

AGENDA

Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 10 March 2016**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square,
Hereford, HR1 2HX**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

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Agenda for the Meeting of the Cabinet

Membership

Chairman

Vice-Chairman

Councillor AW Johnson

Councillor PM Morgan

Councillor H Bramer

Councillor JG Lester

Councillor GJ Powell

Councillor PD Price

Councillor P Rone

AGENDA**Pages****HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in connection with key decisions) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Item No	Title	Portfolio Responsibility	Scrutiny Committee	28 Day Notice Given
4	Options for the future operation of museums and archives	Economy, communities & corporate	General Overview & Scrutiny	Yes
5	Approval of strategic housing strategies	Economy, communities & corporate	General Overview & Scrutiny	Yes

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the Agenda.

3. MINUTES

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2016.

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4. MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE SERVICES

To consider initial options for future operation of the museum and archive service.

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5. APPROVAL OF STRATEGIC HOUSING DOCUMENTS

To approve the housing strategy for Herefordshire, the homelessness prevention review and strategy, the allocations policy and the tenancy strategy.

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COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Thursday 11 February 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor AW Johnson (Chairman)
Councillor PM Morgan (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: H Bramer, JG Lester, GJ Powell, PD Price and P Rone

In attendance: Councillors JM Bartlett, WLS Bowen, JA Hyde, TM James, RI Matthews, AJW Powers, EJ Swinglehurst, DG Harlow, AR Round, NE Shaw and D Summers

128. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr AW Johnson

129. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

130. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman noting that Cllr Mathews and Cllr Powers had been in attendance.

131. HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (HSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15; HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULT BOARD (HSAB) ANNUAL REPORTS 2013/14 AND 2014/15

The interim manager of the safeguarding boards' business unit provided an overview of the annual reports produced by the two boards.

In relation to the report of the safeguarding children's board, and in response to questions by members of cabinet the following points were noted:

- Engagement of partners at a high level in the partnership was good; focus needed to be maintained to ensure continued engagement of partners at an operational level to ensure improvements in practice
- It would be important to be clear about priorities and planned activity aligned to the community safety partnership to provide clear guidance on funding priorities to the incoming police and crime commissioner.

In response to queries by members in attendance the following points were made:

- The forecast drop in the number of under-fives was based on the expected family profile of those moving into additional planned housing.
- The age profile of looked after children and those under child protection arrangements did not remain static, but varied over time

- It was confirmed that an internal audit report in relation to safe employment practices found no concerns in relation to employment of agency staff in the children's directorate although some areas of improvement had been identified in relation to use of volunteers
- Increases in court proceedings case rates reflected a national trend but actions were being taken to reduce this locally which included ensuring an effective multi-agency early help offer and intervention including a focus on areas such as the prevention of homelessness amongst the 16/18 age group.
- The board had recently undertaken work to improve engagement with the third sector and this improvement would be reflected in the next annual report.
- The chairman of the health and social care overview and scrutiny committee drew attention to the need to maintain focus on the support required from partners to deliver improvement following the recent CQC report on Wye Valley Trust.

Resolved that:

- (a) the content of the annual reports and the safeguarding arrangements for children, young people and adults in Herefordshire as assessed by the boards be noted;**
- (b) the strategic priorities identified by the board be used to inform future decision making by the council.**

132. SCHOOLS CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing presented the draft strategy for cabinet consideration noting that the strategy provided a call to everyone to pull together to provide practical solutions to the issues identified. Already, through co-operation between council officers, head teachers and governing bodies much had been achieved but the strategy would provide a focal point for delivering further development.

In response to questions from cabinet members the following points were noted:

- The strategy was not prescriptive in determining a minimum school size but principle five within the strategy provided guidance as to the issues to be considered
- Positive discussions with a number of schools had already been held and innovative solutions were already being explored; moving into the next stage of planning and debate to include local communities was critical

In response to issues raised by members in attendance the following points was made:

- The strategy acknowledged that the solutions did not lie only with the council but with all schools partners regardless of their status and, taken with the children and young people's plan, would provide a sound basis for ensuring Herefordshire's children received the best standard of education and access to opportunity
- The strategy was sufficiently flexible to meet the requirements of emerging legislation; regardless of whether a school was a local authority maintained

school or not the council retained a strategic role to ensure good quality education is in place to meet demand

- Rural school issues in other council areas had been reviewed and the challenges of making changes to smaller rural schools were often left to one side in the light of falling school numbers
- All schools had been visited to confirm the data held and discussions with schools had and would continue to take place; the strategy had not been developed as the result of a desk top exercise
- The strategy would be developed in alignment with other strategic planning documents including neighbourhood development plans
- Community and/or shared use of schools was recognised within the draft strategy to maximise the benefit of the assets; the council was no longer in the position to require schools to consider joint or shared use but would continue to work with schools and communities to explore the potential opportunities and benefits
- The potential for participatory budgeting had not been specifically considered but all opportunities for wider funding would be explored on a case by case basis
- Solutions were not yet being proposed to issues relating to the city and surrounding areas identified, however the strategy would provide the framework for identifying solutions
- There was no evidence to suggest areas of concern in relation to staff morale were specifically related to shared leadership arrangements; any such concerns should be brought to the attention of the head teacher and governing body of the school in question in the first instance
- The strategy was aligned to the growth identified within the core strategy and investment requirements in those areas were accepted although the detail of how that investment was used would be determined as more concrete plans evolved
- The specialist educational advisor for children with disabilities had been consulted

The cabinet member infrastructure emphasised the value of a coherent plan and effective engagement with communities in securing government and other funding to deliver fit for purpose educational facilities.

Resolved that:

- (a) the schools capital investment strategy be approved; and**
- (b) detailed financial plans, including representation to the secretary of state for education be developed and brought to cabinet for approval as required**

133. QUARTER 3 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND BUDGET REPORT 2015/16

It was noted that timetable for adoption of the local transport plan had been amended and, having been considered recently by the general overview and scrutiny

committee, the plan would be considered by cabinet and council later in the spring. The director of resources noted the positive predictions of delivering a balanced budget overall.

In response to queries by members in attendance the following points were made:

- Overspend in children's wellbeing was confirmed as being approximately £1.9m
- The management of change budget was underspent because of action undertaken to minimise severance costs
- The recommendations of the report did not have a community impact.
- The rate of council tax collection provided was year to date not end year position; the collection rate was holding up but it was noted that in relation to business rates if appeals were successful payments were backdated for up to six years
- The current case management system used by social care was being upgraded to the latest version (MOSAIC) and therefore work on updating the existing system (Frameworki) had been halted
- An update on progress in delivering the broadband strategy was provided
- The director of resources would provide written confirmation of the spend profile on the link road since January 2015 to Councillor Mathews
- A briefing note had been provided to all members on the one-off £4.4m grant funding which had been announced in the final settlement and, in accordance with the resolution of Council this would be added to general reserves.

Resolved that:

- (a) **Cabinet notes the council is currently projected to spend within its overall budget in 2015/16; and**
- (b) **Performance for the first nine months of 2015/16 was considered**

134. OPTION APPRAISAL FOR 16 - 18 HIGH TOWN, HEREFORD (BURNT OUT SHOPS ADJACENT TO OLD HOUSE)

It was noted that the reasons for recommendations had inadvertently been omitted from the report. Whilst not materially affecting the content of the report for completeness it was noted that the reasons were to facilitate a council response should no significant market progress be made.

The cabinet member presented proposals to enable the council to take action to facilitate bringing back 16-18 High Town into economic use. The relaxing of listed building planning constraints was welcomed, and the likelihood that this would make the property more attractive to the private sector was acknowledged. In response to questions from cabinet members the following points were noted:

- Enquiries regarding the site were being received and passed on to the administrators;
- The monitoring officer provided assurance that every effort would be made to secure a negotiated arrangement before proceeding with a compulsory purchase order;

In response to questions from members in attendance the following points were

noted:

- The new university had been notified of the site and the current planning requirements

There was general support for action to be taken to resolve the matter.

Resolved that:

- a) subject to the conditions outlined at paragraph 17, the listed building premises known as 16-18 High Town (shown edged in red on the location plan attached to this report) are purchased and a compulsory purchase order be approved if necessary; and,**
- b) authority is delegated to the director for economy communities and corporate, following consultation with the relevant cabinet member and director of finance, to approve the business case and take all necessary steps to effect the purchase within the financial parameters set out within the report**

135. CORPORATE PROPERTY STRATEGY 2016-2020

In recommending the draft strategy the cabinet member contracts and assets the cabinet member noted the need to ensure suitable premises were available from which to deliver services to the public and in particular some of our more vulnerable service users.

In response to questions from members in attendance the following points were noted:

- Operational issues (such as arose in relation to Union Street and Shire Hall) resulted in higher refurbishment and maintenance costs, emphasising the need for suitable cost effective premises; it was intended to continue use of Shire Hall
- The cabinet member contracts and assets confirmed that support would be offered to tenant farmers and invited the Independent group leader to contact him directly with specific concerns or suggestions
- A written response would be provided to Cllr Powers' enquiry about a request for integrated service provision at Belmont library
- Discussions were ongoing with the new university about their accommodation needs; in relation specifically to Franklin House, should a decision be taken to sell the property to the new university they had indicated that a phased approach to occupation would be taken.

Resolved that:

- a) the corporate property strategy 2016-2020 attached at appendix 1 be approved and used to guide the development and delivery of the property programme; and**
- b) the acquisition of a 10 year lease of the property known as Elgar House, Holmer Road, Hereford, at an annual rent of £87k be approved.**

The meeting ended at 15:53



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	10 March 2016
Title of report:	Museum and archive services
Report by:	Assistant director communities

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates and it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To consider initial options for future operation of the museum and archive service.

Recommendations

THAT:

- (a) the savings and income plan (outlined in paragraphs 17 to 29 of the report) is implemented;**
- (b) £80k is invested in improvements to the Old House, stock and marketing as outlined at paragraph 44;**
- (c) a further report on longer term options for future sustainable delivery of the service be developed to include exploration of trust, transfer and shared service arrangements with suitable heritage partners; and**
- (d) the principles of allocating library and museum support fund (outlined at paragraphs 30/31 of the report) are agreed.**

Alternative options

- 1 To reduce or cease operation of the services. This is not recommended given the value placed on these services by residents and visitors, and the potential for the services to develop alternative delivery arrangements over time.

- 2 To maintain existing service provision. This is not recommended given the need to deliver savings and to improve the heritage offer to residents and visitors to the county.

Reasons for recommendations

- 3 The council has considerable budget challenges based on a reduced government grant and the requirement to meet the care and safeguarding requirements of residents in the county. The archive and museum service plays a contributing role in supporting the visitor economy; has responsibility for the care of historic collections for future generations; and along with other museum/heritage providers in the county gives a sense of identity and place. The report and recommendations propose ways of reducing the council's revenue costs whilst retaining elements of the service. The recommendations support the services in becoming more commercial to raise income and looking at full cost recovery when charging for services.
- 4 The report addresses the first two years of revenue budget reductions; a further report on longer term options will be developed.

Key considerations

- 5 The delivery of the archive and museum services should be seen in the context of the wider contribution to the county's heritage offer made by the voluntary, secular and private sector. Herefordshire has a rich heritage well preserved through its landscape, architecture and town/city formations, castles and churches, and the nature of its employment sector through farming, land based industry, crafts and manufacturing traditions.
- 6 There are 33 museum/heritage attractions in the county¹ and 5.5 million² visitors to Herefordshire. Herefordshire Council directly operates the Old House museum (High Town, Hereford), Hereford Museum and Art Gallery (Broad Street, Hereford), the Museum Resource and Learning Centre (MRLC) (Friar Street, Hereford), and the Hereford Archive and Collection Centre (HARC) (Holme Lacy Road, Hereford). Ledbury Heritage Centre and Ross Heritage Centre were part of community asset transfers in 2015 and are now run locally. In addition educational outreach services are offered including 'museum on the move' which takes themed elements of the collection to schools, care homes and community groups.
- 7 The figures below illustrate the visits to the centres:

Sites / Services	Visitor numbers 2012-13	Visitor numbers 2013-14	Visitor numbers 2014-15
Hereford Museum and Art Gallery	28,726	23,467	14,077
The Old House	34,762	26,656	16,080
Herefordshire Archive and Record Centre*	3,160	1,372	Closed
Museum, Resource and Learning Centre (open to the public by appointment)	2,179	1,593	1,193

*note: figures for Record Office influenced by the relocation: open 1 day a week in 2013/14, closed from June during 2014-5; August – January 2015/16 figures: 1,734.

- 8 The figures show a decrease in use of the facilities. This is likely to be due in large part to the reduction in opening times from 41 (summer) and 35 (winter) to 20 hours for the

¹ Review of Museums and Archives, Hilary McGowan with Alastair Stevenson and Lancaster Parr, February 2016

² STEAM report 2012

Museum and Art Gallery and the Old House from 41 (summer) and 35 (winter) to 20 hours a week to deliver financial savings, and reduction in staffing at the museum sites from 14 FTE to 6.2 FTE. However, this reduction in visitor numbers may also in part be reflective of the offer which has been largely unchanged for a number of years, combined with changes to how people access heritage through a multi-channel environment (e.g. increase in digital information making reach and access to collections different).

- 9 Though the centres are based in Hereford they have a countywide function in terms of the collections' presentation, conservation, store and access, plus advice to the voluntary sector. The budget for the service is outlined below:

	Employee costs	Goods and services	Income	Net delegated budget	Centralised premises costs	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Archive / HARC	389	18	(10)	397	224*	621
Sub-total archive service	389	18	(10)	397	224	621
Hereford Broad Street	22	2	0	21	36	57
Hereford Museum Resource and Learning Centre Friar Street	178	10	(3)	188	71	259
Old House	22	2	(3)	21	16	37
Sub-Total museum service	222	14	(6)	230	123	353
Total	611	32	(16)	627	347	974

*Note: premises cost support the services of Archaeology, Historic Environment Record, Biological Records Centre and Archive Service.
Front of Housing staffing between the museum sites is interchangeable.

- 10 The council commissioned a review of the museum and archive services to consider the reduction of the subsidy to the services in light of the wider budget challenge of the authority. The study found a number of opportunities for income generation and savings (see appendix 1 of this report for response to recommendations and appendix 2 for the summary of the review report).
- 11 The report identified key options for savings and income generation as:
- Closure of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery
 - Car parking charges at HARC
 - Expand learning and outreach offer with additional charge
 - Commercial charging for conservation and collections advice/activity
 - Increase lettings of HARC and MRLC
 - Renting of conservation bench space at HARC
 - Charging for conservation work relating to archives
 - Promote licensing of images to generate an income
 - Income from retail and events linked to the Brian Hatton centenary exhibition and pop-up tour
 - Develop retail sales at the Old House based on locally made crafts
 - Reduction of hours at HARC
 - Use of space at HARC for other council services
 - Amalgamation of services with other local authorities / joint provision
- 12 The report does not recommend the closure of other facilities because of the duty to care for the collections, the cost to close, as well as needing to consider the obligations

linked to the funding of MRLC. Also, the report points out that archives have a statutory framework based on the relevant provisions (see legal implications below).

- 13 The report also identified a number of investment areas including:
- New displays and “pop-up” exhibitions
 - Appointment of a commercial manager
 - Appointment of a marketing manager
- 14 The findings of the report have been reviewed and the opportunities assessed with a view to:
- Creating a return on investment and business case (income to cover costs in the first instance then generating income to reduce the revenue costs)
 - Supporting the long term sustainability of the service rather than a one off income generation
 - Proposals are in line with the core intentions of the service to care for the collections and make them accessible to residents and visitors.
- 15 There are a number of drivers for change in how museum and archives operate – specifically councils across the country are finding it a challenge to maintain their current level of service given reducing resources; also the methods of accessing and interpreting history have shifted with an increase of interactive and digital information (though the experience will be different in nature).
- 16 The focus going forward is therefore proposed to be:
- Developing the Old House, as part of the tourism offer for Hereford and the wider county
 - For the museum offer to be part of the wider interpretation of Hereford’s heritage, working with a range of organisations on a co-ordinated view of the city’s historic features
 - For the HARC and MRLC to continue to be centres of heritage collections whilst maximising the use of the venues
 - To increase the opportunity for participation and involvement in history interpretation
 - To be part of the community led scheme to develop Hereford Library, and Hereford Museum and Art Gallery
 - Explore avenues for income generation and merchandise to sustain the service
 - To review the collections policy in light of reduced capacity.
- 17 The table below is an illustration of areas of savings and income generation for years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

	2017/18 ‘000	2018/19 ‘000	Total added to the base budget ‘000
Charging at the Old House	30	30	60
Merchandise for museums	10	6	16
Review of learning offer (saving or additional income)	30		30
HARC review of charging / hire fees	7	3	10
Archives conservation charging	7		7
On-line charges for archives	2	5	7
Hire charges for MRLC	5	2	7

Staff savings on fixed term post at HARC		35	35
Staff savings on museum staff through rationalising different functions		35	35
Savings in operating Broad Street museum	15		15
Total	106	116	222

- 18 **The Old House** – the Old House is an iconic feature of Hereford and the wider county. There is potential to make more of the museum as a key tourism and heritage offer. The proposal is to enhance the visitor experience with improvements to the site. To have additional opening hours offset with an introduction of charging –consultations conducted with visitors between October 2014 and December 2015 has indicated that a charge of £2.50 per adults and £1.50 per child would be reasonable. Improvements to the Old House will be in two phases: 1 – enhance layout and interpretation; 2 – development of the basement rooms and attic spaces, as “hidden treasure” with interpretation and increased interaction supported by a Heritage Lottery bid.

12.28%	21.05%	40.79%	33.37%	2.63%	0.88%
£0 - £1	£1 - £2	£2 - £3	£3 - £4	£4 -£5	£5+

Note: totals 111% as some visitors ticked more than one option

- 19 **Hereford Museum and Art Gallery** – based on the proposals made by Hereford Library Users Group, the museum offer at Broad Street would be part of a new development of the site (this includes Woolhope Club retaining its presence on site (184,434 visits to Hereford Library; 14,000 visits to the Museum and Art Gallery). These proposals will be subject to a further report.
- 20 **Part of tourism in Hereford** – The city has a wonderfully preserved heritage aspect with the layout and feel retaining its rich history. The Old House can be a key part of the offer with the intention to improve the external appeal as part of the High Town improvements. The intention is to also work with the BID team on the wider heritage offer in Hereford including interpretation of key places and spaces of interest. To also use external funding to make the most of digital technology in interpreting heritage.
- 21 **Education and events** – “hands on history” is increasingly part of heritage interpretation and a proactive way of engaging a wider range of interests (not just children) with classes, workshops, activities and interactive displays. The schools offer will be evaluated for its full cost recovery, including Museum on the Move as both Shropshire and now Staffordshire have withdrawn from the partnership to deliver this with Herefordshire the remaining participant. Also, there is potential for income generation through an enhanced package for visitors (e.g. behind the scenes experience) and chargeable events.
- 22 **Merchandise** – there is believed to be a merchandise opportunity at the Old House offering bespoke locally made items for sale to visitors and residents.
- 23 **Marketing and branding** – The promotion of the Old House will aim to increase visitor numbers linked to special events to foster repeat visitors. Also to create a bespoke brand for the Old House, MRLC and HARC to support the promotion and marketing of the facilities. It is proposed that a member of staff within the communications team is aligned to work on marketing and branding for museum and archive services. To also rename MRLC to be more appealing and user friendly.
- 24 **Property** – The Museum, Resource and Learning Centre (MRLC) is an attractive but underused resource. There is potential to use the office space for other services or tenants, and the meeting rooms promoted as hire spaces (the savings generated from this would be part of a second phase - although the shortage of car parking space is an

ongoing issue for hirers). It is also proposed that the MRLC has wifi access so it has greater flexibility with conferencing/hire opportunity and service use. Capacity at HARC (office and storage) will be supported by the creation of a Land and Property Search Centre based at the building supporting both historic and modern land, deed, property and planning searches. This would create a benefit for customers who make requests for these items (create a one stop shop) and increases the footfall at HARC.

- 25 **Charging** – the Review of Museums and Archives Services presented a number of income generation ideas based at HARC. It is proposed that these opportunities are reviewed in consultation with the Friends of Herefordshire Record Office.
- 26 **Charging for Conservation** – The Archive service has expertise in the conservation of documents. Whilst there has been a focus on the collection held by the local authority as part of the relocation there is potential to charge external clients for conservation services recognising this would be balanced with internal conservation requirements.
- 27 **Staff reductions** – a key cost of the service is staffing. Along with all other services in the authority a review of roles and tasks to take place creating a saving on employee costs.
- 28 **Use of volunteers** – over 2,000 hours per year of volunteer time supports the conservation aspects of the museum collections, and between 30-35 volunteers support the work of the records office. As a rewarding experience, there is potential to increase the range of volunteer programmes at each of the sites and services. This includes digital access of records and objects that can help in access to the collections but also create an income for downloaded items.
- 29 **Fundraising** – to increase opportunity for fundraising for specific improvements.

Library and Museum Support Fund

- 30 At Council, on the 5 February 2016, an amendment to the budget was agreed providing £60k for - “one off funding for community groups and schemes to support feasibility studies to facilitate delivery of self-financing delivery models for museum and heritage services, and different options for funding library services to include fundraising, joint funding by partners and income generation”. Such a fund could support the delivery of key schemes that address the long term viability of the library and museum sector.
- 31 It is proposed that the fund be accessed via an open bidding process, with applications based on costed proposals coming from the voluntary or public sectors or partnership schemes. As with other schemes of this nature the grant scheme would be managed by the delegated grants team. The fund would need to meet the key criteria of:
- For schemes that lead to the sustainability or alternative delivery of local authority funded archives and museums, and libraries
 - Can include invest to save schemes, kick start investment, marketing, project management or feasibility
 - Need to directly correlate to reduced revenue or income generation of local authority funding of museum / archive services, and libraries
 - Schemes linked to delivery of the corporate plan ambitions, particularly the priority for adults and child wellbeing and economic development.

Community impact

- 32 The museum and archive service provides a number of community benefits. These include:
- Economically supports the county through tourism
 - Education and learning on the history of the area
 - Local pride and local identity by providing a sense of place and heritage
 - Provides ability to research family and local history
 - Opportunities for volunteering
 - Support for voluntary and community museums and heritage centres
 - Specific projects involve target groups
 - Supports “Fives Ways to Well Being” – social connections; being active; being curious; learning something; helping others.
- 33 The recommendations in the report support the council’s corporate plan priority to secure better services, quality of life and value for money, and to support the growth of our economy by improving the quality of the service whilst delivering savings.

Equality and human rights

- 34 The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine ‘protected characteristics’ (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have ‘due regard’ to the Public Sector Equality Duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
- 35 Where a decision is likely to result in detrimental impact on any group with a protected characteristic, it must be justified objectively. This means that attempts to mitigate the harm need to be explored. If the harm cannot be avoided, the decision maker must balance this detrimental impact against the strength of legitimate public need to pursue the service remodelling to deliver savings.
- 36 There is little local (or national) information on the profile of people who reflect protected characteristics that use museums.
- 37 Museum on the Move users will tend to be children through visits to schools, and the older people and dementia sufferers through visits to care homes, with these age groups affected if there was a reduction of service without an alternative. The effect will be assessed as part of the review of the learning programme for the museum service.
- 38 Also on the characteristic of age, many of the volunteers are of an older age. With the link to wellbeing and volunteering, any withdrawal of opportunity to volunteer could negatively affect this group.
- 39 The Old House, by its nature of a historic building, is not fully accessible for wheelchair users and people with reduced mobility. This has an effect on the protected characteristic of disability.
- 40 Poverty is not a protected characteristic, though a consideration when introducing and increasing charges for services.
- 41 National research as part of the Taking Part Survey 2013/14 (Department of Culture, Media and Sport), highlighted the below points when considering protected characteristics relating to museums:
- 69% of disabled people (including those with a long term limiting illness) visited a heritage site compared to 74% for non-disabled people. Whilst 48% disabled people

attended a museum or art gallery compared to 55% for non-disabled people.

- 35.4% of those aged 75 or over had visited a museum or gallery, compared with the other age groups where the rate varied between 45.4% for 16-24 year olds and 57.1% for those aged 45-64 years.
- In the 12 months prior to being interviewed, adults from BME groups were less likely to have visited a heritage site (57.4% compared to 74.4% for white groups).

42 Summary of mitigation actions:

- Increase the opportunity for volunteering, including instigating a volunteer campaign, to support the increased offer of the service as well as support individual wellbeing.
- Consider the protected characteristic of age when reviewing the learning offer of the museum service to ensure there is an opportunity for children to learn about local heritage and the older people to engage with their own history.
- Consider the protected characteristic of disability when designing the layout of The Old House with accompanying interpretation material on the ground floor.
- Hold free entry days each season to enable people on low incomes to be able to visit The Old House.

Financial implications

43 The impact of the savings on existing budgets would be as follows:

	2016/17 Delegated Budget £000	Saving 2017/18 £000	2017/18 Delegated Budget £000	Saving 2018/19 £000	2018/19 Delegated Budget £000
Archive	397	(16)	381	(43)	338
Museum	230	(90)	140	(73)	67

44 The service is looking to invest £80k from within existing budgets to support delivery of the savings plan; this covers:

- Stock for merchandise
- Improvements to The Old House
- Marketing material and publicity campaign

45 Future opportunities for savings and income generation are being considered. The medium term financial strategy assumes future (2019/20) savings target of £278,000 from these services, with proposals yet to be defined. The shortfall will be subject to future decision following an assessment of future options especially regarding the use of the properties in relation to a “space review” of council premises and use of property.

46 To support future savings the review report also suggests the establishment of a development trust to run in parallel to the service, with the long term potential of operating the service as an independent body. Additionally, the report suggests shared service across counties – this can be revisited as a year three option to create savings. The Arts Council has invited the council to apply to the Museum Resilience Fund to conduct some of the longer term development work. The operation of the service by a third party was tested through a procurement route in 2012 – with one potential partner who later withdrew. Though the climate of providers has not necessarily changed this route can be explored again.

47 Benchmarking work will also be conducted to compare costs and practices with other

like authorities who provide museum and archive services.

Legal implications

- 48 In relation to the museums, the provisions of section 12 Public Library and Museums Act 1964, the council may provide and maintain museums and art galleries within the county.
- 49 In relation to archives and records, there is a statutory framework that governs such documentation namely:
- (i) the Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967 provides for access to certain classes of government records held by local authority record offices.
 - (ii) section 1 Local Government (Records) Act, 1962 empowers the council to do all that is necessary to enable use to be made of records in its control, in particular to provide access. This is primarily intended for historical records.
 - (iii) section 224 Local Government Act, 1972 requires that the council make proper arrangements for their records (current and historic) and section 228 provides for access by certain categories of users to minutes, accounts and abstracts of accounts.
 - (iv) the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 provides for a wider right of access to current documentation, e.g. background papers to committee reports.
 - (v) the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 contains the presumption that records are open to inspection unless otherwise exempted, together with procedures for handling enquiries and complaints.

Risk management

- 50 Generation of income: if the income targets are not achieved then there is a shortfall in the revenue budget. Mitigation: well costed and researched schemes otherwise resort to alternative option.
- 51 Further savings: if further savings are required then there would need to be a cut in service. Mitigation: consider other income ideas and closure of sites as a last resort.
- 52 Staffing resources to implement the changes: If there is not the current staffing capacity to implement the changes in services then the schemes will fail to materialise. Mitigation: that priority is giving to address service changes to support the development of long term sustainability.

Consultees

- 53 The review report itself, mentioned in paragraph 10 above sets out who was consulted in the development of the options.
- 54 The following bodies have also be consulted and their views have informed the development of the recommendations on this report:
- Arts Council of England
 - The National Archives
 - Friends of Herefordshire Record Office
 - Hereford Museum Support Group
- 55 In addition briefing scheduled with Heritage Lottery on the 8 March 2016.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Response to Recommendations in Review of Museums and Archives Services

Appendix 2: Summary of the Review of Museums and Archives Services

Background papers

- Review of Museums and Archives Services Report

Response to Recommendations in Review of Museums and Archives Services

Recommendation	Response
<p>Closure of Museum & Art Gallery; up to £70k We recommend that the council's own accountants verify these anticipated savings from the closure of the Museum & Art Gallery.</p>	<p>Response: The Museum and Art Gallery in Hereford is currently closed following discovery of asbestos when preparing for planned improvements. Future proposals for the site and services are being pursued with community partners and will be the subject of a further report. Since the Museum and Art Gallery has been closed there has been increased hours at the Old House and support given to the collections team. The level of potential savings needs verifying as believe it includes savings already made in front of house cover.</p>
<p>Car park charging at HARC: additional £5,000 per year.</p>	<p>Response: Potential earned income under consultation with the Friends of the Record Office.</p>
<p>Expanded learning & outreach service: additional £6,000</p>	<p>Response: To include in a review of the learning offer. To consider full cost recovery which would include consideration of the salary of staff who manage the learning offer when setting fees (the cost of salaries to support the learning offer within the heritage management budget outlined in the review).</p>
<p>Commercial conservation and collections advice services and renting of bench space at HARC to self-employed conservators: £15,000 per year.</p>	<p>Response: Accepted. Existing practice though the focus has recently been on the internal demands of the service with the relocation of the archive. This could be via a formal agreement with another local authority rather than "ad hoc" contracts. Figure needs to be verified as seems high next to the potential market.</p>
<p>Increased lettings of meeting/event space at HARC and Friars Street and release of office space to other Council departments: £5,000 per year.</p>	<p>Response: Accepted, though a cost implication with staffing for facilitating any additional opening hours and hire arrangement so full cost recovery needs to be included.</p>
<p>Promote licensing of images (photographs, paintings, maps) for commercial use, via an agency such as Bridgeman Art Library, up to £5,000 per year (and consider a partnership with e.g. Ancestry UK, for putting family history archives online).</p>	<p>Response: Accepted, however not included is the cost of scanning and digitalisation. Potential partnership with a commercial organisation who could cover some of the costs and share the income.</p>
<p>Development of the Brian Hatton Centenary exhibition and Pop Up touring shows, from spring 2016 onwards, income from retail lines and events.</p>	<p>Response: Work is taking place to support the Brian Hatton Centenary exhibition. Concern over investment in specific retail which may have a</p>

£10,000.	narrow audience and short shelf life, though could be part of a wider merchandise offer.
Develop retail sales at The Old House with a theme of <i>Made in Herefordshire</i> , up to £5,000 per year.	Response: Accepted. Development of the Old House with bespoke merchandise and opportunity for local produce.
Invest to save: create Commercial & Marketing Manager posts at £30,000 each (see Sections 7.2 & 8.4) to enable some of the above income to be earned and additional income and partnerships to be developed for medium and longer terms. The Commercial Manager is the most urgent to be created, funded by the immediate savings identified above.	Response: The appointment of 2 posts on a salary of £30k with on-costs would require in the region of £80,000 added to the revenue budget requirement, plus any promotional budget required. This would need to be found from existing salary and revenue budgets as the income generation recommendations in the review do not create full costs recovery. It is therefore proposed that skills are developed within the team supported by a post within the communications team for marketing over the next 12 months; guidance and advice from partner organisations and Hoople already supporting the commercial offer of the Museum Service.
Reduction of services at HARC achieved through restricted opening times/public access enabling a reduction in staff numbers.	Response: Not pursued at this time.
Use of space at HARC for other Council services (savings to be found through these services not paying current Premises costs).	Response: Accepted as increased utilisation of the premises. A proposal is to create a Land and Property Search Hub based at HARC, with the relocation of modern records relating to planning, land searches, deeds, etc. This does not create a saving but increased use of the building and footfall with one stop shop for services and customer accessing records.
We recommend that consideration be given to re-branding the building – perhaps as part of a re-launch of the newly invigorated Museums Service? – to one with a shorter, more memorable name which can have meaning for everyone.	Response: Agreed to rename of the Museum Resource and Learning Centre in consultation with Heritage Lottery and other stakeholders.
Amalgamation of services with other local authorities or joint provision; in particular making use of the state-of-the-art facilities at HARC, with potential of up to £40,000 per year. Explore heritage partnerships.	Response: Pursued as second stage of work with an application made to the Arts Council for the Museum Resilience Fund.
We recommend that, as it seems unlikely that the Museum & Art Gallery will re-open in the near future, a modest investment could be used to re-display some of the collections on another site. A radical approach could be taken, replacing the old and various display cases with a vibrant and modern, perhaps more lightweight, style of display, more akin to a	Response: Potentially, but staffing cost for managing the scheme and capital costs for displays not included in the review.

temporary exhibition or a touring show. This could support taking objects out on the road to new places (in addition to <i>Museum on the Move</i>). Pop Up Museums could be sited in shops, community halls, libraries.	
Addition of solar panels to HARC roof: this requires initial investment though grants are available. Although it would take many years to recoup the investment, it could reduce even further the running costs of the HARC building, even though it is designed as a low revenue cost structure.	Response: Being pursued, though no significant short term savings.
Create a Development Trust.	Response: Application to the Arts Council's Museum Resilience Fund to support the financing of this recommendation.
We recommend that significant steps should be taken in the immediate future, but investment will be needed.	Response: That one-off investment to improve the visitor experience at the Old House.
A more fluid approach to display could allow the Museums Service to experiment with different styles and content, starting conversations with the public, exploring co-curation and drawing especially younger members of the community into creating content.	Response: A potential link to Old House development to attract different age ranges.



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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

SUMMARY REVIEW OF MUSEUMS & ARCHIVES SERVICES

HILARY McGOWAN

with

ALASTAIR STEVENSON, MPA

and Lancaster Parr

February 2016

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL
REVIEW OF MUSEUMS & ARCHIVES SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION & BRIEF

1.1 Introduction

Herefordshire Council issued a Brief for a consultancy to review future opportunities for the Museum and Archive Services in the light of local government changes and financial pressures. The review was to evaluate the viability of the services operating on a zero based subsidy, which we understood to mean without any financial input from the Council.

We were pleased to be approached to submit a proposal for this work. Hilary McGowan, the leading Resilience and Governance Heritage Consultant, created a bespoke team for this project with Alastair Stevenson of Marketing Planning Associates, the business and market planning consultants, and Rosie Parr of Lancaster Parr, the leading law firm specialising in charities and community interest companies.

Central government's cuts in grants to local authorities have forced all of them to re-assess priorities but at the same time, growing demands from social services and education have put their dwindling revenue budgets under additional pressure. Local authorities can look to heritage to support them in economic regeneration, skills improvement, promoting health and wellbeing, and community engagement. One of the reasons why they subsidise heritage services is that they are labour-intensive and require professional skills; this gives a democracy of opportunity to the residents of any local authority, preventing them being excluded from services by economic disadvantage. But the financial pressures mean that it is now difficult for local authorities to afford these services so they must earn as much income as possible.

1.2 Our Brief

The Council's Brief stated that the outcomes of the project were to be:

- " To create a road-map for museum and archive services with the intention of moving to a zero based subsidy.
- To present opportunities for the service in meeting the requirements of a contemporary local and visiting audience.
- To recommend a future delivery model for the service, including objectives, purpose and financial overview.

This review has been commissioned to consider the future opportunities for the museum and archive services in the light of local government changes and pressures. The review specifically needs to evaluate the feasibility of the service operating on a zero based subsidy."

Knowing that no local authority heritage services¹ elsewhere in the UK operate without any public subsidy, our proposal for this work included the additional amendment of:

“if operating on a zero based subsidy is not feasible, we would consider the steps the Council could take so that progress could be made towards this situation”.

This amended wording was incorporated into our contract and so became part of our Brief.

Though initially not included, premises-related and central support costs have been included when savings options were examined. Much of this Review was carried out before the Museum & Art Gallery building was closed in September. So Section 3.4 on the Museum & Art Gallery should be read in that context. However, the financial income and savings ideas are discussed in the light of not only the closure but the unlikelihood of the building re-opening in the immediate future.

1.3 Summary of savings and income ideas

1.3.1 The feasibility study part of our Brief became very clear quickly. As the controllable parts of the revenue budgets of both Services total approximately £500,000 and this was also the total savings target ahead, it was easy to see that the Services were not able to earn sufficient income to cover their staffing and running costs. It is not feasible for these Services to run in their current form without financial support from the Council. No County Archive runs without public funding and no local authority Museums Service runs without financial support¹. Independent museums do run without public funding but their operating costs are smaller than local authority museums, they have no central support costs to cover and staff are employed on different conditions of service.

Ideas for savings and additional income generation are described in sections 4 and 7. They are summarised here:

1.3.2 Short term savings (by 2016/17)

Closure of Museum & Art Gallery
(includes redundancies but not their costs)

up to £70,000

savings & business rates while
closed needs clarification

1.3.3 Additional income (short & medium term)

- car park charging at HARC: **additional £5,000** per year
- expanded learning & outreach service: **additional £6,000**
- commercial conservation and collections advice services and renting of bench space at HARC to self-employed conservators: **£15,000** per year

¹ no local authority museum operates without public subsidy other than the Roman Baths in Bath, a tourist honeypot, though independent museums do

- increased lettings of meeting/event space at HARC and Friars Street and release of office space to other Council departments: **£5,000** per year
- promote licensing of images (photographs, paintings, maps) for commercial use, via an agency such as Bridgeman Art Library, up to **£5,000** per year (and consider a partnership with e.g. Ancestry UK, for putting family history archives online)
- development of the Brian Hatton Centenary exhibition and Pop Up touring shows, from spring 2016 onwards, income from retail lines and events: **£10,000**
- develop retail sales at The Old House with a theme of *Made in Herefordshire*, up to **£5,000** per year

Although none of these ideas can produce this income instantly, these figures demonstrate the potential.

1.3.3 Invest to save: create Commercial & Marketing Manager posts at £30,000 each (see Sections 7.2 & 8.4) to enable some of the above income to be earned and additional income and partnerships to be developed for medium and longer terms. The Commercial Manager is the most urgent to be created, funded by the immediate savings identified above.

1.3.4 Longer term savings 2018/19 onwards

These need more detailed assessment:

- reduction of services at HARC achieved through restricted opening times/public access enabling a reduction in staff numbers;
- use of space at HARC for other Council services (savings to be found through these services not paying current Premises costs);
- amalgamation of services with other local authorities or joint provision; in particular making use of the state-of-the-art facilities at HARC, with potential of up to £40,000 per year: this is recommended in section 7.2.

NB: many of these ideas require assessment as they have an impact on existing workloads or require policy decisions so cannot be simply undertaken without assessing if a net contribution would be delivered, e.g. if considerable conservation is to be undertaken for external clients, then the conservators will have less time to work on the priorities of the permanent collections.



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NB: many of these ideas require assessment as they have an impact on existing workloads or require policy decisions so cannot be simply undertaken without assessing if a net contribution would be delivered, e.g. if considerable conservation is to be undertaken for external clients, then the conservators will have less time to work on the priorities of the permanent collections.

An action plan for the next year is in section 8.4 on page 42.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 MUSEUMS AND ARCHIVES

2.1.1 Archives comprise manuscripts, books, photographs, maps, plans, business records, sound and moving images and digital records. Museums hold primarily 3 dimensional material but also hold archives such as books, photographs and maps. They are both collections-focused services which preserve their objects and help the public to understand and use them. There are approximately 2,000 archives in the UK and 2,300 museums, many of whom are part of the same organisation.

Museums and Archives can support and contribute to key corporate objectives of all local authorities in areas from economic prosperity, health and wellbeing, to improving skills and educational attainment. They can work across council departmental boundaries and provide a safe environment, even for those who are non-users, to access new learning and stimulation.

The Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)'s annual *Taking Part* survey about the leisure and cultural habits of adults and children in England, is now in its tenth year. It includes museums and archives. In 2014, the most recent to be published, the survey found that:

- the majority of adults (77%) of adults attended or participated in the arts at least once in the previous year
- seven in ten adults (72%) had visited a heritage site at least once in the previous 12 months
- 5% of adults visited archives including 11.6% as users online
- 52% of adults had visited a museum or gallery in the last year.

Arts Council England (ACE) administers the Museums Accreditation Standard and awards the Standard through a national Accreditation Committee. Established in 1988, this has become the standard which denotes a professionally managed museum and as such is a badge of recognition for the quality of services to supporters, donors and grant-making bodies.

The Archives Accreditation Standard was introduced last year and was designed to be complementary to the existing and successful Museums Accreditation, and with other cultural sector standards such as PAS 197². As the Archives Service has been creating and moving to HARC, they have not been able to apply for Accreditation but intend to begin the process in the coming year. The Accreditation Standard is administered by The National Archives (TNA) with awards granted by an Archives Service Accreditation Committee.

Both Standards share the same focus on organisational health, collections and stakeholders and their experiences. Both schemes have the same ethos of helping to raise standards and reward achievement.

² PAS 197 came into effect in January 2009. It was developed by the British Standards Institution and sponsored by the Collections Trust, with support from a steering group of 16 organisations representing archives, libraries and museums across the UK

2.1.2 Archives

There are over 1,000 linear kilometres of records in UK local authority archive services. Net revenue spending on archives by UK local authorities is 81p per person per year in 2010/11. Local authority archives receive around 750,000 remote enquiries each year and over 30m visits to their websites.²

Archives sit within a statutory framework which museums do not have; e.g. local government has a statutory duty to preserve their own records. Local authorities are covered by several local government acts regarding the safe keeping and accessibility of records. In addition there are measures covering Church records, court, prison, hospital and school records and many other aspects of public life.

2.1.3 Museums

The English museums sector overall has 38,165 employees working on 2,720 sites. These museums earn £2.64bn per year and have an output (into the economy) of £1.45bn. Of these figures, local authority museums account for 3,415 employees on 245 sites. Their earnings are £240m and outputs are £160m. (These figures are for all museums, local authority, national, independent, universities and Ministry of Defence.)

Research conducted by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Arts & Business, showed that public sector cuts have fallen hardest on museums dependent on local authority funding, rather than other types of cultural organisations.

Existing research on the impact of museums has focused on the social and learning aspects, and tourism spend. The Museums Association's market research on public attitudes towards museums found that respondents felt museums played a vital role in society, with an impact much wider than just at the individual level. This informed the MA's policy document *Museums Change Lives*³, published in 2013. The main principles of which are:

- Museums enhance well being
- Museums create better places
- Museums inspire people and ideas.

Mostly the impact of museums has been quantified through tourism spend so this became a refreshing addition to the tourism data. But museums also have a key role to play in the economy. The Association of Independent Museums (AIM) has an economic impact toolkit on its website which allows museums to calculate their impact on their localeconomy.

Earlier in 2015, ACE published *The Economic Impact of Museums in England*⁵. One of its observations is as follows:

“Museums play a number of roles in some local economic development and regeneration strategies and projects, often linked to site-based developments or providing a sense of place. In addition to providing a destination to attract visitors, museums can support a development with a sense of identity and authenticity.”⁴

² these statistics all CIPFA 2010/11

³ Museums Change Lives, Museums Association, 2013

⁴ *The Economic Impact of Museums in England*, ACE, February 2015

The ACE report continues:

our “case studies indicate museums have a number of routes by which indirect economic impact may be achieved. These routes come in the expected forms of procurement (which tends to be focused on local suppliers), visitor spend (which is more significant for some locations than others), and place-making and regeneration (where museums and heritage offers have been significant elements of a development). **But the routes to impact noted in the case studies also come in the unexpected forms of business partnerships**, some of which are explicit commercial relationships that generate income for museums, while at the same time enabling others to generate employment and value (e.g. computer games), and some of which are related to the economic spill-overs associated with clusters of activity ... The partnership and in-kind nature of some of this activity is difficult to capture in a systematic way, and simply does not form part of what statisticians seek to measure when they measure national income; however, that does not mean they [museums] are not economically important.”⁵ (*our bold*)

For every £1 spent on the Herefordshire Museums Service, £8.41 is released into the local economy. Herefordshire’s 33 heritage attractions bring at least £18.8m of tourism value to local businesses.⁶

⁵ page 22, *ibid*

⁶ AIM Economic Toolkit, using 2013-14 user figures

2.2 THE REGENERATIVE VALUE OF CULTURE

The value of cultural developments has long been recognised and culture has been used to regenerate both urban and rural areas throughout the UK. Since Glasgow's *Miles Better* campaign in 1983 with its opening of the ground breaking Burrell Collection gallery, many local authorities have used culture to improve their image, re-generate their public spaces and boost their economies.

As the ACE report, quoted in 2.1.4 above, says:

“last year a survey of local authorities explored the value that they placed on arts and culture; economic development emerged as the main reason for them to fund culture”⁷. ACE's Chief Executive recently stated that because of the role cultural institutions can play in place-making, “local authorities are defining themselves more and more by their cultural institutions in shaping that place” despite their financial problems.

Further details of how this has worked in places ranging from Liverpool and Manchester to rural Dorset are provided in Appendix II. This includes Hull, a similar city to Hereford and the UK City of Culture in 2017. The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, which is leading on Hereford's own bid for UK City of Culture, has been working closely with Hull to learn from their success.

2.3 STATUTORY BASIS FOR ARCHIVES & ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

The National Archives (TNA) took over the regulation of archives in England and Wales in 2011. This was at the same time as ACE became responsible for museums.

TNA has designated Herefordshire Record Office as a place of deposit for public records. In addition, it is also the Diocesan Record Office for the Diocesan of Hereford and for Church of England Parish Registers under the Parochial Records and Register Measure.

TNA was invited to contribute to our consultations but said they would contact the Council directly once the results of our report were known.

The statutory responsibilities of local authorities for archives are detailed in Appendix III.

ACE's policy document for culture identifies five common goals for all cultural organisations in the years to 2020. This ten year strategic framework⁸ highlights how the broad spectrum of cultural organisations can mesh and support each other. These policies are outlined in Appendix IV.

⁷ quoted on page 22 in ACE, op cit

⁸ *Great Art and Culture for Everyone 2010-20*, ACE, 2013

2.4 SPINNING OUT FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities have for many years spun out leisure services in particular, persuaded by the benefits of converting to charitable trusts and mutuals. The growth of Greenwich Leisure Limited, the first spun-out leisure mutual in 1993, inspired others to follow. In addition, many local authorities are, like Herefordshire, involving community-based groups to run selected sites and services such as branch libraries, in order to maintain them⁹. Herefordshire Council has put several contracts out of the Council with The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, HALO (the contract for leisure centres) and Brightstripe (for arts and sports development).

Approximately 70 museums, mainly in England but some in Scotland and in Wales, have now been established as independent charitable trusts and several are in organisations which also include archives, arts development, theatres and/or libraries. This number is still growing.

Although archives have also left local authorities there are fewer of them independently managed than museums. Culture Coventry (2013) includes archives, museums and the local studies library. The South West Heritage Trust (2014), created by Devon and Somerset County Councils, includes both county's archives and local studies libraries with Somerset County's Museums and Historic Environment Record. This is the first organisation to be created by a partnership of two local authorities and they are open to further expansion. In some cases, existing charities have taken over running archives such as Redbridge Culture and Leisure, established as a trust in 2007, which acquired heritage services in 2010 and Woodhorn Charitable Trust who, since 2009, has managed Northumberland County Archives and three museums in this large rural County.

Last year, TNA published a major report assessing the experience of county record offices which have been set up in a new charitable organisation. Called *In a Spin*¹⁰, this important report states:

“However a spin-out has been initiated,
it will not succeed without encouragement and support, and the
local authority will need to ensure that
the spin-out is set up to succeed.”¹¹

Further details of this report and other aspects of spinning out cultural services are in Appendix V.

Many local authorities have built joint archives or history centres and many museums services are now creating formal partnerships to create critical mass and share specialist services. The museums in the West Midlands, of which Herefordshire is a part - working as the Marches Network - are currently exploring the future potential for partnerships. These ideas are picked up within a recommendation in section 7.2.

⁹ this is as a result of the Localism Act, 2011

¹⁰ *In a Spin*, The National Archives, 2014 (this has led to *spinning out* becoming the way to describe this move)

¹¹ *ibid*, page 14

3. SERVICE REVIEW

3.1 HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHIVES & RESOURCE CENTRE

The new Herefordshire Archives and Resource Centre (HARC) is the first PassiveHaus building in the UK. Already acclaimed by the architectural press, this wonderful building now provides a location worthy of the nationally significant Archives which it houses.

We believe that the Council are to be congratulated on their long term vision for Archives in commissioning this building and ensuring that expansion space for the future has been provided. Their far sightedness in using PassiveHaus design has also ensured that HARC will be affordable to run. This also links to the Corporate Plan objective under Environment:

protecting and promoting our understanding of the natural environment and heritage for the benefit of all.

TNA has recently inspected HARC and said that the Council has “created one of the most advanced local archival facilities in the country to date”¹².

The public areas of HARC - the search and meeting rooms and the offices - are in the front part of the building, nearer to the main road. All have natural light, with the rooms in the back of the block top lit; all rooms have natural ventilation. This is green technology which is not only affordable in terms of running costs but better for both collections and people than air conditioning. The blank walls of the archive block itself sits behind this, linked by bridges, so sealing the collections and separating the functions cleanly in addition to being very effective operationally.



HARC entrance showing the link between the two blocks

The Archive collections occupy over two miles of shelving and date back to 12th century.

¹² TNA letter of 9th November 2015

The main classes of holdings are:

- Local government: historic records of Herefordshire Council and its predecessors, Hereford City and Leominster Borough, district and parish councils
- Diocesan: diocese of Hereford
- Parish: registers and records of Church of England parishes within the County of Herefordshire
- Public: Coroners' records, Quarter and Petty Sessions, Constabulary and Magistrates records, hospitals and health authorities, Inland Revenue and District Valuation records
- Private: relating to all aspects of the history and development of the geographical county of Herefordshire, and its inhabitants. Collections include the archives of non-conformist ecclesiastical bodies, businesses, estates and manors, private individuals, and a wide range of societies.

The move from the former Archives building on Harold Street has, not surprisingly, necessarily caused the Service to fall behind other county services in several areas of public access. Most notably, this is manifest through very limited numbers of documents being available online, in contrast to most other county record offices. However, now the index of Wills is online¹³ and many of the catalogues are included on the Access to Archives and the National Register of Archives websites. This has resulted in an increase in remote orders for copies of wills and is an example of how internet availability will stimulate awareness and use of the Archive.

HARC now has a good space in which to base a digitisation project. The Archivists recognise that, now the move is complete, they must assess the options for how to approach digitisation.



HARC's main search room before collections were moved in

User figures for the Archive's Search Room are as follows:

2011-12:	3,359 (last year of full opening)
2012-13:	3,160 (includes 4 sets of fortnightly closures to begin preparation work)
2013-14:	1,372 (open 1 week per month April to Dec., then closed Jan-Mar 2014)
(2014-15)	closed all year)
2015-16:	1,617 (from 4 th August to end of 2015)

The Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Archaeology service, along with the Biological Records Centre are all based at HARC. Their work is complementary to the Archives service so this is a sensible decision.

We carried out most of our surgery sessions at HARC. All our consultees who had not already visited, were delighted to see the new building. The Archives staff now work from a state-of-the-art building which is the envy of many. This will be a good base for them to create a more modern and responsive Service.

¹³ www.herefordshire.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/local-history-and-heritage/archives-collections

However, the staff are not marketing and commercially minded. This is not to say they do not have ideas for income generation or the ability to implement them, but they lack commercial acumen. This is not surprising as they have not been recruited to be so; as with any officer in a local authority, they were all employed to deliver a professional service to the public. However, they are bright and motivated enough to respond if a commercial manager was appointed to take the lead on income generation. (More on this is in 7.2 below.)

The Archive has not engaged in active audience development but now it has more space, more facilities and additional technologies, it is well placed to stimulate new audiences. It does not have a budget however for audience development, marketing, educational pilots, indeed it does not have any learning staff though at least one of the Archivists is capable of working in this area. The learning staff in the Museums Service could assist here and help to develop joint packages. This is one of many examples where the two Services coming under one senior manager is an advantage.

The demands of audiences for research in archives now is much more focused on the resources available on the web. The popularity of TV programmes such as “Who do you think you are?” has fuelled a huge rise in family history researchers. As a result, a large percentage of users are family historians and genealogists. This is a large market for more resources online.



HARC's main search room

Some Archives have entered into partnerships with such as Ancestry UK, which may not earn significant amounts of income but get the documents out to a wider audience. Since HARC's Wills Index has been available online, there has been an increase in requests for copies from remote users, demonstrating the need. Record Offices elsewhere in UK who have considerable numbers of documents online have found that this does not suppress user numbers, quite the contrary: those who now use their offices have more sophisticated needs and are researching at a more advanced level.

We have not included a specific recommendation on implementing digitisation for two reasons: the Archivists are already assessing it and it is too complex an area for us to estimate the investment needed and the possible income and user benefits alongside the rest of our work. But we support its investigation as it should be a priority for the Service.

Herefordshire Council should be proud of their new Archive building and use it as an asset to promote the heritage and history of the County.

3.2 MUSEUM RESOURCE & LEARNING CENTRE

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) with the local authority, the Museum Resource & Learning Centre (known as MRLC) opened in 2007. It is housed in a former Cold War telephone relay station which had belonged to the Post Office/BT and which Herefordshire Council purchased.

It houses all the collections of the Museums Service in a stable and secure environment, in fixed and roller racking, and drawers. As it was designed to be a publically accessible store, there are drawers with perspex tops which show a display of key objects, illustrating the range and depth of these significant collections.

The collections are wide ranging and include archaeology, social history, fine and decorative art and natural history. All collections are from, or linked to, the County of Herefordshire. The curatorial and learning staff are all based at the store and there are learning and meeting rooms which are also available to hire.

It is a superb store and one of the best in the country for care of collections and accessibility. However, the store only has expansion space for archaeology (which was designed) and there is now no space for additional social history for example, a collection which should have a contemporary collecting programme. The wheeled vehicle store is particularly crowded making it impossible to even view the vehicles.

The Museums Service is a recognised place of deposit for archaeological finds. Hereford is one of 5 English cities designated as an Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. So the City's historic significance and national importance has long been recognised and the County has more hillforts than anywhere else in Britain. Consequently, the archaeological collection will continue to grow even if other types of objects are not actively being collected. If a major find or objects were to be offered to the Museums Service – and because of the archaeological importance of the County, if this happened it is most likely to be archaeology – the Museums Service may struggle to be able to display and exploit anything significant (see section 3.4 below).

The grant from HLF supported the creation of MRLC not just because of the significance of the collections but also because of the publicly accessible nature of the building. Regular tours of the stores take place (and additional ones have been available while the Museum & Art Gallery has been closed) and courses, lectures, workshops and other events take place there. These make good use of the collections for which other venues would not be suitable.

The senior curator, called the Museum Team Leader, is not being used to her best ability as she spends too much of her time as a caretaker and housekeeper. This is a bad use of limited financial resources and does not allow professional officers to do the jobs for which they are employed so they become much less effective than if they had the business support they need. We welcome the new senior manager's commitment to providing more effective business support for the Museums Service to manage the MRLC building, service the room hire and allow the curators to do their job.

The Museum Resource & Learning Centre is the official name of the centre, does not trip lightly off the tongue. **We recommend** that consideration be given to re-branding the building – perhaps as part of a re-launch of the newly invigorated Museums Service? – to one with a shorter, more memorable name which can have meaning for everyone.

3.3 THE OLD HOUSE

The Old House is a former butcher's house and shop which stands in splendid isolation in the centre of what now appears to be a market square, High Town. Pevsner remarks that it is "lively enough" to stand in for the former Town Hall (demolished in 1862 and described as "the most fantastic black and white building imaginable"¹⁷). The Old House was built in 1621, is timber framed and has projecting windows, carved bargeboards and a gabled top storey. It later became a bank with Lloyds Bank giving it to the City of Hereford; it opened to the public in 1929.



The Old House

Visitor figures in recent years have been:

2012-13:	34,762
2013-14:	26,656
2014-15:	16,080 (open < 20hrs/wk)
2015-16:	15,937 (to end of 2015)

Inside the House is small but full of interest, and is furnished as a early 17th century dwelling. The floors and the staircase up to the top two floors are, naturally, very uneven so it is not suitable for those not physically able. It stands alone and the striking exterior mean that tourists exploring the City are immediately drawn to it. Many think it is the TIC, especially since the recent closure of the tourist office. The Museum Front-of-House (FoH) staff are very keen to give visitors as much information as possible about the City and County and they are eager to do more. They are undoubtedly an energetic resource for the Museums Service and although we recommend closure of the Museum & Art Gallery to make immediate savings, the consequent impact on the FoH staff may make this recommendation a short sighted one. As with so much of this report, the Council must strike a balance between making the immediate savings they seek and medium and longer term investment.

The gift from Lloyds Bank to the Council has a restrictive covenant upon the uses of the building. The Deed of Gift states that "the Corporation with the intent and object that this covenant shall run with the said premises hereby conveyed Hereby Covenant with the Bank that The Old House shall not at any time hereafter be used for any commercial purpose of any kind whatsoever or re-sold by the Corporation". The Land Registry entry states that the Bank gives the building "free of any resulting trust in favour of the Bank" provided that "the Corporation would undertake that the said premises should not be used for any Commercial purpose or re-sold as thereafter provided in the covenant".

Although ideas in this report cover using The Old House as a focus for Herefordshire Information and selling crafts, if the income was for the Museums Service, then it could not be classed as "commercial" but it should be seen as supporting the Museums Service. However, we stress that this is our view, not a opinion from a solicitor, so if the Council wanted to pursue these ideas, they should ensure they take legal advice beforeproceeding.

3.4 MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

The Museum & Art Gallery on Broad Street shares its building with the Library. The building was built to be a Free Library and was paid for by James Rankin, a member of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club¹⁴ and the North Herefordshire MP. Built on land which originally belonged to the Cathedral, the Club's original, purpose-built meeting room within the building remains its headquarters. The building opened in 1874 with the Library on the ground floor and the Museum above it.

Pevsner states:

*"Public Library and Museum, Broad Street. By F.R. Kempson 1872-1874. Of blue grey Pontypridd sandstone, narrow coursed, with golden Campden ashlar dressings. The style is 'Anglicised Venetian Gothic'. He continues: it features "an astonishing array of fauna and flora ... those of the ground floor capitals represent Europe, Asia, Africa and America. Beasties even break out from the quatrefoiled parapet".*¹⁵



a capital of one of the columns at the entrance to the Museum on Broad Street

Its gothic architecture is typical of museums and other public buildings of that period, a style popularised as a result of the influence of Ruskin's book *Stones of Venice*. Many Victorian philanthropic institutions built to educate the masses were of this design, to share research by learned societies and display objects from collectors and explorers. It is reminiscent of Bristol Museum¹⁶ and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter, both being of a similar date, style and appearance.

In 1911, a bequest by Sir Joseph Pulley and his nephew allowed the Council to buy land to the rear of the building opening onto Aubrey Street. This gave an extension for the Library and the Art Gallery upstairs which opened the following year. The original conveyance of the building stated that it should be used for the purposes of a Free Library only. On 25th October 2000, this covenant was released "to the extent necessary to enable the property to be used as a museum and art gallery"¹⁷.

The entrance hall leads directly into the Library on the ground floor and a staircase rises from the right to the upper floors. The entrance is untidy and, as you enter, the whole has the air of a slightly neglected municipal building.

¹⁴ the learned society, founded in 1851 and, despite its name, not limited only to natural history

¹⁵ [The Buildings of England: Herefordshire](#), Alan Brooks & Nikolaus Pevsner, 2012, page 316

¹⁶ which is now a Brown's Restaurant as the building was bombed in 1940

¹⁷ copy of the conveyance provided to us by Herefordshire Council



The Woolhope Club Library
(from Conservation Management Plan)

The stairs climb through a mezzanine and past the impressive Woolhope Club room (see left) with its original library shelving, into the Museum itself on the top floor.

The rear of the top floor is fitted out to display temporary exhibitions, some created in-house – such as last summer's *Spun Gold* exhibition about wool – and some showing visiting artists and other collections from local people.

Along the right hand side is the Brian Hatton Gallery, displaying changing hangs of Hatton's work after the closure of the external Hatton Gallery in 2002 in Churchill House.

In the front part of this floor are the Museum displays which form a strong contrast to the high standard of exhibitions in the rear part. The collections are not shown to their best advantage and have grown, using a variety of display cases, in an seemingly random layout. There is no sense of arrival as a visitor reaches the top of the stairs and the story of Herefordshire is told in a disconnected story line through the displays. It looks as though it needs updating and investment but on closer inspection the wonders of the collection can clearly be seen. This summer the displays were a contrast to the very attractive *Spun Gold* exhibition which illustrated how outstanding is the collection and what a high standard of work the staff can achieve. (See also comments on the Museums Service's development plan below in 3.5.1.)

There is no shop but a display of disparate objects near the entrance, and no tea room or coffee shop. The *Spun Gold* exhibition could have supported a tempting retail offer with many opportunities for different types of visitor to spend money but there are no commercial staff to source the products nor the budget to buy them.

As the Museum is across the road from the Cathedral, its location is excellent but the building has not been well maintained for several years and it now shows signs of neglect. In the middle of our project, asbestos was found from paint flaking off the ceilings so the whole building was closed for investigations.

While a large repair bill is making the Council consider finding alternative premises for both the Library and the Museum, the building is very significant: it has a covenant on its use, and its listed status and need for investment makes another user, such as the prospective University, doubtful. Key stakeholders such as The Woolhope Club and the Hatton Trust are watching the situation closely and will be supportive of moves to re-open and re-vitalise the building.

3.5 THE MUSEUMS SERVICE

3.5.1 Our Brief specified we address “opportunities for the Service to meet the requirements of a contemporary local and visiting audience” (i.e. local visitors and tourists).

The Museums Service had a three phase development plan: starting with acquiring the site in Friars Street, secondly building the collections store and equipping it, with the third phase to be new displays in the Museum on Broad Street. Funding pressures within the Council prevented the Museums Service from completing their development. Sadly the Museum has not changed significantly in that time though the professional staff have maintained their exhibitions programme at an astonishingly high standard.

The Museums Service lost profile as a result of reductions in opening hours, one of the factors which lead to falling visitor numbers. With no marketing budget or officer, they have limited access to publicising themselves. However, the poor standard of the Museum displays and the slightly chaotic entrance hall have also been a contributory factor. Thirdly, there is now increased competition for visitors in both the City and the County, including the Cathedral with its slick marketing and strong appeal of the Mappa Mundi.

We recommend that, as it seems unlikely that the Museum & Art Gallery will re-open in the near future, a modest investment could be used to re-display some of the collections on another site. A radical approach could be taken, replacing the old and various display cases with a vibrant and modern, perhaps more lightweight, style of display, more akin to a temporary exhibition or a touring show. This could support taking objects out on the road to new places (in addition to *Museum on the Move*). Pop Up Museums could be sited in shops, community halls, libraries, The Courtyard Centre for the Arts. There would be many locations to use for this idea.



part of Derby Museums’ new natural history gallery
(© Derby Museums Trust)

Derby Museums has recently completed two new natural history galleries in its Museum & Art Gallery, a similar Victorian city centre building to Broad Street. The two displays were externally funded and cost a total of £120,000. The relevance here is that the design is an example of the approach described above.

A more fluid approach to display could allow the Museums Service to experiment with different styles and content, starting conversations with the public, exploring co-curation and drawing especially younger members of the community into creating content. The recent jumper exhibition on the main staircase by students from the College of Art is an example of the fun end product of something inspired by historic collections.

Learning and Outreach operates not only *Museum on the Move* but other handling sessions with schools, care homes and community groups. From our consultations, we know that these sessions are highly valued users. The new National Curriculum aims to set children on the Curiosity Path, and stimulate their observation and critical faculties, so handling original objects is an ideal method of doing this. There is demand for these services.



Museum on the Move

In view of the problems in Broad Street, the Museum Service urgently needs to find a venue for the centenary exhibition of Brian Hatton next year. Retail lines should be developed for this and the commemoration has many possibilities for projects locally, especially for a joint project between the two Services and other cultural and heritage institutions in the County. It also links closely with the commemorations of the Centenary of the First World War.

HARC has an interesting exhibition space which can showcase work which has been taking place elsewhere. This would also help to cement the closer working relationship between the staff of the two heritage Services.

The Museums Service does have a key function, has a number of partners who wish to work with them on more and on different projects (see section 4) and has a considerable amount to offer the Council in support of their corporate priorities.

Appendix VI contains details of how the Museums Service has contributed to the Council's Corporate Objectives over the past year (and Appendix VII has the contribution of the Archives). This was specified as part of our Brief that we were to "review how the service relates to the corporate plan for the local authority, and its future potential to do so". But in the interests of keeping this wide ranging report as short as possible, this information has reluctantly, as requested, been moved into the appendices.

3.5.2 Volunteers

Volunteers are a crucial part of any heritage service. Both the Services already use volunteers especially in collections care. In the Archives, volunteers have helped to ensure the Wills Index was completed (it is now online) and at MRLC volunteers identify specialist collections and repack objects to improve their care. Appendices VI and VII identify where volunteers have been used in more detail and as a result, have contributed to the Council's health and wellbeing agenda.

It would be possible to use volunteers to enliven the Pop Up Museum which could replace some aspects of the closed Museum & Art Gallery on Broad Street, helping to interpret the collections and supplement the skills of the staff. These volunteers could be recruited and trained specifically to interact with visitors and school parties, and a role description could be developed for this work. But in a local authority, consultation with the Unions should take place before this was finally decided upon as volunteers should not replace paid staff who have been made redundant. However, the volunteers could supplement the paid staff and bring new skills and knowledge.

There is a drawback to volunteers which is that they are just that and have no contractual obligation to turn up. It would be impossible to replace all Front-of-house Assistants with volunteers as it would prevent the Council from being able to guarantee opening hours. In addition, volunteers need managing and supervising and their rotas need planning just as much as paid staff. But they can very usefully supplement paid staff by bringing additional skills, enlivening exhibitions and displays, and carrying out specialist, time consuming research.

3.6 THE ARCHIVES SERVICE

As outlined above, our Brief specified we address “opportunities for the Service to meet the requirements of a contemporary local and visiting audience” (i.e. local visitors and tourists). Just as the Museum & Art Gallery’s displays need updating but its raw material (the collections) is excellent, so with HARC: the building and facilities are superb, the staff knowledgeable and helpful but digitisation is behind many other county archives (as outlined in section 3.1). So the market for HARC could be as large as for any county archive.

During our consultation (see section 4 below) the stakeholders and users of both Services put forward ideas to earn additional income. Many of these focused on projects working with other organisations and collections. Heritage tourism is a lucrative market and given that both Services are open at the weekends, attracting tourists to HARC would be possible, if working in partnership with tourist organisations. As tourism is a significant industry for Herefordshire, heritage attractions which provide activities will be important. But these type of projects are often long in their gestation so will only be useful in the longer term.



HARC’s main entrance
with the public block on the right

Economic impact of the Archive Service is considerable as it attracts people to Herefordshire from all over the country and internationally. The most recent survey of visitors to the Archives showed that 14% of visitors paid for overnight accommodation, 49% ate out locally and 72% made use of local shops.

This is one example of how the Archives Service contributes to the Council’s Corporate Plan, in particular to the economic regeneration of the County and supporting Health & Wellbeing aims.

There is a summary of how the Archives have contributed to the Corporate Plan in the last year in Appendix VII. This was specified as part of our Brief that we were to “review how the service relates to the corporate plan for the local authority, and its future potential to do so”.

4. CONSULTATION & PARTNERSHIPS

4.1 CONSULTATION

We have carried out considerable consultation with a wide variety of individuals and organisations. Indeed such was the overwhelming public interest that we carried out more than we had originally envisaged and asked for a public meeting to capture ideas for the future of the Services. This meeting was held at MRLC on 16th October and was attended by over 130 people. The MP for Hereford graciously agreed to chair it for us. Four elected Members of Herefordshire Council also attended and spoke appreciatively of the two Services.

We stressed in all our surgery sessions and interviews that we were focusing on positives and the potential roles of the Services in the future, and did not want to hear complaints about the need for the Council to save money. The majority of the contributors responded well to this.

Everyone who talked to us or wrote to us valued and used the Services (either one of them or sometimes both). Although contributions to consultations such as these are necessarily from a self-selecting audience, all expressed a warm and appreciative regard for both Archives and Museums.

All members of staff in both Museums and Archive Services were interviewed and many volunteers. Also we met the HER staff and the Archaeologists. Hilary spoke at a meeting of The Friends of the Record Office and the Marches Network Museum Officers' Meeting.

A complete list of all who contributed to our consultations is in Appendix IX.

Ideas ranged from the tried and tested such as retail trading, digitisation of the Archives and additional room hire through an expanded Learning and Outreach service to working with partners such as Heritage Tourism operators where historic sites can be visited alongside lectures and sessions handling relevant collections. All ideas fed into section 6, below, on income generation but almost all of these are medium or longer term solutions which require investment, additional skills and/or external partners to make them happen. There are no quick fixes and if any of these ideas were being considered, the impact on the existing services would need assessing.

4.2 PARTNERSHIPS

Local partners with whom both Services work include the Cathedral, the Friends of the Record Office and the recently launched Museum Supporters' Group, the College of Art and The Courtyard Theatre. All spoke warmly of the expertise of the officers in both Services but their lack of commercial drive was also remarked upon.

The Archives & Collections Manager was a key member of the Magna Carta working group prior to the 800th Anniversary commemorations in June. The Magna Carta exhibition in the Mappa Mundi building was a major attraction for the City last summer. The Cathedral is expanding its exhibitions programme to aim at an audience not only interested in history and religion but art as well, so working with the art collections of the Museums Service is a logical step for both parties. If both Services are looking to expand their retail operations, then the Cathedral staff would be supportive and helpful and the Marketing Director is very eager to work more closely, offering strategic marketing advice.

The two Friends groups could both be important in the future, even more than they are now. The Friends of the Record Office have already raised money for equipment at HARC and are willing to continue doing so. TNA's report *In a Spin*¹⁸ discusses the role of Friends groups as many archives now need active fundraisers. It refers to some rejuvenated Friends who now carry out substantial fundraising and lobbying, especially where the Archive has left the local authority. This is the same for museums also. However, a traditional Friends, existing as a cultural and social group, can often not want to develop their lobbying voice.

However, the new Museum Support Group was founded as just that and will become active. It could make public awareness and fundraising a priority though we were surprised they had not been more active and vocal during our time in Herefordshire.

The Museums Service is about to start work on the *Making Waves* project with the College of Art and CraftSpace, working with immigrant families and those moving into the new housing estates being built. This project will produce an exhibition and events which will tour community spaces in Herefordshire.

The Courtyard recently applied (unsuccessfully) to ACE for a lottery grant to extend the theatre. One of the ideas in the bid is a digital gallery which could be an outstation of the Museums Service. If Broad Street does not open quickly then this could be one of the sites to be considered for a Pop Up Museum (see 3.5 above). Literacy and storytelling are key parts of the National Curriculum which both could tap into, to their mutual benefit.

The Business Improvement District may offer some avenues of support for the Museums Service. Hereford City Council is a potential partner particularly as they recently announced that they are opening a new Tourist Office in the City this coming season. While they are unlikely to be able to afford to run the Museums Service, they may be interested in supporting particular projects. Given the potential importance for the tourism offer, especially of the Museum & Art Gallery, outlining two or three ideas for discussion with them would be worthwhile, for example they may be able to help with the Brian Hatton exhibition. A venue for this is now an urgent priority

These are just some of the ideas from past, present and future partners of both Museums and Archives Services. Our conclusion is that all existing and potential partners think both Services have potential but are concerned about their lack of capacity which impacts on their ability to work jointly. But they all feel that both Services have a great deal to offer Herefordshire through future joint projects.

¹⁸ see Appendix V for this report

5. SUMMARY of LEGAL ADVICE on HLF CONTRACT

5.1 As specified in our Brief, we took specialist legal advice on Herefordshire Council's contract with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to assess if it would need to repay the Grant, or part of it, to HLF if it sold the Property or if it stopped being a publically accessible museum collections store. This is a summary of the Advice Note from Rosie Parr of Lancaster Parr which is in full in Appendix VIII.

In January 2006, the Council entered into a contract with HLF in return for their grant of £1,223,000 to create and fit out the MRLC. In return for the Grant, the Council entered into the Contract by which it agreed to observe certain conditions attaching to the grant award for a period of 25 years from the date of the Contract (9th January 2006).

In 2006, HLF did not require the Council to give a first charge on the Property as security for the Council's performance of these obligations (which the HLF would do now as a standard term of most of its grant awards of this size.)

The conclusion of the Advice is that the Council cannot sell or let the Property without the prior approval of the HLF, as to do so would be a breach of contract triggering HLF's right to demand repayment of all or part of the Grant.

5.2 CONDITIONS OF THE CONTRACT

The Contract imposes the following obligations on the Council which relate to the Council's consideration of the sale or closure of the Property:

Clauses 3 and 6 – the Council can only use the Property for the 'Approved Usage' and it must also carry out the Approved Purposes in accordance with best practice. The meaning of these terms relate to the Property's use as a publicly accessible museum resource and learning centre. Any change of use by the Council without HLF consent (even without a sale or closure of the Property) or failure to keep to the Approved Purposes would be a breach of the Contract.

Clause 14 – the Council must continue to own the Property and keep full control over what happens to it. The Council may not sell, let or otherwise part with it or any interest in it, or give any rights over it to anyone else (or take any steps to do so) without the prior approval of HLF.

Clause 14 goes on to state that if HLF gives its approval to a sale or letting of the Property it may be on the following terms:

- that the Council pays a share of the net proceeds of selling or letting the Property, such sum to be calculated by the HLF in line with the Monitoring Documents
- that the Property is sold at its full market value
- that the sale or letting is subject to any other terms that HLF may wish to impose as it thinks fit.

Clauses 16 and 17 require the Council to maintain the Property in good repair and condition and insure it to the standard specified – so it is not an option for the Council to allow this Property to fall into a state of disrepair, as to do so would be a breach of the Contract.

Clause 29 sets out the HLF's remedy for any breach of contract - it stipulates that the Council must repay to the HLF any grant monies that it has paid to the Council (or any smaller amounts the HLF ask

the Council to repay) for the reasons listed in this clause 29, which include in sub-clause (d) any failure by the Council to keep any of the terms of this Contract.

Clause 30 states that if the Council has to repay the Grant as a result of, inter alia, a change of ownership of all or part of the Property, a change of the Approved Purposes or Approved Usage, or if the Council has merged with or transferred its functions to another organisation, then any new organisation or owner must within 90 days of this breach of the Contract, send the HLF a new copy of the Grant Application for consideration. This provision would apply, for example, on a transfer of the museum service to a charity, or other form of not-for-profit organisation.

Clause 41 confirms that the conditions of this Contract will last for 25 years, i.e. until 5th January 2031.

5.3 FUTURE HLF RELATIONSHIPS

There is however, another dimension to this as, if Herefordshire Council did close or prevent public access to the MRLC, and even if it repaid the HLF grant, then this breakdown in the Council's relationship could affect any future applications to HLF from Herefordshire. It would not only affect future bids by the Council itself but could affect applications from any organisation in the County. So the impact could wide, deep and long lasting.

HLF may view any contact with Herefordshire Council with a degree of scepticism following their experience with the grant offered for the new displays in the Heritage Centre in Ross-on-Wye in 2014. As the Council was transferring the Heritage Centre to the Town Council of Ross, the HLF grant was repaid.

So **we recommend** that the Council must maintain a positive relationship with HLF.

6. FINANCIAL ASSESSMENTS

6.1 CURRENT COSTS OF THE SERVICES

Herefordshire Council has provided us with considerable financial detail for the Museum and Archive Services, from which we have extracted the information used in this report. The table below summarises the major areas of operating costs of the Museum and Archive Services covering the years 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and the budget for the current year. (The Actuals for the three years are an amalgamation of the costs and income for Heritage Management, Hereford Museum, Collections/Curatorial, Commercial Access to Exhibitions and Events, The Old House Museum, Museum/Resource Centre, Heritage Education Services and Archive Services. In the 2015/16 budget figures Heritage Education and Archive Services are shown separately.)

Museum & Archive Service								
	Actuals			Budget				
	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16				
	Total	Total	Total					
	Actuals			Budgets				
	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	15/16	15/16	15/16	15/16
1 Employees	622,813	578,309	487,631	212,320	5,070	372,533		589,923
2 Premises-Related Expenditure								
3 Transport-Related Expenditure	6,937	1,601	896	1,328	50	800		2,178
4 Supplies & Services	56,758	61,622	36,563	-10,725	1,389	26,903		17,567
5 Third Party Payments	0	0	0	0	0	300		300
9 <i>Income</i>	-38,378	-59,207	-23,422	-14,200	-1,500	-7,017		-22,717
Total Direct Operating Cost	648,130	582,325	501,668	188,723	5,009	393,904		587,636

Over the three years up to 2014/15, reductions have been made in employee costs. These savings have been made within the Museums Service by redundancies, while employee costs within the Archives Service have remained broadly the same. Discounting Support Services and Premises-related expenditure (not within the control of either Service), Employee costs (£590k for 2015/16) account for virtually all the costs within the control of Museums and Archives Services. However, as outlined in the introduction, it was agreed at our presentation to senior officers that we could consider premises related expenditure. Consequently, property costs for the sites totals £347,000.

The income and saving profile is based on: £100k being saved in the financial year 2017/18, £150k from April 2018 then £250k from April 2019.

Income levels have declined in this three year period by some 40%, from a high of £59k in 2013/14 to £23k in 2014/15. This is through continuing to limit the opening hours at the Museums, the decline in visitor numbers at the Museum & Art Gallery, the closure of the Archive while staff packed up and its transfer to HARC earlier in the current year, and limited staff resources to market and manage events and lettings.

The 2015/16 budget figures show a substantial increase in Employee costs compared to 2014/15, an increase within Heritage Management of £65k and Archive Services of £32k. There are also some 'non-repeatable' costs for subsequent years which we believe relate to the establishment of the Archive Service in the new HARC building. These budgets were also prepared before the closure of the Museum in the Broad Street building, so do not take account of any financial implications associated with that. Overall, any variances with earlier years do not materially affect our conclusions in the following sections.

6.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR COST SAVINGS

With controllable costs within the Museums and Archives Service being dominated by Employee costs, there is no other option to achieving the required saving of £500k, other than to remove Employee costs by that amount, resulting in redundancies of staff and the ultimate closure of the Services.

Needless to say, the situation is much more complex than this. A number of potentially expensive issues would arise, the main ones being:

- ◆ the requirement to repay at least part (or possibly all) of the HLF grant which supported the creation of the MRLC (see section 5 above for the legal assessment of this). The exact amount may depend upon the date when it closed and ceased to be a publicly accessible museum store
- ◆ the continuing need to care for the Museum collections, which would involve the time of skilled, knowledgeable staff (detailed in section 6.4 below)
- ◆ a similar need (and in part statutory requirement) to preserve the Archive material now housed within HARC, including the Diocesan archives which the County cares for without charge under the terms of the Parish Records & Registers Measure, and to continue to provide access to such records
- ◆ implications (often highly complex) of objects donated to the Museums and Archives Services by organisations and individuals, who may seek their return if they became concerned about their long-term care and/or the fact that they were no longer accessible if the facilities were permanently closed.

All of the above need detailed investigation to establish their impact but a brief assessment is in section 6.4 below.

Support Services and Premises-related expenditure are understood to remain centrally with the Council, unless buildings used by Museums and Archives are sold or found alternative uses (one of which for the Museum and Library is thought to be the planned Hereford University). However, given the nature and listed status of the building, most prospective users could be deterred as it requires substantial investment in its structure and services, even aside from the current problems. It also has a covenant on it which stakeholders may challenge if the Council tried to get it overturned.

6.3 REVENUE SAVINGS & POTENTIAL INCOME

6.3.1 As part of the consultation for this project, the staff of both Services were asked for their suggestions for opportunities for income generation. A great many suggestions were made at all levels. Whilst it has not been possible to evaluate in any detail the financial potential of some of these, the ones which seem likely to make the most significant contribution to income quickly and easily are listed below.

6.3.2 Revenue savings

Short term savings: Museum & Art Gallery, Broad Street

The Museum & Art Gallery is currently closed and we believe that as the building requires substantial repairs, it is unlikely that the Council will be able to re-open it in the short term. We have had various discussions about the current quality level of the Museum's displays and its role in the City's tourism offer. The Museum is the only portrayal of Herefordshire's history in the City, apart from The Old House. When compared to the draw and quality of the Cathedral and Mappa Mundi, we conclude that the Museum & Art Gallery in Broad Street is not a material part of the City's tourism product, though its location is ideal for its role. In addition it seems unlikely that there would be funds to make any significant improvement in the quality of its displays in the short term without external investment, even if the building was repaired. (See 3.5 for more on this idea.)

Consequently we consider closing the Museum in the short term could offer an opportunity for short term savings for the Services. We believe this could save in the region of £70k in employee costs (depending on how the Front-of-House are re-deployed) and possibly in excess of £20,000 in Premises-related expenditure and Supplies & Services (though there would be a small loss of retail income). An early decision could ensure the savings are achieved as soon as possible and that no further resources are devoted to planning for the re-opening of the Museum in the short term. There could be additional savings resulting from the Museum's closure from central support re-charges. (All savings figures quoted from redundancies do not include redundancy costs.)

This closure should not prevent the Service from developing a programme of Pop Up Museum displays in the City and round the County, as outlined in section 3.5. These could be created by the curatorial staff.

The employee savings could only come from redundancies in the Front-of-House (FoH) staff who would normally be on duty when the Museum was open. However, The Old House still requires staffing during opening hours, these staff are an energetic resource for the Museums Service (see 3.5); in addition, staff should be retained for managing the Pop Up Museum displays but they could be supplemented by volunteers for busy periods such as school holidays.

We imagine that there might not be savings on business rates even though the building was closed to the public. **We recommend** that the Council's own accountants verify these anticipated savings from the closure of the Museum & Art Gallery.

Longer Term Savings

In order to achieve substantial savings beyond those that can be achieved by the closure of the Museum & Art Gallery, one or more of the following should be considered and evaluated in detail for implementation in 2018/19:

- reduction of services at HARC achieved through restricted opening times/public access enabling a reduction in staff numbers (though there would be redundancy costs here);
- use of space at HARC for other Council services. (Transfer of the Modern Records Unit has been discussed but is now understood not to achieve any real savings and indeed may cause additional costs);
- amalgamation of services with other local authorities or joint provision; in particular making use of the state-of-the-art facilities at HARC: this is recommended in section 7.2;
- closure of MRLC at Friars Street: this however has the immediate cost of HLF requiring repayment of all or some of their capital grant and the continuing need to look after, or dispose of, the Museum Collections so this is **not recommended**.

6.3.3 Development of additional income

In section 7.2, we recommend that Commercial and Marketing roles should be created for the Services. These would have to be experienced and dynamic individuals, alongside the current staff who are active in their support. This is expected to generate a net contribution to the Services over time, working with the staff to develop the many revenue generating ideas that have been put forward as part of our consultations. Such income creation could not be expected to be instantaneous but we believe that if a number of the income generating ideas that could begin in 2016/17, these should cover the costs in the first year, though this could not be guaranteed and would be dependent on early establishment of the opportunities in the coming year. (More detail on these posts is in section 7.2 below.)

These ideas include:

- **introduction of retail sales** at The Old House with a theme of *Made in Herefordshire*;
- **increased lettings** of meeting/event space at HARC and Friars Street and **release of office space** to other Council departments (though these have staffing implications as outlined in section 3): with the recent redundancies at MRLC there is some office space available. HARC does have small meeting rooms which could be rented out and conservation bench space (see below). However, there is an administrative aspect to having external people in a high security building, especially if they receive visitors, so some element of managing the tenants should be taken into account in assessing if this income is worthwhile.

Encouraging rental of the learning rooms would also cause increased administration, reception and housekeeping at HARC and MRLC (see also 3.1 and 3.2). If these happened, we estimate the additional income may be **approximately £5,000** per year but with additional staff time required to manage it.

- **car park charging at HARC:** if these are introduced, some element of policing should be allowed for by the HARC staff, unless the Council's own parking services are able to travel out to Rotherwas to do so. Parking machines also need emptying and repairing so there is a cost to doing this. The Council operates on the basis of parking charges income not being allocated to the service but to Parking Services centrally so there is no incentive for HARC if it gives them more work, complaints from their users and no income benefit. We estimate an **additional £5,000** per year could be earned (based on projected user figures) but this would come at a cost. More importantly than this, the Council should be conscious of the potential public backlash against the charge; just after moving the Archives from a City Centre site to one on the outskirts of the City, the public could reasonably expect parking to be free on such a site, as it is now. Although HARC is on two bus routes and the cycle path, the majority of users now arrive by car.
- **addition of solar panels to HARC roof:** this requires initial investment though grants are available. Although it would take many years to recoup the investment, it could reduce even further the running costs of the HARC building, even though it is designed as a low revenue cost structure;
- **charges for expanded learning & outreach service:** during the consultations we spoke to several teachers and lecturers who emphasised the importance of access to original objects for both inspiration and research. The primary schools of the City would certainly pay for additional educational visits of either an expanded *Museum on the Move* and/or an educator with original objects to handle. It is more and more expensive and difficult for schools in particular to get out to visit museums and sites, so having the educators to come to them gives very good value for money. In time the service could be built up to include the Archives also. Using the freelance educators who are currently used to deliver some of the learning service should make it possible to not only cover all the costs but also make a surplus; we estimate an **additional £6,000** could be made per year.
- **development of the Brian Hatton Centenary exhibition:** as outlined in this report, the Museums Service urgently needs a venue for this important exhibition from the spring of 2016. Developing retail lines for both the main exhibition and for any Pop Up touring shows linked to it through the First World War centenary should be an urgent priority for the Museums Service staff and the new Commercial Manager.

Longer term income generation

The Commercial and Marketing roles should develop a comprehensive business plan in conjunction with both Services teams to fully exploit the wider range of commercial opportunities that have been identified, including:

- commercial conservation and collections advice services;
- renting of bench space at HARC to self employed conservators;
- paying events/ craft fairs (but a central venue is needed);
- commercial sponsorship for events/exhibitions;
- promote licensing of images (photographs, paintings, maps) for commercial use, possibly via an agency such as the Bridgeman Art Library
- and digitisation of documents and photographs to complement the above.

Many of these ideas have staffing implications however, such as the organisation of events fairs, and increased sponsorship would require the commercial posts which we recommend above. Many of these also require marketing expertise to make them earn significant income. It would be possible to earn income from carrying out commercial conservation on documents and maps, but this would need to be a policy decision as, if the conservators are carrying this work, they are not working on the Council's own collections.

The ideas for The Old House would need capital investment to create the shop and visitor centre so again, the immediate return would be limited. In addition, sourcing the products for sale would need a Commercial Manager who has buying skills and knowledge. If a Commercial Manager was appointed, they could also develop the retail offer for exhibitions and events.

Essex County Archives appointed a Marketing Manager who has recently launched a new website which includes the ability to purchase copies of documents and maps. There is also a *YouTube* video of the Senior Conservator talking about cleaning and repairing archives and giving storage advice.

Whilst these ideas could increase income for the Service, we recommend that they require careful evaluation to determine the staff time and resources involved. This is the only way to ensure they are capable of making a material net contribution to income, without diverting staff time from other more urgent activities, so policy decisions will be required. Some of them will entail additional staff costs where the skills do not exist at present.

Overall, even if all these opportunities were implemented, the contribution to meeting the required saving of £100k in 2017/18 (let alone future years) would be relatively limited as most require investment and new skills. There are no quick fixes.

In the medium to longer term however, some of them could be developed (with the right skills) to earn a contribution for the two Services, but most of them require investment, detailed assessment as indicated above, and/or external partners to make them happen. In addition, if any of these ideas were being considered, the impact on the existing services would need assessing. With the right skills, the income level over time could make a significant contribution to the cost of the Services but they will always need an element of subsidy from the Council.

6.4 THE COST OF CLOSURE

6.4.1 The impact of closure

As outlined above in section 6.1, the only way the Council can make the savings it has already identified from these two Services, is to make staff redundant unless it includes premises and central service costs within the savings targets. Whatever additional income can be earned, it will not be sufficient to cover all of the current staffing costs. In both Services, this would have an immediate material effect on the levels of service and opening hours. Assuming the Museum & Art Gallery remains closed (see 6.3.2 above), The Old House would have to close to the public too, HARC's search room would have to close and curatorial staff for both Services would be below the bare minimum (the Museums Service's staffing is already much lower than it should be for such large and significant collections).

However, as there are so many costs involved with closure – which this section outlines – the savings targets cannot be met wholly even with full closure. The costs include such as the disposal of the collections and responding to Freedom of Information enquiries. There are several different types of closure and this section considers the implications of these.

The options considered are:

- **maintain public access** by appointment only, retain collections and answer all enquiries but all buildings close to the public without an appointment;
- **mothballing:** retain all collections and some staff to monitor and care for them; no public access, donations or enquiries; both Museums closed;
- **dispose of the collections** the Council is not legally obliged to retain and, in the meantime, close to all public access, donations or enquiries; both Museums closed.

All salary costs quoted as savings are for the next financial year (2016/17) and include on- costs but not redundancy. All options have an element of cost for insurance within them which remains the same in each option as the collections will need insuring wherever they are stored and, where public access will be maintained, they will need insuring with public liability cover. So insurance and premises costs, initially excluded from our Brief, need including alongside the controllable costs of the two Services.

An active pest monitoring programme would still be needed for MRLC for all the options and this would have a modest cost which would remain the same in any option; the main pests are such as moth, museum beetle, and ingress by small mammals. This would need to be administered by at least one member of professional staff, full time or two part time. As HARC is a new building, it is likely to be less penetrable by small mammals and insect life providing it is maintained but the environmental data system must be monitored and collections examined or the Council's investment would be wasted.

In summary, we feel sure, having seen the public's strength of feeling for both Services that if any of these options was being pursued, the Council would face legal challenges. Although The National Archives has not directly contributed to our consultations - they have reserved their position - if they did not feel the Council was making decisions in the best interests of the Archive collections and public access to them, they would intervene.

We do not recommend any of these options for the reasons given throughout this section.

6.4.2 The implications of closure

There are several major drawbacks to these options. It is not an option for either Service to simply turn the keys in the locks and walk away.

Firstly, the Council has a **statutory obligation** to preserve its records and the other records of public services. Under the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is obliged to make *proper arrangements* for the care of, and access to, its records (see 2.3 above and Appendix III for more on this).

Secondly, the Council has an obligation to its **council tax payers** that, having invested £8m in the new HARC, it should ensure this money delivers public benefit. In addition, the Council borrowed all of this funding so it has a debt to repay. The reputational damage to the Council if HARC was to close or severely curtail its hours would be difficult to calculate but it would be safe to assume that the fallout would be substantial both locally and nationally.

Thirdly, as HARC has **Place of Deposit** status (for public records via TNA), the Archive is required to remain alive and active. Under the terms of The Parochial Records and Register Measure (PRRM), Herefordshire Archives are designated as the Diocesan Record Office for the Diocese of Hereford, so hold the Diocesan records and also the Church of England registers. These records do not belong to the Council but are cared for by the Council's Archivists. Public access must be maintained to all these records.

Fourthly, **access** must be maintained to the collections. Any Archive records held (both those owned by the Council, but also those on loan) are liable to Freedom of Information (FoI) enquiries. FoI is not only about modern records. FoI requests cost an average of £293 per request in 2010¹⁹. All Archive services receives regular FoI requests most of which are dealt with as usual business.

If the HARC building was closed to the public or opening hours severely restricted, many more enquiries would be official FoI, therefore would be more costly. In researching the costs for a new Archive building in 2012, it was estimated that it would cost £300,000 a year to answer all standard Archive Service requests as FoI enquiries²⁰. So restricting the availability of the Archive collections to save money would be counter-productive.

Likewise, the Museums Service has an obligation to continue receiving collections as it is a place of deposit for archaeological finds (designated by Historic England²¹) to receive and care for all finds from archaeological investigations (not just excavations). As referred to in 3.2, Hereford is one of 5 English cities designated as an Area of Archaeological Importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, so its archaeological importance is recognised in statute.

The archive of archaeological finds and reports is also needed by the HER which informs all planning applications on which the Council must rule. Their advice can only be as good as their records show so to ensure up to date information is used, it is vital that archaeological holdings are accessible.

The other services which are based in HARC also need access to the building during working hours and all of them receive visitors for research, especially the HER.

¹⁹ Cost of Freedom of Information, Anna Colquhoun, UCL, December 2010

²⁰ Briefing note to Cabinet on HARC, 14th August 2012

²¹ the new name since April this year for English Heritage's statutory protection and designation arm

Under the terms of Museums Accreditation, the Museums Service must manage its collections and maintain public access to them as specified in the Museums Association's *Code of Ethics*²², a cornerstone of Accreditation. Disposal of any object from a museum's collection is possible in certain circumstances but there is a strict process to be undertaken in order to do so and this must be followed or a museum could lose their Accreditation²³.

6.4.3 Options

Closure Option 1: Maintain public access by appointment

retain all collections and maintain public access by appointment only and answer all enquiries; close two museums and reduce HARC hours

If the Museums Service's collections are retained on site at MRLC, especially if enquirers and researchers could still have access, this may remove the need for HLF to claw back its grant. But given the limited nature of the access, there may still be some re-payment demanded.

In order to manage the collections and the users, Curatorial members of staff would need to be retained. No one curator can have considerable knowledge of the collections given their depth, range and significance however. The current complement of 5 part time members of curatorial staff is the minimum we believe to be able to cover basic collections management, supervise volunteers and researchers and answer enquiries. In addition, researchers also require assistance and supervision. Enquiries demand considerable time to respond.

It would not be possible to run a Museums Service with fewer professional curatorial staff than now - apart from the Front-of-house (FoH) staff - as the Service is operating on what we believe is below an adequate minimum level of professional staff. The staff between them cover archaeology, fine and decorative art, social history and collections management & documentation. So this option is possible but no further savings could be found from the Employee costs in the Museums Service except for the FoH staff. Without FoH staff, the Museums themselves (the Museum & Art Gallery and The Old House) would have to close.

Both Museum buildings would need emptying of collections if they closed to the public but there is only limited space to store the collections at MRLC as space must be retained for archaeology in the future (see 3.2 for more on this).

The Learning staff of the Museums Service could still maintain their Outreach service but developing their offer is dependent upon them working with the curators who have knowledge of the collections. There would not be any physical Museum for educational groups to visit which could restrict future development.

As the public would be using HARC and MRLC, even though they were there by appointment, there may, on Health & Safety grounds, need to be an additional member of staff at MRLC in addition to one of the curators at any one time. As the public and researchers would be using MRLC by appointment, it would be possible to manage how many arrived on any given day and ensure that adequate staffing was provided.

²² www.museumsassociation.org

²³ In 2014, Northampton Borough Council Museums Service lost their Accreditation for disposing of an Egyptian statue unethically and it has since been turned down by HLF for funding.

At HARC even if opening hours were reduced, all researchers would have to book ahead and this should be possible by adapting the HARC website. However, many archives still maintain *walk up* access and it would be an unpopular move: as soon as the Council creates more space for more researchers to work, access is restricted by an appointments-only system. There would need to be three members of staff on duty in the Search Room at any one time plus a receptionist for the staff and visitors of the other services within the building. HARC would have to remain available to them and to their visitors even if closed to the archive-researching public.

The savings below include all the FoH staff of the Museums Service and for HARC are based on a third fewer archivists and search room assistants so the available hours for the public to make appointments would have to be cut commensurately. All the current part-time researchers are retained as they mostly undertake research commissions from the public who cannot do the research themselves.

Cost savings Option 1:

Museums Service - FoH staff	£28,973	(incl on-costs but not redundancy)
HARC: 1/3 fewer archivists	£42,550	(incl on-costs but not redundancy)
HARC: 1/3 fewer search room staff	<u>£33,544</u>	(incl on-costs but not redundancy)
Total savings Option 1	<u>£105,067</u>	

Closure Option 2: Mothballing

retain all collections and some staff to monitor and care for them; no public access, donations or enquiries; FoI only close museum sites & reduce staff at HARC

As the stores at MRLC are new, are excellent in terms of environment, it would be more cost effective to retain these collections on site. This would not remove the need for HLF to claw back its grant as the public would be excluded from research access.

Both Museum buildings would need emptying of collections if they closed to the public but there is only limited space to store the collections at MRLC as space must be retained for

archaeology in the future (see 3.2 for more on this). If the two public museums were closed then the FoH staff would need to be made redundant, as in Option 1 above.

In order to monitor and care for the Museum collections, curatorial members of staff would need to be retained. In addition, research enquiries would need to be fielded, either to other museum collections or simply returned with an explanation of the closure of the Service. The figures below suggest half of the current curatorial staff be retained.

The Learning staff of the Museums Service could still maintain their Outreach service but developing their offer is dependent upon the education officers working with the curators who have knowledge of the collections and there may only be one or two of them. There would not be any physical museum for educational groups to visit which could restrict future development.

If the Archives Service lost staff to the extent of the savings already identified, it would have to reduce the hours when HARC was open for the services who are based there and owners of documents on deposit. They would also need to give access to the records owned by the Council to officers, to the Police and to such as Coroners and court officials. The Archivist staff's time would be more than taken

up doing not only this but also running the building, monitoring the collections and returning enquiries with an explanation of why the Service was closed or severely reduced.

The demands on the Archive staff would be considerable as HARC must remain open even on reduced hours. While initially we estimated that half of the current search room staff could be retained for this option, so achieving a saving of £50,000, as all public enquiries would have to be treated as FoI requests (as this is the only method of gaining access to the information in the documents). In assessing the business case for the new Archive in 2012, as outlined in 6.4.2 above, it was estimated that the cost of dealing with all Archive enquiries as FoI would be £300,000. This is approximately the same figure as the whole of the current staff at HARC now so if staff were made redundant and no public enquiries were possible, there could not be any savings from the current cost of employing Archive staff. These costs do not include any input from the Legal officers of the Council. Consequently there can be no staffing savings from HARC for this option because of FoI.

Both Services would need to address the donors and depositors who requested the return of their collections once public access is no longer available. This has recently happened to the Archives as siblings requested the return of documents on long term loan. They could prove they were the legal owners and so it was a straightforward request. However, it took about six months to complete, the Archivists working with the Council's Legal Services. These residual costs would occur more regularly if the Council restricts public access to HARC.

However, most cases would be less straightforward than this one; in many instances, it is more difficult to establish ownership as the heir(s) of the original depositor. So the legal work could be considerable in many cases.

Cost savings Option 2:

Museums Service - FoH staff	£28,973	(incl on-costs but not redundancy) Museums
Service: ½ curatorial staff	<u>£67,849</u>	(incl on-costs but not redundancy) Total
<u>savings Option 2</u>	<u>£96,822</u>	

These savings do **not** include any re-payment of the HLF capital grant for MRLC which would be expected under the terms of their contract with the Council.

Closure Option 3: Disposal

dispose of the collections the Council is not legally obliged to retain and, in the meantime, close to all public access, donations or enquiries

This is Option 2 above plus disposal of all the Museum Service's collections and those archives which HARC is not obliged to retain and which the Council owns.

If the Council wish to sell the MRLC, firstly the collections would have to be disposed of and the process for doing this, as outlined above, is lengthy but not impossible. It is not possible for us to estimate how long this process might take as the collections are numerous and complex. This would certainly need further experienced curatorial staff to carry it out and would not therefore save any of the Council's Employee costs for many years so would lead to additional expenditure. Also, this would ultimately lead to repaying HLF's grant (see section 5 above), and other past grants for the purchase and conservation of objects would need to be assessed and discussions with the grant-giving bodies would need to take place and grants probably paid back.

If six full time experienced and knowledgeable curators were working with administrative support on the disposal, it may be possible to clear the MRLC in ten years. But we stress that this is an estimate.

Nor are there Archivist staff savings to be identified (as outlined in Option 2 above) as otherwise, all enquiries would become FoI requests and the costs of answering them would equal the current cost of the Archive staff. Also a similar time estimate would apply to Archives for disposal, with similar staffing levels (6 FTE's) but one or two could be Archive Assistants in support of the Archivists. This would also be an additional expenditure on salaries. It would not be possible to dispose of all collections, as outlined in 2.3 and Appendix III.

The only savings identified in this Option are the salaries of the FoH staff from the Museums Service. The Museum posts could be made redundant as the two Museums would not be open to the public.

Cost savings Option 3:

Museums Service - FoH staff	£28,973	(incl on-costs but not redundancy)
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<u>Total savings Option 3</u>	<u>£28,973</u>
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NB: There are considerable additional costs (see next page) and the repayment of the HLF capital grant.

Additional staffing costs required for Option 3:

Museums Service:

costs of additional curatorial staff	£62,000	(incl on-costs)	HARC:
additional Archivists	<u>£152,811</u>	(incl on-costs)	<u>Total</u>
<u>additional costs Option 3</u>	<u>£214,811</u>		

In addition, there would be the re-payment of the HLF capital grant.

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There appears to be no advantages to the Council for any of these closure options as they all have significant drawbacks and some of them will cost the Council more than they are looking to save or are costing now. In addition, the reputational cost would be considerable if any option was pursued and, in dismantling the Services, the Council would lose their heritage and a significant contributor to the tourism and learning economy. There is a risk that HLF may require re-payment of their capital grant for all of these Options, and they would definitely require it to be re-paid for Options 2 and 3.

We do not recommend any of these options.

7. FUTURE PURPOSE & DIRECTION

7.1 OPTIONS FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES

Our Brief asked us to recommend a future delivery model for the Services and this we have considered. To become a successful independent, cultural organisation, the two Services would need more critical mass to be able to survive and thrive. They are too small on their own.

In order to be ready for major change, governance or otherwise, an organisation needs to be reasonably fit, have strong leadership and some green shoots of resilience. If not, the change will expose its weaknesses and this can result in projects not delivering. The Herefordshire staff lack both capacity and skills for being more entrepreneurial and have limited commercial experience of running businesses, creating and developing catering, retail and other commercial operations. Their leadership is based on professional collections care and access.

The Museums Service is significantly under-staffed and we are full of admiration for what the staff have achieved in recent years. But they have no spare capacity to cope with the demands that earning additional income and being more entrepreneurial could make upon them.

We have been very impressed at what the Archive Service has achieved with HARC, but now the building is complete, the real work should just be starting, making this building work for the Council and developing the Service. But there has never been a marketing plan (nor budget) for HARC.

Changing the governance of the Services will not help to save money (though potential savings on rates in the first year may give an attractive glow to the idea in the short term). Indeed it would cost to set up a new organisation and to establish it.

What both Services need is

- regrouping, a pause from coping with savings demands and moving
- re-focusing on priorities which will support the Council's main corporate objectives and
- investment to save, with new skills, which could launch an income drive.

We are unable to recommend an immediate change of governance for the Museums and Archives Services. As stated in section 6, there is no scope for making savings from the current revenue budgets without making staff redundant and having a significant impact on opening hours and direct services.

However, irrespective of whether additional savings are made as outlined in section 6, **we recommend** three steps the Council should take to ensure the future of Herefordshire's Heritage Services:

- create a Development Trust
- create commercial posts
- explore heritage partnerships

7.2 THREE STEPS TO THE FUTURE

7.2.1 A Halfway House

We recognise that as the financial pressures continue for the Council, so both Services should take advantage of the Council's interest in their future to begin to take practical steps to establish a new, more business-like organisation. **We recommend** establishing a Development Trust as a halfway house which could help the Services to prepare, in time, to become independent, be part of another external independent organisation.

It would be possible for the Council to establish this as a charity for fundraising and investigating income generating ideas. There would be the costs of establishing the Trust and trustees would be required other than the Council (a corporate trustee role is not recommended). The Trust could continue alongside any future independent cultural Trust as a fundraising body (if one was set up) or could become the eventual Trust itself.

This would be quick and easy to achieve, with potential short, medium and longer term benefit and could also give both Services some experience of independence and working with trustees. The Development Trust could be used as a vehicle to test income earning ideas and could help to introduce some business-like methods into the two Services. It could make the Services more attractive to funders in the future, as they would not feel they were giving money to the Council.

Several local authorities have successfully created these for their heritage services, so the idea is not new. In the south west, Bristol Museums and Archives and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter both have one and Poole Museums Service is currently creating one also.

7.2.2 Create commercial posts

Even without a change of governance, investment is needed in changing the culture of the Services to a heritage-focused business. It is not surprising that local government heritage services are often not business-like as they have been created to provide a subsidised service to local communities, and service is their mantra, not income. They have often been prevented or discouraged from charging and setting cost effective rates for such as room hire. However, all the staff in Herefordshire are bright and motivated enough to respond if a Commercial Manager was appointed to take the lead on income generation.

We recommend that a **Marketing Manager** is created for both Services, with an operational budget. This post will also support the income drive and help to boost visitor numbers at both HARC and any Pop Up Museums. Free access to social media and the ability to create and maintain a standalone website (so it is always up to date) will be key if this post is established and the Services are to grow.

We recommend that the Council appoints a **Commercial Manager** for both Services who can be the focus of assessing income generation potential and can work with the professional collections staff to implement the income generation ideas outlined in this report.

Posts such as these should be shared between the Archives and the Museums Services. A standalone website would be required; financial freedom to invest in lines to sell (some of which may be off-the-shelf and some of which would be bespoke to Herefordshire), not be prevented from stocking the shops just before the end of the financial year, in short, they should operate a trading account with dedicated

websites. If the Council is determined for services to be more commercial and earn more income, then this type of freedom of operation is essential.

The Development Trust, once it is created, could employ these staff to save the Council adding to its establishment. Or consideration could be given to appointing commercial staff who are self-employed which would save the considerable on-costs for the Council. Given that suitable candidates are likely to be working in the independent museums and heritage sector already, rather than local government, this would be a practical approach. We estimate that the posts would need a salary of approximately £30,000 each + an operational budget.

7.2.3 Heritage partnerships

The future of heritage is uncertain in local authorities as government grants will continue to decline and safeguarding children and adults will remain essential expenditure. The recent announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that local government will be able to retain all the business rates it collects is unlikely to relieve all of the burden. As a consequence, all counties should continue to work together as much as they can and, despite the local focus of much of heritage collections, the specialist skills and knowledge required for caring for collections, is expensive to train and retain.

Worcestershire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire are all struggling with their county archive costs. The first two counties also run museums services. Rather than setting up small charitable trusts which lack critical mass, **we recommend** that Herefordshire takes the lead and initiates high level discussions with surrounding counties on more formal working partnerships. The aim of these discussions would be to allow retention of skills and knowledge and make the services more sustainable for the future. Informal discussions with professional heads of service we carried out during this project indicated that other counties are open to these conversations. However as so many senior officer posts have gone, the heads of service find they are unable to progress them as these matters need raising at Chief Executive and senior manager levels.

If Herefordshire takes a positive lead, it could attract central government support²⁴ and we believe the Hereford MP would back any initiative which may create a template which other local authorities could use to save their own heritage services.

7.3 Invest to save

In order to support this responsive, more cohesive approach, develop an independent outlook and a business focus, **we recommend** that significant steps should be taken in the immediate future, but investment will be needed. The development trust would assist here as the Trustees of this would bring a more business-like approach and new skills in support of a more focused and efficient way of working. As referred to in 7.2, the Trust could employ the new commercial and marketing posts to save the Council's establishment costs.

The Services should adopt AIM's *Hallmarks of a Prospering Museum*²⁵ as a blueprint for the more vibrant and business-like Services and perhaps a prospective new organisation. (Despite this being a Museum-based programme, it is still relevant for the Archives as an organisation.) In addition, an organisational

²⁴ Shropshire's Designated Geology collection has just attracted central government funding from the Chancellor's Libor fund through the support of their MP

²⁵ *Hallmarks of a Prospering Museum*, AIM, 2015 www.aim-museums.co.uk

development programme should be adopted to kick-start this new way of working to include:

- **visioning** and build on the recent thinking to combat cuts to create a shared clarity of purpose for both Services;
- **strategic planning** in the medium term (to link with the Council's Corporate Priorities) to articulate this purpose;
- **HARC is a world-beating asset:** how can the Services build on this and use it as an inspirational base?
- **staff/volunteers** including:
 - a review of roles and responsibilities to identify where skills (potentially) exist which are not being used, where capacity needs to increase and which skills will be needed to help grow the organisation,
 - including using two full time support posts to manage the buildings and free up staff to fulfil their professional roles;
 - what roles an expanded volunteer workforce could help to develop and how this could be created and managed;
 - explore working relationships between staff from both Services, to cement partnerships and create action plans for developing joint projects to develop audiences for HARC;
 - creating more fluid and responsive working practices with collaborative assessments of ideas and costs;
 - and continuing to work with external partners as outlined in section 4.

Some external facilitation should be commissioned to support this implementation and to give input as a critical friend. We could provide additional information with a more detailed estimate of costs as and when required (but allow between £5,000 and £7,000).

In addition, key areas to address for more business-like behaviour include:

- regular contact with one or two similar sized organisations who have left local authorities and become independent to understand how they changed their focus (possibly one museum and one archive),
- and identifying similar sized organisations in a similar position to be become benchmarking partners;
- training and support for the senior staff in assessing the real cost of activities to ensure charges can reflect the true cost to the local authority;
- developing FoH staff to support the retail offer, e.g. buying skills, understanding the market and potential;
- training for all staff, including FoH, in selling, upselling and visual merchandising;
- identifying income generation ideas and new income streams.

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If the Council takes these three significant steps, and invests to save, it will not only show the type of leadership which HARC epitomises but will be setting the standard for other local authorities to be bold and creative in dealing with funding heritage services.

8. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION PLAN

8.1 Legal recommendation

The Council cannot close, sell or let MRLC without the prior approval of the HLF, as to do so would be a breach of the contract triggering the HLF's right to demand repayment of all or part of the Grant. (Section 5)

8.2 Financial feasibility study conclusion

With controllable costs within the Museums and Archives Service being dominated by Employee costs, there is no other option to achieving the required saving of £500k, other than to remove Employee costs by that amount, resulting in redundancies of staff and the ultimate closure of the Services. Needless to say, the situation is much more complex than this. A number of potentially expensive issues are detailed in Section 6.

There are no quick fixes. Overall, even if all the financial income-earning opportunities in this report were implemented, the contribution to meeting the required saving of the initial £100k (let alone future years) would be relatively limited as most ideas require investment, time to come to fruition and new skills. In the medium to longer term however, some of them could be developed (with the right skills) to earn a contribution for the two Services, but most of them require investment and/or external partners to make them happen. In addition, if any of these ideas were being considered, the impact on the existing services would need assessing. However, the income levels will never come close to ensuring the two Services do not need any subsidy from the Council.

(Section 6.3)

8.3 Summary of other Recommendations

None of the options outlined in The Cost of Closure are recommended.

(Section 6.4)

We are **unable to recommend** an immediate change of governance for the Museums and Archives Services. They are too small to survive alone, do not have sufficient commercial acumen or strong leadership to make them marketing focused and there are considerable costs to setting up the legal agreements if external charities are being created. (Section 7.1)

We recommend that

- the Council should take three steps to ensure the future of Herefordshire's Heritage Services:
 - create an independent Development Trust
 - create two commercial posts: Marketing & Commercial Managers
 - heritage partnerships: initiate high level discussions with other counties
- **Invest to Save:** in order to support transformation into responsive Services with a more cohesive approach, develop an independent outlook and a business focus, **we recommend** that significant steps should be taken in the immediate future, but investment will be needed. (Section 7.3)

- close the Museum & Art Gallery on Broad Street as it appears it will not re-open in the short term, so achieving some immediate savings (we estimate £70,000 but premises costs are not clear)
- create Pop Up Museums sited in e.g. shops, community halls, libraries, The Courtyard and at other venues round the County. A radical approach could be taken, more akin to a temporary exhibition or a touring show. This could support taking objects out on the road to new places (in addition to *Museum on the Move*) (Section 3.5.1)
- a more fluid approach to display could allow the Museums Service to experiment with different styles and content, starting conversations with the public, exploring co- curation and drawing especially younger members of the community into creating content (Section 3.5.1)
- the policy decision is taken that up to half of the time of the HARC conservation staff can be spent earning income from external advice and conservation work
- and that they investigate renting bench space in the conservation laboratory to one or two self-employed conservators (Section 6.3.3)
- increased lettings of offices and meeting rooms at both HARC and MRLC are assessed for income potential and impact on existing staff (Section 6.3.3)
- consideration to be given to introducing car park charges at HARC and assessing the impact on public opinion (Section 6.3.3)
- progress be made by the Museums Service immediately to expand the learning and outreach service using freelance educators and aiming to make a surplus over the year (Section 6.3.3)
- rapid progress be made to identify a venue for the Brian Hatton Centenary Exhibition in spring 2016 linking to other WWI centenary commemorations and including a full programme of events and retail opportunities (Section 6.3.3)

8.4 ACTION PLAN OF PRIORITIES 2016-17

to April 2016

- close Museum & Art Gallery on Broad Street with consequent redundancies
- re-invest some of this saving in appointing a Commercial Manager
- urgently identify a venue for the Brian Hatton Centenary
- develop a programme and retail lines in support of this

- begin high level talks with Gloucestershire, Shropshire & Worcestershire
- investigate setting up a Development Trust

- identify a venue for a Pop Up Museum and seek sponsorship
- develop volunteer roles in support of this

- agree policy change to allow HARC conservators to use some of their time for earning income from conservation work and collections advice
- examine reducing HARC opening hours to find additional savings in 2017-18
- assess impact on staff time of increased room hire, bench and office rental, and HARC parking charges, canvas the public
- business planning to establish priorities for income generation ideas as a result of assessments above

April – August 2016

- recruit and train new volunteers to support opening the Pop Up Museum
- implement income generation ideas (following assessment above)

September – December 2016

- implement changes in HARC hours (following assessment above)
- business planning to establish priorities for new marketing post
- develop the Pop Up Museum
- launch the expanded Learning & Outreach Service

January – March 2017

- use some of savings and additional income to appoint a Marketing Manager to be in post in April 2017
- and to raise the profile of both heritage Services
- building on the partnerships already in place and increasing sponsorship opportunities

8.5 CONCLUSION

We believe that the Archives and Museums Services are an asset to Herefordshire Council, are contributing to their Corporate Priorities out of all proportion to their small revenue budgets, command much loyalty and support from the general public and attract tourists, so important for the County's economy. Heritage overall brings over £20m into the County's economy and both Services could play a more positive role with the *Invest to Save* recommendations in this report.

The Council's far sighted decision to build HARC demonstrates what is possible. They now need the Council to implement this report. If their vision for Herefordshire is indeed one of economic prosperity with a healthy and fulfilled population, then the Council needs its Archives and Museums Services as partners to help to achieve this.

Hilary McGowan

with

Alastair Stevenson

and

Rosie Parr, Lancaster Parr

February 2016

APPENDICES

Acknowledgements

We started work on this project the week the new Herefordshire Archives & Resource Centre (HARC) opened to the public. Despite this, we were made to feel very welcome and all staff went out of their way to help us as much as they could do. At no point did we feel that they would rather have been getting on the day job instead of working with us. This is a testament to their dedication but also to their realism of how important our work was to the future of the Services.

We are very grateful for the friendly response from the public and stakeholders of both Services who were all open to discussing ideas about how they could help. The huge response to the public meeting on a Friday evening was particularly gratifying and demonstrated to all there how important to Herefordshire are these Museums and Archives Services.

Appendix I

Our Brief in full

Herefordshire Council Review of Museum and Archive Services Brief for Commission

1. Introduction

Herefordshire Council directly runs two museums in Hereford, a museum store and a new archive centre. In addition there are a number of functions the services operate that support voluntary sector museums and the care of the historic collections.

The Council, along with all other local authorities, has had to review its core purpose and activities in the light of public sector changes not least the significant reduction in budgets.

Therefore, this review has been commissioned to consider the future opportunities for the museum and archive service in light of local government changes and pressures. The review specifically needs to evaluate feasibility of the service operating on a zero based subsidy.

2. Objectives of the Commission Key

objectives are:

- To create a road-map for museum and archive services to achieving a zero based subsidy.
- To present opportunities for the service in meeting the requirements of a contemporary local and visiting audience.
- To recommend a future delivery model for the services, including objectives, purpose and financial overview.

Plus additional amendment in the contract:

if operating on a zero based subsidy is not feasible, we would consider the steps the Council could take so that progress could be made towards this situation.

3. Work to be undertaken

3.1 Assessment of Services

- Make contact with departments of the Council to access information regarding services delivered in the museum and archive service, potentially hold a service workshop.
- To explore options for the services with partners and stakeholders.
- A financial and legal assessment of the Heritage Lottery Funding Agreement for the Museum Resource and Learning Centre.
- Assess each site and service for its income potential.
- Conduct desk research on good practice on service operation in a zero subsidy environment.
- Review how the service relates to the corporate plan for the local authority, and its future potential to do so.
- Assess the options for the management of the service, including retained within the authority and outsourced in whatever form.
- Gain an understanding of future operating model based on triangulation of data, stakeholder feedback and good practice.
- Review funding and finance opportunities.
- Produce a final report and an executive summary.

3.2 Case studies

- Reference to other parts of the country that have taken this approach and how that experience can inform intended approach in Herefordshire to the future operation of the museum and archive services.

4. Outputs

It is expected that activity would result in:

- Review of research.
- Outline of future purpose and direction of the service.
- Options for the management of the service, with recommendations.
- Options for income generation by site and service, with recommendations.
- Financial profile of the recommendations.
- Next steps and requirements for future delivery.

5. Skills Required

The consultant chosen will be able to demonstrate:

- Commercial operation of an equivalent service.
- Track record of service evaluation and design.

- Experience of work with the voluntary and public sectors.
- Creative thinking and visioning skills.
- Excellent communication with groups and individuals.
- Report writing.
- Proven track record of similar consultancy exercises.

6. Timescale

The start date of the project should be in mid-July 2015 for completion by October 2015.

7. Ownership

Herefordshire Council will retain ownership and responsibility for all data collected and ownership of the report.

8. Responsibilities

The consultant will be responsible for:

- Conducting all work necessary to complete the final report.
- Undertaking required assessment and interviews.
- Collection and review of all relevant documents.
- Agreeing the format of the final reporting arrangement.
- Attendance at up to three Advice Group meetings and to deliver up to two presentations of the final findings.

Herefordshire Council will be responsible for:

- Ensuring all the relevant information at its disposal is made available.
- Ensuring that all key stakeholders are informed of the consultant's remit.
- Providing a named Council contact.
- Convening an Advice Group and which will direct the project.
- Commenting on the findings, inputting into the final report, and facilitating the meetings for the presentation of the final report.

9. Terms of payment

10. Project Owner

Andrew Ashcroft

Assistant Director – Economic, Environmental and Cultural Services Herefordshire
Council

THE REGENERATIVE VALUE OF CULTURE

The value of cultural developments has long been recognised and culture has been used to regenerate both urban and rural areas throughout the UK. Since Glasgow's *Miles Better* campaign in 1983 with its opening of the ground breaking Burrell Collection gallery, many local authorities have used culture to improve their image, re-generate their public spaces and boost their economies.

ACE's Chief Executive recently stated that because of the role cultural institutions can play in place-making, "local authorities are defining themselves more and more by their cultural institutions in shaping that place" despite their financial problems.

Liverpool restored its Albert Dock, and Tate Liverpool opened in one of the former warehouses in 1988. In Salford and the Borough of Trafford, the site of the former Manchester Ship Canal docks is now a massive cultural site comprising Media City where the BBC and ITV are based, with Imperial Museum North, the first British building by Daniel Libeskind. Anchoring the whole development was The Lowry – the theatres and art gallery building – opened in 2000. The site is now surrounded by offices, apartments and a shopping centre. The cities of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Gateshead invested in the Baltic Mill and Sage, the concert hall, with rejuvenated docksides and the Millennium bridge across the Tyne which won the Stirling Prize in 2002.

Hull City Council built a new archive, called The History Centre, in partnership with the University (where Philip Larkin was Librarian). Kingston-upon-Hull, a major medieval port and a key strategic stronghold on the east coast has a huge and important history. The City Council built up one of England's best Museums Services with seven museums in historic buildings in the Museums Quarter of the City, a boat, a light ship and a significant collection of Old Masters at the Ferens Art Gallery. The City's archives date back to 1299, and papers held include the Port and Docks of Hull and significant individuals such as Andrew Marvell, Amy Johnson and William Wilberforce, in addition to Larkin's papers. Hull is similar to Hereford: a City with a rich history and a large agricultural hinterland.

The History Centre, a new build, was funded by an HLF grant of £7.7m and cost £10.3m. It opened in 2010 and in addition to the City's Archives, it houses the Local Studies Library and the University's archives. The Ferens Art Gallery is currently closed for refurbishment and a new environmental control system, again funded partly by HLF.

Hull will be UK City of Culture in 2017 when the Art Gallery (and the New Theatre) will both reopen. The Turner Prize exhibition and award ceremony will move to the Ferens, as it did to Derry/Londonderry in 2013. As a consequence of this award, the City is experiencing an economic renaissance, stimulated by the cultural investment. Hull had one of the lowest educational attainment levels in England with school truancy a major problem. The investment is already making improvements here.

The Courtyard Theatre, which is leading on Hereford's own bid for UK Capital of Culture, has been working closely with Hull to learn from their success.

Following the re-development of the Central Library in Manchester, completed in April this year, *Home* opened this summer, also in Manchester. This was described by *The Sunday Times* as "another glistening arts complex" but is essentially a new home for the existing Cornerhouse cinemas and Library Theatre Company, with additional contemporary gallery space and broadcast studios.

Situated in an increasingly young and hip area of the city centre, the Chief Executive praised the vision of the City Council:

“it realised that the creation of a multi-arts centre would provide economic and social benefits to the city, acting as a cultural catalyst for the regeneration of the area”¹.

Major individual cultural buildings have also been used to stimulate regeneration for some time: Tate St Ives, opened in 1993, the famous Guggenheim art gallery in Bilbao in 1997, and more recently, the Wakefield Hepworth and, in Margate, the Turner Contemporary. These flagship buildings are symbols of hope for towns reinvigorating themselves and finding pride through art, despite struggles at the time the buildings were created. So such buildings do contribute to giving a new lease of life and help to create a positive image.

But not all the examples of economic regeneration success are urban.

The Tank Museum in Dorset holds one of the most significant worldwide collections and archives relating to armoured vehicle warfare. Based at Bovington Camp, the Army’s Tank training site in Dorset, it is the only substantial indoor visitor attraction in the county.

The Museum has a strong business focus and the majority of its turnover of just under £4m per annum comes from sales: admissions, events and intellectual property. The rural location of the Tank Museum - Bovington Camp is on the Dorset Heathland with no passing trade - underpins the Museum’s visitor offer, experience, and marketing strategy of the Museum as a destination.

The Museum receives around £500,000 per annum Ministry of Defence (MoD) support in the form of a £20,000 grant and direct payment by the MoD of three staff, utilities and building maintenance. Substantial capital investment in recent years from organisations including the Heritage Lottery Fund and DCMS/Wolfson museum and gallery improvement fund has enabled building, exhibition, collections storage and visitor facility improvements. As a consequence of this investment and improved marketing, the visitor figures rose from 109,488 in 2008/9 to 143,309 in 2012/13. To increase its capacity to fund core costs the Museum has established an endowment fund with HLF Catalyst funding support and is developing additional fundraising capacity through a Membership scheme.² This is significant investment in a rural area with no major centres of population other than the county town but with a heritage tourism appeal; a close parallel with Herefordshire.

Although most of these examples, though not all, are in larger towns and cities than Hereford, the principle is well established that culture can support an economic revival, leveraging in additional income for the area and help to create new civic pride.

As the ACE report, quoted in this report, says:

“last year a survey of local authorities explored the value that they placed on arts and culture; economic development emerged as the main reason for them to fund culture”³.

¹ Dave Moutrey, *The Sunday Times*, 7th June 2015

² statistics from ACE, op cit, Case Studies volume, pages 25-28

³ quoted on page 22 in ACE op cit

THE STATUTORY BASIS FOR ARCHIVES

The National Archives

The National Archives (TNA) took over the regulation of archives in England and Wales in 2011 at the same time as Arts Council England become responsible for museums.

TNA's main policy document which summarises their priorities is *Archives for the 21st Century*³³, a major report which has the following five policy recommendations:

- **Built to Last:** develop bigger and better services in partnership
- **Effective, skilled workforce:** strengthened leadership and a responsive, skilled workforce
- **Digital by design:** co-ordinated response to the challenge of managing digital information accessible now and discoverable in the future
- **More accessible online:** comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues and digitised archive content
- **Partnerships:** active participation in cultural and learning partnerships promoting a sense of identity and place within the community.

TNA has designated Herefordshire Record Office as a place of deposit for public records. In addition, it is also the Diocesan Record Office for the Diocesan of Hereford and for Church of England Parish Registers under the Parochial Records and Register Measure.

TNA was invited to contribute to our consultations but declined, saying:

“Unfortunately, on this occasion, The National Archives feels unable to contribute to the consultation directly and will be in contact with Herefordshire County Council separately. We will, however, be interested in seeing the results of the consultation once they are known”.

2.3.2 Other statutory provision

Archives have a statutory framework which is wider than simply TNA and which museums do not have; e.g. local government has a statutory duty to preserve their own records. Local authorities are covered by several local government acts regarding the safe keeping and accessibility of records. Most notably, democratic accessibility is covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoI), the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and various Local Government Acts.

The Public Records Acts of 1958 & 1967 empowered the Lord Chancellor to appoint local record offices as *places of deposit* and Herefordshire Archives and Record Office was first designated in 1964.

³³ *Archives for the 21st Century in Action: refreshed 2012-15*, TNA, 2012

The Local Government (Records) Act 1962 empowered local authorities to acquire records relating to the area they served by gift, purchase or deposit and to make arrangements for public access to these records. It gives responsibility for “adequate use of records under its control”³⁴. This Act refers to allowing inspection and copying of records, preparing indices and guides, and publishing and exhibiting them. It empowers local authorities to acquire records of local significance, over and above their own records, care for them and make them available for study by the public. This Act refers solely to the service provision aspect of archivists’ work, not stewardship and collections care.

The Local Government Act 1972 requires Local Authorities to make *proper arrangements* for any documents that belong to them or are in their care. These *proper arrangements* were defined in joint guidance issued in 1999, confirming that this covered all records, not just those of the local authority. The guidance also referred to the need to provide a suitable physical environment for the records (to BS5454 standard), the need to work with schools and other educational establishments to realise the educational potential of archives and the need to provide adequate staffing.⁴

⁴ www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/legislation/other-archival-legislation/local-government-acts/

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Arts Council England (ACE) has been responsible for museums in England since 2011, at the same time as TNA took over the Archives sector. As it took up these new responsibilities, it commissioned *Culture, knowledge & understanding: great museums and libraries for everyone*. Then in 2013, it merged this document with its existing one for the arts, identifying five common goals for all cultural organisations in the years to 2020. This is the cultural equivalent of TNA's report quoted above, and has many synergies with it while also setting the context for museums under the following headings:

- Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries
- Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries
- The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable
- The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums, and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries.

This ten year strategic framework³⁵ highlights how the broad spectrum of cultural organisations can mesh and support each other.

³⁵ *Great Art and Culture for Everyone 2010-20*, ACE, 2013

SPINNING OUT FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities have for many years spun out leisure services in particular, persuaded by the benefits of converting to charitable trusts and mutuals. The growth of Greenwich Leisure Limited, the first spun-out leisure mutual in 1993, inspired others to follow. In addition, many local authorities are, like Herefordshire, involving community-based groups to run selected sites and services such as branch libraries, in order to maintain them. Herefordshire Council has put several contracts out of the Council with The Courtyard Theatre, HALO (the contract for leisure centres) and Brightstripe (for arts and sports development).

Many museums, mainly in England but some in Scotland and in Wales, have now been established as independent charitable trusts and several are in organisations which also include archives, arts development, theatres and/or libraries. We estimate there are approximately 40 museum services in UK now in organisations independent of local authorities and this number is still growing.

Some archives have also left local authorities but fewer of them than museums. Culture Coventry (2013) includes archives, museums and the local studies library. The South West Heritage Trust (2014), created by Devon and Somerset County Councils, includes both county's archives and local studies libraries with Somerset County's Museums and Historic Environment Record. This is the first organisation to be created by a partnership of two local authorities and they are open to further expansion. Explore York (2014) is a mutual of York City Council's archives and libraries, the first such in Britain.

In some cases, existing charities have taken over running archives such as Redbridge Culture and Leisure, established as a trust in 2007, which acquired heritage services in 2010. The latter comprises archives, a museum, libraries, parks and open spaces. Since 2009, Northumberland County Archives have been managed by Woodhorn Charitable Trust alongside their branch office in Berwick-upon-Tweed and three museums in the County, in Hexham, Morpeth and Berwick. The Woodhorn Trust was an existing charity running the site of the former Woodhorn Colliery near Ashington as a museum. The move provided a new home for the Archives which gave them much needed expansion space from their cramped previous site in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The impetus for setting up museums as "independent" has usually been from the local authority to save money, though this should not be the main driver for considering an independent organisation. The charitable organisation would not pay full business rates so an immediate saving of 80% of the rates would be achieved for the parent council in Year 1. But this saving is a one off and should not be seen a continuous saving year on year.

There are many risks however. TNA's website has several case studies and under the Sustainability heading, it cites one archive service who found it more difficult to maintain links with the public record creators, e.g. courts, hospitals and police, once they were part of an independent trust and appeared to lack the backing of the local authority.

The Council would still be responsible for the collections however even if it created an external trust to manage and care for them on their behalf (the same would be true of the Museums Service's collections also). So the responsibility would remain.

The highest risk to services to be spun out is that that are bled dry of funding and skills through continual cuts by their parent councils. In this scenario, services enter the new phase of their life weakened and not capable of creating a viable future for themselves.

In the case study cited above, the TNA website states that services in this spun out archive struggled to be self-funding so, even though it is in an environment where it is easier to generate income, the archive still requires financial support from their parent authority.

Most local authorities wish to continue to support museums and archives. But the big risk is that their inability to give guarantees of future funding make it difficult to create a resilient business plan for any new governance model and to demonstrate the viability required. Most of the local authority museums who have achieved independence from their parent authority are in England, as stated above, and several of them – notably Birmingham and Derby, both recently created – have had troublesome negotiations for the 2015/16 financial year as their parent authority sought to cut more deeply than previously agreed.

Where the local authority is unable to fulfil their funding agreement and seeks more substantial savings from the new trusts, any young organisation is at risk. So if a new governance model is selected in the future for Museums and Archives Services in Herefordshire, the Council must consider seriously the question of future funding in both the short and longer term. (See section 7.1 for more on this.) Any new organisation running a Council-owned service would need a helping, supportive hand to find its feet, especially if

– as with many heritage organisations – they are not experienced at generating income and thinking commercially. So although many are flourishing, many are also struggling as the financial support from their parent authorities upon which their business plans are based, appears to be unreliable.

Last year, TNA published a major report for county record offices called *In a Spin*⁵ The report states:

“However once a spin-out has been initiated,
it will not succeed without encouragement and support, and the
local authority will need to ensure that
the spin-out is set up to succeed.”⁶

But there are many advantages as well as drawbacks. These would include the ability to fund raise more effectively, to be more responsive to new initiatives and potential partnerships than if they were in the local authority, and to develop trading as an important source of income more easily. Independent organisations can innovate more easily without the bureaucracy of local government and can focus on its communities more effectively without political interference. The members of the new Board of Trustees help the organisation benefit from new skills and a more business-like approach.

Finally, as local government services derive no immediate benefit from the income they generate (income is usually simply used to reduce the bottom line cost of the service), staff have much more motivation to innovate and earn income, once they are in control of it and not losing it at each 31st March.

⁵ [In a Spin](#), The National Archives, 2014 (this has led to *spinning out* becoming the way to describe this move)

⁶ *ibid*, page 14

The TNA report identified some of the key challenges of spinning out as being⁴⁰ (these apply equally to museums as to archives):

“Loss of democratic control: while under direct management, elected members are able to hold service management directly to account and to ensure that policy changes are adopted and implemented rapidly.

Potential for failure: a small, new organisation may struggle to be viable or to develop the disciplines needed to be sustainable.

Savings are often at the expense of staff: while transferred staff will have a degree of protection through the TUPE regulations, many spin-outs make savings in staff costs by employing new starters on lower rates and offering less generous pensions.

No protection from cuts: independence and a contract provide only limited protections from the demands for savings as contracts do make allowances for variation (discussed on the previous page) and the spin-out might find it hard to achieve existing savings targets, let alone take on new ones.

Few opportunities for growth: while some spin-outs have grown considerably, these are the exceptions and many smaller spin-outs lack the commercial skills and capacity to win new work, particularly if there are more and more spin-outs to compete with.

Fundraising can prove difficult: donors and the public may be loath to give money to a service they still identify as a council service and believe they are already funding through taxation.”

We know from our independent museum research outside of this project, that those services which have spun out and have invested in their cultural change and organisational development are the ones most likely to succeed. Luton Cultural Services Trust (established in 2007), is an example of one which has done this and has recently taken over the community halls alongside the museums, libraries and the arts service originally in the Trust. The Council sees them as a strategic partner whom they can commission to help deliver services to support their corporate objectives of well being and economic regeneration, so they have developed an adult relationship. Luton however is significantly bigger than a Herefordshire museums and archives trust would be, as Luton employs 250 with 140 volunteers and six apprentices.

Some trusts have not developed a strong partnership with their local authority however, such as those which are very large combining leisure with culture and heritage (Glasgow and Falkirk are examples) so still run like mini-local authorities rather than heritage-focused businesses. Merthyr Tydfil has recently created a trust for its leisure and cultural services and they are being constrained about what they can charge for services as the local authority still wants to control how the Trust operates. Charities should be independent and as TNA’s report states, the Charity Commission has already refused registration to some local authorities as they did not believe that the new charities would be independent.

Many local authorities have built joint archives or history centres and many museums services are now creating formal partnerships to create critical mass and share specialist services. A group of museums in the south west of England, calling themselves the Wessex Five Museums Partnership, are exploring joint working with funding from ACE’s Resilience Fund, as are several museums in Bath. The museums in the West Midlands, of which Herefordshire is a part - working as the Marches Network - are currently exploring the future potential for partnerships. These ideas are picked up within a recommendation in section 7.2.

Cultural change in an organisation cannot happen overnight but it needs positive action and investment to take place, coupled with continuing encouragement and support.

These facts and the experience of others have influenced our conclusions and recommendations on immediate governance changes in Section 7.1.

**Herefordshire Museums Service:
direct contribution to the Council's corporate objectives**

Enable residents to be independent and lead fulfilling lives

Encourage individuals, communities & organisations to do more for themselves and for their local area

People are active in their communities and look out for the more vulnerable so they can live more independently

- advice and support to community-run museums, heritage attractions and heritage projects
- support of communities through loans of exhibitions, objects, equipment, loans boxes, Museum on the Move visits. We contribute to community-run events such as Bromyard Gala & Historic Hereford day
- support of community interest groups such as Hereford Metal Detecting Club, WEA, Segments poetry writing group, NADFAS, WI
- regular team of volunteers many of whom are vulnerable adults. We support them in developing confidence and skills. One volunteer has developed lectures and walking tours on Brian Hatton in the community through association with HMS
- support of artists and exhibitors through our art gallery exhibition programme

People are physically and mentally healthy and stay safe for longer

- Museums offer opportunities for enjoyment, relaxation, entertainment and learning for a wide range of people with every kind of ability, background or interest
- Museum artefacts connect people to people and people to their past. Artefacts stimulate curiosity and excitement, they have the power to intrigue and captivate
- A publication called Five ways to Well-Being by the Foresight Project highlighted 5 factors in fortifying mental health
 - Social connections: museums offer opportunities to socialise with others through volunteering, workshops, talks and tours, training sessions, adult and family events
 - Being active: staff & volunteer work, open days activities e.g. race to the Celtic Grove
 - Being curious: Museums inspire curiosity and wonder and take us out of our minds into the moment and outwards into the possibilities that museum collections present. They allow us to put aside the worries of our daily lives for a while
 - Learning something: Herefordshire Museum Service is a learning service: Exhibitions, displays, tours, talks, workshops, facilitating research, open days, family events, school workshops, artefact loan boxes, reminiscence sessions, community activities, volunteering
 - Helping others: Volunteers support each other
- Museum sites provide safe, supportive and neutral environments for vulnerable people
- exciting events for families, informal and formal adult workshops including for WEA & U3A, community group tours, talks, walks
- work with vulnerable people includes elderly people (volunteers), people with dementia (Spun Gold exhibition & Courtyard partnership), people who are disabled (group visits to sites and schools sessions) the visually impairment (Braille, tactile imaging, RNIB projects), people with mental health challenges e.g. The Stonebow Unit (artefact loan boxes and 'Mind' volunteer placement), adults and children with

- learning disabilities (school workshops and visits to sites), a young person with autism and looked-after children (work placements), stroke patients (handling session), people in end of life care at St Michael's hospice (artefact boxes), elderly people in care homes (Museum on the Move & artefact boxes)
- Providing volunteer opportunities for the retired & elderly provides a sense of purpose, to stay active & engaged

Protecting children and giving them a great start in life

Access to excellent education and learning opportunities at all levels Outcomes for children and young people improve

- A museum visit can enrich a child's life, and reach the most hard to reach children
- HMS offer child-friendly museum sites, multi-accessible, for special schools and disability. 'The hands on activities were terrific- the children had a great time'
- education and learning opportunities for young children to college students through museum workshops, artefact loan boxes, school education sessions, museum visits, Museum on the Move, visits to the Museum Resource & Learning centre, and projects such as the Take One project
- Museums make learning fun and exciting, enriching the curriculum by learning outside the classroom. A teacher commented 'A child who doesn't normally engage, did so today.'
- Museum artefacts can be explored: immediate, tactile, visceral. Museum objects and specimens are extremely inspiring resources for children to talk and write about, thus improving literacy skills
- the Museums Service education resources contribute to educational attainment, 'My class got the all the questions on forces right in their SATS, after this workshop', teacher from Credenhill Primary School
- artefact access for students, researchers and groups, and work with the local colleges such as College of Art Foundation students 16-18 years induction and familiarisation tours.
- Joint working with universities, such as Cardiff University Conservation course providing artefacts for post-graduate project work

Increased equality of opportunity & access to reduce inequality in health & wellbeing outcomes

- Museums in Hereford are currently free to everyone.
- Fully accessible to all. Access Policy includes Emotional/ Attitudinal, Intellectual/ Educational, Sensory, Physical, Geographical, Temporal, Financial, Cultural, Access to information, Access to decision making

Create and maintain a successful economy

Supports economic growth and connectivity (includes broadband, local infrastructure, transport and economic development)

- For every £1 spent on the Herefordshire Museum Service, £8.41 is released into the local economy. Herefordshire's 33 heritage attractions bring at least £18,745,803 of tourism value to local businesses (Association of Independent Museums (AIM) Economic Toolkit, using 2013-14 figures)
- Old House Museum and Hereford Museum & Gallery are key visitor attractions in the City
- Museums Service supports Herefordshire's Creative Industries and provides exhibition space for artists and craft-makers, and through Arts Council funded projects such as CraftsSpace & Ceramics trail
- Museums Service could maximise retail potential: merchandising the collections & retail local products, for tourist trade & local market, develop a retail/visitor centre
- Museums Service can attract external funding for projects, exhibitions, buildings, collections care & access, education and community activities

Make Herefordshire more attractive to younger age groups for a more balanced age profile

- An active cultural life, including Museums, attracts younger age groups and families into Herefordshire, and keeps younger people and families in the county
- People deciding to move to Herefordshire from elsewhere look at cultural factors in their decision making; things for them to do and take part in
- Museums are a factor contributing to making a place pleasant to live in and worth visiting
- Museums are a part of educational and academic life for young people and their families. They contribute to the future for young people
- Museum has potential as a partner in the development of Herefordshire's University: sharing expertise, information & knowledge, support, training, collections of interest to arts and science programmes of study

Supports the improvement in quality of our natural and built environment

- museums are deeply rooted in Herefordshire and contribute to local distinctiveness
- museum sites are key Historical buildings. Old House (17th century) is an iconic focal point for the City, Hereford Museum & Library is an ornate purpose-built Victorian public building, the Museum Resource & Learning Centre is a 20th century Cold War communications centre
- Old House Museum and Hereford Museum & Gallery are part of the City's historic core and heritage corridor
- Herefordshire Museum collections have a record of the natural and historic environment through artefacts, specimens, paintings and photographs, illustrating the local rural and urban historical aesthetic through time

Embraces new ways of responding to changing pressures (includes sustainable and more local water, fuel and food supplies)

- Schools outreach programme and *Museum on the Move* take workshops, real objects and exhibitions to schools and communities, saving fuel and costs for them of travelling into Hereford
- Museum Resource & Learning Centre solar panel roofing is part of the Council's sustainable energy programme
- HMS exhibitions educate about sustainability e.g. wool as a sustainable resource in 'Spun Gold'

Has vibrant town centres with shops, restaurants and leisure facilities that keep people spending locally. (Maintain the % of residents satisfied with their local area as a place to live.)

- Museums add to the cultural life and leisure facilities of the city
- Tourists and visitors stay longer and spend more with greater visitor attractions
- Hereford Museum & Art Gallery and Old House Museum help draw people to the area, which assists other tourist attractions, businesses, local shops, restaurants and accommodation venues. Museums Service sites signpost other leisure and cultural venues
- Exhibitions and events, activities, courses and talks attract visitors and local people into the City and have the potential to attract new visitors
- The Old House is currently Herefordshire Museum Service's most popular destination for school visits from city and rural schools. School children bring family back with them.
- The Museum Service has the potential to be a useful partner in the development of Herefordshire University

Herefordshire Archive Service

Direct contribution to Herefordshire Council's Corporate Objectives

The new Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre represents a substantial and exciting investment in the future of the county's heritage provision. It has the potential to unlock the capacity of the Archive Service to support Herefordshire Council's strategic priorities and, after three months in operation, is beginning to realise this. Local partnerships and networks, such as the Local History Societies; arts organisations, such as Catcher Media; and benchmarking agencies, such as the Passivhaus Trust, are already benefitting from HARC's facilities. The expertise and commitment of the staff have always been recognised by its users. In HARC, the Archive Service will have the setting in which these qualities can have a real impact.

Wellbeing

- Access to archive collections, with accompanying expert advice, promotes a sense of identity and belonging through family, house and community history. This fosters social cohesion and is an excellent means of bringing Herefordshire communities together.
- The new building and its facilities give an opportunity to explore the potential of family and community history as a therapeutic pursuit through reminiscence sessions and community outreach.
- The Council's investment in HARC gave the county the facility properly to cherish its written memory. The new building and the collection it houses are an asset to be celebrated by the community, and a focus of local pride.
- Through the Herefordshire Local History Societies network, the Archive Service advises a large number of local history societies and provides a central forum from which to encourage best practice.
- Developing new skills as archive users, through guided documentary and online research, enhances quality of life by increasing self-confidence. Skills acquired during archive research are transferable: clients using the Archive Service during *Get Online Week* events in October 2015 became more confident IT users as a result.
- The Archive Service provides education and learning opportunities to all levels through talks, seminars and school sessions. New facilities, such as the well-appointed conservation room, promise an extension of current outreach activities to incorporate conservation techniques.

A substantial and growing volunteer programme, with over 40 volunteers currently in place, has proven benefits for both the service and local citizens. With expert guidance, volunteers gain new skills and derive personal fulfilment from participation. In a welcoming and appreciative environment volunteers engage with each other and support other users in their research.

- Clear mental health benefits for volunteers and numerous cases of volunteers taking part for therapeutic reasons. Volunteers who have suffered from brain injury have improved confidence levels as a result of working with the Archive Service. The new building and its facilities give an opportunity to extend the range of volunteer opportunities. Capacity to engage actively with social care professionals.
- From the new centre of HARC, heritage guided walks will take place. These will contribute to the general fitness of individuals while encountering the local history. Such group activities also provide opportunities for socialising.
- The new exhibition space and public meeting room at HARC offer local groups the chance to express themselves through artistic and historical displays and to share ideas through meetings and talks.
- The Archive Service supports agencies such as the police, courts and coroner's services and provides information, including electoral register checks, to assist in detection and access to closed inquest and trial records for health and judicial review purposes.

Economy

- The Archive Service attracts people to Herefordshire from around the country and internationally, spending money locally and using other local facilities and amenities. The most recent survey of visitors showed that 14% of visitors paid for overnight accommodation, 49% ate out locally and 72% made use of local shops.
- The recent availability of online access to the collections, with the support of volunteers, has already resulted in increased remote demand. Increasing digitisation of holdings, which will be achieved in partnership with external bodies at little cost, will bring greater number of visitors to the locality.
- HARC has already demonstrated its potential for attracting project funding. Two recently announced substantial projects, which will take place in 2016, are predicated on the use of HARC as a base for associated outreach activities.
- The new specialist facilities in the conservation room offer a great opportunity for income generation through commissioned conservation work and consultancies, as well as the potential to attract external funding for conservation projects.
- As the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone becomes established and expands, HARC offers excellent complementary facilities for meetings and business conventions. Local high quality catering provision is also available and will benefit as a result.
- The Archive Service provides access to information that can allow agencies and communities to make informed decisions about local projects and initiatives. Issues such as rights of way and planning enquiries are frequently resolved with archival support and expertise.
- HARC has greatly enhanced the capacity of the service to support further and higher educational needs. Facilities for guided research and tuition using archives and conservation science offers great potential which would be fully exploited in partnership with a new local university.

- Volunteers and regularly placed work experience students benefit from the acquisition of new specialised skills, many of which are transferable, as well as a general exposure to workplace discipline. This leads to increased employability and, in 4 cases, advancement to professional training courses and employment.
- HARC promotes the use of Passivhaus standard of energy efficiency in buildings. Several workshops have already been held where HARC has been both venue and case study.
- The new facilities at HARC, including a well-appointed merchandise display area, will enable the expansion of sales. Initiatives, such as a partnership with local publishers, will extend the commercial capability of the service.
- The conservation service is equipped to play a role in flood resilience for Herefordshire Council and local businesses and is able to advise on preparedness and salvage.

LEGAL ADVICE LETTER IN FULL

**LEGAL ADVICE ON HLF CONTRACT DATED 9th JANUARY 2006
FROM ROSIE PARR, LANCASTER PARR**

1. BACKGROUND

In January 2006 Herefordshire Council ('the Council') entered into a Grant Contract ('the Contract') with the Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the parent body of the Heritage Lottery Fund ('the HLF'). For the purposes of this advice note I shall refer to the HLF as the contracting party.

The HLF made an award of £1,223,000 ('the Grant') to the Council for certain purposes approved by the HLF ('the Approved Purposes') which were set out in the application form. I understand these purposes related to the Museum Resource and Learning Centre in Friars Street, Hereford ('the Property').

In return for the Grant the Council entered into the Contract by which it agreed to observe certain conditions attaching to the grant award for a period of 25 years from the date of the Contract (9 January 2006) – see clause 41. The HLF did not in 2006 require the Council to give a first charge on the Property as security for the Council's performance of these obligations (which the HLF would do now as a standard term of most of its grant awards of this size.)

I understand that freehold title to the Property is owned by the Council. The Council now seeks advice on whether it would need to repay the Grant or part of it to the HLF if it sold the Property or if it stopped being a publically accessible museum collectionsstore.

2. CONDITIONS OF THE CONTRACT

The Contract imposes the following obligations on the Council which relate to the Council's considering sale or closure of the Property:

Clauses 3 and 6 – the Council can only use the Property for the 'Approved Usage' and it must also carry out the Approved Purposes in accordance with best practice. The meaning of these terms was set out in the Council's grant application form which I have not seen but they relate to the Property's use as a publicly accessible museum resource and learning centre. Any change of use by the Council without HLF consent (even without a sale or closure of the Property) or failure to keep to the Approved Purposes would be a breach of the Contract.

Clause 4 states that the Council is bound to observe both the terms of the Contract and any special conditions set out in the HLF's award letter and the conditions and requirements in the Monitoring Documents as defined on page 1 of the Contract.

Clause 14 states that the Council must continue to own the Property and keep full control over what happens to it. The Council may not sell, let or otherwise part with it or any interest in it, or give any rights over it to anyone else (or take any steps to do so) without the prior approval of HLF.

Clause 14 goes on to state that if HLF gives its approval to a sale or letting of the Property it may be on the following terms:

- that the Council pays a share of the net proceeds of selling or letting the Property, such sum to be calculated by the HLF in line with the Monitoring Documents.
- that the Property is sold at its full market value
- that the sale or letting is subject to any other terms that HLF may wish to impose as it thinks fit.

Clauses 16 and 17 require the Council to maintain the Property in good repair and condition and insure it to the standard set out in the Monitoring Documents – so it is not an option for the Council to allow this Property to fall into a state of disrepair, as to do so would be a breach of the Contract.

Clause 20 of the Contract requires the Council to have appropriate access to the Property, and to make sure that no person is unreasonably denied access to the Property. A gain it would be a breach of the Contract terms for the Council to close the Museum Resource and Learning Centre to the public, save on health and safety grounds, as with the Museum & Art Gallery at present.

Clause 28 sets out a range of default circumstances which would require repayment of the Grant to the HLF. The ones which are still applicable include the Council no longer operating; its insolvency or its supply of fraudulent, incorrect or misleading information in the HLF application form; its negligence in connection with the Approved Purposes or Approved Usage; or a direction from a competent authority that the Grant should be repaid.

Clause 29 sets out the HLF's remedy for any breach of contract - it stipulates that the Council must repay to the HLF any grant monies that it has paid to the Council (or any smaller amounts the HLF ask the Council to repay) for the reasons listed in this clause 29, which include in sub-clause (d) any failure by the Council to keep any of the terms of this Contract.

Clause 30 states that if the Council has to repay the Grant as a result of, inter alia, a change of ownership of all or part of the Property, a change of the Approved Purposes or Approved Usage, or if the Council has merged with or transferred its functions to another organisation, then any new organisation or owner must within 90 days of this breach of the Contract, send the HLF a new copy of the Grant Application for consideration. This provision would apply, for example, on a transfer of the museum service to a charity, or other form of not-for-profit organisation.

Clause 33 states that the Council will have to immediately repay to the HLF a share of the net proceeds if it sells or otherwise parts with all or part of the Property without the permission of the HLF as required by clauses 14 or 30, or the Council receives money in some other way as a result of its breach of the Contract. An example of the latter circumstance might be if the Council closed the Museum Resource and Learning Centre to the public and then received a payment from a property developer as part of an option to purchase agreement.

Under this clause 33 the HLF has the right to determine the share of such net proceeds it is entitled to receive in line with the Monitoring Documents, if that share is more than it would be entitled to demand under clauses 28 or 29 dealing with breaches of contract.

Clause 38 requires the Council to write to the HLF if it requires approval for anything (such as a proposed sale or letting of the Property). Note also that the Council can only rely on an approval from the HLF if it is given in writing.

Clause 41 confirms that the conditions of this Contract last for 25 years, i.e. until 5 January 2031.

3. CONCLUSION

The Council cannot sell or let the Property without the prior approval of the HLF, as to do so would be a breach of contract triggering the HLF's right to demand repayment of all or part of the Grant. I see that the definition of the Monitoring Documents on page 1 of the Contract states that these include information as to how the HLF would recover the Grant.

The HLF did not obtain a first charge on the Property, registered at the Land Registry, to secure the performance of the conditions in the Contract, which would have enabled it to block a sale.

As a remedy the HLF might refer the matter to a mediation process for resolution. Alternatively, or if mediation failed, the HLF could commence court proceedings and sue the Council for damages equivalent to the sum claimed plus costs and expenses.

4. RECOMMENDATION

If the Council decides to sell, let or close the Property to generate funds or an income, then it should apply in writing to the HLF for consent to the disposal or closure and then negotiate the terms as to any repayment of the Grant, if that is sought by the HLF. The HLF may be prepared to give consent to a sale or letting of the Property but on terms that the HLF receives a share of the net proceeds or rental income.

Rosie Parr
Principal Solicitor
Lancaster Parr

14th October 2015

Authorised and regulated by the Solicitors' Regulation Authority, SRA Number 51277

CONSULTATIONS

All members of staff in both Museums and Archive Services were interviewed and many volunteers. Also we met the HER staff and the Archaeologists.

Hilary spoke at a meeting of The Friends of the Record Office and the Marches Network Museum Officers' Meeting.

Hilary spoke at the Public Meeting on 16th October 2015 attended by over 130 people including elected Members of Herefordshire Council and Hereford City Council.

Interviews and surgery sessions

Ian Archer, Chief Executive, The Courtyard Theatre
Charlotte Berry, Cathedral Archivist
Isabel Churcher, Museums Relationship Manager, Arts Council England
Jean Currie, Friend of Herefordshire Record Office
Ginn Downes, Textile Tutor
Tony Featherstone, Herefordshire Council
Joy Gordon, Chair of Ross U3A and Museums Service volunteer
Hilary Gow & Sue Gough, WEA
Edward Harley, President of the Friends of Herefordshire Archives
Dominic Harbour, Marketing Director, Hereford Cathedral
Sue Hubbard, Archivist at Brampton Bryan Estate, volunteer at Weobley Museum
Keith James, Derek Evans Collection
Yve James, Herefordshire Family History Society
Deborah Jarman, Leominster Museum and Herefordshire Museum Forum
Jacqui Jonson, President Woolhope Club & Museums Service volunteer
Chris Johnson, Ledbury Civic Society and Heritage Centre
Sue Knox, former Museum Development Officer, Herefordshire Council
David Marshall, Chairman of The Cider Museum and of Friends of Herefordshire Museums
Jan Nesaratnam, Herefordshire Libraries
Elizabeth Pimblett, Herefordshire Museums Support Group
Peter Reavill, Portable Antiquities Officer, Museums Service, Herefordshire & Shropshire
Julie Rees, Head Teacher, Ledbury Primary School and Chairman Herefordshire Schools Forum
Natalia Silver, Herefordshire Council
Richard Smith, Chairman of the Friends of the Record Office & volunteer at HARC
Andrew Teale, Head Teacher, St Paul's School, Hereford
David Whitehead, Woolhope Club member, Vice-chairman of Victoria County History and historian
Clare Wichbold, Cathedral Perpetual Trust and Chairman of Friends of Three Choirs Festival
John Williams, Leintwardine History Society

Plus additional letters and emails from other stakeholders.

HMcG/hw



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	10 March 2016
Title of report:	Approval of strategic housing documents
Report by:	Joint commissioning manager

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

NOTICE has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve the housing strategy for Herefordshire, the homelessness prevention review and strategy, the allocations policy and the tenancy strategy.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the allocations policy for Herefordshire 2016 (at appendix 1 to this report) be approved;
- (b) the homelessness review and prevention strategy for 2016 to 2020 (at appendix 2 to this report) be approved; and
- (c) the interim housing strategy for 2016 to 2020, incorporating the tenancy strategy for 2016 to 2020 (at appendix 3 to this report) be approved.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Ewen Archibald, Joint commissioning manager on Tel (01432) 261970

Alternative options

- 1 To not approve a contemporary homelessness prevention review or strategy. This option is not recommended, since both the review and the strategy are statutory requirements and the existing documents need refreshing to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The council is required to review regularly the extent of actual and threatened homelessness in the county and the effectiveness of measures taken to prevent and relieve it. It must also set out its plans to tackle homelessness in the coming years.
- 2 To not adopt a housing strategy. Whilst it is not a statutory requirement, this option is not advised. The scale and complexity of the housing challenges facing Herefordshire are significant and the strategy is an opportunity to describe how local issues and new national policy will be addressed. In addition, it will serve to define key priorities relating to health and wellbeing and housing development.
- 3 To continue with the allocations policy in its current form, without any revision. This option is not advised, owing to the current difficulties arising from the application of the policy. These encompass access to housing, effective use of housing stock, housing development, statutory compliance and reputational issues.

Reasons for recommendations

- 4 As strategic housing authority for Herefordshire, the council has a lead role in identifying housing need and co-ordinating the assets and resources of the housing economy accordingly. In so doing, it must comply with a myriad of established housing law and seek to maximise the strategic impact of housing provision. The council's own housing resources and statutory powers are now greatly diminished and so more than ever, it works in partnership with social housing providers, developers and others. These partnerships and the priorities they address are reflected in three key strategic documents; the housing strategy, homelessness review and prevention strategy and the housing allocations policy. All these documents have come to require review and revision during 2015 and are now presented for approval.
- 5 Each of the documents' purposes is distinct and originally they were to be revised and approved separately, as has been the practice in the past. However, during the Spring of 2015, there was nationally a greatly increased focus of political attention on housing and it became clear that significant policy change would be forthcoming over the next year. It was felt it would be imprudent to revise the council's main strategic positions before the direction and potential impact of those changes could be assessed. It was decided to take time to engage with housing providers and other stakeholders so as to gauge their response to emerging legislation. This process took place between August and December 2015. All the strategy documents presented with this report have been informed directly by that engagement.
- 6 The homelessness prevention review and strategy is a statutory document which the council must undertake and revise periodically. The existing strategy expired in 2013. A recent audit of the council's homelessness provision identified that a new review and strategy should be completed and published as soon as practicable.
- 7 The most recent housing strategy has now expired and was published jointly with Shropshire council. Whilst in 2011 there was an intention to evolve a continuing joint approach to strategic housing issues with Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin, in practice, each authority has pursued its own priorities and partnerships quite separately. Although no longer a statutory requirement, the housing strategy provides an opportunity for the council to set out

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key objectives and to connect initiatives across disparate priorities. It was important for the strategy to take account of the onrushing political developments in national housing policy and the recent engagement process has allowed those to be captured in the document. However, because national policy changes are unceasing at present, with new announcements by Government coming weekly, the strategy must be seen as interim at this stage. It is suggested that later in 2016/17, the policy and legislative climate should be reviewed to consider the appropriateness of further revisions, so as to finalise the housing strategy.

- 8 The housing allocations policy sets out the rules and processes by which local people get access to social and affordable housing. Whilst this is focused on the workings of the “housing register”, the process actually encompasses interplay between the centrally held register and allocations practices of housing providers. The policy is implemented through the Home Point partnership, comprising those providers and the council. The allocations policy is a statutory requirement and the law in this area is complex, influencing many facets of the document and its implementation. The policy was revised in 2014, resulting in a very dramatic reduction in the size of the housing register. This is associated with a number of unintended consequences of the revision which have provided considerable challenge to people seeking housing, as well as to individual housing providers and to the council. A further revision is therefore required. The new policy takes account of research and legal requirements, as well as recent engagement and negotiation with housing providers and others.

Key considerations

Housing strategy

- 9 The housing strategy provides a very broad overview of housing need and provision in Herefordshire and the key issues facing the council and its partners over the next four years. It identifies the existing legislative framework, the profile of housing need and the state and character of the social and affordable housing market in the county. In so doing, it looks broadly at population need and then focuses on how best to house and support particular groups of vulnerable people. To complement the detail on homelessness and housing allocations contained in the other strategic documents, it addresses in some depth the role of good housing in supporting health and wellbeing. However, further work is required in this area in order to establish a dynamic, costed health and housing plan which takes account of the work undertaken in social care, primary care and environmental health sectors.
- 10 The strategy identifies and analyses the existing challenges in providing affordable and social housing for Herefordshire’s citizens. These include:
 - The relative cost of housing for rent and the highest affordability ratio in the West Midlands.
 - Managing the needs and risks for both tenants and landlords in increasing the take up of private rented housing.
 - The complexities and costs to both tenants and providers in managing affordable and social housing in a very rural and sparsely populated area.
 - Providing housing options to suit the diverse needs of the county’s growing older population, given especially the insufficiency of attractive and appropriate housing in the right places for home owners over 65.

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- Using the council's precious land resources and limited powers to deliver affordable and social housing and a financial return for Herefordshire.
- Identifying population needs and available resources to deliver appropriate specialist housing with care options for learning disabled people, older people, people with mental health needs and vulnerable young people.

11 The housing strategy highlights and analyses the many new policies and initiatives which have been brought forward by the Government in 2015/16, notably in relation to the Housing and Planning Bill and the Work and Welfare Reform Bill. These include:

- A decrease in the household benefit income cap to £20,000 outside London, along with frozen rates for most benefits and new rules associated with universal credit.
- The removal of housing benefit entitlement for 18 to 21 year olds, albeit with some protection for vulnerable groups.
- A progressive cut in social housing rents by 1 per cent annually for four years, significantly affecting the budgets of housing providers.
- An earnings cap on social housing tenants for the first time, requiring a new approach to tenancies from housing providers, with significant resources implications.
- Increased investment in housing now being linked to a focus on home ownership and reduced expectation on developers to build social housing for rent. This is likely to reduce the housing which is available to people on low incomes.
- Changes to housing benefit rules for those in social housing to extend the application of housing allowance and complication of the funding arrangements for temporary accommodation.
- Extension of the "right to buy" scheme to tenants of independent housing providers which is likely to reduce the availability and quality of social rented housing.
- The introduction of mandatory fixed term tenancies across housing providers.
- The "right to rent" scheme, threatening criminal prosecution for landlords who rent to people without leave to remain in the UK, offering further disincentive to private landlords to let in the affordable or social markets.
- The housing strategy has a different focus and context to the previous strategy document and so there is no direct correlation or comparison to be made between the contents of the two documents.

Homelessness review and prevention strategy

12 The homelessness review and prevention strategy sets out the very complex legal and policy context for preventing and relieving homelessness, having identified definitions of the concepts. It also analyses the costs of homelessness to the state and the public sector system, along with its causes and effects for individuals and households. The review also sets out in some detail the resources the council brings to bear on

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homelessness, working in partnership with other statutory and voluntary sector agencies. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the progress made and the evolving challenges since the last homelessness strategy.

13 The document also incorporates the homelessness prevention strategy, which addresses the issues identified in the review and seeks to build on the successes already achieved. Those successes have been significant, notably:

- Reducing reliance on temporary accommodation year on year
- Intervening earlier in specific factors contributing to homelessness such as mortgage arrears and potential loss of shorthold tenancies.
- No use of bed and breakfast accommodation since 2012.

14 The document focuses on particular themes, including; rough sleeping and “concealed families” of mostly young adults living with wider family, sometimes in over crowded conditions. It sets out strategic objectives to continue tackling the main challenges over the next four years.

Housing allocations policy

15 The allocations policy is a complex document, the content of which is driven substantially by regulations arising from the key legislation. In addition to the main criteria for allocating housing, it also sets out the procedures for the policy’s operation and explains the relationship between it and housing providers’ own policies and practices. It is accompanied by a glossary to help lay people navigate the technical detail.

16 The current policy was launched in July 2014 with the intention of removing from the housing register those people who had no meaningful housing need and who were not likely ever to be offered social housing. In the event, the register numbers fell immediately from over 5,000 to around 550 and over the past eighteen months have rallied to just below 1,000. In practice therefore, many more people lost the right to bid for social rented properties than was intended. In particular, these included so called “concealed families” of young adults living with family or “sofa surfing” and older people with quite modest financial assets. These groups generally do have housing need within the definitions of the legislation, when taken as a whole. It is appropriate to address their representation on the housing register which will increase the numbers overall, so that:

- Certain housing needs groups are assured of having opportunities to bid for properties
- Housing providers are generally able to let their properties without significant delay.
- As an important indicator of housing need, the register is effective in articulating how much affordable and social housing is required to be developed.
- All people living in insanitary or unsatisfactory housing will be able to bid for properties.

17 In addition, a number of technical aspects of the policy have been identified as requiring adjustment in order to ensure optimum fairness, effectiveness and compliance with the law. These relate to:

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- The level of priority given to categories of “reasonable preference”.
- The concept of people being “threatened with homelessness” needs to be applied and prioritised more precisely, so that those people actually homeless or in other priority need groups can gain access to housing expeditiously.
- Recent case law requires the lack of a local connection to be treated in a somewhat more flexible way.
- A more direct correlation is required between the statutory code of guidance and to needs identified in the policy.
- Whilst transfers of tenants within or between providers’ accommodation lie technically outside the allocations policy, a transparent process is required to ensure fairness and enable analysis of need.

18 Furthermore, the effectiveness and fairness of the allocations policy are dependent in part on its relationship with the specific approaches to allocations and exclusions of tenants practised by individual housing providers. There has been some potentially significant inconsistency on key issues, notably relating to rent arrears or wider debt and anti social behaviour and criminal convictions. The allocations policy itself has not formally excluded anyone, whilst giving reduced “preference” to people in some circumstances. Meanwhile, providers may in practice exclude people from consideration for tenancies for up to five years. This leads to the following concerns:

- People may not have a realistic appreciation of the potential for them to acquire a tenancy and bid successfully for housing.
- Inconsistency between different providers
- Vulnerable people may not be able to obtain safe and appropriate housing, which may exacerbate their vulnerability with poor outcomes for individuals and the public service system.
- There may be a risk of challenge through judicial review to the council or to individual housing providers where people in housing need face exclusion by providers which is seen to be unfair or inconsistent with the allocations policy.

19 These issues have been addressed in the recent engagement with housing providers and in particular through specific discussions about allocations and exclusions. In the main, housing providers have agreed to revisit their policies on exclusions to avoid fixed periods, to support vulnerable people and to ensure transparency. The allocations policy now makes specific reference to providers’ having their own policies and provides for a provisional exclusion of people for up to one year. This would apply only to those people presenting most risk to landlords, arising either from their behaviour or their ability to pay rent. In summary, the main changes from the existing allocation policy are as follows;

- Current policy only allows on to the housing register people with a “reasonable preference” (those in priority groups) where they have a local connection to Herefordshire. Case law and the statutory code of guidance requires that such people without a local connection are able to go on the register. In the new policy they are placed in band D, giving them a reduced priority. The proposed policy provides more information on the process, the arrangements with the registered providers, and decision makers as required by statute and code of guidance.

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- The proposed policy reflects the right to move guidance issued in April 2015, allowing people with a job or job offer in Herefordshire to join the housing register with a priority, regardless of any other local connection.
- The proposed policy clarifies that under 18 year olds may join the register, although guarantor or equivalent arrangements may be required to secure accommodation.
- The proposed policy provides more guidance on eligibility for property types & sizes and clarity on advertising of individual properties which restricts access to certain groups.
- The proposed banding scheme reflects the requirement to give a 'head start' or higher priority on the housing register to those applicants who fall into the "reasonable preference" categories.
- The proposed banding scheme more clearly reflects the code of guidance examples of the groups that fall into the "reasonable preference" or priority categories.
- The proposed policy gives more clarity on the definitions of the recognised housing need within the banding scheme, as required by statute and the code of guidance.
- The proposed policy clarifies the expectations of applicants in respect of their application, time limits on priority, provision of information and the processes that will be undertaken to review applications.
- The proposed policy enables management of the bid and offer process for those accepted as homeless, to avoid excessive stays in temporary accommodation.
- The proposed policy makes clear the distinction between acceptance on to the housing register and housing providers' own policies in accepting or refusing applicants.
- The proposed policy specifies the monitoring information required to ensure its effectiveness in meeting the aims of the policy.
- The asset level rule has been relaxed in relation to older people in need of sheltered accommodation, from £100,000 to £150,000.
- People sharing facilities (bathroom, kitchen) with nonfamily members will be treated as a priority group and able to bid for properties on the register.
- Adult siblings will be enabled to bid to share upper floor accommodation.
- The threshold ages for children sharing bedrooms have been reduced to eight for children of different genders and fifteen for same gender.

20 The tenancy strategy is a technical document which is no longer seen as a self standing entity and is now presented as an appendix to the allocations policy. The strategy sets out matters to which housing providers are required to have regard in preparing and

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operating tenancies. The strategy outlines the scope of the expectations on landlords and provides links to the main housing providers' own procedures and data. It sets out current rates for housing allowance. The strategy identifies preferred approaches to fixed term tenancies and their review and to secure or assured tenancies. It also seeks to regulate the application of affordable rent within tenancies to ensure that accommodation is genuinely affordable.

- 21 The strategy contains little detailed data because this will become outdated quite quickly. It does offer links to data sources and references. The document provides a general updating of information from the previous strategy but has not introduced a new material.

Community impact

- 22 Housing is fundamental to the formation and sustainability of communities and the quality of life of those living within them. The four revised strategic housing documents are consistent with and contribute directly to the council's strategic corporate priorities and are supported by Understanding Herefordshire. In particular, the allocations policy has responded to the analysis around the growing number of "concealed families" living in the county. Housing is identified as one of the key priorities in the health and wellbeing strategy for Herefordshire.

- 23 The housing strategy identifies the key determinants of housing need which relate directly to people's vulnerability and to the functioning of communities. It addresses the role of housing in the wider economy and the contribution which housing development and renewal can make to community growth and viability. The strategy sets out how housing can contribute to the health and wellbeing of the population, which has far reaching benefits for communities and links to key priorities in public health and social care prevention.

- 24 Homelessness poses significant risks to the wellbeing and functioning of communities, not only for those individuals facing it directly. The homelessness prevention strategy and review has identified those approaches and resources having most positive benefit by preventing and relieving homelessness. These and other approaches will be developed to extend the benefits and help to mitigate the potential for increased homelessness which may arise from national policy changes.

- 25 The revised allocations policy will address a number of issues which pose a risk to communities. It will seek to resolve the problem of hard to let properties in rural areas and help people to find housing locally, without having to move from their community. It will ensure consistency and support for vulnerable people and manage risks to housing providers, so minimising instability and throughput of residents within communities. It will assist in requiring developers to provide affordable housing in rural communities.

Equality and human rights

- 26 Adoption of the strategic housing documents will contribute to meeting the council's obligation under the general duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The housing strategy is concerned in part with promoting the health and wellbeing people through safe and appropriate housing. In particular, this will benefit older people and disabled people. It sets out priorities for meeting the housing needs of groups of people with protected characteristics, notably disabled people including older disabled people and those with mental health needs.

- 27 The provisions of the homelessness prevention strategy will benefit in particular people from groups with certain protected characteristics who are especially vulnerable to homelessness. These include people with mental health needs, learning disability and other disabled people.
- 28 The allocations policy brings forward a range of changes to improve access of people to social and affordable housing. These are likely to bring benefits to people from groups with protected characteristics within the wider population. It will not bring any disadvantage to people with protected characteristics. Since it involves significant and specific changes to the organisation of public services, an equality impact assessment has been prepared in relation to the allocations policy.

Financial implications

- 29 There are no specific financial implications arising from the strategic housing documents as in the main, they address broad strategic positions rather than specific programmes or services. There are no financial implications of the revised allocations policy as it involves allocation of the resources and assets of housing providers rather than the council itself. If in the implementation of the housing strategy and homelessness prevention strategy, specific services or projects are to be developed, these will be subject to their own governance processes, addressing any financial implications. There are no specific financial implications related to temporary accommodation arising from the strategic documents.

Legal implications

- 30 The council has a duty to have and thereafter keep under review replacing or modifying from time to time a tenancy strategy which sets out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing operating in the district must have regard in formulating their own policies in relation to the kinds of tenancies they grant, their terms and renewal pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 s150(1) and s150(4).
- 31 The council has a duty pursuant to the Homelessness Act 2002 s(1)-(4) to carry out a homelessness review and formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. In formulating or modifying that strategy, authorities in England must have regard to their current allocation scheme and their current tenancy strategy.
- 32 The council has a duty pursuant to the Housing Act 1996 s166A(1) to maintain an allocation policy or scheme incorporating priorities and procedures (including all aspects of the allocation procedure, including by whom decisions may be made).
- 33 Save in relation to its duties as above there are no specific legal implications for the council of this report. Specific actions arising from the implementation of the strategies proposed will require further consideration as to legal implications.

Risk management

- 34 There are few risks arising from this report directly given its very broad strategic perspective. There will be risks arising from the allocations policy and homelessness review and prevention strategy. In summary, the main risks would be:
- Failure to finalise a homelessness review and strategy would be a breach of statute and confer significant reputational risk on the council.

- Homelessness prevention depends on complicated networks of statutory and voluntary agencies working together. With budgetary pressures facing all such bodies there is a risk that reductions in staffing or operational spending could undermine existing capacity to prevent and relieve homelessness. This would lead to escalating costs of homelessness to the whole system and reputational risk to the council.
 - Delay in implementing a new allocations policy will engender risk of judicial review challenge from housing providers choosing to opt out of the current policy because properties are not being let through Home Point. This could link to wider dissatisfaction with the present arrangements and a possible breakup of the Home Point partnership. This would be damaging reputationally and would require the council to form individual nomination agreements with each provider.
 - Delay in implementing the allocations policy involves risk of legal challenge around the current interpretation of “reasonable preference” categories.
- 35 It is intended that all these risks will be mitigated by the approval and implementation of the homelessness prevention strategy, allocations policy and housing strategy. The effective and timely implementation of the allocations policy will be particularly significant in managing risk arising from housing providers’ concerns with present arrangements. Communications work will be undertaken to manage any changing expectations of people on the housing register, arising from changes to the allocations policy.

Consultees

- 36 The council has consulted widely with registered housing providers, voluntary and other organisations prior to preparing the strategic housing documents proposed in this report. In August 2015, written requests for comment on changes to national housing policy were sent to all housing providers and there was a good written response. Further written submissions were received during September 2015. Three open workshop events were held with housing providers and other stakeholders in September and October 2015. These were attended by a range of interested organisations and individuals and focused on homelessness, housing development and allocations respectively. They generated lively debate and a great many comments and views relating to local challenges and national policy were recorded.
- 37 On 19 October 2015 a main housing engagement event was held at the Kindle Centre in Hereford. This was attended by more than 60 representatives from housing providers, voluntary and faith sector organisations, statutory agencies and the council, including some council members. The event provided many more comments, ideas and observations. In November and December 2015, there was further specific consultation with senior representatives of the larger housing providers, notably in relation to housing development and allocations. The extensive feedback from all the engagement activity has directly informed the detailed content of the housing strategy, allocations policy and homelessness review and prevention strategy. General overview and scrutiny committee the draft documents on 19 January 2016. No specific recommendations were made. Since the committee’s consideration, only minor changes have been made to strategic documents, reflecting additional information from received from housing sector partners and others.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Allocations policy for Herefordshire 2016 and Tenancy Strategy 2016 to 2020

Appendix 2: Homelessness review and prevention strategy 2016 to 2020

Appendix 3: Interim housing strategy for Herefordshire 2016 to 2020

Appendix 4; Equality Impact Assessment for allocations policy for Herefordshire

Background papers

- None identified.

Housing Allocation Policy for Herefordshire 2016



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GLOSSARY

Accommodation of choice	Accommodation of choice is defined through legislation and case law in relation to homelessness decisions. It relates to establishing a local connection. If someone is living in accommodation not of their own choice then residence by virtue of simply living in an area will not count towards having a local connection. See below for definition of settled accommodation
Advertising cycle	The period from Wednesday morning to midnight on a Tuesday when properties are advertised and applicants can bid for them.
Affordable Housing	Housing provided at below market prices and allocated on the basis of need to people who qualify for the housing register in Herefordshire as their only home and/or who are unable to purchase or rent properties generally available on the open market without financial assistance.
Affordable rented housing	Rented housing usually owned and managed by housing associations where the total rent charged (including service charges, where applicable) is up to 80% of the open market rent.
Allocation policy	This is the policy document which explains the rules that Herefordshire Council and its partner landlords use to define those who qualify to register for social and affordable rented housing, and to prioritise those applications.
Armed Forces	As detailed in s.374 Armed Forces Act 2006, this means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular Army or the Royal Air Force.
Bedroom Standard	The bedroom standard is the commonly used standard to assess whether a household is overcrowded. The standard allocates a separate bedroom to each: Adult couple Person over 21 2 people aged 10-20 of the same sex 1 child under 10 years and 1 young person under 20 of the same sex 1 or 2 children under 10 years (any or both sexes) Any unpaired person aged 10-20 or unpaired child under 10
Bidding for a property	This is the method by which applicants show they have an interest in a property being advertised by Home Point.
Bidding platforms	These are the methods available for qualified applicants to express an interest in an available property.
Choice based lettings	A scheme that enables applicants to express an interest in a property of their choice, within the property types for which they qualify.
Eligibility	Nationally set requirements that applicants have to comply with as the first stage in the registration process.
Equality Act 2010	This act requires that 'due regard' is shown to the needs and rights of members of the community including the 'protected' characteristics, which are: Age Disability Gender Gender reassignment Marriage and civil partnerships Pregnancy and maternity

	Race Religion or belief Sexual orientation
Full housing duty (homeless)	A term that refers to people or families to whom a local housing authority have accepted as homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless, and acknowledges a duty to ensure that the household is offered settled accommodation.
Home Point	The name of the housing register and choice based lettings partnership in Herefordshire.
Homelessness Act 2002	This Act made amendments to the Housing Act 1996 and places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness in their area.
Housing Act 2004	Parts 1 and 2 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to improve standards in accommodation. The Bedroom standard (see above) was introduced as part of this system.
Housing Association	A not-for-profit landlord organisation providing a range of affordable housing. Also known as Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and, more recently, Registered Provider (RP) in the relevant legislation. They are generally regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency.
Housing Health and Safety Rating Standard (HHSRS)	The housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) is a risk-based evaluation tool used to identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. It includes a definition of bedroom requirements for households known as the 'bedroom standard'.
Housing Register	The Housing Register is the directory of applicants who have expressed an interest in, and qualified for, social housing in Herefordshire.
Local connection criteria	These criteria relate firstly to the county and the level of preference an applicant has for social and affordable rented housing in the county in the Allocation policy. Local connection criteria may also refer to the terms of a s.106 planning agreement which gives priority to applicants with a defined connection to the specific parish.
Local lettings policy	Local lettings policies are agreed for the allocation and letting of properties in specific area to address particular issues in that area.
Localism Act 2011	The Localism Act 2011 gave flexibilities to local authorities in relation to qualification on the housing register.
Looked after children	A child who is being looked after the local authority is known as a child in care. They might be living: with foster parents, at home with their parents under the supervision of social services, or in residential children's homes.
Low cost home ownership	Housing sold at a price lower than the open market value to households in housing need who could not otherwise afford to purchase, as determined by the Technical Data supporting the Planning Obligations SPD and updated annually.
Mutual exchange	A swap of homes by two social housing tenants moving permanently into the other tenants property. Tenants must be granted permission by both landlords.
Nomination	The term used for applicants who qualify for the register and whose name and details are provided to the landlord as part of the bidding process through Home Point.
Reasonable Preference	The Housing Act 1996(as amended) requires local authorities to give reasonable preference in their allocation policies to applicants who fall into specified categories of housing need. See section 2.1 of this policy for a full explanation of the categories.
Reduced Preference	The term used for applicants whose application has a lower priority than it would normally have if the applicant had either a local connection to Herefordshire or had not previously acted in a manner that was not acceptable for a tenant living in social housing.

Registered Provider	Registered provider is the current term for organisations that are registered with the Homes and Communities Agency to provide affordable housing.
Reserved Forces	AS detailed in s374 Armed Forces Act 2006, this means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army , the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.
Restrictive advertising	This is a term used for adverts which indicate that available properties are restricted to specific categories of applicants.
Section 21 notice	A formal document giving tenants two months notice on an assured shorthold tenancy.
Section 106	This refers to s.106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 under which developers may provide affordable housing on a specific site, with criteria which grant priority to applicants with a local connection to the parish or ward. .
Settled accommodation	Defined through legislation and case law in relation to homelessness decisions. Any accommodation that is precarious, short term or insecure is not considered settled. Examples of settled accommodation include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Freehold or Leasehold Ownership · A tenancy enjoying security of tenure (assured or assured shorthold tenancy) · An indefinite Licence or Permission to Occupy (Any occupation implying an indefinite time period) · Returning to long term occupation with parents · An indefinite stay with other relatives · Tied accommodation as a long term employee.
Shortlist	A list of applicants who have expressed an interest in a property advertised by Home Point at the close of the bidding cycle.
'Skipping' bids	This is the term used where a housing association landlord does not offer a property to the applicant next on the shortlist for reasons such as ineligibility for the property type, does not meet the housing association's Allocation policy requirements or has outstanding housing or housing related debt.
Social Housing	The term used in this policy document to mean social and affordable rented housing let through this Allocation policy.
Social Rented	Rented housing usually owned or managed by a housing association, let at below market rents, where the changes in rent levels are subject to government policy.
Specialist housing	Housing that has been specifically designed to meet the requirements of people with particular needs. It can refer to housing that has been purpose designed or designated for a particular client group to assist tenants to live independently.
Supported housing	Housing scheme where housing, support and sometimes care services are provided as an integrated package. The schemes can be long-term designed for people who need support to live independently, or short-term, designed to help people acquire the skills needed to move on into more mainstream housing.
Transfer	This is a term used for a permanent move by an existing social housing tenant within social housing stock.

INTRODUCTION

The Housing Act 1996 requires every local authority to develop and publish an allocations policy for determining the priorities and detailing the procedures to be followed in allocating housing. Recent legislation has allowed local authorities more freedom to determine policies that best meet local circumstances and priorities, within the constraints set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended (“the 1996 Act”).

Herefordshire Council does not own any housing stock. Its statutory duties are delivered through arrangements with both stock transfer organisations and other housing associations operating in the county. This policy clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the local authority and the housing associations, and the legal responsibilities of each for delivering the local authority’s statutory responsibilities in relation to the allocation of housing. It details the arrangements for applying to register for, and the process by which the majority of, social and affordable rented housing (hereafter referred to as ‘social housing’) is let in Herefordshire.

The council and the major registered providers (hereafter referred to as partner housing associations) within the county operate a common housing register and allocate housing through a choice based lettings scheme known as Home Point. Although Home Point administers the system, specific allocation decisions are made by the housing association which owns or manages the individual property.

Details of the partner housing associations are available in Appendix A.

Partner housing associations use this policy as a means of allocating 75% of their available social housing within the county. The remaining 25% of properties are let to existing tenants registered under band E in this scheme, to which the associations apply their own rehousing criteria.

The 1996 Housing Act (as amended) requires local authorities to make all nominations in accordance with their allocation policy. This policy will be used to make nominations to any housing association with stock in the county that is not a partner in Home Point.

In developing this policy Herefordshire Council has had due regard for legislation, government guidance and responses from consultation.

This policy sets out:

- The aims of the policy;
- Who can register;
- How applicant’s housing needs are assessed;
- How the housing register operates;
- How social rented homes across the county are let.

The key aims of this policy are to:

- meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing
- provide choice of affordable homes to meet applicants needs
- ensure that the housing allocation process is transparent to applicants
- maximise the best use of existing housing stock within the county
- help to prevent homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- contribute to the development of sustainable communities
- ensure consistency in the way in which applicants access affordable and social rented housing

We will deliver these aims by:

- Operating a housing allocation policy where applicants are placed in bands according to their level of need;
- Advertising all available homes weekly;
- Providing support and advice for vulnerable customers when they need it;
- Providing applicants with straightforward and realistic information on supply and demand and the prospect of re-housing;
- Ensuring that every application is dealt with fairly and consistently, so promoting equality of opportunity;
- Building confidence in the choice based lettings process;
- Facilitating mobility to meet household needs.

1. Legal framework

The primary legislation governing the allocation of social housing is the Housing Act 1996, (as amended), and the associated statutory codes of guidance and statutory instruments.

This legislative framework applies to Herefordshire Council directly although it requires housing associations to cooperate in offering accommodation to assist the council to discharge its

statutory duties to homeless people and to meet its strategic housing functions and sustainable communities.

Where an allocation by a housing association follows the policy it will meet the requirements of the nomination agreement to let 75% of properties to applicants from the council's housing register.

Any housing association with stock in Herefordshire who is not a partner of Home Point will be subject to local nomination agreements in order to allocate accommodation. Nominations for vacancies in this stock will be assessed in accordance with this policy.

The legislative framework restricts eligibility for social housing and enables local authorities to define those who qualify to be allocated housing in their areas. It allows financial resources, behaviour and local connection to be taken into account when defining qualification rules. Herefordshire Council has chosen to make use of these flexibilities in this Allocation policy.

The Allocation policy has been developed to be compatible with other relevant legislation and guidance including, but not restricted to:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Children's (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Right to Move Guidance 2015

A summary of the Allocation policy must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. This document is the full version of the scheme and is available for inspection on the Home Point, Herefordshire Council, and any of the partner's, websites. If requested a hard copy can be provided on payment of a reasonable fee (to be confirmed at time of request).

1.1 Legal Responsibility

The Council will be responsible for the conduct and costs of any legal challenge relating to the Council's Allocation policy and general operation of the Home Point system.

A partner housing association will be responsible for the conduct and costs of any legal challenge relating to the individual partner housing association. This includes where an applicant has been refused a property because they do not meet the housing association's Allocation policy criteria, were subject to the housing association's exclusion policy or cannot provide rent in advance or payment by direct debit, if required.

2. Equality statement

Herefordshire Council is committed to serving all members of the community effectively and has signed up to the Herefordshire Equality and Human Rights Charter, recognising that some people may experience discrimination and disadvantage. This policy recognises and respects different and diverse housing needs.

The Allocation policy is drafted to ensure that it is compatible with the council's equality duties including the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. The protected characteristics are age, race, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, religion or belief and gender reassignment.

The policy ensures that each applicant is assessed on the basis of individual need. In addition, the assessment will seek to identify and meet any special requirements.

Herefordshire Council expects all partners to ensure that they comply with the Equality Act 2010 and have their own Equality policies available.

3. Statement on choice and constraint

The Home Point partners are fully committed to enabling applicants to play an active role in choosing where and in what property type and tenure they want to live, whilst continuing to house those people in the greatest need, making the best use of the available housing stock and complying with all relevant legislation.

It is important to appreciate that the demand for accommodation is higher for some types of property and for some areas than others. In making a decision about the choices available, applicants need to consider their housing need priority against the availability of properties in any given area.

Applicants can determine whether they are likely to be successful as they are able to check their position on a shortlist at the time of placing a bid and when all bids have been made after the shortlist is closed. They are also able to check on historic bids. This enables an applicant to make an informed choice when deciding which property to apply for and whether social housing is a realistic option for them to secure housing.

Whilst the policy offers applicants choice, there will be a number of instances where this may not be possible, for example:

- the applicant does not meet the criteria for the scheme or the empty property (see page 29)
- there is a legal agreement restricting who can be offered the property (see page 29)
- there is a local lettings plan in place (see page 29)

- the applicant has been accepted under the full homeless duty (see section 6 page 31)

4. Officer roles and responsibilities

The Home Point team administers the housing register and the choice based lettings scheme on behalf of the council and the partner housing associations. Herefordshire Council is responsible for the operational management of the scheme.

Whilst the council and its partners aim to achieve clarity and transparency for the public, there will be discretion in relation to qualification, priority and property size rules for council officers to provide a degree of flexibility in the implementation of the policy when considering individual exceptional cases. Any use of this flexibility will be undertaken in agreement with the Head of Prevention and Support.

Certain functions within the scheme can only be undertaken by a senior officer or manager and, where this is the case, it has been identified in the allocations policy.

Applicants should note that the decision to make an offer of a property is made by the housing association, **not** the Home Point team.

5. Confidentiality, data protection & information sharing

All information received relating to a household's application for inclusion on the housing register will be treated as confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Home Point will seek the consent of applicants joining the register to share personal information about the applicant and members of their household with the partner organisations. Any information relating to the application, and the application itself, can only be viewed by staff members of the Home Point partners.

Information will not be shared with third parties unless consent has been given by the applicant. However, consent is not required in exceptional circumstances which include where there is a public safety interest or to prevent fraud.

The existence of an application from an individual will not be disclosed to any other member of the public without the consent of the applicant.

An applicant has the right to request details of the information held about them.

6. Advice and assistance

The council acknowledges that this Allocation policy requires the active participation of housing applicants and to reflect this, the council and its partners aim to provide advice and assistance as required by s.166(1) and s.168(1) of the Housing Act 1996. This will ensure that no person is disadvantaged by the way the policy operates.

General information about the scheme will be made available as follows:

- information about the procedures for applying to the scheme and for applying for advertised properties
- information about how applicants are prioritised under this policy
- how successful applicants will be selected
- rules on how properties will be advertised including bidding cycles and restrictive advertising
- information about the housing associations that have vacancies advertised through the Choice Based Lettings system

Applicants will also be provided with information regarding their own application which will include:

- what information they need to supply to complete registration and the **timescales** for providing the information
- if they do not qualify what they need to do to rectify this
- what their band is under this policy
- what size properties they are entitled to bid for

Applicants who have difficulty reading or understanding this policy may benefit from the following services:

- an interpretation service if their first language is not English
- signing if speech or hearing is impaired
- provision of documents in large print if an applicant is visually impaired
- an interview to explain the policy
- information about where independent advice is available

The Home Point team can also provide information about other housing options.

This will include:

- advice on housing associations operating in the county
- advice on available low cost home ownership options

The council's Housing Solutions team can provide:

- advice and help on renting in the private sector.

Advice is also available through the the Housing Advice Questionnaire, a self-help tool available on the Home Point website www.home-point.info

7. Councillors, board members, employees and their close relatives

This scheme is designed to ensure that Herefordshire Council and partner housing associations are transparent and equitable when letting homes to staff, Councillors or board members and their close relatives. Applicants must disclose any such relationship when applying for housing. Failure to do so may result in the application being suspended or closed.

The Allocation scheme is open to any qualifying applicant and there are stringent checks in place that all applicants must follow. Staff, Council members and their relatives are treated as any other applicant and must be seen to not be gaining any advantage or any preferential treatment in the course of their application, nor shall they be disadvantaged.

8. What is an allocation under this policy?

In this policy an 'allocation' occurs when an applicant within bands P to D (see pages 22-24) are nominated to be an Assured or an Assured Shorthold tenant of a property owned or managed by a housing association. It does not include the selection of an existing tenant of a social landlord where that tenant does not have a housing need as identified in the banding scheme priorities P to D.

8.1 Exempt Allocations

The following are not 'allocations' under this Scheme and not subject to the banding scheme above:

- Succeeding to a tenancy under s.89 of the Housing Act 1985;
- A mutual exchange with another tenant;
- Assigning a tenancy;
- Transferring a tenancy in accordance with a court order under Family Law provisions or under the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- An introductory tenant becoming a secure tenant;
- Provision of temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power;

WHO CAN REGISTER

1. ELIGIBILITY

Herefordshire Council, through the Home Point partnership, operates a single housing register on behalf of the partnership. This means that applicants need to complete only one application to join the scheme and bid for properties made available by the housing providers participating in the scheme.

Social housing will only be allocated to those households who are eligible and qualify to register. The Housing Act 1996, as amended, defines the categories of people who are **not** eligible.

1.1 Ineligible households

Under s.160ZA Housing Act 1996 an applicant will not be eligible for an allocation of housing if s/he is a person subject to immigration control as defined by Section 13(2) of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and prescribed by the Secretary of State as ineligible. This includes:

- Applicants who are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (i.e. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man);
- Applicants whose right to reside in the UK is from a status as a 'jobseeker' within the meaning of Regulation 6(1)(a) of the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/1003) ("the EEA Regulations");
- Applicants whose right to reside in the Common Travel Area is an initial right to reside for a period not exceeding 3 months under Regulation 13 of the EEA Regulations.

Applicants whose immigration status makes them ineligible to be accepted on to the register will be notified in writing of the decision.

2. QUALIFICATION

All applicants eligible to join the register will be considered, provided that the application is made in accordance with this policy. Applicants must have a housing need recognised by the Allocation policy in order to qualify for inclusion on the register.

2.1 Local connection

To qualify to join the Home Point housing register applicants should have a local connection to the county, as defined by s.199 of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants with a local connection to the county will be awarded greater preference than those who do not have a verified local connection. Applications received from those without a local connection who do not fall into one of the 'reasonable preference' categories (see page 21), unless applying under the Right to Move guidelines, will not be accepted on to the housing register

Local connection in this context means that the applicant meets at least **one** of the following criteria:

- a) Currently living in the county (in settled accommodation or accommodation of choice) for at least 6 months out of the last 12 months or 3 years out of 5 years at the point of application;

- b) Have close relatives living in the county (parents, adult children, brothers or sisters) who have done so for at least the last 5 years at the point of application;
- c) Be employed and have worked in the county for at least 6 months or more and the work is for more than 16 hours a week.

For the purposes of determining eligibility on residency grounds, living in the local authority area shall not include the following:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan, motor caravan or houseboat where it is not their only or principal home;
- Occupation of a holiday letting for the purposes of a holiday;
- Occupation in student accommodation where it is not their principal home;
- In-patient of a hospital or similar settings where the applicant has a connection elsewhere.

Under some special circumstances, such as where there may be an overriding housing need to be met or a duty to a statutory homeless person, then the qualification rules may be waived.

2.3 Those who do not qualify

An applicant will **not** be accepted on to the register for social housing if: -

- a) They have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need. Applicants with a combined annual household income of £45,000 or above and those with capital or assets of £50K (under 50 years of age) or £100K (over 50) will not normally qualify to join the housing register. Applicants over 60 years of age with capital or assets worth up to £150K may be accepted on to the register for sheltered housing only where they have a **proven** need for sheltered housing.
- b) They have unreasonably disposed of financial resources that could have enabled them to purchase/obtain their own accommodation.
- c) Applicants (or a member of their household) have been in breach of the conditions of their tenancy such that a social housing landlord would be entitled to outright possession and at the time of their application for housing they are still considered unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour. For more details see Appendix B.
- d) Applicants have significant rent or former tenant arrears such that, if the applicant(s) was the tenant of a housing association, a social housing landlord would be entitled to outright possession. For more details see Appendix B.

2.4 Armed Forces personnel

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.

ADDITIONAL PREFERENCE FOR ARMED FORCE PERSONNEL

Applicants who meet the above Armed Forces criteria **AND** fall into any of the reasonable preference categories (see banding scheme section, page 20) will be awarded additional preference by means of backdating the effective date by six calendar months. For example, a qualifying applicant awarded priority within one of the reasonable preference categories on 1st December 2015 will have their effective date backdated to 1st June 2015.

2.5 Right to Move

With effect from April 2015 the government introduced the Right to Move for social housing tenants. This required that a local connection may not be applied to existing social tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England who:

- have reasonable preference because of a need to move to the local authority's district to avoid hardship, **and**
- need to move because the tenant works in the district, **or**
- need to move to take up an offer of work

2.6 Young person aged 16- 18 years old

The register is open to applicants under the age of 18 unless they are specifically ineligible or do not meet the qualification requirements.

It should be noted, however, that a tenancy would not usually be granted to applicants under the age of 18. Consideration may be given to applicants where an adult or organisation acts as a trustee to hold the tenancy in trust for the applicant until they reach the age of 18. There may also be a requirement to obtain a rent guarantee.

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years old will be assessed for accommodation where one or more of the following apply:

- over the age of 16 where a referral for assistance has been made by Social Services authorities under Section 27 of the Children Act 1989;
- a young person who is deemed a relevant or eligible child under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 as amended.

In each case, an assessment of the applicant's housing, care and support needs will be undertaken to ensure that adequate support is available to make sure that the applicant is capable of maintaining a tenancy.

2.7 Right to review

Applicants have the right to request a review of the decision made in the registration and allocation process. These include applicants who;

- are not eligible to join the register;
- are not a qualifying applicant due to unacceptable behaviour or housing debt;
- application has been closed;
- priority banding has been withdrawn;
- who wish to query the information being taken into account in considering whether to make an offer of accommodation.

The review in the first instance will be carried out by the partner organisation that made the decision. The person carrying out the review will be senior to the person who made the original decision and will have had no previous involvement in the original decision. For further details see Appendix C.

ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED

1. Property Size

The table overleaf shows the size of properties that applicants are eligible for based on their household composition.

Households claiming benefits should be aware that there is a limit on their eligibility for housing benefit payments based on the government's assessment of their household's bedroom need. For further details see Appendix D.

There are changes coming into effect in April 2018 that will affect single people under the age of 35 claiming benefits whose social housing tenancy starts on or after April 2016. For further details see Appendix D.

Single people between the ages of 18 and 21 will not be entitled automatically to any help with their rent payments if they are not working. This comes into effect from April 2017. For further details see Appendix D.

The government is changing the way that benefits are paid. Universal Credit is the name for the monthly combined payment that will eventually be paid to all working age residents who are on a low income or out of work. Universal Credit is made up of different amounts, called 'elements' depending on individual circumstances. The housing element of the Universal Credit payment helps tenants with their eligible rent and service charge costs. Further information is available on the website www.gov.uk and in Appendix D.

In circumstances where an applicant is offered a property that is deemed larger than necessary by the housing benefit regulations, the housing association may undertake a financial assessment with the applicant to ensure that the rent is affordable to the household.

A number of flats and bungalows are restricted to people over a specified age or on the basis of need /support to help applicants maintain their independence. It is sometimes possible in these schemes to offer a larger property than shown below, subject to an applicant being able to afford the rent.

Applicants for sheltered accommodation will be assessed as to whether they need this type of accommodation.

Pregnant applicants without other children will be eligible primarily for 2 bedroom 3 person accommodation to enable larger households requiring 2 bedrooms to be housed in the larger 2 bedroom properties.

In rural areas, where one bedroom non-elderly housing is very limited, under-occupation may be permitted in two bedroom properties, if the housing association is satisfied that the household can afford the rent.

PROPERTY SIZE ELIGIBILITY								
Household size	Suitable property size							
	Bedsit/ studio	1 Bed	2 Bed 3 Person	2 Bed 4 Person	3 Bed	4 Bed 6 Person	4 Bed	5 Bed
Single person	X	X						
Single person or couple without children		X						
Single person or couple without children (age restricted properties)	X	X	X	X				
Pregnant applicant (25 weeks onwards)			X	X				
2 adult siblings sharing			X	X				
Parent(s) and one child			X	X				
Parent(s) and 2 children regardless of gender aged 0- 8				X				
Parent(s) and 2 children same gender aged 0 -15, less than 10 years age difference				X				
Parent(s) with 2 children aged 0-15 with greater than 10 years age difference				X	X			
Parent(s) and 2 children different gender one over 8 years				X	X			
Parent(s) and 3 children any gender mix aged 0-15					X			
Parent(s) and 3 children, one child over 15, other children of different gender and one of other children over 8.					X	X		
Parent(s) and 4 children					X	X	X	
Parent(s) with 5+ children						X	X	X

1.1 Extra room allowed for non-resident carers

Applicants with a disability or a long term health condition who have a non-resident carer may be entitled to an extra bedroom if they can provide evidence that:

- they reasonably require overnight care and that this care is provided;
- one or more persons regularly stay overnight to provide care;
- there is a need for an extra bedroom that is used by a carer or carers for overnight stays as part of caring for the applicant or a household member.

A 'person who needs overnight care is defined as someone who is:

- receiving Disability Living Allowance middle or higher rate care or who receives the Personal Independence payment (PIP) daily living component enhanced rate and/or the mobility enhanced rate or Attendance Allowance.

If not in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, PIP or Attendance Allowance evidence must be provided to show that the care is required e.g. letter of confirmation from a medical practitioner.

1.2 Children / access to children

For the purposes of this section of the policy a child is defined as someone who is either under the age of 18 or who is still dependant on the applicant e.g. due to continuing education.

Where parents who do not live together but have shared care of children apply, the children will be treated as living with the parent who provides their main home and receives child benefit.

1.3 Fostering and adoption

Where a household has formal evidence that, subject to a suitable home becoming available, approval would be given to foster or adopt a child or children, they may be included in the bedroom entitlement calculation. Verification of fostering and/or adoption arrangements may be carried out by the housing association before an offer is made.

1.4 Sharing siblings

The policy enables adult siblings to register for upper floor (1st floor and above) flats. Both parties must be eligible and qualify to go on the register.

2. Banding scheme

The Home Point partnership operates a needs based banding scheme described below. The bands are arranged to reflect housing need with the highest band indicating the greatest need for housing. The table is organised in descending order of priority for bands P to D. For the

allocation of social housing under this policy, applicants in band P have the highest priority and applicants in band D have the lowest priority.

The scheme consists of 7 bands, with one band reserved for existing social housing tenants who do not have a housing need within this Allocation policy and are only able to bid for the properties advertised as 'withheld by landlord' or 'for existing tenants only'.

All eligible applicants are placed in bands according to their housing needs assessment. Further information about each band is available in Appendix E. Applications are prioritised first by band, and secondly, within that band, by effective date.

Where applicants are placed in a band with a specific time limit this means that at the end of the period of the time limit the Home Point team will review the applicants' bidding history.

2.1 Reasonable Preference

Herefordshire Council is required by law to determine the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important when, as is the case in this county, the demand for social rented housing is generally greater than the availability of homes.

The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that reasonable preference for housing must be given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

Therefore, the allocation policy gives reasonable preference to the following categories of people (s.166A (3)):

- (a) People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Act;
- (b) People who are owed a duty by any housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s.192(3);
- (c) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability;
- (e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

This does not mean that households who fall into the reasonable preference categories are necessarily entitled to priority over all other applicants in all circumstances.

Herefordshire Allocation Policy Banding Criteria	
Criterion	Summary definition
Band P – Time limits apply	
Statutory or severe overcrowding (reasonable preference)	This is awarded where a household is either, by the room standard of Part X of the Housing Act 1985, severely overcrowded by at least two bed spaces, or fails the bedroom standard of the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS) by at least three bed spaces and has not deliberately worsened their housing situation. 26 week time limit followed by review process
Under-occupation by a social housing tenant (releasing 1 or more bedrooms)	Households presently under-occupying a rented home owned by a partner housing association that is situated in Herefordshire and the applicant wants to move to a property fewer bedrooms. 26 week time limit followed by review process
Serious state of disrepair (reasonable preference)	Households will be placed in this band in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the hazard(s) are so severe or numerous that the most appropriate course of action would be to prohibit the property from residential use. 26 week time limit followed by review process
Homeless households who are owed a full housing duty (reasonable preference)	Households who are owed a full housing duty under s. 193(2) or s. 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996, or ss. 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985. 12 week time limit followed by review process
Band A – Time limit 12 months (followed by review process)	
Care Leaver (reasonable preference)	This includes care leavers and relevant children as defined by the Children Act 2000, as amended.
End of Agricultural or service tied tenancy (reasonable preference)	This may apply to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • households where an agricultural worker is being displaced to accommodate another agricultural worker and the farmer cannot provide suitable alternative accommodation; • households in council service or related occupancy agreements which are coming to an end.
Homeless, unintentional, not in priority need (reasonable preference)	Households assessed by the council's Housing Solutions team as being unintentionally homeless but not in priority need.
Lacking or sharing facilities with non-family members (reasonable preference)	Applies to households who do not have access to a bathroom, kitchen or inside WC or whose accommodation lacks hot or cold water supplies, electricity supply or provision of adequate sources of heating.

	Applies to households sharing a kitchen and bathroom/WC with non-family members who are not on the application. Family members include parents, step parents, children, step-children, siblings, step- siblings and grandparents.
Major adaptations no longer required	Tenants of partner housing associations who no longer require a property where major adaptations such as a stair lift or level access shower have been installed.
Move on from supported/ specialised accommodation (reasonable preference)	Tenants of supported or specialised housing who have been assessed by their support provider as being ready to move into settled accommodation.
Overcrowding by 1 or 2 bed spaces (reasonable preference)	Households where the property is one or two bed spaces deficient under the bedroom standard of the HHSRS and the household has not deliberately worsened their housing situation.
Right to move for social housing tenants	This applies to a social housing tenant who works in the county or has the offer of work in the county but does not live in the county.
Referral from Herefordshire Council's Adults and Wellbeing or Children's Wellbeing Directorates.	Households who require urgent alternative accommodation on safeguarding or associated grounds, subject to referral to, and agreement from, Head of Prevention and Support, Adults and Wellbeing Directorate.
Verified harassment, witness intimidation	Households where the police or relevant agencies advise that there is a need for urgent alternative accommodation to protect witnesses or prevent severe harassment and where prosecution of the offender is intended.
Verified urgent medical/welfare need (reasonable preference)	Households where there is an urgent need to move to prevent or improve significantly health or well-being by the provision of a different type of accommodation. Medical evidence will be required where relevant. Applicants referred through the Multi Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPP) may be dealt with under this criterion.
Verified urgent need to move to a particular area to avoid hardship (reasonable preference)	Households who need to move due to employment, where the household has no access to a private vehicle OR the use of public transport is not available AND the journey would take over 1.5 hours in each direction.
Band B – Time Limit 12 months (followed by review process)	
Affordability	30% or more of gross income is spent on housing costs, excluding child benefit, attendance allowance, DLA, PIP or carers allowance (or successor benefits). Financial evidence will be required to assess applications.
Households with children aged 8 or under living above first floor (reasonable preference)	This applies to households where there is one child (or more) aged 8 or under. Households must live above both the ground and the first floor.
Intentional homeless (reasonable preference)	As defined by the Housing Act 1996, as amended. Households who are assessed by the Council's Housing Solutions team as being intentionally homeless also may have a reduced preference depending on the reason for their status as intentionally homeless.

Verified medical/welfare need (reasonable preference)	Households where there is a need to prevent or improve the health or well-being by the provision of a different type of accommodation.
Verified need to move to avoid hardship (reasonable preference)	Households who need to move due to employment, where the household has no access to a private vehicle OR the use of public transport is not available AND the journey would take over 1 hour in each direction.
Band C	
Proven need for sheltered housing with assets up to £150,000	Households over the age of 60 who have been assessed as in need of sheltered accommodation but whose ability to access open market provision is limited due to total capital assets and/or savings of under £150,000.
Relationship breakdown	Applies where there are children involved and the couple have insufficient financial resources to meet the housing needs of the partner leaving the family home.
Rural localities /s.106 local connection schemes	In order to promote sustainable communities, households that do not have a housing need under other criteria in this allocation scheme but have a local connection to a specific parish may qualify for section 106 affordable housing developments in the parish(es) to which they have a local connection.
Sharing siblings	Adult siblings, living in the family home or not in settled accommodation, who apply as joint tenants for properties on the first floor and above,.
Band D –reduced preference	
Applicants/households who:	Are within the reasonable preference categories but who do not have a local connection to the county of Herefordshire.
	Have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances.
	Have housing related debts to the local authority or a housing association.
	Have committed acts of anti-social behaviour or other breaches of tenancy not severe enough to have been subject to an outright possession order, a demotion order, an injunction, criminal proceedings.
	Have provided false information on their application for social housing.
Band E – transfer band	
	Existing social housing tenants who are not in the reasonable preference or under-occupation categories above
Band F – low cost home ownership	
	Households who are interested in applying for low cost home ownership schemes.

HOW THE HOUSING REGISTER WORKS

1. Registration process

The Housing Register (referred to as 'the register' throughout this document) is a key part of the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. The register is a single list of all the applicants who have applied for and been accepted (on to) the CBL scheme. People who apply to join the register have the benefit of applying to all the partner landlords through one application. In order to bid for a property, an applicant must be on the register.

Applicants are strongly advised to consider whether they would have any priority for social housing before applying to go on the register. The Housing Advice Questionnaire on the Home Point website offers personal advice on a range of housing options that might be appropriate.

All applicants must complete the application process. Applicants can apply to join the register by completing an on-line form. This can be done through by going to the Home Point website www.home-point.info. Information on how to complete the form is available on the Home Point website, as is the list of the evidence that needs to be supplied in support of the application. Also on the website is a Housing Advice Questionnaire which will give you personal advice on the housing options available to you.

1.1 Joint applications

Joint applications are encouraged and can be made as long as at least one applicant is eligible. However, if only one party is eligible, should an offer be made by a housing association, only the eligible applicant will be offered a tenancy.

If a joint application is received where both are eligible but only one party qualifies under this policy, a tenancy will be offered only to the qualifying tenant.

Joint applicants can only make one application. In the case where two sole applicants wish to become joint applicants one of the applications must be withdrawn and the other amended to reflect the joint circumstances.

1.2 Multiple applications

Multiple applications are not allowed.

If an applicant is already registered the applicant must decide which application they want to retain. The other application will be closed. This will also apply to people who are registered as a joint applicant on more than one application.

1.3 Providing information and documentation

During the application process, applicants will be asked to provide supporting evidence to verify their identity and personal circumstances e.g. their National Insurance number and proof of residency for themselves and anyone being housed with them. A list of documents which can be used to support an application is available on the Home Point website.

Without supporting information the application will not be assessed and made active. An applicant is not able to bid for any property until s/he is active on the register.

A failure to respond to a request for information within 28 calendar days, as part of the initial verification process, will generally lead to closure of the application.

Additional information and documentation must be provided if requested. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the information / documentation within the specified timescale.

Once an application is completed, all applicants are assessed for any factors that determine housing need. A financial assessment will be carried out at this stage. If the applicant qualifies for housing, the application will be made active on the register and given the appropriate band.

1.4 Giving false information or deliberately withholding information

It is an offence under s. 171 of the Housing Act 1985 for applicants to:

- knowingly or recklessly give false information relating to their application for housing or other elements of the process e.g. change of circumstances;
- knowingly withhold information that has been reasonably requested.

A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by s.146 of the 1996 Act) enables a housing association to seek possession of a tenancy granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

1.5 Confirming registration

Applicants will receive confirmation from the Home Point team that their application has been registered together with:

- their registration date;
- the band they have been awarded;
- confirmation of which size of properties they are eligible to bid for;
- if the applicant is only eligible for certain types of properties, the ones they can bid for;
- their username, unique reference number and password for the website.

Applicants must check the accuracy of this information as it will be used to decide their priority for receiving an offer of housing.

Confirmation should be received within 28 days of the provision of all the required information in support of the application. Applicants will be advised by the Home Point team if an extension of this timescale is required and the reason for the extension.

1.6 Change of Circumstances

Applicants are required to inform Home Point if their personal circumstances change and it may reasonably be expected to have an effect on their housing register application. This includes any change in their address or household composition. Examples include:

- Change of accommodation type
- Marriage
- Pregnancy
- Birth of a Child
- Death of a member of the family
- Change in health

Changes in circumstances that lead to re-banding will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. Home Point will re-assess an application where there has been a change of circumstances and will notify the applicant in writing that this has been done. Where this has led to a change in priority applicants will be informed in writing stating the reasons, any time limits in the new banding, the effective date for the change in priority and the right to request a review of the decision.

2. Annual Review

The Home Point team undertake an annual review of applicants on the register. This helps to ensure that those on the register are still interested in applying for suitable properties. It is expected that all active applicants will bid for appropriate properties when advertised. At the time of the annual review the bidding history of applicants in the higher time-limited priority bands will be part of the review process.

Each applicant will be contacted, in writing, close to the anniversary of their application to ascertain if they still wish to be registered. Should there be no response to this letter **within 28 calendar days**, the application will be suspended. Further written contact will be sent to the applicant notifying them their application is suspended and if they do not respond **within 14 days** their application will be closed.

Applicants who subsequently decide they wish to re-join the register will need to apply in the normal way and will have their current circumstances assessed. The application date will not be backdated under these circumstances.

3. Closure of Applications

The Home Point team will close applications where:

- an applicant is housed as a result of the application;
- an applicant has failed to provide supporting evidence in the given time period of 28 days (see above) or other time limits specified in correspondence;
- an applicant fails to respond to the annual review within the set timescale above;
- an applicant has moved and failed to notify the team;
- an applicant persistently fails to respond to communication or requests for information over a reasonable timescale;
- an applicant has made a request for the application to be closed.

Should an applicant subsequently wish to re-join the scheme then they will be required to complete a new application which will be processed accordingly based on their current circumstances and with a new registration date.

4. Advertising

Properties are advertised primarily through the Home Point website. Property adverts are also available at:

- Franklin House, Hereford;
- All partner offices;
- Herefordshire Council Customer Service Centres; and
- Public libraries in Herefordshire.

In partnership with the housing associations, the Home Point team endeavours to ensure that all advertisements are as comprehensive as possible. The service promotes informed choices and will help guide applicants to bid for properties they can realistically expect to secure. Advertisements will include as many of the following as possible:

- location;
- property type, size and floor level;
- nature of tenancy on offer;
- what type of heating it has and whether it has a heating charge payable that is not covered by housing benefit;
- any restrictions such as s.106 schemes;

- whether such things as a garden or parking are available with the property;
- the amount of rent and any other charges that are payable;
- photographs of the property and links to guides about the local area.

4.1 What is restrictive advertising and how is it applied under this policy?

This refers to adverts for individual properties which are subject to specific restrictions on the types of households whose bids will be considered for that property.

These household types will be given preference for the advertised properties to meet local requirements. Examples include:

a) Age

Adverts will clearly state where offers are restricted to people over a certain age.

b) Property type e.g. Sheltered scheme

Certain types of properties are only available for specific types of households. Where bids will only be accepted from designated household types this will be clearly labelled on the advert.

c) Section 106 developments

Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between local authorities and developers which are linked to a planning approval. Where these exist they normally grant priority for affordable housing to applicants with a local connection to the ward, parish or village. Applicants with a local connection to the area take precedence over all others on the register for these properties. Bidders with a local connection will be shortlisted in banding priority and offered properties based on this priority. Properties governed by s106 agreements will be advertised as 'Local Connection Required'.

d) Local lettings plans

Local lettings plans are normally introduced to meet a particular local need or to address an issue affecting the local area. There are a number of these policies throughout the county. To be considered for a property within one of these schemes the applicant would have to meet the criteria listed in the advert. For example, applicants may need to have children over a certain age.

e) **Transfer applicants**

Properties withheld as part of the 25% restricted for existing tenants will be marked as 'withheld by landlord' or 'for existing tenants of (relevant housing association(s))'.

5. Bidding

Once the application is active, an applicant has to place a bid to express an interest in available properties. Applicants are only able to be considered for properties for which they are eligible.

Properties are advertised from Wednesday morning until midnight the following Tuesday night. This period is known as the advertising cycle. On occasion a landlord may need to withdraw a property during or after it has been advertised. In this instance no bidders will be entitled to an offer.

Applicants can place bids at any time during the advertising cycle via the following platforms:

- www.home-point.info ;
- an automated telephone number 0845 270 2550;
- by text on 0778 148 2312;
- contact a partner organisation in person.

Applicants can bid for up to 2 properties in each cycle and must indicate whether the bid is their 1st or 2nd choice. Depending on their method of bidding, applicants can find out their position on the shortlist **at the time** they bid, together with the total number of bids **already** placed against the property. Position on the shortlist can change as additional bids are received. Applicants are able to see their queue position on current and historic bids via their online application account.

The Home Point team can offer support with the bidding process on the request of the applicant, if the applicant, for instance, is not able to use the bidding platforms effectively due to age, health or access to the bidding options.

5.1 Time-limited priority bidding

Applicants who are awarded priority in recognition of their urgent housing need will be awarded this priority on a time-limited basis. This acknowledges the urgency of the situation, both for the applicant and for the council. The time limits are stated in the banding table.

Time-limited priority can be reviewed and cancelled at any time if the applicant's circumstances change.

Priority applicants will be monitored during the initial time-limited period. Priority applicants should bid for any suitable advertised properties. This means that applicants will sometimes need to compromise on their ideal choice of housing in order to achieve the urgent move they need. It will not always be possible to meet all preferences within the time available.

If the initial time-limit is reached and the applicant has not been housed, the Home Point team will review the priority and may cancel it. In conducting the review the team will take into consideration the following factors:

- Have there been any properties advertised that would have met the applicant's need?
- If so, why did the applicant choose not to bid or why were they unsuccessful?
- Has the applicant received appropriate support and help in accessing the bidding system?
- Have the applicant's circumstances remained the same or has the need for priority gone?

Having considered the above factors, the Home Point team may:

- extend the priority for a further designated period (e.g. 12 or 26 weeks);
- place on auto bidding;
- arrange for a direct offer to be made.

6. HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS WHO ARE OWED THE FULL HOMELESSNESS DUTY

Homelessness assessments are determined by a Housing Solutions Officer on behalf of Herefordshire Council and where the council accepts a duty to provide secure accommodation, under the Housing Act 1996 s. 193(2), s 195(2) or other statutory duties, time-limited priority bidding for 12 weeks applies.

Applicants who are awarded Band P because of this duty must bid on **all** properties that would constitute a reasonable offer during that period. Assisted bidding will be offered to **all** of these applicants to enable them to receive an early suitable offer. At the end of their time-limited priority the award will be reviewed and one, or more, of the following actions will be taken:

- Auto bidding arranged;
- Direct offer arranged;
- Extension of priority status for a further 12 weeks.

6.1 Auto bidding

The Home Point team may arrange for automatic bidding on suitable properties on behalf of the homeless household. Properties that are bid on may be outside the areas of choice where the applicant would prefer live. Areas can be excluded by agreement if they are shown to be unsuitable for an applicant and a bid will not be made in these areas.

6.2 Direct offers

The majority of available properties will be advertised and open for qualifying households to place bids through the Choice Based Lettings scheme. However, there are circumstances where a property may be let outside the scheme by a direct allocation. This may be done where households, accepted as homeless, have failed to bid for properties that were available and suitable for their needs, or have been unsuccessful in bidding for suitable properties.

6.3 Extension of priority status for a further 12 weeks

In exceptional circumstances the priority status can be extended for a further 12 weeks. On these occasions assisted bidding will be undertaken as part of the agreement to extend priority.

6.4 Refusal of Offers by Households Owed the Full Homelessness Duty

If a homeless household refuses an offer of suitable accommodation Herefordshire Council may decide that its duty under the homelessness legislation has been discharged and the household banding will be re-assessed. Applicants will be advised of the consequences of refusal and of their right to request a review of this decision. The applicant has this right whether they refuse or accept the offer of accommodation.

6.5 Discharge of Homelessness Duty to the Private Rented Sector

The Localism Act 2011 allows local authorities to discharge their full housing duty by an offer in the private rented sector, provided the offer is for an Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a minimum fixed term of one year. Herefordshire Council has chosen to use this power to discharge the full duty when appropriate.

Applicants should not decline an offer made as a final discharge of the homelessness duty. If they do so Herefordshire Council may decide that its duty has been discharged and the household's banding will be re-assessed. The applicant will retain the right to request a review of the suitability whether or not they accept the offer.

Where the homelessness duty is discharged to the Private Rented Sector, applicants who are subsequently given a section 21 notice to leave within two years of the offer being accepted, where the applicant is eligible for assistance and not intentionally homeless, the homelessness duty to secure further suitable accommodation is revived. The duty revives even if the applicant no longer has a priority need, but it only applies to the first incidence of homelessness within the two year period.

HOW PROPERTIES ARE LET

1. Nominations

An allocation is a nomination of applicants to a housing association where the council has nomination rights. The 25% of void properties that are available to existing tenants without a housing need recognised in this policy are not allocations within the meaning of the policy.

When a vacancy arises in the rented stock of a housing association within the county, and the property has been made available for allocation through the choice based letting scheme, an allocation will normally be made to the applicant with the highest priority for the property type available.

Where a nomination is made, the housing association concerned will consider if the applicant is acceptable under their own lettings policy.

As part of their allocation policies, individual housing associations usually have exclusion policies which can affect whether an applicant is offered a property. Applicants should be aware of the potential for these policies to adversely affect the likelihood that they will receive an offer of accommodation.

While the Council acknowledges the right of their housing association partners to formulate their own allocation and exclusion policies, it is expected that these will be fair and reasonable, minimising the risk of exclusion from social housing by ensuring that they are applied to reflect the spirit of published allocation policies, including this overarching allocation policy.

The Council expects exclusion policies to be flexible, with cases being considered on an individual basis. The following criteria should be applied:

- there must be reliable evidence of unacceptable behaviour;
- there should not be inflexible specific time periods as far as possible;
- partners should communicate effectively with the applicant and the Home Point team;
- there should be provision for discretion;
- there should be a recognition where special circumstance arise e.g. people with learning disabilities, mental health issues, statutory homelessness duties arise.

Each case should be considered upon its own merits and subject to the spirit of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 according to individual circumstances.

Housing associations individual lettings policies may be viewed through their own websites which can be accessed from the Home Point website.

2. Shortlisting

At the end of the advertising cycle the bidders are shortlisted by housing need which includes property size required. Priority is indicated by band and, within the band, by date.

The housing association is able to view the shortlist and will then carry out their selection processes.

Shortlist position does not guarantee an offer from the housing association.

A bid for a property will not be considered by the association if the applicant's household does not meet the size, age or disability requirements for that property unless there are exceptional circumstances which should be taken into account.

A property may not always be offered to the applicant at the top of the shortlist if there are reasons to 'skip' the applicant. Skipping bids can be done in defined circumstances, such as no local connection, or where the household does not meet age requirements, and this is monitored and reported to the partnership.

Partner landlords may require further information from bidders before making a decision to offer the property. The bidder needs to respond to these requests within the required timescale.

Landlords are entitled to carry out an affordability assessment to ensure that the tenancy is viable. Where the assessment shows that the tenancy would not be sustainable the landlord may withdraw the offer, advising the bidder of the outcome of the assessment. Withdrawal of the offer should only be done where the assessment has included reviewing the options to maximise the prospective tenant's income.

2.1 Offers

Applicants should note that all offers of housing are made by the relevant housing association **not** the Home Point team.

Further verification of circumstances may be undertaken to ensure the applicant still qualifies for the property prior to an offer being made. Applicants will be required to provide information within a specified timescale.

Before offering a property to an applicant the following checks will be made:

- The band award is correct;
- Circumstances have not changed;
- Household composition matches the property size;
- Any other restrictions placed upon the property or customer that would prevent them from receiving an offer.

Offers may be made in writing, by phone or in person. Applicants should be made aware of the timescale in which they must respond. This should not be less than 2 working days.

Applicants should be given at least 1 working day to respond to an offer after viewing the property.

2.2 Skipping or overlooking bids

There are circumstances where Home Point partners will need to, or have the discretion to, skip a bidder.

Potential grounds for overlooking a bid include:

- Does not meet the advertised requirements such as the age restriction, or local connection criteria for property;
- Outstanding housing related debt;
- Essential need for an applicant to live close to another person within the county;
- There is no relevant support package in place, as required.

2.3 Refusals of offers

When an applicant refuses an offer, they will be expected to provide the reasons for the refusal. This information is necessary to identify why the property was not acceptable and to ensure that future offers are more likely to be accepted.

Applicants who refuse 2 or more reasonable offers in a 12 month period will have their application reviewed. Landlords should advise applicants at the time of their refusal if they consider it to be unreasonable and explain why.

Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the re-assessment. If the refusals are found to be unreasonable the application will normally be closed and the applicant will not be eligible to re-apply for 12 months from the date the application is closed. Applicants have the right to appeal against this decision. For further details see Appendix C.

3. Withdrawal of Adverts and Offers

Occasionally, a housing association may be required to withdraw a property advert, circumstances for this may include if:

- it becomes apparent that the property will be let through a direct allocation in accordance with this policy ;
- the current tenant of the property being advertised has withdrawn their notice terminating their tenancy of that property, so the property is no longer available;
- significantly incorrect information had been advertised in respect of the property or applicants eligibility for that property.

3.1 Reasons for the withdrawal of any property adverts will be publicly available.

In exceptional circumstances a senior officer of a partner housing association may authorise the withdrawal of an offer. Circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- where it is clear that an applicant is not capable of understanding the responsibilities associated with being a tenant or they do not clearly understand what they are signing when asked to sign a tenancy agreement or associated paperwork;
- the current tenant of the property being advertised has withdrawn their notice terminating their tenancy of that property, so the property is no longer available ;
- where an applicant has failed to respond to contact from a partner housing association after 2 working days.

4. Publishing feedback on let properties

Home Point will publish lettings results on the website and will include the following information:

- The street address;
- The closing date of the bidding cycle;
- The total number of bids made for the property;
- The successful applicant's priority band and date.

This feedback helps applicants understand the likelihood of success in obtaining housing when making future bids.

Individual applicants can view the outcome of their personal bids through the website.

Lettings are monitored by the Home Point partnership to ensure that the partners' aims are being achieved and to provide a basis for improvement of the choice based lettings service.

5. Direct allocations

Where possible all allocations are made through the Home Point system to ensure fairness and transparency. A small number of applicants may meet a reasonable preference but their circumstances mean that they have an urgent need which may require a direct allocation to a property. A direct allocation might also occur because of the type of accommodation needed e.g. an appropriately adapted property.

Home Point partners reserve the right to offer a direct allocation of accommodation to ensure the best use of the housing stock to meet the needs of the applicant. Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- An urgent move is required because of violence, threats of violence or through the National Witness Protection scheme
- Where an applicant has been accepted as a homeless household by the council and has failed to bid or been unsuccessful in bidding;
- Move on from supported or specialised accommodation;
- In association with referrals from statutory agencies;
- Essential need for a priority applicant to live close to another person;

6. Managing Changes

The Council wishes to retain flexibility in operational processes and procedures in order to respond to changes arising from case law and regulatory changes, whilst still operating within the principles set out in this policy. Where changes are necessary they will be made with the authority of the Director of Adult and Wellbeing under the Council's scheme of delegation. Such changes will be published on the Council's website.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: List of partners and contact details



Bromford Housing Group
11 Miller Court, Severn Drive
Tewkesbury Business Park
Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire
GL20 8ND
Tel: 0330 1234 034

Email: customerservices@bromford.co.uk
Website: www.bromford.co.uk



Stonewater
Benedict Court, Southern Avenue
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 0QF
Tel: 01568 610 100

Email: leominster@stonewater.org
Website: www.stonewater.org



Festival House
Groewood Road
Enigma Business Park
Malvern
WR14 1GD
Tel: 01684 579 579

Email: info@fortisliving.com
Website: www.festivalhousing.org



Sanctuary Housing Association
164 Birmingham Road
West Bromwich
B70 6QG

Email: contactus@sanctuary-housing.co.uk
Website: www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk



Housing Solutions Team
Franklin House
4 Commercial Road
Hereford
HR1 2BB
Tel: 01432 261 600

Website: www.herefordshire.gov.uk



Herefordshire Housing Ltd
Legion Way
Hereford
HR1 1LN
Tel: 0300 777 4321

Website: www.hhl.org.uk



Kemble Housing
44 Berrington Street
Hereford
HR4 0BJ
Tel: 0300 790 6531

Email: herefordcst@wmhousing.co.uk
Website: www.kemblehousing.co.uk



South Shropshire Housing Association
The Gateway
Auction Yard
Craven Arms
Shropshire, SY7 9BW
Tel: 0300 303 1190

Email: enquiries@shropshirehousing.co.uk
Website: www.shropshirehousing.co.uk



Two Rivers Housing
Rivers Meet
Cleeve Mill Lane, Newent
Gloucestershire
GL18 1DS
Tel: 0800 316 0897

Email: customerservices@2rh.org.uk
Website: www.tworivershousing.org.uk



The Guinness Partnership
Gloucester Officer
2 St Michael's Court
Brunswick Road
Gloucester, GL1 1JB
08456 044 529

Website: www.guinnesspartnership.com

APPENDIX B: Exclusions from the Register and Reduced Preference

1. What is meant by exclusion and reduced preference?

1.1 Exclusions

These occur when an applicant has been assessed but, due to their behaviour, they are excluded for a period of 6 months during which time the applicant should address the cause of their exclusion. Generally the applicant will be expected to take specific action, of which they will be advised, such as making payments to reduce arrears.

1.2 Reduced Preference (see below)

This occurs when an applicant has been assessed for and accepted onto the housing register and is informed that their priority for housing has been reduced because of their behaviour. They have been placed into a lower band. They will remain in the lower band until their conduct or their debt has improved or there has been a change in circumstances. Generally the applicant will be expected to take specific action, of which they will be advised, to address such as making payments to reduce arrears.

2. Exclusions: Unacceptable Behaviour

The Code of Guidance (Allocation of Accommodation June 2012) and the Localism Act 2011 allow local authorities to adopt criteria which disqualify individuals who satisfy the reasonable preference grounds due to their poor behaviour. Herefordshire Council has retained the principles of the previous 'unacceptable behaviour' test in this regard.

In summary an applicant will not qualify for the register if the applicant or a member of his/her household has been guilty of 'unacceptable behaviour' that is serious enough to have entitled a landlord to outright possession within the previous 12 months.

Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Significant rent arrears at a tenancy or former tenancy;
- Causing nuisance and threat to neighbours;
- Being violent towards a partner, family member or member of staff;
- Conviction for committing offences in or near the property.

Each case will be judged on its own merits and efforts will be made to resolve any issues which prevent applicants from joining the register as denying access to social housing can result in broader social exclusion for the households involved, and have adverse effects for the community as a whole.

2.1 Exclusion periods and other conditions associated with behaviour

Applicants who fail the 'unacceptable behaviour' test may be excluded from registering, or remaining, on the register for 6 months unless the applicant can demonstrate they meet other conditions.

Where possession has been granted on the grounds of anti-social behaviour, the applicant should be able to show that they are addressing the issues before qualifying for inclusion on the register. This may include undertaking programmes with support agencies to show their understanding and commitment to behaviour improvement.

Where the applicant has significant rent/former tenant arrears the applicant must make arrangement to pay the debt and maintain the arrangement from the date of its commencement for the full remaining time the applicant is excluded. This would need to be for a minimum of 13 weeks. The payment arrangement needs to continue once the applicant is made active on the register. Failure to do so is likely to adversely affect the chances of being housed.

It should be noted that an application is likely to be placed in a reduced preference band after the exclusion 'term' of six months has elapsed.

2.2 Applicants with special needs

Where Home Point has reason to believe that unacceptable behaviour is due to a physical, mental or learning disability, the person will not be excluded from the register without considering whether they would be able to maintain a tenancy satisfactorily with appropriate care and support.

Home Point will consult as appropriate with any relevant agencies, including Health and Social Services, the Medical Advisor or other medical advisors, and local providers of support services.

2.3 Exceptional circumstances

This exclusion policy may be varied in exceptional case. For example, the applicant or tenant's need to move on social, welfare or medical grounds is considered a sufficiently high priority to override their history of unacceptable behaviour. Consideration will also be given where the applicant or tenant has a continuing support package in place.

3. Reduced Preference band

Applicants whose behaviour is not serious enough to be excluded under these provisions may be awarded a **reduced preference** when the application is assessed and also may be overlooked for offers of accommodation by the housing association.

It is not intended that a person's behaviour at one time in their life should permanently exclude them from social housing. Applicants who are placed in a reduced preference band due to anti-social behaviour or damage to property will normally only receive reduced preference if the incidents or convictions occurred within the previous 12 months. If, at the time of application, there has been no repeat of the behaviour in that time the applicant will not be given reduced preference.

Applicants should be able to show that they are addressing the issues which caused the award of a reduced preference before moving into the appropriate priority band. This may include undertaking programmes with support agencies to show their understanding and commitment to behaviour improvement.

With regards to former or current rent arrears and money owed to the local authority, if the applicant has made an arrangement to pay the debts and has maintained this arrangement for a 26 week period or the debt is £100 or less, the reduced preference will be removed as long as the payment arrangements are maintained.

3.1 Applicants with special needs

Where Home Point has reason to believe that behaviour is due to a physical, mental or learning disability, the person will not be placed in the reduced preference band without considering whether they would be able to maintain a tenancy satisfactorily with appropriate care and support.

Home Point will consult as appropriate with any relevant agencies, including Health and Social Services, the Medical Advisor or other medical advisors, and local providers of support services.

3.2 Exceptional circumstances

This reduced preference policy may be varied in exceptional cases. For example, the applicant or tenant's need to move on social, welfare or medical grounds is considered a sufficiently high priority to override their history of poor behaviour. Consideration will also be given where the applicant or tenant has a continuing support package in place.

- 4.** Anyone wishing to appeal should refer to Appendix C of this policy.

APPENDIX C: Right to review decisions on applications or offers

All applicants have the right to ask for a review of a decision, if they consider they have been unfairly or unreasonably treated having regard to the provisions of this policy. For example, a decision about:

- exclusion or removal from the register;
- any decision taken in relation to their registration;
- information that has been taken into account when assessing the application;
- type of property the applicant is eligible for;
- the band into which they have been placed;
- instances of an application being 'skipped';
- suitability of accommodation offered to households subject to the full homeless duty.

Initial requests for reviews will be dealt with by the organisation within the partnership that has been mainly dealing with that application .i.e. the organisation that has notified the applicant on the issue they would like reviewed.

For reviews of decisions about the register including banding, property eligibility and decisions in relation to homeless households, requests should be addressed initially to Housing Solutions and Home Point Team Leader at Herefordshire Council.

There are two stages to the appeal 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 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 it may take longer. Where this is the case the applicant/advocate will be notified in writing prior to expiry of the 21 day period

If an applicant is unhappy with the initial review decision they should notify the relevant organisation, in writing, within 21 days of receipt of that decision, requesting a second review.

Stage 2

If the applicant is unhappy with the decision made, they may request that a further review be carried out by the Home Point Board of Management (or their nominated representative). This request must be made in writing within 14 calendar days of the date of the stage 1 decision. A decision will normally be given in 21 calendar days, subject to extension where necessary. If the applicant remains unhappy with the outcome of the appeal, the applicant may make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

For decisions regarding '**skipping**' or **offers of accommodation**, unless from an applicant owed the full homelessness duty, the Housing Manager of the relevant partner housing association should be contacted. See Appendix A for contact details.

APPENDIX D: Financial support for housing costs

Households on low incomes or out of work may be able to claim housing benefit, or the housing element of its replacement, Universal Credit (see below) for help with the payment of housing costs. Housing Benefit can pay for part or all of your rent. How much you get depends on your income and circumstances.

The Universal Credit system is being rolled out across the country now and will affect all claimants in Herefordshire in the next few years. Applicants should be aware that new claimants are likely to be those affected first by this change..

Applicants should be aware that there are significant changes being made to benefit entitlements and should ensure they understand what their entitlements are and how they might change. It is not clear whether there will be any amendment to the proposed changes or whether further changes are likely to be introduced at this time. Applicants should be mindful that further changes to the benefit system may affect the Allocation policy and Herefordshire Council retains the right to make amendments to reflect alterations to the benefits system.

Benefit cap

From April 2016 the overall benefit cap for working age households with children will be reduced to £20,000 per year outside London. The overall benefit cap for single claimants will be reduced to £13,400.

Young or single households

The government is changing the level of benefit which will be paid to social housing tenants under the age of 35. Tenancies that come into effect on or **after 1st April 2016** will be affected by the change in eligible rates. **With effect from April 2018**, for these tenancies, housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit will only be paid at the shared accommodation rate, as set out under the Local Housing Allowance. Local housing allowance rates can be viewed at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/advice-and-benefits/benefits-and-support/council-tax-reduction/how-your-circumstances-affect-benefits/local-housing-allowance>

There are **some** exceptions to this rule, notably for looked after children.

As part of the Sumner Budget 2015 the Chancellor also announced the removal of automatic entitlement to the housing element of Universal Credit (or Housing Benefit) from young people aged 18-21, with some exceptions, from April 2017.

Spare bedrooms

A benefit claim could be reduced if you live in social housing and have a spare bedroom. The reduction is:

- 14% of the 'eligible rent' for 1 spare bedroom;
- 25% of the 'eligible rent' for 2 or more spare bedrooms.

For those making benefit claims the following are expected to share:

- an adult couple;
- 2 children under 16 of the same sex;
- 2 children under 10 (regardless of sex).

The following can have their own bedroom:

- a single adult (16 or over);
- a child that would normally share but shared bedrooms are already taken, e.g. you have 3 children and 2 already share;
- children who can't share because of a disability or medical condition;
- a non-resident overnight carer for you or your partner (but only if they must stay overnight).

This Allocation policy allows households to apply for additional bedrooms at an earlier age than under benefit regulations (8 and 15 as opposed to 10 and 16) so applicants should be aware that, if in receipt of benefits, they will have to prove to the housing association that they can afford to pay the rent that will not be covered by housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

For further information see the webpages at <https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit>

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a benefit for people who are on a low income or are out of work. In the majority of cases Universal Credit will be a single, monthly payment which is paid in arrears directly into the claimant's account. Payments will include all eligible housing costs. Couples living in the same household will receive one monthly payment between them. Any other adults living in the household will receive their own separate payment.

The housing element of the Universal Credit payment is based on the eligible rent and service charge costs. In the majority of cases eligible housing costs will be paid directly to the claimant as part of the single Universal Credit (UC) payment. For social housing tenants the housing element of the UC payment should be their actual housing costs. This will not include service charges that are not covered by UC or charges for utilities, such as water or electricity.

You have to pay rent to your landlord directly if you get Universal Credit. For further information see the website at <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

APPENDIX E: Banding criteria detail

	Band P – Time limits apply –12 or 26 weeks
Statutory or severe overcrowding (reasonable preference)	<p>This is awarded where a household is either, by the room standard of Part X of the Housing Act 1985, severely overcrowded by at least two bed spaces, or fails the bedroom standard of the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS) by at least three bed spaces and has not deliberately worsened their housing situation. Applicants may need to provide bedroom sizes in order for household bedroom space requirements to be assessed.</p> <p>Applicants are expected to use space appropriately and no account is taken of possessions or furniture in the assessment of overcrowding.</p> <p>A room intended for use as a bedroom but used for another purpose will still be classified as a bedroom, subject to it meeting the space standards for bedrooms.</p> <p>Assessment of overcrowding in bedsitting rooms/studio apartments will be based on Herefordshire Council’s Amenity and Facility standards in a HMO, available at: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/1740993/HMOL7_amenity_provisions_in_relation_to_number_of_persons.pdf</p> <p>Discretion can be exercised by Home Point staff to adjust the number of bedrooms required if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the bedrooms in the property are particularly large or small; • a child requires their own bedroom due to disability.
Under-occupation by a social housing tenant (releasing 1 or more bedrooms)	<p>Households presently under-occupying a rented home owned by a partner housing association that is situated in Herefordshire and the applicant wants to move to a property with fewer bedrooms. The calculation of under-occupation will be assessed using the Bedroom Standard from the HHSRS</p> <p>Checks will be made with the relevant landlord to validate the application by reference to the housing association’s own lettings criteria and to ensure that the property would be suitable for re-letting.</p>
Serious state of disrepair (reasonable preference)	<p>Households will be placed in this band in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the hazard(s) are so severe or numerous that the most appropriate course of action would be to prohibit the property from residential use. <p>There is a process for the assessment of hazards under the HHSRS and applicants will be expected to work with the Council in complying with, and following, the actions that are required.</p>
Homeless households who are owed a full housing duty (reasonable preference)	<p>Households that have been accepted as homeless by Herefordshire Council under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and who are owed the ‘full duty’ under s. 193(2) (in priority need and unintentionally homeless), or s. 195(2) (in priority need and threatened with unintentional homelessness) of the Housing Act 1996, or ss. 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985.</p>
	Band A – Time limit 12 months (followed by review process)
Care Leaver (reasonable preference)	<p>This relates to referrals from Children’s Wellbeing under s.27 Children Act 1989 or where the young person is deemed to be a relevant or eligible child under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, as amended.</p> <p>The applicant will need to be ready for independent living and have an appropriate support package in place, as agreed between relevant organisations.</p>

<p>End of Agricultural or service tied tenancy</p>	<p>This may apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> households where an agricultural worker is being displaced to accommodate another agricultural worker and the farmer cannot provide suitable alternative accommodation; The Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 requires a local housing authority to use their best endeavours to provide accommodation for a qualifying displaced agricultural worker subject to the provisions of s.27. If the authority is satisfied that the applicant's case is substantiated, it is a duty to endeavour to provide suitable alternative accommodation for the displaced worker; households in council service or related tenancies, or where occupancy of a council property is related to their employment, which is coming to an end.
<p>Homeless, unintentional, not in priority need (reasonable preference)</p>	<p>Households assessed by the council's Housing Solutions team as being unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days but not in priority need.</p>
<p>Lacking or sharing facilities with non-family members (reasonable preference)</p>	<p>Households who do not have access to a bathroom, kitchen or inside WC or whose accommodation lacks hot or cold water supplies, electricity supply or provision of adequate sources of heating. Households sharing a kitchen and bathroom/WC with non-family members who are not on the application. Family members would include parents, step parents, children, step-children, siblings and step siblings and grandparents. Checks will be made with the landlord and through other resources to confirm the housing circumstances of the applicant.</p>
<p>Major adaptations no longer required</p>	<p>Tenants of partner housing associations who no longer require a property where major adaptations such as a stair lift or level access shower have been installed.</p>
<p>Move on from supported/ specialised accommodation (reasonable preference)</p>	<p>Tenants of supported or specialised housing who have been there for a sustained period of time and have been assessed by their support provider as being ready to move into settled or alternative accommodation. Formal assessment and confirmation of that assessment will be required. For the purposes of this assessment, supported housing does NOT include crash pad type accommodation or temporary accommodation. The agreement between Herefordshire Council and the supported housing provider will require that, where appropriate, arrangements will be made for ongoing support in the new tenancy.</p>
<p>Overcrowding by 1 or 2 bed spaces (reasonable preference)</p>	<p>Households where the property is one or two bed spaces deficient and the household has not deliberately worsened their housing situation. Applicants may need to provide bedroom sizes in order for household bedroom space requirements to be assessed. Applicants are expected to use space appropriately and no account is taken of possessions or furniture in the assessment of overcrowding. A room intended for use as a bedroom but used for another purpose will still be classified as a bedroom, subject to it meeting the space standards for bedrooms.</p>

	<p>Assessment of overcrowding in bedsitting rooms/studio apartments will be based on Herefordshire Council's Amenity and Facility standards in a HMO, available at: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/1740993/HMOL7_amenity_provisions_in_relation_to_number_of_persons.pdf</p> <p>Discretion can be exercised by staff to adjust the number of bedrooms required if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the bedrooms in the property are particularly large or small; • a child requires their own bedroom due to disability.
Right to move for social housing tenants	<p>In accordance with the Right to Move guidance 2015, this applies to a social housing tenant who works in the county or has the offer of work in the county but does not currently live in the county. The regulations only apply if work is not short-term or marginal in nature, nor ancillary to work in another district. Voluntary work is also excluded. A contract of employment that was intended to last for less than 12 months is considered to be short-term. Employment of less than 16 hours a week is considered to be marginal.</p> <p>Assessment will follow the 'urgent need to move on hardship grounds' process used for current residents of Herefordshire.</p>
Referral from Herefordshire Council's Adults and Wellbeing or Children's Wellbeing Directorates.	<p>Households who require urgent alternative accommodation on safeguarding or associated grounds. Award of this priority is subject to referral to, and agreement from, Head of Prevention and Support, Adults and Wellbeing Directorate.</p>
Verified harassment/witness intimidation	<p>Households where the police, or relevant agency, such as the National Witness Mobility scheme, confirm that there is an urgent need for alternative accommodation to protect witnesses, whose actions in reporting crime led to them becoming unsafe in their own home, or prevent severe harassment and, normally, where prosecution of the offender is intended.</p>
Verified urgent medical/welfare need (reasonable preference)	<p>Households where there is an urgent need to move to prevent significant deterioration or where a move could improve significantly, the health or well-being by the provision of a different type of accommodation. Rehousing must achieve a significant health gain. Medical evidence will be required and will be used to assess banding. This banding will not be awarded where the need is temporary as a result of injury or surgery.</p> <p>Applicants with a diagnosed mental health condition and where it is demonstrated that the applicants are living in conditions which are contributing to a critical deterioration in their mental health and/or there is a significant risk of serious self-harm or harm to other people in their present accommodation.</p> <p>There are many conditions and illnesses for which medial priority is not granted. It is unlikely that someone suffering from cancer would benefit from a move, unless the cancer is creating mobility problems for them. Similarly if someone is suffering from asthma and the property they are living in is damp the most likely action would be to work to tackle the causes of the damp rather than facilitate a move.</p> <p>Welfare need includes moving to build a stable life such as that provided through the foster care or adoption process.</p> <p>Applicants identified as in need of rehousing urgently through Multi Agency Public</p>

	Protection Panel (MAPPA) arrangements may be dealt with through this criterion. A recommendation to be placed in this category is only likely to be made when all options to improve the current accommodation have been exhausted.
Verified urgent need to move to a particular area to avoid hardship (reasonable preference)	Households who need to move due to employment, education or training, where the household has no access to a private vehicle OR the use of public transport is not available AND the journey would take over 1.5 hours in each direction. Applicants who need to move urgently to give or receive support will need to provide confirmation of the support provision available, and a health and well-being assessment may be required to determine the most appropriate type of housing for the person's needs. The assessment will include typical travel time and individual circumstances when assessing travel.
	Band B – Time Limit 12 months (followed by review process)
Affordability	30% or more of gross income of the household is spent on housing costs, excluding child benefit, attendance allowance, DLA, PIP or carer's allowance (or successor benefits). Applicants will need to provide financial evidence for an income/expenditure assessment to be completed.
Children aged 8 or under living above first floor (reasonable preference)	This applies to households where there is one child (or more) aged 8 or under. Households must live above the ground and first floor. This priority will cease when the youngest child reaches the age of 9.
Intentional homeless (reasonable preference)	As defined by the Housing Act 1996, as amended. Households who are assessed by Herefordshire Council's Housing Solutions team as being intentionally homeless also may have a reduced preference depending on the reason for their status as intentionally homeless.
Verified medical/welfare need (reasonable preference)	Households where there is a need to prevent deterioration in, or improve, the health or well-being by the provision of a different type of accommodation. Medical evidence will be required. This banding may be considered where surgery is required for the period up to the surgery and during any recuperation period. Once an applicant has recovered and their housing need is resolved the banding will be removed. There are many conditions and illnesses for which medial priority is not granted. It is unlikely that someone suffering form cancer would benefit from a move, unless the cancer is creating mobility problems for them. Similarly if someone is suffering from asthma and the property they are living in is damp the most likely action would be to work to tackle the causes of the damp rather than facilitate a move.
Verified need to move to avoid hardship (reasonable preference)	Households who need to move due to employment, education or training, where the household has no access to a private vehicle OR the use of public transport is not available AND the journey would take over 1 hour in each direction. Applicants who need to move to give or receive support will need to provide confirmation of the support provision available, and a health and well-being assessment may be required to determine the most appropriate type of property for the person's needs. The assessment will include typical travel time and individual circumstances when assessing travel.

	Band C
Proven need for sheltered housing with assets up to £150K	Households over the age of 60 who have been assessed as in need of sheltered accommodation but whose ability to access open market provision is limited due to total capital assets and/or savings of under £150K. Applicants will need to provide evidence of assets, including the value of any property that is owned. There will also be an assessment of the need for sheltered accommodation based on current assessments used by partner housing associations.
Relationship breakdown	Applies where there are children involved and insufficient financial resources to meet the housing needs of the partner leaving the family home. Appropriate documentation must be submitted to confirm the arrangements for any children of the relationship and, where appropriate, that divorce or legal separation has been applied for, whether or not the sale or transfer of ownership of the property has been agreed. Both partners will be required to submit financial information for the assessment of their resources and the partner applying to be rehoused will only be eligible for a property meeting their specific needs i.e. bedroom eligibility will normally not include provision for children.
Rural localities /s.106 local connection schemes	In order to promote sustainable communities, households that do not have a housing need under other criteria in this allocation scheme but have a local connection to a specific parish may qualify for section 106 affordable housing developments in the parish(es) to which they have a local connection. This test is in addition to the initial local connection test. Applicants will be required to provide evidence of their local connection to specific settlements and will only qualify for housing in the settlements to which they have a local connection. Bids to properties in places to which these applicants have no local connection will be skipped.
Sharing siblings	Adult siblings living in the family home, sharing with non-family members or not in settled accommodation who apply to share as joint tenants for properties on the first floor and above. Applicants will need to confirm to the relevant housing association partner that they can sustain a joint tenancy.
	Band D –reduced preference
Applicants/ households who:	Applicants who are within the reasonable preference categories, as identified in this banding scheme, but who do not have a local connection to the county of Herefordshire.
	Have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances normally within the last 12 months. This may refer to circumstances such as where households have given up secure accommodation, have allowed additional people to move into a home when there is insufficient bedroom space or have damaged property such that fittings or facilities provided are not usable or the cost of repair is prohibitive. Applicants who have transferred ownership of a property within the past 5 years may be considered to have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances. Generally the applicant will be expected to take specific action, of which they will be advised, such as making payment towards the cost of the damage.
	Have housing related debts to the local authority or a housing association. This may include rent arrears, former tenant arrears, charges related to damage to property,

	<p>outstanding rechargeable repairs, unpaid loans or deposits provided in relation to accommodation, arrears from temporary accommodation placements and council tax arrears.</p> <p>This applies to applicants with debts of over £100. It does not apply where applicants were not notified of the requirement to pay at the time the charge was implemented or of the level of arrears/outstanding debt within 4 weeks of cessation of the provision, subject to the partner having the relevant address details. Applicants whose debt is less than £100 will not be placed in the reduced preference category, but they will be required to make an arrangement to clear the outstanding debt through regular payments.</p> <p>Housing related debts that have been written-off previously may be re-instated.</p> <p>Applicants with housing related debt should refer to Appendix B of this policy.</p>
	<p>Have committed acts of anti-social behaviour or other breaches of tenancy not severe enough to have been subject to an outright possession order.</p> <p>This may include, but is not limited to, causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors, noise nuisance, threats towards members of the community or staff members, being violent towards a partner or family member, allowing the condition of a property deteriorate, allowing any furniture or fixtures provided by the landlord to deteriorate and/or paying money to illegally obtain a tenancy.</p> <p>There is no requirement for the applicant or member of the applicant's household to have been convicted of such behaviour but applicants should only be placed in the reduced preference band where there is sufficient evidence to conclude that, on the balance of probability, the behaviour has taken place.</p> <p>Applicants placed in the reduced preference band for this reason should refer to Appendix B of this policy.</p>
	<p>Have provided false information on their application for social housing. Where there is a suspicion or allegation that a person has provided false information or withheld information the application will not be made active until an investigation has been completed.</p> <p>If false information has been provided or withheld the application will be re-assessed and, depending on the seriousness of the false information provided, this may result the applicant may be liable to prosecution.</p> <p>If the false information is not of a fundamentally serious nature the application will be placed in the reduced preference and the applicant will be required to take action to address the issue.</p>

APPENDIX F: Monitoring and review

In order to ensure that the scheme is achieving its aims of being as open and accessible as possible to all members of the community the Partnership will monitor the following:

- a) The number of applicants by band each quarter & by age, ethnicity and disability.
- b) Bidding behaviour.
 - Bidding method used;
 - For each bidding method, breakdown by age, ethnicity and disability.
- c) The number of allocations in the financial year (cumulative) each quarter:
 - By property type (and bedrooms);
 - Separate listings for general needs and sheltered housing;
 - Whether restricted (i.e. criteria used in advert);
 - 'Skipped' bids;
 - How many allocations by banding;
 - Properties let outside of the scheme;
 - Local connection.
- d) Applicants who have made a bid and been "skipped" due to a i) housing related debt;
ii) Anti-social behaviour.
- e) Property Feedback for each allocation as follows monthly:
 - Address of property,
 - Number of beds;
 - Type;
 - General / Sheltered;
 - Number of bids.
 - Refusals,
 - Application/banding dates,
 - Local connection
- f) List of all properties let by the scheme for current financial year each quarter.
- g) Refusals and number of complaints about the scheme each quarter & by age, ethnicity and disability
- h) Non bidders, customer satisfaction & performance against service standards annually.

The Home Point Partnership Board will also receive quarterly reports on the following to ensure that the scheme meets Herefordshire Council's commitment to serve all members of the community.

a) Profile of scheme: -

- Additional needs identified of those registered;
- Number of applicants indicating need for additional support with bidding;
- Allocations by age, ethnicity and disability – with comparison to register, banding and bidding profiles;
- Percentage of allocations to each band.

Review

The data collected from the monitoring arrangements will be used in an initial review of the policy 12 months after its implementation.

Any decisions on further review timescales will be taken after the initial review.

APPENDIX G: Service standards for Home Point

The following outlines our intended approach in working with people who use Herefordshire Council services:

We will treat people with dignity and respect, and expect the same consideration in return.

We will respect people's privacy and confidentiality.

We will listen and respond to concerns, and act to resolve queries where we can and have the powers to do so.

We will prioritise our resources to deal with areas of high risk, specifically danger to the public and where the most vulnerable in the community may be affected.

We can provide an interpreting service for customers who do not speak English or where English is not sufficient.

We can provide information in large print, audio and Braille on request.

We will design services so that they are accessible by disabled people and ensure reasonable adjustments are made where needed.

We will evaluate our practices to make sure we are offering the best service possible next to the resources we have available.

We will always wear ID badges and identify ourselves when responding to phone calls and written correspondence.

APPENDIX H: Complaints

If you are not happy

We welcome positive feedback when you are happy with the service provided as it lets us know what we are doing right.

If you are unhappy, we will work with you to resolve your query or issue at a service level, and if you are not happy with the outcome we will explain why we've taken that particular course of action or find an alternative remedy.

If you are still not happy with the outcome the following routes can be taken.

Formal complaint

A formal complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or lack of action by Herefordshire Council, our staff or contractors.

This could be based on stated standards not being met or not what the customer thinks is reasonable:

- We are doing something the customer did not want;
- We carried out duties in an unsatisfactory way or our staff or contractors behaved in an unacceptable way;
- We failed to do something which was asked for;
- We should have taken some action;
- Generally, a complaint has to be made within 12 months from the day the matter occurred or came to the notice of the complainant.

Formal complaints to the Council will be dealt with only through the Information Access team and we will not reinvestigate the same complaint. For further information visit the Council's [make a complaint](#) page.

Complaints about the service provided by partner housing associations

These should be dealt with through the specific housing association's Complaint Policy which is available on their websites. See Appendix A for contact details.

APPENDIX J: Herefordshire Council Tenancy Strategy 2015 - 2018

1. Introduction

Herefordshire council developed the first Tenancy Strategy, 2012 – 2015 in accordance with the duty placed on local authorities by The Localism Act 2011 (s.150) to “*publish a strategy setting out the matters to which the registered providers (Housing Association’s) of social housing for its district are to have due regard to in formulating policies relating to:*

- (a) the kinds of tenancy they grant,*
- (b) the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind,*
- (c) where they grant tenancies for a certain term, the length of the terms and*
- (d) the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.*

The flexibilities provided by the Localism Act 2011 provided an opportunity to address the following issues:

- (a) Better use of social and affordable housing to more effectively address housing need,*
- (b) Better use of social and affordable housing to reduce costs for the housing sector as a whole,*
- (c) Increased local and customer accountability for the use of social and affordable housing,*
- (d) Better use of social and affordable housing to contribute to sustainable community outcomes.*

The Act also brought about a revised Regulatory Framework and Tenancy Standard, (Homes and Communities Agency, 2012), which requires housing association’s to let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. Housing associations shall demonstrate how their lettings:

- (a) Make the best use of available housing,*
- (b) Are compatible with the purpose and the nature of the housing offered,*
- (c) Contribute to the local authorities’ strategic housing function and sustainable communities.*

Whilst Herefordshire has no council housing stock, the impact of the proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill 2015, to end council’s issuing lifetime tenancies, may eventually impact on housing associations. The Bill proposes that all new council tenancies granted will be of between two and five years duration, with a review of circumstances being carried out before deciding whether to renew the tenancy, offer alternative social housing or terminate the tenancy.

Links are provided below, to the four largest housing association’s websites currently operating in the county:

1. Herefordshire Housing Ltd

<http://www.hhl.org.uk/news-leaflets/all-our-documents/#toggle-id-2>

2. Stonewater

<https://www.stonewater.org/for-residents/housing-and-residents-policies/>

3. West Mercia Housing

<http://www.wmhousing.co.uk/help-advice/Publications>

4. Fortis Living

<https://www.fortisliving.com/home>

The Tenancy Strategy has due regard to the Housing Allocation Policy 2016 for Herefordshire and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2015-18.

These documents can be found at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/

2. Local context, vision and priorities

Herefordshire is a predominately rural county of 842 square miles situated in the south-west corner of the West Midlands region. The city of Hereford is the major location in the county for employment, administration, health services, education facilities and shopping. The principal locations are the five market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Leominster, Ledbury and Ross on Wye. Overall (census data 2011) the total housing stock comprises of 53,800 owner occupation, 10,903 social housing and 13,600 private rented sector.

A particular feature of the county is a very high proportion of detached housing, which represents 42.4% of the housing stock compared to 23.7% across the West Midlands and 22.3% across England.

Current data indicates that Housing in Multiple Occupation represents less than 1% of the total housing stock in Herefordshire.

Partner housing associations follow the overarching Housing Allocation Policy and have due regard to the Tenancy Strategy, when developing their own policies, to assist this council in meeting its priorities and statutory duties. The main aim of both documents is to meet the housing need of those eligible to register for social housing.

All the policies should have consideration to the main themes from Herefordshire's council Plan.

These priorities are explained in more detail on the [2014/15 budget consultation page](#).

3. Housing Affordability

Affordable housing is allocated to those in the greatest housing need. It can be a challenge, for low income households, to access suitable affordable housing in Herefordshire. There is a limited supply of appropriate accommodation, particularly in the county's rural areas. Trying to access the private-rented sector can present challenges, due to the large deposit often required and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates lower than the private rental levels that have changed very little, in Herefordshire, since September 2011.

Local Housing Allowance Rates for 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

Room Size	LHA rates for Herefordshire
Shared Accommodation	£57.64
1 Bedroom	£92.05
2 Bedroom	£117.37
3 Bedroom	£135.19

The chart below is a current estimate, by Herefordshire Council Research Team, of the cost of private rental-weekly. Private rental levels have been monitored and changed very little since September 2011.

Room Size	Estimated cost of private rental-weekly
1 Bedroom	£102
2 Bedroom	£127
3 Bedroom	£150

The chart below shows the average housing association rental-weekly in 2014.

Room Size	Average housing association rental-weekly
1 Bedroom	£71.00
2 Bedroom	£82.10
3 Bedroom	£93.20

As the charts above show, rent levels for housing association accommodation are significantly lower than rent levels in the private rented sector, making housing association accommodation more affordable for low income households. The provision of affordable housing is a priority for the county and is a common theme through key strategic documents. This is due to the combination of low earnings, the median earnings for 2014 is £21,160, and high house prices, the median house price April 2014-March 2015 is £192,000, which creates significant barriers to accessing the housing market for residents of the county.

For more details the Herefordshire Council Key Housing Fact Sheet details the housing stock, affordability and need in Herefordshire see link below.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/advice/strategic-housing-information>

The July 2015 budget introduced a reduction in housing association rents of 1% for the next four years. This could have an impact on the future number of new homes being built in Herefordshire. Housing associations have already had to make estimated adjustments to their business plans. Revised business plans were sent to the Homes and Communities Agency by the end of October 2015 before the enactment of the Housing Bill or Welfare Reform Act.

4. Use of Fixed Term Tenancies

In Herefordshire the majority of social tenancies granted are still assured tenancies. Whilst the benefits of offering fixed term tenancies are recognised, the practical ability for low income families to be in a position to move on into alternative accommodation is a challenge. From April 2016 a benefit cap reduction will reduce the income of families on benefits to a maximum of £20,000.

Introductory, starter and probationary tenancies will be supported where issued to new tenants and used in conjunction with fixed term tenancies. Once an introductory tenancy period, (normally 12 months), is successfully completed, (i.e. with no breaches of tenancy conditions), a further tenancy may be created or alternative housing options advised within the private and social sectors.

Where housing associations use their discretion to grant fixed term tenancies it is requested that they consider the following:

- A minimum five year fixed tenancy, wherever possible, excluding any introductory period.
- Longer tenancies five to ten years for specialist, adapted properties, limited stock larger properties or families with dependent school-aged children attending a specialist local school.
- Lifetime tenancies are used for sheltered housing or extra care housing.
- Fixed term tenancies are not used to address breaches of tenancy, where there are existing legal remedies.
- Two year tenancies should only be used where someone is expected to move on to more permanent accommodation or requires short term housing.
- Where a fixed tenancy is used, housing associations should give tenants appropriate advice and information to tenants about their housing options at the time of letting and when their tenancy review will be carried out.
- It is expected, that tenancies will be renewed following a review, provided that the tenant's circumstances remain the same.

5. Secure and Assured Tenancies

Secure and Assured tenancies must be retained for housing association tenants whose tenancy commenced before 1 April 2012.

Whilst lifetime tenancies will be more appropriate in some cases, this does not suggest this is linked to a particular property and tenants will be encouraged to move to more suitable property as their needs change over time.

6. Reviewing a Fixed Term Tenancy

Housing associations are required to formulate policies that will govern the process under which tenancies will either be renewed or terminated at the end of a fixed-term. Within this process the impact on the following should be considered:

- Tackling worklessness and promoting financial inclusion.
- The household's current and future likely income.
- Addressing overcrowding and under-occupation.
- The prevention and alleviation of homelessness.
- The purpose of the accommodation and any subsequent changes since the commencement of the tenancy.
- The needs of individual households and any subsequent changes since the commencement of the tenancy. Housing associations are encouraged to work closely with other agencies where appropriate in understanding the needs of the household.
- The sustainability of the community.
- The efficient use and availability of housing stock.
- The stability of family life and education where children are part of the household.

Where a decision has been taken by a housing association not to renew a tenancy at the end of a fixed-term, the provider should:

- Reviews should be undertaken at least six months prior to the end of the Fixed Term Tenancy.
- Seek to inform the tenant at the earliest possible opportunity, no less than five months, to make them aware of the housing associations intentions.
- Provide households affected by the termination of a tenancy with any relevant advice and assistance that will support them in successfully relocating to alternative accommodation and prevent homelessness.

- Formally notify and actively work with the council's Housing Solutions Team to prevent homelessness occurring as a result of ending a fixed term tenancy.

All housing associations are expected to have an appeal process in place through which the tenant is able to appeal the decision taken.

Herefordshire Council will work with local housing associations to monitor the use of fixed term tenancies, including their review, renewal and termination.

Committed is required from housing associations to ensure that any decision to terminate a tenancy, does not lead to an increase in levels of homelessness in Herefordshire. In the majority of circumstances, affordable housing providers should seek to renew a tenancy at the end of a fixed-term period or seek to secure alternative and more appropriate accommodation across the housing stock within the county.

When conducting reviews, housing associations should consider the current circumstances of the household including the financial capability of the tenant to secure alternative market accommodation or other affordable tenures, in terms of earned income and the need of the household for the property type and size.

7. Affordable Rents

The council recognises that many new fixed term tenancies for social housing are at affordable rather than social rents. It will monitor the extent to which affordable rents are actually affordable to those in housing need, particularly in the light of national welfare reforms. In some cases or geographic areas the Council will encourage the letting of social homes at social rents.

Social Rent – rents in line with guideline target rents which are determined through the national rent regime.

Affordable Rent – the housing provided will have the same characteristics as social rented housing except that it is outside the national rent regime, but is subject to other rent controls that require it to be offered to eligible households at a rent of up to 80% of local market rents.

8. Governance Arrangements

Housing associations in Herefordshire are required to have regard to the principles set out in this policy and work within the Localism Act 2011, when developing their organisations tenancy policies and when granting and terminating tenancies.

The implementation of the tenancy strategy will be monitored through the Housing Partnership Sub Group (Housing Practice).

The tenancy strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and considered alongside the potential impact of planned welfare reforms.

Homelessness Review and Prevention Strategy

2016 – 2020

Version 2.1



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Herefordshire Council's Homelessness Review and the accompanying Homelessness Prevention Strategy have been developed in a challenging environment of significantly reduced council budgets, the uncertain impact of radical reforms to housing and social welfare policy and increasing pressures on local services. If we are to continue to build upon our existing success in preventing homelessness there must be a commitment to do so from across the council and from external stakeholders and partner agencies.

The strategic objectives set out in our Homelessness Prevention strategy, which accompanies this Homelessness Review, reflect the council's commitment to prevent homelessness happening whenever it is possible to do so and, where this has not been possible, to prevent it happening again.

1.1 Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness in their district every 5 years and to publish a Homelessness Strategy based on the findings of the review. The legislation emphasises the importance of working strategically with social services and other statutory, voluntary and private sector partners in order to tackle homelessness more effectively.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, July 2006 states that the purpose of the review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the district, assess its likely demand in the future, and identify what is currently being done, by whom, and what level of resources are available for preventive and responsive work.

Herefordshire's Homelessness Review provides an evidence base for the development of our Homeless Prevention Strategy 2016-2020 through an assessment of:

- The national policy context.
- The local context.
- The housing market in Herefordshire.

The Review of homelessness includes:

- A review of homelessness trends, current levels of homelessness and likely future levels.
- A review of activities that contribute towards homeless prevention.
- A review of the activities that contribute towards securing accommodation.
- A review of the activities that contribute towards providing support.
- A review of the resources and activities that contribute to homelessness prevention.

1.2 Extent of Homelessness

- The number of households making a formal homeless application reduced from 372 in 2012-2013 to 220 households in 2014-2015, a reduction of 40%. The number of households being accepted as statutorily homeless also reduced from 70% of total applications in 2012-2013 to 53% in 2014-2015.
- The above should be understood in the context of a preventative approach, which reduces the number of households counted as making a formal homeless application. This should not, therefore, be taken to mean that homelessness is a decreasing issue in Herefordshire. Statistics show that 148 households were prevented from becoming homeless in 2013-2014 and 511 in 2014-2015.
- By far the most significant and consistent reason for the determination of 'priority need,' between 2012-2015, was that the household contained a dependent child or children. In total, 361 households were owed the full homeless duty for this reason.

1.3 Strategic Objectives

Our strategic objectives include preventing homelessness and finding solutions for those who often face the biggest barriers in accessing and sustaining a home and who, therefore, require more intensive support to do so.

Objective 1:

Minimise rough sleeping and increase tenancy sustainment opportunities for rough sleepers and for people with complex needs.

Objective 2:

Maximise homelessness prevention activity by building on current success and promoting positive opportunities for homeless people.

Objective 3:

Improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people and those who are at risk of homelessness.

Objective 4:

Ensure that affordable housing and support services are available for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Overview of Local Housing Authorities Homelessness Duties

The homelessness legislation, Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, places a general duty on housing authorities to ensure that advice and information about homelessness, and preventing homelessness, is available to everyone in their district free of charge.

The legislation also requires authorities to assist individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and apply for help.

In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to:

- Ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, specifically by requiring the housing authority to develop a homelessness strategy for their area.
- Strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories to homeless 16 and 17 year olds; care leavers aged 18, 19 and 20; people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, the armed forces, prison or custody, and people who are vulnerable because they have fled their home because of violence.
- The legislation places duties on housing authorities, and gives them powers, to meet these aims. But it also emphasises the need for joint working between housing authorities, social services and other statutory, voluntary and private sector partners in tackling homelessness more effectively.

Homeless people are often perceived to be those who are sleeping rough. However, a household will be considered as statutorily homeless by their local authority if they meet specific criteria set out in legislation.

Homeless households are not necessarily or generally those who are 'roofless,' but they will be threatened with the loss of, or unable to continue to live in their current accommodation.

Simplistically, somebody is statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them and their household, and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in. It would not be reasonable for someone to continue to live in their home, for example, if it was likely that this would lead to violence against them, or a member of their family.

In cases where an authority is satisfied that an applicant is eligible for assistance, is in priority need, and has become homeless through no fault of their own, the authority will owe a main homelessness duty to secure settled accommodation for that household i.e. they have been 'accepted' as homeless.

Priority need groups include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and individuals who are vulnerable in some way. Vulnerability can arise as a consequence of:

- Mental illness or physical disability.
- Being a young person 16 to 17 years old, or 18 to 20 years old and vulnerable as a result of previously being in care.
- Previously being in custody.
- Previously being in HM Forces.
- Forced to leave home because of violence or the threat of violence.

When a main duty is owed the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available until a settled home can be secured. In the meantime, households are either assisted to remain in their existing accommodation, or are provided with temporary accommodation.

Where the authority has found that the main duty is not owed, this will be for one of the following three reasons, the applicant has been found to be (i) 'not homeless,' or (ii) 'not in priority need' or (iii) 'intentionally homeless.'

Where a main duty is not owed the authority must make an assessment of the applicant's housing needs and provide advice and assistance to help the household find accommodation for themselves.

Where an applicant falls into a priority need group, but is intentionally homeless, the authority must ensure that accommodation is available for a reasonable time to allow the household to find a home.

3. THE COSTS OF HOMELESSNESS

3.1 Financial Costs:

'Evidence Review of the costs of homelessness, DCLG, August 2012

The Evidence Review was intended to provide an initial overview of the information held by government and other organisations on the magnitude of financial costs to government from homelessness. Due to the considerable difficulties in estimating costs across the whole of the homeless population, the evidence related primarily to single homeless rough sleepers and hostel dwellers.

The report states that drug and alcohol dependency, especially when combined with a mental illness, are linked to homelessness as causal risk factors and triggers, but also as a consequence of being homeless. Triggers can also include bereavement, job loss, crime, leaving an institution (including the armed services), and relationship or family breakdown.

Information in the review would suggest that the most significant costs to health and support services are likely to come from drug and alcohol treatment and mental health services.

Estimated gross costs of homelessness are calculated to be between £24,000 and £30,000 per person, with a **total annual gross cost of up to £1billion**.

The above comprises benefit payments, health costs in supporting homeless persons with mental health, substance abuse or alcohol dependency problems, and costs to the criminal justice system from crimes committed by homeless people.

3.2 Costs to Health and Wellbeing

A review conducted by Homeless Link on behalf of Public Health England and published in June 2015, strengthens existing evidence on the impact of early intervention in reducing health inequalities.¹

A good quality stable home is critical to health and wellbeing. It helps people to be, and remain healthy, and provides a foundation from which to seek and find employment, feel part of a community and experience personal value and self worth.

For people experiencing homelessness or prolonged periods of rough sleeping, the rate at which health problems occur increases rapidly, particularly amongst single homeless people:

- 73% report a physical health problem, for 41% this is a long term problem compared to 28% of the general population.
- 45% have been diagnosed with a mental health issue compared to 25% of the general population.
- Factors which contribute to unhealthy lifestyles such as smoking and drug and alcohol use are also more prevalent than the general population.
- Research also highlights higher rates of communicable health diseases such as TB and higher rates of premature mortality.

As identified above, homelessness also places substantial costs on the NHS and other support services. Department of Health estimates show that people who are sleeping rough or living in a hostel, a squat or sleeping on friends' floors consume around four times more acute hospital services than the general population.

The Homeless Link Review identifies existing prevention activity, which has been developed in response to health and wellbeing needs and delivered by, or in partnership with, the wider health workforce.

¹ Preventing Homelessness to improve Health and Wellbeing. Putting the evidence into Practice, Homeless Review, June 2015

The researchers claim, however, that there is still considerable potential for commissions across the NHS and public health to incorporate co-ordinated preventative approaches within the services they already commission, and to target those known to be more at risk of homelessness. This has the potential to maximise health and wellbeing gains, whilst reducing overall costs to services.

3.3 Homelessness Link Health Needs Audit

Addressing health inequalities is a key priority for the NHS, Public Health teams and Clinical Commissioning Groups, but to do this a good evidence base about homeless people's health and the services they use is needed.

Homeless Link's 'Health Needs Audit,' was developed in partnership with a series of pilot organisations across England, funded by the Department of Health. At a local level, the audit has been designed to enhance recognition of the health needs of homeless people in the commissioning process, filling in gaps left by local evidence gathering procedures such as Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

The Health Needs Audit Toolkit, which is free to use, is designed to be used in partnership by representatives from the local authority, voluntary sector, and health services. It sets out the following steps:

- i. Planning between voluntary sector, health and local authority.
- ii. Audit conducted by local agencies over an agreed timescale.
- iii. Analysis and interpretation of the data.
- iv. Identifying action in partnership.
- v. Implementation and review.

In gathering the data as outlined above, the audit aims to:

- Increase the evidence available about the health needs of people who are homeless.
- Bring statutory and voluntary services together to develop responses to health need and gaps in services.
- Give homeless people a stronger voice in local commissioning processes.

3.4 Groundswell Homeless Health Peer Advocacy (HHPA)

Groundswell is a registered charity, which aims to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and to play a full role in the community. They specialise in peer-led work, involving people with experience of homelessness in finding solutions to homelessness.

Groundswell's Homeless Health Peer Advocacy, offers one-to-one support for people experiencing homelessness to make and attend health appointments, overcoming the practical, personal and systemic barriers, which prevent them from addressing their health needs. The program is delivered by Peer Advocate volunteers, who all have personal experience of homelessness. In addition to providing practical support, such as accompanying people to appointments, Peer Advocates build the skills and confidence to enable people to access health services independently.

4. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness was set up in 2010 by the (then) Housing Minister, Grant Shapps. The Working Group remit was to help communities to tackle homelessness by bringing together the relevant government departments to share information, resolve issues and avoid unintended policy consequences.

4.1 Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide

In July 2011 Grant Shapps announced £20 million Homelessness Transition Fund, which was to be administered by the umbrella group Homeless Link, to enable the countrywide roll-out of 'No Second Night Out (NSNO).'

The focus of NSNO was on single homeless people, including those sleeping rough, to whom local authorities do not have a statutory duty to secure housing. Sleeping rough is the most visible form of homelessness and where people are most vulnerable.

Rough sleepers and people in unstable accommodation have significantly higher levels of mental and physical ill health, substance abuse problems and higher rates of mortality than the general population. They can also experience difficulties registering with a general practitioner in the local area, accessing follow-up care or staying on a course of treatment.²

The NSNO plan sets out six priority areas where government departments and partners committed to work together to end rough sleeping, as follows:

- New rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle.
- Members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.
- Rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options.
- They should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.

² 'Evidence Review of the costs of homelessness, DCLG, August 2012

- If people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community, unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends.

The final evaluation of NSNO services³ suggested that the project had been successful. The report stated that, in total, 67% of rough sleepers worked with were taken off the streets after their first night of sleeping rough, and of these 78% did not return to the streets once helped.

However, despite the input of these resources, the latest figures on rough sleeping for autumn 2014, published February 2015⁴ show a 14% increase on the autumn 2013 figure. The official counts of rough sleepers have recorded increases in consecutive years since 2010.

The 'Homelessness Monitor,' Crisis February 2015 notes that these official figures are likely to be a considerable underestimate of the reality. Their own exploratory estimates suggest that, on any typical night in England during 2010-2011, between 4,000 and 8,000 people would be sleeping rough, whereas the official estimates were of less than 2,000 people.

In Herefordshire a Rough Sleeper Outreach post was funded through the SASH Partnership, (Services Addressing Single Homelessness), formed between Herefordshire and Worcestershire councils, to support people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough, access suitable accommodation, health and employment services. The post was funded from August 2013 on a fixed term contract running until December 2015.

Through partnership with St Peter's Night Shelter, Worcester, funding was also secured in September 2013, to employ a Hospital Discharge Worker on a fixed term contract, to work in Herefordshire.

The two posts are complimentary; the post holders work very closely together and have been very successful at homelessness prevention and sustained re-settlement.

4.2 'Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness,' DCLG , August 2012

The foreword to 'Making every contact count,' states that

'For many people, becoming homeless is not the beginning of their problems; it comes at the end of a long line of crises, a long line of interactions with public and voluntary sector services, a long line of missed opportunities. We must change that.'

'No single voluntary sector organisation, government agency, local authority or central government department can prevent homelessness alone, but working together we can make a big impact.'

³ 'No Second Night Out,' Homeless Link, February 2014

⁴ 'Rough Sleeping,' House of Commons Library, March 2015

‘Making every contact count,’ encourages better cross-service working between councils and all partner agencies, including charities, health services, housing and the police to focus on earlier support for people likely to become homeless. The report contains five Government commitments and sets out what action is being taken to fulfil each of these:

- Tackling troubled childhoods and adolescence.
- Improving health.
- Reducing Involvement in crime.
- Improving access to financial advice, skills and employment services.
- Pioneering innovative social funding mechanisms for homelessness.

The report also sets out a number of the ‘local challenges’ including the following:

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness, which has buy in across all local authority services.
2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients, including written advice.
4. To adopt a ‘No Second Night Out’ model or an effective local alternative.
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support.
6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord.
7. To have a homelessness strategy, which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs.
8. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
9. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.

4.3 Supreme Court Judgement on assessing ‘priority need,’ May 2015 **Case Hatak v Southwark, Kanu v Southwark Johnson v Solihull:**

The Supreme Court in three appeals (above) was asked to decide how Local Authorities should approach the statutory test of ‘vulnerability’ contained in the Housing Act 1996.

The court determined that to assess the ‘vulnerability’ of a single homeless person, local authorities must now decide if s/he is in greater danger than an ‘ordinary’ person facing the

prospect of homelessness. Previously, councils have determined someone's vulnerability, and therefore eligibility for priority housing, by comparing their mental and physical health to other homeless people, who are statistically more likely to have drug addictions, learning difficulties and other disabilities.

Prior to this judgement, research by Crisis⁵ used mystery shoppers, with previous experience of homelessness, to examine the quality of advice and assistance provided by 16 local authorities to single homeless people.

The research found that in just over a third of visits, mystery shoppers did not receive an assessment and were not given the opportunity to make a homelessness application. The report makes recommendations, which include the following:

- All people who approach their local authority as homeless must be given the opportunity to make a homelessness application and should have the process clearly explained to them. All homeless households, whether or not they are deemed to have a priority need must be provided with meaningful advice and assistance.
- All applicants should be provided with a letter summarising the outcome of their visit, including the result of any homelessness application and how it can be appealed; what advice they have been given and next steps to be taken by them and the authority.

These recommendations already form part of Herefordshire council's standard practices, when advice and assistance about homeless or threatened homelessness is sought.

4.4 'Addressing complex needs: Improving services for vulnerable homeless people,' DCLG March 2015

The report summarises the work of the cross-government Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness since its inception in 2010 and sets out the issues around 'complex needs homelessness.'

People with complex needs have multiple support requirements, which overlap and compound each other, but as services tend to be structured around single 'issues,' they often struggle to access mainstream services.

The authors of research commissioned by the Lankelly Chase Foundation⁶ state that:

'We still categorise people in separate boxes defined by single issues. So a person who takes drugs to deal with childhood trauma, who falls into offending as a consequence, and loses their home when entering prison acquires three quite distinct labels. Each of these labels triggers a different response from statutory and voluntary systems, different

⁵ Turned Away: the treatment of single homeless people, October 2014

⁶ Hard Edges: Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England, Bramley, Fitzpatrick et al, January 2015

attitudes from the public and media, different theoretical approaches from universities, different prescriptions from policy makers.'

The research sought to provide a statistical profile of people with multiple needs involved with the homelessness, substance misuse and criminal justice systems in England annually. The main findings of the study were:

- Each year, over a quarter of a million people in England have contact with at least two out of three of the homelessness, substance misuse and/or criminal justice systems, and at least 58,000 people have contact with all three.
- People affected are predominantly white men, aged 25–44, with long-term histories of economic and social marginalisation and, in most cases, childhood trauma of various kinds.
- In addition to general background poverty, the most important early roots of this type of multiple disadvantage arise from very difficult family relationships and very poor educational experience.
- The 'average' local authority might expect to have about 1,470 active cases over the course of a year, as defined by involvement in two out of the three relevant services.

In addressing complex needs the government believes that, as the voluntary sector has expertise in working with people with complex needs, they are best placed to deliver the specialist services that are needed.

4.5 The 'Housing First' model of provision

'Addressing complex needs' refers to the 'Housing First' model of provision. This places homeless people with complex needs straight into long-term settled accommodation from which support needs are addressed, rather than using a 'stepped' approach of specialist temporary, followed by longer term move-on accommodation. Using this approach, results from pilot projects in other parts of Europe and North America have been very positive with around 90% tenancy sustainment being achieved.

A number of small-scale Housing First projects have been run in the UK and in February 2015 the results of an observational evaluation of nine of these was published.⁷

In general, people using these services were much more likely to have severe mental illness, very poor physical health and learning difficulties than the general population. They often experience social exclusion and marginalisation, lack social support networks and have histories of contact with the criminal justice system. Rates of problematic drug and alcohol use are also high.

⁷ Housing First in England, An Evaluation of Nine Services, Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace, University of York, February 2015

The main findings of the research were:

- The average estimated length of homelessness per person was 14 years.
- Most of the Housing First services had been operational for less than three years and some for much shorter periods, which meant assessment of long-term effectiveness was not yet possible. However, 74% of service users had been successfully housed for one year or more.
- There was evidence of improvements in mental and physical health. 43% reported 'very bad or bad' physical health a year before using Housing First, this fell to 28%.
- 52% reported 'bad or very bad' mental health a year before using Housing First, falling to 18% when asked about current mental health.
- There was some evidence of progress away from drug and alcohol use, but also some evidence that this pattern was uneven.
- Overall potential savings in public expenditure could be in the region of £15,000 per person per annum.
- There are strong arguments for exploring the potential of Housing First as a more cost effective approach to long-term and recurrent homelessness. However, it is not a 'low cost' option as it is a relatively intensive service offering open-ended support.
- There is the potential to use such schemes in new ways, for specific groups of homeless people, such as women and young people with high support needs or as a preventative model, targeted on vulnerable individuals who are assessed at heightened risk of long-term homelessness.

4.6 Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 introduced very significant changes to housing policy and planning in what the government described in, 'Laying the Foundations, A Housing Strategy for England, November 2011 as a 'radical programme of reform of social housing.'

Key reforms relating to housing and planning include:

- Social housing reform: This gives individual social housing providers new powers to grant tenancies for a specified fixed-term, where they choose to do so, rather than a 'life-time' tenancy.
- Allocation reform: This gives local authorities greater control over who is entitled to register for social housing.
- Reform of homelessness legislation: This gives local authorities powers to discharge their housing obligations to homeless people through the private rented sector on a minimum one-year Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012: This establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans and the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies.

4.7 Welfare Reform Act 2012

The Welfare Reform Act 2012, contained important changes to benefit entitlement, each of which is intended to reduce the overall cost to the Treasury. These include:

- The introduction of Universal Credit, which merges a number of different benefit entitlements, including Housing Benefit and Job Seekers Allowance, into a single monthly payment. There is a benefit cap that limits the amount of benefit a household is entitled to receive.
- Universal Credit is being rolled out in Herefordshire from March 2015 for single people, who would have been eligible for Job Seekers Allowance. It remains to be seen if this will impact negatively on access to the private rented sector through, for example, any reluctance by landlords/lettings agencies to offer tenancies to claimants on Universal Credit.
- From April 2013 new rules were introduced to restrict the amount of Housing Benefit working-age council or housing association tenants could claim if they were deemed to be under-occupying their home. For one spare bedroom, Housing Benefit entitlement was reduced by 14% per week and for two or more bedrooms by 25%.
- In October 2012 a new harsher sanctions regime for Job Seekers Allowance was introduced by the Welfare Reform Act. This set out three levels of fixed periods of sanction for failure to undertake agreed work search activity, ranging from four weeks up to a maximum of three years for repeated failures. Some research⁸ has indicated that sanctions are having a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, including homeless people, single parents and disabled people.

4.8 Summer Budget July 2015: Key measures relating to Housing and Welfare

The Budget announced around £17 billion of spending cuts, including £12 billion by 2019-20 from welfare reforms. The main reductions are as follows:

- From April 2017, the overall benefit cap, currently set at £500 per week (£26k per year) for a working age household with children, will be reduced to £385 (£20k per year) or £442 (£23k per year) in London.
- Housing Benefit will be frozen for four years from April 2016, along with both Child and Working Tax Credits and a number of other working age benefits, including Jobseekers' Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Child Benefit

⁸ The Homelessness Monitor, Crisis and JRF, February 2015

- The Universal Credit work allowance will be abolished entirely for non-disabled, childless households. For all other households whose claim includes housing costs, it will be reduced to £44.30 per week (£192 per month).
- From April 2017 parents claiming Universal Credit, including lone parents, will be expected to prepare for work when their youngest child is two and to look for work when they are three.

4.8.1 Removal of Housing Benefit entitlement for 18-21 year olds

- From April 2017, 18-21 year olds submitting a new claim for Universal Credit will not be automatically entitled to receive the housing costs element (the equivalent of Housing Benefit). There will be exceptions for:
 - Those who are parents and whose children live with them.
 - Vulnerable groups.
 - Those who had previously been living independently and working continuously for 6 months.
- 18 -21 year olds receiving Universal Credit will also be subject to a new youth obligation. They will be expected to participate in a programme of support at the start of their claim and to apply for an apprenticeship or traineeship, gain work place skills or go on a work placement after six months.

Following these announcements, the Chief Executive of Crisis claimed that more young people were likely to become homeless as a result of the proposed cuts.

*'Under-25s already make up a third of homeless people and there is a real danger these changes could make things even worse. For many young people, living with their parents simply isn't an option.'*⁹

4.8.2 Social Housing Rents

- From April 2016, government will require all social landlords to reduce their rents by 1% every year for the next four years (rather than increasing them by Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1%, as previously identified). This will be taken forward via the Welfare Reform and Work Bill and will apply to both social and affordable rents.
- Tenants in social housing who earn more than £30,000 per year, or £40,000 per year in London, will be expected to pay market or near market rents. This was subsequently withdrawn and replaced by a voluntary system for housing association providers, whilst being retained for council tenants.

⁹ Jon Sparks, Chief Executive, Crisis, July 2015

The National Housing Federation (NHF)¹⁰ has responded to the announcements in the Summer Budget as follows:

- Whilst a cut in rents over the next four years will be a real help to some tenants, the reduction in rental income will impact on housing associations ability to plan for and invest in new housing development. An initial estimate suggests that at least 27,000 new affordable homes will not be built as a result of this loss.
- Modelling indicates that the reduction in the benefit cap could affect 205,000 households including 68,000 households living in housing association properties. The lower cap will impact on affordability in all areas of the country and a lower benefit cap outside London takes no account of regional variations in rents. Initial analysis indicates that, for a couple with three children, the weekly shortfall for a three-bedroom property is likely to be in the region of £44.34 using average rent data.

Whilst there are plans for a national living wage for over 25s (set at £7.20 per hour from 2016 and rising to £9.00 per hour by 2020) estimates in the Institute for Fiscal Studies post-budget briefing paper¹¹ indicate that this will not provide full compensation for the majority of losses that are likely to be experienced overall.

If the above initial projections for reduced household incomes are accurate, it is possible that homelessness will increase, across all household types, as tenants in the social and private-rented sector, subject to cuts in benefit entitlement, are unable to afford their rents.

4.9 Autumn Statement and Comprehensive Spending Review

In November 2015, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Autumn Statement for 2015 and the Comprehensive Spending Review covering the period up to the 2020 General Election.

Main announcements affecting housing include the following:

- Funding for new 'affordable' homes will be doubled, but will be refocused so that most of the funding will be spent supporting new homes for low cost home ownership, rather than to rent.
- Housing benefit in the social housing sector will be capped at local housing allowance rates for new tenants. This includes extending the shared room rate, whereby single people under 35 are only eligible for enough support to cover the cost of a room in a shared house. The change will apply to tenancies starting from April 2016 and will take effect from 2018.
- The cuts to working tax credits announced as part of the summer budget will not now be implemented. However cuts to child tax credits will still go ahead as planned.

¹⁰ National Housing Federation Briefing Paper: Summer Budget 2015, July 2015

¹¹ Paul Johnson, Institute for Fiscal Studies, July 2015

- There will be changes to the way the management of temporary accommodation is funded. The management fee currently paid by the Department for Work and Pensions to local authorities on a per household basis will end from 2017-2018 and instead an up front fund will be established.

Whilst additional spending on housing is to be welcomed, focussing government support only on home ownership will not help those in housing need who are not able to save a deposit or get a mortgage. This will include substantial number of families and single people and families in need in Herefordshire.

Information in the 'Understanding Herefordshire Report,' 2015 confirms that the county is still one of the worst areas within the West Midlands region for housing affordability, where house prices at the lower end of the housing market cost around 8.1 times the annual earnings of the lowest earners.

Capping housing benefit for new tenants in the social housing sector to local housing allowance rates could also have a major impact on young people. This change is likely to make it more difficult for single people under 35 to find a home in Herefordshire that they can afford.

4.10 Housing and Planning Bill 2015

Extending the Right to Buy to housing association tenants

The Housing and Planning Bill, which is expected to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2016, will:

- Extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants,¹² offering discounts worth up to £102,700 in London and £77,000 in the rest of England, but not in Scotland or Wales, where Right to Buy is being abolished.
- There are around 2.5 million housing association tenants. Whilst they already have the Right to Acquire, the discounts are much less generous, ranging from £9,000 to £16,000 depending on location. In addition, the Right to Acquire is currently not available in rural areas where there are fewer than 3,000 properties.
- To fund the policy the Housing and Planning Bill will require stock-owning councils to sell 5% of their most valuable housing properties when they become vacant and replace them with cheaper homes.
- The government has made a commitment to ensure there will be 'one-for-one' replacement for all the properties sold under extended RTB. However, figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), June 2015, show that 12,304 homes were sold under the Right to Buy in England in 2014-2015, whilst only 1,903 homes were started or acquired to replace them.

¹² There may be some Right to Buy exemptions, for example properties that will be difficult to replace in rural areas. Tenants may be provided with a 'portable discount' as an alternative.

- The Bill contains measures to deliver an extra 200,000 new homes through the new Starter Homes initiative, which will offer a 20% discount to first-time buyers under 40. It is intended that these will be built predominantly on brownfield sites that were not previously identified for housing development.

Locally, there could be a loss of housing association properties in Herefordshire, but at present, there are too many variables to allow any accurate assessment.

4.11 Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)

The MEAM report, 'Solutions from the front line,' June 2015 sets out how policymakers, local authorities, commissioners and frontline services can respond to the challenges faced by people experiencing multiple needs. The findings are based on qualitative research with 50 people who have either had experience of multiple needs or are practitioners supporting those who do.

Respondents emphasised the need for better joint working between different sectors, which would prevent people from being 'bounced backwards and forwards' between services without anyone taking full responsibility for their welfare.

One of the ways suggested ways in which this could be achieved was through a central point of contact, responsible for linking all of the different services together on behalf of the person concerned.

One of the recommendations was that Commissioners should be accountable for ensuring local areas have joined-up services, and identifying where people with multiple needs fall through the gaps. The report states that:

'In every local area people with multiple needs and exclusions are living chaotic lives and facing premature death because as a society we fail to understand and coordinate the support they need. Yet evidence shows that by working together local services can develop coordinated interventions that can transform lives.'

5. HEREFORDSHIRE HOUSING MARKET

Housing is a fundamental requirement for good health and wellbeing. Inequalities in a range of health issues can be tracked to the quality of housing, examples include the effects on the general quality of living and mental/general health, people rough sleeping when their housing needs are not met and terminal illness or death due to inadequate living conditions.

The following information is taken primarily from Understanding Herefordshire 2015.¹³ The report provides strategic intelligence for commissioning and business planning for the whole county.

- Within the West Midlands region, Herefordshire is ranked as the third most expensive unitary or shire authority when median rents for all dwelling sizes are compared.
- The difficulties in acquiring housing are compounded by having one of the worst affordability levels within the West Midlands region; with houses at the lower end of the market costing around 8.1 times the annual earnings of the lowest earners. This puts greater pressure on the affordable housing options that are available across the county and with a high demand against limited supply, there is a substantial shortfall.
- The Local Housing Market Assessment 2013 identified that, to balance the housing market over the longer term (2011-31), an average of 35% of new homes built would be a viable level of affordable housing. The report recommended a range of tenures to cater for a range of housing needs and a range of circumstances, particularly for those that can afford to pay more than social rents, but still cannot access the market.
- Between April 2011 and March 2015, an additional 434 new affordable homes were built or acquired for those in housing need in the county.
- The last decade has seen a large increase in the number of concealed families, i.e. those that live in a household containing more than one family (including grown-up children who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household; elderly parents living with their family; or unrelated families sharing a home).
- In 2011 there were almost 850 concealed families, an increase of 87% on 2001 compared with 70% nationally.

This increase could be related to:

- A combination of the affordability of housing and the availability of finance since the credit crunch.
- There may also be some connection to increased migration following the expansion of the European Union. The 2011 Census shows that a relatively large proportion of people in the white non-British ethnic group live in some form of shared housing.
- The 'heads' of just over half of the concealed families were aged under 34, mostly either lone parents with dependent children or couples with no children.

¹³ Understanding Herefordshire 2015: An Integrated Needs Assessment

5.1 Structural Factors impacting on homelessness

The 'Homelessness Monitor England'¹⁴ is an annual state-of-the-nation report looking at the impact of economic and policy developments on homelessness. The current report is the fourth of a five year project (2011-2016). Research for the report is being conducted by Heriot-Watt University and the University of York on behalf of Crisis.

The Monitor states that the continuing shortfall in new house building, relative to household formation, is a prime structural factor contributing to homelessness and other forms of acute housing need.

The research quotes household formation projections for England, which indicate that household numbers will increase at an average rate of 220,000 a year up to 2021. This means that the rate of new house building would need to almost double from the 2012-2013 levels of 125,000 just to keep pace with the rate of new household formation and without alleviating existing housing pressures.

The impact of structural factors is reasserted in the Housing of Commons Briefing Paper, August 2015,¹⁵ which states that where there is an insufficient supply of affordable housing, prices are pushed up beyond the reach of the larger population. This puts additional pressure on the rented sector, which in turn inflates rents and results in more people applying for social housing.

Against this rising demand, the social housing sector has declined as a proportion of all housing in recent years. In 1981 it accounted for 5.5 million households (32% of all households) but by 2013-2014 this number had dropped to 3.9 million (17% of all households).¹⁶ This decline is a consequence of the low build rate and the impact of the Right to Buy scheme.

The briefing paper suggests that, although the Right to Buy scheme has enabled the home ownership aspirations of many families and single people to be fulfilled, it has nevertheless removed vast numbers of social homes from public ownership and limited the scope for local authorities to house homeless families and others in housing need.

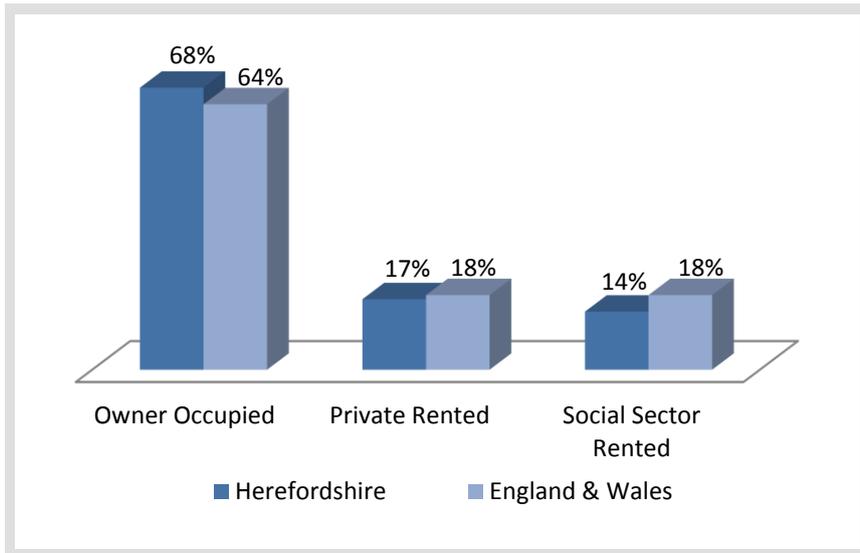
Locally, as can be seen from Chart 1 below, social rented housing is the smallest tenure in Herefordshire and at only 14% of total stock is substantially lower than the average for England and Wales.¹⁷

¹⁴ The Homelessness Monitor, Crisis, February 2015

¹⁵ House of Commons Briefing Paper Number 01164, Statutory Homelessness in England, August 2015

¹⁶ English Housing Condition Survey Household Report 2013-2014, published June 2015

¹⁷ Herefordshire Census data 2011



Whilst it is possible to identify the wider structural issues that underlie homelessness, relatively little is known about the personal, social and economic circumstances of homeless families and other vulnerable households that are represented in the statutory homeless statistics of local authorities.

It is recognised that people moving in and out of institutional care are vulnerable to homelessness. People leaving prisons, hospitals, psychiatric placements, as well as young people leaving care, are at particular risk of social exclusion and other factors which can lead to homelessness.

6. REVIEW OF HOMELESS TRENDS

Statistical data on homelessness in England is compiled by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) from statutory P1E Returns, which are submitted quarterly by local authorities. The P1E contains statistics on statutory homelessness, rough sleeping and homelessness prevention and relief.

These official figures do not, however, give a full picture of homelessness in England. They exclude those who are homeless, but who do not approach a local authority for assistance and households who do not meet the statutory criteria.¹⁸

In the Homeless Monitor 2015¹⁹ it is suggested that headline statutory homeless acceptance figures are of declining usefulness in tracking national trends. This is because local authorities are increasingly refocusing homelessness management towards an approach aimed at encouraging applicants to choose informal 'housing options' assistance rather than making a

¹⁸ That is households who are (i) homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days, (ii) eligible for assistance, (iii) have a priority need, (iv) not be homeless intentionally, (v) and have a local connection with the area (except in cases of domestic abuse)

¹⁹ Crisis, February 2015

statutory homeless application. Applications outside the statutory framework are not recorded as 'homelessness' in the P1E Statutory Returns. They will instead be counted as homelessness 'prevention' or 'relief.' To illustrate, in a survey of local authorities conducted by Crisis for the Homelessness Monitor, 63% agreed with the statement that:

'Because of a continuing shift towards a more prevention-focused service, post-2010 homelessness trends in our area cannot be accurately gauged by tracking our statutory homelessness assessment statistic.'

6.1 Official Figures: Extent of homelessness

Official DCLG homelessness statistics show that, nationally, in the three years up to 2012-2013 households 'accepted as homeless' rose by 34% from 40,000 households to 52,000. In 2013-2014, however, the numbers of homeless acceptances declined by 2%.

In Herefordshire, as shown in Chart 2 below, the number of households making a formal homeless application reduced from 372 households in 2012-2013 to 220 households in 2014-2015, a reduction of 40%.

The number of households being accepted as statutorily homeless also reduced from 70% of total applications in 2012-2013 to 53% in 2014-2015.

These figures should not, however, be taken to mean that homelessness is a reducing issue in Herefordshire, but is a reflection of the successful homeless prevention work that has been undertaken.

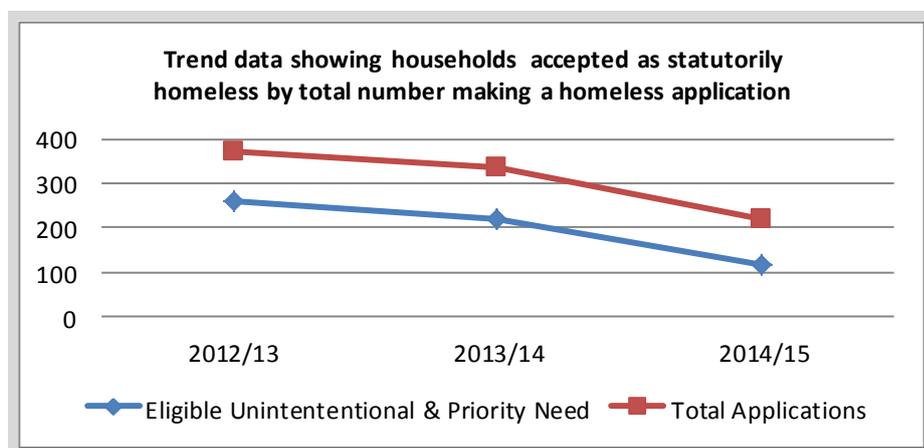
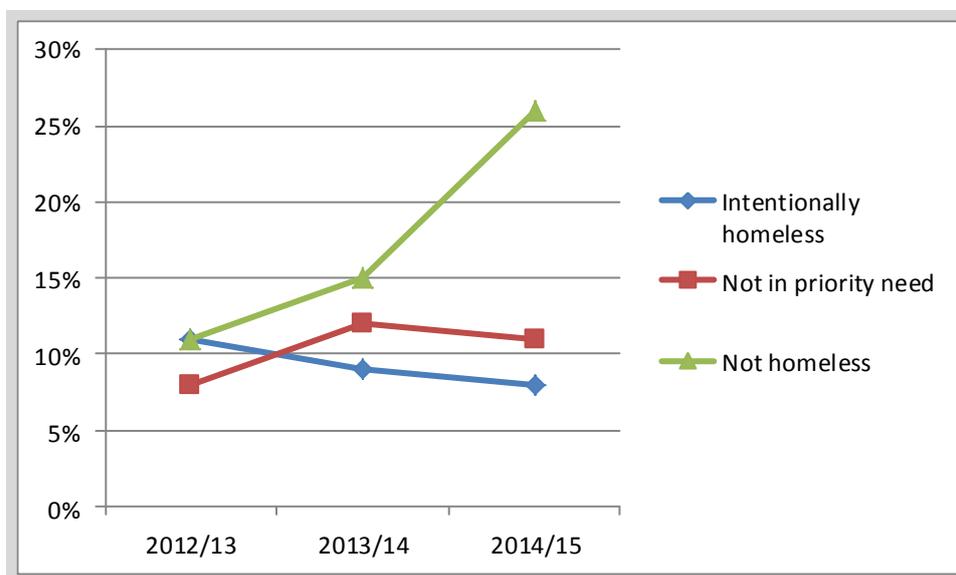


Chart 3 below shows that proportionately, over the three year period, the main reason for the full statutory duty not being owed was that the applicant was found to be 'not homeless.' At 26% of all applications for 2014-2015 this is close to the averaged national figure for that financial year, at 25%.

Whilst the 'not homeless' figure has risen very significantly, there has been relatively little change in the proportion of decisions where the household was found to be 'not in priority need' or 'not homeless.'



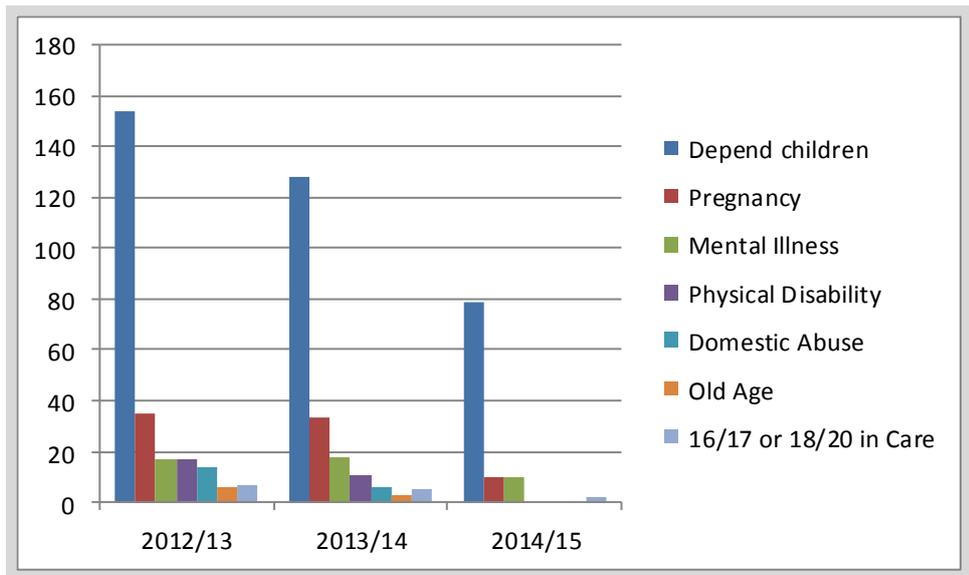
6.2 Priority Need

As illustrated in Chart 4 below, by far the most significant and consistent reason for the determination of 'priority need,' over the period, was that the household contained a dependent child or children.

Household member being pregnant was the next highest reason for priority need, although, in total, this represented 283 fewer households. The local situation mirrors the national picture where the presence of dependent children established priority need in 67% of total cases, followed by household member pregnant at 7%.

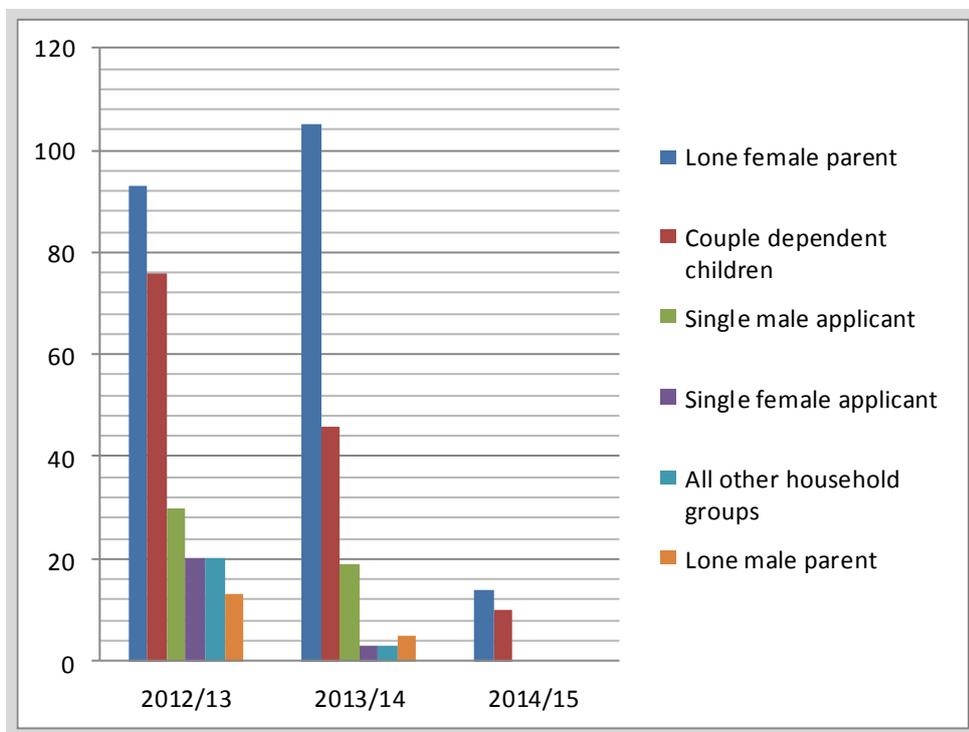
Over the three-year period 45 households were in priority need due to mental illness and 28 households consisted of or contained a disabled person. At respectively 6% and 5% of total applications this is consistent with national figures where priority need was established through mental illness in 8% of applications and physical disability in 7%.

It remains to be seen if the Supreme Court Judgements, *Hatak v Southwark*, *Kanu v Southwark* *Johnson v Solihull* relating to the application of the 'vulnerability test' for determining priority need will increase these acceptance figures.

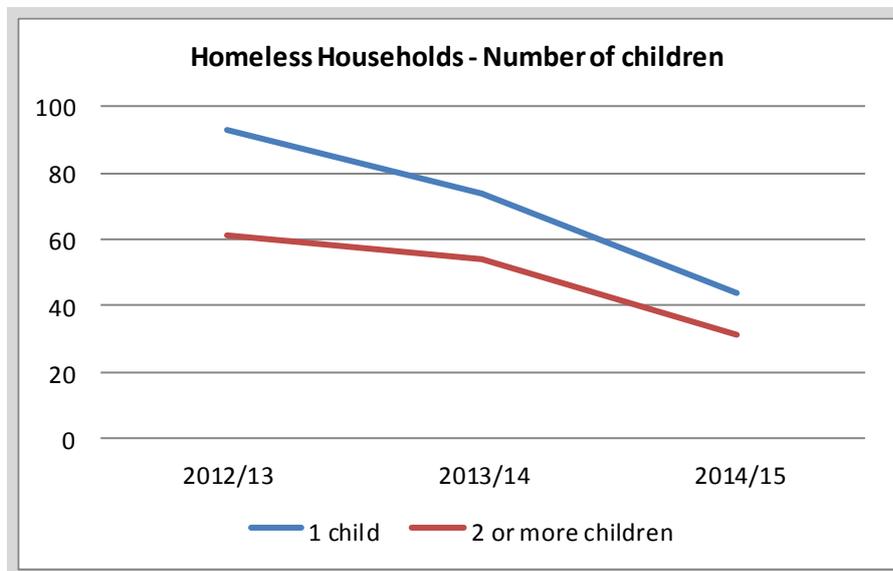


6.2.1 Priority Need – Dependent Children

Unsurprising given the priority need statistics above, the most frequently occurring household type in acceptance homeless figures are those which contain a dependent child/children, with lone female parents accounting for 36% and couples with dependent children accounting for 22% of homeless acceptances over the three year period. Chart 5 below provides more detail.



The majority of families whose priority need was established through the presence of a dependent child or children have one child. This has been consistent over the three year period, as shown in Chart 6 below.



6.2.2 Priority Need – Young People

The DCLG report, ‘Making Every Contact Count,’²⁰ quotes research, which shows that the main ‘trigger’ for youth homelessness is the breakdown of family relationships, often compounded by difficulties at school, overcrowding at home, mental health problems, substance abuse and crime.

A priority need in homelessness legislation is established if an applicant is aged 16 or 17 or is aged 18 to 20 years and formerly in care. As discussed more comprehensively below, this can trigger respective responsibilities both through the Children Act 1989 and the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996.

The challenge for Children’s Services and Housing Services, therefore, is to ensure that there are no gaps between services, and that young people get quick, effective access to the services they need regardless of which service they approach for help first. This requires effective collaborative working between statutory agencies, including social care and housing services, and housing providers, which is formalised in joint protocols agreed by all parties.

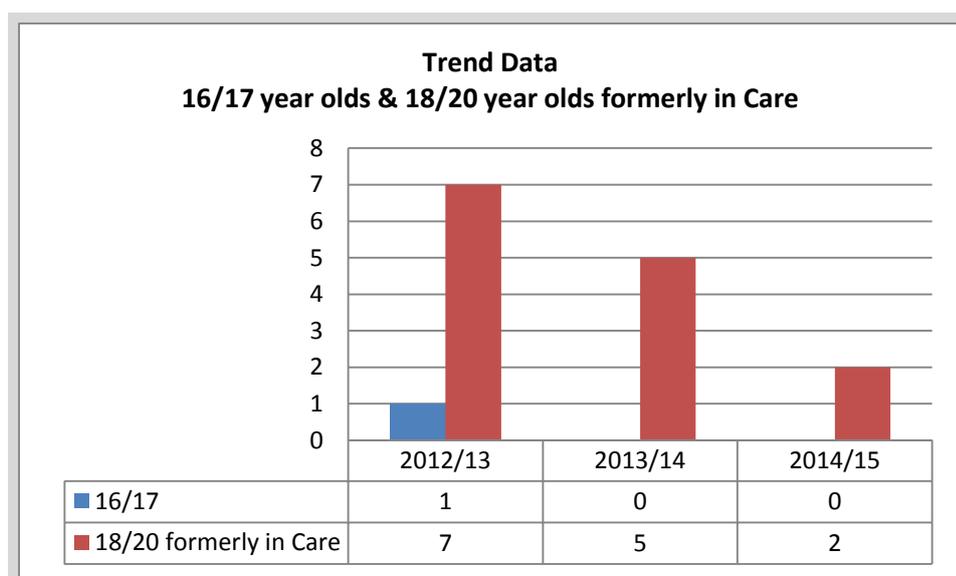
Joint protocols enable partners to understand their respective roles and confidently engage in effective joint working. They lead to better communication, increased understanding and better outcomes for young people.

²⁰ Making Every Contact Count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness, DCLG, August 2012

St Basils has worked with Barnardos to produce a national Care Leavers' Accommodation and Support Framework and toolkit, funded by the DCLG. 'Developing Positive Pathways to Adulthood'²¹ provides a flexible framework for local authorities and their partners to use locally to ensure a planned approach to homelessness prevention and housing for young people.

The framework has been developed to help public service commissioners and providers of services to work together in the planning and delivery of services for young people, recognising that safe, decent and affordable housing underpins achievement of other positive outcomes including those around education, training and employment.

Chart 7 below shows that in Herefordshire, for the last two years, there have been no homeless acceptances for 16 – 17 year olds and reducing acceptances for 18 – 20 year olds, who were formerly in Care. However, this does not mean that potential homelessness is not an issue for these young people in the county, but is rather a reflection of a successful preventative approach.



6.2.2(i) Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996

Very broadly, the Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need' (section 17) and requires that they provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who has reached the age of 16 and whose welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not do so.

Children who are accommodated and supported by local authorities under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 become 'looked after children,' which entitles them to additional support,

²¹ St Basil's, August 2015

from the age of 16 years, while in the care of the local authority and to when they leave care support.

The Homelessness legislation, Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, requires that in some specified circumstances the local authority will owe a main duty to secure settled accommodation for a homeless person, or someone threatened with homelessness within 28 days. Any need beyond housing is not addressed by this legislation.

The legal interrelations between the Housing Act and the Children Act are complex and have been subject to a number of court cases.²² As a consequence, in 2010 the government issued statutory guidance on ‘Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation.’

The guidance specifically states that the Children Act takes precedence over the Housing Act. If a young person aged 16 or 17 seeks help from the local authority because of homelessness, their needs should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and if the child is found in need of accommodation they should become a looked after child under section 20.

For homeless 16 and 17 year olds housing options, which provide security and safety, are usually very limited. With restricted access to welfare benefits, requirements for rent in advance and bond payments and tenancy law issues, very few reputable private sector landlords are willing to offer a tenancy.

This is why it is so important that local authorities have protocols in place that clearly identify respective responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996 and how statutory duties will be fulfilled.

The following table, which is taken from ‘Keeping homeless older teenagers safe,’ Children’s Society, March 2015, sets out respective legislative responsibilities.

Looked after under Section 20, Children Act 1989	Accommodated under Housing Act and/or Section 17 Children Act
Pathway Plan developed by Children’s Services, prompting them to think ahead.	Minimum support and no requirement for a Pathway Plan to be put in place.
Accommodation paid for by Children’s Services up to the age of 18 years.	Young people are responsible for claiming benefits and paying for their accommodation and all other expenses.
Pathway Plans include education and career planning.	There is a duty on young people to participate in education or training but no specific support.

²² R (G) v Southwark, 2009 and others

Looked after under Section 20, Children Act 1989	Accommodated under Housing Act and/or Section 17 Children Act
All looked after children have named health professionals and have improved access to health services, including mental health services.	Young people do not have any additional entitlements for health support.
All looked after children are entitled to advocacy support if they want to make a complaint or representation about the services they receive.	There is no automatic entitlement to advocacy support.
If a crisis occurs at the accommodation, e.g. as a result of behaviour deteriorating, Children's Services continue to provide support and will provide a new placement.	If there is a crisis in their accommodation, which results in eviction, the young person may be seen to be intentionally homeless and therefore, receive limited support with continued accommodation provision.
Entitled to support from Children's Services up to age of 21 years and 25 years in some cases.	

6.2.2(ii) Keeping homeless older teenagers safe,' Children's Society, March 2015,

The research set out in the above report is based on information obtained from three sources: freedom of information requests, analysis of 74 cases from Children's Society practice; and the findings of focus groups and interviews held with practitioners and young people. It established that out of approximately 6,000 young people who presented as homeless:

- Almost one third had a serious mental health problem.
- Almost one third had experience of the criminal justice system.
- Over one third were at risk of child sexual exploitation.
- One quarter had problems with drugs and alcohol.
- Fifteen percent were not in education, employment or training

Case studies showed that often young people do not leave home simply because of arguments with their parents, but that they were often living in families where there were issues with problems such as substance abuse, unemployment, depression, bereavement or domestic violence. To quote from the report:

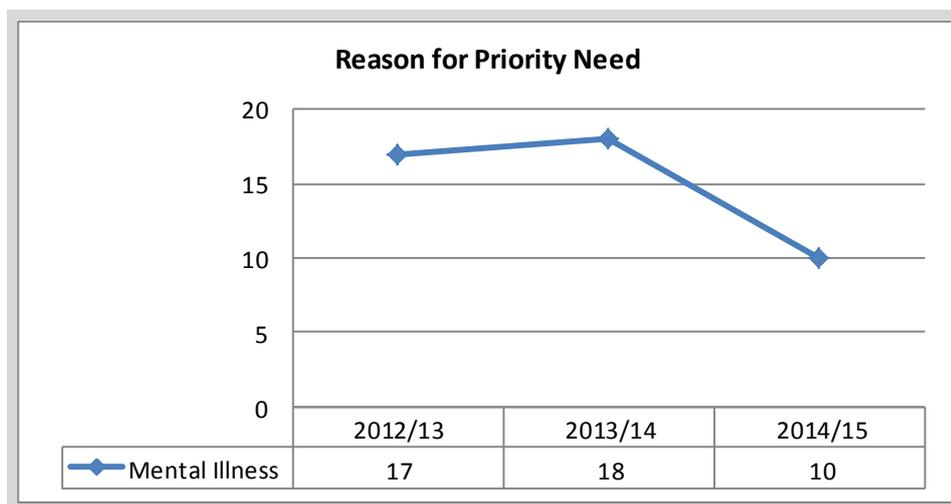
'The provision of accommodation can be life-changing for some young people, but accommodation alone will never be sufficient to help them resolve all the issues they face. They need support from different services and in many cases different services will

have to work closely together to ensure that young people can move into adulthood successfully.'

6.2.3 Priority Need – Vulnerable due to Mental Health

Chart 8 below shows that the number of households owed the full homeless duty due to vulnerability as of consequence of mental illness, has declined over the three year period. However, the proportion of all homeless acceptances for this reason has remained relatively consistent, particularly over the last two years at 9% and 8% respectively for the financial years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. This is reflective of the national statistics for England as a whole, which average at 8%.

Whilst the number of people whose priority need was established through mental illness are small, the costs to the individual and social care and health services are considerable, particularly in a predominately rural county such as Herefordshire.



The MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) submission²³ states that whilst it is recognised that homelessness is an extreme form of social exclusion, which has a substantial detrimental impact on the health of individuals, homeless people still often experience considerable difficulty in accessing health care.

The document further claims that, in particular, homeless people face inequalities in accessing mental health services, yet their mental health can be exacerbated as a result of homelessness and mental ill health can itself be a risk factor in homelessness.

A secure, affordable home is essential in supporting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing and, as a consequence, reducing the overall demands on expensive health and social care services.

²³ Submission to the Mental Health Taskforce on Multiple Needs, June 2015

This finding is reiterated in the 'Five Year Forward View Mental Health Taskforce: Public Engagement Findings,'²⁴ which states that:

'Many people discussed the importance of addressing the broader determinants of good mental health and mental health problems, such as good quality housing, debt, poverty, employment, education, access to green space and tough life experiences such as abuse, bullying and bereavement.'

The council's Housing Solutions Team works closely with mental health and a supported housing provider in Herefordshire to help prevent homelessness amongst people who have a co-existing mental health and substance use issues.

6.2.4 Priority Need – Vulnerable due to Domestic Abuse

Homelessness acceptances, where priority need has been established as a consequence of domestic abuse, have decreased over the last three years in Herefordshire, as follows:

- 2012-2013 - 14 households
- 2013-2014 - 6 households
- 2014-2015 – 0 households

This should not be taken to mean that incidents of domestic abuse have declined in the country or in England as a whole, but is rather a reflection of homelessness prevention and relief activity. Depending on each circumstance this may mean the provision of alternative accommodation or putting in place measures to enable the household to remain safety in their current accommodation.

In addition, domestic abuse is still largely a hidden crime. Those who have experienced abuse from a partner or ex-partner will often try to keep it from families, friends, or authorities. Whilst domestic violence is most commonly experienced by women and perpetrated by men, men can also sometimes be victims in both gay and heterosexual relationships.

- In Herefordshire, in the year up to September 2014, calls to the Women's Aid Helpline totalled 4,193, an increase of 42% on the previous year.
- In 2014-2015, 316 children were involved in MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) cases, a 59% increase from the previous year. In the same period, West Mercia Women's Aid also reported an 18% rise in the monthly average number of children in their services from 122 in 2013-2014 to 147 in 2014-2015.

²⁴ Report from the Independent Mental Health Taskforce for NHS England, September 2015

The Herefordshire Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) Needs Assessment,²⁵ states that DVA has a huge impact on society. It causes pain and suffering for the victim and their family, but also has a significant cost to public services and the local community.

Domestic abuse affects people in a number of ways, including poor physical and emotional health including, physical injury, homelessness, loss of income or work and isolation from families and friends. As a result of witnessing domestic abuse, children can experience both short and long term cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects. The consequences are not only personally damaging, but also have very significant financial costs.

The following are headline conclusions from the Herefordshire's Needs Assessment:

1. Domestic violence and abuse is prevalent across all of society and across the whole of the county.
2. Almost anyone is vulnerable to becoming a victim of domestic violence, although there are some scenarios which put the victim at higher risk.
3. By the time children reach secondary school, as a consequence of exposure to domestic violence and abuse, many have already developed inappropriate behaviour and attitudes to such abuse, as well distorted perceptions on healthy relationships.
4. Survivors do not experience violence and abuse in silos and neither should agencies respond in silos.
5. There is a strong correlation between domestic violence and child abuse.
6. Domestic violence frequently co-exists with alcohol, substance abuse and mental health problems, although these are rarely causal factors. Victims with multiple risk factors are often the most problematic to provide effective support.
7. For many agencies, victims only become engaged or are engaged with, at the time of crisis. This can lead to a 'revolving door' syndrome.

Nationally:

- One incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every minute.
- One in seven children and young people under the age of 18 will have experienced living with domestic violence.

Refuge spaces are extremely limited in Herefordshire and the refuge is frequently full. At the time of writing there were no spaces available in the Herefordshire refuge and no refuge spaces and no safe houses available across Worcestershire.

²⁵ Herefordshire Council Research Team & Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership, July 2013

As the current refuge is no longer adequate for need, funding is being sought from the HCA to build a new refuge, which if approved would have nine self-contained apartments.

6.2.5 Priority Need – Vulnerable due to Physical Disability / Older Person

Chart 9 below shows that for the past three years very few accepted homeless households were in priority need because of physical disability or old age and that there were no acceptances for these reasons during the 2014-2015 financial year.

This does not necessarily mean that homeless is not issue or does not happen, but is rather a reflection of work done around homeless prevention.



6.2.6 Priority Need – Vulnerable due to having been in custody/on remand

Over the last three years only one person has been accepted as having a priority need established through having been in custody or on remand. This was for the quarter January – March 2015.

‘Better together: Preventing Re-offending and Homelessness’,²⁶ identifies the significant contribution of homeless services to the prevention of re-offending. The report, the result of 12 months research, identifies the complex links between homelessness and re-offending.

Data quoted in the report shows that amongst people who are homeless there is a vast over-representation of offending backgrounds.

- Over 75% of homelessness services in England support clients who are prison leavers. One in five clients using homelessness services has links with the probation service.

In turn, homelessness increases the chances of re-offending.

²⁶ Homelessness Link, September 2011

- Ex-prisoners, who are homeless upon release, are twice as likely to re-offend as those with stable accommodation. Offenders, who are homeless upon entering prison, have a much higher reconviction rate within one year of release, with 79% being reconvicted, compared to 47% who have accommodation.

The report also identifies the above average incidence of mental ill-health amongst offenders both in prison and the community. In addition, mental health needs among those in contact with the criminal justice system are often complex:

- 72% of male and 71% of female prisoners have two or more mental ill-health problems, including schizophrenia, bi-polar, depression, anxiety, personality disorder, alcohol misuse and drug dependence. This against 5% and 2% respectively for the general population.

After leaving prison, people with mental health difficulties still require support to avoid relapses and to make sure they can comply with the conditions of their release and any supervision requirements.

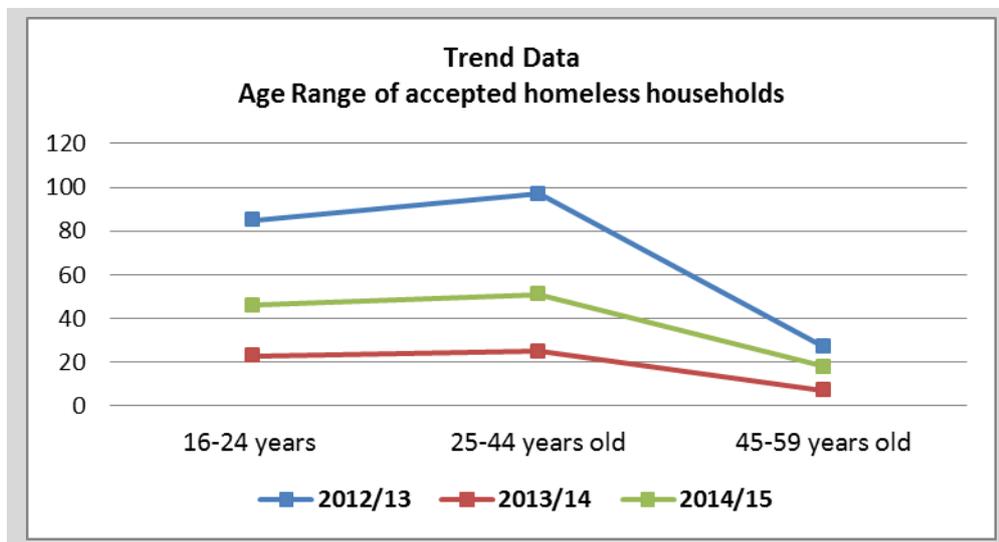
6.2.7 Priority Need - Vulnerability due to Substance Dependency

In 2012-2013, two households were accepted as being homeless and having a priority need through vulnerability due to alcohol dependency and two households as a result of vulnerability due to drug dependency. From 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2015 there has been no acceptance for this reason.

6.3 Age of Statutory Homeless Households

Chart 10 below, shows that, consistently over the three year period, the majority of accepted households were aged between 25-44 years (53%), which is in line with the national average at 58%. Acceptances for 16-24 year olds were marginally lower (47%) although significantly higher than the national average of 24%.

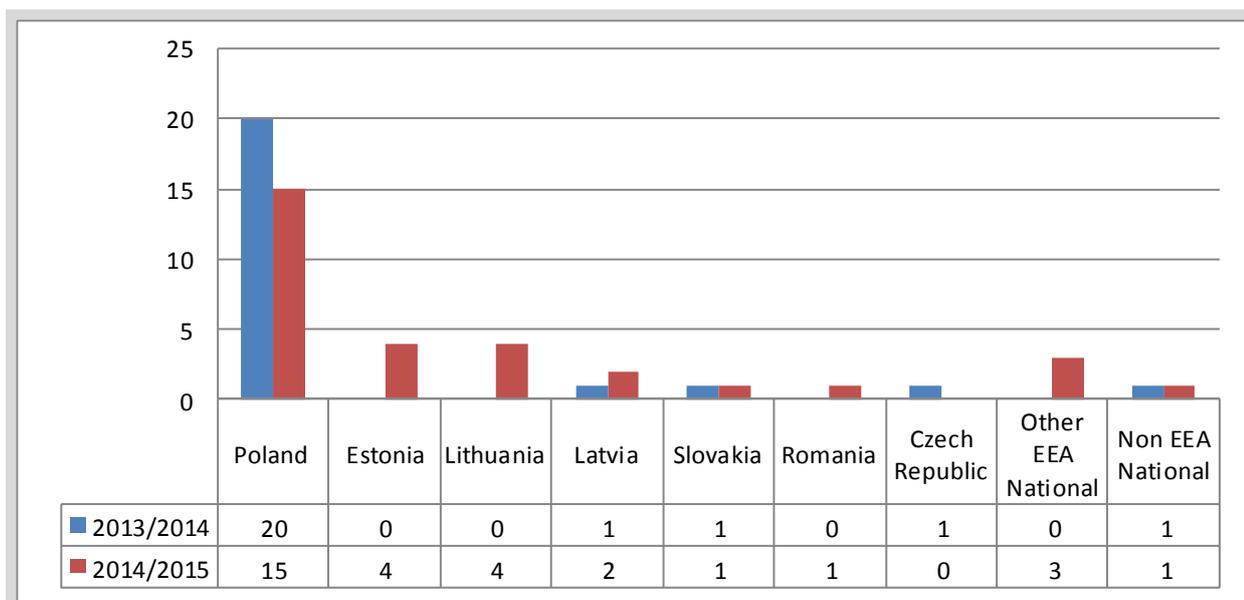
Only one household, over the period, contained a person who was between 65-74 years.



6.4 Foreign National Households

Chart 11 below shows the country of origin and the numbers of non-UK households who were accepted as being owed a full duty under the homelessness legislation during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 financial years. As can be seen, for both years, Poland was the primary country of origin.

The number of foreign national households accepted as homeless in Herefordshire rose from 12% of all acceptances in 2014-2014 to 27% in 2014-2015. The England average acceptance rate for 2014-2015 at 13% was considerably lower.



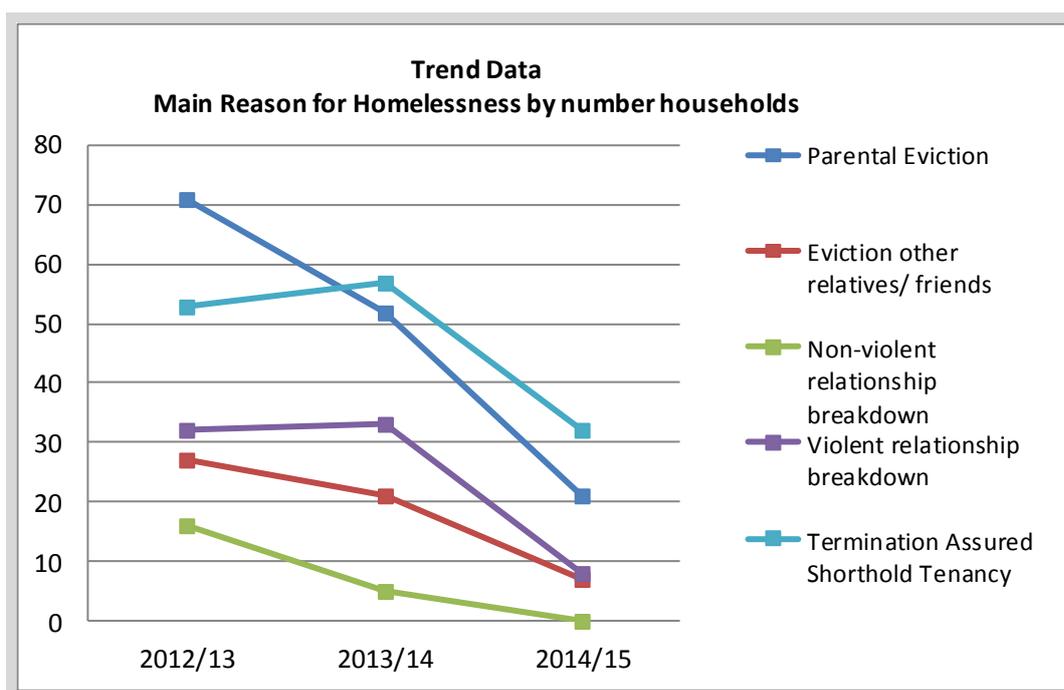
6.5 Accepted Homeless Households - Reason for Homelessness

6.5.1 Termination of Assured Shorthold (AST) Tenancy:

The most frequently occurring reason for homelessness for the last two financial years has been termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a private landlord. 57 households (34% of total) became homeless for this reason in 2013-2014 and 32 households (47% of total) in 2014-2015, as shown in Chart 12 below.

This is substantially higher than the average national figure, even though the increase in statutory homeless acceptances in England over the last six years has resulted from the sharply rising numbers made homeless for this reason. Between 2009-2010 and 2014-2015 the figure more than doubled from 11% to 26%.²⁷

²⁷ The Homelessness Monitor, Crisis, February 2015



The rising levels of homelessness due to termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy should be seen in context of the shift in housing tenure in Herefordshire from owner occupation to the private rented sector over the last decade (2001-2011) rising from 9% to 14%.²⁸ This reflects the national trend, where the number of households living in the private has almost doubled over the ten year period up to 2013-2014 to reach 4.4 million households.

There have been concerns that the implementation of a £20,000 benefit cap (outside London) from April 2016 could potentially increase homelessness through higher levels of rent arrears in both the private and social rented sector.

‘As the cap is initially being implemented by “squeezing” Housing Benefit entitlement, housing organisations in both the social and private rented sectors expressed concern about its potential impact on rent arrears, evictions and increases in homelessness amongst those affected.’²⁹

6.5.2. Other main reasons for homelessness

Table 1 below shows other main reasons for statutory homelessness in Herefordshire:

	Termination AST Tenancy	Parental Eviction	Violent Relationship Breakdown	Eviction other Rels/Friends	Non-violent Relationship Breakdown
2012/13	53	71	32	27	16

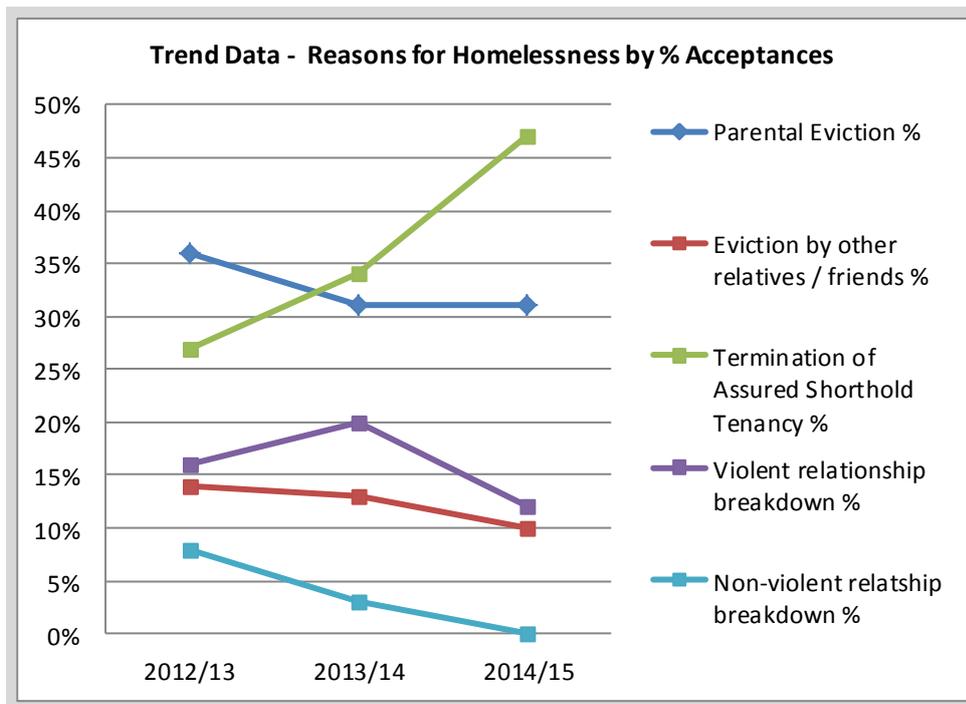
²⁸ Herefordshire Census data 2011

²⁹ House of Commons Briefing Paper, The Benefit Cap, July 2015

	Termination AST Tenancy	Parental Eviction	Violent Relationship Breakdown	Eviction other Rels/Friends	Non-violent Relationship Breakdown
2013/14	57	52	33	21	5
2014/15	32	21	8	7	0

- Parental eviction was the highest cause of statutory homelessness in 2012-2013 at 36% of all acceptances. By 2014-2015, however, the number of households accepted for this reason had declined by 70% to 21 households.
- Violent breakdown in relationship has consistently been the third highest cause of homelessness over the three year period at 32 households in 2012-2013, reducing to 8 households in 2014-2015 – a reduction of 75%.
- Eviction by friends / other relatives (non-parents) although a lesser cause of homelessness in Herefordshire has still been significant over the three year period, reducing from 32 households in 2012-2013 to 7 households in 2014-2015.
- Homelessness due to non-violent breakdown in relationship, as a reason for homelessness, has declined from 32 households in 2012-2013 to no households in 2014-2015.

Chart 13 below shows that termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy is **the only cause of homelessness that has increased proportionately** over the three year period from 27% of total to 47%. The range of other reasons have declined or remained static



It should be born in mind that the above figures will be influenced by the authority's successful homelessness prevention and homelessness relief activity. In addition, it may be that termination of Assured Shorthold is more difficult to address in the time available between notification of threatened homelessness and actual homelessness.

The DCLG Statutory Homelessness Statistical Release, June 2015 states that, for England as a whole, the end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy has been an increasingly frequent cause of loss of last home over the last six years.

Data quoted in the Homelessness Monitor 2015³⁰ reinforces this, claiming that almost three quarters of the increase in homelessness acceptances over the past four years is attributable to the sharply rising numbers made homeless from the private rented sector.

This is not, perhaps, surprising given that the number of households living in the private rented sector has doubled in the last ten years to reach 4.4 million households by 2013-2014.

7. THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR (PRS)

The PRS is now the largest rental sector in England and is increasingly significant as both a potential solution to homelessness (by providing housing opportunity to households who might otherwise become homeless) and also as a cause of homelessness (with loss of private tenancies now the single largest reason for statutory homeless acceptances nationally).

However, the ability of the PRS to house those who are homeless and/or on low incomes is heavily dependent on housing benefit and access is, therefore, constrained by government welfare reform policy

The following quotation from research undertaken for the 'Homelessness Monitor,' February 2015 is illustrative:

'We're definitely seeing more and more homelessness applications from people because their private tenancies are ending. And that's happening either because they want to sell or they know that if they get rid of those tenants they can charge a much higher rent.' (A Local Authority key informant in a rural authority).'

7.1 Discharge of duty to Homeless Households through use of private-rented accommodation.

Since November 2012, the Localism Act 2011 enabled local authorities to discharge their duty to accepted homeless households by using private rented accommodation in accordance with the legislation and supplementary DCLG guidance.³¹ These changes allowed local authorities to end the main homelessness duty with a private rented sector offer, without the applicant's consent.

³⁰ Crisis, February 2015

³¹ Supplementary Guidance on the homelessness changes in the Localism Act 2011 and on the Homeless (Suitability of Accommodation (England) Order 2012

The duty can only be ended in the private rented sector in this way with a minimum 12 month assured shorthold tenancy and where all the requirements of the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 are clearly met. A further duty arises if a household placed in the private rented sector becomes unintentionally homeless within 2 years and reapplies for assistance.

In England, during the 2013-2014 financial year, 1,040 households accepted an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.

In Herefordshire the figures were:

- 11 household in 2013-2014
- 7 households in 2014-2015

This figure includes those who were in temporary accommodation arranged by the council, and those who were still living in the accommodation from which they had been accepted or were in temporary accommodation that they had arranged themselves. It excludes those whose homelessness was prevented or relieved, as identified below.

In February 2014, Shelter and Crisis published the final report of a study conducted between 2010 and 2014 into the long-term outcomes and wellbeing of vulnerable homeless households resettled into the private rented sector.³²

The objective of the research was to rectify the dearth of evidence about people's experiences of the private rented sector, by tracking 128 survey participants over a 19th month period. The authors claim that:

'The research has demonstrated that there are significant problems in the PRS including regulation, enforcement practices and a lack of security for tenants. The PRS presents challenges for any vulnerable people resettled into it and is not currently functioning in a way which supports their wellbeing. It is clear that the PRS is not a suitable housing option for everyone, and there are particular questions about its suitability for people with vulnerabilities.'

8. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RELIEF

The DCLG defines homelessness prevention and relief in the following terms:

- Homelessness prevention involves providing people with the means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. This is done by either assisting them to obtain alternative accommodation or enabling them to remain in their existing home.

³² A Roof Over My Head: The final report of the Sustain Project, February 2014

- Homelessness relief occurs when an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness, but helps someone to secure accommodation even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so.

The DCLG clearly encourages all local authorities to offer prevention assistance to all households, who approach as being at risk of homelessness in the near future, including single persons and others who may not fall within a priority need category. Providing prevention assistance cannot, however, be used to avoid statutory obligations.

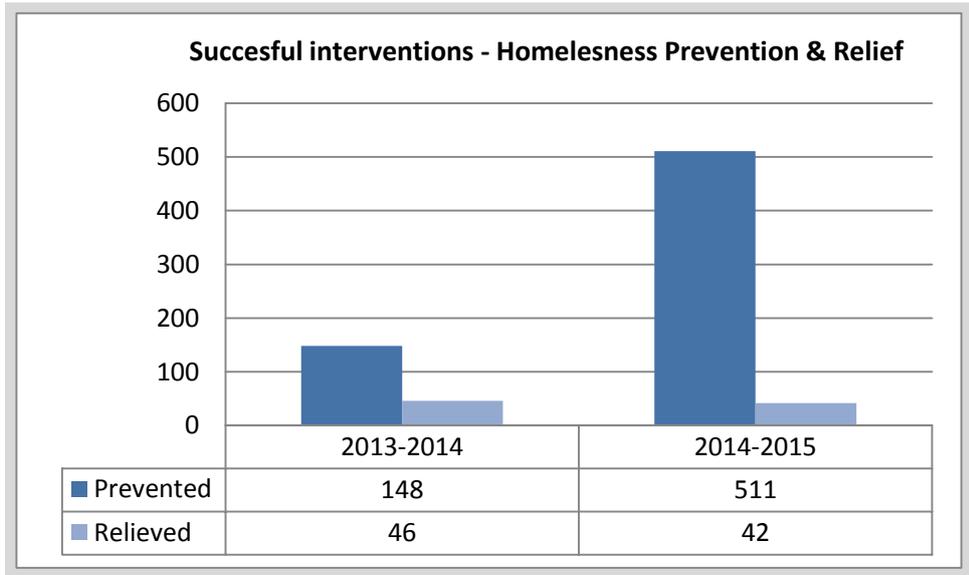
Aggregated national P1E data shows that activity under statutory homeless provisions has accounted for only a small proportion of all local authority homelessness work for a number of years, with informal homelessness prevention accounting for more than 75%. This situation is reflected locally with, in the region of, 74% of homelessness activity being logged as prevention work and statutory homeless cases at 26% of total.

In the 'Homelessness Monitor'³³ it is suggested that, as a reliable indicator of the changing scale of homelessness in recent years, the statutory homeless statistics now have limited value. It is further noted that, whilst most local authorities responding to a survey stressed that they still informed all relevant households of their legal right to make a homeless application, it is clear that the housing options / prevention route was being strongly encouraged across England.

As Chart 14 below shows, the council has been very effective in its homeless prevention activity over the last two years, with 148 households prevented from becoming homeless in 2013-2014 and 511 in 2014-2015. This represents a 245% increase in success rate for homeless prevention over the two year period.

In England in 2014-2015, 93% of successful homeless interventions were preventions and 7% were homelessness relief. Herefordshire's figures are consistent with this at 92% and 8% respectively.

³³ Crisis, February 2015



8.1 Type of homeless prevention activity:

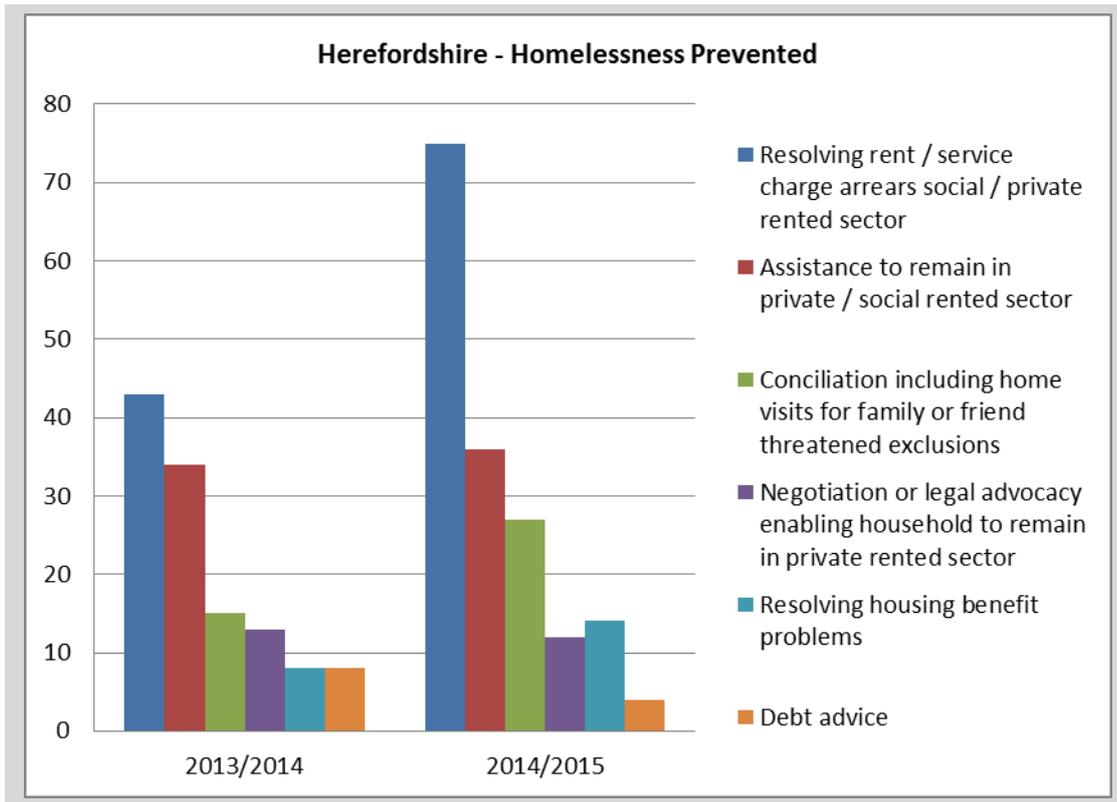
Of the 2014-2015 prevention outcomes for homeless households in Herefordshire, 30% (153 households) were assisted to remain in their current accommodation, which is lower than England as a whole at 53%. The remaining 70% (358 households) were assisted to find alternative accommodation.

As illustrated in Chart 15 below, of the cases who were assisted to remain in their own homes, the most common preventative actions were around ‘resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector.’

The next most successful intervention recorded on the P1E statutory return was ‘provision of assistance to remain in the private or rented sector,’ a ‘catch-all’ classification which, unfortunately, is too broad to be of any significant analytical value.

42 threatened homelessness cases were alleviated through conciliation, which enabled the household to remain in their existing accommodation with family or friends.

The Herefordshire figures differ somewhat from national averages in that resolving housing benefit problems has been the signal most frequent type of homeless prevention assistance for the last two years at 22% in 2013-2014 and 24% in 2014-2015. It should be borne in mind, however, that as the P1E classifications are quite general, variations in local recording practice are likely to have a significant impact on the national picture.



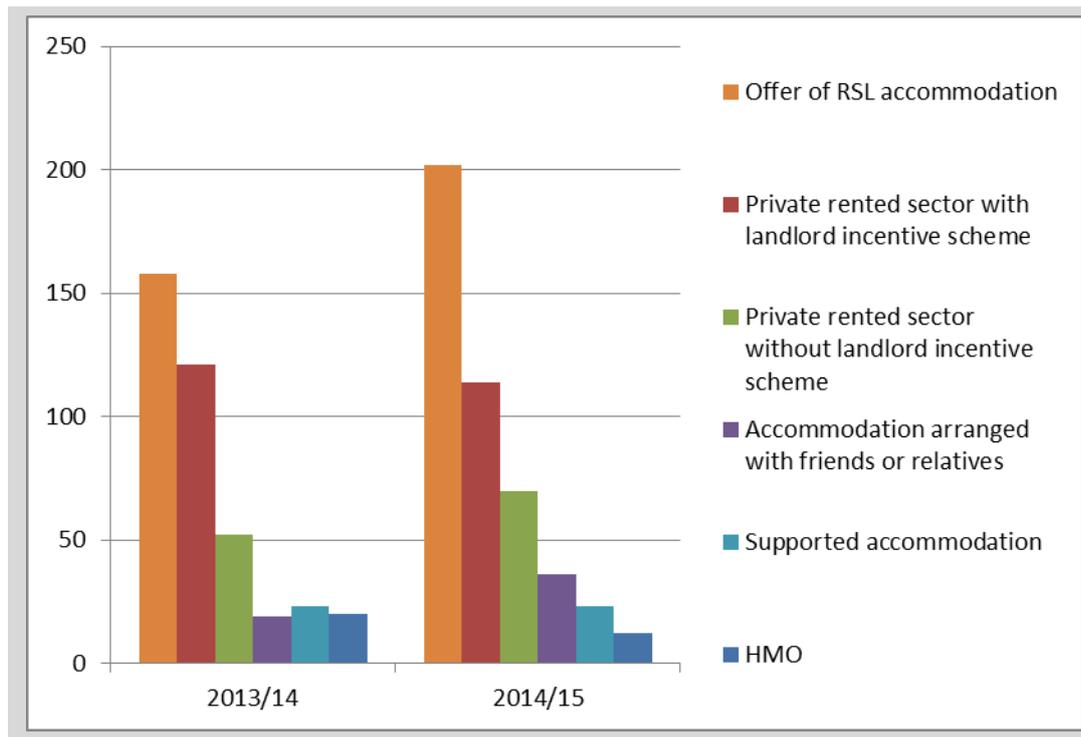
8.2 Homelessness prevention/relief through the provision of alternative accommodation

Of the households who were assisted to find alternative accommodation over the two year period, in total 360 households accepted an offer of accommodation from a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). The figures also show, however, significant use of the private rented sector at 357 households in total whose homelessness was prevented or relieved through assistance to access accommodation in this sector.³⁴ This does not include the 32 households who were assisted to gain access to private rented sector houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and who are likely to be homeless single people and couples without children.

The data would tend to suggest that access to the private rented sector is a realistic option for some households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, although more specific analysis is required around household type and income etc., against the profile of the accommodation that is being provided.

Chart 16 below illustrates the most significant types of successful homeless prevention and relief activity in Herefordshire between 2013 and 2015.

³⁴ For clarity, this figure relates to homelessness prevention and relief as distinct from the 11 households in 2013-2014 and the 7 households in 2014-2015 where a statutory duty was accepted and fulfilled through discharge of duty through a private-rented sector offer of accommodation.



9. NON-PRIORITY NEED HOUSEHOLDS

Where households are found to be homeless, but not in priority need, the council must make an assessment of their housing need and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves. There is no statutory duty to provide accommodation, whether temporary or permanent, even though the person may actually be street homeless/rough sleeping or hidden homeless 'sofa sufferers' relying on the goodwill of friends or relatives.

The DCLG Statistical Release for January – March 2015 shows that in England 19% of households who made a homeless application were found to be homeless, but not in priority need.

For Herefordshire, as shown in Table 2 below, the proportions of households found to be not in priority need to the numbers applying are much lower than the national figure.

Eligible Not in priority need		
	Number	%
2012/13	28	8%
2013/14	40	12%
2014/15	20	9%

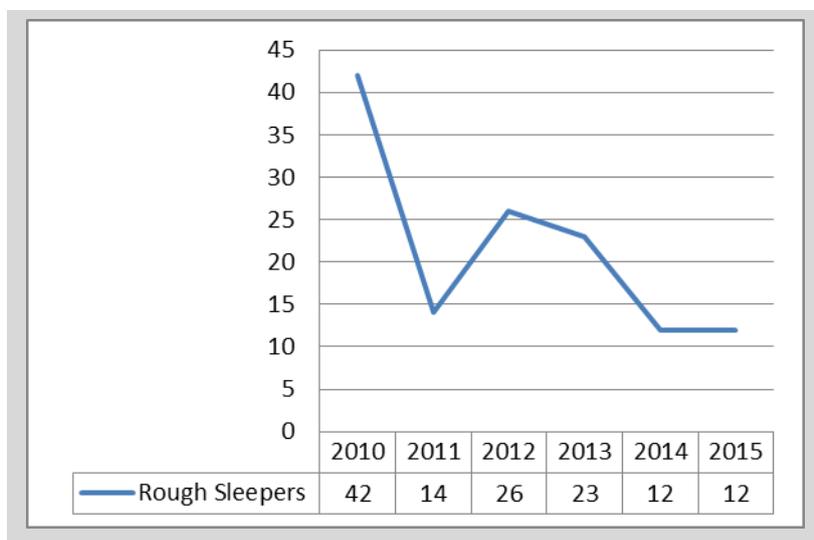
10. ROUGH SLEEPERS

Rough sleepers are defined by the DCLG as people sleeping / bedding down in the open air, on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks and bus shelters etc. It also includes those in buildings or other places not designed for habitation, such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks and makeshift shelters such as cardboard boxes.

Rough sleeping counts and estimates are single night snapshots of the number of people sleeping rough in local authority areas on any night between 1st October and 30th November. Local authorities decide whether or not to carry out a count or an estimate based upon their assessment of whether local rough sleeping problems justify this. Local authorities are encouraged to gain intelligence for counts and estimates from outreach workers, the police, the voluntary sector and members of the public and to submit the count or estimated figures by completing the DCLG rough sleeping statistical return.

It is clear that accurately counting or estimating the number of rough sleepers within the local authority area is inherently difficult. Key issues here include the problem that no street count can ever be wholly comprehensive and that, given the shifting populations involved, 'snapshot' counts inevitably understate the numbers of those affected over a given time period.

Chart 17 below shows the overall trend in the count of rough sleepers in Herefordshire between 2010 -2014. The count is undertaken during November.



10.1 St Peter's Winter Shelter, Hereford

St Peter's Winter Shelter in Hereford has opened every year for the past seven years. The service is provided in accordance with DCLG and Homeless Link³⁵ good practice guidance on Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEP).

³⁵ SWEP and extended winter provision: Engaging rough sleeping in winter, September 2015

Extreme cold can cause serious health problems and death for those who are exposed overnight or for long periods of time. Every local authority should have a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which is instigated, at minimum, when the temperature is forecast to drop to zero degrees Celsius (or below) for three consecutive nights.

SWEP operates outside usual homelessness eligibility criteria, which trigger an authority's duty to provide temporary accommodation. It should include people who may otherwise be excluded or not entitled to service, for example:

- People with no recourse to public funds.
- People who may have previously been banned.
- People with no local connection to the area.

Whilst local areas should have adequate provision to prevent rough sleeping at any time of year, the winter period often presents greatest risks to people's health. It also provides increased opportunities to engage with entrenched rough sleepers and other hard-to-reach groups, who may be more willing to do so during periods of extreme cold.

It is important that the demographic and support needs data of people using the SWEP service is recorded, monitored and shared, with consent and in accordance with data protection requirements. This enables more efficient health and support service referral processes and promotes effective future planning.

During the 2014-2015 financial year, the shelter opened to men on 1st December 2014 and to women on 1st January 2015, following the installation of separate female shower and WC facilities. The shelter, which had a maximum capacity of 16 men and three women, closed on March 29th 2015.

The following information was collected:

- A total of 60 men used the shelter, 42 UK and 18 non EU residents.
- The overall average of nights spent as the shelter was 15, but this ranged from between 1 to 92 nights.

Residents reported a high incidence of mental and/or physical health problems, drug and/or alcohol misuse and interaction with the Criminal Justice System.

Physical health problems included lung disease, cirrhosis, alcoholic neuropathy and alcoholic seizures. Self-reported mental ill health included schizophrenia and mania.

Where agreed, the Street Outreach Worker made referrals to health services and worked with residents to promote access to more stable accommodation.

11. HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS / CONCEALED HOUSEHOLDS

Hidden homelessness generally refers to households, who may be in a similar housing situation to those who apply to local authorities as homeless, but who do not do so.

Concealed households are family units or single adults living in the homes of other households and, who may wish to live separately given appropriate opportunity.

Estimates indicate that there were 2.23 million households containing concealed single persons in England in 2013. In addition to this there were 265,000 concealed couples and lone parents. Overall this is equivalent overall to around 12% of all households in England.³⁶

Census data for 2011 showed that, in Herefordshire, there were 850 concealed families. This, which represents an increase of 87% since 2001 compared to 70% nationally, would indicate that there is considerable tenure-wide housing pressure in the county

12. HOUSING ADVICE IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The homelessness legislation, Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, places a general duty on housing authorities to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and preventing homelessness, is available to everyone in their district free of charge. The duty is provided through the council's Housing Solutions Team.

Herefordshire Council's website provides contact details for the Housing Options Team, opening times, and out of hours emergency contact numbers.

The website also provides information, advice and contact details relating to the following:

- Housing rights and tenancy relations, homelessness and threatened homelessness, with links to other relevant sites.
- Welfare benefits and Income maximisation through welfare benefits. This section also provides a benefits calculator, Personal Budget Planner and information about making an appointment to see one of the benefits team.
- Availability of permanent accommodation provided by registered social landlords through the Home Point Choice Based Lettings Scheme and links to partner housing association websites.
- Affordable housing including social rented, shared ownership, low cost market, Help to Buy Armed Forces Home Ownership Scheme (AFHOS), owner occupation including shared ownership and home ownership for people with long-term disabilities.

³⁶ Homelessness Monitor England, Crisis, February 2015

- Housing and public health, private sector housing, handyperson services and the availability of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

The website also provides service contact details for people who prefer to talk to someone face to face or by telephone.

The council recognises that, whilst its website does provide a wide range of information this does need updating.

In addition, the Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire (WISH) is a service provided by Herefordshire Council in partnership with Services for Independent Living (SIL). The WISH service provides information online, by phone or face to face. The telephone and face to face support is provided by the local charity Services for Independent Living (SIL) through a dedicated team of people.

The housing information provided by WISH includes signposts to the Housing Solutions Team, Herefordshire Home Point and links to free debt and money advice services. It also provides a comprehensive directory of services and activities that support the wellbeing of adults, children, young people and families across Herefordshire.

13. FUTURE LEVELS OF HOMELESSNESS

Whilst there are inherent difficulties in predicting future levels of homelessness and threatened homelessness in Herefordshire, these will inevitably be influenced by the prevailing economic environment, national austerity and substantial local budgetary constraint.

The implementation of the welfare reform agenda could impact adversely on low income groups and those vulnerable to homelessness and housing instability. In addition, it is likely that the Housing and Planning Bill will, in time, reduce access to good quality affordable housing for these households. Restrictions in funding streams are also being felt by other statutory agencies and voluntary and community groups who have an interest in homelessness prevention.

Given the above landscape, whilst the council will continue to direct its efforts to homeless prevention, there is a limit to what prevention can achieve if there is simply not enough affordable accommodation in the area to address housing need.

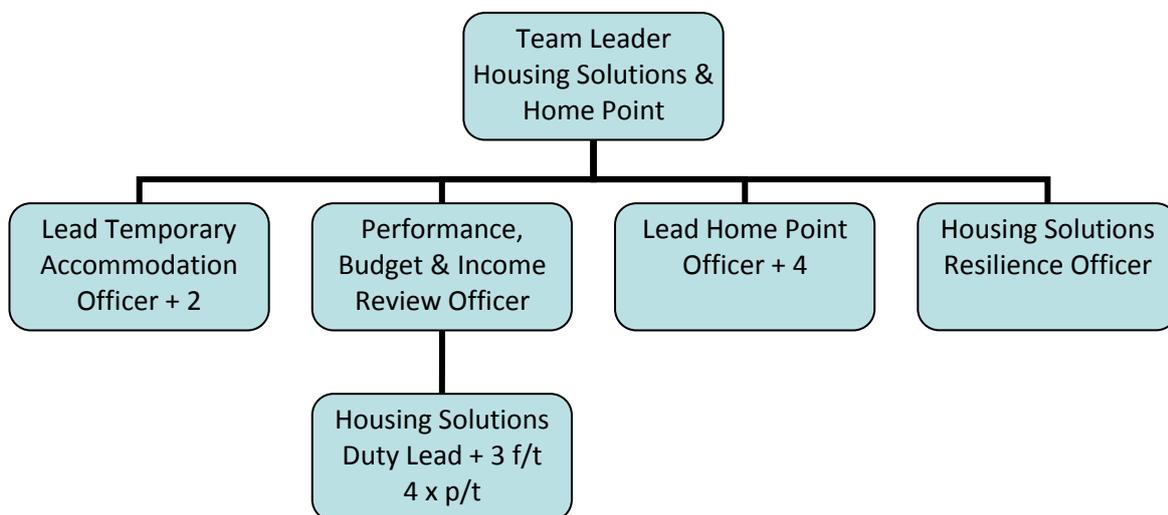
14. REVIEW OF RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND SUPPORT

As previously identified, the homelessness legislation, Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, places a general duty on housing authorities to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and preventing homelessness, is available to everyone in their district free of charge.

The legislation also requires authorities to assist individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and apply for help.

14.1 Housing Solutions Team

In Herefordshire, the duty to provide advice homelessness advice is fulfilled by the Housing Solutions Team, which is located in the Adults and Wellbeing Directorate incorporating housing and adults' social care. The team structure and number of posts is illustrated in diagram 1 below:



There are a number of specialists within the Housing Solutions Team focusing on homeless prevention and relief, including:

- Private Sector Accommodation Officer.
- Dedicated Officer, who speaks five languages and focusses primarily on homeless prevention amongst European Foreign National households.
- Officer with specific responsibility for keeping up-to-date with housing, homelessness and related legislation and case law and ensuring that any developments are translated into operational practice.
- Dedicated officer for liaison with West Mercia Women's Aid.
- Housing Solutions Resilience Officer with dedicated responsibility for multi-agency cases.
- Local Welfare Provision Officer.
- Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker – currently externally funded on a fixed term contract, but managed within the Housing Options Team.
- Housing Discharge Worker – currently externally funded on a fixed term contract, but managed within the Housing Options Team.

14.2 Hospital Discharge Worker and Rough Sleeping Outreach Worker

The Hospital Discharge Worker (HDW) and the Rough Sleeping Outreach Worker (RSOW) are (at the time of writing) both currently employed externally, but managed within the council's Housing Solutions Team.

St Peter's Night Shelter secured funding in September 2013 for the HDW post through the Department of Health (DoH) Homeless Hospital Discharge Fund.

St Paul's Hostel, Worcester, secured funding through the SASH Project, (Services Addressing Single Homelessness), for the RSOW post. The post holder is employed by St. Paul's, but works closely with Housing Solutions Team to support people across Herefordshire.

The RSOW post was funded through the SASH Partnership, formed between Herefordshire and Worcestershire councils, to help existing rough sleepers to find and sustain stable accommodation. There is also a strong focus on preventing street homelessness amongst single people who are at risk.

The HDW and the RSOW work very closely together and jointly support more than 100 individuals at any time. In the year to October 2015, permanent housing solutions were found for 122 single homeless people.

The RSOW:

- Visits food banks, prisons, police stations and other locations to identify people at risk and to work with them to find appropriate housing solutions.
- Has developed a wide range of partnership links with professional and voluntary organisations to support outreach and resettlement.
- Provides and/or enables extensive follow-up support to promote tenancy sustainment once accommodation is found.
- Submitted a successful bid for the Prevention of Reoffending Fund and secured a grant of £10,500.

The HDW has developed a very close working relationship with colleagues in hospitals, attending A&E daily, undertaking visits to wards and participating in various multi agency forums.

Should future funding not be found to continue these two posts, the number of people presenting as homeless are likely to increase significantly. This will put additional resource pressures on the service, which could not be sustained and may require the use of B&B as emergency accommodation for the first time since 2012.

14.3 Families First

The Families First Programme in Herefordshire is a local programme with the ambition to make lasting positive changes to the lives of some of the most vulnerable families and communities across Herefordshire. It is Herefordshire's approach to the national Troubled Families Programme, which was initially a three year programme to 2014/15, but has been extended for an additional five years from 2015/16.

The Families First programme aims to work with families who locally are a cause for concern amongst local partners, cause high costs to the public purse and have problems relating to:

- Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.
- Children who have not been attending school regularly.
- Children who need help.
- Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness.
- Families affected by domestic violence and abuse.
- Parents and children with a range of health problems.

The service supports the identification of families, coordinating support with partners, monitoring the achievement of outcomes for families, evaluating the impact of the programme on securing cost savings and avoiding costs for partners by reducing demand on public sector services.

The Programme is a key priority area of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership. Support for vulnerable families forms part of the emerging priority areas of both the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan.

14.4 External Services Supporting Homelessness Prevention

The following external homelessness prevention services have been procured. These commenced on the 31st August 2015 for a minimum of three years:

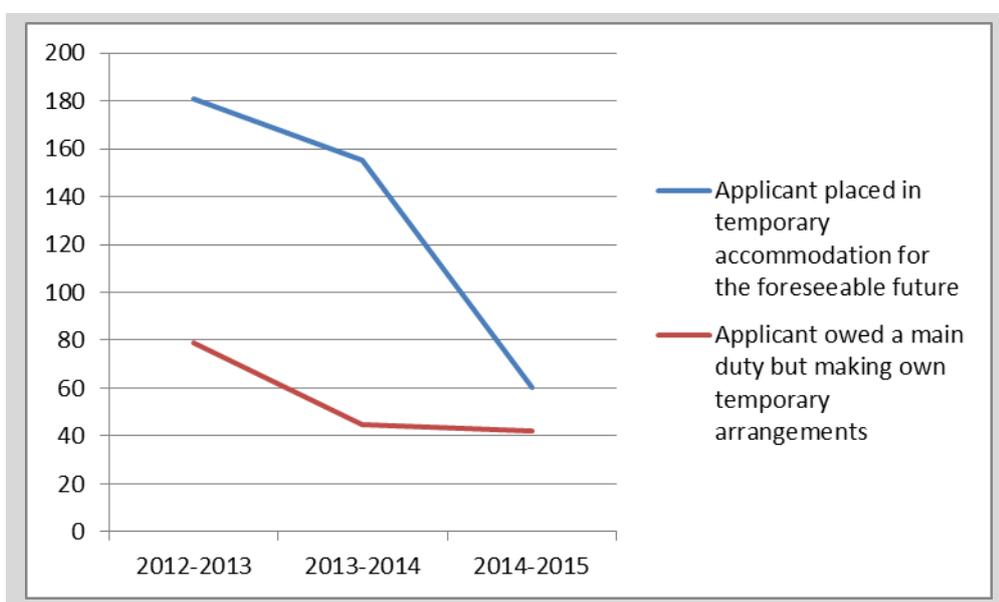
- Accommodation based housing support services for vulnerable people, over the age of 18 years, who are at risk of homelessness or homeless.
- Housing Related Floating Support Services for vulnerable people over the age of 18 years, who are at risk of homelessness or homeless, as a result of mental health issues, substance misuse, complex needs and/or a history of offending behaviour.'

15. USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

As can be seen from Chart 18 below, the use of temporary accommodation has declined substantially over the last three years from 181 households during the 2012-2013 financial year to 60 households during 2014-2015. This represents a 67% decrease in usage.

At the same time accepted homeless households making their own temporary accommodation arrangements has also declined from 79 in 2012-2013 to 42 households in 2014-2015.

These statistics are reflective of the successful homeless prevention work carried out by the Housing Solutions Team, which circumvents the need to place homeless households in temporary accommodation whilst a more permanent housing solution is found.



15.1 Changes to the way Temporary Accommodation is funded

It was announced in the November 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review that there will be changes to the way the management of temporary accommodation for homeless households is funded.

The management fee, currently paid retrospectively via housing benefit payments, will end from 2017-2018 and will be replaced by a stand alone grant paid to councils upfront. The government is encouraging councils to use this money flexibly to prevent homelessness.

This is, potentially, a positive move as it will allow councils to innovate to better meet the needs of homeless households. There are risks, however, as it effectively means a move from a demand-led system to a fixed budget. Whilst the overall budget is set to increase year on year until 2021, it is based on current levels of homelessness and may not incorporate increases if the demand for homeless temporary accommodation is greater than expected. This is a real possibility given the implications of the roll-out of the welfare reform agenda.

16. SOUTH WEST AUDIT PARTNERSHIP JUNE 2015

In June 2015 the South West Audit Partnership undertook an audit of the homelessness service. The purpose of the audit was to provide an assurance level in relation to how effective the Council is in preventing homelessness and to ensure that the Council is fulfilling its duty of care, in compliance with legislation.

Overall the audit found through its evidence testing procedures, that Herefordshire Council is achieving its objectives of preventing homelessness through using a proactive approach.

17. HEREFORDSHIRE HOMELESSNESS FORUM

Representatives from the council attend the Herefordshire Homelessness Forum (HHF), which meets every two months, is well attended and has a wide representation from statutory and voluntary agencies and faith groups.

The Forum has, since its inception, made significant contributions to policy and practice for service providers. Its Vision Statement is:

‘Providing for the needs of homeless individuals and families across the county of Herefordshire.’

The Forum’s purpose and function includes:-

- Enabling statutory and voluntary agencies to meet as equal partners.
- Comparing best practice across the county.
- Information sharing, and reviewing trends and forecasts.
- Acting as an independent "critical friend" to all bodies working in homelessness.

18. LINKS TO HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2016-2020

The analysis undertaken for this Homelessness Review has formed a robust evidence base for the development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy objectives.

HOMELESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2016-2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness in their district every 5 years and to publish a Homelessness Strategy based on the findings of the review.

The legislation emphasises the importance of working strategically with social services and other statutory, voluntary and private sector partners in order to tackle homelessness more effectively.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, July 2006 states that the purpose of the review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the district, assess its likely demand in the future, identify what is currently being done and what level of resources are available for preventive and responsive work.

In December 2015, the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Committee announced an inquiry into the causes of homelessness, as well as the approaches taken by national and local government to prevent and tackle homelessness. The inquiry will include the effectiveness of the current legislative framework in England with a review of the different approaches taken in Scotland and Wales. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be reviewed in the light of any recommendations and/or changes arising from the inquiry.

Herefordshire's Homelessness Review provides an evidence base for the development of the Homeless Prevention Strategy objectives and should be read in conjunction with this strategy.

Homelessness can happen to anyone, but some people often face greater difficulty in accessing and maintaining a home. These include rough sleepers, young people, people with substance dependencies or mental health issues, people with challenging behaviours and people who are socially marginalised.

For this reason the strategic objectives include preventing homelessness and finding solutions for those who often face the greatest barriers in accessing and sustaining a stable home. The council will work towards achieving these objectives by 2020.

1.1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 1:

Minimise rough sleeping and increase tenancy sustainment opportunities for rough sleepers and people with complex needs.

Objective 2:

Maximise homeless prevention activity by building on current success and promoting positive opportunities for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

Objective 3:

Help improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people and those who are at risk of homelessness.

Objective 4:

Ensure homeless people and those at risk of homelessness are able to access affordable housing and that support services are targeted effectively.

2. EQUALITY ACT 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010, public bodies such as Herefordshire Council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Many factors combine to cause and contribute to homelessness. Homelessness, poor and insecure housing have adverse effects on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Housing inequality also impacts on other factors such as income, education, health and wellbeing and life experiences.

In Herefordshire we have a strong commitment to promoting equality and tackling disadvantage. Herefordshire Council, along with other local organisations, has signed up to Herefordshire's Equality and Human Rights Charter. The Charter sets out an agreed vision of equality and human rights for the communities of Herefordshire.

3. HEADLINE FINDINGS FROM THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

Statistical data on homelessness in England is compiled by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) from statutory P1E Returns, which are submitted quarterly by local authorities. The P1E contains statistics on statutory homelessness, rough sleeping and homelessness prevention and relief.

The official figures do not, however, give a full picture of homelessness in England. They exclude those who are homeless, but who do not approach a local authority for assistance and households who do not meet the statutory criteria.³⁷

The following is a summary of some of the main findings, which are fully detailed in the Homelessness Review.

3.1 Statutory Homelessness in Herefordshire: Totals and Priority Need

- The number of households making a formal homeless application reduced from 372 in 2012-2013 to 220 households in 2014-2015, a reduction of 40%. The number of households being accepted as statutorily homeless also reduced from 70% of total applications in 2012-2013 to 53% in 2014-2015.
- As identified in the Homeless Review document, the above should be understood in the context of a preventative approach, which reduces the number of households counted as making a formal homeless application. This should not, therefore, be taken to mean that homelessness is a decreasing issue in Herefordshire. Statistics show that 148 households were prevented from becoming homeless in 2013-2014 and 511 in 2014-2015.
- By far the most significant and consistent reason for the determination of 'priority need,' between 2012-2015, was that the household contained a dependent child or children. In total, 361 households were owed the full homeless duty for this reason.
- Household member being pregnant was the next highest reason, although significantly lower at a total of 78 households over the three year period. The local situation mirrors the national picture, where the presence of dependent children established priority need in 67% of total cases, followed by household member pregnant at 7%.
- Over the three-year period 45 households were in priority need due to mental illness and 28 households consisted of or included a disabled person. At respectively 6% and 5% of total applications this is consistent with national figures.
- Whilst the number of people whose priority need was established through mental illness is small, the costs to the individual and social care and health services are considerable.
- In 2014-15 there were no homeless acceptances where priority need was established due to domestic abuse. As above, this does not mean that incidents are declining in the county, but that homelessness was prevented through effective joint working between the council's Housing Solutions Team and West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA).

³⁷ That is households who are (i) homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days, (ii) eligible for assistance, (iii) have a priority need, (iv) not homeless intentionally, (v) and have a local connection with the area (except in cases of domestic abuse)

- Domestic abuse is still largely a hidden crime, but it is one that can sometimes have life-threatening consequences. In 2014, information suggests that 150 UK women were killed by men. One woman every 2.8 days.³⁸
- A research project undertaken by the London Metropolitan University, published January 2011, estimated the annual total financial costs of domestic violence in England to be £5.5bn.³⁹

4. ROUGH SLEEPERS

Rough sleepers are defined by the DCLG as people sleeping / bedding down in the open air, on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks and bus shelters etc. It also includes those in buildings or other places not designed for habitation, such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks and makeshift shelters such as cardboard boxes.

Herefordshire's Rough Sleeper Count identified 26 rough sleepers in 2012. This figure had reduced to 12 people by the November 2015. Whilst there are a number of different reasons for this, the work of the Street Outreach Worker in helping rough sleepers off the streets and in sustaining accommodation has been very significant.

*'It is vitally important to not lose sight of the scale of the human cost of single homelessness. The unique distress of lacking a settled home, which can be combined with isolation, high support needs and a disconnection from mainstream social and economic life, is perhaps the most damaging form of poverty and marginalisation that can be experienced in the UK.'*⁴⁰

5. HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS / CONCEALED HOUSEHOLDS

Hidden homelessness generally refers to households, who may be in a similar housing situation to those who apply to local authorities as homeless, but who do not do so.

Concealed households are family units or single adults living in the homes of other households and, who may want to live separately given appropriate opportunity.

Census data for 2011 showed that, in Herefordshire, there were 850 concealed families. This, which represents an increase of 87% since 2001 compared to 70% nationally, would indicate that there is considerable tenure-wide housing pressure in the county.

³⁸ The 'Counting Dead Women Project'

³⁹ 'Islands in the Stream,' London Metropolitan University, January 2011

⁴⁰ 'At what cost: An estimate of the financial costs of single homelessness in the UK, University of York, July 2015

6. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The strategic objectives reflect the council’s commitment to prevent homelessness happening whenever it is possible to do so and, where this has not been possible, to prevent it happening again.

Homelessness issues are complex, often requiring support and early intervention from many other service areas including health, social care, the wider criminal justice system, housing providers and voluntary and community organisations.

We are working in a challenging environment of significantly reduced council budgets, the uncertain impact of radical reforms to housing and social welfare policy and increasing pressures on local services. If we are to continue to build upon our existing success in preventing homelessness there must be a commitment to do so from across the council and from external stakeholders and partner agencies.

6.1 OBJECTIVE 1:

MINIMISE ROUGH SLEEPING AND INCREASE TENANCY SUSTAINMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS AND FOR PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS.

Rough sleeping is the most visible and damaging manifestation of homelessness.

As set out in the council’s Homelessness Review document, homelessness places substantial costs on the NHS. In 2010 the Department of Health estimated that people who are sleeping rough or living in a hostel, a squat or sleeping on friends’ floors consume around four times more acute hospital services than the general population, costing at least £85m in total per year.

Rough sleepers and people in unstable accommodation have significantly higher levels of mental and physical ill health, substance abuse problems and higher rates of mortality than the general population. In addition, they are more likely to die young. The data analysis in the ‘Homelessness Kills,’ research paper⁴¹ shows that rough sleepers and those in temporary homeless shelters have an average age of death of 47 years compared to 77 years for the general population.

‘It is unacceptable that anyone has to sleep rough on the streets of Britain today. It is damaging to individuals and to communities. It is essential that tackling the issue remains at the heart of efforts to combat homelessness.’⁴²

⁴¹ ‘Homelessness Kills: An analysis of the mortality of homeless people in early twenty-first century England,’ University of Sheffield, September 2012

⁴² ‘Let’s Make the Difference,’ Homeless Link, January 2015

ACTIONS:

1. Consolidate the Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker post and its funding through direct employment within the Adult Wellbeing Housing Solutions Team.
2. Investigate external funding opportunities to expand the assertive rough sleeper outreach service, focusing on preventative activity around known rough sleeping pathways and the provision of successful tenancy sustainment once suitable accommodation is obtained.
3. Consolidate the Hospital Discharge Worker post and its funding through direct employment within the Adult Wellbeing Housing Solutions Team.
4. Support Home Group in a Big Lottery Fund application to develop a Home Achievement Programme (HAP) project for Herefordshire through which homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, with complex needs and those at risk of homelessness can be supported to address issues such as substance misuse, domestic violence, offending behaviour, debt, tenant responsibilities and health matters.
5. Work with housing associations locally to establish opportunities for developing a 'housing first' pilot project for housing applicants undertaking HAP, and subject to a housing association exclusion policy, to be offered a social housing starter tenancy.
6. 'Engage in joint working with other street based support services, as appropriate and continue to build on existing relationships with Integrated Offender Management.'
7. Strengthen joint working between the Hospital Discharge Worker and social care staff through the identification and removal of any existing barriers.

Case Study:

P was employed, living in settled rented accommodation and had a good relationship with his family. When he lost his job his life spiralled out of control, he became depressed and started using drugs. His need was such that, as soon as his welfare benefit payments were deposited, the money was withdrawn to buy any substance, which was available to him. His relationship with his family deteriorated and he was eventually evicted from his home. He began sleeping rough; his health deteriorated and he did not engage with any of the statutory services.

P became known to the Street Outreach Worker and slowly a relationship of trust was built. Through this contact he began to understand that he could change his life and, more importantly perhaps, that he really wanted to. The Street Outreach Worker found and successfully negotiated access to the type of substance rehabilitation support services that would give P the best chance of success.

After an uncertain start P reported that he was doing well. Relationships were being re-established with his family and he said that he was happy, feeling positive and looking forward to a future without addiction and criminality.

6.2 OBJECTIVE 2:

MAXIMISE HOMELESS PREVENTION ACTIVITY BY BUILDING ON CURRENT SUCCESS AND PROMOTING POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE.

Shelter estimates that every eleven minutes a family in Britain loses their home.⁴³

ACTIONS:

1. Identify the actions necessary to ensure that there is a corporate commitment to homeless prevention across Herefordshire Council and Health Services, and develop and agree actions for implementation.
2. Identify funding and other opportunities to actively work in partnership with others to help homeless people develop their skills and access the support, education, employment and training needed to achieve their aspirations and promote successful tenancy sustainment.
3. In partnership with voluntary and community groups and homeless people or those at risk of homelessness, explore the feasibility of developing a social enterprise to increase employment opportunities for homeless people
4. Continue to seek and maximise new funding opportunities for prevention initiatives, including supporting funding submissions by the voluntary sector and community groups to resource support and outreach work with socially excluded households at risk of homelessness
5. Work with private landlords to put in place packages of support and financial assistance that provide incentives for landlords to offer tenancies to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
6. Investigate how the reasons why private sector landlords terminate Assured Shorthold tenancies can be more effectively captured as a basis for addressing homelessness from this tenure and identifying potential opportunities for prevention.
7. Work collaboratively with the council's Children's Wellbeing Directorate and social housing providers to identify how the housing and support needs of homeless, and potentially homeless, 16-17 years old and young people leaving care can be most effectively met.

⁴³ Making Change Happen, Shelter 2014

Review existing joint working protocols and develop new models, which are appropriate and sharing of the management of risk.

8. Continue to work with vulnerable families under Herefordshire's 'Families First Programme' to prevent homelessness and deliver lasting positive change. Identified outcomes are to:
 - i. Improve children's school attendance and behaviour.
 - ii. Reduce both adult and youth crime and anti-social behaviour.
 - iii. Assist adults into employment or training.
9. Continue to work with West Mercia Women's Aid in their support for women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence and abuse.

The following case study is illustrative of findings from a number of research projects including 'Rebuilding Shattered Lives, St Mungo's March 2014, which suggest that women's life experiences of violence and abuse can be a significant risk factor in the development of subsequent mental health problems.

It is suggested that these experiences can leave some women with very complex needs, including a combination of offending behaviours, alcohol and/or drug issues, homelessness, and for many, continued experiences of violence, abuse and exploitation.

Mental health consequences such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harm issues, and low self-esteem can be exacerbated by the lack of sustained access to appropriate services. Suicide attempts are much higher amongst women who have been abused compared to those who have not.

Case Study:

B was admitted to hospital after overdosing on drugs and alcohol. She had been in abusive relationships, had a history of mental ill health and, often, a very chaotic lifestyle. Her stay in hospital was challenging and resource intensive and there was a very real possibility that she would be homeless on discharge.

Prior to coming to Herefordshire B had been accommodated in a women's refuge in another part of the country. It was planned that she should return and travel arrangements were made. Unfortunately, before this could happen B was arrested, following an incident, and held at a police station. This changed the situation and considerable negotiation and discussion with all involved parties was necessary before it was agreed that could return to the refuge, where she would receive the support she needed to access and maintain and appropriate housing.

This is the sort of approach recommended in 'Making Every Contact Count,' DCLG, August 2012 which states that:

'For many people, becoming homeless is not the beginning of their problems; it comes at the end of a long line of crises, a long line of interaction with public and voluntary sector services, a long line of missed opportunities. We must change that.'

6.3 OBJECTIVE 3:

IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND THOSE WHO ARE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

People who become homeless have some of the highest and costliest health needs in a local community, but those needs are often overlooked when healthcare and social care services are planned and commissioned.⁴⁴

ACTIONS:

1. Investigate the feasibility of carrying out the Homeless Link Health Needs Audit with voluntary and statutory agency partners. The Audit has been updated with funding from Public Health England. This is a big project and will require the commitment of all partner agencies if successful implementation and robust results analysis is to be achieved.
2. Investigate the feasibility of developing a Groundswell Homeless Health Peer Advocacy Project, which will support homeless people to access health care and be delivered by volunteers with personal experience of homelessness.
3. Demonstrate a commitment to improve the health of homeless people by working towards achieving the priorities in the St Mungo Broadway Charter for Homelessness Health through:
 - i. Identifying and including the health needs of homeless people in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, including people who are sleeping rough and those living in temporary supported accommodation.
 - ii. Providing leadership on tackling health inequalities through a stated public health commitment and the recognition of homelessness as a priority for the Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

⁴⁴ 'Homeless Health Needs Audit,' Homelessness Link, August 2015

- iii. Commission for inclusion by working with the CCG to ensure that local health services meet the needs of people who are homeless and that services are welcoming and accessible.

Research has shown that street homeless people and those at risk of homelessness often seek medical help at a later stage during illness, leading to costly secondary health care and reduced positive health outcomes. This can be intensified by reduced opportunity for recovery if homeless people return to inappropriate, insecure accommodation after medical treatment.

As the Case Study below illustrates, in some cases, accommodation may be lost during hospitalisation, resulting in further costs to health services where a patient has no suitable accommodation to return to upon hospital discharge. In addition, people can recover more quickly if they have appropriate accommodation to go to and they are also less likely to be readmitted to hospital as emergency patients.

Research quoted in Homeless Link's, 'Evaluation of the Homeless Hospital Discharge Fund, January 2015, showed that the total cost of hospital usage by homeless people has been estimated to be about four times higher than the general population. If inpatient only costs are considered, the difference is eight times higher among homeless people.

Case Study:

L had been admitted to hospital due to self-neglect. She was dehydrated, insulin dependent and was also exhibiting acute symptoms of anxiety and depression. L had been living in insecure accommodation in the home of an acquaintance and due to changed circumstances was unable to return. The risks to L's health and her fragile emotional wellbeing meant that she could not be discharged from hospital without a suitable home to go to.

As a priority, the Hospital Discharge Worker worked closely with L and other agencies to put all the necessary processes in place and L was able to bid for and acquire a housing association property which was suitable to her needs. Reports suggest that L's health is improving and she is happy in her new home.

6.4 OBJECTIVE 4:

ENSURE THAT AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE AND THOSE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

*'As the [universal benefit] cap is initially being implemented by "squeezing" Housing Benefit entitlement, housing organisations in both the social and private rented sectors expressed concern about its potential impact on rent arrears, evictions and increases in homelessness amongst those affected.'*⁴⁵

The shortage of low cost housing is a major barrier to tackling homelessness effectively.

Overall, however, it should be recognised that there are limits on the amount of control that councils' have on the operation of the provider market and consequently on issues such as how much housing is delivered, its affordability and tenure balance.

The majority of new homes will be built by private developers for sale to those seeking and able to buy on the open market. The type, size and location of developments will be directly influenced by housing demand and the affordability of the properties. Additionally, a number of affordable rented or intermediate homes will also need to be built for those unable to meet the financial commitment necessary to buy.

Given the pressures on Herefordshire's housing market, and a central government emphasis on low-cost home ownership, it is absolutely necessary to make best use of the existing affordable social rented housing stock. In addition, the council will need to explore appropriate alternatives in the private rented sector, as well as enabling the provision of new affordable accommodation options for those that are unable to access market housing.

ACTIONS:

1. Respond to the current pressures in the housing market by working with housing providers to enable the provision of new affordable accommodation for those that are unable to access market housing.
2. Work with local housing associations in their asset management stock viability and appraisal modelling to ensure that best use is made of existing resources and that schemes continue to be responsive to housing need.
3. Enable local housing associations to make the best use of their existing stock through provisions in the reviewed Home Point Allocations Policy
4. Support housing association partners to develop open-market private rented sector housing, where appropriate.

⁴⁵ House of Commons Briefing Paper, The Benefit Cap, July 2015

5. Support the delivery of new housing through the following:

i. Delivering New Homes Policy SS2

- A supply of deliverable and developable land will be identified to secure the delivery of a minimum of 16,500 homes in Herefordshire between 2011 and 2031 to meet market and affordable housing need.
- Hereford will be the focus for new housing development to support its role as the main centre in the county. Outside Hereford, the main focus for new housing development will take place in the market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye.

ii. Affordable Housing Policy H1 – thresholds and targets

All new open market housing proposals on sites of more than 10 dwellings, which have a maximum combined gross floor space of more than 1000 sqm, will be expected to contribute towards meeting affordable housing needs.

- Indicative affordable housing targets of 35% and 40% have been established for different parts of the county, based on evidence of need and viability in the county's housing market and housing value areas.
- Affordable housing provided under the terms of this policy will be expected to be available in perpetuity for those in local housing need.

iii. Rural Exception Sites Policy H2

- The provision of affordable housing is more difficult in rural areas where, often the scale and location of new development is more restricted. Proposals for affordable housing schemes in rural areas may be permitted on land, which would not normally be released for housing in accordance with the criteria set down in the policy.
- The policy enables the provision of affordable housing outside of villages, in areas where there is generally a restraint on open market housing, so as to help meet affordable housing needs in rural areas in perpetuity.
- In order to enable the delivery of affordable housing some market housing may be permitted, as part of the development, to subsidise a significant proportion of affordable housing provision. This will need to be evidenced through a financial appraisal, as set down in the policy.

iv. Individual or Group Self and Custom Build

- The council recognises that individual or group self and custom build projects will contribute to the delivery of homes over the period of the Core Strategy. These may be

in the form of affordable, low cost market and open market housing. The council will encourage and support this type of development where the proposals are in line with the relevant policies of the Core Strategy and neighbourhood plans.

- A self-build land register will be kept in accordance with the requirements of the Housing and Planning Bill, when enacted.

v. Traveller sites Policy H4

The accommodation needs of travellers will be provided for through the preparation of a Travellers' Development Plan Document (DPD), which will include site specific allocations. The Travellers' Sites Document, which is programmed in the Council's Local Development scheme (2015), for adoption in spring 2016, will include the following:

- An assessment of current need for permanent residential pitches with an indication of the process for updating need on a regular basis.
- Pitch targets for travellers.
- Deliverable sites for residential pitches for the period 2014-19 to set against targets.
- Identification of broad locations for further developable residential sites for travellers over the period 2019-2031.
- Identification of need for, and approach to, the provision of transit sites for the plan period.
- Consideration of the need for, and approach to, provision for travelling show persons within the county for the plan period.
- Consideration of the need for a rural exceptions policy to enable sites to be brought forward solely as affordable gypsy and traveller sites.

Traveller sites include those considered necessary to meet the residential needs of gypsies and travellers, who will remain in a location permanently or for substantial periods; transit sites for those moving through the area and well plots for travelling show people.

6. Continue to work with the Homes and Communities Agency, the Local Enterprise Partnerships and other partners to maximise the amount of external funding that can be drawn into Herefordshire to promote and deliver housing and economic growth.
7. Review the existing land and property portfolio, both as part of a planned strategic disposal approach, and in support of the delivery of market and affordable housing.
8. Explore options for increasing housing choice for homeless people through access to good quality, affordable private rented sector housing, where this is appropriate to the needs of

the household and, where applicable, the duties set down in the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 are clearly met.

9. Identify opportunities to pilot an additional shared accommodation model for young single people.
10. Identify opportunities for increasing access, for people under the age of 35 years, to social and affordable private rented accommodation in the light of the implementation of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015.
11. Review the availability and use of good quality, affordable temporary accommodation for homeless households.
12. Work with social care colleagues and other stakeholders to continue to develop the evidence base for the housing and support needs of vulnerable people, including young people, learning disabled people, people with mental health problems and those with substance dependencies. Work with housing and support providers to enable these needs to be suitably met.
13. Continue to help prevent homelessness through the pro-active use of the Homelessness Prevention Fund to enable access to housing and/or prevent the loss of the existing home.

Case Study

J was living in a housing association property with his adult son D, who has a life-long development disability. J had failed to recover from an earlier physical and emotional trauma and the condition of his property continued to deteriorate to a, potentially, unsafe condition. Despite the best efforts of the housing association J did not engage and, as a last resort, the housing association was taking action to regain possession of the property and the family were at risk of homelessness.

G, a member of the Housing Solutions Team, who had previously worked with J, managed to convince him of the seriousness of the situation and he eventually agreed to co-operate. As a consequence, the housing association were prepared to withdraw legal action. G worked intensively with the family, the property was brought back up to standard, defective goods and furniture was replaced and both J and D were allocated a support worker.

Without this successful intervention the financial costs to other services would have been considerable. D is incapable of independent living and would have required accommodation to be provided by social care. J had a serious medical condition and was awaiting a further operation. He would not have been able to be discharge from hospital without a safe, suitable home to go to.

7. FUNDING CONTEXT

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy has been written within the context of substantial reductions in the council's budget for the lifetime of the Strategy.

Since 2011, the council has saved £49 million. From now until 2020, the council will need to save an estimated additional £42 million.

The impact of this is that the council can no longer continue to pay for all the services that it has traditionally provided and faces challenging decisions about prioritising service areas and how they are provided.

8. NEXT STEPS

We will, where necessary, develop an Action Plan in consultation with partner agencies, setting out the work necessary for achieving the strategic objectives and the dates by which we intend to achieve them.

The objectives will need to be delivered within existing resources and driven forward by members of the Commissioning Team and the Housing Solutions Team. Input will also be necessary from colleagues across other parts of the council and its partner agencies. The council will also work with other strategic groups and partnerships, where they have a role to play in addressing key objectives in the strategy.

Successful delivery will ultimately depend on effective co-ordinated action and commitment both within the council and across our statutory and voluntary sector partner agencies.

9. MONITORING

The Homelessness Forum will monitor achievement of key objectives as set out in the Strategy Action Plan.

The resources available to deliver the Action Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis and every opportunity will be taken to acquire additional finance through external funding opportunities.

Finally it should be recognised that unforeseen challenges may continue to present through the roll-out of welfare reform and radical changes to central government housing and planning policy and that this may require a re-evaluation of approach.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL INTERIM HOUSING STRATEGY

v3.2

2016-2020



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1. INTRODUCTION

Herefordshire council faces a diversity of challenges in its role as a strategic housing authority. In common with other councils across the country, it no longer holds its own housing stock and its resources and direct control over social housing provision has been substantially reduced over the years.

However, the council still retains significant responsibilities in relation to:

- Affordable housing development.
- Prevention and relief of homelessness.
- Housing conditions and enforcement in the private rented and owner-occupied sectors.
- Assistance to sustain healthy independent living through promoting safe, appropriate housing and affordable warmth.
- Provision of specialist housing with care.
- Policy for the allocation of social/affordable rented housing in the county.

Herefordshire Council's Housing Strategy 2016-2020, is an overarching document. It connects to a number of other housing related strategic documents and plans that, taken together, provide the framework through which our housing and housing related priorities will be achieved.

The Strategy has been developed against the backdrop of national austerity and substantial local budgetary constraint, the uncertain impact of radical reforms to housing and social welfare policy and increasing pressures on local services.

For context, since 2011, the council has saved £49 million. From now until 2020, it will need to save an estimated additional £42 million. The impact of this for Herefordshire, as for councils nationally, is that it no longer has the resources to pay for all the services that have traditionally been provided. Inevitably, difficult decisions will have to be made about how housing responsibilities are prioritised and delivered and an even greater emphasis placed on joint working across inter-related parts of the council and with our external statutory and voluntary sector strategic partners.

The Housing Strategy contributes towards the Council's wider strategic aims and priorities, which are to:

- Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life.
- Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives.
- Invest in projects to improve roads, create jobs and build more homes.

In fulfilling its strategic housing responsibilities, the council works in partnership with;

- Housing association providers of local social, affordable and private rented housing and low cost home ownership.¹
- Private property developers.
- Voluntary sector and statutory agencies in preventing or relieving homelessness.
- Neighbouring local authorities, specifically Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and District Housing Authorities in Worcestershire.

There are also partnerships within Herefordshire council, between teams responsible for Housing Strategy and Development, Planning, Environmental Health, Corporate Finance and Adults Wellbeing Operations.

2. HOUSING PRIORITIES AND THEMES

Housing of the right type, in the right place which is comfortable, safe, affordable and appropriate to needs is intrinsic to emotional and physical wellbeing. The Strategy has three overarching priorities, which reflect this, supported by a number of housing themes:

Priority 1: Improving Housing Supply and Access to Housing

- Ensure a programme of affordable housing development, consistent with local housing need and national and local targets.
- Establish new models of partnership with housing developers, which deliver optimum benefit from the council's resources.
 - Deliver new models of investment including private rented and new-build, custom and self-build homes.
 - Establish new ways of development using council land, including support for privately rented new builds, self-build and custom build homes

¹ Also referred to as Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and Registered Providers (RPs). The term Housing Association will be used in this Strategy as this is more generally understood.

- Ensure that the Home Point social housing Allocations Policy meets statutory obligations, is fair and realistic in the context of the exclusions policies operated by Home Point housing association partners.
- Enable the local housing sector to operate economically and optimise take up of social housing.

Priority 2: Improving Housing Support

- Ensure development of sufficient market rent and affordable housing and appropriate housing with care to meet the future needs of older people.
- Use an evidence based approach to delivering diverse, appropriate specialist housing with care options, for disabled people, people with mental health needs and vulnerable young people, including those leaving care.
- Prevent homelessness happening whenever it is possible to do so and, where this has not been possible, prevent it happening again.
- Enable appropriate and enduring housing solutions for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, including those who often face the greatest barriers in accessing and sustaining a stable home. These may include rough sleepers, young people, people with substance dependencies or mental health issues, people with challenging behaviours and people who are socially marginalised.

Priority 3: Improving Housing Standards

- Enable improved health and safety of private sector accommodation.
- Ensure that the links between health and housing are understood and that the importance of collaborative working is recognised and enable, both across the council and with external strategic partners.

3. STRATEGIC LINKS

This Strategy does not exist in isolation. It provides an overarching framework for housing and housing related activity within the county. It also has important links with other Herefordshire Council strategic documents and plans including:

- Older People's Housing Strategy and Pathway.
- Homelessness Review and Prevention Strategy 2016-2020.

- Herefordshire Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment 2015.
- Learning Disabilities' Commissioning Plan 2015.
- Herefordshire Autism Strategy 2014-2017.
- Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2013.
- Mental Health Integrated Needs Assessment 2015.
- Looked After Children and Complex Needs Assessment 2014-2019.
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015.
- Housing Enforcement Policy 2016.

The Strategy takes account of the significant changes, which have affected housing at the national, regional and local level and draws on a number of evidence sources, including the following:

- Understanding Herefordshire: An Integrated Needs Assessment 2015.
- Herefordshire Core Strategy 2011-2031.
- Local Market Housing Assessment, update 2014
- Herefordshire Affordable Warmth Strategy 2015-2018
- Healthy Housing Report 2012

Whilst there is an existing evidence base to inform the strategic priorities and intended direction of the core elements of the strategy, it is probable that the unfolding impact of national government housing, planning and social welfare policy will require a flexible response that looks to incorporate any new opportunities for effective and focused joint working with partners, which may arise.

4. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT²

The Strategy builds on the work of the previous Herefordshire and Shropshire Joint Housing Strategy 2012-2015. However, the legislative and commercial context in which

² It is important to note that the information contained below was correct at the time of writing, but as supplementary announcements from central government on housing and social welfare policy continue there may be some change.

the housing market operates has changed substantially and government reforms are affecting every aspect of housing within Herefordshire.

Fundamental change in recent national housing policy has included:

- Reforms to how social housing is provided and allocated.
- Changes in entitlement to Housing Benefit and the introduction of Universal Credit.
- Abolition of regional planning structures with an emphasis on local decision making.
- The introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which raises the threshold under which affordable housing is required to be delivered.
- Changes in the way that health and social care is commissioned through the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
- Government pledge to extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants.

4.1 Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 introduced very significant changes to housing policy and planning in what the government described in, 'Laying the Foundations, A Housing Strategy for England, November 2011 as a 'radical programme of reform of social housing.'

Key reforms relating to housing and planning include:

- Social housing reform: This gives individual social housing providers new powers to grant tenancies for a specified fixed-term, where they choose to do so, rather than a 'life-time' tenancy.
- Allocation reform: This gives local authorities greater control over who is entitled to register for social housing.
- Reform of homelessness legislation: This gives local authorities powers to discharge their housing obligations to homeless people through the private rented sector on a minimum one-year Assured Shorthold Tenancy. The duty can only be ended in the private rented sector in this way with a minimum 12 month assured shorthold tenancy and where all the requirements of the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 are clearly met. A further duty arises if a household placed in the private rented sector becomes unintentionally homeless within 2 years and reapplies for assistance.

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012: This establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans and the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies.

4.2 Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Welfare and Work Bill 2015-2016

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 consolidated a raft of changes intended to reduce government spending on welfare by £18bn by 2015, through encouraging people to support themselves through work rather than welfare. Changes included:

- The phased introduction of Universal Credit (UC), a single benefit to be paid on a monthly basis to replace Income Support, income-based Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.
- Universal Credit was rolled out in Herefordshire from March 2015 for single persons, who would have been eligible for Job Seekers Allowance. It remains to be seen if this will impact negatively on access to the private rented sector through, for example, any reluctance by landlords/lettings agencies to offer tenancies to claimants on Universal Credit.
- The introduction of a cap on the total benefits to which an individual or couple is entitled from out of work benefits. The cap was introduced in April 2013, and set at £26,000 a year (a maximum of £500 per week) for lone parents and couples with or without children, and around £18,000 a year (a maximum of £350 per week) for single people without children or whose children for whom they have responsibility do not live with them. Any household receiving more than the cap has their Housing Benefit reduced to bring them back within the limit.
- From April 2013 new rules were introduced to restrict the amount of Housing Benefit working-age council or housing association tenants could claim if they were deemed to be under-occupying their home. For one spare bedroom Housing Benefit entitlement was reduced by 14% per week and for two or more bedrooms by 25%.
- In October 2012 a new harsher sanctions regime for Job Seekers Allowance was introduced by the Welfare Reform Act. This set out three levels of fixed periods of sanction for failure to undertake agreed work search activity, ranging from four weeks up to a maximum of three years³ for repeated failures. Some research³ has indicated that sanctions are having a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, including homeless people, single parents and disabled people.

³ The Homelessness Monitor, Crisis and JRF, February 2015

4.3 Affordable Rent Regime:

The concept of 'Affordable Rent' was introduced as part of the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) 2011-2015. This form of tenure, where providers can charge up to 80% of the market rent, essentially shifts the balance between grant support and rental income as the means of financing new development. The model permits housing associations to convert vacant Social Rent properties to Affordable Rent when they are re-let, but only where a delivery agreement for a new supply of social housing has been agreed with the HCA.

4.4 Summer Budget July 2015: Key measures relating to Housing and Welfare

The Budget announced around £17 billion of spending cuts, including £12 billion by 2019-2020 from welfare reforms. The main reductions are as follows:

- From April 2017, the overall benefit cap for a working age household with children, will be reduced to £20,000 per year (a maximum of £385 per week) for households living outside London. (£20k per year)
- Housing Benefit will be frozen for four years from April 2016, along with both Child and Working Tax Credits and a number of other working age benefits, including Jobseekers' Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Child Benefit.
- From April 2017 parents claiming Universal Credit, including lone parents, will be expected to prepare for work when their youngest child is two and to look for work when they are three.

Removal of Housing Benefit entitlement for 18-21 year olds

- From April 2017, 18-21 year olds submitting a new claim for Universal Credit will not be automatically entitled to receive the housing costs element (the equivalent of Housing Benefit). There will be exceptions for:
 - Those who are parents and whose children live with them.
 - Vulnerable groups.
 - Those who had previously been living independently and working continuously for 6 months.
- 18 -21 year olds receiving Universal Credit will also be subject to a new youth obligation. They will be expected to participate in a programme of support at the start of their claim and to apply for an apprenticeship or traineeship, gain work place skills or go on a work placement after six months.

Following these announcements, the Chief Executive of Crisis claimed that more young people were likely to become homeless as a result of the proposed cuts.

“Under-25s already make up a third of homeless people and there is a real danger these changes could make things even worse. For many young people, living with their parents simply isn’t an option.”⁴

Social Housing Rents

- From April 2016, government will require all social landlords to reduce their rents by 1% every year for the next four years (rather than increasing them by Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1%, as previously identified). This will be taken forward via the Welfare Reform and Work Bill and will apply to both social and affordable rents.
- Tenants in social housing who earn more than £30,000 per year (outside London), will be expected to pay market or near market rents. This was subsequently withdrawn and replaced by a voluntary system for housing association providers, whilst being retained for council tenants.

The National Housing Federation (NHF)⁵ has responded to the announcements in the Summer Budget as follows:

- Whilst a cut in rents over the next four years will be a real help to some tenants, the reduction in rental income will impact on housing associations ability to plan for and invest in new housing development. An initial estimate suggests that at least 27,000 new affordable homes will not be built as a result of this loss.
- Modelling indicates that the reduction in the benefit cap could affect 205,000 households including 68,000 households living in housing association properties. The lower cap will impact on affordability in all areas of the country and a lower benefit cap outside London takes no account of regional variations in rents. Initial analysis indicates that, for a couple with three children, the weekly shortfall for a three-bedroom property is likely to be in the region of £44.34, using average rent data.
- Whilst there are plans for a national living wage for over 25s (set at £7.20 per hour from 2016 and rising to £9.00 per hour by 2020) estimates in the Institute for Fiscal Studies post-budget briefing paper⁶ indicate that this will not provide full compensation for the majority of losses that are likely to be experienced overall.

⁴ Jon Sparks, Chief Executive, Crisis, July 2015

⁵ National Housing Federation Briefing Paper: Summer Budget 2015, July 2015

⁶ Paul Johnson, Institute for Fiscal Studies, July 2015

4.5 Autumn Statement and Comprehensive Spending Review

In November 2015, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Autumn Statement for 2015 and the Comprehensive Spending Review covering the period up to the 2020 General Election.

Main announcements affecting housing include the following:

- Funding for new affordable homes will be doubled, but will be refocused so that most of the funding will be spent supporting new homes for 'low cost home ownership,' rather than to rent.
 - Whilst additional spending on housing is to be welcomed, focussing government support only on home ownership will not help those in housing need who are not able to save a deposit or get a mortgage. This will include substantial number of families and single people and families in need in Herefordshire.
 - Information in the 'Understanding Herefordshire Report,' 2015 confirms that the county is still one of the worst areas within the West Midlands region for housing affordability, where house prices at the lower end of the housing market cost around 8.1 times the annual earnings of the lowest earners.
- The cuts to working tax credits announced as part of the summer budget will not now be implemented. However cuts to child tax credits will still go ahead as planned.
- There will be changes to the way the management of temporary accommodation is funded. The management fee currently paid by the Department for Work and Pensions to local authorities on a per household basis will end from 2017-2018 and instead an up front fund will be established.
- Housing benefit in the social housing sector will be capped at local housing allowance rates for new tenants. This includes extending the shared room rate, whereby single people under 35 are only eligible for enough support to cover the cost of a room in a shared house. The change will apply to tenancies starting from April 2016 and will take effect from 2018.
- As at December 2015, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has clarified that it does intend to apply the cap to housing benefit for tenants in supported and sheltered housing, but that it will seek to protect people as far as possible through the local system of Discretionary Housing Payments.
 - Capping housing benefit for new tenants in the social housing sector to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates could also have a major impact on households.

At the time of writing further information on how this will be applied is awaited. However, in December 2015 Davie Orr, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation (NHF) wrote to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning expressing concern that this would have a ‘catastrophic’ impact on, in particular, supported housing providers, as follows:

‘The impact of the LHA on the amount of Housing Benefit payable for supported housing will make it extremely difficult for any housing association to develop new supported housing. Without existing levels of benefit being available, providers across the country will be forced to close schemes.

5. HOUSING AND PLANNING BILL 2015

Extending the Right to Buy to housing association tenants:

The government’s proposed Housing and Planning Bill will:

- Extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants, offering discounts worth up to £102,700 in London and £77,000 in the rest of England, but not in Scotland or Wales, where Right to Buy is being abolished.
- There are around 2.5 million housing association tenants. Whilst they already have the Right to Acquire, the discounts are much less generous, ranging from £9,000 to £16,000 depending on location. In addition, the Right to Acquire is currently not available in rural areas where there are fewer than 3,000 properties.
- To fund the policy the Housing and Planning Bill will require stock-owning councils to sell 5% of their most valuable housing properties when they become vacant and replace them with cheaper homes. Cash from the sale proceeds will be used to create a £1bn Brownfield Regeneration Fund.
- The government has made a commitment to ensure there would be ‘one-for-one’ replacement for all the properties sold under extended Right to Buy. However, figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), June 2015, show that 12,304 homes were sold under the Right to Buy in England in 2014-2015, whilst only 1,903 homes were started or acquired to replace them.
- Locally, it is to be expected that there will be a loss of social and affordable rented housing association properties as the extended Right to Buy impacts, but at present it is not possible to estimate the extent to which they will be replaced.

5.1 National Planning Policy:

National planning policy requires local planning authorities to plan proactively to meet all housing needs in the area, including market and affordable housing. The current definition of affordable housing⁷ includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Starter Homes:

The Housing and Planning Bill contains measures to deliver an extra 200,000 new homes through the new Starter Homes initiative, which will offer a 20% discount to first-time buyers under 40 years of age. It introduces a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the delivery of starter homes, and a requirement for a proportion of starter homes to be delivered on all suitable reasonably-sized housing developments.

The Bill defines starter homes as new dwellings for first time buyers under 40, sold at a discount of at least 20% of market value and at less than the price cap of £250,000.

The Bill puts a general duty on all planning authorities to promote the supply of Starter Homes, and provides a specific duty to require a certain number or proportion of Starter Homes on site.

It was originally stated that Starter Homes will be built predominantly on brownfield sites that were not previously identified for housing development. However, at the Conservative Party Conference in October 2015, the Prime Minister announced that developers will be permitted to provide Starter Homes, instead of traditional affordable housing, on private sites to satisfy Section 106 planning requirements. These homes will be sold directly by the developer, with no need for housing association involvement.

Self-build and custom housebuilding:

The Bill adds to and amends the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, which requires local authorities to keep a register of people seeking to acquire land to build or commission their own home.

Section 106 contributions:

Section 106 contributions, sometimes known as 'planning obligations' or 'planning gain,' stem from agreements made under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. They are agreements made between the developer and the Local Planning

⁷ As at January 2016

Authority (LPA) to meet concerns about the costs of providing new infrastructure or affordable housing levels.

Community Infrastructure Levy:

In November 2015 the Government announced that an independent group would be set up to conduct a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), with the remit of:

- Assessing the extent to which CIL does or can provide an effective mechanism for funding infrastructure
- Recommending changes that would improve its operation in support of the Government's wider housing and growth objectives.

DCLG Consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy December 2015:

In December 2015, the DCLG issued a consultation document seeking views on some specific changes to national planning policy, as follows:

- Broadening the definition of affordable housing, to expand the range of low cost housing opportunities for those aspiring to home ownership.
- Increasing the density of development around commuter hubs, to make more efficient use of land in suitable locations.
- Supporting sustainable new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites, and delivery of housing allocated in plans.
- Supporting delivery of starter homes.

Introduction of Fixed-Term Tenancies:

- A government amendment, introduced at the Committee Stage of the Housing and Planning Bill, proposes the use of mandatory fixed-term tenancies of between two and five years. Whilst the amendment relates specifically to council tenants, the government could introduce similar measures for housing association tenants through regulatory change.
- Whilst not originally part of the Housing and Planning Bill, a government announcement in early January 2016, stated its intention to directly commission the building of up to 13,000 new starter homes, defined as above, on public land. The pilot scheme will start on five sites in north-west London, Dover, Cambridgeshire, Chichester and Gosport.

6. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE THE 2012-15 HEREFORDSHIRE AND SHROPSHIRE JOINT STRATEGY

As at 31st March 2015, 400 new affordable homes had been delivered since the start of the Joint Strategy in 2012.

- The target of 140 affordable homes for the 2014-2015 financial year has been exceeded.
- 34 units of accommodation have been delivered in rural areas for local people in housing need through Community Led Development Funding.
- £2 million has been secured through the 2015-2018 HCA Bid Round to develop affordable housing across Herefordshire.
- A major regeneration project in a deprived area of Hereford City has been supported, which included the development of 259 new sustainable homes; 130 of which are affordable rent properties and 129 are for home ownership.
- An Older People's Housing Strategy and Pathway has been published, following a major research project, which identified older people's housing need across the county up until 2031. The document provides clear guidance on the housing and other related services that the council wishes to develop, in partnership with a range of other organisations, to address the housing and service challenges of our ageing population.
- An assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople has been completed and current and projected permanent, transit and other accommodation needs identified.
- 171 empty properties were brought back into use in 2013-2014, of which 55 were classed as 'long-term empty.'
- Herefordshire was one of five innovation areas in England selected for the delivery of the Department of Health (DoH) Homeless Link project, which aimed to improve outcomes for homeless people with mental health and substance misuse needs. An audit report, which identifies the findings from the project, has been published.
- B&B has not been used as emergency temporary accommodation for homeless families and other adult households since 2012.
- Herefordshire Healthy Housing Survey completed and report published October 2012.

- Adoption of the regional Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme in April 2014.

7. HEREFORDSHIRE'S HOUSING MARKET AND KEY CHALLENGES

Housing is a fundamental requirement for good health and wellbeing. Inequalities in a range of health issues can often be tracked to the quality of housing or its absence.

Unless otherwise stated, the following information is taken from 'Understanding Herefordshire' 2015. The report provides strategic intelligence for commissioning and business planning for the whole county.

- Within the West Midlands region, Herefordshire is ranked as the third most expensive unitary or shire authority, when median rents for all dwelling sizes are compared.
- The difficulties in acquiring housing are compounded by having one of the worst affordability levels within the West Midlands region; with houses at the lower end of the market costing around 8.1 times the annual earnings of the lowest earners. This puts greater pressure on the affordable housing options that are available across the county and, given a high demand against limited supply, there is a substantial shortfall.
- Research published by the Halifax Building Society in November 2014, concludes that rural house prices across Great Britain are 26% higher than in urban areas. Whilst the rural premium exists across all regions it is greatest in the West Midlands at 57%. This puts rural owner-occupation out of the reach of many, particularly young first-time buyers.
- The Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) published November 2013⁸ identified that, to balance the housing market over the longer term (2011-2031), an average of 35% of new homes built would be a viable level of affordable housing. The report recommended a range of tenures to cater for the breadth of housing needs and circumstances, particularly for people who can afford to pay more than social rents, but have insufficient resources to access the market.
- Flood risk is a key issue and in some areas a significant constraint to new development.
- The Herefordshire Local Housing Requirements Update, September 2014,⁹ states that the private-rented sector is likely to continue to be used for the foreseeable

⁸ G L Hearn

⁹ GL Hearn

future by households who cannot acquire a social rented home, given the existing shortfall. Whilst not identified in the study there is however, some circumstantial evidence to suggest that there may be barriers to accessing the private-rented sector for low-income and other households and this needs to be investigated more rigorously.

- Through 2001-2011, the number of over-crowded properties increased by 34% and the number of people living in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) grew by 44%. This is above the levels seen in Shropshire as well as regional and national averages, indicating that the situation in Herefordshire is more acute than elsewhere.¹⁰
- The last decade has seen a large increase in the number of concealed families, i.e. those that live in a household containing more than one family (including grown-up children who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household; elderly parents living with their family; or unrelated families sharing a home).
- In 2011 there were almost 850 concealed families, an increase of 87% on 2001 compared with 70% nationally. This increase could be related to:
 - A combination of the affordability of housing and the availability of finance since the credit crunch.
 - There may also be some connection to increased migration following the expansion of the European Union. The 2011 Census shows that a relatively large proportion of people in the white non-British ethnic group live in some form of shared housing.
- The 'heads' of just over half of the concealed families were aged under 34, mostly either lone parents with dependent children or couples with no children.
- Fuel poverty is a significant challenge in Herefordshire. Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) figures indicate that there were c11,000 fuel poor households across Herefordshire in 2013. This equates to 14.1% of all households, placing Herefordshire amongst the worst 10% of English Local Authorities in terms of fuel poverty levels. Fuel poverty has been identified as a significant health and wellbeing challenge and features in two of the seven priorities identified in Herefordshire's Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- The Herefordshire Healthy Housing Report 2012, confirmed that Herefordshire, as a large rural County, faces exceptional challenges in relation to the age and type of housing, the availability of mains gas, and the population profile.

¹⁰ GL Hearn, as above

- Weekly and annually work based earnings are low in Herefordshire compared to those regionally and nationally and comparator areas.
- A relatively large proportion of employment is in low paid sectors such as wholesale and retail and agriculture, which affects the overall productivity of the county.
- Herefordshire has the 4th lowest overall population density in England with a population scattered across the 842 square miles of the county.
- 25% of the population live in areas classified as ‘very sparse,’ which is higher than any other county.
- Rural households have additional costs associated with transport and heating the home, which for residents of villages are estimated to be 25% higher for pensioner household and at least 10% higher for the population as a whole.
- Almost all the county’s 842 square miles fall within the 25% most deprived in England in terms of geographical barriers to services.
- Some areas of South Hereford, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye are amongst the 25% most deprived in England and have become more deprived relative to other areas.
- People using secondary mental health services have an employment rate which is 66 percentage points lower than that the population as a whole.
- People with learning disabilities have an employment rate which is 59 percentage points lower than that the population as a whole.

7.1 General Housing Needs

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) March 2012 and Planning Practice Guidance on Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessments (DCLG, March 2014), sets out how the Objectively Assessed Need for housing is expected to be identified and other factors, which are relevant in translating this into policy targets for housing provision in local plans.

The Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy 2011-2031 sets out the overall strategic direction of land use for housing development and economic growth, taking into account environmental protection, transport and other infrastructure needs. Its latest version, published May 2014, demonstrates a need for a total of 16,500 new homes over the plan period, as follows:

- Hereford City 6,500
- Market Towns 4,700
- Rural Villages 5,300

Of the above, the identified need is for the delivery of, in the region of, 4,800 affordable homes over the Core Strategy period. For the purpose of delivering affordable housing across Herefordshire, the council considers affordable housing for local people to be:

‘Housing provided at below market price and allocated on the basis of need to people who live or work in Herefordshire, or need to move to Herefordshire to receive/provide support and who are unable to purchase or rent houses generally available on the open market without financial assistance, as their only home.’

Social Rented: Rented housing, usually owned and managed by housing associations, for which guideline target rents are determined through the HCA national rent regime.

Affordable Rented: Rented housing, usually owned and managed by housing associations, with rents set at up to 80% of the open market rent.

Intermediate: Homes for purchase and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels. They can include homes for Shared Ownership, Low Cost Market and Intermediate Rental.

The Herefordshire estimated target for affordable development over the next five years is in the region of 1,500 affordable homes located in urban and rural areas. However, In November 2014 a Written Statement by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning established that no affordable housing or other tariff-based infrastructure contributions could be required on residential development proposals of 10 dwellings or less and a maximum combined floor space of no more than 1,000 square meters, except in areas of outstanding natural beauty or on rural exemption sites. This development threshold is a mandatory requirement through restrictions to the Section 106 process, with immediate effect.

In the Rural Housing Policy Review Group report, ‘A fair deal for rural communities, February 2015, it was suggested that this would have a substantial detrimental impact on councils’ ability to negotiated affordable housing development in rural areas.

Following a Judicial Review of the planning amendment, brought by two local authorities, these policy changes were quashed by the High Court in July 2015.

7.2 First Time Buyers

GL Hearn, 2014 states that the tight lending criteria initiated by the ‘credit crunch’ has continued to have an impact on mortgage lending over the last four years, with households’ ability to obtain mortgage finance functioning as a constraint on demand for market homes. This has led to substantial difficulties for first-time buyers trying to access home ownership. Whilst the council is constrained in the extent to which it can

influence the market, where there is an identified need, intermediate housing such as low cost market and shared-ownership is secured through planning processes.

The extent to which the government's 'Starter Homes' initiative will improve opportunity for first time buyers in Herefordshire remains to be seen. Concerns remain that, even at a discount of 20% below market value, home ownership will still remain out of reach of many of Herefordshire's under 40 year olds who aspire to home ownership.

7.3 Older People's Housing

Herefordshire's population already has a relatively old age structure with 22% of people aged 65+ compared to 17% nationally. Population projections indicate that by 2031 almost a third of the county's population will be aged 65+ and the number of people aged 85 or over will have doubled.

Many older people in Herefordshire are active and healthy and through the provision of informal care to family and friends, and through volunteering activities, provide a significant contribution to the sustainability of their communities. There are however, significant longer-term implications for the provision of care and support as the proportions of very elderly people in the population increase.

To compound this issue residents who are aged 65-84, are more likely to live in rural villages and dispersed areas than the population as whole (49% of people aged 65-84 compared to 43% of all Herefordshire residents). The impact of significant cuts to budgets also has to be considered alongside the pre-existing challenges arising from demography and rurality.

Herefordshire's Older People's Housing Strategy and Pathway 2015, builds on the major research undertaken by Peter Fletcher Associates (PFA) and Arc4 2012, updated January 2015. The research highlights that:

- 80% of older people are able to purchase a property outright or with a mortgage and would prefer to purchase rather than rent. For general needs older peoples' housing development and/or remodelling there should be an average mix of 80% sale/20% rent, depending on the local market.
- There is a major shortage in the county of housing which is desirable, appropriate to needs and aspirations and presents an attractive option for older owner-occupiers wishing to move from larger family homes.
- There is equity in the older persons' market and the potential to use new housing development as a stimulant to rebalance a housing market that currently lacks sufficient choice and diversity.

The Older People's Housing Strategy and Pathway provides detailed analysis of the profile of general and specialist need for older people's housing in each of Herefordshire's seven local Housing Market Areas. This analysis is not, therefore replicated here.

7.4 Younger People aged 18-34 years

Access to suitable affordable housing in Herefordshire is a major challenge for young people in the current economic climate, particularly in the county's rural areas where there may be very limited availability of suitable accommodation.

Home ownership is out of the reach for the majority of young people, whilst social housing is inaccessible to all but the most vulnerable households and potentially, there are also barriers to accessing the private-rented sector in Herefordshire.

A report from the Institute for Public Policy Research¹¹ claims that nationally the inaccessibility of both home ownership and social housing for young people has meant that many are living in private rented accommodation, or with their parents or in shared housing.

In Herefordshire, whilst the data is not age specific, GL Hearn's analysis shows an overall reduction in home ownership and a growth in the private rented sector in Herefordshire between 2001 and 2011. This information does not however, identify significant, but elusive factors such as; the type of household accessing the sector, the average length of stay, the type and quality of the accommodation and if there are pre-existing barriers to access such as age and entitlement to housing benefit. Anecdotally the latter is considered to be the case for younger people and this needs further investigation.

From 1st January 2012 housing benefit entitlement for young people, aged 34 years and under and renting in the private sector was restricted to the rent payable for one room in shared accommodation (SAR), with some specific exemptions.

Contributory evidence to the Work and Pensions 2014 report Work and Pensions Report,¹² suggested that the SAR has led to young people getting into debt in accommodation that they can no longer afford and to increased 'sofa surfing' hidden homelessness where affordable accommodation cannot be accessed or unaffordable accommodation has been moved out of.

That homelessness and threatened homelessness is an issue for young people in Herefordshire is confirmed by data contained in the Homelessness Review 2016-2020.

¹¹ No Place to call Home, December 2012

¹² Support for housing costs in the reformed welfare system, March 2014

7.5 Learning Disabled People

Learning disabled people have poorer health than the general population, much of which is avoidable. These health inequalities often start early in life and are serious.

In general, learning disabled people die at a younger age than their non-disabled peers. Research has found that on average men die 13 years younger than men in the general population, whilst women die on average some 20 years younger than women in the general population.¹³

In Herefordshire, our aim is to ensure that the health, housing and support needs of learning disabled people are effectively met and that they have choice and control over their lives so they can live as independently as possible. In order to help us achieve this we are currently in the process of identifying a number of different housing models, which will be designed to meet needs and aspirations for supported and independent living.

‘Building the Right Support,’ October 2015 is a national plan to develop community services and close inpatient facilities for learning disabled and/or autistic people who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition. The document states that, whilst the numbers living in institutional care settings has significantly reduced in recent years, there is still an over reliance on this type of care.

The national plan has been built on the recognition that learning disabled and/or autistic people have the right to the same opportunities as anyone else to live satisfying and valued lives and to be treated with dignity and respect. They should expect, as non learning disabled/autistic people, to live in their own homes, to develop and maintain positive relationships and to get the support they need to be healthy, safe and an active part of society.

In order to speed up and shape the national approach, six ‘fast track’ areas including Herefordshire and Worcestershire, have drawn up plans to transfer resources away from institutional to community settings. Further information on the Herefordshire and Worcestershire approach is detailed in the body of the ‘Building the Right Support,’ report.

In 2013-2014, 540 people with learning disabilities, between the ages of 18-64 years, were known to social services in Herefordshire.¹⁴ Accommodation and employment data is shown below.

¹³ Confidential Inquiry into the Premature Death of People with Learning Disabilities, Heslop et al, 2013

¹⁴ Public Health England Community Mental Health Profiles 2013-14

	Herefordshire	England	WestMids	Similar L/As
Living in settled accommodation	77.0%	74.9%	68.9%	75.4%
In employment	4.5%	6.7%	4.9%	7.2%

7.6 People with Autism

Autism is the name given to a spectrum of conditions that have a lifelong impact on people. The term broadly describes differences and impairments in social interaction and communication, combined with rigid and repetitive behaviours.

There is little certainty in data on the local numbers of adults with Autism. The National Autistic Society estimates on prevalence in the UK population as a whole would suggest that in Herefordshire there are likely to be approximately 2,000 with some form of Autism.

In December 2014 Herefordshire Council submitted a self-assessment to Public Health England on how well it was doing in meeting the requirements of the National Autism Strategy. One of the key findings from the self-assessment was the pressing need to improve housing provision and opportunities for people with autism in the county

7.7 Looked After Children 16+ population

Herefordshire’s overarching vision for looked after children and those with complex needs is the same as for all of Herefordshire’s children and young people – that we keep them safe and give them a great start in life.

The 16+ population includes young people who:

- Have been looked after by the local authority and have reached 16-21 years of age.
- Are homeless 16-17 year olds or are at risk of homelessness.
- Have been remanded into the care of the local authority by the Court.
- Are a risk to themselves or others, with history of offending, mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.

The Looked After Children and Complex Needs Placements: Commissioning & Sufficiency Strategy 2014–2019, forms part of Herefordshire’s overall approach to commissioning services for children, young people and families and represents a key priority area. The strategy recognises that:

- There are gaps in provision for care leavers who are 18 years or over and have left care.

- Further work is necessary to develop an understanding of the housing and support needs of these young people so that appropriate services can be commissioned.

For homeless 16 and 17 year olds housing options, which provide security and safety, are usually very limited. With restricted access to welfare benefits, requirements for rent in advance and bond payments and tenancy law issues, very few reputable private sector landlords are willing to offer a tenancy. This is why it is so important that local authorities have protocols in place that clearly identify respective responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996 and how statutory duties will be fulfilled.

However, Research published by the Law Centres Network concluded that some local authority protocols for dealing with homeless 16 and 17 year olds did not comply with the law, resulting in homeless young people failing to receive the support they are entitled to.

7.8 Mental Health

The Department of Health (DoH) 'No Health without Mental Health Implementation Framework,' July 2012 states that at least one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives and that more than £2 billion is spent annually on social care for people with mental health problems.

In 2013-2014, Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group allocated £15.3 million to its contract with the current provider of secondary and community mental health services.¹⁵ A safe and secure place to live is essential for emotional and physical health and wellbeing. For many people however, poor mental health is linked to insecure, poor quality and overcrowded housing and homelessness.

The Mental Health Implementation Framework acknowledges that housing service commissioners and providers have a key role in improving mental health outcomes, providing both settled housing and the services people need to maintain their homes as independently as possible and in providing specialist support.

There is also recognition that good use of Health and Wellbeing Boards needs to be made to ensure effective alignment of joint resources across Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and local authority housing and social care commissioners.¹⁶

Adult Social Care outcomes show the following information 2013-2014 (Health and Social Care Information Centre).

¹⁵ Mental Health Needs Assessment, HCCG, March 2015

¹⁶ Housing and Mental Health, Mental Health Network, December 2011

	Herefordshire	England	WestMids	Similar L/As
Living in settled accommodation	50.5%	60.8%	72.2%	59.3%
In employment	7.1%	7.0%	10.4%	8.9%

The measures are for those on the Care Programme Approach only and so may not include all of those in contact with secondary mental health services. They do, however, show that, for both indicators for 2013-2014 Herefordshire, averages were below those for the West Midlands, similar local authorities and England as a whole.

In order to increase availability of affordable settled accommodation, we are currently in the process of identifying a number of different housing models, which will be designed to meet needs and aspirations for supported and independent living.

In addition, some people with mental health problems will require a stay in hospital and the integration of housing with discharge planning is critical if delayed discharges are to be avoided.

7.9 Gypsies and Travellers

Various research has shown that Gypsies and Travellers are one of the most disadvantaged and socially excluded groups in the country. Often their life experience is one of considerable prejudice and discrimination and they are particularly susceptible to a range of inequalities relating to health, education and quality of accommodation.

There are significant health inequalities particularly around infant and maternal mortality and life expectancy, which is 10-12 years below that of the settled population.

In order to assess needs in Herefordshire, the research consultants Arc4 were commissioned. The results were published in the 'Herefordshire Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment,' January 2015.

8. HEALTH AND HOUSING

8.1 Health and Social Care Act 2012

Local authorities' statutory responsibilities for public health services are set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The Act introduced substantial changes to the way that the NHS in England is organised. At the local level, Upper tier and unitary authorities took on new responsibilities to

improve the health of their populations, backed by a ring-fenced grant and a specialist public health team, led by the director of public health.

Section 12 of the Act lists some of the steps to improve public health that local authorities and the Secretary of State are able to take, including:

- Providing assistance to help individuals minimise risks to health arising from their accommodation or environment, including improving poor housing where this impacts on health.

8.2 Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 is a landmark piece of legislation, which places a fundamental emphasis on prevention and the implementation of a system, which intervenes early to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support.

The Act recognises housing authorities and housing providers as critical partners in the promotion of healthy independence and emotional wellbeing, making it clear that housing is a health-related service. In addition, the HCA acknowledges the positive relationship between good mental health and good housing and that it is core to social inclusion and recovery from mental illness.¹⁷

Specifically, Section 195 of the Act imposes a duty on Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWB) to encourage integrated working between commissioners of NHS, public health and social care services for the advancement of the health and wellbeing of the local population. A Health and Wellbeing Board must provide advice, assistance or other support in order to encourage partnership arrangements such as the developing of agreements to pool budgets or make lead commissioning arrangements under section 75 of the NHS Act.

There is an impressive and growing evidence base that shows housing related services can improve outcomes and reduce costs for health services and other areas of public expenditure. Delivering services in the community, rather than in institutions also brings a sharper focus on social capital; helping people with health needs or long term conditions to build links with the community give and get support through informal social networks as well as specific services.

Housing has been defined as a health ‘social determinant.’ Social determinants of health are the key social factors that affect people’s health over their lifetime and can either increase or reduce health inequalities between different groups in society. In comparison to other important social determinants of health, investing in housing and

¹⁷ Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund, HCA, February 2015.

related services are one of the few interventions shown in systematic reviews to narrow inequalities in health outcomes between social groups.¹⁸

The section also enables the Health and Wellbeing Board to encourage those who arrange for the provision of services related to wider determinants of health, such as housing, to work closely with it and to promote close working with commissioners of health and social care services.

8.3 Market Shaping and Facilitation

The Care Act places new duties on local authorities to facilitate and shape their market for care, support and related services.

‘Market shaping’ requires local authorities to understand and identify existing, unmet and future needs for care, support and related services and to link this into Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and strategies. There is the expectation that a diverse provider market will be encouraged to invest in innovative and cost-effective service solutions, which support prevention and early intervention.

There are clear links between the Housing Strategy and market shaping in the fundamental importance of the identification of existing and projected longer term needs for housing, care and related services and in our work with providers to ensure that these needs are met.

Market Facilitation – Housing Need

In terms of housing need, market facilitation includes consideration of issues around:

- How much housing and of what type and size is needed in each of Herefordshire’s seven local market areas?
- What potential does supported or specialised housing have in avoiding the need for a move into residential care or enabling a move out of it?
- The importance of healthy housing in the private and owner occupied sectors as a ‘prescription’ to prevent costly health and social care interventions.
- What impact does the quality, design and affordable warmth of existing housing have on repeat hospital admission for people who are vulnerable?
- What types of communities will enable people with care needs to remain living in them or what needs to be done to support this?

¹⁸ Public Health Research Consortium (2010) Tackling the Wider Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities: Evidence from Systematic Review

In the document, Market Position Statements and Housing,¹⁹ effective facilitation of housing markets starts from access to good market intelligence. This can then be used to encourage the market in particular directions, and to inform discussions with providers, consumers and planners about the type of accommodation that might be needed now and in the future.

8.5 Financial Costs of Poor Housing

In 2010 the BRE Trust published the results of a research project which sought to quantify the cost of people living in poor housing in England to the National Health Service. This was possible because of the availability of information from the English Housing Survey on the risk of a home incident occurring and its likely impact on health, measured through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), combined with information from the NHS on treatment costs.

The March 2015 Briefing Paper updates the BRE models and calculations in the original research and also widens the definition from 'poor housing' to include all 'sub-standard' housing.

The data shows that the hazards of excess cold and falls are those which have the most impact on health. In terms of the costs of remedial action, excess cold dominates, while some hazards might be remedied for a relatively small cost, for example installing handrails on unsafe stairs or changing dangerous cooker positions.

The 2015 estimate for the cost of poor housing is £1.4bn, compared to £600m in the 2010 report.

The 'Improving the public's health: A resource for local authorities,'²⁰ report quotes research which quantifies the extent of the financial savings to health that can be achieved through 'healthy housing' interventions. Some examples include:

- Meeting the NICE guidelines on safety assessments and installing safety equipment in homes would cost £42,000 for an average local authority. If this prevented 10% of injuries, it would save £80,000 in prevented hospital admissions and emergency visits, with further savings in associated GP visits and for ambulance, police and fire services (NICE 2010).
- In the 10 best-performing Safe At Home scheme areas, hospital admissions fell by 29% (Laser Alliance 2012). This equated to an overall saving of £27 million, while the cost of implementing the programme in these areas was just £1.7 million.

¹⁹ Institute of Public Care, December 2012

²⁰ Kings Fund, December 2013

- A Birmingham City Council health impact assessment established that a total outlay of £12 million achieved savings of £24 million a year, with the ‘quickest wins’ arising from improvements related to excess cold and reducing falls amongst older people.

8.6 Herefordshire Healthy Housing Survey

The Herefordshire Council Healthy Housing Survey 2011 was undertaken to provide a comprehensive review of current housing conditions across Herefordshire, to assess the impact of past policies and initiatives, and to inform future strategy and policy.

The fieldwork was completed during the period October 2011 to January 2012, and consisted of 1,264 individual property surveys, representing a 1.5% random sample of all residential properties in Herefordshire.

Information in the report confirms that the county’s older housing profile, restricted access to mains gas, relatively low income levels and lower than average social housing options, combine to create complex housing challenges, each of which has a cumulative adverse impact on the other.

The survey identified that private rented sector tenancies account for just under 19% of the housing market in Herefordshire. This 2% increase from 2005 is partly due to the current economic situation as more people are relying on the private rented sector when they would previously have purchased. This has had the effect of creating a cheaper sub-market that some rogue landlords are capitalising on by offering an inferior product.

In 2011 the government’s renewal budget allocation (first introduced in 1949) was completely removed, creating a gap in housing assistance previously administered by Herefordshire Council to address poor conditions in the private sector, including the owner occupied sector. Many vulnerable home owners cannot afford essential repairs and improvement. There is therefore a need to review these gaps in policy and provision, and evaluate options within available resource.

Survey Key Findings:

- 27% of private housing within Herefordshire fail the Decent Homes Standard overall, with a total cost implication of £37,395,278, an average of £1,680 per failing dwelling. Nationally 26.5% of private sector dwellings were non-decent, therefore, Herefordshire is performing marginally below the national average.
- 21% of dwellings were assessed as exhibiting Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. The English Housing Condition Survey (EHS) 2010-11 reported that nationally 17.1% of private dwellings contained a HHSRS Category 1 failure.

- 26% of households classed as vulnerable, occupy dwellings which fail the Decent Homes Standard, almost half of which are pre 1945 properties.
- In the owner occupied sector 28% of homes are non-decent and 20% of these are occupied by vulnerable households.
- In the private rented sector 32% of dwellings are non-decent and 55% of these are occupied by vulnerable households.
- More than half (52.4%) of households are not in a position to improve the condition of their home. More than a third (37%) are not homeowners, and therefore not responsible for home improvements.

8.7 Fuel Poverty

A fuel poor household is one that cannot afford to keep adequately warm at reasonable cost. Many of these households often face the difficult choice of either paying for sufficient fuel to keep warm or paying for other basic necessities.

14.1% of Herefordshire households were classed as fuel poor in 2013. These figures were higher than those in other parts of the West Midlands region, neighbouring Shropshire and Worcestershire and England as a whole.

Fuel Poverty has become a significant public health priority. Preliminary excess winter death (EWD)²¹ figures for the period 2012-13 showed an increase of 29% on the equivalent period from 2011-2012.

Public Health England's 2014 Cold Weather Plan demonstrates that winter weather has a direct effect on the incidence of heart attack, stroke, respiratory disease, flu, falls and injuries and hypothermia. Indirect effects include, mental health problems such as depression, and the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if boilers, cooking and heating appliances are poorly maintained or poorly ventilated.

8.8 Herefordshire Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2015-2018

The strategy, which was published in February 2016, makes the following points:

- Nationally, Fuel Poverty remains a key priority. 2013 figures show that 2.35 million English households live in Fuel Poverty, approximately 10.4 percent of all households in England.

²¹ These are deaths which are directly related to the cold weather. These are people who generally have underlying health problems, but would not have been expected to die during this period.

- The government's Fuel Poverty Advisory Group is strongly encouraging the Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England to support the development of preventative action with a strong focus on fuel poverty alleviation.
- Households on fixed low incomes are particularly vulnerable to fuel poverty. These include older people, (especially those who live alone), people with a disability, a long term or life-limiting illness, or mental ill health, single parents with dependent children and those out of or unable to work.
- People living in inefficient housing are also vulnerable. Typically, older properties are less energy efficient and are often less likely to have had insulation improvements installed. They are also often harder to insulate due to the complexities of their construction.

Fuel Poverty remains a significant public health issue. Cold-related illness, stress and excess winter deaths can all be linked to the prevalence of fuel poverty.

Analysis in the council's Affordable Warmth Strategy suggests that, using Age UK (2012) and Herefordshire population data, it can be estimated that the cost to the NHS in Herefordshire owing to cold homes is £4,706,935 and that reducing fuel poverty would lead to consequential reductions in local health spend, GP referrals and hospital admissions.

It is clear therefore, that initiatives promoting healthy housing, affordable warmth and other related services, which are integrated and jointly commissioned across health, housing and social care, have significant potential as a preventative activity to help vulnerable people remain well and independent in their own homes.

In addition to the clear health benefits, an increase in energy efficiency measures installed in homes could also have a positive impact on the local economy through increased employment opportunities and skills development.

8.9 Home Improvement Agency

A priority for Herefordshire is to provide a range of choice, advice and support to enable older people, disabled and vulnerable people to live safely and independently in their own homes. Latest reports from Age UK showed that 1.9 million bed days were lost to the NHS in the four years to June 2014 as older patients, who were ready to leave hospital, were delayed whilst waiting for home adaptations or care packages to be put in place.

Herefordshire Council's Home Improvement Agency supports vulnerable people to live independently by providing, enabling or signposting to services which promote continued independent living. They also oversee major work such as the installation of

level access showers and stair lifts carried out through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), which are now part of the Better Care Fund.

9. ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE OUR PRIORITIES

It should be noted that all identified strategic priorities have been developed on the basis of existing, or known, proposed changes to national housing, planning and social welfare policy. However, as at January 2016 this remains in a state of flux and firm futures on which to base our strategic housing priorities still remain uncertain.

9.1 PRIORITY 1 ACTIONS: IMPROVING HOUSING SUPPLY AND ACCESS TO HOUSING

Overall, it should be recognised that there are limits on the amount of control that councils' have on the operation of the provider market and consequently on issues such as how much housing is delivered, its affordability and tenure balance.

The majority of new homes will be built by private developers for sale to those seeking and able to buy on the open market. The type, size and location of developments will be directly influenced by housing demand and the affordability of the properties. Additionally, a number of affordable rented or intermediate homes will also need to be built for those unable to meet the financial commitment necessary to buy.

There is, however, a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the Government's policy in the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012. Herefordshire Council intends to achieve this as identified in the 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development policy.'

9.1.1 DELIVERING NEW HOMES

Provide well designed, quality homes

There is a substantial need for new homes in Herefordshire, but they still need to meet the council's minimum standards. We want to provide new build, well designed, quality homes that have a good energy rating, which will enable people to reduce living costs and avoid costly repairs. In addition, with an aging population in Herefordshire it will become increasingly important to promote the Lifetime Homes standards at the design stage for all residential development.

The delivery of new housing will be supported through the following actions:

Range and mix of housing

Residential development should provide a range and mix of housing, which contributes to the creation of balanced and sustainable communities.

Planning for Herefordshire's ageing population and strong retirement market by the development of 'homes for life' to facilitate independent living and care needs is becoming increasingly important.

At the same time, there is the opportunity to plan for more balanced communities by providing the right mix of housing and facilities to cater for people at different stages in life and with different incomes and needs. This will require the provision of more affordable housing, more family sized and smaller homes for younger households, facilities for children and young people, and a wider range of employment opportunities for people of working age.

Housing affordability is an issue in the county with a high proportion of detached housing and houses in the higher council tax bands. The supply of properties, which younger households might be able to afford to buy is limited and only 13.5% of housing is in the social rented sector compared to 19.5% across the West Midlands.

On larger housing sites of more than 50 homes, developers will be expected to:

- Provide a range of different sizes and types of housing to suit the needs of all households, including younger single people and couples.
- Provide housing that is capable of being adapted for people with additional needs.
- Providing housing capable of meeting the specific needs of older people.

Core Strategy planning policies may need to be reviewed and amended from time to time, subject to approval by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The following relates to the adopted policies as at February 2016.

Delivering New Homes Policy SS2

- A supply of deliverable and land capable of development will be identified to secure the delivery of a minimum of 16,500 homes in Herefordshire between 2011 and 2031 to meet market and affordable housing need.
- Hereford will be the focus for new housing development to support its role as the main centre in the county. Outside Hereford, the main focus for new housing development will take place in the market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye.

- In rural areas new housing development will be acceptable where it helps to meet housing needs and requirements, supports the rural economy and local services and facilities and is responsive to the needs of its community.
- The use of previously developed land in sustainable locations will be encouraged.

Affordable Housing Policy H1 – thresholds and targets

- All new open market housing proposals on sites of more than 10 dwellings, which have a maximum combined gross floor space of more than 1000 sqm, will be expected to contribute towards meeting affordable housing needs.
- Indicative affordable housing targets of 35% and 40% have been established for different parts of the county, based on evidence of need and viability in the county's housing market and housing value areas.

Affordable housing provided under the terms of this policy will be expected to be available in perpetuity for those in local housing need.

Rural Exception Sites Policy H2

- The provision of affordable housing is more difficult in rural areas, where often the scale and location of new development is more restricted. Proposals for affordable housing schemes in rural areas may be permitted on land, which would not normally be released for housing in accordance with the criteria set down in the policy.
- This policy enables the provision of affordable housing outside of villages, in areas where there is generally a restraint on open market housing, so as to help meet affordable housing needs in rural areas in perpetuity.
- In order to enable the delivery of affordable housing some market housing may be permitted, as part of a development, to subsidise a significant proportion of affordable housing provision. This will need to be evidenced through a financial appraisal in accordance with the terms set down in the policy.

Traveller sites Policy H4

- The accommodation needs of travellers will be provided for through the preparation of a Travellers' Development Plan Document (DPD), which will include site specific allocations. The Travellers' Sites Document, which is programmed in the Council's Local Development scheme (2015), for adoption in spring 2016, will include the following:

- An assessment of current need for permanent residential pitches with an indication of the process for updating need on a regular basis.
 - Pitch targets for travellers.
 - Deliverable sites for residential pitches for the period 2014-2019 to set against targets.
 - Identification of broad locations for further developable residential sites for travellers over the period 2019-2031.
 - Identification of need for, and approach to, the provision of transit sites for the plan period.
 - Consideration of the need for, and approach to, provision for travelling show people within the county for the plan period.
 - Consideration of the need for a rural exceptions policy to enable sites to be brought forward solely as affordable gypsy and traveller sites.
- Traveller sites include those considered necessary to meet the residential needs of gypsies and travellers, who will remain in a location permanently or for substantial periods; transit sites for those moving through the area and well plots for travelling show people.

Individual or Group Self and Custom Build

- The council recognises that individual or group self and custom build projects will contribute to the delivery of homes over the plan period. These may be in the form of affordable, low cost market and open market housing. The council will encourage and support this type of development where the proposals are in line with the relevant policies of the Core Strategy and neighbourhood plans.
- A self-build land register will be kept in accordance with the requirements of the Housing and Planning Bill, when enacted.

Ensuring sufficient housing land delivery Policy SS3

- A sufficient supply of housing land will be maintained to ensure the delivery of the Core Strategy housing target over the plan period. The rate of housing delivery and supply will be assessed through the annual monitoring process.
- If monitoring demonstrates that the number of new dwelling completions is below the cumulative target figure, over a financial year, the council will prioritise increasing housing supply in the following monitoring periods.

- In respect to the housing target for the county, the expectation is that the highest rate of housing completions will be towards the latter end of the plan period.

Joint Venture Developments

- We will explore the opportunities for undertaking Joint Venture developments, where this is demonstrably favourable.

Maximise External funding Opportunities

- We will continue to work with the Homes and Communities Agency, the Local Enterprise Partnerships and other partners to maximise the amount of external funding that can be drawn into Herefordshire to promote and deliver housing and economic growth.

Increasing Housing Options and Choice for Older People

- We will ensure development of sufficient market rent and affordable housing and appropriate housing with care to meet the future needs of older people, through implementing the actions identified in the Older People’s Housing Strategy and Pathway Action Plan.
- We will negotiate with developers to trial non-standard housing design on new build open market schemes, which may be particularly attractive to older people wanting to down-size and thereby release family housing. As an example, we have successfully negotiated for a national housing developer to build a number of larger two-bedroom properties for older people on a three-bedroom ‘land footprint.’ This design will be replicated on other sites if these properties prove to be an attractive to older buyers.

9.1.2 INCREASING ACCESS TO HOUSING

We will:

- i. Review our land and property portfolio, both as part of a planned strategic disposal approach and in support of the delivery of market and affordable housing.
- ii. Review the Home Point Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Allocation Policy

The Home Point Allocations Policy is currently being thoroughly reviewed following consultation with partner agencies and other stakeholders. The review identified a number of issues, which have been addressed by the reviewed draft policy. Remaining key actions include:

- Modelling the draft policy to ensure it meets identified objectives.

- Undertaking the necessary work to facilitate policy implementation in Autumn 2016.
- iii. Investigate opportunities to increase access to good quality private-rented sector housing, which is affordable for people in housing need.
- iv. Support housing association partners to develop open-market private rented sector housing, where appropriate.
- v. Work with local housing associations in their asset management stock viability and appraisal modelling to ensure that best use is made of existing resources and that schemes continue to be responsive to housing need.

Empty Homes:

We will evaluate resources available to address empty residential property in Herefordshire. In particular we will:

- Evaluate previous successes prior to 2014 and set targets for future work within available resource.
- Aim to provide affordable housing from homes that are brought back into use.

9.2 PRIORITY 2 ACTIONS: IMPROVING HOUSING SUPPORT

Accommodation Based and Floating Support

Housing related support services are commissioned through a competitive tender process, which reflects our commissioning approach of service delivery based on the outcomes to be achieved and the most effective way of securing value for money.

- We will continue to provide accommodation based and floating support to vulnerable people including people with offending behaviour, substance misuse, mental health and learning disabilities, through a delivery partner.
- We will continue to provide accommodated based housing support for young people, through a delivery partner.

Increase Housing Options and Support Choice for Vulnerable People

- We are working towards delivering a range of housing and support options to address the needs of learning disabled people, autistic people and people with mental ill health.

Preventing Homelessness

- We will ensure that we continue to prevent homelessness occurring through implementing the actions identified in our Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2016-2020. The Homelessness Review 2016-2020 provides the evidence base for the following Strategic Objectives:
 - i. Minimise rough sleeping and increase tenancy sustainment opportunities for rough sleepers, or those at risk and for people with complex needs.
 - ii. Maximise homeless prevention activity by building on current success and promoting positive opportunities for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.
 - iii. Help improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people and those who are at risk of homelessness.
 - iv. Ensure homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, are able to access affordable housing and that support services are targeted effectively.

Maximising External Funding Opportunities

- We intend to maximise investment opportunities to ensure that our housing priorities are delivered. We will work with partners, including housing associations, voluntary and community groups, charitable foundations, the Homes and Communities Agency, the Department of Health, and any other appropriate organisation to secure additional funding with which to increase the range of services available.

Promoting Independent Living

- We will continue to provide a range of choice, advice and support to enable older people, disabled and vulnerable people to live safely and independently in their own homes.
- We will continue to promote the council's Home Improvement Agency (HIA) in supporting vulnerable people to live independently by providing, enabling or signposting to services, which promote continued independent living.
- The HIA also will continue to oversee major work, such as the installation of level access showers and stair lifts carried out through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG); now part of the Better Care Fund.

9.3 PRIORITY 3 ACTIONS: IMPROVING HOUSING STANDARDS

As previously identified, there are clear links between health and housing. The March 2015 BRE Briefing Paper, 'The Cost of Poor Housing the NHS, estimates the cost of poor housing to be in the region of £1.4bn. This includes the impact of cold homes on health and wellbeing.

- We will aim to reduce the issue of cold homes and fuel poverty in Herefordshire through implementing the actions identified in the Affordable Warmth Strategy 2015-2018.
- We will aim to increase housing and management standards in the Private rented sector by:
 - Identify ways through which opportunities for providing advice and training for tenants can be provided to make them more 'attractive' to landlords and empower them to take action in relation to poor housing standards.
 - Providing advice and training opportunities for landlords.
 - Identifying and take action on poor quality private rented properties including:
 - ❖ Having a staged proportionate response to housing standards complaints and enquiries.
 - ❖ Targeted interventions at the bottom of the market, for example, proactive inspection of higher risk shared accommodation (i.e. Houses in Multiple Occupation).
 - ❖ Prosecution of rogue landlords in line with the 2016 Housing Enforcement Policy.
- We will explore options to assist home owners maintain and repair their homes. The council no longer has the financial resources to improve the condition of owner-occupied homes and needs to identify other ways to help fund work. This may include consideration of equity release schemes.
- We are considering the feasibility of developing housing and health profiles in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Housing and Health Toolkit. This could include a desktop exercise for reviewing current housing conditions in the County.
- We will explore the potential to develop a Health and Housing Plan, which will sit below and support the Housing Strategy. The Health and Housing Plan will be

developed jointly with other colleagues, including representatives from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Environmental Health, Public Health, Social Care and colleagues concerned with energy efficiency and affordable warmth.

10. MONITORING THE STRATEGY

The actions to achieve the priorities identified in this strategy will be monitored on a regular basis by the Commissioning Team and on a periodic basis by the Adults and Wellbeing Cabinet Member and by the Joint Commissioning Board.

It should be recognised that unforeseen challenges may continue to present through the roll-out of welfare reform and radical changes to central government housing and planning policy and that this may require a re-evaluation of approach.

Equality Analysis (EIA) Form

A) Description

Name of service, function, policy (or other) being assessed

Housing Allocation policy for Herefordshire

Directorate or organisation responsible (and service, if it is a policy)

AWB Commissioning (Housing Partnerships)

Date of assessment

January 2016

Names and job titles of people carrying out the assessment

Trea Connon, Commissioning Officer (Housing Partnerships)

Accountable person

Martin Samuels, Director of Adult and Wellbeing

What are the aims or main purpose of the service, function or policy? What does it provide and how does it provide it?

The policy is based on the reasonable preference categories which are set by law and must be given a 'head start' in a local authority's Allocation Policy.

The policy establishes the rules and processes by which people get access to social and affordable rented housing. The council and the major registered providers within the county operate a common housing register and allocate housing through a choice based lettings scheme known as Home Point.

The key aims of the policy are to:

- meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social and affordable rented housing
- provide housing choice of affordable homes to meet applicants needs
- ensure that the housing allocation process is transparent to applicants
- maximise the best use of existing housing stock within the county
- help to prevent homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- contribute to the development of sustainable communities
- let housing association's accommodation fairly and in an open and transparent way
- ensure consistency in the way in which applicants access affordable and social rented housing

The policy establishes the qualifying criteria for inclusion on the housing register and the main criteria for allocating housing. It also sets out the procedures for the policy's operation and explains the relationship between it and housing providers' own policies and practices.

Location or any other relevant information

List any key policies or procedures to be reviewed as part of this assessment.

The Home Point guidance and working procedures will need to be reviewed following approval of the policy and prior to implementation.

Who is intended to benefit from the service, function or policy?

Local resident households in housing need and the wider community. Applicants in need will be given the opportunity to access affordable housing. It will provide choice to applicants, balanced against the shortage of social housing.

There are a number of specific groups who are expected to benefit from the change in policy. These include certain groups who currently do not qualify for the housing register but who are generally accepted as having a housing need, as identified in the Code of Guidance, such as those lacking or sharing facilities with non-family households.

It is intended that those who fall into the 'reasonable preference' categories will have the degree of priority required in the legislation.

Who are the stakeholders? What is their interest?

Potential social housing tenants and some existing social housing tenants. Their interest relates to access to the register and ability to bid for available social housing properties.

Registered Providers (aka Housing Associations) own and manage the social housing stock in Herefordshire. The Providers are required to cooperate with the council to ensure its statutory duties are delivered. Providers need to let their properties efficiently and to those in housing need.

B) Partnerships and Procurement

If you contract out services or work in partnership with other organisations, Herefordshire Council remains responsible for ensuring that the quality of provision/ delivery meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, i.e.

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advances equality of opportunity between different groups
- Fosters good relations between different groups

What information do you give to the partner/contractor in order to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Act? What information do you monitor from the partner/contractor in order to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Act?

Herefordshire Council expects all partners to ensure that they comply with the Equality Act 2010 and have their own Equality policies available.

The Home Point partnership will monitor various aspects of the scheme including applicants to the register, exclusions and those who successfully bid for social housing.

Are there any concerns at this stage that indicate the possibility of inequalities/negative impacts? For example: complaints, comments, research, and outcomes of a scrutiny review. Please describe:

The 2004 National Evaluation of choice based lettings (CBL) schemes does not suggest any negative equality impact on the grounds of race. Barriers tend to relate to recent immigrants who do not speak English to a high standard.

Taking a broad view of the term 'Disability' the National Evaluation suggests that CBL may impact on:

- Very elderly or infirm
- People with learning difficulties
- People with limited literacy
- People with mental health issues.

Research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2012) in a northern rural local authority area found that:

- vulnerable groups were not disadvantaged by CBL

- there were disproportionately fewer older persons bidding and a high numbers of older persons requiring assistance to bid.

Application to the register and bidding for properties is largely an online process. Generally older and disabled people may be less likely to have IT access in the home, and, in some cases, may have greater difficulty visiting public offices where IT facilities are available. Herefordshire is predominantly a rural county with 95 per cent of the land area classified as 'rural', and 53 per cent of the population live in these rural areas. This can make accessing services more difficult.

The current online application process has proved difficult for some applicants. This seems to be largely due to the need to complete a housing options questionnaire as an integral part of the application. The questionnaire will be retained, as this provides useful individualised housing advice but it will be a standalone tool, separate from the online application.

C) Information

What information (monitoring or consultation data) have you got and what is it telling you?

The monitoring information that we currently have is limited. We are able to identify the number applications which include a household member who is registered disabled. We can also monitor for age. However, other data has proven difficult to obtain. Therefore, although the indications are that generally the council is meeting its duties, improvement in data collection and analysis is required to ensure that this is the case.

D) Assessment/Analysis

Describe your key findings (eg. negative, positive or neutral impacts - actual or potential). Also your assessment of risk.

Strand/community	Impact
Race	The policy is considered to have a neutral impact although there may be barriers, which may have a racial or nationality dimension, relating to recent immigrants who do not speak English to a high standard.
Disability	Those with disabilities where their current housing circumstances have a significant impact on their health and wellbeing will benefit from high priority under the proposed scheme. Information is available in different formats for those with sight impairments. Generally, older and disabled people may be less likely to have IT access in the home and in some cases may have greater difficulty in accessing public offices.
Age	Older social housing tenants under-occupying their properties will have a high level of priority. Those in need of sheltered accommodation due to medical need will be assisted within the policy. Generally, older and disabled people may be less likely to have IT access in the home and in some cases may have greater difficulty in accessing public offices.
Gender	Married, civil partners and co-habiting couples, same sex couples, and siblings, who wish to live together, can make applications.
Faith/religion	Further data will need to be collected to assess impact. However initially the Policy is considered to be neutral.
Marriage/civil partnership	It is not considered that that the policy will impact negatively on this group.
Gender reassignment	Further data will need to be collected to assess impact. However initially the Policy is considered to be neutral.

Sexual orientation	Further data will need to be collected to assess impact. However initially the Policy is considered to be neutral. Same sex couples can make joint applications.
Pregnant women & women on maternity leave	Pregnant women are protected under the Homelessness legislation, which is reflected within the banding.

E) Consultation

Did you carry out any consultation? **Yes**

Who was consulted?

Registered provider partners, statutory and voluntary groups.

Describe other research, studies or information used to assist with the assessment and your key findings.

Piloting Choice-Based Lettings: An evaluation, ODPM 2004
North Yorkshire Home Choice Evaluation, JRF 2014

Do you use diversity monitoring categories? **N**

(if No you should use this as an action as we are required by law to monitor diversity categories)

If yes, which categories?

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage & Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & Maternity
- Race
- Religion & Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

What do you do with the diversity monitoring data you gather? Is this information published? And if so, where?

F) Conclusions

	Action/objective/target OR justification	Resources required	Timescale	I/R/S/J
a)	Establish effective diversity monitoring indicators and protocols	Staff time, internal and partners	Sept 2016	S
b)	Ensure that continued support is available for groups most likely to be impacted by the use of IT.	Staff time	Sept 2016	S
c)	Review the effectiveness of the current provision of translation services through the IT system	Staff time	Sept 2016	S
d)				

(I) Taking immediate effect.

(R) Recommended to Council/Directors through a Committee or other Report*.

(S) Added to the Service Plan.

(J) To be brought to the attention of the Equality Manager.

*Summarise your findings in the report. Make the full assessment available for further information.

NB: Make sure your final document is suitable for publishing in the public domain.