcement Manager or the Exceptional Circumstances Panel (as appropriate). There is a limited annual budget for the scheme and therefore any possible financial assistance under the scheme will be conditional on the availability of funds in the allocated budget. This scheme is therefore discretionary on a number of factors, including budget availability.

The scheme is specifically targeted towards pensioner households who are under occupying family homes. A cash incentive may be offered to such households if they are willing to downsize to smaller accommodation. This incentive is further enhanced if a move to sheltered accommodation is accepted.

### **Overview – key facts**

- Targeted towards pensioner households
- Incentive amount linked to property demand
- Enhanced allowance to move to sheltered accommodation
- Tenants of working age eligible for consideration of downsizing support allowance only
- Subject to budget availability and other tenancy conditions being satisfied

### **Downsizing Support Allowance**

For non pensioner households who are under occupying their homes financial assistance will be a maximum downsizing support allowance of £500 towards the cost of removal expenses and associated costs. Tenants of working age and on housing benefit who are under occupying their homes will be included in this category. However, for all households affected by the under occupation penalty (or bedroom tax) the maximum allowance of £500 will also apply if downsizing to smaller accommodation is the result of a mutual exchange or a transfer.

This scheme seeks to provide financial assistance to tenants affected by the under-occupation penalty (bedroom tax) and who are seeking to move to smaller accommodation and not be under occupied as defined by the housing benefit rules. The Trust will take a considered approach to sanctioning a move for tenants in arrears who are affected by the under occupation penalty but any outstanding

arrears would have to be agreed to be repaid as a former tenant debt prior to any authorization being made. This could also become a specific condition of any new tenancy agreement granted.

## **Eligibility**

Secure tenants with a 'live' housing transfer application registered are eligible to apply for the Assisted Transfer Scheme, providing that no overcrowding would be caused by the move and no children under 16 years would be living in a flat as a result. The tenant must also be registered for a mutual exchange (except for those wishing to move into sheltered accommodation only)

An applicant would only be able to use the Assisted Transfer scheme once. It would not be permitted, for example, for a tenant to move into a series of successfully smaller properties using the scheme.

Non-secure tenants are not eligible for the Assisted Transfer Scheme.

## **Assistance with Moving**

Normally a straight cash payment is made to the tenant but he or she may negotiate with the Housing Support Officer (Home Mover) for removal arrangements to be made on their behalf. This would include liaison with appropriate utility companies etc. and support with moving into the new home. In this situation the removal costs would be deducted from the incentive payment.

## **Tenants Requesting Aids and Adaptations**

If a tenant requires an expensive aid or adaptation, and particularly if their property is under-occupied, Neighbourhood Housing staff should work closely with the Welfare Services team to consider jointly whether the tenant could instead benefit from an assisted transfer.

## **Factors Influencing Priorities**

Some types of property are harder to let than others – for example sheltered units, including one bedroom flats (or even bungalows) for older people. Conversely the demand for family homes and General Needs single person accommodation is always consistently high.

To reflect this, incentive sums reflect the 'desirability' of the property against demand for the property to which the tenant would be prepared to move. (*See table below.*)

Scheme priorities may change over time and will be subject to annual review by the Head of Housing Management.

## Applicants with Rent Arrears

Unless there are exceptional circumstances any outstanding arrears and/or tenancy related debts will prevent a move from being authorized.

However, if a move is sanctioned for a tenant in arrears, the financial assistance will be offset against these before any payment can be made direct to the tenant.

If arrears recovery has progressed beyond court order stage the Head of Housing Management will consider whether a move can be sanctioned or not. Unless there are exceptional circumstances any outstanding arrears and/or tenancy related debts will prevent a move from being authorized.

## Properties in Poor or Unsatisfactory Condition

Unless there are exceptional circumstances any properties in poor or unsatisfactory condition, particularly as a result of unauthorized works or improvements, will prevent a move from being authorized.

However, if a move is sanctioned for a tenant whose property is in poor or unsatisfactory condition, it may be possible to offset the incentive, or part of it, against the cost of the work required.

When the keys to the property have been returned, an inspection of the property will be carried out by the Neighbourhood Housing Officer. Providing the property is in a satisfactory condition, payment would be made after this.

However, if the property is in poor condition and a decorations allowance would have to be made to the next tenant - or it would be necessary for rechargeable work to be carried out during the void period - the cost of this would be deducted from the incentive amount. A cheque for any outstanding sum would then be made payable to the former tenant.

### PROPERTY TYPES AND INCENTIVE AMOUNTS

<b>Applicants of pensionable age willing to downsize to smaller general needs accommodation</b>		
<b>Property Tenant currently has</b>	<b>Property Tenant would move to</b>	<b>Incentive amount</b>
Four bed house or larger	Two bed flat	<b>£2,500.00</b>
Four bed house or larger	One bed flat	<b>£3,000.00</b>
Three bed house	Two bed flat	<b>£2,000.00</b>

Three bed house	One bed flat	<b>£2,500.00</b>
Two bed house	One bed flat	<b>£1,500.00</b>
Two bed flat	One bed flat	<b>£1,000.00</b>
<b>Applicants of pensionable age willing to move into sheltered accommodation</b>		
Four bed house or larger	Two bed bungalow	<b>£2,000.00</b>
Four bed house or larger	One bed bungalow	<b>£3,500.00</b>
Four bed house or larger	Two bed flat	<b>£3,500.00</b>
Four bed house or larger	One bed flat	<b>£4,000.00</b>
Three bed house	Two bed bungalow	<b>£1,500.00</b>
Three bed house	One bed bungalow	<b>£2,500.00</b>
Three bed house	Two bed flat	<b>£3,000.00</b>
Three bed house	One bed flat	<b>£3,500.00</b>
Two bed house	Two bed bungalow	<b>£1,000.00</b>
Two bed house	One bed bungalow	<b>£1,500.00</b>
Two bed house	Two bed flat	<b>£2,500.00</b>
Two bed house	One bed flat	<b>£3,000.00</b>
Two bed flat	Two bed flat	<b>£1,000.00</b>
Two bed flat	One bed flat	<b>£1,500.00</b>

## **Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council DRAFT Rightsizing Transfer Scheme**

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) aims to make best use of its housing stock and the Rightsizing Transfer Scheme aims to encourage, and assist, tenants to move to a home that suits their current needs. Particularly if their existing home may have become impractical for a variety of reasons, such as size, mobility, and changes in financial or family circumstances.

The scheme is discretionary and the final decision on a financial payment linked to a Rightsizing transfer must be made by the Housing Portfolio Manager or Neighbourhoods Team Leader.

There is a limited annual budget for the scheme and therefore any possible financial assistance under the scheme will be conditional on the availability of funds in the allocated budget and other scheme conditions.

### **Aims**

- Make better use of our housing stock
- Reduce underoccupancy and free up larger family homes to prevent overcrowding and other housing needs in the area
- Reduce homelessness
- Address the impact of welfare reform
- Reduce financial hardship
- Promote independence
- Offer an incentive/financial assistance for under-occupiers thinking of moving

### **Eligibility**

- WHBC tenants moving to a smaller home if this does not result in overcrowding or under-occupation as defined by the housing benefit under-occupation charge (bedroom tax).
- WHBC tenants who are affected by the under occupation charge and wish to move to a smaller property
- WHBC tenants who have not previously received a payment under this or a previous scheme.
- Tenants must have a clear rent account, except in some cases where they are affected by the bedroom tax or other financial hardship.
- Tenants returning their property to WHBC in a satisfactory condition, unless agreed due to exceptional circumstances.
- Tenants must not be subject to a valid notice of seeking possession, other than where there are exceptional circumstances which have been agreed by the Neighbourhood and Enforcement Manager or Service Director.

Only secure or fixed term tenants are eligible for help with the scheme. Non-secure tenants and those with a license agreement for their WHBC accommodation are not eligible for payment under the scheme.

### **Incentive**

- Each eligible household, downsizing by one bedroom, will be paid £750 minimum payment.
- A further payment of £250 will be made for each additional bedroom released through the move.

### **Tenants with rent arrears**

Usually, tenants would have to have a clear rent account prior to a transfer, but we will consider exceptional circumstances and in particular weigh up the benefit to the council of releasing a family sized home, where a tenant is down-sizing.

Where there are rent arrears, or associated debt, these would usually be deducted from the RTS payment. Any additional outstanding debts would have to be agreed to be repaid as a former tenant debt. This would also become a specific condition of any new tenancy agreement granted.

The manager assessing the case will consult with the Income Team leader to consider carefully whether to give payment under this scheme for tenants in rent arrears.

If arrears recovery has progressed beyond court order stage, the Neighbourhoods and Enforcement Manager or Income and Home Ownership Manager will consider whether a move can be sanctioned or not.

### **Tenants requiring assistance with moving**

Usually, tenants will be given their payment once they have signed a new tenancy agreement and moved into their new home, by way of bank transfer. They will be able to make their own arrangements and get help from their support network.

In exceptional cases, where the tenant is not able to make their own arrangements, and does not have support available to do so, WHBC may arrange some aspects of their move for them, for instance their removals. We would make direct payments to the contractor for these services, which would usually be deducted from the Rightsizing transfer payment made to the tenant upon moving home.

In exceptional cases of vulnerable tenants, without support and/in financial hardship, WHBC may use other available resources to help the customer with additional services in addition to the standard rates of payment. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Manager or Team leader assessing the request.

## **Property Condition**

Unless there are exceptional circumstances any properties in poor or unsatisfactory condition, particularly because of unauthorised works or improvements, will prevent a move from being authorised and payments being received from this scheme.

However, if a move is sanctioned for a tenant whose property is in poor or unsatisfactory condition, it may be possible to offset the incentive, or part of it, against the cost of the work required.

When the keys to the property have been returned, an inspection of the property will be carried out by the Neighbourhood Officer. Providing the property is in a satisfactory condition, payment would be made after this.

## **WHBC policies to consider while assisting a customer to downsize are:**

Housing Allocations Policy  
Decant Policy

Date: September 2022  
Author: Lydia Bradbury  
Date of next review: September 2023

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Part I  
Item No:  
For Decision

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET – 6 SEPTEMBER 2022

Recommendation from Cabinet Parking and Planning Panel on 18 August 2022:-

15. INTRODUCTION OF RESIDENT PERMIT PARKING SCHEMES, AND OTHER WAITING RESTRICTIONS, IN VARIOUS ROADS, HIGH DELLS AND HILLTOP, HATFIELD

Report of the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Economic Development) on the Introduction of Resident Permit Parking Schemes and other waiting restrictions in various roads in High Dells and Hilltop, Hatfield.

In September 2021, Parking Services undertook a parking survey with residents and businesses in parts of Hatfield South West ward and a small number of roads within Welham Green and Hatfield South ward. The extent of the consultation area was from College Lane, following Bishops Rise southwards to Southdown Road. The west of the area was bounded by Roehyde Way, and east to the edge of but not including Travellers Lane. The purpose of the survey was to engage with residents and businesses in seeking their views on parking options for the area. Historically, Parking Services had received many requests from residents highlighting parking issues caused by University students as well as motor traders leaving vehicles parked upon the highway for long periods reducing parking availability for residents. A follow up letter was also sent to remind residents to partake in the survey to ensure a good response rate. Parking Services also sent a letter in February 2022 with draft ideas relating to the parking restrictions to gather any further feedback, where 18 further feedback comments were received.

Owing to the location of the area being within proximity to The University of Hertfordshire it was divided into 2 separate consultation focus areas: High Dells and Hilltop and the University Campus providing the natural break between the two areas.

89 objections had been received relating to the proposed order(s) which were set out in Section 9 of the report. To note, 3 households made 2 objections, one household made 3 objections. Parking Services also received 9 objections from people outside of the consultation area, including an objector from Birmingham and one from Yorkshire, as well as plus 7 objections from residents from elsewhere in Hatfield. This would equate to 74 households within the consultation area that objected overall. This was an objection rate from 2031 properties of 3.6%. A full list of the objections was contained within Appendix A of the report.

Two petitions were also received during the statutory objection period, one from Roe Green Close and one from Tudor Close. The Roe Green Close petition had 68 signatures from 39 households after verification (one household

misunderstood the petition and withdrew) and it related to removing the road from the permit zone proposals and this related to 82.97% of Roe Green Close's 47 households. The Tudor Close petition was signed by 40 households after verification related to amending the permit zone days and hours to Monday to Friday 7am to 6pm, this related to 52.63% of Tudor Close's 76 households.

Parking Services advertised proposals for 4 out of 5 proposed permit zones in the area to operate Monday to Sunday 7am to 9pm based upon the indicative survey results. The majority of objections received focused upon the proposed operational days and times being too long, as well as residents highlighting the financial implications for bringing in the permit zone especially over 7 days and for most of the waking day.

Taking into account the detail of the objections received, the report set out the Parking Services' recommendation to proceed with an amended proposal of Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, removal of Roe Green Close and the merging two proposed zones into one, for the reasons set out in Sections 4 and 6 of the report.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- Members stated that the parking issues and concerns on many of the roads within the proposal were well known and historic with some of them being the worst constructed roads of all of Welwyn Hatfield.
- Members were concerned that some streets that currently had no or mild parking issues may find that without a permit scheme their road will become the new place for people to park.
- Members stated that there were many grass verges in the area and many had been damaged and continue to be parked upon despite efforts to discourage them from parking on the grass verges. A permit scheme coupled with verge protection orders, could be positive in preventing and repairing the damage already made.
- Members stated that they were happy to see that the consultation had been extensive and had not been rushed.
- Members noted that there were many more cars now and the streets in the area were not designed to accommodate large amounts of cars on the street and many of the properties had no designated on-street parking. It was noted that the students from University of Hertfordshire also park their cars there.
- Members noted that the cost of living crisis had grown in scale and had impacted considerably since the consultation began. There were multiple objections citing the cost of living crisis as a concern and would impact the residents that live there.
- Councillor Thorpe proposed adding another recommendation on setting up a hardship fund for residents within any parking area within the borough who can demonstrate the impact that additional costs of permit parking would have upon them financially.
- Members asked when the scheme would be implemented with regards to the university term as it would be better if the six month assessment was done during the university term and not during the holiday period. Officers stated that they will take the term time into account and will ensure that parking services can assess the situation across the larger time scale.

- Member wanted to know how the hardship fund would be defined in terms of who would be eligible for it as it might need some consideration. It was determined that Cabinet would have to decide who would be eligible and a criteria created for the fund. The money for the fund could come from the general fund or from increasing the cost of permits. It was noted that the Hardship Fund would have to come out of the council's budget and possibly increase taxes.
- Members stated that every parking scheme from now on will always have this problem of cost of living and asking if people will be able to afford it whether it will be in Hatfield or Welwyn Garden City.
- It was noted that the parking scheme in the area had been requested by residents over the years as the parking was very bad and had been for a long time. It was noted that any thought of a scheme to alleviate the cost needed to be quite separate to what members were deciding on. Firstly, it would be wrong to pick one item for the alleviation of poverty. Secondly the Council had next to no money and the Council was run on a very difficult budget. In order to set up any scheme it would either mean raising the council tax for other people or it would mean cutting services which at present the Council carries out.
- Members were supportive of the scheme and the proposals. Members thought that it was good that the officers had offered to amend the proposal to 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and the removal of the weekend permit was a good idea. It was noted that there were residents that were supportive of the scheme.
- Members asked if the timing were based on the recommendations received from residents. Officers stated the proposal was based on feedback from the residents. Initially it was proposed Monday to Sunday 7am to 9pm but now the Council was looking at proposing Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. It was noted that parking outside of the hours will be free.
- Members asked if there were any letters of support on the permit parking or how many people supported the proposal? Officers stated that when they asked residents for the feedback initially 626 out of 2,031 responded to the consultation and out of those who responded 428 were in favour of the scheme and the vast majority of those indicated that there was a problem with non-residential parking. Within the feedback in the objections received, there were comments in favour of the proposal however they did not like the excessive times or the operational hours.
- Members asked if the students would have access to purchasing a parking permit as they will be residents on the street. Officers stated that once the proposal was in place each household will be able to purchase some residential parking permits and also visitor parking permits. There were certain criteria that each applicant needed to fill out for example, being a resident in controlled parking zones. They will need to show proof of being a resident and the vehicle needed to be registered to the property. It was noted that not everyone would be eligible and needed to live in the list of eligible properties.
- Members asked if the council had explored speaking to the university to see if there was anything they could do to provide some additional parking spaces on campus for students just to alleviate some of the issues the council was having as the students were also part of the community. Officers stated that they had not had a conversation with the university

about providing extra parking for students. The university were aware of the proposals and they do support it. It is in their handbook as well that students should not bring a car to Hatfield unless they need it for their placement for example nursing students.

- Members stated that a permit scheme can be better and residents can buy visitor parking that can last 24 hours. It can alleviate problems with parking on the street.
- Members asked about the small number of households who have a postal address which was attached to a different street but their houses and their normal egress and where they park was within the parking zone yet because their street address is not within the parking zone they cannot get a parking permit. Is there any way the council could include that small number of households and allow them to purchase the permits? Officers stated that within the area there were a few residents who asked about this and unfortunately parking services were unable to do that because when they designed the scheme they always allocate the property address within the zone. Parking services will look at an exception if there is no road and will always go by the property and it is not possible to change that. Parking services did look at the comments received and those properties had parking available to them, it might not be the parking they were using previously but there is parking available to them in a short distance.
- Members asked if that was a matter of policy or a matter of physical space where parking would be allocated to a property. Officers stated that once they draw parking zones, each property falls into certain zones and when they are looking into this, they write a list of eligible addresses. Normally that is by the address of the property so for example, if someone lives within a high-street then they will be able to park on the high-street even though they used to park elsewhere. It was a very common approach across the UK.
- Members mentioned paragraph 4.3 of the report and that the University of Hertfordshire had displayed unauthorised signage in Roe Green Close. This showed that there is a disconnection between the Council and the university.
- Members wanted clarification on the doctors/ health visitor permit for £24 per annum and who would be paying for it? Officers stated that within the scheme there were various permits available for example the doctors/ health visitor permits were for health professionals that were required to park within the controlled parking zone in order to carry out their duties. There was also a 50% discount for OAP residents on visitor vouchers and blue badge holders can park for free. It was noted that some of the health permits were in circulation and were being used by health professionals and officers stated that the employer had applied on behalf of the employees for a permit. Health professionals can also buy a permit themselves. With the permit, health professionals can park across the borough in any zone as long as there are carrying out their duties.
- Members asked at what point does the Council protect those that have gone out in an emergency to care for someone but have not got a parking permit or if they are visiting a family member in an emergency, would they be expected to be fined and clamped because they had been called out in an emergency. Officers stated that street wardens can only issue

penalties and not clamp cars. Wardens who issue penalties unfortunately have to issue penalties in every situation that they observe such as a vehicle parked illegally, they cannot be biased and cannot take anything into consideration. However, if there was a medical emergency and a penalty was issued then this can be considered as part of the challenge process and the penalty would be cancelled if a genuine medical emergency was confirmed.

RESOLVED:

**(13 voting FOR - unanimous)**

**(1) “The Borough of Welwyn Hatfield (Various Roads, High Dells, Hatfield) (Restriction of Waiting and Permit Parking Zones) Order 2022”**

That the Panel considers the objections received in Section 9 in addition to the issues raised in Section 20 around equalities and diversity and recommends to Cabinet to proceed with permit zones with amended days and times – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm as set out in Section 4 and the creation of the traffic regulation order for resident permit zones; and to note the delegated powers conferred to Executive Member for Community Safety and Parking to sign an executive member decision to proceed with the creation of the traffic regulation order as advertised, subject to unanimous recommendation of the Panel.

**(13 voting FOR - unanimous)**

**(2) “The Borough of Welwyn Hatfield (Various Roads, High Dells, Hatfield) (Prohibition of Stopping and Waiting on Verge or Footway) Order 2022”**

That the Panel considers the objections received in Section 9 in addition to the issues raised in Section 20 around equalities and diversity and recommends to Cabinet to proceed with the creation of the traffic regulation order as advertised; and to note the delegated powers conferred to Executive Member for Community Safety and Parking to sign an executive member decision to proceed with the creation of the traffic regulation order as advertised for the verge and footway prohibition, subject to unanimous recommendation of the Panel.

**(13 voting FOR - unanimous)**

**(3) “The Borough of Welwyn Hatfield (Various Roads, Hilltop, Hatfield) (Restriction of Waiting and Permit Parking Zones) Order 2022”**

That the Panel considers the objections received in Section 9 in addition to the issues raised in Section 20 around equalities and diversity and recommends to Cabinet to proceed with permit zones with amended days and times – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm as set out in Section 6 and the creation of the traffic regulation order for resident permit zones; and to note the delegated powers conferred to

Executive Member for Community Safety and Parking to sign an executive member decision to proceed with the creation of the traffic regulation order as advertised, subject to unanimous recommendation of the Panel.

**(13 voting FOR - unanimous)**

- (4) “The Borough of Welwyn Hatfield (Various Roads, Hilltop, Hatfield) (Prohibition of Stopping and Waiting on Verge or Footway) Order 2022”

That the Panel considers the objections received in Section 9 in addition to the issues raised in Section 20 around equalities and diversity and recommends to Cabinet to proceed with the creation of the traffic regulation order as advertised; and to note the delegated powers conferred to Executive Member for Community Safety and Parking to sign an executive member decision to proceed with the creation of the traffic regulation order as advertised for the verge and footway prohibition, subject to unanimous recommendation of the Panel.

A fifth recommendation was then proposed and seconded by Councillors K.Thorpe and P.Shah and

RESOLVED:

**(6 voting FOR, 5 voting AGAINST and 2 ABSTENTIONS)**

- (5) To recommend to Cabinet to rapidly explore setting up a hardship fund for any resident within any permit parking area within the borough who can demonstrate the impact the additional cost of a permit or permits would have upon them financially and/ or socially to allow for a defined process to alleviate this pressure until it is deemed that this fund is no longer required.

The reports of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel meeting can be viewed in full here:

<https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=266&MIId=1499&Ver=4>

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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