

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Lettings Policy Review

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 5 February 2026
Cabinet – 10 February 2026

Executive Portfolio: Resident Services and Corporate Performance (Cllr S Ferguson)

Report by: Housing Needs & Resources Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The Council's Lettings Policy provides the legal allocations framework as to who is accepted onto the register, how the register is administered and how the majority of social rented housing in the district is let.

The policy must be reviewed and amended where necessary in light of changes in legislation, new statutory guidance or precedents and rulings made in the Courts.

The Council's policy has been reviewed and amended to reflect changes as a result of:

1. The Secretary of State amending legislation and statutory guidance which removes the local connection or residency requirement for care leavers and victims of domestic abuse applying to council housing registers.
2. The need to clarify how Cambridgeshire County Council Care Leavers are prioritised once accepted onto the housing register, compared to Care Leavers who are funded by other local authorities and have no other connection to the area.

Delegated authority is also sought so that in future, minor amendments and statutory changes can be made to the Lettings Policy by the Corporate Director (Communities) in consultation with Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the amendments to the Lettings Policy, as shown in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Give delegated authority to the Corporate Director (Communities), in consultation with Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, to make minor amendments and statutory changes to the Lettings Policy.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 As the local Housing Authority, the Council is required by law to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities in the allocation of social rented housing. The Lettings Policy is the Council's allocations scheme.
- 1.2 Although the Council is no longer a stock holding authority it has a housing register of people wishing to be considered for an allocation of social rented housing and a choice-based lettings scheme (the Home-Link scheme) which is the vehicle for letting the majority of these properties in the district. The Lettings Policy dictates how the housing register and the letting of properties operates and the six partner local authorities within the Home-Link scheme each operate a Lettings Policy that follows the same broad principles.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to advise of necessary changes to the Lettings Policy in light of changes made to legislation and statutory guidance by the Secretary of State. As these changes were implemented immediately, they were introduced to staff by a management instruction whilst the necessary changes to Lettings Policies were agreed amongst the Home-Link partner councils. The proposed amendments to the Policy are to ensure that the risk of legal challenge is minimised.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government amended [Part 6 of the 1996 Act](#) and revised statutory guidance in July 2025. These changes came into effect immediately and management instructions and revised guidance for staff were introduced so that these changes were being correctly applied from the outset. The Home-Link partnership of authorities has considered what changes were required to our Lettings Policies and systems and this report seeks approval to make the necessary changes to the published Policy. The report also seeks approval to make minor changes to the Policy in future under delegated authorities, so that these types of changes can be made more quickly.
- 2.2 The changes made by the Secretary of State exempt Care Leavers under 25 and victims of domestic abuse from local connection or residence requirements that may be contained with a council's Lettings Policy. The changes are to ensure fairer access to housing for vulnerable people who often need to move for safety or support.
- 2.3 To comply with this change, the wording in Section 3.4 of the Lettings Policy must be amended to make it clear that certain groups of people are excluded from the Local Connection test. The new wording is attached at Appendix One.
- 2.4 In addition, a further amendment to Section 4.6 of the Policy is required to clarify that Care Leavers funded by Cambridgeshire County Council will qualify for a Band A status when certain other conditions are met. This wording is also contained in Appendix One.

- 2.5 The Band A status awarded to Cambridgeshire Care Leavers is not a new aspect of the Policy. However, the removal of the Local Connection test means that Care Leavers funded by any local authority area in England are now eligible to join the register. This broader eligibility necessitates additional clarification of the circumstances under which Cambridgeshire-funded Care Leavers are awarded the Band A status, and how applications from Care Leavers funded by other local authorities will be assessed. The Home-Link partnership has proposed that although Care Leavers from other local authority areas are eligible to join the register they would not attract the same priority and would be awarded the housing factor relevant to their circumstances in priority Band C.
- 2.6 A full review of the policy is planned for 2026. However, the Local Connection amendments are required immediately to ensure the Policy remains compliant with statutory guidance.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 The proposed to amendments to the Lettings Policy will ensure that it remains legally complaint and aligned with legislation and statutory guidance. This will minimise potential legal challenge should the Policy not include the exemptions introduced by the Secretary of State's amendments.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The amendments as to how housing register applicants are assessed has already been introduced via a management instruction given that the Secretary of State's immediately introduced these changes.

6. LINK TO HUNTINGDONSHIRE FUTURES, THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Improving the quality of life for local people by keeping them out of crisis through assisting to help meet their housing needs is a strategic priority of the Council. By keeping our Lettings Policy up to date with both legal requirements and government policy this will enable us to provide the most appropriate advice and assistance to customers wishing to apply to the housing register and access social rented housing.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 As the suggested changes do not affect a large proportion of applicants on the register, or constitute a significant alteration to procedure, this is not

considered to be a major change of policy and a wider consultation exercise is therefore not required at this stage.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Home-Link partners have sought legal opinion about the proposed Lettings Policy changes and have been advised that they will ensure the policy remains legal considering the changes to legislation and statutory guidance.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no resource implications associated with this report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 The Lettings Policy must be amended in light of changes to legislation and statutory guidance. This report recommends the necessary changes to ensure that the Lettings Policy remains legal and minimises the risk of legal challenge.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Proposed changes to the Council's Lettings Policy

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Statutory guidance - Providing social housing for local people](#)

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title	Jon Collen – Housing Needs & Resources Manager
Tel No:	01480 388220
Email:	<u>Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</u>