

Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Guildhall
Frankwell Quay
Shrewsbury
SY3 8HQ

Date: 15th September 2026

Committee:
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 23 September 2026
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

You are requested to attend the above meeting. The Agenda is attached

There will be some access to the meeting room for members of the press and public, but this will be limited. If you wish to attend the meeting please email democracy@shropshire.gov.uk to check that a seat will be available for you.

Please click [here](#) to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda*

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel [Here](#)

Richard Phillips
Service Director – Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Members of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Andy Davis (Chairman)	Vicky Moore
Rosemary Dartnall (Vice Chairman)	Vivienne Parry
Jeremy Blandford	Carl Rowley
Harry Hancock-Davies	Jon Tandy
Duncan Kerr	Teri Trickett
Nigel Lumby	

Your Committee Officer is:

Shelley Davies Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257718
Email: shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk

When attending this meeting, Members are reminded of the three principles of the Jo Cox Foundation and Compassion in Politics Civility Pledge:

1. *Use a civil and constructive tone in debate*
2. *Act with integrity, honesty and compassion*
3. *Behave respectfully towards others, including those I disagree with*

*(Please note that while we strive to live stream meetings, technical issues may occasionally occur. In the event of a technical disruption, the meeting will be paused to try to resolve the issue. Should it not be possible to resume the live stream, the meeting will proceed as scheduled, and a backup recording will be made available after the meeting. Any disruption to the live stream does not affect the legality of the meeting).

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosable Interests

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 2)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2026. [Minutes attached]

Contact: Shelley Davies – Committee Officer.

4 Public Questions

To receive any questions from members of the public of which notice has been given. The deadline for this meeting is 12.00 pm, Thursday 17th September 2026.

5 Member Questions

To receive any question of which Members of the Council have given notice. The deadline for this meeting is 12.00 pm, Thursday 17th September 2026.

6 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (Pages 3 - 16)

To receive the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Policy for review. [Report attached]

Contact: Paula Mawson, Service Director –Communities & Customer & Mannie Ketley, Interim Director of Finance Improvement.

7 Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme (Pages 17 - 68)

To receive a paper on the proposed review of the Shropshire Council Allocations

Policy and Scheme. [Report attached]

Contact: Paula Mawson – Service Director for Communities and Customer.

8 Statutory Duties: Homelessness - A National Plan for Homelessness
(Pages 69 - 84)

To receive an overview of the council's statutory duty regarding homelessness, temporary accommodation and rough sleeping, including recent national developments and the implications for Shropshire Council and progress made locally in responding to the Government's reform agenda. [Report attached]

Contact: Paula Mawson – Service Director for Communities and Customer.

9 Work Programme (Pages 85 - 86)

To receive a verbal update on the work programme of the Committee. [Work Programme attached]

Contact: Claire Braddock – Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

10 Exclusion of the Public and Press

To resolve in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4[3] of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item.

11 Exempt Minutes (Pages 87 - 90)

To confirm the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2026. [Minutes attached]

Contact: Shelley Davies – Committee Officer.

12 Date of next meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at 2.00 p.m. on Thursday 26th November 2026.



Committee and Date

Housing Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

23rd September 2026

HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2026

In the Whitchurch Room, the Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

10.00 - 11.32 am

Responsible Officer: Shelley Davies

Email: shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257718

Present

Councillor Andy Davis (Chairman)

Councillors Rosemary Dartnall (Vice Chairman), Christopher Lemon, Nigel Lumby, Jon Tandy, Adam Fejfer (substitute for Teri Trickett), Mark Owen (substitute for Vicky Moore) and Wendy Owen (substitute for Jeremy Blandford)

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Duncan Kerr

Councillor James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Councillor Roger Evans - Portfolio Holder for Finance

Councillor David Walker – Portfolio Holder for Planning

Councillor Heather Kidd – Leader

Officers in Attendance:

Claire Braddock – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Tom Dodds - Strategy and Scrutiny Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Kassandra Polyzoides - Service Director – Place Shaping (remotely)

Duncan Whitfield – Section 151 Officer

Steve Law - Head of Property & Development

Graham White – Solicitor

16 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Jeremy Blandford (Substitute: Wendy Owen), Vicky Moore (Substitute: Mark Owen) and Terri Trickett (Substitute: Adam Fejfer).

17 Disclosable Interests

None received.

18 Minutes

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

19 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

20 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

21 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and paragraph 10.4(3) of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items.

22 Call In of the Oswestry SUE Corner Site - Asset Decision

Following a detailed discussion the Committee

RESOLVED:

That no further action be taken in relation to the call in of the Oswestry SUE Corner Site - Asset Decision.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:



Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time

23rd September 2026
10am

Public

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Cabinet Member:	Councillor James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing
Lead Director:	Paula Mawson, Service Director –Communities & Customer Mannie Ketley, Interim Director of Finance Improvement
Service Area:	Communities & Customer (Housing Services)
Report Author	Laura Fisher, Head of Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living
Officer contact details	01743 258981 laura.fisher@shropshire.gov.uk
Electoral Divisions Affected	All electoral divisions
Key Decision?	Non Key
Cabinet Forward Plan	
Report considered by	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report presents the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Policy for review. The HRA is the Council's ring-fenced account for council housing. Money held in the HRA must be used for proper council housing purposes, including managing, maintaining and investing in council homes.
- 1.2. The draft Policy has been developed following an independent review of the HRA in June 2026. The review found that the HRA is currently in a sound position, but recommended clearer governance around borrowing, reserves, viability assessments, grant funding and investment decisions.

- 1.3. The draft Policy brings these recommendations together in one document. It includes the HRA 'Golden Rules' and sets out how HRA resources should be managed so that decisions are transparent, affordable and sustainable over the long term.
- 1.4. The report asks Members to review the draft HRA Policy in line with recommendations agreed at cabinet on 9th September 2026 and in advance of full Council approval.

2. Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 Consider and discuss the draft HRA Policy at Appendix A, including the proposed Golden Rules.
- 2.2 Consider any recommendations to Cabinet for the HRA policy in advance of full Council approval.
- 2.2 Note that a summary HRA plan was brought to Cabinet on 9th September 2026 and that a full refresh of HRA business plan will be brought to full Council for sign off in line with the newly developed HRA policy.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Housing Revenue Account is a separate, ring-fenced account within the Council. It records income and expenditure relating to the Council's housing landlord functions. This includes rent income, service charges, repairs, maintenance, compliance work, investment in existing homes and, where affordable, the delivery or acquisition of additional council housing. The effective management of the HRA is central to meeting the needs of tenants and ensuring that council housing provides stable, safe and decent homes, both now and in the future.
- 3.2 The HRA is separate from the Council's General Fund. This means HRA money cannot simply be used to support wider Council services, and General Fund pressures do not remove the Council's duty to manage the HRA properly. The Council remains responsible for HRA finances, even though day-to-day housing management is delivered through STaR Housing.
- 3.3 A long-term HRA Business Plan is needed to show how the Council will keep the HRA financially sustainable while meeting its responsibilities as a social landlord. It helps Members understand the impact of decisions on rents, borrowing, reserves, stock investment, compliance and future housing delivery.
- 3.4 An independent review undertaken in June 2026 provided assurance that the HRA is currently in a sound position. However, it also identified the need for stronger and clearer arrangements for financial governance, the use of reserves, borrowing assumptions, viability testing and oversight of investment decisions.
- 3.5 The review also considered the HRA 'Golden Rules'. These are the principles used to guide decisions on borrowing, reserves, viability and sustainability. The draft HRA Policy now includes these principles so that future decisions are made against a clear and consistent framework.

- 3.6 The draft Policy is intended to make clear how HRA resources should be used, how decisions should be governed, and how the Council will protect the long-term sustainability of the account. It supports more transparent decision making and provides a basis for future updates to the Business Plan.
- 3.7 The HRA Business Plan will be aligned with the Council's Housing Strategy, Local Plan and wider housing priorities as they develop. Regular review will ensure the HRA remains focused on current housing need, tenant safety, regulatory compliance and long-term affordability.

4. Summary of Main Proposals

- 4.1 The main proposal is to introduce a clear HRA Policy. The Policy explains how the HRA should be managed as a ring-fenced landlord account and how decisions about income, expenditure, reserves, borrowing, grant funding and investment should be made.
- 4.2 The Policy responds directly to the independent review by strengthening governance and incorporating the HRA Golden Rules. These are intended to guide future decisions and ensure that the HRA remains affordable, prudent and sustainable.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1. The Council could decide not to approve a HRA Policy. This is not recommended. A clear policy is needed to protect the HRA ring-fence, support proper financial management and give Members assurance that decisions are affordable and sustainable.
- 5.2. The Council could delay approval until a later date. This is not recommended because the independent review has already identified areas where governance should be strengthened, and delay would slow down the introduction of clearer controls.
- 5.3 The preferred option is to agree the draft HRA Policy. This provides the clearest basis for managing the HRA, responding to the independent review and supporting transparent long-term decision making.

6. Key risks and Opportunities

- 6.1 The main risks relate to financial sustainability, compliance with the HRA ring-fence, the affordability of investment plans, accurate rent and service charge setting, and the Council's ability to meet landlord and regulatory requirements.
- 6.2 These risks are mitigated through the draft HRA Policy, the Golden Rules, regular financial monitoring, scenario testing, compliance oversight, clear governance and future reports to Members for significant decisions.
- 6.3 There are also opportunities. A clearer HRA framework will support better planning, stronger assurance, more transparent use of resources and improved alignment between investment decisions, tenant safety, regulatory compliance and local housing need.

6.4 Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
The HRA Policy is not approved, leaving the Council without a clear framework for managing the HRA ring-fence, reserves, borrowing, viability and investment decisions.	Progress the draft Policy through scrutiny and Council approval, ensuring it reflects the independent review recommendations and the proposed HRA Golden Rules.
The Policy is approved but not applied consistently, leading to unclear or inconsistent decision making.	Embed the Policy in HRA governance, reporting templates, business case development and officer/member decision processes.
The HRA ring-fence is not properly understood, creating a risk that HRA resources are used, or perceived to be used, for non-HRA purposes.	Use the Policy to clearly set out permitted HRA purposes and require finance and legal advice for decisions with potential ring-fence implications.
Future decisions on reserves, borrowing, grant funding or investment are made without sufficient viability testing or long-term affordability assessment.	Apply the Policy and Golden Rules to all relevant decisions, supported by business cases, scenario testing, finance advice and Member approval where required.
The Policy becomes out of date as legislation, regulation, rent policy or local housing priorities change.	Review the Policy regularly and update it when there are material changes to law, regulation, government policy, financial assumptions or Council priorities.

7. Council Priorities

- 7.1. The draft HRA Policy supports the Council's priorities by providing a clear framework for investment in safe, decent, affordable and sustainable council homes. The policy also supports financial sustainability by strengthening governance over HRA resources.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The HRA is a ring-fenced account for council housing. Its income and expenditure must be managed separately from the General Fund and used for proper HRA purposes.
- 8.2. The independent review found that the HRA is currently in a sound position, but recommended clearer governance for reserves, borrowing, viability assessment, grant funding and investment decisions. These recommendations have informed the draft HRA Policy.

9. Legal and HR implications

- 9.1. The Council must ensure that all HRA decisions comply with the statutory HRA ring-fence and relevant finance, housing and public law requirements. The draft HRA Policy supports this by providing clearer principles for the use of HRA resources.

- 9.2. There are no immediate direct HR implications arising from this report. Delivery will require appropriate officer capacity and clear working arrangements between the Council, STaR Housing and relevant partners.

10. Electoral Division Implications

- 10.1. The HRA applies to council housing across Shropshire and therefore has implications for all electoral divisions. Existing stock is mainly in the North West and South East of the county, but future investment may support housing need in other parts of the county where appropriate and affordable.

11. Health, Social (including “Child Friendly Shropshire”) and Economic Implications

- 11.1. The proposals support positive health, social and economic outcomes by helping the Council invest in safe, affordable and energy efficient homes. This can reduce risks linked to poor housing, fuel poverty, homelessness and unsuitable accommodation.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1. The draft HRA Policy is expected to have a broadly positive equality impact by supporting investment in safe, affordable and accessible council housing. They will help the Council respond to the needs of tenants and households requiring affordable, specialist or supported housing.
- 12.3. Equality impacts will be considered in more detail as specific schemes, policy changes or service proposals are developed.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1. Carbon offsetting or mitigation: The draft HRA Policy does not itself approve specific works, schemes or investment decisions and therefore has no direct carbon offsetting or mitigation implications to consider at this stage.
- 13.2. Climate change adaptation: The draft HRA Policy provides a governance framework for HRA decision making only. It does not commit the Council to any specific physical works and therefore has no direct climate change adaptation implications to consider at this stage.
- 13.3. Energy and fuel consumption: There are no direct energy or fuel consumption implications arising from approval of the draft HRA Policy. Any future investment proposals affecting energy use will be considered separately through the appropriate business case and approvals process.
- 13.4. Renewable energy generation: The draft HRA Policy does not approve or commit the Council to renewable energy generation projects. There are therefore no direct renewable energy implications to consider at this stage.

14. Background Papers

Cabinet paper – 09.09.2026 –

- [15. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Agenda Supplement for Cabinet, 09/09/2026 10:30](#)
- [Appendix A - Housing Revenue Account Policy Statement](#)
- [Appendix B - Housing Revenue Account Business Plan](#)

15. Appendices

Appendix A – Draft HRA Policy

Appendix A: HRA Draft Policy

DRAFT Housing Revenue Account Policy

Document status	DRAFT
Owner	Service Director / Section 151 Officer
Approval route	Cabinet / Council as required by constitution
Review cycle	Formally review every three years, or sooner if legislation, regulation or financial circumstances change

Policy Aims: The Council's Housing Revenue Account will be managed as a sustainable, transparent and tenant-focused investment account that protects and enhances council housing assets, delivers safe and compliant homes, supports current and future tenants, and maintains long-term financial resilience.

1. Purpose

This Policy Statement sets out the Council's approach to the management, governance and financial stewardship of its Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The HRA is a statutory, ring-fenced account that exists to support the provision, management, maintenance and improvement of council housing and associated landlord services. The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for decision-making, investment, financial sustainability, and regulatory compliance.

This policy should be read alongside the Council's Housing Strategy (currently being refreshed), HRA Business Plan, Treasury Management Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, and all relevant housing, financial and regulatory requirements.

The HRA Golden Rules are set out specifically at Appendix A and should be used to guide decisions on affordability, borrowing, reserves and long-term financial sustainability.

2. Policy Principles

2.1 Tenants First

The primary purpose of the HRA is to support the delivery of safe, decent, affordable and well-managed homes for tenants. Decisions affecting the HRA will prioritise:

- Tenant safety.
- Regulatory compliance.
- Quality housing services.
- Protection and enhancement of housing assets.
- Long-term sustainability.

2.2 Statutory Ring-Fence

The Council will ensure full compliance with the statutory ring-fence requirements governing the HRA in regard to its landlord function. HRA income and expenditure will be applied solely for legitimate housing purposes and will not be used to subsidise General Fund services.

Any cross re-charging between HRA, general fund and the ALMO company account will maintain the statutory ring fence requirements. Capital recharges will be in line with the Council's financial rules.

2.3 Long-Term Sustainability

The Council will maintain and regularly review a robust long-term HRA Business Plan to ensure:

- Financial viability.
- Appropriate reserves.
- Sustainable borrowing.
- Delivery of capital investment.
- Future compliance with housing regulation and legislation.

The Council will consider the impact of all major decisions across a minimum thirty-year planning horizon.

3. Regulatory Compliance

The Council will ensure that the HRA supports regulatory compliance with:

- The Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.
- The Rent Standard.
- The Decent Homes Standard.
- Awaabs Law.
- Building Safety requirements.
- Health and safety legislation.
- Asset management and stock condition requirements.
- Housing Act 1996, Part VI (allocations)
- Housing Act 1996, Part VII (homelessness)
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (prevention)
- And any other future regulatory obligations.

Investment decisions will prioritise maintaining compliance and reducing risk to tenants.

4. Housing Assets and Stock Investment

The Council recognises that its housing stock is a valuable public asset.

The Council will:

- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of stock condition.
- Operate a planned maintenance and replacement programme.
- Invest in improving existing homes as per the Planned Improvement Programme, up to Decent Homes Standard.
- Prioritise health and safety works.

- Support energy efficiency and decarbonisation in line with value for money business cases.
- Ensure investment decisions are evidence-based and aligned to housing need.
- Major Repairs reserves to fund the program in the first instance. Borrowing to be used as an additional option in line with value for money business cases. Borrowing to be repaid over a 20 year period unless otherwise directed by S.151 officer.

All capital investment programmes will be supported by business cases demonstrating affordability and value for money.

5. Rent Setting

The Council will set rents in accordance with Government policy and the Rent Standard.

Rent decisions will:

- Support the long-term sustainability of the HRA.
- Be supported by appropriate consultation and communication.
- Be approved through the Council's governance arrangements.

Service charges will be transparent, evidence-based and reflect the services provided.

6. HRA Reserves

The Council recognises the importance of maintaining adequate reserves to manage risk and support future investment.

The Council will ensure:

- Use of reserves supports agreed housing priorities and represents value for money.
- The HRA reserves should be maintained at a target level of £5 million, these reserves should be held in a revenue reserve to allow for flexible use under the revenue rules.
- Under no circumstances should the reserve balance fall below £3 million without an approved recovery plan and specific approval through the Council's governance arrangements.
- Monitor and report to Cabinet, the forecast position for the HRA on a quarterly basis including reserve levels with any adverse variances addressed through appropriate improvement plans agreed by S.151 officer.
- Use reserves strategically and sustainably.
- Avoid creating structural reliance on reserves for recurring expenditure.
- Revenue reserves to only be used as a last resort due to the flexible nature of the reserve.
- Use of reserves will be on a case-by-case basis with business cases to justify the use. Working with the Council's Treasury function under the direction of the S.151 officer, it will be determined whether the use of reserves over borrowing is the best approach whilst looking at the interest on borrowing and investing.

7. Borrowing and Debt Management

The Council may utilise borrowing to support housing investment where this is affordable and sustainable. All borrowing will be in line with the Council's Treasury Management Policy.

Decisions will:

- Be supported by robust business cases that look at the long term (30 year) and short term (5 years) effect of the project.
- Maintain a notional HRA borrowing cap of **£174 million**, subject to compliance with the Prudential Code and consideration of scheme-specific business cases, including affordability assessments based on future rental and service charge income.
- Demonstrate affordability throughout the business planning period.
- Comply with prudential borrowing requirements.
- Consider impacts on tenants and future generations.
- Decisions regarding refinancing or restructuring of HRA debt are delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer.

Borrowing will normally be prioritised for:

- New council housing where the repayment will be interest only and an annual contribution will be made to the Major Repairs Allowance in lieu of a principal repayment. Borrowing for new builds to be structured over a 50 year term.
- Regeneration programmes.
- Major asset investment where repayment will be both principal and interest over a 20 year term.
- Strategic acquisition opportunities.

Debt management arrangements will be reviewed regularly as part of the HRA Business Plan.

8. Development and Acquisitions

The Council supports the growth of affordable, social and specialist housing where financially sustainable.

All development and acquisition proposals must demonstrate:

- Value for money.
- Strategic fit with housing need.
- Affordability.
- Compliance with approved investment criteria.
- Appropriate risk management.
- Right To Buy receipts and grant funding to be maximised with borrowing kept to a minimum where possible. Right to Buy receipts will be utilised in full within statutory timescales to avoid repayment or clawback.
- The HRA Capital Programme shall be maintained over a minimum 10-year planning horizon

The Council will maintain clear separation between commissioning, valuation, development and approval functions.

9. Governance and Accountability

The Council retains ultimate responsibility for the HRA regardless of any management agreements in place.

Cabinet, Council and the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive regular performance monitoring and outcomes reports to ensure appropriate review of:

- HRA Business Planning.
- HRA Capital programmes.
- HRA borrowing strategies in line with treasury management.
- Rent setting.
- HRA asset management.
- Major HRA investment decisions.

The Section 151 Officer and Service Director responsible for housing will provide professional assurance regarding financial sustainability, regulatory compliance and housing need.

10. Performance and Assurance

Cabinet and Council will regularly monitor the HRA's:

- Financial performance.
- Delivery of the HRA Business Plan.
- Housing management performance.
- Tenant satisfaction.
- Compliance indicators.
- Stock condition and asset health.
- Regulatory readiness.

The Council will monitor performance of the HRA and STAR Housing as its ALMO via Contract monitoring, assurance arrangements and attendance at relevant committee and board meetings.

11. Policy Framework Summary

Area	Core commitment	Assurance route
Ring-fence	HRA income and expenditure used only for legitimate housing purposes.	Finance monitoring and annual accounts
Business plan	Maintain a sustainable long-term HRA Business Plan.	Annual review and member reporting
Assets	Use stock condition and compliance data to inform investment.	Asset management and capital programme reporting
Rents and charges	Set rents and service charges lawfully and transparently.	Annual rent setting report and tenant communications
Borrowing	Borrow only where affordable, prudent and aligned to housing strategy.	Business cases, treasury advice and Section 151 assurance
Governance	Maintain clear ownership, accountability and decision-making.	Cabinet, Council and scrutiny arrangements

Appendix A: The HRA Golden Rules

The Golden Rules provide clear financial limits and decision-making principles for the HRA designed to ensure:

- Long-term financial sustainability.
- Adequate investment in housing stock.
- Protection of tenant services.
- Responsible management of borrowing.
- Delivery of housing growth and regeneration objectives.

All major financial decisions affecting the HRA shall be assessed against these Golden Rules.

1. Maintain a minimum reserve balance

The HRA shall maintain a minimum reserve balance of £5M with the balance never going below £3M. If the balance has to go below £5M then an action plan for repayment will need to be authorised through the Council.

This is to ensure the HRA has sufficient resources to:

- absorb financial shocks;
- respond to emergencies;
- manage inflationary pressures;
- maintain liquidity.

2. Maintain a suitable Loan-to Value Ratio

The Housing Revenue Account shall maintain:

Maximum LTV = 70%

Calculated as:

$\text{HRA Borrowing} \div \text{HRA Housing Asset Value} \times 100.$ ⁴

To:

- protect housing assets;
- limit financial risk;
- maintain future borrowing capacity.

3. Operate within the approved debt cap

Total HRA borrowing shall not exceed the approved debt cap.

The current working business-plan assumption is a debt cap of approximately £174 million.

To ensure:

- affordability;
- treasury management compliance;
- prudent borrowing levels.

4. Interest Cover Ratio

The HRA will operate with a minimum 1.24 cover for interest.

This will ensure that

- The debt of the HRA can be managed
- Limit financial risks

The interest coverage ratio measures how easily a company can pay the interest on its debts using its operating profit. It is calculated by dividing a company's earnings before interest and taxes by its total interest expense. A higher number means the business is financially safe.

5. Debt Repayment

The HRA will:

- Repay interest only on the current debt, stock acquisition and new builds, a depreciation contribution from rent will be allocated for the major repairs program annually.
- Repay interest and principal on Temporary Accommodation provision and if there is a need to borrow for the investment in the current stock.

6. Right to Buy Receipts

The Right to Buy Receipts received will be utilised within the given time frame to ensure that none are repaid.

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Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time

23rd September 2026
10am

Public

Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme

Cabinet Member:	Councillor James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing
Lead Director:	Paula Mawson – Service Director for Communities and Customer
Service Area:	Communities and Customer (Housing Services)
Report Author	Laura Fisher – Head of Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living
Officer contact details	01743 258981 – laura.fisher@shropshire.gov.uk
Electoral Divisions Affected	All
Key Decision?	Non Key
Cabinet Forward Plan	Not Applicable
Report considered by	Not Applicable

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Shropshire's Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an early opportunity to understand the proposed review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme, including the Council's statutory duties, current housing register and homelessness demand, proposed policy changes and operational improvements. This report enables Scrutiny to contribute its thinking and make any recommendations to Cabinet ahead of a future report seeking approval to undertake public consultation on the revised policy.

2. Recommendations

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to

- 2.1 Note the Council's statutory duty to operate a lawful housing allocation scheme under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, including the requirement to give reasonable preference to specified categories of applicants and to allocate social housing in accordance with the published scheme.
- 2.2 Support a full review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme to ensure it remains lawful, transparent, fair, consistently applied and aligned to current housing need, homelessness pressures, affordable housing supply and the Council's wider Housing Strategy review.
- 2.3 Consider and provide comments and recommendations to Cabinet on a range of potential policy changes ahead of public consultation.
- 2.4 Agree that the outcomes and feedback of the public consultation and the draft refreshed policy are received by Scrutiny for pre-decision comments and recommendations to Cabinet, ahead of the policy being presented to Council for approval.

3. Background

- 3.1 Shropshire HomePoint is Shropshire Council's housing register and choice-based lettings service for social and affordable housing. The system provides all registered providers who operate in Shropshire the ability to advertise and allocate their available social housing properties. Eligible applicants are assessed in accordance with the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme and placed into priority bands based on their housing need and circumstances. Available properties are advertised and applicants can express interest in homes that meet their assessed housing requirements.
- 3.2 The Council has a statutory duty under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 to have and operate a lawful allocation scheme. The scheme must set out who can apply, how applications are assessed, how priority is determined, and the procedures followed when social housing is allocated. The Council must also give reasonable preference to specified categories of applicants, including people who are homeless, people owed certain homelessness duties, those living in overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing, people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, and people who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship.
- 3.3 Although the Council does not have to provide social housing to everyone who joins the register, it must ensure that decisions are made lawfully, transparently and consistently in accordance with the published allocation scheme. This includes clear governance over banding decisions, nominations, direct lets, bypassing applicants, exceptions and review rights.

- 3.4 The HomePoint register currently has 8 bands and includes a significant number of households with differing levels of assessed housing need. As of 1 August 2026, there were 4,944 households on the register, but during 2025/26 there were only 855 social housing properties let across the county demonstrating a lack of supply for all registered providers operating in Shropshire.
- 3.5 The review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme provides an opportunity to ensure that the scheme aligns with current council priorities, is legally robust and in line with current pressures. This includes the relationship between allocations and homelessness duties, the prioritisation of local housing need, the affordability of market housing in Shropshire, access for vulnerable groups, the use of direct nominations and direct lets, and the operational processes required to support consistent decision-making.

4. Summary of Main Proposals

- 4.1 Review the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme
The main proposal is to undertake a full review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme to ensure it remains lawful, transparent, fair, consistently applied and aligned to current housing need across Shropshire. There are some changes that are necessary due to changes in regulation, however some changes are proposals that need discussion in line with the significant demand across the county.
- 4.2 Align the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme with statutory duties and homelessness pressures
The review must ensure the policy continues to meet the Council's duties under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 and gives reasonable preference to the required categories of applicants. It should also ensure that the allocations framework aligns effectively with Part 7 homelessness duties so that homelessness decisions, housing register priority and discharge of homelessness duties are clearly connected and consistently applied.
- 4.3 Consider a review of local connection arrangements
The review could consider whether the housing register should remain open to applicants with no local connection who are currently placed in Band 7, or whether Shropshire should move towards a closed register where applicants must evidence a local connection before joining, subject to statutory exemptions. Any change would need to protect groups such as people fleeing domestic abuse, care leavers, Armed Forces households and applicants owed relevant homelessness duties.
- 4.4 Consider a rural allocation criterion to support local people accessing local homes
The review could consider whether a clearer rural allocation criterion is needed to support the principle that local people should have fair access to homes in their local communities, particularly in smaller settlements where affordable housing supply is limited and housing need may be closely linked to family, employment, caring responsibilities, schooling, support networks or long-standing community connection. Any rural criterion would need to be carefully framed so that it remains lawful, transparent, evidence-based and consistent with reasonable preference requirements, while also supporting sustainable rural communities and making best use of scarce local housing supply.

- 4.5 Consider a review of income, savings and asset thresholds
The Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme currently places applicants in Band 7 where they have gross household income above £50,000, savings or assets including property equity above £200,000, or both. The review could consider whether these thresholds remain appropriate in light of local incomes, private rent levels, mortgage accessibility, household size, disability-related costs and availability of suitable alternative accommodation. The review could also consider excluding disability benefits for children from income assessments.
- 4.6 Strengthen direct nominations and direct lets and exceptional matching
The review could consider the use of a Choice Based Letting system, or the introduction of a nomination-based option. Alternatively, adaptations to the current Choice Based Lettings system that ensures clearer wording to allow the Council to make direct nominations or direct lets where appropriate. It could also consider formal arrangements for adapted property matching so that scarce adapted stock is used effectively.
- 4.7 Strengthen governance and improve transparency, audit trails and review rights
The review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme should strengthen governance, improve transparency and ensure the policy is better aligned with Council priorities. This should include clearer arrangements for shortlisting, bypassing applicants, direct lets, nominations and cases where homelessness duties apply. Decisions should be supported by clear reasons, with bypass decisions recorded, Housing Options notified where homelessness duties are relevant, equality impacts considered and evidenced, and appeal or review rights set out clearly so that applicants and authorised representatives understand how relevant decisions can be challenged. The review should also clarify key operational areas within the policy, including merging Bands 1A and 1B into a single Band 1 category for operational simplicity, clarifying medical banding criteria, amending Band 3 overcrowding wording, strengthening domestic abuse and violence wording, updating Prevention Duty wording, clarifying Public Sector Equality Duty expectations, and correcting outdated or inconsistent references.

5. Alternative Options

Option 1: Do nothing / retain the current policy unchanged

The Council could choose not to review or amend the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme at this stage. This would avoid immediate consultation, legal, system and operational work. However, it would not address known areas where the policy would benefit from clarification, including banding, local connection, income and asset thresholds, direct lets, adapted property matching, governance of bypass decisions and alignment with homelessness duties. This option carries a risk that the policy becomes less responsive to current housing need, unlawful, more vulnerable to inconsistency or challenge and does not provide reasonable preference to the specified categories of applicants.

Option 2: Make minor drafting and operational clarifications only

The Council could limit the review to minor drafting corrections and operational clarifications that do not materially affect applicants' rights, qualification or priority. This would reduce consultation requirements and implementation complexity. However, it would not address the more significant questions identified in the briefing paper, including whether the register should remain open to households with no local connection, whether financial thresholds

remain appropriate, and whether stronger direct nomination and exceptional matching arrangements are required.

Option 3: Undertake a full policy review and public consultation

The Council could undertake a full review of the Allocation Policy, supported by legal advice, equality impact assessment, engagement with registered providers and public consultation. This option would enable the Council to consider major policy changes in a transparent and evidence-led way, including local connection, financial thresholds, banding, direct nominations and operational governance. It would require officer capacity, consultation resource and Abritas system planning, but would provide the strongest audit trail and reduce the risk of challenge.

Option 4: Introduce selected major policy changes only

The Council could focus only on selected major changes, such as moving to a closed register for applicants without a local connection or revising income and asset thresholds. However, considering individual changes in isolation may create unintended consequences, particularly where one change increases register demand while another reduces it. It may also miss the opportunity to align the policy fully with the Housing Strategy review and wider operational improvements.

Preferred option

The preferred option is to undertake a full review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme alongside the wider Housing Strategy review, with legal advice, equality impact assessment, engagement with registered providers, public consultation and Abritas system (Customer Records Management) planning before any major changes are adopted. This provides a proportionate and legally robust approach, supports transparency and public confidence, and enables scrutiny to consider the policy, consultation feedback, operational impacts, KPIs and suggested targets before implementation.

6. Key risks and Opportunities

Risk	Mitigation
Risk that significant policy changes are made without sufficient legal advice, public consultation or equality assessment, increasing the likelihood of challenge or inconsistent decision-making.	Seek early legal advice, complete an equality impact assessment and undertake appropriate public consultation and engagement with registered providers and key partners before any major policy changes are adopted or implemented.
Risk that changes to local connection rules could unlawfully or unfairly exclude applicants who should be protected by statutory exemptions or reasonable preference requirements.	Ensure any closed-register approach is carefully framed, with clear exemptions for relevant groups including people fleeing domestic abuse, care leavers, Armed Forces households and applicants owed relevant homelessness duties.
Risk that increasing income, savings or asset thresholds expands the number of applicants in the lower bands without increasing the supply of available social housing.	Base any threshold changes on clear evidence of local affordability, private rent levels, mortgage access, household size and disability-related costs, and clearly communicate that acceptance onto the register does not guarantee an offer of social housing.

Risk that operational capacity is insufficient to reassess affected applications, particularly Band 7 cases, while maintaining business-as-usual processing and review timescales.	Develop an implementation plan setting out staffing requirements, phasing, communications, review processes and temporary capacity needs before any changes go live.
Risk that Abritas system changes are not scoped, costed or delivered in time to support any agreed policy changes.	Engage early with Abritas to confirm configuration requirements, timescales, testing, implementation dates, communications and any costs before policy changes go live.
Risk that registered providers apply nominations, affordability checks, bypass decisions or direct-let arrangements inconsistently.	Strengthen partner engagement, nominations agreements, operational guidance and audit arrangements so that participating landlords apply the scheme consistently and transparently.
Risk that equality impacts are not fully identified for vulnerable households, disabled applicants, care leavers, people fleeing domestic abuse, Armed Forces households and applicants with specialist housing needs.	Complete a full equality impact assessment, consider reasonable adjustments and ensure the policy clearly protects statutory exemptions and reasonable preference groups.
Risk that direct lets, exceptional allocations or bypass decisions are not sufficiently evidenced, creating perceived unfairness or increased challenge.	Introduce clearer approval routes, recording requirements, equality checks, Housing Options oversight where homelessness duties apply and regular audit of direct lets, nominations and bypass decisions.
Risk that policy changes create unintended consequences, for example increasing the number of applicants who qualify without improving the likelihood of rehousing.	Model the potential impact of proposed changes on register size, banding, lettings demand, temporary accommodation pressures and applicant expectations before final recommendations are made.
Risk that proposed policy changes create financial pressures for the Council and registered providers, including increased void periods, reduced numbers of suitable applicants for some properties, additional affordability checks, higher refusal rates or a greater proportion of complex households requiring more intensive support to sustain tenancies.	Model the potential financial and operational impacts with registered providers before consultation and implementation, including void turnaround, lettings performance, refusal reasons, demand by property type, affordability outcomes and tenancy sustainment risks. Use this evidence to inform final policy proposals, partner agreements, communications and any resourcing or support requirements.
Risk that scrutiny does not have sufficient oversight of consultation outcomes, implementation progress, operational impacts, KPIs and whether the revised policy is achieving its intended outcomes.	Develop a clear monitoring framework for scrutiny, including agreed KPIs and suggested targets covering register size, application processing, review requests, allocations by band, nomination outcomes, direct lets, adapted property matching, local connection decisions and temporary accommodation move-on.

7. Council Priorities

7.1 A Council that is financially sustainable, with clear priorities and purpose, and a workforce supported to excel

The review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme supports the Council's central priority ambition by ensuring that the housing register and allocation scheme are lawful, transparent, consistently applied and focused on the effective use of limited social and affordable housing. A clear policy framework will support better demand management, stronger governance, reduced risk of legal challenge and improved oversight of operational decision-making. The review will also need to consider workforce capacity, including the resources required to reassess applications, implement system changes, manage consultation and maintain business-as-usual service delivery.

7.2 Communities that are connected by well-maintained roads, accessible transport and infrastructure

The allocations policy has an indirect but important relationship with this ambition. In a large rural county, access to suitable housing is closely linked to transport, local infrastructure, schools, health services, employment, caring responsibilities and support networks. A clear and evidence-led allocation framework can help ensure that local connection, hardship, employment, family support and rural access issues are considered fairly and consistently when assessing housing need and determining priority.

7.3 People live in safe, inclusive places with homes that meet their needs

This is the strongest direct alignment with the Corporate Plan. The Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme determines how scarce social and affordable housing is prioritised and allocated to households in need. The review will consider how the policy supports households who are homeless, overcrowded, living in unsuitable housing, fleeing domestic abuse or violence, affected by medical or welfare needs, requiring adapted accommodation, ready to move on from supported housing, or needing to move to avoid hardship. Strengthening local connection rules, banding criteria, direct nominations, direct lets and exceptional matching will help ensure that homes are allocated fairly to those whose needs are greatest.

7.4 Everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and to thrive at every stage of life

Access to suitable, secure and affordable housing is an important foundation for health, wellbeing and independence. The Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme review supports this ambition by considering how priority is given to applicants with medical, welfare, disability, domestic abuse, safeguarding, care leaver and other support needs. Clearer medical banding, stronger wording on domestic abuse and violence, improved exceptional matching for adapted or specialist accommodation and alignment between allocations and homelessness duties will help ensure that vulnerable households are considered fairly and receive appropriate priority where their housing circumstances affect their ability to live safely and independently.

7.5 An environment that harnesses our natural assets and supports wellbeing

The Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme review has limited direct environmental implications, but it can support wellbeing by helping households access suitable homes in places where they can sustain family life, employment, education, care, support networks and community connections. In the context of

Shropshire's rural geography, decisions about local connection, hardship, employment and access to services should recognise the importance of place-based wellbeing and the impact that unsuitable or poorly located housing can have on people's health, independence and community participation.

7.6 A thriving economy that benefits everyone

The review supports this ambition by considering how the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme can help residents remain connected to employment, education, training and local communities. The policy already recognises housing need linked to excessive travel to employment, key worker status and hardship where a move to a particular locality is needed. Reviewing income and asset thresholds, key worker criteria and local connection rules will help the Council consider how best to balance statutory housing need with the wider economic importance of enabling people to live and work in Shropshire, while recognising that social housing supply remains limited.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme has potential financial implications for the Council, although the scale of these will depend on the nature of any changes agreed following legal advice, equality assessment, consultation and scrutiny. The report does not seek approval for additional expenditure at this stage, but identifies that future costs, savings or resource pressures may arise.
- 8.2 There may be additional operational costs associated with reviewing and implementing policy changes. These include officer time to draft the revised policy, obtain legal advice, complete an equality impact assessment, engage with registered providers, undertake public consultation, analyse responses, prepare decision reports and implement any agreed changes. There may also be costs or resource implications linked to Abritas system configuration, testing, communications and staff training.
- 8.3 Changes to income, savings and asset thresholds could increase or reduce the number of applicants who qualify for lower bands, depending on the final proposal. Increasing thresholds may increase the number of households on the active register and create additional administrative demand through application assessments, verification, reviews and case management. Moving to a closed register for applicants without a local connection may reduce some administrative demand, but this would need to be balanced against statutory exemptions and the impact of any other policy changes.
- 8.4 Any future policy changes should be supported by financial and operational modelling, including the likely impact on register size, application processing, review requests, nominations, direct lets, adapted property matching and temporary accommodation move-on. Where additional resource requirements are identified, these should be considered through the Council's normal budget, governance and decision-making processes.

9. Legal and HR implications

- 9.1 The review has significant legal implications because the allocation of social housing must comply with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, relevant statutory guidance, public law principles and the Council's published allocation scheme. The Council must ensure that the policy sets out who can apply, how priority is assessed, how properties are allocated, how reasonable preference is given to statutory groups and how applicants can request a review of relevant decisions.
- 9.2 Major policy changes, including changes to local connection rules, income and asset thresholds, banding priority, direct lets, nominations, homelessness cases or access for vulnerable groups, should be subject to appropriate legal advice before consultation and before final adoption. The Council should not assume that all suggested changes can be made without consultation, particularly where changes may affect the relative priority or qualification of a large number of applicants.
- 9.3 The Council must also have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when reviewing the policy. An equality impact assessment should be completed to consider the potential impact of proposed changes on protected and vulnerable groups, including disabled applicants, households fleeing domestic abuse, care leavers, Armed Forces households, applicants with medical or welfare needs, and households requiring adapted or specialist accommodation.
- 9.4 There are also legal and governance implications for nominations, direct lets, exceptional allocations, management transfers and bypass decisions. Any revised policy should clearly identify when these routes may be used, who has authority to approve them, what evidence must be recorded, how equality impacts will be considered and how decisions will remain transparent, consistent and capable of review.
- 9.5 HR implications are likely to relate mainly to workforce capacity, training and change management. Reviewing the policy, undertaking consultation, reassessing affected applications, updating operational guidance and implementing system changes will require officer time across HomePoint, Housing Options, legal, policy, equality, communications and IT/system support functions.
- 9.6 Staff will need clear guidance and training on any agreed changes, particularly in relation to local connection, financial assessments, medical and welfare priority, domestic abuse and violence, statutory homelessness links, key worker criteria, direct lets, nominations, bypass decisions, review rights and use of the Abritas system.
- 9.7 If the review results in a significant number of applications requiring reassessment, particularly applicants currently in Band 7, there may be temporary workload pressures. These should be considered through implementation planning, including phasing, communications, additional capacity if required and monitoring of processing and review timescales.

10. Electoral Division Implications

- 10.1. None – this report is relevant countywide

11. Health, Social (including “Child Friendly Shropshire”) and Economic Implications

- 11.1 The Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme has significant health, social and economic implications because it determines how limited social and affordable housing is prioritised for households in housing need. Access to suitable, secure and affordable housing is a key foundation for health, wellbeing, independence, family stability and participation in education, employment and community life.
- 11.2 The review should ensure that applicants with medical, welfare, disability, safeguarding or support needs are assessed fairly and consistently. Clearer criteria for medical banding, improved adapted property matching and a specialist or exceptional housing needs pathway would help ensure that households whose current accommodation affects their health, safety or independence are appropriately prioritised.
- 11.3 There are important social implications for children, families, care leavers, people fleeing domestic abuse or violence, Armed Forces households, people moving on from supported accommodation and households experiencing overcrowding or unsuitable housing. The policy review provides an opportunity to ensure that these circumstances are reflected clearly in qualification, banding, reasonable preference and exceptional allocation arrangements.
- 11.4 The policy review is relevant to Child Friendly Shropshire because housing stability, overcrowding, unsuitable accommodation and access to local schools, health services and support networks can significantly affect children’s wellbeing and family life. Reviewing the treatment of households with children, including the suitability of upper-floor flats and the treatment of children’s disability benefits in financial assessments, will help ensure the policy supports fair and child-aware decision-making.
- 11.5 The economic implications relate to how the allocation policy supports access to housing for households who need to live, work, provide care or maintain family connections in Shropshire. Reviewing local connection, hardship, employment-related housing need and key worker criteria will help the Council consider how the policy can support local communities and the wider economy while continuing to prioritise statutory housing need.
- 11.6 Any changes to income, savings and asset thresholds should be considered carefully so that the policy reflects local affordability while recognising the limited supply of social housing. Increasing thresholds may allow more households to qualify for lower bands, but it will not increase the number of homes available and may create higher expectations or additional administrative pressure.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 There are clear equality and diversity implications because the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme determines who can join the housing register, how housing need is assessed, how priority is awarded and how scarce social housing is allocated. Changes to qualification criteria, local connection, income and asset thresholds, banding, direct lets or nomination arrangements may affect applicants differently depending on their circumstances and protected characteristics.

- 12.2 A full equality impact assessment should be completed before any major policy changes are adopted. This should consider the potential impact on disabled applicants, older people, children and families, pregnant applicants, care leavers, people fleeing domestic abuse or violence, Armed Forces households, applicants with medical or welfare needs, people requiring adapted or specialist accommodation and households facing rural access barriers.
- 12.3 A review of local connection rules must be carefully framed to avoid unlawfully excluding or disadvantaging applicants who should be protected by statute or guidance. This includes people fleeing domestic abuse, care leavers, Armed Forces households, applicants owed relevant homelessness duties and other reasonable preference groups.
- 12.4 Changes to income and asset thresholds should also be assessed for equality impacts, particularly where disability-related costs, children's disability benefits, household size, caring responsibilities or specialist accommodation needs affect an applicant's realistic ability to secure suitable accommodation in the market.
- 12.5 The revised policy should include clear wording on reasonable adjustments, accessible communication, authorised representatives, review rights and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Registered providers and other partners acting under the scheme should also understand their role in applying the policy fairly and consistently.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 The review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme has limited direct climate change, biodiversity or environmental implications, as its primary focus is the review of a Policy. The policy determines how social and affordable housing is prioritised and allocated, rather than directly commissioning, developing or managing housing stock.
- 13.2 There are some indirect environmental considerations arising from the rural nature of Shropshire. Allocation decisions that take account of local connection, hardship, employment, caring responsibilities and access to services can help households remain connected to schools, health care, support networks and employment, potentially reducing unnecessary travel and supporting more sustainable community outcomes.
- 13.3 The review may also support better use of existing adapted and specialist housing stock through clearer exceptional matching and adapted property processes. Making best use of existing homes can support both resident wellbeing and efficient use of housing resources.
- 13.4 Any future operational or policy changes should continue to consider whether the location, suitability and availability of homes support stable tenancies, community connection and access to local services. This is particularly important in a rural county where transport access and distance to services can affect both wellbeing and environmental outcomes.

13.5 Overall, no significant direct climate change, biodiversity or environmental impacts are identified at this stage. Any future proposals arising from the policy review that have direct property, transport, commissioning or development implications should be assessed separately through the Council's normal governance and environmental assessment processes.

14. Background Papers

14.1. None

15. Appendices

Appendix A – Current Shropshire Housing Allocations Policy

Appendix B – Suggested Discussion Areas

Appendix C – Glossary

Appendix B – Suggested Discussion areas:

- Does Scrutiny support a full review of the Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme to ensure it remains lawful, transparent, fair, consistently applied and aligned to current housing need, homelessness pressures, affordable housing supply and the wider Housing Strategy review?
- How should the revised policy balance statutory housing need and reasonable preference duties with wider local priorities, including homelessness duties, key workers, care leavers, domestic abuse, adapted housing need and households with strong rural or community connections?
- Should Shropshire move to a closed housing register, where applicants must evidence a local connection before joining, or retain an open register where applicants with no local connection remain in Band 7? What statutory exemptions and safeguards would be required?
- Should the policy include a clearer rural allocation criterion to support local people accessing local homes, particularly in smaller settlements where housing need is linked to family, employment, caring responsibilities, schooling, support networks or long-standing community connection?
- Should the Council review the income, savings and asset thresholds? If so, how should affordability be evidenced, including local income levels, private rent levels, mortgage accessibility, household size, disability-related costs, children's disability benefits and the availability of suitable alternative accommodation?
- Should the Council be able to use direct nominations, direct lets, management transfers or exceptional matching to meet urgent statutory, safeguarding, adapted property or specialist housing needs?
- What safeguards, governance and audit arrangements are needed for shortlisting, bypassing applicants, direct lets, nominations, exception decisions and cases where homelessness duties apply, so decisions remain transparent, lawful, consistent and capable of review?

Appendix C – Glossary:

Statutory Homeless Duty

A statutory homelessness duty is a legal obligation placed on a local authority to provide advice, assistance, and in some cases accommodation, to eligible people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in accordance with homelessness legislation.

Prevention Duty

The Prevention Duty is the legal duty on a local authority to take reasonable steps to help an eligible person who is threatened with homelessness within 56 days to retain their accommodation or secure alternative housing so that homelessness is avoided.

Relief Duty

The Relief Duty is the legal duty on a local authority to take reasonable steps to help an eligible person who is homeless secure suitable accommodation and relieve their homelessness.

Hazards

A hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is any risk to the health or safety of an occupier arising from a defect, deficiency, or condition within a dwelling, building, or surrounding area.

Hazards are assessed according to the likelihood of harm occurring and the potential severity of the outcome. They are then classified as:

- Category 1 Hazard – a serious hazard requiring local authority intervention.
- Category 2 Hazard – a less serious hazard where local authority intervention is discretionary.

Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

CBL systems are a method of allocating social and affordable housing that allows eligible applicants on a housing register to actively express an interest in available properties that are advertised. Properties are advertised on a regular cycle, and applicants are able to bid for homes that match their assessed housing need, eligibility and preference criteria. Applications are prioritised in accordance with the local authority's allocations policy. CBL systems are designed to provide transparency, choice and customer involvement in the allocation process, enabling applicants to make informed decisions about where they wish to live while ensuring that social housing is allocated fairly and in accordance with housing legislation and local priorities.

Direct lets

The allocation of a social housing property to a specific applicant without the property first being advertised through the Choice-Based Lettings process. Direct lets are typically used in exceptional or urgent circumstances where there is a clear operational, legal or welfare reason for bypassing the normal bidding process.

Management transfers

A move arranged by a social landlord to relocate an existing tenant to another property where there is a compelling management, welfare or operational reason to do so. Unlike a standard transfer or choice-based lettings allocation, a management transfer is usually considered outside the normal bidding process)

Nomination arrangements

When operating with nomination agreements, the nominee is selected by the Council (rather than choosing the property) in accordance with the council's Allocation Policy, taking account of housing need, eligibility and priority.

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Shropshire Council Allocations Policy and Scheme

March 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Housing Allocation Policy and Scheme applies to the Shropshire Council unitary local authority area. References to Shropshire and the Council refer to the unitary local authority of Shropshire.
- 1.2 This document sets out Shropshire Council's Policy for applications to the Housing Register; the allocation of the housing stock owned by the Council, which is managed by its Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Shropshire Towns and Rural (STAR) Housing; and nominations to housing associations registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (for social and affordable rented and low cost home ownership¹ properties) and to private landlords.
- 1.3 Officers act under delegated powers in accordance with this policy. All allocations and nominations are made from the Housing Register.

2. Aims of the Allocation Policy and Scheme

- 2.1 In Shropshire the demand for affordable housing exceeds available supply. Therefore, this housing allocation policy and scheme seeks to meet the following aims:
 - Ensure people in the greatest housing need have the greatest opportunity to access suitable housing that best meets their needs;
 - To prevent and relieve homelessness;
 - To make best use of the Council's and housing association stock;
 - To help the Council meet statutory and strategic aims;
 - To help contribute to the development of sustainable communities; and
 - To allow for the greatest degree of choice possible in the allocation of affordable housing.
- 2.2 Whilst this Policy is intended to be comprehensive, the Council recognises that it is not possible to cover every eventuality. In special cases with exceptional needs, the Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living has the discretion to award additional priority and approve offers of accommodation taking into consideration all factors relevant to the application.

¹ With the exception of Homes England grant funded shared ownership properties on non-exception sites

3. Eligibility

- 3.1 Applicants ineligible under Government regulations will not be eligible to be accepted onto the Housing Register. Eligibility is a question of immigration status. The rules regarding eligibility are complex and subject to regular changes in immigration law. Applicants who are not British citizens can request further information from the Council before making an application.
- 3.2 Any applicant who has been excluded from the Housing Register on the grounds of ineligibility will be given written notice of the decision and the reasons for it and advise of their right of appeal (see section 40).

4. Qualification Criteria

- 4.1 The Council will usually only accept applications to the Housing Register who are in housing need. Housing need qualifying criteria is set out in Bands 1 to 6 in Appendix A. Applicants deemed not to be in housing need will be placed in Band 7.

Local Connection

- 4.2 The Council will usually only accept applications to the Housing Register from an applicant with a local connection to the Shropshire Council area. Local connection means that the applicant or a person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them either:
- Is normally resident within the local authority area of Shropshire; or
 - Has a local connection with the area by virtue of family association or secure employment.
- 4.3 Normally resident means resident in accommodation for a period of at least two years immediately prior to an application being made. This does not include being detained in prison or resident in a bail hostel. Persons occupying holiday or other temporary accommodation (for example, hospital or student housing) are not considered as normally resident unless they can demonstrate that this has been their sole or main home for a period of at least five years.
- 4.4 Family association normally means that the applicant has parents, grandparents, adult children, grandchildren, a brother or a sister currently living in Shropshire and has been normally resident within Shropshire for at least five years. In cases where the Council is considered to be the corporate parent of a care leaver placed “out of county”, this will establish a familial association. In exceptional circumstances and where support is required family association may include extended family, each case will be determined on its own merits. Applicants will be required to provide proof of local connection by virtue of family association.
- 4.5 Secure employment means the employment or self-employment of the applicant or an adult member of the household for at least one year’s duration and at least 20 hours per week. Where this employment has been for less than one year at the time of application or is on a zero-hour contract, evidence will be required to confirm the nature of the employment.



4.6 Local connection requirements will not apply to the following applicants:

- members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge;
- bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner;
- serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service;
- existing social housing tenants in England who have a reasonable preference because of a need to move to Shropshire to avoid hardship and if they work or have been offered work in Shropshire and have a genuine intention to take up that offer;
- persons who need to move from another local authority area to escape domestic abuse; and
- persons who need to move from another local authority area to escape other forms of violence or harm.

4.7 Not having a local connection to Shropshire Council will not preclude those applicants identified to be within the class of person set out in section 13.1 of this Policy from being on the Housing Register. Such applicants will be placed in Band 7 unless exceptional circumstances apply (see section 4.15).

Unacceptable Behaviour

4.8 Applicants will not be accepted on to the Housing Register where it is decided that the applicant, or a member of the household with whom the applicant would usually reside, has behaved unacceptably.

4.9 Examples of unacceptable behaviour could include:

- Significant² rent or mortgage arrears or breach of tenancy obligations where no attempt is being made to repay the debt or remedy the breach;
- Cautioned or convicted of a nuisance, anti-social or violent offence;

² For example, those with amounts exceeding £1,000 may be disqualified from the Housing Register until the amount has been reduced to below £1,000 or consecutive payments for 26 weeks have been made, unless there are agreed extenuating special circumstances.



- Subject to an injunction under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 or an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) or equivalent;
 - Conduct likely to cause serious nuisance, annoyance or harassment to neighbours;
 - Using accommodation or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes;
 - Fraudulent or duplicitous behaviour to obtain accommodation;
 - Serious damage to or neglect of a property by the tenant or other occupants; or
 - Committing violent or anti-social behaviour, or domestic, racist or other abuse.

4.10 Cases will be considered on an individual basis. The following criteria will be applied in determining whether an applicant (this includes existing Council tenants) is excluded from being able to go on the Housing Register for re-housing because of their unacceptable behaviour:

- There must be reliable evidence of unacceptable behaviour;
- In normal circumstances the behaviour concerned should have occurred within the last two years. In cases of a more serious nature, for example those involving criminal prosecution, a longer timescale may be appropriate; and
- There must be reasonable grounds for believing that the behaviour could continue or be repeated. For example, the applicant may have issued threats or there might be a history of repeat offending.

4.11 The decision as to whether to exclude an applicant from the Housing Register on the basis of unacceptable behaviour, be this due to the applicant's behaviour or the behaviour of a member of the household with whom the applicant would usually reside, will be made by the Shropshire Council's Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living.

Financial and Needs Assessment

4.12 Applicants with a household income of more than £50,000 gross per annum or savings and assets (including equity in a property) of more than £200,000 or both will usually be considered as not being in housing need and will be placed in Band 7. In the scenario where an applicant **only** wishes to access low cost home ownership accommodation, the cap on household income will be raised to £80,000 gross per annum. Lump sums awarded to Armed Forces service personnel injured or disabled in action will be disregarded.

4.13 The financial assessment will have regard to the financial resources of the applicant and the cost and availability of alternative suitable accommodation. Such applicants who can demonstrate that they have health or support needs that they are unable to meet in



the open market will be considered on their individual merits by the Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living. Examples include:

- an applicant who is eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to fund major adaptations to their existing home, where it is more cost-effective for the authority to re-house the applicant in accommodation appropriate to their housing need;
- an older person is committed to paying for care or support costs in order to remain living independently; and
- an applicant who requires specific accommodation to meet their housing needs, for example, the needs of disabled dependent children, but this accommodation is not available in the private sector, other than that provided by STAR Housing or a housing association.

4.14 As with all other decisions made under this policy, any applicant who is deemed to have such resources as not to qualify to be placed in Bands 1 to 6 will have a right of appeal against that decision (section 40).

4.15 Where an application to the Housing Register would not otherwise be accepted on the grounds of failing to meet the qualification criteria, as the Local Housing Authority, the Council will retain the discretion in exceptional circumstances where it is considered necessary to dis-apply the qualification criteria and / or place the applicant in any other Band as set out in this policy.

4.16 Any applicant who has been excluded from the Housing Register on the grounds of failing to meet the qualification criteria will be given written notice of the decision and the reasons for it and advised of their right of appeal (see section 40).

5. Age of Applicants

5.1 Applicants will normally be at least 18 years of age. In the case of 16- and 17-year olds applicants must be care leavers or homeless / threatened with homelessness, and not deemed to be a child in need following an investigation by Social Services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989³. Applicants under the age of 18 must have a recognised support package and financial guarantor or guardian before being accepted on to the register.

6. Homeless Applicants

6.1 Shropshire Council has a duty to secure suitable accommodation for homeless households who are eligible for assistance, in priority need, have a local connection and who are not intentionally homeless, in Council, other Registered Provider (housing

³ In this instance an application will be made by Social Services on behalf of the child in need and a support package will be in place.



associations registered by the Regulator of Social Housing) or suitable private rented accommodation. Discharge of the main homelessness duty to the private rented sector will be made in line with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.

- 6.2 It is important that persons who are homeless or threatened with being made homeless seek advice from Shropshire Council, or their local council, at the earliest opportunity.

7. Transfer Applicants

- 7.1 Existing tenants of Shropshire Council will be subject to the provisions of the Allocation Policy. Tenants wishing to transfer will not normally be considered for re-housing until they have been resident in their present home for one year.

8. Applying to the Housing Register

- 8.1 Persons wishing to register must complete an Application Form. The application can either be completed using a paper application form or online through the Shropshire Council website. Paper applications can be printed from the website and are available by post from Shropshire Council's Customer Contact Points.
- 8.2 The Application will then be assessed by Shropshire Council. Applicants will receive a written response confirming whether their application has been accepted. If accepted, the applicant will be provided with written notification of the Band in which they have been placed and given a registration date.
- 8.3 Where an applicant is not satisfied with the way their application has been assessed or determined they have a right of appeal (see Section 40).

9. Verification

- 9.1 On completing the Application Form applicants give permission for Shropshire Council to verify (check) the information that they have provided or will re-provide prior to any offer being made or any change of circumstance. This includes permission to contact other Council departments, for example Council Tax and Social Services, and other people or organisations such as previous and current landlords, the UK Border Agency and the police. Applicants will not be made an offer of accommodation until all information requested has been provided and verified. Appendix C lists the information applicants are required to submit to verify their housing application at both application and offer stage.
- 9.2 Shropshire Council may share information as appropriate where this is legally required and when providing nominations to housing associations and private landlords.



10. False Statements and Withholding Information

- 10.1 Ensuring all the information provided is true and accurate is the responsibility of the applicant. Verification checks will be undertaken at the point of offer to confirm the information on the application form is correct and up to date.
- 10.2 It is a criminal offence for applicants knowingly or recklessly to give false information; or to knowingly withhold information. It can carry a fine and in separate civil proceedings can lead to the loss of any accommodation let as a result of Shropshire Council relying on that false information.
- 10.3 Applicants are required to sign paper applications and certify online applications confirming the details they have given are correct to the best of their knowledge.
- 10.4 This Scheme falls within the provisions of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. Section 171 of the Act states:
- (1) A person commits an offence if, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under this Part:
 - (a) they knowingly or recklessly make a statement which is false in material particular, or
 - (b) they knowingly withhold information which the authority has reasonably required them to give in connection with the exercise of those functions.
 - (2) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.
- 10.5 Consequently, where Section 171 applies, Shropshire Council may bring a prosecution which if successful could result in a fine of an unlimited amount.
- 10.6 Where false information is found to have been given, the applicant may also be disqualified from the Housing Register on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour. Where false information has resulted in the applicant obtaining accommodation, the relevant Landlord may bring possession proceedings for recovery of the property.

11. Worsening of Circumstances

- 11.1 Applicants must not deliberately worsen their circumstances in order to obtain greater preference on the Housing Register. If an applicant is found to have deliberately worsened their circumstances they will either be placed in the Band corresponding to their circumstances at the time of their original application or may be disqualified from the Housing Register on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour.



11.2 Examples of deliberate worsening of circumstances might include:

- Selling a property that is affordable and suitable for an applicant's needs;
- Disposing or gifting assets, including property;
- Moving from a secure Assured Tenancy to insecure, overcrowded accommodation, where there is no good reason for this move; and
- Where there is evidence that it was reasonable for an applicant to have remained in their original accommodation.

11.3 Where an applicant has little or no control over their move to alternative accommodation, this will not be considered as a deliberate worsening of circumstances.

12. Change in Circumstances

12.1 If an applicant's circumstances change Shropshire Council must be informed straight away or as soon as is reasonably practicable. Examples of changes include change of address or change in family size.

12.2 If an applicant's circumstances change they may cease to be eligible for inclusion on the Housing Register, and their application will be disqualified. They will be informed if this is the case and advised of any right of appeal (see Section 40).

13. Statutory Requirements

13.1 Under the Housing Act 1996 Shropshire Council has to ensure that when allocating and nominating to housing accommodation **reasonable preference** is given to the following groups:

- people who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (including those who are intentionally homeless and those not in priority need);
- people who are owed a duty by any housing authority under the Housing Act 1996 sections 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3);
- people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability; and
- people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).



13.2 The Housing Act 1996 also requires that housing authorities must give **additional preference** to the following categories of applicants who fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs:

- former members of the Armed Forces⁴
- serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service;
- bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner; and
- serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.

13.3 Those applicants who are in the above categories and are placed in Bands 1 to 6 and are considered to have urgent housing needs will be given additional priority so that they are considered for re-housing ahead of other applicants in their respective Band.

14. The Banding System

14.1 The Allocations Policy is based on seven Bands with specific qualifying criteria (see Appendix A for more details). Each applicant's housing need and other circumstances are assessed on the information provided and the applicant is placed in the **highest** Band their circumstances allow. Within each Band applicants are ranked in date order from when they were registered into that Band.

15. Statement of Choice

15.1 Shropshire Council is committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of affordable housing in the county, whilst ensuring that housing is allocated to those with the greatest need.

15.2 There will be certain situations where choice cannot be offered in the allocation of housing, such as when the Council needs to make a direct let as a matter of urgency. These circumstances are detailed within the scheme.

15.3 With the exception of these limited circumstances, housing will only be allocated to applicants who apply for a specific property, and all applicants have the opportunity to bid for properties they are entitled to be considered for, having regard to household size and other eligibility criteria.

⁴ Usually where the application is made within five years of discharge.



16. How the Scheme Operates

- 16.1 All properties managed by STAR Housing that become available for letting and all housing association properties where the Council has nomination rights will be advertised through choice-based lettings. Housing associations and private landlords are able to advertise other properties where nomination rights do not apply. The scheme operates on a weekly property cycle from a Wednesday to the following Tuesday. The exact rent, service charge, for sale price, tenancy type and length of tenancy will be clearly advertised on the property details.
- 16.2 Those applicants who have been accepted onto the Housing Register can then bid (apply) for properties that are advertised. Applicants are able to apply for one property each cycle. When the bidding period has closed the advertised property will be offered to the bidder in the highest Band for whom the property is suitable and who has been within that Band for the longest period of time, unless otherwise provided by this Policy.
- 16.3 In the event that the bidder does not want to accept the property then it will be offered to the bidder in the same Band who has been waiting the second longest and then so on. Only when bidders in the highest Band have been considered, will ~~the~~ those in the next highest Band be offered the property.
- 16.4 When a property is allocated, notification will be given on the Shropshire Council website identifying the Band of the successful applicant and their registration date.

17. Bedroom Entitlement

- 17.1 Where possible, adverts will show the number of bedrooms available and number of people they are suitable for to enable eligibility to be exactly matched, for example, three bedroom five persons. Adverts will also show if any restrictions apply to the type of household that can apply.
- 17.2 Those applying for properties should ensure their income, including housing and welfare benefits, is sufficient to fully cover all the rent and charges associated with the accommodation.
- 17.3 The number of bedrooms required for each household is calculated in accordance with age, sex, marital status composition and the relationship of the members to one another. A separate bedroom is required for each married or cohabitating couple, for any other person aged 16 years or over, for each pair of children aged 0 to 15 years of the same sex, and for each pair of children under 10 years of the same or opposite sex. If that is not possible, he or she is counted as requiring a separate bedroom, as is any unpaired child under the age of 10 years. Additional bedroom/s required because of a medical condition/s will be considered as part of the medical assessment procedure.



17.4 Appendix D gives examples of what size and type of property an applicant can usually expect to be offered, therefore, should bid for.

Access to Children

17.5 In the case of divorced or separated parents / guardians, a child will typically be expected to reside with one parent / guardian as their main residence. Unless it is stated in a legal document that residency is 50% for each parent / guardian, the other parent / guardian will not receive any bedroom entitlement for access visits.

18. Fostering and Adoption

18.1 Where a household has formal evidence that, subject to a suitable property becoming available, approval would be given to foster or adopt a child or children, subject to confirmation from a Social Worker, each child would usually be entitled to a separate bedroom. Verification of fostering and/or adoption arrangements will be carried out at point of offer of accommodation.

19. University / Full-time Study Away from Home

19.1 Household members studying away from home in full-time courses will be considered in bedroom entitlement unless they are the main applicant.

20. Overnight Carers

20.1 Where a household has formal evidence that an overnight carer or team of carers is needed three or more nights per normal week, a carer shall be included in the bedroom eligibility calculation.

21. Supported Accommodation

21.1 Applicants can indicate whether they want to be considered for supported accommodation on the application form but will usually be offered one only if they meet the following criteria:

- Older persons' sheltered or independent living accommodation – applicants aged 55 or over with support needs. Applicants will be expected to sign-up to a support package.
- Older persons' extra care sheltered accommodation – applicants aged 55 or over with support and/or care needs. Applicants require a referral from a social care manager to be considered for this type of housing. Applicants will be expected to sign-up to a support and care package.



- Other supported housing - applicants must meet the requirements set out in each scheme's eligibility criteria. Applicants will usually require a referral from a social care manager to be considered for this type of housing. Applicants will be expected to sign-up to a support and / or care package as appropriate.

21.2 Bungalows will usually only be offered to applicants who have poor health and/or a disability who require accommodation on one level.

21.3 Other properties may be designated, for a limited period of time, for applicants who fall into a particular age category to ensure the continued sustainability of a particular block or area of housing. These may be subject to local lettings policies (see below).

22. Support / Care Packages

22.1 Some applicants (such as care leavers, and people with serious mental illness, dementia, or learning disabilities) will only be eligible for an offer of accommodation once it is confirmed that they have a recognised support/care package in place. This support/care package need not be provided through Social Services, but could include other forms of support, for example from family or friends. The support/care package will be reconfirmed before an offer of accommodation is made to ensure that applicants are supported to live successfully in their new home.

23. Advice and Assistance

23.1 Shropshire Council is unable to provide personal appointments. However, staff are able to signpost applicants to other sources of advice and assistance including those of dedicated teams and organisations throughout Shropshire. In particular, assistance will be provided to anyone who may have difficulty participating due to disability, learning disability, illness, age, not speaking English as a first language, or any other reason that might make it harder for them to fully participate within the scheme. Where applicants are unable to submit bids themselves an assisted bidding process can be offered.

24. Information about the Allocation Policy and Scheme

24.1 Anyone who wishes is entitled to a free summary of the Allocation Policy and Scheme, which can be obtained from Shropshire Council. A copy of this document is available to be downloaded from the Shropshire Council website.

24.2 Applicants to the Housing Register are also entitled to request details of information that has been used to assess their application. Requests must be submitting in writing.

24.3 When each property advertised has been successfully allocated, the banding and registration date of the successful applicant will be made available on the website. This information should be sufficient for applicants to determine their prospects of success in



obtaining housing, and to estimate how long they are likely to have to wait to obtain such housing.

25. Local Lettings Plans and Policies

25.1 Local Letting Plans are usually introduced to:

- Balance communities to achieve sustainable neighbourhoods;
- Deliver specific local strategic outcomes; and
- Due to planning conditions.

25.2 Affordable housing dwellings may be subject to special planning conditions or legal restrictions applied through Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) specifying local occupancy or employment conditions on who is able to live in the accommodation. These conditions are usually found in rural settlements and aim to ensure that applicants on the Housing Register who have a local connection with a specific parish or defined area are given priority for rehousing, over and above those who do not have that connection. Each Section 106 document will set out the specific detail of the Local Lettings Policy.

25.3 Where a Local Letting Plan or Policy is in place, priority will normally be given to applicants who directly meet the criteria of the Plan. Details of each Local Letting Plan or Policy will be available on request from the Council. Advertisements for properties included in the Local Letting Plan will specify the required criteria.

26. Letting Privately Rented Accommodation

26.1 Private landlords (this does not include housing associations registered with the Regulator of Social Housing) who offer affordable housing to households on the Housing Register may use additional criteria when selecting prospective tenants. The use of a Private Landlord's Letting Plan must be agreed with Shropshire Council and referred to in the property advertisement. The Plan must also be available to applicants on request.

27. Sensitive Lets

27.1 There may be circumstances where properties will be identified for Sensitive Let. This means specific criteria will be applied to individual properties to achieve wider objectives. Where a Sensitive Let is identified, priority may be given to applicants who directly meet the required criteria. Advertisements for properties defined as Sensitive Lets will specify the required criteria.



28. Direct Lets

28.1 Shropshire Council and its ALMO, STAR Housing, may from time to time need to make a Direct Let of a property to an applicant in exceptional or urgent circumstances, for example to facilitate or maintain essential support arrangements, or for an applicant who has very specific housing requirements.

29. Adapted Properties

29.1 Properties which have been adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities will be identified when advertised. In order to ensure best use of stock, priority will normally be given to the applicants requiring the adaptations provided.

30. Offers of Accommodation

30.1 Applicants have a responsibility to ensure their contact details are up to date including, change of address, contact telephone numbers and email addresses. Shropshire Council publishes a list of supporting information required at point of offer which applicants are expected to have available immediately for verification. In most instances offers of accommodation will be made by telephone and applicants will be given three working days to respond. If applicants do not respond within this timescale, the offer may be withdrawn.

30.2 Where the offer of accommodation is to an applicant where a statutory homeless duty is owed by Shropshire Council, they will be given three working days for applicants to respond. If no response is received the Landlord will notify the Housing Options Team and agree whether to withdraw the offer.

30.3 Those applicants, with the exception of those with a homeless duty, who have refused or have failed to make contact on four or more occasions within a twelve-month period when suitable offers of accommodation have been made through the Allocation Scheme, will be deferred and therefore be declined further offers for a period of up to six months. The Council will write to the applicant and inform them of the reason as to why they have been deferred.

30.4 Landlords will make formal offers of accommodation in writing, either by letter or email.

31. Medical Assessment Procedure

31.1 Shropshire Council will assess and verify medical need/s which are directly affected by the applicant's accommodation and where a move to more suitable accommodation is needed.



31.2 Information is taken from the application with any supporting evidence to determine if there is a medical need and the level of this need. In exceptional circumstances, an independent medical assessment may be sought.

32. Joint Applications

32.1 Joint applications can usually be made by:

- A married couple;
- A civil partnership couple; and
- Partners (including same sex couples)⁵.

32.2 Where a sole application becomes a joint application, the original or earliest registration date of the two will apply. Should the parties of the joint application then wish to separate their applications, the respective dates at which they each separately registered will then apply.

33. People in Prison

33.1 Applications will be accepted from those currently in prison provided eligibility and qualification criteria are met. Shropshire Council works with a range of agencies to prepare people for release from prison and to prevent homelessness. While preparation for release may begin sometime prior to release, applicants should be mindful that bids made one month or more before the release date will not normally be considered.

33.2 Upon release an update application will be required and if applicable liaison with any support workers and agencies.

33.3 Emergency cases will be referred to Shropshire Council's Housing Options Team.

34. Pregnancy

34.1 Where a household member is pregnant, the pregnancy will only be considered once a medical certificate such as a MATB1 is received. Until the birth and the sex of the child or children can be confirmed the bedroom entitlement assumption will be set at the minimum number according to the above criteria.

35. Applications from Employees, Board Members, Councillors and their Relatives

35.1 Applications are monitored carefully to ensure that all allocations are made in line with this policy and no favour is given to those with close links to Shropshire Council, STAR Housing or housing associations with housing stock in Shropshire.

⁵ This does not include friends.



36. Property Adverts

- 36.1 Available properties are published each week. The scheme operates on a weekly property cycle from a Wednesday to the following Tuesday with applicants able to bid (apply) for one property each cycle.
- 36.2 Those applicants with email addresses will be sent a weekly link to available properties. Those applicants who have no internet access, who cannot access the internet elsewhere and do not have anyone who is able to bid on their behalf, can request that the Council undertakes bidding on their behalf.

37. Equal Opportunities Statement

- 37.1 Shropshire Council believes that it is a fundamental right for everyone to be treated fairly, with respect and dignity; in the implementation of this policy it will ensure that this right is promoted and upheld. This includes the need to ensure that applicants' specific needs are recognised when they bid for properties and are being considered for offers of accommodation.

38. Appeals

- 38.1 Any applicant to Shropshire Council's Housing Register has a right to make an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the Council, such as disqualifying them from registration, or the banding awarded.
- 38.2 For decisions made by Shropshire Council the applicant should appeal / complain in writing to the Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living. An applicant can also appoint an advocate and, once appointed, Shropshire Council will deal directly with that advocate.
- 38.3 There are two stages to the appeals process:

Stage 1

The appeal must be made in writing within 21 calendar days of the date of the decision letter, stating the grounds for the appeal. The appeal will be considered by the Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living or nominated representative, and a decision will normally be given within 21 calendar days. In complex cases it may not be possible to give a decision in 21 days and may take longer. Where this is the case the applicant will be notified in writing prior to expiry of the 21-day period.

Stage 2

If the applicant is unhappy with the decision made by the Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living they may request that a further review be carried



out by the Director of People or their nominated representative. This request must be made in writing within 7 days. Again, a decision will normally be given in 21 days, subject to extension where necessary.

38.4 If still unhappy with the outcome of the appeal, the applicant may make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

38.5 Where an offer of accommodation has been made to discharge the main homelessness duty, this will be subject to a different review process.

39. Complaints

39.1 Complaints about the policy should be made in the first instance to the Head of Service – Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living.

39.2 A copy of the full complaints procedure is available from Shropshire Council.

40. Monitoring and Review

40.1 Shropshire Council monitors all allocations and reports this in a 'Quarterly Monitoring and Statistics Report' which is published and available to download from the Shropshire Council website.

40.2 This policy and scheme will be subject to annual review, seeking to ensure it reflects changes in legislation and meets its aims.

41. Transitional arrangements

41.1 The below transitional arrangements apply to **existing applicants** registered on the housing register at the time of implementation.

41.1.1 Those existing applicants who have a local connection under the allocations policy and scheme published in 2014⁶ will be placed into Bands 1 to 6 according to their circumstance, with the exception of those applicants whose financial

-
- Applicants currently living in Shropshire Council Area
 - Those that have ^{resided} in the county three of the last five years, where residence has been out of choice;
 - Those who are ^{employed} in the area, other than of a casual nature;
 - ^{Those} who have close family connections, who have themselves lived in the county for five or more years;
 - The ^{applicant} was a permanent resident of the local area for five years as a child, and attended a local school;
 - Those who ^{need} to move to Shropshire for urgent social reasons such as to receive / give support



resources mean that they are not considered as being in housing need, who will be placed into Band 7.

- 41.1.2 Those existing applicants without a local connection to Shropshire will be placed in Band 7, this being irrespective as to whether they are in a reasonable preference category.
- 41.1.3 Existing applicants will be placed in the highest Band which their circumstances allow, the date they will be shortlisted by being their original registration date.
- 41.1.4 Existing applicants who are assessed as being in the “sharing essential facilities” category in the allocation policy and scheme published in 2014 will be placed in Band 5.



Appendix A: Bandings

All qualifying applicants will be allocated to one of the following Bands according to their particular circumstances. Subject to exceptional circumstances as set out in section 4.15, applicants in Bands 1 to 6 will require a local connection.

Band 1:

Band 1A

Homeless households who are owed the main duty and are currently accommodated in emergency accommodation and other emergency cases:

- Households who are homeless and are owed the main duty including when they have become homeless or the Relief Duty has come to an end and they have been assessed as being eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless, in priority need and have local connection and are currently accommodated in emergency accommodation provided by the Council⁷.
- Other households in emergency housing need where the authority has a statutory duty to provide housing.

Band 1B

Homeless households who are owed the main duty and where Council tenants need to move due to major works or demolition:

- Households who are homeless and are owed the main duty including when they have become homeless or the Relief Duty has come to an end and they have been assessed as being eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless, in priority need and have local connection.
- Where Shropshire Council require tenants to move to alternative accommodation to allow major works to be undertaken (such as modernisation or demolition).

Where households are homeless and owed the main duty Shropshire Council's Housing Options Team will bid on applicants' behalf for each suitable property that becomes available. When a successful bid is made for a property the applicant will be notified of this and, subject to rights of review under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), this will constitute an offer of housing under Part VI as a discharge of the Council's homelessness duty.

⁷ This includes care leavers, where the Council is considered to be the corporate parent (so may have been placed "out of county"), who are owed the main homelessness duty and are accommodated in emergency temporary accommodation provided by the Council.



Band 2:

Homeless households who are owed the Relief Duty, urgent medical need, hospital discharge; care leavers, serious disrepair, persons who are fleeing domestic abuse or other forms of violence or harm and reducing re-offending:

- Applicants who are homeless and are owed the Relief Duty and would be owed or likely to be owed the Main duty when the Relief Duty came to an end, because they are or are likely to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless.
- Urgent medical need where the applicant's (or member of their household who is moving with them) condition is currently directly affected by their accommodation and an urgent move is needed to have a positive effect on their medical condition, or where as a result of their condition their current accommodation is not suitable to their needs. An investigation will be carried out. For Urgent Medical Need it is generally expected that the property cannot reasonably be occupied as the applicant is either unable to use or has serious difficulty using an essential part of the property, for example, the WC.
- Applicants who have been released from hospital and cannot return to the property. Severity of medical illness does not determine the housing banding. Medical evidence will be required.
- Where a young person who has been looked after, fostered or accommodated by Shropshire Council, is engaging with the support provided, and there will be a duty to rehouse accepted by Shropshire Council within six months of the young person being ready for independent living.
- Serious disrepair refers to the condition of the current accommodation. This will apply where the Council has deemed the applicant's home to have the presence of Category 1 Hazards, Bands A - C under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and these Hazards cannot be resolved or reduced to a Category 2 Hazard with six months.
- Applicants who are fleeing domestic abuse or other forms of violence or harm. All applications will be taken seriously and will be fully assessed in conjunction with partner agencies and landlords.
- Reducing re-offending – applicants due to be released from prison where a personal housing plan has been undertaken and a support package is in place.

Unless specified otherwise in this policy, Band 2 will normally be valid for 12 weeks from date of award. If accommodation has not been secured in this period there will be a review carried out. If no suitable properties have become available during the period time in Band 2 will be extended for a further period, usually six weeks. If the applicant has been bidding for suitable properties but has not been successful, the status may be extended. If however, the applicant has failed to bid for properties, or has been bidding for unsuitable properties, the reasons for this will be determined and if there are valid reasons the time in Band 2 may be



extended, but where there are insufficient reasons, the Band will be withdrawn and the applicant will be reassessed accordingly.

Band 3:

Resettlement, homelessness prevention, serious medical need, use and occupation, over-crowding, under-occupation and members of the armed forces to be discharged within six months:

- Resettlement - applicants have been assessed as ready to move from hostel or other temporary supported accommodation into settled accommodation. Where appropriate, arrangements will be made for tenancy support.
- Applicants who are threatened with homelessness and are owed the Prevention Duty and would be likely to be owed the Main duty if both the Prevention Duty and any Relief Duty that followed on were to end unsuccessfully and they would be, or would likely to be, found to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless.
- Serious medical need will apply where the applicant's (or member of their household who is moving with them) condition is currently directly affected by their accommodation and a move is needed to have a positive effect on their condition, or where as a result of their condition their current accommodation is detrimental to health and wellbeing. An investigation will be carried out.
- Use and occupation - following the death of the tenant, occupiers of Registered Provider⁸ dwellings who either do not have succession rights or a non-statutory succession cannot be granted as the current property would be under-occupied or considered unsuitable. Following notice served by a tenant and an assignment cannot be granted to the remaining occupants.
- Overcrowding – assessments will be based on the bedroom entitlement at Appendix D. Lodgers will not be included in the assessment.
- Under-occupation by one or more bedrooms by a tenant of a Registered Provider⁹ where the property is in Shropshire.
- Where a member of the British Armed Forces is going to be discharged within 6 months or has been discharged but been unsuccessful in finding permanent suitable accommodation. If part of a couple separating, this criterion would not apply to their ex-partner's application. Those that have been dishonourably discharged will be considered individually based upon the circumstances and reasons for the discharge.

Band 4:

⁸ In the case of a private registered provider (housing association) there will usually be an agreement between the PRP and the Council that the resulting void dwelling will be subject to nomination rights.

⁹ In the case of a private registered provider (housing association) there will usually be an agreement between the PRP and the Council that the resulting void dwelling will be subject to nomination rights.



Need to give or receive support, moderate medical need, disrepair, overcrowding, excessive travel and homelessness:

- Give or receive support from close family members and / or move closer to local facilities. Where not having a move would result in serious detriment.
- Moderate medical need where the applicant's (or member of their household who is moving with them) condition is currently directly affected by their accommodation and a move is needed to have a positive effect on their condition, or where as a result of their condition their current accommodation is not suitable to their needs
- Disrepair where the Council has deemed the applicant's home to have the Presence of Category 2 Hazards, Band D under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System.
- Overcrowding where there is a need for one additional bedroom – assessments will be based on the bedroom entitlement at Appendix D. Lodgers will not be included in the assessment.
- Excessive travel, where applicants in, or due to be in, permanent full-time employment (20+ hours per week) are subject to excessive travel (over 1 hour each way).
- Homeless is where the Council accepts a household is homeless but to whom it does not owe a duty to secure settled accommodation because they are not considered to be in priority need or because they are intentionally homeless.

Band 5:

Sharing essential facilities, forced to live apart, above ground floor flat with child or pregnant, and key workers:

- Sharing essential facilities such as bathroom, toilet or kitchen with a separate household¹⁰.
- Family forced to live apart, where the family that has previously lived together find themselves in circumstances where it is impractical to reside in the same house due to financial, work or other commitments.
- The applicant has a child under ten or is pregnant and lives in a first floor flat or above.
- The applicant is considered by the Council to be a key worker.

¹⁰ Where the households sharing essential facilities are parents and their adult children this does not apply



Band 6:

Following a financial and need assessment, applicant is considered to be in housing need.

Band 7:

Applicant is not considered to be in housing need or does not have a local connection

- Following a financial and need assessment, applicant deemed to have a local connection is not considered to be in housing need.
- Applicant is not deemed to have a local connection but identified to be within the class of person set out in section 13.1 (and where there are no exceptional circumstances as set out in section 4.15).



Appendix B: Glossary and Definition of Terms

Affordable Housing	Affordable housing comprises social and affordable rented accommodation and low-cost home ownership products [see NPPF]
Affordable Rent	Rent which is to 80% of local open market gross rent.
Allocation	Selecting a person to be a council tenant or nominating a person to be a housing association tenant.
Bidding for a Property	The applicant's way of expressing an interest in being re-housed in that property
Choice-Based Lettings	More commonly known as CBL. A process used to advertise available properties and asking applicants to choose for themselves the properties they would like to be considered for.
Community Benefit	An allocation used to promote the best interests of the local community, detailing how the eligibility for a property departs from the standard criteria within the Allocation Policy.
Direct Let	Used in urgent situations where the Council directly allocates or nominates to a property.
Housing Register	The list of all those registered with Shropshire Council for affordable housing.
Key worker	Someone whose role provides an essential service deemed crucial to the economy and wellbeing of society.
Local Letting Plans	Specifies how the qualification and eligibility for a property departs from the standard criteria within the Allocation Policy.



Main Duty	Where a homeless household is found by the local housing authority to be eligible for assistance, homeless but not intentionally so, in priority need and with a local connection they are owed the main duty of an offer of suitable accommodation.
Nomination	When a person is allocated a housing association tenancy in line with the Council's allocation policy and scheme.
Prevention Duty	If a homeless household is eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness within 56 days, the local housing authority is required to work with them to prevent them becoming homeless.
Registered Providers	Housing organisations that are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing. Local authorities who own social housing stock are Registered Providers. Private Registered Providers are usually called Housing Associations.
Relief Duty	If a homeless household is eligible for assistance and is homeless, regardless of priority need, the local authority is required to take reasonable steps assist the household to obtain accommodation, this duty could last for up to 56 days.
Sensitive Let	Used for specific properties in the best interests of the local community.
Section 21 Notice	A formal document giving two months' notice on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy to vacate a property.



Section 106 Agreement	Some properties may be restricted under agreements pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), imposing conditions on who is eligible to be allocated / nominated, such as including a local connection requirement to a specific parish or area.
Shared Ownership	Where a person buys a proportion of a new home and pays rent on the remaining portion.
Statutory Homeless	A term that refers to people or families to whom a local housing authority has a duty to make an offer of suitable accommodation – this could be a council or housing association property or a twelve-month tenancy of private rented accommodation.



Appendix C: List of Information Required to Verify an Offer of Accommodation

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Local Connection

A copy of one of the following documents either from the applicant or from the close relative must be provided:

- Council tax bill
- Employment or contract of employment details
- Tenancy agreement

Without the documentation shown above, your local connection will not be verified.

Identification

- Passport sized photograph of applicant
- Original or certified copy of birth certificate or passport for applicant and for each household member included on the applicant's application
- Where applicable, proof of name change via Deed Poll
- Where applicable, original or certified copy of Marriage certificate

Housing

- A copy of Tenancy agreement
- A copy of Licence agreement
- A letter from friend or relative confirming the applicant's living arrangements - (letter should state date when the applicant moved in and number of bedrooms to which they have access)
- A current valuation of the applicant's home
- A copy of the applicant's latest mortgage statement
- Confirmation of Tied accommodation

Income

A copy of award letter or bank statements showing the following amounts:

- Employment Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Child Benefit (award letter only)



- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Incapacity benefit
- DLA
- Carer's allowance
- Pension credit
- State Pension
- Occupational Pension
- Rent income
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Council tax benefits
- Universal credit
- Child support payments
- Last 3 months or 5 weeks of payslips for each employment
- A copy of self-employed accounts

Assets

- Independent property valuation
- Current, saving and investments bank accounts
- Premium bonds



Appendix D: Size and Type of Properties Eligibility Criteria

It is expected that for working age applicants the size of property for which they are entitled is in line with the DWP bedroom standard, however if applicants can demonstrate that they are able to pay rent with or without recourse to Housing Benefit, they may be considered for a property with an additional bedroom, this being subject to availability.

If a person named on an application as being part of the household is aged 16 or over they are classed as a person who is not a child and, therefore, as needing their own bedroom.

Households will usually be able to choose the floor level on which they want to live (depending on property type) unless there is an assessed need for a particular floor level. For example, if priority for ground floor accommodation is recommended on medical grounds.

The criteria listed below will usually be used when deciding what property is suitable for a household.

Household	Properties usually considered suitable
Single person of working age ¹¹	Room in shared house, bedsit or 1 bedroom flat
Single person over working age	Bedsit, 1 or 2 bedroom flat or bungalow
Couple both of working age	1 bedroom flat
Couple with one or both over working age	1 or 2 bedroom flat or bungalow
Pregnant woman with no other children	1 or 2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with one child	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with two children aged under 10	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with two children aged under 16 of the same sex	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with two children of different sex, where one or both children are aged 10 or over	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with three children	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with four children	3 or 4 ¹² bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with five or more children	4 or 5 ¹³ bedroom house
Household needing 2 bedrooms where all are adults	2 bedroom flat or maisonette

¹¹ Working age includes anyone who is under the State Pension Credit age at the time

¹² Depending on age and sex of children

¹³ Depending on age and sex of children



Appendix E: List of Local Lettings Plans and Policies

Hanley Lane, Bayston Hill

Oak Meadow, Bishops Castle

Chapel Close, Bomere Heath

Rastick Close, Bridgnorth

Tasley Area, Bridgnorth

Wenlock Rise, Bridgnorth

Love Lane, Cleobury

Shrewsbury Road, Cockshut

Brook Close, Condover

The Leasowes, Ford

Bearcroft, Hinstock

Warren Court, Market Drayton

Orchid Meadow, Minsterley

Callaughton Lane, Much Wenlock

Hawthorne Grove, Lime Grove, Holly Green and Hazel Grove, Oswestry

Plas Ffynnon Way, Oswestry

Willow Gate, Castle Street, Oswestry

Wingate Way, Park Hall, Oswestry

Thomas Beddoes, Shifnal

Battlefields, Shrewsbury

Sweetlake Meadow, Shrewsbury

White Lodge, The Mount, Shrewsbury

Bower Farm, St Martins

Church Farm, Tilstock

Round Meadow, Wem

Saxon Fields, Wem

Pipegate, Woore



Appendix F: Key workers

Health and Social care

Includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare

Includes childcare, support and teaching staff, social workers and specialist education professionals.

Key public services

Includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Local and national government

Only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of essential public services, such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arm's length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods

Includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example, hygienic and veterinary medicines).

Public safety and national security

Includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

Transport

Includes those who keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Utilities, communication and financial services

Includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data



infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.



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Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time

23rd September 2026
10am

Public

A National Plan for Homelessness

Cabinet Member:	Councillor James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing
Lead Director:	Paula Mawson – Service Director for Communities and Customer
Service Area:	Communities and Customer (Housing Services)
Report Author	Laura Fisher – Head of Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living Fiona Whitaker-Stranks – Interim Homelessness Operations Manager
Officer contact details	01743 258981 – laura.fisher@shropshire.gov.uk
Electoral Divisions Affected	All
Key Decision?	Non Key
Cabinet Forward Plan	Not Applicable
Report considered by	Not Applicable

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the council's statutory duty regarding homelessness, temporary accommodation and rough sleeping, including recent national developments and the implications for Shropshire Council and progress made locally in responding to the Government's reform agenda.

2. Recommendations

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to

- 2.1 Note the national homelessness reform agenda and the implications for Shropshire Council, including the National Plan to End Homelessness, the Rough Sleeping Programme, proposed Duty to Collaborate, Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty and care leaver reforms.
- 2.2 Support the development of a local Action Plan in response to the National Plan Delivery Plan, aligned to the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024–2029, to provide a clear framework for local implementation, governance, risk management and performance monitoring.
- 2.3 Recognise homelessness prevention as a whole-Council and whole-system responsibility, requiring strengthened partnership working across Housing, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, health, education, criminal justice agencies, registered providers and the voluntary sector.
- 2.4 Note plans to request that this report also be received by People Scrutiny Committee, the Health and Wellbeing Board, and by Cabinet to support shared understanding of homelessness as a whole-system issue and the need for coordinated partnership action across housing, health, social care, children's services and wider partners.
- 2.5 Support continued development of the Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy, improved move-on pathways, care leaver housing protocols and rough sleeping responses to reduce homelessness, manage demand and improve outcomes for residents.
- 2.6 Agree that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives further reports on progress in delivering the National Plan locally, including ongoing performance assurance on prevention outcomes, repeat homelessness, rough sleeping, temporary accommodation use, successful move-on, partnership effectiveness and readiness for new statutory duties. This will include review of the proposed key performance indicators and suggested targets to ensure they are meaningful, achievable and aligned to local priorities, with links made to KPI reporting through corporate performance reports.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Government's National Plan to End Homelessness, published in December 2025, represents the most significant homelessness reform programme in recent years. It sets out a national ambition that homelessness should become rare, brief and non-recurring, supported by a stronger focus on prevention, partnership working and accountability across public services.
- 3.2 Alongside the National Plan, Government has announced a new Rough Sleeping Programme and an ambition that everyone sleeping rough should have a route off the streets before Christmas 2026.

- 3.3 The Government is also strengthening protections for care leavers through legislative changes which will prevent eligible care leavers under 25 being found intentionally homeless.
- 3.4 Shropshire Council is well placed to respond to these developments. Much of the direction of travel aligns with work already underway through the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029. National reforms demand development of a supplementary National Delivery Plan (which links with the current strategy action plan), a review of allocations and nominations arrangements, implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty and development of a Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy.
- 3.5 However, the increasing complexity of homelessness presentations means that homelessness can no longer be viewed solely as a Housing issue. Achieving the ambitions of the National Plan will require a whole-Council and whole-system response involving Housing, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, health partners, criminal justice agencies, registered providers and the voluntary sector.
- 3.6 The National Plan to End Homelessness is supported by a national performance and accountability framework designed to assess whether homelessness is becoming rarer, briefer and less likely to recur. Whilst Government has set the national priorities and outcome measures, local authorities are expected to establish their own baseline position and publish locally determined improvement targets.
- 3.7 The priorities set out within the National Plan closely align with the Council's existing Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 and much of the activity required nationally is already being delivered locally. The current Strategy focuses on early intervention and partnership working, preventing rough sleeping and repeat homelessness, increasing access to suitable accommodation solutions and delivering an effective and accessible Housing Options service.
- 3.8 The Government's priorities include:
- Preventing homelessness through earlier intervention and partnership working.
 - Ensuring homelessness is brief by reducing reliance on temporary accommodation and improving move-on opportunities.
 - Eliminating the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families other than for very short-term emergencies.
 - Reducing rough sleeping, including a national ambition to halve long-term rough sleeping.
 - Improving housing outcomes for people leaving care, prison and hospital.
 - Strengthening local accountability, governance and partnership arrangements.
- 3.9 These priorities align strongly with existing work underway in Shropshire, including homelessness prevention and welfare support pathways, temporary accommodation management, development of a Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy, review of allocations and nominations arrangements with registered providers, rough sleeping outreach and multi-agency responses, implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty, and strengthened joint working arrangements with Children's Services, Adult Social Care, health partners and criminal justice agencies.

- 3.10 As part of the National Plan, all local authorities are required to publish targets against six measures contained within the Government's Local Outcomes Framework. These measures will form the primary mechanism through which progress against the ambition to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring will be assessed nationally. The request of Scrutiny is to determine the targets associated with each of these for Shropshire to demonstrate its improved delivery.

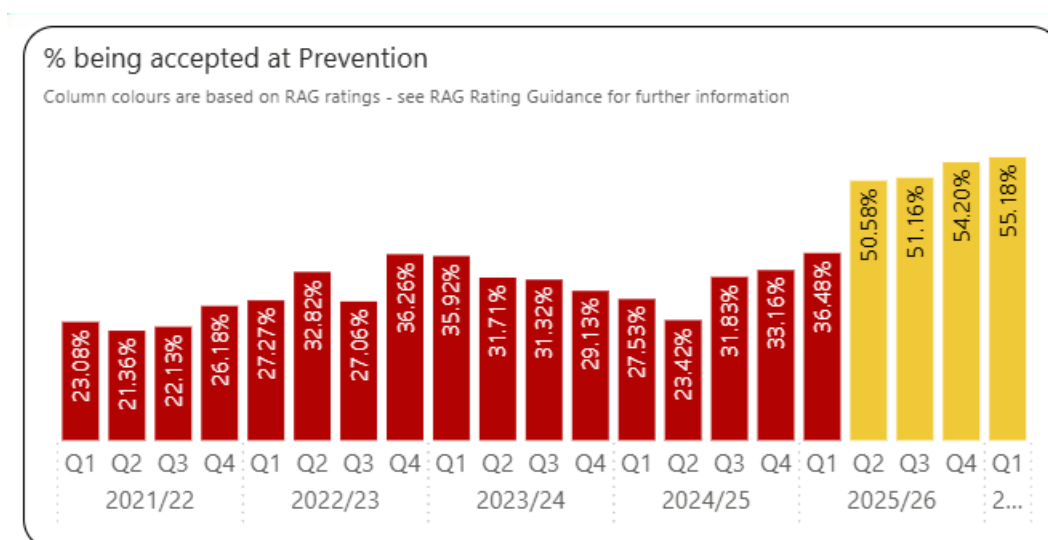
Central Government determined Local Outcomes Framework Measure	National Ambition	Shropshire Baseline
Households with children in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households	Reduce reliance on temporary accommodation and ensure homelessness is brief	H-CLIC April-June 2026 0.40
Households with children in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks	Eliminate family B&B use other than for very short-term emergencies	HCLIC April-June 2026 0
Success at preventing and relieving homelessness	Increase the proportion of households whose homelessness is prevented or relieved	HCLIC April-June 2026 36.89%
Success at preventing and relieving homelessness for households with three or more support needs	Improve outcomes for households experiencing multiple disadvantage	HCLIC April-June 2026 0.44%
People sleeping rough on a single night	Reduce rough sleeping and ensure rapid routes off the streets	As of August 2026 27
People experiencing long-term rough sleeping	Halve long-term rough sleeping by the end of the Parliament	As of August 2026 12

Note – Officers will present data at scrutiny regarding trajectory to date to help aid discussion around future suggested targets.

- 3.11 The baseline position demonstrates both areas of strength and areas where further improvement will be required. Of particular note, Shropshire currently has no households with children accommodated in Bed and Breakfast accommodation beyond the statutory six-week limit, a position that aligns with the National Plan ambition and one which the Council is committed to maintaining. More broadly, the most recent H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Classification – the quarterly reports we have to return to Central Government on our homelessness performance) records 0.4 households with children in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households in Shropshire, substantially below the national average of 3.5.
- 3.12 Following participation in Shelter's Systems Thinking in Homelessness Services programme in 2024, the Council implemented a range of service improvements from April 2025, including the elimination of historic allocation backlogs, same-day case

allocation, revised triage arrangements, clearer pathways between prevention and homelessness teams, and the introduction of housing options officer specialisms.

- 3.13 Evidence indicates these changes are contributing to improved outcomes for households seeking assistance and supporting earlier intervention across the service. Examples of these improvements can be shown through the measure that demonstrates the proportion of households owed a prevention duty has increased from 36.48% in Quarter 1 2025/26 to 55.18% in the most recent quarter reported. This measure assesses the proportion of households who approach the service before homelessness occurs and are accepted for prevention support, rather than after homelessness has already occurred and a relief duty is owed. When assessed against the benchmarking thresholds used within the Government's statutory homelessness statistical returns, Shropshire has improved from 'red rated' performance in Quarter 1 2025/26 to Amber rated performance in Quarter 2 2025/26. The aim is now to reach the 'green rated' threshold.



- 3.14 Other indicators demonstrate a similar direction of travel. The proportion of duties successfully prevented has increased from 15.75% to 31.93%, whilst the proportion of prevention and relief duties ending with accommodation secured has increased from 30.26% to 36.89%. Independent analysis undertaken with Shelter concluded that these trends are consistent with a service increasingly focused on earlier intervention, reducing escalation into crisis and improving outcomes for applicants.
- 3.15 More recent operational data indicate significant progress in reducing reliance on B&B accommodation. At the end of September 2025, 286 households were in temporary accommodation, including 100 in B&B accommodation and 17 families. By 4 September 2026, this had reduced to 246 households overall, with 20 in B&B accommodation, including nine families. Over the same period, the number of temporary accommodation units available increased from 186 to 226. This equates to an 80% reduction in B&B use and reflects the wider programme of work to increase suitable temporary accommodation, improve move-on and reduce the use of nightly-paid provision.
- 3.16 This demonstrates that many of the improvements sought through the National Plan are already being progressed locally and provides a strong foundation for future target setting and performance improvement.

- 3.17 This report is asking Scrutiny to discuss local improvement trajectories and consider factors to be considered in the recommending of targets to Cabinet for the published targets against each of the 6 Central Government determined Local Outcomes Framework Measures. Whilst Government has specified the outcome measures and reporting methodology, target setting remains a local decision. This provides an opportunity to ensure that targets are both meaningful and achievable, taking account of local housing market conditions, rurality, homelessness demand, accommodation supply, service capacity and existing performance. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to consider the proposed performance framework and provide views on the level of ambition that should be reflected within the final targets prior to their publication through the Shropshire National Plan to End Homelessness Delivery Plan.

4 Summary of Main Proposals

- 4.1 Implement the National Plan to End Homelessness locally
Shropshire Council should continue to align its homelessness work with the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness, which aims to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. This includes strengthening prevention, earlier intervention, reducing rough sleeping, reducing reliance on temporary accommodation and improving outcomes for people leaving care, hospital and prison.
- 4.2 Develop a local National Plan Delivery Plan
The reforms propose developing a supplementary local delivery plan to set out how Shropshire will respond to the national reform agenda. This will sit alongside the existing Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024–2029 and provide a more focused route for implementing national expectations locally.
- 4.3 Strengthen whole-system partnership working
A key proposal is that homelessness prevention should become a shared responsibility across the Council and partner agencies, not just Housing Services. The report highlights the need for stronger collaboration with Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health, health partners, criminal justice agencies, registered providers and the voluntary sector.
- 4.4 Prepare for the proposed Duty to Collaborate
The proposed national Duty to Collaborate is a significant change. Locally, this means Shropshire will need to strengthen joint pathways, shared accountability and operational arrangements across services so that people with complex needs receive coordinated support before homelessness occurs or escalates.
- 4.5 Embed the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty
Continue implementation of the new statutory duty requiring Housing Services, subject to consent, to notify relevant education and health services when a child is placed in temporary accommodation. This is intended to support continuity of education, health care and wider support for children experiencing homelessness.

- 4.6 Develop and apply a Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy
The Council is developing a Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy to support consistent decision-making and ensure placements are appropriate. This links to the wider aim of reducing unsuitable temporary accommodation and maintaining progress in avoiding the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families beyond the statutory six-week limit.
- 4.7 Improve pathways for rough sleepers
The reform proposes development of rough sleeping responses in line with the Government's new Programme and the ambition that everyone sleeping rough should have a route off the streets before Christmas 2026. This includes housing-led approaches, Housing First principles, multi-agency case coordination, improved move-on pathways and stronger links with mental health, substance misuse and social care.
- 4.8 Strengthen support for care leavers
The reform highlights legislative changes preventing eligible care leavers under 25 from being found intentionally homeless. The proposal is to strengthen joint working between Housing and Children's Services, review local protocols and ensure care experienced young people are supported to access and sustain accommodation.
- 4.9 Review allocations, nominations and move-on arrangements
The reforms link with the proposed review of social housing allocations and nominations arrangements to improve access to suitable accommodation and support move-on from temporary accommodation, supported housing and rough sleeping pathways.
- 4.10 Improve performance monitoring and scrutiny assurance
This report proposes that scrutiny should receive assurance on whether homelessness is becoming rarer, briefer and less likely to recur. Suggested measures, in line with Government reporting KPI's include prevention outcomes, repeat homelessness, rough sleeping levels, temporary accommodation use, successful move-on, policy readiness and partnership effectiveness.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council is required to respond to the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness and associated reforms. Decisions on formal adoption, resourcing and implementation will sit with Cabinet as appropriate. The purpose of this report is therefore to seek the views of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to inform the development of a local National Plan Delivery Plan, including the level of stretch that should be reflected in suggested local targets. In the first instance, this work will be progressed using existing resources, with clear prioritisation and ongoing scrutiny oversight. Any future gaps in capacity, funding or delivery can be considered through the Council's normal budget, commissioning and governance processes.

6 Key risks and Opportunities

Risk	Mitigation
Increasing homelessness demand and complexity, including mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, care experience, safeguarding concerns and repeat homelessness.	Strengthen early intervention, multi-agency case coordination and referral pathways so that support needs are identified and addressed alongside accommodation duties.
Limited affordable housing supply, restricted private rented sector access and insufficient supported accommodation, which may delay move-on and increase pressure on temporary accommodation.	Continue to review allocations and nominations arrangements, improve move-on planning, work with registered providers and partners, and explore opportunities to increase access to settled and supported housing options.
Growing pressure on temporary accommodation, including cost, availability and suitability of placements.	Maintain a strong focus on prevention, develop and implement the Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy, monitor placement quality and continue work to avoid unsuitable Bed and Breakfast use, particularly for families.
Homelessness prevention remains seen primarily as a Housing responsibility rather than a whole-system responsibility.	Use the proposed Duty to Collaborate and local National Plan Delivery Plan to strengthen shared accountability across Housing, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health, health, criminal justice agencies, registered providers and the voluntary sector.
New statutory duties and national reforms are not fully embedded consistently across policies, systems and operational practice.	Develop clear operational processes, staff guidance, consent documentation, notification templates and governance arrangements to support implementation of duties such as the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty and care leaver reforms.
Children and families in temporary accommodation may experience disruption to education, health care and wider support.	Embed the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty so that, subject to consent, relevant education and health services are notified promptly and can provide coordinated support.
Care leavers under 25 may face increased risk of homelessness and may require additional support to access and sustain accommodation.	Strengthen joint protocols between Housing and Children's Services, reinforce corporate parenting responsibilities and ensure early housing planning forms part of pathway planning for care experienced young people.
Rough sleepers with entrenched and multiple needs may not sustain accommodation without intensive support.	Build on RESET and existing rough sleeping arrangements, strengthen housing-led approaches, apply Housing First principles where appropriate and improve links with mental health, substance misuse and social care services.
Financial and service sustainability pressures increase as demand, temporary accommodation use and complexity rise.	Monitor demand, cost and outcomes closely, prioritise prevention activity, strengthen move-on pathways and use scrutiny and governance

	arrangements to oversee risk, performance and resource implications.
Scrutiny may not have sufficient assurance on whether homelessness is becoming rarer, briefer and less likely to recur.	Develop a clear performance framework for scrutiny, including measures on prevention outcomes, repeat homelessness, rough sleeping, temporary accommodation use, successful move-on, partnership effectiveness and policy readiness.

7 Council Priorities

7.1 A Council that is financially sustainable, with clear priorities and purpose, and a workforce supported to excel

This reform supports the Council's central priority ambition by focusing on prevention, demand management and stronger governance. Homelessness and temporary accommodation create significant statutory, financial and operational pressures for the Council. By prioritising early intervention, reducing reliance on temporary accommodation, improving move-on pathways and strengthening performance monitoring, the proposals support more sustainable use of resources and clearer oversight of demand, cost, risk and outcomes. The development of a local National Plan Delivery Plan will also provide a clear framework for implementation, accountability and assurance.

7.2 Communities that are connected by well-maintained roads, accessible transport and infrastructure

In a large rural county, access to suitable accommodation is closely connected to transport, infrastructure, schools, health services, employment, support networks and community facilities. Homelessness prevention and appropriate temporary accommodation placements help people remain connected to the services and communities they rely on, reducing the risk of isolation and disruption, particularly for families, care leavers, people with health needs and those with complex support needs.

7.3 People live in safe, inclusive places with homes that meet their needs

This is the strongest direct alignment with the Corporate Plan. The reform supports this ambition by setting out the Council's statutory homelessness responsibilities and the actions being taken to prevent homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, improve access to settled accommodation and ensure temporary accommodation is suitable. Work to review allocations and nominations arrangements, strengthen move-on pathways, improve supported accommodation options and develop a Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy will help more people access safe, appropriate and sustainable homes that meet their needs.

7.4 Everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and to thrive at every stage of life

Homelessness is a significant wider determinant of health and wellbeing. These changes support this ambition by recognising the links between homelessness, mental and physical health, domestic abuse, poverty, substance misuse, safeguarding, care experience, hospital discharge and criminal justice pathways. The Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty will help ensure that, subject to consent, education and health partners are notified when children are placed in temporary accommodation. Strengthened pathways for rough sleepers, care leavers and people

with complex needs will also support earlier intervention and better long-term outcomes.

7.5 An environment that harnesses our natural assets and supports wellbeing

The changes contribute to this ambition through its focus on suitable, stable and sustainable accommodation outcomes that support individual and community wellbeing. Although the environmental link is not the primary focus of the report, safe and settled housing is an important foundation for wellbeing and helps people remain connected to local places, communities and support networks. Future delivery planning should continue to consider the suitability, location and sustainability of accommodation options, particularly in the context of Shropshire's rural geography.

7.6 A thriving economy that benefits everyone

Preventing homelessness and improving access to settled housing supports economic participation and resilience. Stable accommodation helps people sustain employment, education, training and family life, while reducing the disruption and cost associated with crisis placements. This reform also supports more efficient use of public resources by seeking to reduce avoidable temporary accommodation use and improve move-on into settled housing. This contributes to a more inclusive local economy by helping residents remain connected to work, learning, services and community opportunities.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The National Plan to End Homelessness and associated reforms have potential financial implications for the Council wider than just in Housing Services. There will be direct and indirect implications across Adults and Children's services also. The Council is likely to face continued financial pressure through rising homelessness demand, increased complexity of presentations, temporary accommodation costs, and the need to strengthen prevention, move-on pathways and support arrangements for rough sleepers, care leavers and households with multiple needs. Rising homelessness demand would require ongoing mitigations to continue to manage the pressures on the housing budgets.
- 8.2 There is also potential cost pressures linked to implementing new statutory duties, including the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty and reforms affecting care leavers under 25. These may require operational capacity, system changes, staff guidance, information-sharing processes and stronger partnership arrangements across Housing, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, education and health partners.
- 8.3 However, there are also opportunities to reduce longer-term costs through earlier intervention, reduced use of temporary accommodation, improved tenancy sustainment, fewer repeat homelessness presentations and better coordinated support for people with complex needs. Effective implementation of the National Plan locally should therefore be viewed not only as a statutory and strategic requirement, but also as an opportunity to reduce avoidable demand and improve financial sustainability across the wider Council system.

- 8.4 The Council will work with Finance as part of developing the Delivery Plan to model the potential financial implications of the proposed actions, including the impact on Housing Services and wider Council budgets. This work will inform the development of the plan and any future report to Cabinet, ensuring that the financial impacts, risks, assumptions and any resource requirements are clearer at the point Cabinet is asked to consider future decisions.

9 Legal and HR implications

- 9.1 These changes identify a number of legal implications linked to existing homelessness duties and emerging national reforms. The Council must continue to meet its statutory duties under homelessness legislation, including duties to prevent and relieve homelessness, assess applications, provide interim and temporary accommodation where required, and ensure that accommodation offered is suitable.
- 9.2 There are also specific legal implications arising from the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty, introduced from 1 September 2026 through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. This places a new requirement on local housing authorities, subject to consent, to notify relevant education and health services when a child is placed in temporary accommodation. The Council will need to ensure that consent, information sharing, data protection and notification processes are legally compliant and consistently applied.
- 9.3 The report also references legislative changes preventing eligible care leavers under 25 from being found intentionally homeless. This has implications for the Council's homelessness decision-making, Children's Services pathways and corporate parenting responsibilities. Local policies, procedures and joint protocols will need to reflect this change to reduce the risk of unlawful or inconsistent decisions.
- 9.4 The proposed Duty to Collaborate also has potential legal implications. Although further detail is expected, the direction of travel suggests stronger statutory expectations around joint working between housing, social care, health, education, criminal justice and voluntary sector partners. The Council will need to ensure that governance, referral pathways and accountability arrangements are sufficiently robust once guidance and legislative requirements are confirmed.
- 9.5 There are workforce implications arising from the increasing complexity of homelessness presentations and the shift towards prevention, earlier intervention and whole-system working. Staff will need the skills, capacity and confidence to respond to cases involving multiple and overlapping needs, including mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, safeguarding, care experience, hospital discharge and rough sleeping.
- 9.6 Implementation of new duties will require staff guidance, training and operational support, particularly in relation to the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty, consent processes, information sharing, care leaver reforms, temporary accommodation suitability and multi-agency case coordination.

- 9.7 The report also highlights the need for stronger partnership working across Housing, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health, education, health partners, criminal justice agencies, registered providers and the voluntary sector. This may require clearer roles and responsibilities, escalation routes, joint working arrangements and potentially additional management capacity to oversee delivery, performance and risk.
- 9.8 There may also be implications for staff wellbeing and workload, particularly if homelessness demand, temporary accommodation pressures and case complexity continue to increase. The Council will need to monitor capacity, caseloads and service resilience to ensure statutory duties can be met safely and consistently.

10 Electoral Division Implications

- 10.1 None – this report is relevant countywide

11. Health, Social (including “Child Friendly Shropshire”) and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Homelessness and temporary accommodation can have significant adverse impacts on physical and mental health. The report highlights that many people presenting to Housing Options have complex and overlapping needs, including severe and enduring mental health conditions, substance and alcohol misuse, physical health needs, learning disabilities, neurodiversity and safeguarding concerns. Without coordinated support, there is a risk of worsening health inequalities, increased crisis presentations, tenancy breakdown, repeat homelessness and greater demand on health and emergency services.
- 11.2 The implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty provides an opportunity to strengthen links between Housing, education and health services. Subject to consent, notifying GP practices, health visitors and other relevant services when children are placed in temporary accommodation should support earlier identification of health needs, continuity of care and improved health outcomes.
- 11.3 There are significant social implications, particularly for vulnerable adults, children, families, care leavers and people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Homelessness can contribute to social exclusion, family instability, disruption to education, poor wellbeing, safeguarding concerns and increased reliance on public services.
- 11.4 The Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty directly supports the ambitions of Child Friendly Shropshire by recognising the impact that homelessness and temporary accommodation can have on children's wellbeing, education, health and family stability. Ensuring that education and health partners are notified when children are placed in temporary accommodation will help children receive earlier and more joined-up support.
- 11.5 Shropshire currently has no households with children accommodated in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks. This is an important position to maintain, as extended use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families can have significant impacts on children's health, wellbeing, education, privacy and family stability. Continued oversight of temporary accommodation use, suitability and move-on arrangements will be important to ensure this position is sustained.

- 11.6 The report also supports the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities by strengthening protections for care leavers under 25 and reducing the risk that care experienced young people become homeless. A whole-system response involving Housing, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, education, health partners, criminal justice agencies, registered providers and the voluntary sector will be essential to improving social outcomes and reducing repeat homelessness.
- 11.7 There are economic implications for both the Council and the wider community. Rising homelessness demand, temporary accommodation pressures and increasing case complexity can create significant financial costs for the Council, particularly where households require emergency accommodation, intensive support or repeated interventions.
- 11.8 However, the report also presents opportunities to reduce longer-term costs through prevention, earlier intervention, tenancy sustainment and improved move-on pathways. Preventing homelessness before crisis point can reduce expenditure on temporary accommodation, reduce demand on health, social care and emergency services, and support better long-term outcomes for individuals and families.
- 11.9 Improving access to settled housing, supported accommodation and effective rough sleeping pathways can also support wider economic wellbeing by helping people maintain employment, education, training, family networks and community connections. This aligns with the Council's wider aim of supporting resilient communities and reducing avoidable demand across public services.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 There are clear equality implications because homelessness and temporary accommodation can disproportionately affect people with protected characteristics and those experiencing wider disadvantage. The groups most likely to be impacted include children and young people, care leavers, people with disabilities, people with mental health needs, people experiencing domestic abuse, pregnant women, older people, people with substance misuse needs, people leaving prison or hospital, and people from minority ethnic communities who may face additional barriers to accessing suitable housing and support.
- 12.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council will need to ensure that any local delivery plan, policies and operational arrangements have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This will be particularly important in relation to temporary accommodation suitability, access to homelessness prevention services, information sharing, reasonable adjustments, communication needs, rural access barriers and the availability of appropriate support.
- 12.3 The reforms support equality objectives by promoting earlier intervention, stronger partnership working and more coordinated support for those at greatest risk of homelessness. The Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty is particularly relevant for children, as it supports earlier engagement with education and health services and helps reduce the risk of disadvantage arising from homelessness or housing instability. The proposed strengthening of care leaver protections also

supports equality of opportunity for care experienced young people, who are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

- 12.4 The Council should continue to monitor the impact of homelessness services and temporary accommodation placements on different groups, including by age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, race and other relevant protected characteristics where data is available. Equality impact considerations should inform the development of the local National Plan Delivery Plan, the Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy, care leaver protocols and any changes to pathways or access arrangements.
- 12.5 The report also has implications for the Armed Forces community in line with the Armed Forces Covenant, which seeks to ensure that serving personnel, veterans and their families are not disadvantaged in accessing services as a result of their service.
- 12.6 Homelessness prevention, housing advice, temporary accommodation and move-on pathways should continue to take account of the needs of veterans, serving personnel leaving the Armed Forces, reservists and Armed Forces families. Some members of the Armed Forces community may experience housing difficulties linked to transition from military to civilian life, relationship breakdown, mental health needs, physical injury, disability, financial hardship or limited local connection following service-related moves.
- 12.7 The report supports the Armed Forces Covenant by promoting earlier intervention, targeted prevention for groups at higher risk of homelessness and stronger partnership working across services. This provides an opportunity to ensure that Armed Forces households are identified early, receive appropriate housing advice and are referred to relevant specialist support where needed.
- 12.8 In implementing the National Plan locally, the Council should ensure that staff are aware of Armed Forces Covenant commitments and that homelessness assessments, prevention activity and accommodation pathways recognise service-related circumstances. This may include working with Armed Forces support organisations, health services, voluntary sector partners and housing providers to support sustainable housing outcomes for veterans and Armed Forces families.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 The report has limited direct environmental implications, as its primary focus is homelessness prevention, temporary accommodation, rough sleeping and statutory housing duties. However, there are several indirect environmental considerations linked to the way homelessness and temporary accommodation services are delivered.
- 13.2 The rural nature of Shropshire means that access to accommodation, support services, education, health care and employment can involve travel across dispersed communities. Where temporary accommodation is located away from a household's existing school, GP, support network or place of work, this may increase travel requirements, transport costs and associated carbon emissions. Ensuring that placements are as suitable and local as reasonably practicable can therefore support both social and environmental objectives.

- 13.3 There may also be environmental implications linked to the quality, condition and energy efficiency of accommodation used for temporary or supported housing. Poor-quality or inefficient accommodation can contribute to fuel poverty, poor health outcomes and higher energy use. The development of a Temporary Accommodation Suitability Policy provides an opportunity to ensure that accommodation standards, including safety, condition and suitability, are considered consistently.
- 13.4 In the longer term, improving access to settled housing, reducing repeat homelessness and strengthening move-on pathways can contribute to more sustainable patterns of accommodation use. This may reduce reliance on emergency or short-term placements, avoid unnecessary travel and support more stable community outcomes.
- 13.5 Overall, while the report does not identify significant direct environmental impacts, there are opportunities to align homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation planning with the Council's wider objectives around sustainable communities, reducing unnecessary travel, improving housing quality and supporting residents to live safely and sustainably.

14. Background Papers

- 14.1. Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2024-2029) - [Preventing-Homelessness-and-Rough-Sleeping-Strategy.pdf](#)

15. Appendices

Appendix A – Suggested Areas of Discussion

Appendix A – Suggested areas of discussion

- **Prevention and early intervention:** What more can be done across the Council and with partners to identify households at risk of homelessness earlier, before crisis presentation or the need for temporary accommodation?
- **Whole-system responsibility:** How can Housing, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health, health partners, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector work together more effectively so that homelessness prevention is not seen solely as a Housing function?
- **Complex needs and safeguarding:** Where individuals present with mental health needs, substance misuse, domestic abuse, care and support needs or safeguarding concerns, what assurance does scrutiny need that joint pathways are effective and timely?
- **Temporary accommodation pressures:** What are the key drivers of temporary accommodation demand in Shropshire, and what further action is needed to reduce reliance on unsuitable or costly accommodation while still meeting statutory duties?
- **Housing supply and move-on:** How do limited availability of affordable housing, private rented sector access and supported accommodation affect the Council's ability to bring homelessness duties to an end safely and sustainably?
- **Rough sleeping:** What local arrangements are in place to ensure people sleeping rough have a clear route off the streets, and what are the barriers to sustaining accommodation once it is secured?
- **Care leavers and corporate parenting:** How should the Council strengthen joint working between Housing and Children's Services to ensure care experienced young people do not leave care into homelessness?
- **Policy and operational readiness:** What assurance is needed that local policies, procedures and staff guidance are ready for emerging national requirements, including the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty, the temporary accommodation suitability policy and changes affecting care leavers?
- **Performance, outcomes and assurance:** What measures should scrutiny receive to understand whether homelessness is becoming rarer, briefer and less likely to recur, including prevention outcomes, repeat homelessness, rough sleeping, temporary accommodation use and successful move-on?
- **Financial and service sustainability:** How should the Council balance statutory duties, increasing demand, financial pressures and the need to invest in prevention and long-term housing solutions?
- **Role of elected members:** How can members support early identification of housing need in their communities, promote partnership working and provide constructive scrutiny of statutory homelessness duties and outcomes?

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – 2026/2027

COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

Date	Topic	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holders	All Member Briefing	Task and Finish Group followed by a report to Committee	Report straight to committee	Previous topic of review - an update against the action plan
25-Jun-26	Local Plan	Eddie West	David Walker			☒	
25-Jun-26	Social Housing Regulator – update presentation	Paula Mawson / Laura Fisher	David Walker			☒	
25-Jun-26	Work programme 2026-27	Claire Braddeek					
23-Sep-26	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Laura Fisher	James Owen			☒	
23-Sep-26	Allocations Policy	Laura Fisher	James Owen			☒	
23-Sep-26	Statutory Duties (including regulator, renters rights, homelessness etc)	Laura Fisher	James Owen			☒	
26-Nov-26	STAR Housing Overview	Laura Fisher	James Owen			☒	
23-Sep-26	Housing Strategy	Laura Fisher	James Owen			☒	
						☐	
18-Mar-27							

Other identified areas of interest from Committee discussions, including topics for briefings and potential Task and Finish Groups:

Planned Task and Finish groups	
Planned Member Briefings	
Traveller Sites	Autumn 2026
Other items for consideration	

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