

Local Housing Allowance

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor E Woodburn
LEAD OFFICER: Jane Salt, Head of Customer Services
REPORT AUTHOR: Jane Salt, Head of Customer Services

<p>Recommendation: Executive approve the Safeguard Policy in respect of the Local Housing Allowance Scheme</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the most radical change in Housing Benefits (HB) since its introduction in 1988. It is the cornerstone of the Government's HB reform programme that aims to simplify HB and ensure it supports the wider objectives for welfare reform.

1.2 The main change for private landlords is that LHA will be paid to the tenant and the tenant will be responsible for paying their rent to the landlord. In recognition of the risk that some tenants may struggle with the responsibility of paying their rent, safeguards have to be put in place for vulnerable claimants.

1.3 This report seeks Executive approval of the policy that will ensure that the safeguards are in place and applied correctly.

2. ARGUMENT

2.1 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has provided guidance on when direct payments to the landlord may be appropriate, where a tenant cannot pay or is unlikely to pay their rent.

2.2 However each local authority must approve a policy to ensure that staff are given clear guidance to follow to guarantee equal and fair treatment is applied to all claimants.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

3.1 Not introduce a policy allowing unfair treatment for those in society who are most vulnerable.

3.2 Introduce a policy that ensures fair treatment for those in society who are most vulnerable.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Council should adopt a Safeguard Policy in respect of making payment of rent allowance direct to the landlord.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

5.1 DWP has provided some funding for the implementation of LHA.

5.2 There are some human resource implications with the introduction of LHA but these will be confined to the existing arrangements in the Revenues and Benefits section (RBS).

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The introduction of LHA is being project managed within RBS.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 This policy will help local residents have access to the benefits they are entitled to (2.4.4)

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Safeguard Policy (Payment Direct to Landlord)

List of Background Documents: None

List of Consultees: Corporate Team, Cllr E Woodburn

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed . This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Ensure vulnerable claimants are dealt with fairly
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Impact on Sustainability	None
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	Ensure vulnerable claimants are dealt with fairly
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Ensure vulnerable claimants are dealt with fairly
Children and Young Persons Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	Ensure vulnerable claimants are dealt with fairly
S151 Comments	
Monitoring Officer Comments	Reports on statutory changes. As far as the consequences of those changes are concerned Councils would normally be expected to take positive action to redress inequalities

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision NO