

(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title:	Agenda
Date:	Tuesday 24 November 2015
Time:	<p>6.00 pm Open Forum</p> <p>At each Cabinet meeting, up to 15 minutes shall be allocated for questions from and discussion with, non-Cabinet members in Part 1(A) of the agenda only. Members wishing to speak during this session should if possible, give notice in advance. Who speaks for and for how long will be at the complete discretion of the person presiding.</p>
	<p>6.00 pm <i>(or at the conclusion of the Open Forum, whichever is the later)</i></p> <p>Members of the public who live or work in the District are invited to put one question or statement of not more than three minutes duration relating to items to be discussed in Part 1(A) of the agenda only. If a question is asked and answered within three minutes, the person who asked the question may ask a supplementary question that arises from the reply.</p> <p>A person who wishes to speak must register at least 15 minutes before the time the meeting is scheduled to start.</p> <p>There is an overall limit of 15 minutes for public speaking, which may be extended at the Chairman's discretion.</p>
	<p>6.15 pm</p> <p>The formal meeting of the Cabinet will commence at 6.15 pm or immediately following the conclusion of the informal discussions, whichever is the later, in the Conference Chamber East, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds.</p>
Venue:	<p>Conference Chamber West (F1R09) West Suffolk House Western Way Bury St Edmunds</p>

Membership:	<p style="text-align: center;">Leader James Waters</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Deputy Leader Robin Millar</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Councillor</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Portfolio</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>David Bowman</td> <td>Operations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stephen Edwards</td> <td>Resources and Performance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Andy Drummond</td> <td>Leisure and Culture</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Robin Millar</td> <td>Families and Communities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>James Waters</td> <td>Planning and Growth</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	David Bowman	Operations	Stephen Edwards	Resources and Performance	Andy Drummond	Leisure and Culture	Robin Millar	Families and Communities	James Waters	Planning and Growth
<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>												
David Bowman	Operations												
Stephen Edwards	Resources and Performance												
Andy Drummond	Leisure and Culture												
Robin Millar	Families and Communities												
James Waters	Planning and Growth												
Interests – Declaration and Restriction on Participation:	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.												
Quorum:	Three Members												
Committee administrator:	<p>Sharon Turner FHDC Cabinet Officer/Committee Administrator Tel: 01638 719237 Email: sharon.turner@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p>												

Procedural Matters

All Members of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet will be in attendance to enable informal discussions on the reports listed in Items 4. to 6. inclusive below to take place between the two authorities:

Councillor

Robert Everitt
Sara Mildmay-White
John Griffiths
Ian Houlder
Alaric Pugh
Jo Rayner
Peter Stevens

Portfolio

Families and Communities
Housing (*shared Lead Member with FHDC*)
Leader
Resources and Performance
Planning and Growth
Leisure and Culture
Operations

QUORUM: Three Members

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions, the Cabinet will hold its formal meeting as follows:

Part 1(A) - Public

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Open Forum

(This item was undertaken at the beginning of the informal discussions, to allow Members to consider the issues raised by the non-Cabinet members in relation to Items 4. to 6. The Open Forum on Items 7. and 8. will be subject to the following rules)

At each Cabinet meeting, up to 15 minutes shall be allocated for questions from and discussions with, non-Cabinet members in **Part 1(B)**. Members wishing to speak during this session should if possible, give notice in advance. Who speaks and for how long will be at the complete discretion of the person presiding.

3. Public Participation

(Public speaking on Items 4. to 6. was undertaken at the beginning of the informal discussions, to allow Members to consider the issues raised by the members of the public. Public speaking on Items 7. and 8. will be subject to the following rules)

Members of the public who live or work in the District are invited to put one question or statement of not more than three minutes

duration relating to items to be discussed in Part 1(B) of the agenda only. If a question is asked and answered within three minutes, the person who asked the question may ask a supplementary question that arises from the reply.

A person who wishes to speak must register at least 15 minutes before the time the meeting is scheduled to start.

There is an overall limit of 15 minutes for public speaking, which may be extended at the Chairman's discretion.

(Following the informal discussions held with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Items 4. to 6. below, Members are asked to refrain from partaking in any further discussion. However, Members are requested to formally resolve Items 4. to 6. below before commencing separate consideration of Items 7. and 8.)

NON KEY DECISIONS

- | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| 4. | Office Accommodation Plan
Report No: CAB/FH/15/056
Portfolio Holder: Stephen Edwards
Lead Officer: Alex Wilson

<i>(For reference purposes, St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Report Number is CAB/SE/15/071)</i> | 1 - 10 |
| 5. | Recommendation of the Licensing Committee - 28 September 2015: West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019
Report No: CAB/FH/15/057
Portfolio Holder: James Waters
Chairman of the Licensing Committee: Michael Anderson
Lead Officer: Tom Wright

<i>(For reference purposes, St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Report Number is CAB/SE/15/072)</i> | 11 - 14 |
| 6. | Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance
Report No: CAB/FH/15/058
Lead Officer: Andy Newman

<i>(For reference purposes, St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Report Number is CAB/SE/15/073)</i> | 15 - 68 |

Part 1(B) - Public

NON KEY DECISIONS

- | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| 7. | Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2016/2017 | 69 - 80 |
| | Report No: CAB/FH/15/059
Portfolio Holder: Stephen Edwards
Lead Officers: Paul Corney and Joanne Howlett | |
| 8. | Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2016/2017 | 81 - 90 |
| | Report No: CAB/FH/15/060
Portfolio Holder: Stephen Edwards
Lead Officer: Joanne Howlett | |

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(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Office Accommodation Plan	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/056	
Report to and date:	(Informal Joint) Cabinet	24 November 2015
Portfolio holder:	Stephen Edwards Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance Tel: 01638 660518 Email: stephen.edwards@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Alex Wilson Director Tel: 01284 757695 Email: alex.wilson@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	The Office Accommodation Plan sets out the high level principles for managing our future accommodation needs.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that Cabinet approve the Office Accommodation Plan, as set out in this report, as the basis for future office accommodation projects, including the Mildenhall Hub.	
Key Decision:	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.</i>		
Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with staff and other relevant parties will be undertaken as necessary in the implementation of the accommodations principles. 	
Alternative option(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This document sets out a range of principles. The paper explains why maintaining the status quo is not financially viable. 	

Implications:			
Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no financial implications associated with this report; however there will be future costs associated with the implementation of the projects referenced in the report such as the PSVII etc. Any future costs are either incorporated within existing budgets or will be included in the business cases for specific office accommodation projects. 	
Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This report has no impact on staffing numbers; however there are implications for all office based staff as a result of the various aspects of the report. 	
Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation principles within the Office Accommodation Plan will require support from ICT in regard to future needs for developments in computer technology and telephony. 	
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no new legal or policy implications. 	
Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due regard will need to be given to the equality implications around any changes to existing office accommodation and future office accommodation, specifically around the build requirements. 	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
PSVII and Mildenhall Hub projects are stopped or significantly delayed.	Low	These projects are being managed through the Councils' project management process.	Low
The Councils have surplus capacity in their office accommodation (and associated cost)	High	Implement this plan	Low
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers:		None	
Documents attached:		None	

Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Within the next couple of years Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils will need to make some key decisions relating to property development/asset management projects which could impact on how we deliver our services, our choice of new work styles and technologies, and the associated need for office accommodation. It is important that these decisions are not made in isolation and that the combined impact or outcome is not overlooked.
- 1.2 This report therefore looks to provide an overarching Office Accommodation Plan which clearly articulates our rationale for such accommodation and the principles to which we will adhere when developing each of these individual development projects. This Plan does **not** encompass arrangements for:
 - face-to-face customer access, as this is addressed through our Customer Access Strategy; or
 - democratic meeting spaces, as there is no need to change the provision for St Edmundsbury Borough Council and the development of the Mildenhall Hub will include the necessary civic space for Forest Heath District Council's future needs.

Background

- 2.1 Within West Suffolk we will, in the coming years, potentially be working on two large projects which could directly impact on how we manage our own and partners' office accommodation needs:
 - Mildenhall Hub; and
 - Public Service Village Phase 2 (PSV II).
- 2.2 The most imminent of these is the Mildenhall Hub project which will be presenting its final business case in early 2016, as well as consulting on a development brief. However, each of these projects presents the councils with opportunities to review our future office accommodation needs and working practices; our two main offices account for 4% of our total net budget. This overlap needs to be carefully managed to ensure that we make the most of the opportunities available to us without prejudicing future needs or developments and making the most the potential opportunities to maximise income, reduce costs and improve service delivery.
- 2.3 As well as these projects, which focus on improving services for our communities through good asset management, there are a number of other strategic developments that we need to give consideration to when considering our medium term accommodation needs. For example:

Key Drivers:

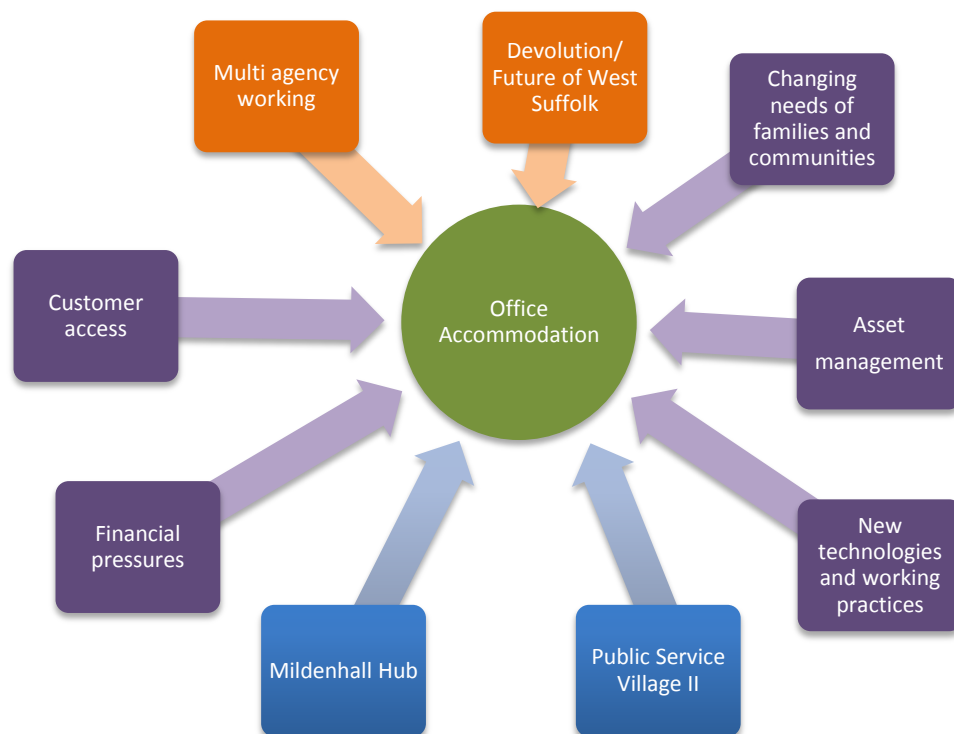


Fig. 1

2.4 The above factors require the councils to be very clear about the outcomes we are seeking to achieve. In all of our property projects now we are working with partners in looking to the bigger picture around integrated service delivery. However we still need to be sure that we secure sufficient and appropriate office accommodation to meet our own needs.

2.5 The following table sets out some of the key drivers which could impact upon our future accommodation needs.

The National Picture (Table A)	
<i>One Public Estate</i>	The Government's One Public Estate programme sets out a range of principles to ensure that land/asset disposals are for the greater good. The principles are that any development project should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. create economic growth 2. generate capital receipts 3. reduce running costs 4. deliver more integrated and customer focused services.
Across Suffolk	
<i>Transformation Challenge Award</i>	Our work as part of the Suffolk Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) Bid – working differently with our partners, removing barriers, virtual teams and matrix working. The devolution agenda, if it proceeds, will add to this.
<i>Working with partners to remove barriers</i>	Co-location with partners. With a range of examples, including both West Suffolk House and the District Offices in Mildenhall, we have already developed or adapted buildings which enable us to co-locate with public sector and third sector partners

	including SCC, Police, NHS, Department of Works and Pensions (DWP i.e. Job Centre Plus), Community Action Suffolk, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Abbeycroft Leisure and the East of England Local Government Association.
In West Suffolk	
<i>Our financial position</i>	<p>The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out commitments that could impact on our office accommodation needs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuation of the shared service agenda and transformation of service delivery; • behaving more commercially; • encouraging the use of digital forms for customer access.
<i>Our Customer Access commitments</i>	<p>As part of our Customer Access Strategy we have committed to ensure that our services continue to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • customer friendly and focused • co-ordinated and integrated • appropriate, flexible, responsive and • cost effective. <p>As part of this work we have been re-engineering our processes to improve the customer experience. This work is looking to design new processes around our Target Operating Model. The guiding principle of this model is that, wherever possible and practicable, we will enable customers to access our services via digital channels (digital by design).</p>
<i>Working with Families and Communities</i>	<p>Our Families and Communities Strategy outlines our vision for working in and with communities including a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different ways of working across organisations - conventional silo working approaches are unsuited to preventative approaches • a different workplace – broadly speaking, in the places where people are, not in public sector offices.
<i>Asset Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desk audit undertaken in June 2015 highlighted that the majority of our office-based staff (around 315 people or 290 FTE) currently operate across two sites, College Heath Road, Mildenhall and West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds. • These staff also support service provision in additional satellite sites varying from Parks and Museums to customer access points. All of these sites require asset management support from cleaning to ICT infrastructure. There are associated running costs with all of these buildings. • Some of these buildings are also our largest assets in terms of opportunity costs. For instance, the Mildenhall Hub could free up the College Heath Road site for potential redevelopment as housing.

Office Accommodation Plan

- 3.1 The aim of this Office Accommodation Plan is to ensure that we as West Suffolk councils are able to provide appropriate and efficient office accommodation, enabling ICT and a culture which supports an increasingly dynamic organisation.

What are our current office facilities?

- 4.1 For the purposes of this report our office accommodation focuses on two main offices at College Heath Road and West Suffolk House and excludes specialist operational buildings such as the depots, leisure facilities and customer access points.

College Heath Road (CHR):

- 170 West Suffolk desks (in current configuration)
- approximately 40 Suffolk County Council and NHS desks
- Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), Job Centre Plus, health clinics
- temporary public gym (Abbeycroft)

West Suffolk House (WSH):

- 170 West Suffolk desks (in current configuration)
- 360 Suffolk County Council, other agency and shared hot desks
- youth facility and CCTV control room
- small public library facility

- 4.2 The total running costs (2015/16) for the two sites for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils are around £700,000 per annum. The West Suffolk share of the West Suffolk House costs is £360,000 and the like-for-like costs of running College Heath Road would be approximately £340,000. St Edmundsbury and Suffolk County Council have already realised savings of over £1m a year through the move to West Suffolk House in 2009. Forest Heath now has the opportunity to make savings through its equivalent Mildenhall Hub project.

What are our current office needs?

- 5.1 A basic desk audit was last undertaken in June 2015. The desk audit results highlighted that:
- at that time 314 individual West Suffolk staff (287.6 FTE) staff required a desk for some of the working week at College Heath Road and/or West Suffolk House;
 - 77% of the workforce now splits its time between the two office bases in varying degrees;
 - currently the split between the two sites is typically 65:35 (WSH:CHR);
 - over 250 staff are enabled for mobile or home working;
 - On average 240 desks are occupied across the two building;
 - on current workstyles, this equates to a desk ratio of 83% (i.e. 8.3 desks for every 10 FTE).

How we want to work – how we utilise technology

- 6.1 We are currently developing an ICT Strategy which will outline how as an organisation we will utilise and maximise the benefit of developments in technology. This document along with our commitment to Digital by Design within our Target Operating Model for customer access will ensure that the key platform for service delivery is the internet. Another key area to tackle before committing to new office space would be digitising existing paper files and moving to completely paperless systems, which would reduce the amount of space, we need for storage on-site and also enable much more flexible working arrangements. Both would reduce the amount of physical office space we need (or increase the capacity of buildings).
- 6.2 There are a number of options that will be investigated in terms of developments in the use of computer technology and telephony arrangements. Councillors and officers are now using wireless laptop and tablet technology more commonly, enabling them to operate out of different buildings or public spaces. Improvements in telephony mean that we can also enable routing of calls to different landline or mobile phone handsets with relative ease. These options will be investigated further as part of the development of the ICT Strategy.

Office Accommodation Principles

- 7.1 It is important to establish the purposes of an office and the business functions that it needs to support. Our office accommodation fulfils many needs:
- a flexible base from which staff can work;
 - a place for staff to work with each other, customers, councillors and partners;
 - a place for formal/civic/democratic/community meetings;
 - a building that makes a statement about West Suffolk councils and the way they work (and operate as local planning authority through leading by example);
 - a place to store files and equipment;
 - business continuity and emergency planning.
- 7.2 Having regard to this and the drivers highlighted in Table A it is suggested that the key principles are that future office accommodation models must (in no ranked order):
- be cost effective for taxpayers;
 - facilitate new methods of working e.g. mobile working, collaborative working; paperless systems;
 - provide locality based services wherever practical;
 - be flexible – now and for the future;
 - enable multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working;
 - maximise co-location opportunities with partners;
 - enable the delivery of the Target Operating Model for customer access (digital by design);
 - Release maximum land for redevelopment and income generation (One Public Estate).

Impacts for councillors, customers and staff

- 8.1 **Councillors** - civic/democratic space (e.g. councillor facilities, meeting rooms and Council Chambers) is not encompassed within this Office Accommodation Plan. There is sufficient provision at WSH and any necessary change in this respect within Forest Heath can be facilitated through the Mildenhall Hub project. Access to frontline staff for councillors will be maintained in both locations.
- 8.2 **Customers** - with the development of the Mildenhall Hub, we will have purpose built multifunctional buildings in Bury St Edmunds and Mildenhall as well our other customer access points across West Suffolk. Furthermore, our work to re-engineer services to meet customer needs has and will continue to see a shift to "digital by default" making the internet our main customer access channel where practical.
- 8.3 **Staff** - although it was a snap-shot in time, the audit also highlighted some of the working patterns that are evolving since the culmination of shared services and the need for one staffing body to operate over two sites, (it should be noted that some customer services staff are servicing 6 customer access points) in particular, over 75% of FTE staff are now dual site.
- 8.4 These changes have had implications for the way we work; with a need for more mobile and transient working for individual members of staff and, as teams, for managing relationships and workloads across multiple sites. Improvements in the Council ICT infrastructure and approach to technology have enable this transition with staff being about to access networks, Wi-Fi, telephones and printers at multiple sites. Staff have also embraced these changes with a shift towards laptop and tablet working by many staff, with over 250 staff already enabled for home or mobile working.
- 8.5 The way we are working together is also changing, with more multi-disciplinary and multi-partner teams. The new Mildenhall Hub and PSVII developments will need to expand the use of technology and enable multi-functional work spaces to provide a wider range of work-styles e.g. 'touch-down' points and more spaces designed for collaborative working, as well as quieter working environments. We can also look to implement such changes within West Suffolk House as and when opportunities permit.

What is our future office accommodation need?

- 9.1 As highlighted above there are currently around 340 desks available across College Heath Road and West Suffolk House. Even based on a high desk ratio of over 80% there is a surplus of 100 desks on most days. This excess capacity reflects the simple fact that the office accommodation we currently have reflects the organisations the two councils were. In the case of College Heath Road, opened in 1980, the amount of floorspace reflects an organisation that ran its own housing stock, leisure centres and revenues and benefits service. Since 2009, both councils have also reduced their overall workforces as a result of shared services and budget reduction programmes. This plan offers the chance to resolve this situation, while improving workplaces.

- 9.2 Current government targets for OPE suggest that office accommodation should be allocated at 8 m² per person (this is inclusive of shared spaces such as meeting facilities and breakout areas, but excludes toilets, stairs, lifts and cleaning facilities). Modern practice, and experience from West Suffolk House, also shows that a desk ratio of 70% (7 desks for every 10 FTE) is achievable. If working practices could be adapted to reduce to the 70% ratio there would be 140 surplus desks.
- 9.3 The continued work on shared services, not just across West Suffolk but also in the wider local government context and our forthcoming building projects present an opportunity to reduce this surplus capacity and make a considerable saving for the taxpayer. Potentially, in excess of £150,000 a year from current revenue budgets in property costs alone. In addition, there would be savings in ICT costs.
- 9.4 We also need to ensure that we have flexible office accommodation that enables us to operate having regard to all of the issues outlined in Table A but without limiting ourselves to only these issues i.e. an element of future proofing.

Reducing the cost and making the most of our office accommodation

- 10.1 The desk audit highlights the scope to reduce costs by removing surplus capacity we have now. With changes to the ways we work and the technologies we utilise, the amount of office space we provide could go down more in the medium term, reducing costs further. In terms of new build, we could adopt the target of 8m² per employee for administrative buildings.
- 10.2 Based on the current need for around 240 desks (at an 83% desk ratio) and the existing capacity at West Suffolk House of 175 desks, there is a shortfall of 65 desks. On the basis of 8m² Net Internal Area per desk, this need could be met by approximately 500m² of new office space for West Suffolk within the new Mildenhall Hub. If a 70% desk ratio is achieved, either this space could be reduced at the outset, or additional space will be freed up for rental to partners at both sites, bringing additional income and further reducing our own accommodation costs.
- 10.3 It is therefore proposed that as part of the Office Accommodation Plan we:
- remove the current excess desk capacity we have through the Mildenhall Hub Project;
 - look to implement a 70% desk ratio for our office accommodation through better use of space and new uses of technology as highlighted within this report;
 - adopt a standard of 8m² of Net Internal Area for new office developments including the Mildenhall Hub;
 - develop flexible office accommodation to enable new layouts, working styles and enable future letting of spare capacity.

Strategic next steps

- 11.1 Following approval of the Office Accommodation Plan, the principles and commitments outlined within it will provide a clear and consistent direction for the Mildenhall Hub and any other future office projects. Additional actions around future ICT needs and cultural changes around different work styles and reducing the desk ratio will be encompassed within the ICT Strategy and the Organisational Development Work plan.

(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Recommendations of the Licensing Committee - 28 September 2015: West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/057	
Report to and dates:	(Informal Joint) Cabinet	24 November 2015
	Council	9 December 2015
Portfolio holder:	Councillor James Waters Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth Tel: 07771 621038 Email: james.waters@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Chairman of the Committee:	Councillor Michael Anderson Chairman of the Licensing Committee Tel: 01638 601624 Email: Michael.anderson@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Tom Wright Business Regulation and Licensing Manager Tel: 01638 719223 Email: tom.wright@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	On 28 September 2015 the Licensing Committee considered the following as a substantive item of business : Gambling Act 2005 : West Suffolk Revised Joint Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019	
Recommendations:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u>: that, subject to the approval of full Council, the Gambling Act 2005: West Suffolk Joint Statement of Policy for the period 2016 to 2019, as contained in Appendix 3 to Report No: LIC/FH/15/006, be adopted.	

Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>		<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Consultation:		• See Report: LIC/FH/15/006	
Alternative option(s):		• See Report: LIC/FH/15/006	
Implications:			
<i>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</i>		See Report: LIC/FH/15/006	
<i>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</i>		See Report LIC/FH/15/006	
<i>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</i>		See Report: LIC/FH/15/006	
<i>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</i>		See Report: LIC/FH/15/006	
<i>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</i>		See Report: LIC/FH/15/006	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
See Report: LIC/FH/15/006			
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		Licensing Committee: 28 September 2015 - Report No LIC/FH/15/006	
Documents attached:		None	

Key issues and reasons for recommendation

1. Gambling Act 2005 : West Suffolk Revised Joint Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019 (Report No LIC/FH/15/006)

- 1.1 The Committee had considered Report No [LIC/FH/15/006](#) which set out the results of public consultation and sought approval of the Gambling Act 2005: Joint Statement of Policy for the Period 2016 to 2019. The Statement of Policy sets out how Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils (the West Suffolk Councils), in their roles as Licensing Authorities, will carry out functions under the Act. It recognises the importance of responsible gambling within the entertainment industry whilst seeking to balance this with the key objectives of the Act as follows:
- (a) preventing gambling from being a source of crime and disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime;
 - (b) ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way; and
 - (c) protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.
- 1.2 The objective of the Statement of Policy is to provide a vision for the local area and a statement of intent that guides practice.
- 1.3 The current Statement of Policy will expire in January 2016. Prior to and during the consultation on the version which would apply to the period 2016 to 2019 no evidence has been presented to support an assertion that any part of West Suffolk has or was experiencing problems from gambling activities. This position will, however, be kept under review and in the event of change further research will be undertaken to discover the extent of problems and an Area Profile will be prepared accordingly.
- 1.4 Replies to the consultation along with officer responses, both in summarised form, were attached as [Appendix 1 to Report No LIC/FH/15/006](#). Full consultation responses were contained in [Appendix 2a](#), [Appendix 2b](#) and [Appendix 2c](#). In the absence of data to support local risks and the development of a robust gambling area profile the Consultation Draft of the Statement required minor revision and key changes made were listed in paragraph 2.5 of the report. Further revisions made as a result of the consultation were referred to in the Officer Response column of Appendix 1. A final version of the document was included as [Appendix 3](#).
- 1.5 Officers advised that St Edmundsbury's Licensing and Regulatory Committee were to consider the Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019 the following evening (29 September 2015) and they subsequently also recommended approval.
- 1.6 Subsequent to the meeting of the Committee, a minor amendment to the text of the Joint Statement of Policy has been made under delegated authority by the Head of Planning and Growth, in consultation with Councillor James Waters as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth. The amendment was required to take account of a new fifth edition of the Gambling Commission Guidance for

Licensing Authorities. Accordingly the third paragraph of the Preface now reads as follows : *"All references made within this document to the Gambling Commission Guidance for Licensing Authorities, and any extracts quoted thereof, refer to the fifth edition Guidance document published in September 2015."*

- 1.7 Further very minor textual amendments have also been made to the document under delegated authority since it was considered by the Committee but as is the case in 1.6 above, these do not materially affect the meaning of the document.

(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/058	
Report to and date:	(Informal Joint) Cabinet	24 November 2015
Lead officer:	Andy Newman Service Manager (Housing Standards) Tel: 01638 719276 Email: andrew.newman@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	To approve the revised Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that the revised West Suffolk Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance, as contained in Appendix A to Report No CAB/FH/15/058, be approved.	
Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.</i>		
Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed changes simplify the processing of existing policy and do not essentially change it. Consultation is not considered necessary. 	

Alternative option(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternatives are to reduce the extent of the policy or to dispense with it, (since there is no legal requirement for it). However the aim of the Housing Strategy is to increase the number of decent homes occupied, particularly for more vulnerable residents, so these options were not considered further. 	
Implications:			
Are there any financial implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both councils currently have annual capital budgets for Housing Assistance Grants of £800,000 for St Edmundsbury and £420,000 for Forest Heath. The revisions to this policy will not require any additional funding. 	
Are there any staffing implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any ICT implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing legislation, in the form of the Regulatory Reform Order, enables a discretionary policy of this nature. 	
Are there any equality implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy does not exclude any resident or prejudice them under the Equality Act and the processes aligned to the policy will be fully compliant with this legislation. 	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Limited take up of the discretionary grants	Medium	The grants scheme will be promoted and targeted as appropriate	Low
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards The policy is not restricted to any specific wards, residents who meet the eligibility criteria are entitled to make an application.	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		None	

Documents attached:

(Please list any appendices.)

Appendix A: Revised West Suffolk
Housing Assistance Policy and
Application Guidance

Appendix B: Existing Housing
Assistance Policy and Application
Guidance

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The West Suffolk Housing Strategy recognises the importance of maximising the use of existing housing. The West Suffolk councils (Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury) offer discretionary grant assistance under the Housing Assistance Policy. The strategy contains an action to review and revise the policy to ensure it meets its purpose.
- 1.1.2 Each of the two West Suffolk councils had its own Housing Assistance Policy prior to sharing services and in 2012 these policies were aligned. The current policy supports the prevention of harm to health by helping vulnerable homeowners without sufficient funds, or access to other sources of funding, to maintain or repair their own homes. It also offers a grant to owners of longer-term empty homes to enable these to be repaired and let out.
- 1.1.3 The review considered that, in the main, the existing policy helped to ensure decent safe housing for households benefiting from a grant.
- 1.1.4 Some changes were however considered necessary to simplify the policy and increase uptake. In doing so, we also wish to introduce processes to ensure we recover as much of our funding as possible so that we can continue to offer grants and invest in this sector.

1.2 Key Changes

1.2.1 The key changes are:

- Bringing together current decent homes grants (small works, heating & insulation and major works) into a single Housing Assistance Grant. The eligibility criteria remain the same, while simplifying the process.
- Widening of eligibility for the empty home grant to incentivise uptake. The change removes the previous criteria around specific leasing schemes and nominated families from our housing register. The view is that it is better to incentivise the occupation of homes in this way, rather than homes remaining vacant with no uptake for the grant. Should enforcement action prove necessary to release the empty home for occupation, this reasonable approach will be seen in the Councils' favour.
- A requirement to pay back all Housing Assistance Grant when the property is sold or transferred (with the exception of grants under £1000). In the case of Empty Home Grant, repayment is due if the property becomes vacant for longer than three months.
- A requirement to ensure value for money in respect of grant aided works. With constrained budgets it is particularly important that the cost and quality of work is satisfactory.
- The removal of the discretionary 'top up' grant for the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The maximum grant available of £30,000 is considered reasonable and sufficient.

- The policy also includes an appendix relating to DFGs including a protocol to ensure that the Councils meet our legal duty in that all works are eligible, reasonable and practical, will meet the essential needs of the disabled resident and can be completed at an acceptable cost. The protocol is designed to ensure that DFG is appropriate and that other options have been considered.
- Since agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, a further amendment is being recommended to how some charges are imposed on properties. In respect of discretionary grants, at present, the charge is a local land charge and is declared if a property search is carried out but it needs to be specifically reclaimed by the Council. It is now possible to register this charge with Land Registry. This means the charge can be automatically reclaimed by the Council, as the charge is applied directly, therefore making the process for reclaiming grant monies on the sale of the property easier and more secure. This change does not affect the policy itself just the way in which grant conditions are administered.

2. Promotion

- 2.1 The new policy will be promoted to encourage uptake for these grants targeting areas of West Suffolk in particular where there is a density of poorer housing and where residents may benefit from a Home Assistance Grant.
- 2.2 We will promote new Empty Homes Grant in line with our strategy. The grant is part of a wider set of tools that we are using to work with and support owners in bringing their homes back into use (including enforcement, where appropriate).

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West Suffolk Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance

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1. Introduction

The West Suffolk Strategic Plan includes a priority for ***Homes for our communities***. Included in the priority is a commitment to improve the condition of private sector housing (where alternative funding, including Government funding, is not available), help to bring empty homes back into use and increasing the number of decent homes for vulnerable people. Through this financial assistance policy, we are demonstrating how we support this commitment which will in turn contribute to our overarching strategic priority.

The West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2015-18 describes how Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough councils (working together as West Suffolk) will support the delivery of homes through an integrated approach to housing policy, and it contains an action to review the existing Housing Assistance Policy.

This West Suffolk Housing Assistance Policy has been developed from existing policies, linking with a number of other housing policy areas to produce an integrated approach towards housing policy. This sets out the framework for action to support and target households to improve the condition of their homes, including advice and education, enforcement and financial assistance.

Discretionary financial assistance and support (or Housing Assistance) is available to property owners, owner-occupiers and renters in the private rented sector and is explained in this policy. In particular, this support seeks to help those who are unable to meet the cost of repair themselves.

This policy does not cover the social housing sector. Under their landlord duties, Registered Providers (RPs) are responsible for ensuring their housing is decent and suitable for their tenants. Both councils transferred their housing stock to (separate) RPs, and improvement programmes should be in place to maintain housing to the Decent Home Standard.

Currently housing assistance in West Suffolk consists of the following grants:

- Home Assistance Grants
- Home Security Grants
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Empty Homes Grants

2. Overview

The quality of housing has an impact on the health of the occupants. This link between health and housing is well established and recognised in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) introduced with the Housing Act 2004 and coming into force in April 2006. In their assessment of housing conditions, local councils must consider the health impact associated with poor housing rather than concentrating on disrepair.

This policy has been informed by housing data published in the West Suffolk Housing Strategy: <http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/news14102201ws.cfm>

The importance of improving people's homes is recognised in the Housing and Health Charter for Suffolk, launched by the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2015. The charter's vision statement is: '...for Suffolk people to live in a suitable affordable home that is in good condition where they feel safe and supported by the local community.' The document in full is available at the following link: <http://www.eastsuffolkpartnership.org.uk/assets/Uploads/Board-September-2015/Agenda-Item-4-Appendix-1-Housing-and-Health-Charter.pdf>

Repair and maintenance remain the responsibility of the home owner, but it is sometimes appropriate for a council to take action and offer assistance to those in greatest need and without funds to improve their homes themselves. This discretionary financial assistance will only be available where:

- it can be demonstrated that other funding options have been explored and eliminated;
- the assistance means the councils are meeting their priorities of returning long-term vacant properties into use;
- we are ensuring that homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. The definition of a decent home has been issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and can be found at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf

3. Aims

By adopting and implementing this policy across West Suffolk we aim to:

- increase the number of vulnerable people that live in properties in private sector housing which meet the Decent Homes Standard;
- assist those not otherwise in the position to improve their homes;
- increase thermal comfort and energy efficiency of homes; addressing issues of fuel poverty, and ensuring good quality sustainable housing;
- provide disabled residents with essential adaptations and facilities;
- increase the number of empty homes brought back into use that meet the Decent Homes Standard;
- improve the quality of life of elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents by appropriate improvements to their homes.

4. Delivering our aims

The West Suffolk councils recognise the need to improve housing in West Suffolk and will take action to support households in improving the condition of their homes, with priority given to homes owned and occupied by vulnerable people.

We will deliver our aims through the following actions.

- **Advice and education**

By providing information, advice and signposting services for all homeowners and landlords to help them maintain and improve their homes.

- **Enforcement**

By taking enforcement and regulatory action to secure compliance with housing standards in the private rented sector in accordance with West Suffolk's Enforcement Policy, which can be found at the following link:

http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Policies_Strategies_and_Plans/enforcementpolicy.cfm, mainly relating to private rented properties.

- **Financial assistance**

For details please see section 6.

5. Legislative background

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 gave local authorities the discretionary power to provide support and financial assistance to homeowners to deal with poor quality housing. The councils also provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for adaptations to properties under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

The councils use the HHSRS to identify and rate significant hazards. The system scores the likelihood of harm to health occurring due to particular hazards during a 12-month period and the likely severity of the outcome. This results in a banding and category type for the hazard. Some form of action is expected to remedy a Category 1 hazard and protect the household.

Guidance found in the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, published in July 2012, places a statutory responsibility on local authorities to publish a report of the energy conservation measures that they consider practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in their area. The report can be found at the following link:

https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Policies_Strategies_and_Plans/upload/West-Suffolk-2013-15-HECA-progress-report-FINAL.pdf

Furthermore, in March 2015, in response to the Hills Review, Government published a revised fuel poverty strategy for England in March 2015, "*Cutting the cost of keeping warm*" which can be found at the following link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408644/cutting_the_cost_of_keeping_warm.pdf. Under supporting regulations published in December 2014, a new fuel poverty target has been set for England, "*to ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band C, by 2030*". Government

has however adopted two interim milestones to keep efforts on track with the target of (i) *“as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band E by 2020”* and (ii) *“as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band D by 2025”*.

Additional information on Energy Performance Ratings can be found at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/332236/fpeer_methodology.pdf

6. Financial assistance

Financial assistance will be offered in accordance with this policy. The housing assistance schemes are set out in section 8. Funding for all the discretionary grants detailed in this policy is provided through the councils’ capital programme. We will seek to fund our capital works programme sufficiently to meet the demands for the different types of grant and assistance being offered through the policy.

Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants is provided through the Better Care Fund in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The Better Care Fund pools funding from Social Care, Health and Housing across the county to provide more integrated services for residents.

We will make best use of the limited funding available for these grants in a number of ways, including effective and efficient partnership working, and accessing other funding that may be available.

If the demand for grants included in this policy exceeds the available budget it may be necessary to prioritise requests/applications or delay applications being processed, until sufficient funds are available.

In such circumstances, requests/applications will be prioritised by considering factors such as the:

- vulnerability of the occupant(s);
- potential harm to health;
- condition of the property;
- alternative options available (other than financial assistance);
- wider benefit and impact to the community under our strategic priorities.

In all cases, prior to grant approval, repairs and/or improvements to the property should be the most appropriate course of action.

7. Guidance on applications for housing assistance

The councils operate four grant schemes:

- Home Assistance Grants
- Home Security Grants
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Empty Home Grants

Details on how these grants can be used, who is eligible to apply, qualifying works, the level of grant available and conditions can be found in section 8.

7.1 General conditions

The West Suffolk councils share housing policies and staff so delivery of the services are the same across both councils. The location of the property which is the subject of an application for funding will determine which council makes the decision about any grant award.

An application for assistance must be in a form specified by the councils and shall include:

- full particulars of the proposed works including, where relevant, plans and specifications of the works;
- particulars of any professional fees or other charges which relate to the preparation of the scheme, the supervision of the works or administration of the contract; and
- written consent of the mortgagees when a charge applies.

Potential applicants can request help with their application. Applicants may also get help from a Home Improvement Agency, surveyor or architect, although such fees will only be eligible as part of a grant if the council considering the award agrees that they are reasonable.

Applicants will not be entitled to assistance if they:

- start or complete the work before their application is determined;
- deliberately worsen their housing conditions, for example by damaging the structure or fittings;
- have commenced a project and have been unable to complete it;
- make a fraudulent application or request for payment;
- are in council tax arrears;
- are not resident in the property at the time of the application, with the exception of the Empty Homes Grant.

Applicants (or their agents) must inform the council of all relevant changes in their circumstances from the date of enquiry through to approval and payment of assistance. Applicants should contact the council in advance if they believe their circumstances may change.

Where the eligibility of a grant is dependent upon the receipt of a specified benefit the grant will only be approved where the owner of the property, or where applicable the tenant, is in receipt of the benefit. Refer to section 8 for further detailed information in respect of each grant. Where other persons, not in receipt of such a benefit, have a shared interest in the property (excluding partners and shared ownership schemes) the council may restrict or refuse a grant.

Where the Government introduces a new benefit, change, vary or otherwise alter existing benefits, the authorised officer will determine whether the benefit is a qualifying benefit for the purposes of the grant.

There will be general conditions concerning ownership and tenure as part of the application for respective grants.

7.2 Contractual arrangements

The council will only approve financial assistance on the basis of what it considers to be the reasonable costs of the works. Applicants will be responsible for paying any amounts in excess of this.

The building contractor is responsible to the applicant (or their representative or agent) for ensuring that works progress to a satisfactory completion. Before works commence, it is essential that the applicant and the contractor agree the following.

- The scope and cost of the works to be carried out (this may be the approval notice schedule of works, provided by the council following inspection, but it may also include items that are not covered by the approval notice). This should also include VAT and proof of public liability insurance.
- The time it will take to complete the contract.
- All the relevant practical arrangements for working on site: for example, the hours of work, what services can be used by the contractor, the provision of dustsheets to protect furniture and possessions and other preliminaries.
- How the work is to be paid for, for example by instalments or on completion.

The applicant and contractor will be expected to resolve any contractual disputes. Any disputes which involve breach of contract by either party are civil law and may require specialist advice from a solicitor or a Citizens Advice Bureau.

7.3 Conditions for repayment of assistance

Repayment conditions are attached to Home Assistance Grants once the cumulated grant value exceeds £1000. Repayment conditions are attached in respect of the total grant for Empty Home Grants and Disabled Facilities

(Relocation) Grants. Where a repayment condition is applied, it is registered as a Charge until it has been repaid. Further information is provided in section 8. Only in exceptional circumstances will the council not demand repayment. Repayment conditions are not attached to the Home Security Grant.

With regard to Disabled Facilities Grants, repayment conditions (registered as a local land charge) apply where the grant exceeds £5000, subject to a maximum of £10,000, where the applicant disposes of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date. The date of completion of the qualifying works to the satisfaction of the council is the certified date.

If an application is approved but it subsequently appears to the council that the applicant (or applicants) was not, at the time of the application's approval, entitled to assistance, no payment will be made. The council may demand that any payments already made are repaid with interest.

Applicants will be wholly liable for meeting any costs incurred under the contract and/or will be required to repay the money upon any breach of the conditions.

The council will demand the repayment of grant from the applicant in whole where an interim payment has been made but the relevant works have not been completed.

7.4 Applications that do not comply with the policy

Where an application falls outside the specific policy, but in the opinion of the authorised officer there would be a benefit to the West Suffolk councils' strategic aims in considering the scheme, then the authorised officer may approve the application.

7.5 Prior approval

In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the authorised officer, approval may be given to commence the relevant works prior to the formal approval of a grant. An application for 'prior approval' must be made in writing stating the reasons why the particular works should commence before approval of the grant. Prior approval will only be given where a grant application form has been received by the council together with estimates for the works that are intended to be carried out under the prior approval.

If, for whatever reason, formal grant approval is not granted, no payment will be made towards any 'prior approved' works completed.

7.6 Payment of grant

When the council approves an application for assistance, it is forming a contract with the applicant to pay the correct amount of money on satisfactory completion of the eligible works and on condition that the applicant complies with the terms under which assistance is given.

It is a condition of payment of every grant that the eligible works are carried out within twelve months from the date of the approval. The council may allow further time where it is satisfied that any delay in the completion of the works was beyond the control of the applicant.

Final payment of the grant will only be made on the completion of all relevant works to the satisfaction of the council and the submission of invoices and relevant certificates of compliance.

It is a condition of the payment of every grant that the eligible works are carried out by the contractor whose estimate accompanied the application, or where two or more estimates were submitted, by one of those contractors. The cost of the grant eligible works will however be calculated on the lowest quote submitted.

Interim payments may be made at the discretion of the authorised officer. In normal circumstances interim payments will only be made in the following circumstances:

- the payment is for a minimum of £1500;
- at least 50 per cent of the eligible works are completed;
- in the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant, the applicant has paid 90 per cent of their contribution (the 'notional loan') to the grant;
- the total of interim payment should not exceed 90 per cent of the grant value;
- a maximum of two interim payments can be made.

Where there is more than one contractor carrying out grant works an interim payment may be made when the above criteria does not apply, where one contractor completes the works ahead of another.

The interim payment will be repayable if for any reason the applicant fails to complete all the approved grant works to the satisfaction of the councils within the period specified.

7.7 Unforeseen works

At the discretion of the authorised officer additional grant assistance (up to the maximum for that grant) may be approved towards the cost for relevant works that could not have reasonably been foreseen prior to the grant approval. Grant assistance towards unforeseen works will only be considered where the defect/deficiency has been inspected prior to its remedy. No payment for additional works and/or increased expenditure will be made unless the council is satisfied that the works are eligible for additional grant.

8. Housing assistance schemes

8.1 Home Assistance Grant

The **purpose** of this grant is to:

- fund the cost of energy efficiency measures in the homes of owner-occupiers on low incomes but who do not qualify for assistance under any other Government schemes;
- assist applicants to maintain their properties to prevent them from falling into serious disrepair;
- carry out repairs and improvements to homes in the private sector to ensure they meet the Government's four criteria for a Decent Home as defined in the following guidance:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf
- enable the existing occupier to remain in the property in safety through carrying out essential works;
- carry out works and repairs to equipment;
- carry out works which enable the owner to be discharged from hospital and reoccupy their home.

Eligible owner-occupiers are those who:

- have savings of less than £16,000;
- have a gross income of less than £20,000 for a single person, £24,500 for a couple, plus £2500 for each child up to a maximum of two children;
- subject to the discretion of an authorised officer, qualify for a Government scheme but there is an unreasonable delay in the provision, repair or replacement of a boiler and the applicant would be left without heating over the winter months
- are in receipt of specified income related or disability related benefits where minor adaptation is required for a disabled person.

The following are classed as **qualifying works**.

- Loft insulation up to 270 mm.
- Cavity wall insulation.
- Draught-proofing.
- Provision of heating to the Decent Homes standard.
- Repair or replacement of boilers.
- Repairs to the fabric of the building.
- Repair of basic amenities.
- Works to remedy Category 1 hazards (as assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System).
- Provision of reasonably modern facilities and services (as described in the Decent Homes Standard).
- Minor adaptations for disabled persons.

The **level of grant** available is:

- the reasonable costs of the eligible work as determined by the council, subject to the following minimum and maximum amounts:
 - minimum cost of eligible works – £100;
 - maximum – £20,000.

The following **conditions** apply.

- Two contractors' estimates must be provided in respect of the relevant works.
- For any grant where the cumulated grant figure exceeds £1000 the grant will be registered as a Charge from the certified date.
- The council will demand the repayment by the applicant of the grant, in full, if the applicant disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant of over £1000 was given.
- Where central heating is provided or boilers are repaired or replaced it is a condition that draught-proofing, loft insulation and cavity wall insulation is installed to the West Suffolk councils' minimum recommended standard.

Qualifying benefits: As specified by the Government and as agreed by the authorised officer

8.2 Home Security Grant

The **purpose** of this grant is to fund works which enable applicants to remain in safe and secure homes.

Eligible applicants are those that are in receipt of a specified income related or disability related benefit.

Qualifying works include revision of security devices as determined in consultation with Suffolk Police.

The **level of grant** available is 100%, up to a maximum of £500 per application.

The grant is given on condition that the applicant intends to live in the property as their main residence for a period of at least 12 months following the completion of the works.

Qualifying benefits: As specified by the Government and as agreed by the authorised officer.

8.3 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) - Mandatory

The **purpose** of this grant is to adapt the home of a disabled person so that they are able to gain access to and safely use all the normal facilities of their home.

Eligible owners/occupiers are those that are living with disabilities in West Suffolk, subject to an essential need assessment by an Occupational Therapist employed or contracted by Suffolk County Council.

The following are classed as **qualifying works**.

- All works that are mandatory as described in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended, to meet the essential needs of the client and that can be completed at a reasonable cost.
- Where major internal adaptations or extensions are being proposed, it may be appropriate to refer the application through a panel, as detailed in the attached Disabled Facilities Grant Protocol, for further discussion, and to look at any other appropriate, alternative options. See appendix 1 for further details.

The maximum **level of grant** available is £30,000.

The following **conditions** apply.

- Where the applicant has a qualifying owner's interest in the premises on which the relevant works were carried out, the grant will be registered as a local land charge for a period of ten years from the certified date.
- The council awarding the grant will demand the repayment by the applicant of such part of the grant that exceeds £5000, subject to a maximum of £10,000, where the applicant disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date.
- The matters in section 3(2)(b) of the Disabled Facilities (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008 have been considered and it is considered reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment.

8.4 Disabled Facilities Grant (Relocation) - Discretionary

The **purpose** of this grant is to assist an applicant eligible for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant to move to a property that is either adapted to meet their needs or is capable of being adapted, and where their existing home cannot be adapted.

Eligible owners/occupiers are those that qualify for the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.

Qualifying works include grant aid towards the approved cost of moving to a more suitable property.

The maximum **level of grant** available is £10,000.

The following **conditions** apply.

- The applicant must be a resident within either West Suffolk council area and the property moved to must be within the districts of the two councils.
- Where applicable, an application for a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant must be made within 12 months of the payment of the Relocation Grant.

The council awarding the grant will demand the repayment by the applicant of the grant, in full, if the applicant disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was paid.

8.5 Empty Home Grant

The **purpose** of this grant is to fund the return of empty residential properties back into use.

Owners are **eligible**:

- where the property is currently empty and has been vacant for more than twelve months
- Where, at the discretion of the authorised officer, renovation would provide homes to meet the strategic aims of the councils.

The following are classed as **qualifying works**, where works of repair and improvement (in the judgment of the council awarding the grant) are necessary to:

- remove Category 1 hazards (as assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System);
- ensure that the property is in a reasonable state of repair;
- provide reasonably modern facilities and services (in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard);
- provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

The **level of grant** available is the reasonable costs of the eligible work as determined by the council awarding the grant and up to a maximum of £20,000.

The following **conditions** apply.

- The property is let as residential accommodation; or
- the property is occupied by the owner as their only or main residence.
- Repayment of the full grant will be made:
 - on breach of the condition to let or occupy the property; or
 - on sale (assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the property; or
 - the property becoming vacant without being let or occupied for a period of more than three months.

9. Appeals, complaints, standards of service

Any applicant who is dissatisfied with any decision or the standard of service relating to a grant enquiry or application should initially discuss their concern with the relevant service. If the customer is still dissatisfied, their complaint will be investigated under the West Suffolk councils' Corporate Complaints Procedure as the Grant Authority.

There is no appeal against the outcome of the statutory test of resources ('means test') in respect of applications for Disabled Facilities Grants. Applicants will be advised how their contribution to the grant was calculated. The calculation is based on Government guidance and legislation, over which the councils have no discretion.

10. Definitions

Authorised Officer: an officer authorised by the West Suffolk councils in respect of grant decisions made under this policy.

Certified date: the date the eligible, or qualifying works, are completed to the council's satisfaction.

Completion to the council's satisfaction: means when the work has been completed to an acceptable standard and in accordance with the submitted and approved plans, quotations, planning approvals, building regulations and any other relevant statutory requirements. It excludes any defects liability period.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG): Mandatory DFGs are available from local authorities for essential adaptations to give disabled people better freedom of movement into and around their homes and to give access to essential facilities within the home. The legislation governing DFGs is the *1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act*.

Eligibility: the criteria that determines who the grant will be available to.

Grant period:

- for Disabled Facilities Grant a period of 10 years from the certified date;
- for all Home Assistance Grants over £1000, up to the disposal of the property by the applicant (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise);
- for Empty Home Grants, up to the disposal of the property by the applicant (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) or the property becomes vacant, without being let or occupied for a period of more than three months.

Means test: a statutory test of the applicant's resources to determine the amount of eligible grant aid.

Notional loan contribution: the contribution the applicant will have to make to their Disabled Facilities Grant when a full grant is not available following a means test.

Owner-occupier: where grant eligibility is in respect of owner-occupiers the applicant must be resident in the property at the time of the application.

Owner's interest: a person will be deemed to have an owner's interest if that person is on the deeds of the property as an owner, either in full or part, of the property which is subject to the grant application.

Qualifying works: the works that will be eligible for grant aid.

Valid application: means an application which includes fully completed application forms, all necessary plans, quotations for the works, Certificate of

Title (if appropriate) and copies of any planning and building regulation approvals.

West Suffolk councils: Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

11. Useful links

The Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Department for Communities and Local Government - Guidance for landlords and property related professionals

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9425/150940.pdf

A decent home: Definition and guidance for implementation. Department for Communities and Local Government.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf

APPENDIX 1 – Disabled Facilities Grant referral protocol

Purpose

To ensure that, as the grant authority, we meet our statutory obligations in that all works that have been recommended are eligible, will meet the essential needs of the client and can be completed at a reasonable cost.

To ensure that we consider alternative options to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), where appropriate, and therefore discuss these alternatives with the client and their family, as well as the Occupational Therapist (OT), so as to provide real choice.

Challenge

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to challenge the essential needs being recommended, particularly where major internal adaptations or extensions are being proposed.

Panel

Referring an application, which is more complex, through the proposed panel will enable appropriate discussions on the proposals to consider any suitable alternative options.

Relocation

This would include the possibility of relocation, where adaptations would not be considered reasonably practicable or the cost of an adaptation is considered excessive.

Maximise funding

By ensuring that only grant eligible works are approved and grant schemes are both reasonable and practicable to maximise the limited funding available.

Managing expectations

It is very important to manage the expectations of applicants and their families from an early stage so that they are fully aware that any grant offered will be for the minimum scheme of works required to meet the essential needs of the disabled person.

With the development of the new integrated Home Improvement Agency Service many of these principles will be taken forward into practice.

Process

- It is essential that the OT referral clearly states the essential needs of the client and explains why the client needs a particular adaptation. Where it is considered that the proposed adaptation will need to include complex and extensive provision for future needs; for example, a wheelchair

accessible bathroom, or ceiling tracks for a hoist where the client's condition is likely to deteriorate in the future, these must be clearly stated and explained. This information may be submitted at the initial referral stage or following a site visit as below. There is no need for a detailed specification as part of the OT referral as this can be worked up at a later stage if adaptation is appropriate.

- A site visit with the OT will help to establish if the adaptation is considered to be reasonably practicable, having taken account of the construction and layout of the property concerned. This will also provide an opportunity to discuss alternative ways of achieving the required outcomes if appropriate.
- Consideration must also be given to the overall suitability of the property to accommodate the occupiers and existing overcrowding issues will need to be taken into account.
- Where it is considered that the property cannot be reasonably adapted for the essential needs of the client, the possibility of a relocation grant to a property which can be adapted should be discussed. It may be appropriate for the housing options officer to visit and discuss alternatives with the applicant(s). If adaptation is not appropriate then a letter should be sent to the applicant(s) advising of this decision and giving the reasons.
- Where extensive internal adaptations or extensions are being considered, it is recommended that the officer draws up a rough plan of the property, with appropriate dimensions, positions of windows and doors etc. The proposal and any possible alternative options can then be discussed with team members /DFG panel and the OT where considered appropriate, to determine and agree any works which should be funded through a DFG, prior to confirmation of the eligible works with the client. This will enable all parties to be clear of the adaptations required to meet the essential needs of the client prior to plans being drawn up for planning or building regulation approval, if required.

**HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY
AND APPLICATION GUIDANCE**

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DATE DOCUMENT APPROVED:	
LAST REVIEW DATE:	

Policy Statement:

Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) share similar aims and objectives in terms of providing housing assistance and improving the condition of private sector housing in their respective areas.

Their overall strategic approaches are to ensure sufficient, suitable, safe housing for residents that meets both their current and future needs, and supports economic activity whilst ensuring vulnerable households are protected.

A joint Housing Assistance Policy has therefore been developed.

“Housing assistance”, in terms of this policy, means the provision of financial, and other support, to the owners and occupiers of private sector residential properties in order to improve the quality of their accommodation.

The aim of this policy is to set a framework for the provision of this assistance and support to property owners and occupiers, particularly those that are unable to meet the cost of repair or renewal from their own resources. It recognises that the prime responsibility for maintaining properties rests with the individual property owner, and that many owners have equity available that can safely be released. Equally there is recognition that some owners may be unable to access finance and will need support from public funds.

The policy forms part of the overall housing strategies for both Councils, and links with a number of other housing policy areas to produce an integrated approach towards housing. It sets out the principles for the provision of discretionary financial housing assistance, which will contribute to strategic priorities relating to increasing the number of decent homes for vulnerable people. Through this policy, and the associated investment, each Council will seek to comply with their statutory housing duty of pro-actively improving the private sector.

The policy does not cover the social housing sector. Registered Providers are responsible under their landlord function to ensure their housing is decent for their tenants. Both Councils have transferred their housing stock to separate providers, and the vast majority of the stock meets the decent home standard. Improvement programmes are put in place by the providers to maintain the standard of their housing. The aim is to work with the providers and their tenants, where necessary, in terms of compliance with the Housing Act standard.

While general guidelines are given for applying for housing assistance, this document does not set out in full the detailed procedures for each form of assistance. A procedure for each type of grant assistance will be put in place, and suitable information will be available for applicants’.

This policy seeks to:

- Increase the percentage of vulnerable persons in private sector housing whose accommodation meets the Decent Homes Standard.
- Assist those who would otherwise not be in a position to improve their homes.
- Increase thermal comfort and energy efficiency of homes; addressing issues of fuel poverty, and ensuring good quality sustainable housing
- Provide disabled residents with essential adaptations and facilities.
- Increase the number of empty homes brought back into use to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- Increase the quality of life for elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents through appropriate improvements and measures to their homes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Poor quality housing can have a negative impact on the health of the occupants, on the quality of life in the area and on wider sustainability issues. Every resident should have the opportunity of a decent home that is safe, comfortable and in reasonable condition. The link between health and housing is well established and is now recognised through the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which came into force in April 2006. In their assessment of housing conditions Councils must now consider the health impact associated with poor housing rather than concentrating on disrepair.

Whilst repair and maintenance remain the responsibility of the home owner, it is sometimes necessary and appropriate for the Council to step in and offer assistance to those in greatest need and unable to improve their homes. Alternative sources of funding will be encouraged where appropriate and discretionary financial assistance will only be available where it can be demonstrated that other funding options have been explored and eliminated, or where the assistance helps the Council to meet its priorities; for example, returning long-term vacant properties into use or ensuring that homes meet the Decent Homes Standard.

The overriding purpose of the policy is to improve the quality of the private sector housing stock, targeting the assistance towards providing increased housing for vulnerable people. In doing this it will positively contribute to both Councils' strategic priorities. For example, Forest Heath has stated that it wishes to ensure more good quality homes are available to local people, and St Edmundsbury wishes to improve the quality of life, safety and wellbeing of the community.

2. LOCAL HOUSING CONDITIONS

Both Councils have valuable information on the condition of their respective housing stocks from surveys and reports carried out in 2006 (FHDC) and 2008 (SEBC) respectively. These reports provide a useful comparison with the English House Condition Survey (EHCS) from 2004, and enable this policy, and other housing policies, to target resources where there is the most need.

At the time of the house condition surveys there were an estimated 37,200 private sector dwellings in SEBC and 21,400 in FHDC. Although the condition of the stock is in line with the national average of 29% dwellings non decent, with SEBC just under and FHDC just over, there were areas of concern in terms of fuel poverty and excess cold.

2.1 Stock Profile

The age profile of the housing stock in **St Edmundsbury** differs from the average for England in that it contains a lower proportion of pre-1919 stock (17.7% compared to the national average of 24.9%). There are substantially higher proportions of stock built between 1965 – 1980 (33.5% compared to 20.9% nationally) and post 1980 (28.7% compared with 18.6%).

The tenure profile in SEBC is almost identical to the national profile, with almost the same proportions of both owner-occupied and privately rented properties. The proportion of publicly rented properties, such as Housing Association dwellings, is slightly lower at 17% (these properties were not considered as part of the survey).

Forest Heath also differs to the average for England in that smaller proportions of the stock were built pre-1919 and up to 1964, but with significantly more post 1964 properties. This is similar to the SEBC profile. The tenure profile differs from that of SEBC, and the national profile, because of the slightly higher level of owner occupied, private rented and housing association properties, but with a lower level of local authority and public sector properties.

2.2 Resident Profile

In both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath average gross earnings are slightly below the national average, and the ratios of house prices to income are above average as follows. These figures suggest that there are likely to be affordability issues for those needing housing repair and maintenance work.

Average weekly gross pay 2011	
	Median
Forest Heath	£479.50
St Edmundsbury	£497.40
England	£503.10

Source - Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2011)

While both districts include a large number of households in the higher income bands, significant numbers are also present in the lower income bands, where the issues of affordability of repairs are likely to be most acute. In St Edmundsbury, for example, 17% of households have an annual income of £10,000 or less and 17% have a household income between £10,000 and £15,000. These figures are not available for Forest Heath, but the income and housing affordability profile of both districts is similar, as follows:

House price to income ratios 2011 (lower quartile):	
SEBC	7.76
FHDC	6.94
England	6.53

Source - HM Land Registry

Given these issues, we would expect to see maintenance and adaptation issues being difficult for many, and in particular “equity rich – cash poor” older owner occupiers.

2.3 Decent Homes

The following table sets out the condition of the housing stock, as identified in the House Condition Surveys for both Councils.

	Non decent as % of stock	Dwellings with category 1 hazards as % of total stock	Dwellings with thermal comfort failure as % of total stock	Dwellings in need of repair as % of stock	Dwellings lacking adequate modern facilities as % of stock
Forest Heath	30.0	22.4	14.5	3.7	0.9
St Edmundsbury	26.6	15.5	12.5	3.9	4.4
National average	28.7	NA	19.8	8.1	1.3

For SEBC the stock condition survey estimated that in 2008 68.3% of vulnerable private sector households occupied decent homes and that to meet the 2010/11 70% target 100 non decent homes would need to be made decent.

For FHDC the stock condition survey estimated that there was a shortfall of 185 non-decent homes, or 5.3%, to meet the above target.

Both Councils have now reached these targets, primarily through significant spend under the respective policies and decent homes programmes.

The surveys noted that Category 1 Hazards, assessed under the HHSRS, were mainly associated with pre-1919 dwellings, the privately rented sector and detached houses and bungalows. The surveys also indicated that there was a clear association between Category 1 Hazards and low-income households, and those with heads of household over 60.

The main reason for the presence of a Category 1 Hazard was found to be excess cold followed by damp and mould growth.

2.4 Thermal Comfort and Energy Efficiency

There are estimated to be 3,600 (9.7%) dwellings which contain households in fuel poverty within St Edmundsbury, compared with the national average of 13.9%. With the increase in fuel prices over the summer months of 2008 the rate of fuel poverty is likely to be higher than estimated.

The average energy efficiency level in St Edmundsbury, using the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is 52. This is above the all-England average of 46 from the 2005 English House Condition Survey (EHCS). The target SAP for all dwellings is 65. A SAP of less than 35 is considered unacceptably low and represents a difficult and expensive dwelling to heat, which is non-decent because of a Category 1 cold hazard. In St Edmundsbury 3,800 dwellings have a SAP rating of less than 35.

Forest Heath does not currently have its average SAP rating, however it does have data relating to wards, numbers of vulnerable households in fuel poverty and housing that does not have the benefit of cavity wall insulation. The level of excess cold in homes, due to failure in thermal comfort, is likely to be similar to St Edmundsbury because of the connection with areas of greater deprivation in the district.

3. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 gave local authorities the discretionary power to provide support and financial assistance to homeowners to deal with poor quality housing. The Councils also provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) for adaptations to properties under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

The previous Government set a Public Sector Agreement (PSA) target for at least 70% of vulnerable households to be living in decent homes by 2010/11 and 75% by 2020/21, and that there should be a year on year increase in vulnerable households living in decent homes. Whilst the PSA target is no longer in place, the Councils believe that increasing the numbers of vulnerable households living in decent housing is a worthwhile aim, and the policy is targeted around achieving this. Vulnerable, for this purpose, is a person or household below an income threshold as specified by Government.

The Housing Act 2004 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which seeks to ensure that residential premises are safe and healthy. A dwelling is assessed under the 29 potential hazards. Where a significant hazard is identified, it is rated under the system. The system scores the likelihood of harm to health occurring due to the particular hazard, over the next 12 months, along with the likely severity of the outcome. This analysis produces a banding and category type for the hazard. Where a Category 1 hazard is in existence, some form of action is expected to remedy this and protect the household.

4. DELIVERY OF POLICY

Given the pressing need to improve the condition of its housing stock, Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils will take action over the coming years to support households in improving the condition of their homes. It is proposed that some action is taken on all aspects of improving the stock, but with particular priority given to homes owned and occupied by vulnerable persons.

Our specific aims are to:

- Increase the percentage of vulnerable persons in private sector housing whose accommodation meets the Decent Homes Standard.
- Assist those who would otherwise not be in a position to improve their homes.
- Increase thermal comfort and energy efficiency of homes, addressing issues of fuel poverty, and ensuring good quality sustainable housing.
- Provide disabled residents with essential adaptations and facilities.
- Increase the number of empty homes brought back into use that meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- Increase the quality of life for elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents through appropriate improvements and measures to their homes.

Housing assistance will be delivered through three main routes:

- Advice and education;
- Enforcement;
- Financial assistance.

Advice and education: Information, advice and 'signposting' services to all homeowners to help them maintain and improve their homes. Specific targeted education campaigns will also be undertaken to achieve certain objectives, for example improving domestic energy efficiency.

Enforcement: Enforcement and regulatory action will be taken to secure compliance with housing standards in accordance with Enforcement Policy, mainly relating to private rented properties.

Financial Assistance: Financial assistance will be provided in accordance with this Policy. The funding for this policy is through the Councils capital programme and as such all expenditure must comply with the definition of capital expenditure within the relevant accounting code of practice and capital financing regulations. The Councils will seek to sufficiently fund their Capital Works Programmes to meet the demands for the different types of grant and assistance being offered through the Policy. If, however, the demand exceeds the available budget it may be necessary to prioritise requests/applications or delay applications being processed.

In such circumstances, requests/applications will be assessed against those already received by considering factors such as:

- the vulnerability of the occupant(s);
- the potential harm to health;
- the condition of the property;
- alternative options available (other than financial assistance);
- the wider benefit and impact to the community under the Councils strategic priorities.

In all cases, prior to Grant Approval, improvements to the property should be the most appropriate course of action.

Both Councils use the services of a Suffolk-wide Home Improvement Agency (HIA), currently Orbit Care & Repair, to help deliver the grants under the policy. The HIA specialises in overseeing all aspects of the grant process, and bridges the gap between their vulnerable client/applicant and the Council. This is particularly important in terms of DFG, however the HIA will also deliver other housing improvement grants.

Monitoring performance

Success will be measured against the aims of this policy, and by monitoring:

- the number of homes that have been brought up to the decent homes standard;
- the number of vulnerable households helped to improve their housing up to the decent home standard;
- the number of adaptations for disabled residents; and
- the number of empty homes improved and returned to use.

The policy will be periodically reviewed to ensure it continues to deliver against the aims set out above.

GUIDANCE ON APPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE

5 APPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE

5.1 General conditions

An application for assistance must be in a form specified by the Council and shall include:

- Full particulars of the proposed works including, where relevant, plans and specifications of the works;
- Particulars of any professional fees or other charges which relate to the preparation of the scheme, the supervision of the works or administration of the contract;
- Written consent of the mortgagees when a charge applies.

Potential applicants can request help with their application through our Home Improvement Agency. Applicants may also get help from a surveyor or architect, such fees will only be eligible as part of a grant if the Council agrees that they are reasonable.

Applicants will not normally be entitled to assistance if they:

- Started or completed the work before their application is determined;
- Deliberately worsened their housing conditions, for example by damaging the structure or fittings;
- Have commenced a project and have been unable to complete it;
- Make a fraudulent application or request for payment;
- Are in Council Tax arrears;
- Are not resident in the property at the time of the application, with the exception of the Empty Home Grant..

Further applications for Decent Home Assistance will not normally be considered unless 10 years have passed since the last application for assistance. This period may be reviewed by the Council to take into account individual circumstances and may be waived or reduced accordingly, with other grants considered to assist the resident.

Where eligible works can be approved under one grant, simultaneous applications will not normally be considered unless it can be demonstrated that there are particularly good reasons for doing so.

Applicants (or their agents) must inform the Council of all relevant changes in their circumstances from the date of enquiry through to approval and payment of assistance. Applicants should contact the Council in advance if they believe their circumstances may change.

Where the eligibility of a grant is dependant upon the receipt of a specified benefit the grant will only be approved where the owner of the property, or where applicable the tenant, is in receipt of the benefit. Where other persons, not in receipt of such a benefit, have a shared interest in the property (excluding partners and shared ownership schemes) the Council may restrict or refuse a grant.

In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Authorised Officer, applications for minor adaptations to benefit a disabled person may be approved under the Healthy Home (small works) Grant, providing that any member of the household is in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit.

Where the Government introduce a new benefit, change, vary or otherwise alter existing benefits, the Head of Service will determine whether the benefit is a qualifying benefit for the purposes of the Healthy Home Grant and the Decent Home Grant.

There will be general conditions concerning ownership and tenure as part of the application for respective grants.

5.2 Contractual Arrangements

The Council will only approve financial assistance on the basis of what it considers to be the reasonable costs of the works; applicants will be responsible for paying any amounts in excess of this.

The building contractor is responsible to the applicant (or their representative or agent) for ensuring that works progress to a satisfactory completion. Before works commence, it is essential that the applicant and the contractor agree:

- The scope and cost of the works to be carried out (this may be the approval notice schedule of works provided by the Council, but it may also include items that are not covered by the approval notice). This should also include VAT and proof of public liability insurance;
- The time it will take to complete the contract;
- All the relevant practical arrangements for working on site: for example, the hours of work, what services can be used by the contractor, the provision of dustsheets to protect furniture and possessions and other preliminaries;
- How the work is to be paid for, for example by instalments or on completion.

The applicant and contractor will be expected to resolve any contractual disputes. Any disputes which involve breach of contract by either party are civil law and may require specialist advice from a solicitor or a Citizens Advice Bureau.

5.3 Conditions for repayment of assistance

Repayment conditions are attached to most grants and loans and are registered as a local charge until they have been repaid or the relevant condition period expires. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Council not demand repayment. Repayment of a grant or loan, awarded to bring an empty property back into use, will be required either; when sold, at the end of the lease period, during the lease period or if the property becomes vacant for more than 6 months, depending on the circumstances.

If an application is approved but it subsequently appears to the Council that the applicant (or applicants) was not, at the time the application was approved, entitled to assistance, no payment will be made. The Council may demand that any payments already made are repaid with interest.

Applicants will be wholly liable for meeting any costs incurred under the contract and/or will be required to repay the money upon any breach of the conditions.

The Council will demand the repayment of grant from the applicant in whole when the following circumstances apply:

- Thermal Comfort Grant, Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant or Discretionary Disabled Facilities (Top-Up) Grant:
The disposal (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises, in respect of which a grant was given, within the 'grant period';
- Interim payments:
Where an interim payment has been made but the relevant works have not been completed.
- Decent Home Grant
The disposal of the property within the 'grant period' (grants up to £15,000) or on disposal at any time (grants in excess of £15,000)
- Empty Home Grant
The property is not being leased or rented out, or on disposal of the property at any time.

5.4 Applications that do not comply with the policy

Where an application falls outside the specific policy, but in the opinion of the Authorised Officer there would be a benefit to the Council's strategic aims in considering the scheme, then the Authorised Officer may approve the application.

5.5 Restriction of works

An application for a grant will not normally be approved if the relevant works have begun before the application is approved.

Where the relevant works have been commenced but have not been completed, the Council may approve the application for a grant, where satisfied that there were good reasons for beginning the works before the application was approved.

An application for a grant will not be approved if the relevant works have been completed.

5.6 Prior approval

In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Authorised Officer, approval may be given to commence the relevant works prior to the formal approval of a grant. An application for 'prior approval' must be made in writing stating the reasons why the particular works should commence before approval of the grant. Prior approval will only be given where a grant application form has been received by the Councils together with estimates for the works that are intended to be carried out under the prior approval.

If, for whatever reason, formal grant approval is not granted no payment will be made towards any 'prior approved' works completed.

5.7 Payment

When the Council approves an application for assistance, it is forming a contract with the applicant to pay the correct amount of money on satisfactory completion of the eligible works and on condition that the applicant complies with the terms under which assistance is given.

It is a condition of payment of every grant that the eligible works are carried out within twelve months from the date of the approval. The Council may allow further time where it is satisfied that any delay in the completion of the works was beyond the control of the applicant.

Final payment of the grant will only be made on the completion of all relevant works to the satisfaction of the Council and the submission of invoices and relevant certificates of compliance.

It is a condition of the payment of every grant that the eligible works are carried out by the contractor, whose estimate accompanied the application, or where two or more estimates were submitted, by one of those contractors.

Interim payments may be made at the discretion of the Authorised Officer. In normal circumstances interim payments will only be made in the following circumstances:

- the payment is for a minimum of £1,500;
- at least 50% of the eligible works are completed;
- in the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant, the applicant has paid 90% of their contribution (the 'notional loan') to the grant;
- the total of interim payment should not exceed 90% of the grant value;
- a maximum of two interim payments can be made.

Where there is more than one contractor carrying out grant works an interim payment may be made when the above criteria does not apply, where one contractor completes the works ahead of another.

The interim payment will be repayable if for any reason the applicant fails to complete all the approved grant works to the satisfaction of the Councils within the period specified.

5.8 Unforeseen works

At the discretion of the Authorised Officer additional grant assistance (up to the maximum for that grant) may be approved towards the cost for relevant works that could not have reasonably been foreseen prior to the grant approval. Grant assistance towards unforeseen works will only be considered where the defect/deficiency has been inspected by the Council prior to its remedy. No payment for additional works and/or increased expenditure will be made unless the works have been examined and agreed as eligible for additional grant.

6 HOUSING ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

6.1 Thermal Comfort Grant

Purpose: A grant to fund the cost of energy efficiency measures in the homes of owner-occupiers on low incomes but who do not qualify for assistance under the Warm Front scheme.

Eligibility: Owner-occupiers that –

- Do not qualify for Warm Front ;
- Have savings less than £16,000;
- Have a gross income less than £20,000 for a single person, £24,500 for a couple, plus £2,500 for each child up to a maximum of two children.
- At the discretion of the Authorised Officer, grant is available to applicants who qualify for Warm Front works where there is an unreasonable delay in the provision, repair or replacement of a boiler and the applicant would be left without heating over the winter months.

Qualifying Works:

- Loft insulation up to 270 mm;
- Cavity wall insulation;
- Draught-proofing;
- Provision of heating to the Decent Homes standard;
- Repair or replacement of boilers.

Level of Grant: The amount of the grant shall be the reasonable costs of the eligible work as determined by the Council up to a maximum of £10,000.

Conditions:

- Two contractors' estimates must be provided in respect of the relevant works.
- Payment will be made on the completion of the works and the submission of invoices for the works undertaken. Interim payments may be made in certain circumstances in accordance with Council policy.
- The grant will be registered as a local land charge for a period of five years from the certified date.
- The 'certified date' is the date the eligible works have been completed to the satisfaction of the Council.
- Where central heating is provided or boilers are repaired or replaced it is a condition that draught-proofing, loft insulation and cavity wall insulation is installed to the Councils minimum recommended standard.

6.2 Healthy Home Grant

Purpose: A grant to assist applicants to maintain their properties to prevent them from falling into serious disrepair and to enable the occupiers to remain in safe and secure homes.

Eligibility: Subject to the category of Healthy Homes Grant the applicant must be in receipt of a specified income related or disability related benefit.

Qualifying Works:

Healthy Homes (small works): Works of repair to the fabric of the building, repair of basic amenities and minor adaptations for disabled persons. This grant is available only to owner-occupiers.

Healthy Homes (homes security): Provision of security devices as determined in partnership with Suffolk Police.

Healthy Homes (home safety):

- Essential works to the property to enable the existing occupier to remain in the property in safety.
- Works and repairs to equipment.
- Works to enable the owner to be discharged from Hospital and re-occupy their home.

Level of Grant: 100% grant up to a maximum of £3,000 per application and a maximum of £6,000 in any five year period. Minor adaptations for disabled persons maximum grant of £1,000. Minimum cost of eligible works £100.

Conditions:

- Eligible grant works must be completed within 12 months of the grant approval.
- Payment will be made on the completion of the works and the submission of invoices for the works undertaken. Interim payments may be made in certain circumstances in accordance with Council policy.
- The applicant intends to live in the property as their main residence for a period of twelve months following the completion of the works.

Qualifying Benefits: As specified by the Government and as agreed by the Head of Service.

6.3 Decent Home Grant

Purpose: A grant to carry out repairs and improvements to homes in the private sector to ensure they meet the Government's four criteria for a decent home.

Eligibility: The applicant must be an owner-occupier in receipt of a specified income or disability related benefit. Grant assistance will not be approved for any works that are eligible under the Warm Front scheme.

A grant will also be considered for low income households that meet the following criteria:

- Have savings less than £16,000;
- Have a gross income less than £20,000 for a single person, £24,500 for a couple, plus £2,500 for each child up to a maximum of two children.

Qualifying Works: Works of repair and improvement, which in the judgement of the Council is necessary to:

- Remove Category 1 hazards (as assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System);
- Ensure that the property is in a reasonable state of repair;
- Provide reasonably modern facilities and services (as described in Government guidance); and
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Level of Grant: The amount of grant shall be the reasonable cost of the eligible work as determined by the Council up to a maximum of £15,000. In exceptional cases a grant will be considered for a higher amount, up to a maximum of £30,000, however this will only be when a case has been properly made for renovation being the most appropriate course of action (MACA), and following approval by the Head of Service. A valid case for the grant should always be made for works estimated above £15,000.

Conditions:

- Two contractors' estimates must be provided in respect of the relevant works;
- Eligible grant works must be completed within 12 months of the grant approval;
- Payment will be made on the completion of the works and the submission of invoices for the works undertaken. Interim payments may be made in certain circumstances in accordance with Council policy;
- The property must be insulated to the Councils recommended minimum standard;
- For any grant up to the value of £15,000 the Councils will demand the repayment of the grant if the applicant disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises, in respect of which the grant was given, within 10 years of the certified date (the grant period). After the 10 year period there will be no requirement to repay the grant. When the grant is in excess of £15,000 the Councils will demand the repayment of that sum in excess of £15,000, on the sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise of the property.

Qualifying Benefits: As specified by the Government and as agreed by the Head of Service.

6.4 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Disabled Facilities Grant (Top-Up)

Purpose: A grant to assist applicants for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant to fund the cost of essential works in excess of the statutory maximum grant, currently £30,000.

Eligibility: The applicant must qualify for the maximum Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant. Payment of the grant will be subject to the discretion of the Authorised Officer.

Qualifying Works: Works eligible for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant in excess of the statutory maximum level. The grant is not available towards the applicant's Notional Loan contribution as assessed under the statutory means test for Disabled Facilities Grant.

Level of Grant: The maximum level of grant shall be £5,000.

Conditions:

- Where the applicant has a qualifying owner's interest in the premises on which the relevant works were carried out the grant will be registered as a local land charge for a period of ten years from the certified date. The 'certified date' is the date the eligible works have been completed to the satisfaction of the Council;
- The Councils will demand the repayment by the applicant of the grant if the applicant disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date (the 'grant period').

Disabled Facilities Grant (Relocation)

Purpose: A grant to assist an applicant eligible for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant to move to a property that is either adapted to meet their needs or is capable of being adapted, and where their existing home cannot be adapted.

Eligibility: The applicant must qualify for the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.

Qualifying Works: Grant aid will be paid towards the approved cost of moving to a more suitable property.

Level of Grant: The maximum level of grant shall be £10,000.

Conditions:

- The applicant must be a resident of either Council and the property moved to must be within the districts of the two Councils;
- Where applicable, an application for a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant must be made within 12 months of the payment of the Relocation Grant.

6.5 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

Purpose: A grant to adapt the dwelling of a disabled person so that they are able to gain access to and use all the normal facilities of their home.

Eligibility: The grant will be available to all people with disabilities living in either the Forest Heath or St Edmundsbury area, subject to a needs assessment by an Occupational Therapist employed or contracted by Suffolk County Council.

Qualifying Works: All works that are mandatory as described in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended:

Level of Grant: The maximum level of grant is £30,000.

Conditions:

- Where the applicant has a qualifying owner's interest in the premises on which the relevant works were carried out the grant will be registered as a local land charge for a period of ten years from the certified date. The 'certified date' is the date the eligible works have been completed to the satisfaction of the Council;
- The Councils will demand the repayment by the applicant of such part of the grant that exceeds £5,000, subject to a maximum of £10,000;
- The applicant disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date; and
- The matters in section 3(2)(b) of the Disabled Facilities (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008 have been considered and it is considered reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment.

6.6 Empty Home Grant

Purpose: A grant to return empty properties back into use.

Eligibility: The grant is available to owners' of properties that have been vacant for more than six months and are either:

- Let to a vulnerable person(s) under the Councils' Private Sector Leasing Scheme, or a similar scheme managed, or endorsed, by the Council; or
- At the discretion of the Head of Service, where renovation would provide homes to meet the strategic aims of the Council.

Qualifying works: Works of repair and improvement, which in the judgement of the Council is necessary to:

- Remove Category 1 hazards (as assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System);
- ensure that the property is in a reasonable state of repair;
- Has reasonably modern facilities and services (as described in CLG guidance); and
- Provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Level of Grant: The level of grant shall be the reasonable costs of the eligible work as determined by the Council and up to a maximum of £30,000, with additional justification required above £10,000.

Conditions:

- Two contractors' estimates must be provided in respect of the relevant works;
- Eligible grant works must be completed within 12 months of the grant approval;
- Payment will be made on the completion of the works and the submission of invoices for the works undertaken. Interim payments may be made in certain circumstances in accordance with Council policy;
- The property must be insulated to the Councils recommended minimum standard;
- Repayment of the full grant on breach of the condition to lease or rent out the property; on sale (assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the property, or the property becoming vacant without being leased or rented.

7. APPEALS & COMPLAINTS

- 7.1 Any applicant who is dissatisfied with any decision relating to a grant enquiry or application should discuss their concern with the relevant service. If the customer is still dissatisfied their complaint will be investigated under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.
- 7.2 There is no appeal against the outcome of the statutory test of resources ('means test') in respect of applications for Disabled Facilities Grants. Applicants will be advised how their contribution to the grant was calculated. The calculation is based on Government Guidance and legislation, which the Council has no discretion on.

8. SERVICE STANDARDS

The Environmental Health Service is committed to providing an excellent service to grant applicants. The Councils have reviewed their grant systems to try and ensure that applications are processed efficiently and works are carried out as speedily as possible. There has also been a Suffolk Review on DFG, with participation from the Councils and their HIA, with a view to improving average completion times. These are monitored, along with other key performance data, with a view to improving the service wherever possible.

9. DEFINITIONS

Warm Front Grant: the Warm Front Grant provides a package of insulation and heating improvements up to the value of £2,700 (or £4,000 if oil central heating is recommended). It is a Government-funded initiative.

Certified date: the date the eligible, or qualifying works, are completed to the Council's satisfaction.

Completion to the Council's satisfaction: means when the work has been completed to an acceptable standard and in accordance with the submitted and approved plans, quotations, planning approvals, building regulations and any other relevant statutory requirements. It excludes any defects liability period.

Grant period: a period of either 5 years (Thermal Comfort Grant) or 10 years (Disabled Facilities Grant (Top-Up) and mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant) from the certified date, and 10 years for Decent Home Grants up to £15,000. For Empty Home Grants the 'Grant period' is whilst the property is being leased or rented out.

Eligibility: the criteria that determines who the grant will be available to.

Means Test: a statutory test of the applicant's resources to determine the amount of eligible grant aid.

Notional Loan Contribution: the contribution the applicant will have to make to their DFG when a full grant is not available following a means test.

Qualifying works: the works that will be eligible for grant aid.

Owners' interest: a person will be deemed to have an owners interest if that person is on the deeds of the property as an owner, either in full or part, of the property which is subject to the grant application.

Valid application: means an application which includes fully completed application forms, all necessary plans, quotations for the works, Certificate of Title (if appropriate) and copies of any planning and building regulation approvals.

Authorised Officer: an officer authorised by the Council in respect of grant decisions made under this policy.

Owner-occupier: where grant eligibility is in respect of owner-occupiers the applicant must be resident in the property at the time of the application.

APPENDIX 1 - THE HOUSING, HEALTH AND SAFETY RATING SYSTEM (HHSRS)

The HHSRS defines 29 hazards that may affect the health and safety of residents and visitors to any dwelling over a 12 month period. These are:

- Damp & Mould Growth
- Excess Cold
- Excess Heat
- Asbestos (and Manufactured Mineral Fibres)
- Biocides
- Carbon Monoxide & fuel combustion products
- Lead
- Radiation
- Uncombusted fuel gas
- Volatile Organic Compounds
- Crowding and Space
- Entry by Intruders
- Lighting
- Noise
- Domestic Hygiene, Pests & Refuse
- Food Safety
- Personal Hygiene, Sanitation & Drainage
- Water Supply
- Falls associated with baths etc.
- Falling on level surfaces etc.
- Falling on stairs etc.
- Falling between levels
- Electrical hazards
- Fire
- Flames, Hot surfaces etc.
- Collision & Entrapment
- Explosions
- Position and operability of amenities etc.
- Structural collapse & falling elements

All hazards are risk assessed by reviewing the deficiencies, which contribute to the hazard, scoring the likelihood of the deficiency causing an occurrence of the hazard within the next 12 months and then scoring the outcome for each class of harm, (this ranges from life threatening to minor harm requiring medical attention). This will give a numerical score that is used to decide on the hazard band.

Information that is more detailed can be found on the DCLG website www.dclg.gov.uk

APPENDIX 2 - DECENT HOME STANDARD

A Decent Home is one that: -

- ✓ meets the current Statutory minimum standard for housing and
 - ✓ is in a reasonable state of repair and
 - ✓ has reasonably modern kitchen and bathroom facilities and services and
 - ✓ provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort
1. To meet the current minimum standard for housing a dwelling must be free from Category 1 Hazards as scored by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System.
 2. A property is not in reasonable repair where the building components are old and generally have the following defects/renewal needs:
 - roof coverings that need renewal
 - areas of rising or penetrating dampness
 - window renewals
 - substantial areas of brickwork repairs
 - chimney Stack renewals
 - renewal of electrical installations
 - gas fires / boilers
 3. A property does not have reasonable modern facilities if it lacks three or more of the following facilities:
 - kitchen which is 20 years old or less
 - kitchen with adequate space or layout
 - bathroom which is 30 years old or less
 - appropriately located bathroom and WC
 - adequate noise insulation
 - adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats
 4. A property does not have a reasonable degree of efficient heating if it does not have:
 - efficient heating
 - effective insulation

(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2016/2017	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/059	
Report to and dates:	(Informal Joint) Cabinet	24 November 2015
	Council	9 December 2015
Portfolio holder:	Stephen Edwards Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance Tel: 01638 660518 Email: stephen.edwards@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officers:	Paul Corney Head of Anglia Revenues Partnership Tel: 01842 756437 Email: paul.corney@angliarevenues.gov.uk	
	Joanne Howlett Acting Head of Resources and Performance Tel: 01284 757264 Email: joanne.howlett@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	This report also sets out recommendations for Members on the 2016/17 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) and technical changes levels from 1 April 2016.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that Cabinet recommends to Council that no change be made to the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme or Council Tax Technical changes levels for 2016/2017.	
Key Decision: (Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)	Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition? Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As detailed in the body of the report
Alternative option(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking at the scheme in isolation, changing the current LCTR scheme is not required from a financial perspective, as the current schemes are operating effectively, delivering a cost - neutral position. Members could reduce the maximum level of discount under the LCTR scheme to generate additional revenue for the council to assist towards delivery of Council services as a result of the wider financial pressures. Providing a maximum of 90% discount (a reduction of 1.5% discount for working age claimants as the current scheme is 91.5%) would generate an additional £2,600 for Forest Heath (based on 9.6% share). Members could reduce the discount available for empty properties and uninhabitable properties to generate additional revenue for the council to assist towards delivery of Council services. Complete removal of the current discounts/exemptions around class A and C technical changes would generate £22,000 for Forest Heath (based on 9.6% share). These options are addressed in para 2.5 of the report
Implications:	
<p>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As outlined in the body of the report.
<p>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As outlined in the body of the report
<p>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An equality impact assessment was undertaken as part of the development of the 2013/2014 scheme in 2012. As there are no changes to the LCTR scheme the equality impact assessment is unchanged.

Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
Reduction in collection rates Council Tax collection rates could decrease over the year, reducing the scheme revenues	High	ARP closely to monitor non-payment from working age claimants.	Medium
Demand. There is a risk of a higher demand on the LCTR Scheme.	High	ARP to closely monitor caseload. The major precepting authorities will share the financial risks associated with LCTRS. Representatives from Forest Heath and other Suffolk billing authorities and Suffolk County Council are continuing to work together to monitor the county-wide framework.	Medium
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		<p><u>Extraordinary Council (16 January 2013)</u> – Local Council Tax Support 2013/2014 (Report No COU13/610; Appendix A; Appendix B)</p> <p><u>Extraordinary Council (16 January 2013)</u> - Council Tax for Council Tax Base Setting Purposes 2013/2014 and Changes to the Level of Discounts and Exemptions in respect of Second Homes and some Empty Properties (Report No COU13/611; Appendix 1; Appendix 2)</p> <p><u>Council (11 December 2013)</u> - Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2014/2015 (Report No COU13/654)</p> <p><u>Council (10 December 2014)</u> - Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2015/2016 (Report No COU/FH/14/006; Appendix A)</p>	

Documents attached:

Appendix A - New Policy Institute study - Impacts of Council Tax Support Reduction on Arrears, Collection rates and Court Administration costs from 2014.

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

- 1.1 The government replaced Council Tax Benefit with a Localised Council Tax reduction Scheme (LCTRS) from 1st April 2013. This meant that Forest Heath had to decide upon a local means tested scheme to replace Council Tax Benefit.
- 1.2 The Government's aims in making this change were:
- To transfer the system to local control; and
 - To reduce by 10% the amount of support paid to those finding it hard to pay council tax, in order to meet the Government's funding cut.
- 1.3 In creating a local scheme Forest Heath also aimed to:
- Make provision to protect vulnerable people; and
 - Support work incentives for claimants created by the Government's wider welfare reform
- 1.4 At the same time Councils were given the discretion to increase council tax income; to charge up to 100% for some previously exempt properties, to charge up to 100% in respect of furnished empty properties (usually referred to as holiday homes), to charge up to 100% in respect of second homes and to charge up to 50% empty homes premium for properties that had been empty for over 2 years.
- 1.5 In offering these new powers to increase council tax income from empty properties the Government were seeking to influence owners to bring empty homes back in to use.
- 1.6 Following consultation, the Council decided in 2013 to meet the cost of the Government's 10% cut by requiring working age claimants to pay 8.5% more of the council tax charge than previously; and by changing the discounts/exemptions available to owners of second homes and empty properties as detailed in paragraph 1.8. Forest Heath protected War Pensioners (pensioners are protected by the government changes) from the reduction in maximum benefit and also removed Second Adult Rebate for working age claimants from our schemes.
- 1.8 Forest Heath also used their powers to increase council tax income as follows:

Table 1

Discounts	2012/13	2013/14&2014/15	2015/16
Class A, empty, unfurnished and undergoing major repairs to render habitable	100% exemption for 12 months maximum	30% discount for a twelve month period	30% discount for a twelve month period
Class C, empty, substantially unfurnished	100% exemption for 6 months maximum	One month exemption only of 100%	One month exemption only of 100%
Second homes	10% discount	5% discount	No discount
Empty homes premium (property empty for more than 2 years)		Pay 150%	Pay 150%

2. 2st Year Review 2014/15 - Behavioural and Administrative impacts

- 2.1 A number of customers receiving LCTRS had not had to pay any Council Tax in the past. Having to pay 8.5% of the council tax charge represented a significant cultural change and this led to a very large increase in calls to the offices and over the phone in 2013/14. In 2014/15 the number of customers querying bills and the issue of reminders and summons has reduced back to the type of levels we saw in 2012/13.
- 2.3 The council's aim was to achieve a balance in charging an amount of council tax to encourage working age claimants back in to work whilst setting the amount charged at an affordable and recoverable level.
- 2.4 By setting the amount payable on LCTRS at 8.5% of the charge, in most cases, where a customer is not paying we can effect recovery through attachment to benefit within a year and so the charge, with costs, is recoverable. If the amount payable was much higher than it is, it is likely that debt would not be recoverable and there would be a danger of creating a culture of non-payment of council tax.
- 2.5 National research shows that any further increase in the amount payable for working age LCTRS customers could increase administration costs and have a detrimental effect on collection rates, see appendix - Impacts of Council Tax Support Reduction on Arrears, Collection rates and Court Administration costs from 2014 (New Policy Institute study).

3. 2nd Full year review 2014/15 – Financial Impacts

- 3.2 Council Tax accounts where there has been a period of LCTRS awarded show a collection rate of nearly 83.3%, compared with our target of 90% over the 2 year period. As expected, collection has partly relied upon a significant increase in arrangements to deduct Council Tax from DWP Benefits. For comparison purposes the in-year collection (non LCTRS) for 2014/15 was 96.97%.
- 3.3 Forest Heath have seen a reduction in LCTRS caseload of 7% compared to 2013/14 levels. A very small number of LCTRS customers have also received Housing Benefit reductions attributed to the Welfare Reform changes from April 2013, namely the Spare Room Subsidy Restriction and the Benefit Cap, with little demand for Exceptional Hardship payments which can be applied for using a specific application form available for this purpose.
- 3.4 In assessing the anticipated LCTRS expenditure for 2014/15 it was assumed that this would be at the 2013/14 level along with an assumption for bad debt was factored in to the budget. The actual 2014/15 LCTRS expenditure was therefore below budget due to the drop in overall caseload. Going forward we assume neutral changes to the caseload as, whilst unemployment continues to fall, a major employer reducing staff significantly, ceasing to trade or relocating is difficult to predict.
- 3.5 In respect of the technical changes for 2014/15, these were broadly in line with the expected costs/budget for the year and it is assumed this will continue throughout the current year 2015/16.

4. Financial and resource implications

- 4.1 Forest Heath continues to come under significant pressure from central government grant reductions. The Local Council Tax Support Grant received in 2013/2014 was a separately identifiable grant amount received as part of the council's grant settlement and therefore the Council was able to identify the amount that it had been reduced by (10%). However, it has been confirmed by the Department of Communities and Local Government that this amount will not be separately identifiable going forward. Forest Heath is anticipating up to a 24% reduction in our central government grant.
- 4.2 The recommended continuation of the current schemes covered by this report is intended to continue to deliver a 'cost neutral scheme' against the original 10% government grant reduction. This is order to maintain collection rates and avoid additional administrative costs. The impact of the 2016/17 24% reduction in central government grant is therefore required to be addressed elsewhere and will form part of the council's wider Medium Term Financial Strategy review and 2016/17 budget setting process.
- 4.3 As both the LCTR scheme and council tax technical changes are discount and exemption based, any proposed changes have a direct impact on the Council's Tax Base for Council Tax setting purposes. The proposals below at section 5 and 6 will therefore for feed into the Tax Base setting process during the autumn.

5. Proposals for 2016/17 LCTR scheme

- 5.1 Based on the overall findings of the second year review outlined above in sections 2 and 3 the recommendation is to continue the LCTR scheme in its current form, including applying the current 2015/16 level of applicable amounts # within the LCTRS, for 2016/17.

(#An applicable amount is the amount that the government says that a family needs to live on each week. When your applicable amount has been calculated it is then compared with your income to work out the council tax reduction entitlement for which you are eligible).

- 5.2 Due to the fact that the LCTRS is not changing this year there is no requirement to undertake specific consultation.

6. Proposals for 2016/17 technical changes

- 6.1 Based on the overall findings of the second year review outlined above in sections 2 and 3 the recommendation is to continue with the 2015/16 levels:

Table 2

Discounts/exemptions	2016/17
Class A, empty, unfurnished and undergoing major repairs to render habitable (formally exempt Class A)	30% discount for a twelve month period
Empty, substantially unfurnished properties (formally exempt Class C)	One month exemption only of 100%

Discounts/exemptions	2016/17
Second homes	No discount – charge 100%
Empty homes premium (property empty for more than 2 years)	Pay 150%

7. Legal and policy implications

- 7.1 The National Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Pensioners will be determined by Central Government whilst the Local Council Tax Reduction scheme for people of working age is determined by each local authority. The scheme may be altered each year, giving the Council the opportunity to take into consideration any local factors or budget constraints. Subsequent amendments may require further consultation and agreement.
- 7.2 The Council's Constitution gives the Head of Resources and Performance delegated power 'to manage the Revenues and Benefits function' including appointing officers of Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP) to carry out debt recovery and criminal prosecutions and for the administration of the Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS).

The impacts of Council Tax Support reduction on arrears, collection rates and court and administration costs

September 2014

In April 2013, Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was abolished and replaced by Council Tax Support (CTS). In England, 326 local authorities had to devise their own local CTS schemes, but with 10 per cent less funding. This summary looks at the impact of that change on council tax arrears, collection rates and court and administration costs.

Key findings

- In 2013/14, the majority of local authorities in England saw council tax arrears and court and administration costs increase and collection rates fall. These changes were more pronounced in areas that reduced Council Tax Support entitlement.
- The main entitlement change introduced by councils in April 2013 was the requirement for all working-age adults to pay at least some council tax regardless of income. Councils that introduced this 'minimum payment' were more likely to see arrears and court and administration costs increase and collection rates decrease.
- Areas with a higher minimum payment tended to see greater increases in arrears than areas with lower minimum payments. For instance, arrears increased by at least a quarter in 84 per cent of councils with a high minimum payment, compared to 32 per cent of councils with a low minimum payment.
- Increases in arrears and court and administration costs were more common in areas where there were larger cuts to support. For instance, court and admin costs increased in 43 per cent of councils where the cut was less than £1 per week, but increased amongst 65 per cent councils cutting support by £2 per week or more.

Background

In April 2013, Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was replaced with Council Tax Support (CTS). CTB reduced the amount of council tax that low-income households have to pay – often to nothing. The change marked a historic move from a nationally devised system to one of 326 different local schemes in England. Alongside this restructuring, the money provided by central government to fund CTS was cut by 10 per cent. Each local authority is now responsible for devising its own scheme within the reduced budget. Apart from one major requirement – that pensioners receive the same amount as they did in 2011/12 – councils have near full autonomy to create and amend the local schemes.

From April 2013, 71 per cent of councils required all working-age adults to pay at least some council tax regardless of income (a minimum payment), 11 per cent made some changes that did not affect all CTB recipients, while the remaining 18 per cent of councils retained the 2012/13 levels of CTB.

Arrears

- Overall, 235 English councils (72 per cent) saw council tax arrears increase¹ in 2013/14.
- Councils that introduced changes that reduced CTS entitlement were more likely to see arrears increase. 78 per cent of councils that introduced changes in 2013/14 saw arrears increase compared to 47 per cent of councils that made no change.
- An increase in arrears was more common amongst councils that introduced a minimum payment, particularly amongst those with high minimum payments. Those councils with higher minimum payments were more likely to see a larger increase in arrears (see table below).

Size of minimum payment	Number of councils in group	Proportion of councils where arrears increased	Proportion of councils where arrears increased by at least 25 %
No minimum payment	97	52%	14%
8.5% & under	111	73%	32%
8.5-20%	21	86%	57%
20%	53	85%	55%
20+ %	43	95%	84%
All councils	325	72%	39%

- Increases in arrears tended to be greater in councils with higher cuts in support (linked to the size of the minimum payment). For example, arrears increased in 87 per cent of councils where the average cut was at least £2 per week, compared to 73 per cent of councils making smaller cuts.

¹ To allow for annual fluctuation, changes in the level of arrears were only counted as an increase if they were up by more than 10% on the previous year.

Court and administration costs

- Court and administration costs increased² in 35 per cent of councils that did not introduce changes that reduced CTS entitlement. This compared to 62 per cent of councils that changed their CTS scheme and cut support.
- Increases in court and administration costs were more common amongst councils introducing minimum payments. Costs increased in 40 per cent of councils with no minimum payment compared to 64 per cent of councils with a minimum payment. 73 per cent of councils with a minimum payment of more than 20 per cent saw an increase in court and administration costs.
- Court and admin costs increased in 35 per cent of councils where there was no cut in support in 2013/14, compared to 43 per cent in councils where the cut was less than £1 per week. The level is much higher (at 63 per cent) among councils that cut support by £1-£2, but only rises to 65 per cent for councils cutting support by £2 per week or more.

Collection rates

- 94 per cent of councils that replicated the previous CTB system saw no change³ in their council tax collection rates compared to 69 per cent of councils that made changes. Of those councils where the collection rate fell, the drop was between 0.5 and 1 percentage points.
- Changes in collection rates varied by minimum payment level. As the minimum payment level increased, the proportion of councils seeing their collection rate fall increased. The collection rate fell in 15 per cent of councils that introduced minimum payments of 8.5 per cent or less, rising to 63 per cent in councils with minimum payments of at least 20 per cent.

About this project

This study draws on official [council tax statistics](#) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July 2014 and data on [local council tax support schemes](#) gathered and analysed by the New Policy Institute.

The data on local CTS schemes was sourced from individual lower tier and local authority websites. The estimates of the average reduction in support are drawn from a model devised by NPI. This combines: local authority level data on the distribution of properties by council tax band (the valuation list); local authority level administrative data on the number of working-age CTB recipients; and regional level survey data (from the Family Resources Survey) on the distribution of CTB claimants by band and whether single or couple.

This study follows two previous reports, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, on the impacts of Council Tax Support in [2013/14](#) and [2014/15](#).

² Percentage changes in court and administration costs of +/- 10% were counted as no change.

³ To allow for annual changes, increases or decreases in collection rates of .5 percentage points were counted as no change.

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(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2016/2017	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/060	
Report to and dates:	(Informal Joint) Cabinet	24 November 2015
	Council	9 December 2015
Portfolio holder:	Stephen Edwards Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance Tel: 01638 660518 Email: stephen.edwards@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Joanne Howlett Acting Head of Resources and Performance Tel: 01284 757264 Email: joanne.howlett@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	To set out the basis of the formal calculation for the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2016/2017.	
Recommendation:	<p>It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that, subject to the approval of full Council:</p> <p>(1) the tax base for 2016/2017, for the whole of Forest Heath is 17,207.93 equivalent Band 'D' dwellings, as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of Report No: CAB/FH/15/060; and</p> <p>(2) the tax base for 2016/2017 for the different parts of its area, as defined by Parish or special expense area boundaries, are as shown in Appendix 2.</p>	
<p>Key Decision:</p> <p><i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i></p>	<p><i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i></p> <p>Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	

Consultation:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tax base figures provided within Appendix 2 of the report have been communicated to town and parish councils so they can start to factor these into their budget setting process. 	
Alternative option(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	
Implications:			
<p>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</p>		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council Tax Base calculations are used to determine the New Homes Bonus received by the Council, and the level of Council Tax set by the Council. Once approved, the Tax Base for Council Tax collection purposes of 17,207.93 will be included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. 	
<p>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</p>		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</p>		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</p>		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</p>		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
The Council's ability to collect Council Tax income in the current economic climate.	High	Two separate collection rates have been applied to the tax base calculations in respect of collectability. Communication plan in place.	Medium
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		None	

Documents attached:

Appendix 1: CTB1 Return made to Central Government on 16 October 2015.

Appendix 2: 2016/2017 Tax Base for each Parish and Town Council and for Forest Heath District Council.

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

1.1 The Council Tax Base

1.1.1 The Council Tax Base of the Council is the total taxable value at a point in time of all the domestic properties in its area, plus projected changes in the property base and after applying the estimated collection rate.

1.1.2 The total taxable value referred to above is arrived at by each dwelling being placed in an appropriate valuation band determined by the Valuation Office, with a fraction as set by statute being applied in order to convert it to a Band 'D' equivalent figure. These Band 'D' equivalent numbers are then aggregated at a district wide level and are also sub totalled for parishes. This has to be done by the Council responsible for sending the bills out and collecting the council tax ('the billing authority'). In two tier areas, district councils fulfil this function.

1.1.3 The Council Tax Base is used in the calculation of Council Tax. Each authority divides its total Council Tax required to meet its budget requirements by the Tax Base of its area to arrive at a Band 'D' Council Tax.

1.2 Calculation of the tax base for tax setting purposes

1.2.1 The calculation of the tax base for tax setting purposes consists of three stages:

- (a) Calculation of the tax base for New Homes Bonus purposes as at 5 October 2015 (DCLG return – CTB1);
- (b) Analysis of Band 'D' equivalents over each of the Parish areas; and
- (c) Adjustment of the Band 'D' equivalents to reflect changes in the tax base as a result of valuation changes, exemptions, discounts and a collection rate.

1.3 Tax base for New Homes Bonus purposes

1.3.1 The Tax Base return CTB1 is used by central government for data collection and the calculation of New Homes Bonus (see Appendix 1). This return shows the analysis of properties across the eight Bands for the following classifications of liability:

- (a) properties attracting 100% liability;
- (b) properties with an entitlement to a 25% discount;
- (c) properties with an entitlement to a 50% discount;
- (d) properties with an entitlement to a 100% discount;
- (e) exemptions;
- (f) discounts, including local council tax reduction scheme discounts; and
- (g) Disabled Relief Adjustments.

1.3.2 The figures used to make the above calculations are derived from the Valuation List as deposited on 14 September 2015, and as amended to reflect any errors or omissions so far detected in reviewing that list.

1.4 Analysis of Band 'D' Properties

1.4.1 The Band 'D' Properties figure as at 5 October 2015 of 17,551.2 as quoted in the CTB1 form has been updated as at 4 November 2015 to allow for:

- (a) technical changes outlined in Report No: CAB/FH/15/059, contained elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda; and
- (b) potential growth in the property base during 2016/2017 taken from an average of the housing delivery numbers for those sites within the local plan and those that have planning permission, adjusted for an assumed level of discounts/exemptions within that growth of property base.

1.4.2 An allowance is then made for losses on collection, which assumes that overall collection rates will be maintained at approximately 97.5%. In addition to this collection rate change, an adjustment has been made to allow for the collectability of the council tax arising from the Local Council Tax Support scheme, which has been assessed at 90%. **The resulting Tax Base for Council Tax collection purposes has been calculated as 17,207.93** which is an increase of 556.62 on the previous year.

1.4.3 The Table below shows the actual number of dwellings in each tax band based on the current valuations which are discounted to 1 April 1991 and the percentage in each band. There has been no national revaluation since that date.

Band	Tax Band values as at 01/04/1991 (£)	Actual Number of dwellings (Note 1)	Actual Number of dwellings as a percentage	Number of Chargeable dwellings (Note 2)	Relevant Proportion	Relevant Amount (Note 3)
@ (Note 4)				5.2	5/9	2.9
A	Up to 40,000	6,546	22.3%	3,984.2	6/9	2,656.1
B	40,001 to 52,000	9,817	33.4%	7,217.7	7/9	5,613.8
C	52,001 to 68,000	5,914	20.1%	4,214.6	8/9	3,746.3
D	68,001 to 88,000	3,977	13.5%	2,538.6	9/9	2,538.6
E	88,001 to 120,000	1,926	6.6%	1,195.8	11/9	1,461.5
F	120,001 to 160,000	698	2.4%	559.5	13/9	808.1
G	160,001 to 320,000	433	1.5%	382.4	15/9	637.4
H	Over 320,000	53	0.2%	43.3	18/9	86.5
Total		29,364	100.0%	20,141.2		17,551.2
Actual Taxbase after applying technical changes, an allowance for potential growth and collection rate						17,207.93

Note 1: This is the total number of dwellings on the Valuation List before making any adjustments (line 1 of the CTB return at Appendix 1).

Note 2: This is the number of chargeable dwellings after adjusting for discounts, exemptions and local council tax support but before applying the relevant proportion (ratio to Band D) (line 29 of the CTB return at Appendix 1).

Note 3: This is the total number of Band D equivalent dwellings as shown on line 33 of the CTB return at Appendix 1.

Note 4: Disabled reduction results in charging the property at one band lower (1/9th) than its actual band. The "@" figure relates to Band A properties which are eligible for a disabled reduction (1/9th below a band A charge).

1.5 **Precept Payment Arrangements for 2016/2017**

1.5.1 In line with the delegated authority to administer the Council's financial affairs as outlined in the Constitution, the arrangements for the scheduling of the precept payments for 2016/2017, will be determined by the Head of Resources and Performance (Chief Financial Officer).

1.5.2 It is expected that the payments schedule for Parish and Town Councils will take the same form as previous years:

AMOUNT OF PRECEPT	AMOUNT OF PAYMENTS
Under £4,000	Full payment Friday, before 1 May 2016
£4,000 - £10,000	50% payment Friday, before 1 May 2016 50% payment Friday, before 1 August 2016
Over £10,000	50% payment Friday, before 1 May 2016 15% payment Friday, before 1 August 2016 35% payment Friday, before 1 October 2016

CTB(October 2015)

Calculation of Council Tax Base

Please e-mail to : ctb.statistics@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Please enter your details after checking that you have selected the correct local authority name

Ver 1.1

Please select your local authority's name from this list

Check that this is your authority :
 E-code :
 Local authority contact name :
 Local authority contact telephone number :
 Local authority contact e-mail address :

CTB(October 2015) form for Forest Heath

Completed forms should be received by DCLG by Friday 16 October 2015

Dwellings shown on the Valuation List
for the authority on
Monday 14 September 2015

Band A
entitled to
disabled relief
reduction
COLUMN 1

Band A
COLUMN 2Band B
COLUMN 3Band C
COLUMN 4Band D
COLUMN 5Band E
COLUMN 6Band F
COLUMN 7Band G
COLUMN 8Band H
COLUMN 9TOTAL
COLUMN 10

Part 1

1. Total number of dwellings on the Valuation List		6,546	9,817	5,914	3,977	1,926	698	433	53	29,364.0
2. Number of dwellings on valuation list exempt on 5 October 2015 (Class B & D to W exemptions)		505	848	1,082	1,164	642	98	33	3	4,375.0
3. Number of demolished dwellings and dwellings outside area of authority on 5 October 2015 (please see notes)		1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3.0
4. Number of chargeable dwellings on 5 October 2015 (treating demolished dwellings etc as exempt) (lines 1-2-3)		6,040	8,969	4,831	2,812	1,284	600	400	50	24,986.0
5. Number of chargeable dwellings in line 4 subject to disabled reduction on 5 October 2015		8	34	28	38	14	9	4	5	140.0
6. Number of dwellings effectively subject to council tax for this band by virtue of disabled relief (line 5 after reduction)	8	34	28	38	14	9	4	5		140.0
7. Number of chargeable dwellings adjusted in accordance with lines 5 and 6 (lines 4-5+6 or in the case of column 1, line 6)	8	6,066	8,963	4,841	2,788	1,279	595	401	45	24,986.0
8. Number of dwellings in line 7 entitled to a single adult household 25% discount on 5 October 2015	2	3,053	3,096	1,196	598	222	111	57	3	8,338.0
9. Number of dwellings in line 7 entitled to a 25% discount on 5 October 2015 due to all but one resident being disregarded for council tax purposes	0	42	67	47	27	7	3	2	0	195.0
10. Number of dwellings in line 7 entitled to a 50% discount on 5 October 2015 due to all residents being disregarded for council tax purposes	0	2	4	3	0	6	0	6	2	23.0
11. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as second homes on 5 October 2015 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		61	42	35	17	20	9	9	6	199.0
12. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty and receiving a zero% discount on 5 October 2015 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		106	163	93	60	34	13	6	2	477.0
13. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty and receiving a discount on 5 October 2015 and not shown in line 12 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		22	27	20	7	4	1	0	0	81.0
14. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty and being charged the Empty Homes Premium on 5 October 2015 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		41	27	13	6	7	4	2	0	100.0
15. Total number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty on 5 October 2015 (lines 12, 13 & 14).		169	217	126	73	45	18	8	2	658.0
16. Number of dwellings that are classed as empty on 5 October 2015 and have been for more than 6 months. NB These properties should have already been included in line 15 above.		97	88	48	31	23	9	5	2	303.0
16a. The number of dwellings included in line 16 above which are empty on 5 October 2015 because of the flooding that occurred between 1 December 2013 and 31 March 2014 and are only empty because of the flooding.		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
17. Number of dwellings that are classed as empty on 5 October 2015 and have been for more than 6 months and fall to be treated under empty homes discount class D (formerly Class A exemptions). NB These properties should have already been included in line 15 above. Do NOT include any dwellings included in line 16A above.		0	4	2	2	1	1	0	0	10.0
18 Line 16 - line 16a - line 17. This is the equivalent of line 18 on the CTB(October 2014) and will be used in the calculation of the New Homes Bonus.		97	84	46	29	22	8	5	2	293.0
19. Number of dwellings in line 7 where there is liability to pay 100% council tax before Family Annexe discount	6	2,904	5,742	3,562	2,150	1,033	476	334	40	16,247.0
20. Number of dwellings in line 7 that are assumed to be subject to a discount or a premium before Family Annexe discount	2	3,162	3,221	1,279	638	246	119	67	5	8,739.0

CTB(October 2015)

Calculation of Council Tax BasePlease e-mail to : ctb.statistics@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Please enter your details after checking that you have selected the correct local authority name

Ver 1.1

21. Reduction in taxbase as a result of the Family Annexe discount (b/fwd from Family Annexe tab)	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
22. Number of dwellings equivalents after applying discounts and premiums to calculate taxbase	7.5	5,291.5	8,158.9	4,518.1	2,628.5	1,219.0	567.5	384.3	43.3	22,818.3
23. Ratio to band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
24. Total number of band D equivalents (to 1 decimal place) (line 22 x line 23)	4.2	3,527.6	6,345.8	4,016.0	2,628.5	1,489.8	819.7	640.4	86.5	19,558.5
25. Number of band D equivalents of contributions in lieu (in respect of Class O exempt dwellings) in 2015-16 (to 1 decimal place)										
26. Tax base (to 1 decimal place) (line 24 col 10 + line 25)										
	19,558.5									

Part 2

27. Number of dwellings equivalents after applying discounts and premiums to calculate tax base (Line 22)	7.50	5,291.45	8,158.85	4,518.05	2,628.45	1,218.95	567.50	384.25	43.25	22,818.3
28. Reduction in taxbase as a result of local council tax support (b/fwd from CT Support tab)	2.33	1,307.27	941.11	303.50	89.85	23.18	8.02	1.84	0.00	2,677.1
29. Number of dwellings equivalents after applying discounts, premiums and local tax support to calculate taxbase	5.2	3,984.2	7,217.7	4,214.6	2,538.6	1,195.8	559.5	382.4	43.3	20,141.2
30. Ratio to band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
31. Total number of band D equivalents after allowance for council tax support (to 1 decimal place) (line 29 x line 30)	2.9	2,656.1	5,613.8	3,746.3	2,538.6	1,461.5	808.1	637.4	86.5	17,551.2
32. Number of band D equivalents of contributions in lieu (in respect of Class O exempt dwellings) in 2015-16 (to 1 decimal place)(line 25)	0.0									
33. Tax base after allowance for council tax support (to 1 decimal place) (line 31 col 10 + line 32)	17,551.2									

Certificate of Chief Financial Officer

I certify that the information provided on this form is based on the dwellings shown in the Valuation List for my authority on 14 September 2015 and that it accurately reflects information available to me about exemptions, demolished dwellings, disabled relief, discounts and premiums applicable on 5 October 2015 and, where appropriate, has been completed in a manner consistent with the form for 2014.

Chief Financial Officer :

Date :

Ver 1.1

Local authority contact name : Sharon Coleman
 Local authority contact telephone number : 01842 756546
 Local authority contact e-mail address : 01842 756546

Parish Estimates 2016/2017

Parish/Town	Taxbase 2016/2017 (Number of Band D Dwellings)
Barton Mills	338.86
Beck Row	873.69
Brandon (and Wangford)	2,417.20
Cavenham	49.23
Dalham	130.28
Elveden	98.56
Eriswell	160.74
Exning	702.72
Freckenham	132.01
Gazeley	246.82
Herringswell	103.34
Higham	71.11
Icklingham	140.17
Kentford	169.94
Lakenheath	1,274.07
Mildenhall	2,660.80
Moulton	520.59
Newmarket	5,358.09
Red Lodge	1,320.72
Santon Downham	86.38
Tuddenham	153.04
Worlington	199.57
Total	17,207.93

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