RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: REGULATORY

1. DECISION TAKEN

Minor amendments to the Common Housing Allocation Scheme (CHAS)

Decision to make minor amendments to the Common Housing Allocation Scheme (CHAS).

2. DECISION TAKER

Director - Regulatory

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

6 November 2026

4. REASON FOR DECISION

4.1 Minor changes have been made following changes to the operational environment and also to clarify text to accurately reflect existing policy.

4.2 Cabinet resolved at its meeting on 6th February 2024 that authority be delegated to the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health (now Regulatory), in conjunction with the Director of Housing and Environmental Health (now Regulatory), to make minor amendments to the CHAS.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None.

6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)

6.1 The amendments to the Common Housing Allocation Scheme (CHAS) have been agreed with Lifestone Homes (formerly SettleParadigm), which works together with the Council as the North Hertfordshire Housing Partnership (NHHP) to jointly manage and operate the CHAS and the Common Housing Register. As the amendments are minor in nature, the Council is not required to consult more widely.

6.2 The Executive Member for Regulatory, Councillor Mick Debenham, has been consulted and is supportive of this decision.

7. FORWARD PLAN

7.1 This decision is not a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Council is required by law to have an allocation scheme for determining how the allocation of affordable housing is prioritised, and the procedures to be followed. The current version of the CHAS was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 6th February 2024 and implemented in September of that year. Further minor amendments have since been agreed under delegated authority (most recently in October 2025) in response to legislative changes or to address emerging operational issues.

8.2 The majority of the amendments now proposed relate to the proposed withdrawal of the NHHP policy on under-occupation and housing benefit reduction (dated August 2013). This policy was introduced to protect households affected by the national social sector size criteria which effectively reduces the amount of Housing Benefit for working-age social housing tenants who have more bedrooms than they are deemed to need. At the time, there was considerable concern about the impact on social tenants who might be unable to move from properties they could no longer afford and the CHAS was revised to allow for households affected by the social sector size criteria, and who wished to move to a smaller social property, to be awarded a Band A priority.

8.3 More than a decade later, the number of households awarded this preference is minimal (there are no households currently on the Common Housing Register (CHR) with this preference). In practice, the operation of the policy has also proved to be unduly cumbersome as well as restrictive for applicants who, in line with the policy, are only able to bid on certain ring-fenced properties. It is therefore proposed to withdraw the NHHP policy on under-occupation and housing benefit reduction and remove the corresponding preference in the CHAS. If any new households in similar circumstances join the CHR, they will be dealt with under discretion, maintaining the Band A priority award but without the previous restrictions on bidding.

8.4 Last year, we piloted changes to better manage move-on preference for single/couple households in supported accommodation. However, these changes have proved difficult and time consuming to implement. We are therefore proposing further refinement to this preference, which will continue to provide medically vulnerable households who are ready to leave supported accommodation with a pathway through to settled accommodation.

8.5 Remaining proposed minor amendments aim to clarify text to reflect existing policy or to prevent policy being circumvented.

8.6 Appendix 1 details all proposed amendments, together with impacts. If approved, these would come into immediate effect.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The Cabinet approved the current version of the CHAS at its meeting on 6th February 2024. The Cabinet also resolved that authority be delegated to the Director of Housing and Environmental Health (now Regulatory) in conjunction with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health (also Regulatory), the power to make minor amendments to the Common Housing Allocation Scheme (CHAS) from time to time.

9.2. Section 4 of the Homelessness Act 2002 confirms that the District Council is the Local Housing Authority (LHA) under the Housing Act 1985 Section 1 (1).

9.3. Section 14 (1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 provides that the LHA is no longer required to maintain a housing register. However, Section 166A (1) of the Housing Act 1996 states that every LHA shall have a scheme for determining local priorities and the procedure to be followed in allocating housing.

9.4. Section 160ZA(7) of the Housing Act 1996 gives LHAs the power to determine who qualifies, or does not qualify, to be allocated social housing, subject to any regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 160ZA(8).

9.5. LHAs' homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, including duties to provide accommodation for specified homeless applicants.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. Minimal software costs are expected and will be shared with Lifestone Homes in accordance with existing cost sharing arrangements. Minimal costs also from a small number of additional medical assessments.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Without the proposed minor amendments to the CHAS, there is a risk of challenge to Council decisions due to the policy being open to a degree of interpretation.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken at the time that the updated CHAS was considered by Cabinet, on 6th February 2024. The minor changes outlined in this report are not expected to change the conclusions of that Assessment.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this decision.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. All recommendations/actions of the council, and those identified in this report/decision strive for positive impacts on the environment as per the Council's Sustainability priority.

14.2 There are no significant environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the decision taken in this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no human resource implications.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 Cabinet's approval of the original Common Housing Allocation Scheme 6th February 2024 (Update to Common Housing Allocation Scheme item 266)

16.2 The current Common Housing Allocation Scheme can be viewed at: Apply for social housing | North Herts Council

17. APPENDICES

17.1 Appendix 1: Proposed minor amendments to the Common Housing Allocation Scheme

NOTIFICATION DATE

9 November 2026

Please Note: that *unless urgency provisions apply* EXECUTIVE decisions cannot be implemented until 5 clear working days have elapsed after the decision has been taken to allow for scrutiny call-in.

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS