



PUBLICATION OF DECISION LIST NUMBER 25/18-19

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018/2019

Date Published: Tuesday 9 October 2018

This document lists the Decisions that have been taken by the Council, which require publication in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. The list covers Key, Non-Key, Council and Urgent Decisions. The list specifies those decisions, which are eligible for call-in and the date by which they must be called-in.

A valid request for call-in is one which is submitted (on the form provided) to the Governance and Scrutiny Team in writing within 5 working days of the date of publication of the decision by at least 7 Members of the Council.

Additional copies of the call-in request form are available from the Governance and Scrutiny Team.

If you have any queries or wish to obtain further report information or information on a decision, please refer to:
– Claire Johnson (ext.4239)

Phone 020 8379 then extension number indicated

INDEX OF PUBLISHED DECISIONS – Tuesday 9 October 2018

List Ref	Decision Made by	Date Decision came into effect	Part 1 or 2	Subject/Title of Report	Category of Decision	Affected Wards	Eligible for Call-In & Date Decision must be called in by (If Applicable)	Page Number
1/25/18-19	Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement (Cllr Mary Maguire)	Wednesday 17 October 2018	Part 1	Discretionary Housing Payment Policy	Key Decision KD: 4427	All	Yes – Tuesday 16 October 2018	1-2

DECISIONS

For additional copies or further details please contact Claire Johnson (020 8379 4239), Governance and Scrutiny Team.

LIST REFERENCE: 1/25/18-19

SUBJECT TITLE OF THE REPORT :							
DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY							
Part 1 or 2 (relevant exempt Paragraph)	Wards affected by decision	Decision taken by	Date Decision comes in to effect	Interest declared in respect of the Decision	Category of decision (i.e. Key, Non-Key, Council, Urgent)	Contact Details	Eligible for Call-in & Date to be called in by
Part 1	ALL	Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement (Cllr Mary Maguire)	Wednesday 17 October 2018	None	Key Decision KD: 4427	Harriet Potemkin 020 8379 8399 harriet.potemkin@enfield.gov.uk	Yes – Tuesday 16 October 2018
<p>AGREED that the following decision will come into effect on 17th October, subject to not being called in: TO approve the new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy for implementation.</p>							
<p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED</p> <p>An alternative option is to continue with the approach set out in our existing policy. However, this will restrict the council from meeting the challenges of existing and future welfare reform.</p> <p>Increasing numbers of private sector tenants whose benefits have been capped will become threatened with homelessness. Without a more robust DHP Award Scheme which incentives and supports applicants to find work or more affordable accommodation, it is likely that many of these households will become dependent on DHP. This is not sustainable given that DHP is a limited resource. Keeping the existing policy would also lead to increasing numbers of temporary accommodation tenants whose benefits have been capped becoming dependent on DHP. Where this becomes unaffordable given the limited DHP funds, and the council are increasingly required to terminate DHP on review, it would remain difficult to make Cessation of Duty decisions because tenants will argue that their accommodation is unaffordable and the council must cover the costs. This risks a significant projected budget pressure on temporary accommodation costs.</p>							
<p>REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The new policy has been amended to enable the council to make better use of the limited DHP award resource to support tenants while they take action to resolve their housing difficulties in the longer term. The new emphasis will also support the Council is making an “intentionally homeless” (private sector) or a “cessation of duty” decision (temporary accommodation) where a tenant fails to take reasonable action to pay rent they can reasonably afford or take action to resolve their housing benefit shortfall in the longer term.</p>							

The new policy aims to discourage tenants from becoming dependant on DHP payments and make DHP available to help other tenants in need. It aims to ensure the Council communicates clearly to capped private sector tenants that tenants are expected to take reasonable steps to resolve their shortfall in the longer term. Where tenants fail to take such action, the change of policy will make it easier to for the Council to cease DHP payments (after a reasonable period) and find the tenant intentionally homeless in exceptional and appropriate cases.

The change in policy should encourage private rented sector tenants to resolve their own housing benefit shortfalls rather than choose to approach Enfield as homeless and rely on temporary accommodation. This is an important way in which to avoid escalating temporary accommodation costs.

Temporary housing tenants will also be encouraged to take action to resolve their housing benefit shortfalls, pay rent they can reasonably afford, find work or find alternative accommodation, rather than become dependent on DHP in the long term. Enfield will find it easier to make a cessation of duty decision in exceptional and appropriate cases, where the tenant is failing to engage with support and advice and take steps to reduce their shortfall. This will help the Council avoid escalating costs of uncollected rent.

Tenants with enduring need are the exception to the above. Where the transitional nature of DHP is not appropriate because of an enduring need, the award would continue for the longer term, subject to the availability of the DHP fund.

We have consulted with members of the public, relevant support groups in the voluntary sector and with registered housing providers to seek feedback on the policy and identify any actions we may need to take in addition to what is set out in the policy. Responders to the consultation were broadly supportive of the new policy. Briefing sessions and communication material will be arranged following approval of the policy. A policy summary has been produced to aid communication to the public.

BACKGROUND

Please note that a copy of the Part 1 report is available on the Council's Democracy pages.