

Notice of KEY Executive Decision (Special Urgency)

Subject Heading:	Closure of PASC Service for Housing Demand
Cabinet Member:	<i>Joshua Chapman</i>
SLT Lead:	<i>Patrick Odling-Smee</i>
Report Author and contact details:	<i>Darren Alexander, Assistant Director, 01708433751</i>
Policy context:	<p>COVID 19</p> <p>LBH have a legislative responsibility to prevent homelessness and take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants in line with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Housing Act 1996</i> • <i>Homelessness Act 2002</i> • <i>Homeless Reduction Act 2017</i>
Financial summary:	<i>We will be attributing all costs associated with COVID 19 to a designated cost centre as it is difficult to quantify.</i>

Key Executive Decision

Reason decision is Key	<p><i>Indicate grounds for decision being Key:</i></p> <p><i>(a) Impact of COVID 19</i></p> <p><i>(b) Risk placed on members of the public and staff following government guidance to maintain 2 metre social distancing</i></p> <p><i>(c) Workers asked not to travel into work for non-essential work activity where working from home is a viable alternative.</i></p> <p><u>Mitigation</u></p> <p><i>All interviews and assessments can be conducted by telephone. Face-to-face contact is not a priority action unless emergency fire or flood; in which case Emergency Planning arrangements will be initiated.</i></p>
Date notice given of intended decision:	Monday 30 March 2020
Relevant OSC:	
Is it an urgent decision?	Yes
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	<i>Yes, due to Special Urgency</i>

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

Following the outbreak of the Covid 19 virus Central Government has taken unprecedented steps to limit the impact of the outbreak by announcing a number of measures which have a direct impact on the ability to provide a housing allocations service.

These include the guidance on social distancing, the directive on self-isolating, the advice for only essential travel and the closure of all but essential retailers.

Additionally we have seen the closure of core services on which some parts of our service rely, including the court system and supply chain partners

To comply with these directives it is necessary to shift all frontline services to a back office function where staff will deliver a telephone service.

It is to ask that cabinet note the following actions taken:

1. To follow the line of other London Authorities in the suspension frontline service where staff will work exclusively from home in accordance with Government and PHE guidance on COVID 19.
2. To suspend face-to-face contact for homeless assessments and all other Housing Solutions activity where possible to ensure we follow social distancing guidance until ban has been lifted.
3. To continue deliver a robust message to property owners who intend to illegally evict families from private rented accommodation during the pandemic crisis.
4. To support households to who need to self-isolate into self-contained accommodation where possible.
5. To continue to provide support to households at risk of domestic violence with planned moves facilitated through the domestic abuse policy working closely with local refuges and MARAC panels.
6. To minimise the disruption of a closed PASC service with a fully operational telephone appointment service.
7. To support vulnerable people sleeping rough with a slimmed down on street service to facilitate the accommodation of all entrenched rough sleepers including those with no recourse to public funds individuals.

Key Executive Decision

8. Respond to all other household emergencies including fire, flood and other natural disasters with immediate offers of accommodation relief to meet the needs of the household.

All changes will be communicated to residents via our call centre and through the website.

All changes will be communicated to the members of the public via our call centre and through the website. The following message will be given to visitors to the LBH website:

The PASC Service is currently Closed until further notice.

This is to avoid disruption to households especially those self-isolating and to support the stay at home and social distancing advice from Government. It will also enable Havering Council to prioritise support for our most vulnerable residents in the borough at this time.

For applicants who have received a s21 notice from the landlord following the Governments recent suspension of evictions via the courts can contact our Contact centre for advice but we wish to advise will not be at risk of eviction at this critical time.

If your landlord has proceeded to take matters into their own hands and sought evictions through unlawful means we may be able to help if you make contact with us urgently via our contact centre.

In the meantime, for all homeless queries and reporting of people sleeping rough you .

- Telephone: 01708 432824

Email: housing.solutions@haverling.gov.uk

If you know of or have seen people sleeping rough please report your sighting to www.streetlink.org.uk

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Councils Responsibility for Functions Scheme as set out in the Councils Constitution at 3.8.2 (a)

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This decision is required under "Special Urgency" to allow the Council to plan and

Key Executive Decision

undertake effective strategies for working and service delivery during the current Covid 19 outbreak.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

To continue to deliver a full uninterrupted service.

This option was rejected for a number of reasons;

Following government advice regarding essential services and the guidance on limiting travel, both of which have a significant impact on the availability of staff and means to continue to deliver a service that protects the health of members of the public and staff.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr Chapman has been consulted on this decision and is happy with the position we have taken.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Darren Alexander

Designation: Assistant Director, Housing Demand

Signature:



Date: 27.03.2020

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

1. The report correctly identifies the statutory provisions for the Council's homelessness duties and functions. The decision relates to the manner in which those services, duties and functions will be delivered. There are few legal implications as the statutory requirements with regard to homelessness will continue to be met, by alternative means to how they are usually delivered.
2. The Council needs to ensure that the revised service is accessible to all who need it, for example, if someone did not have a telephone to make contact. Further, if a person is vulnerable or has a protected characteristic under Equality Act 2010, and will have difficulty accessing the Council on the revised telephone service, then the Council may need to make reasonable adjustments to enable that individual to have access to the service.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no direct financial implications associated with the temporary closure of the PASC Service.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

Given the Coronavirus outbreak, the paramount consideration of the Council is the health and wellbeing of Members and officers. The proposals contained in this report will directly impact on all staff that work at the PASC who will be managed in accordance with the Council's published COVID-19 Managers Guidance.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender,

Key Executive Decision

and sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

An EqHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) is usually carried out when a current or planned service/policy/activity is likely to affect staff, service users, or other residents. It is acknowledged that in emergency or urgent situations it will not always be possible to carry out an EqHIA in advance of a relevant activity, however, managers will undertake the required EqHIAs at the earliest opportunity. Where managers are already clear that protected groups/users will be impacted negatively by the intended activity, then this will be noted in the next paragraph and/or put into EqHIAs. Where the negative impact of the intended activity can be mitigated, this too should be set out in this report and/or the EqHIA.

In all situations, urgent or not, the Council will seek to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all.

Key Executive Decision

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The COVID 19 pandemic is a global and national emergency with serious impact on lives and socio economic activities. National guidance recommends social distancing measures, working from home and only essential travels to reduce further risk to lives.

The proposed closure of the Public Advice and Service Centre, PASC, Service for Housing, and the reduction of service may potentially affect those in need of advice and housing, which is a key health determinant.

Actions to mitigate the risks include telephone provision, continued housing support to households and vulnerable people sleeping rough and urgent response in case of emergencies.

Given the threat to lives posed by the ongoing pandemic, the overriding consideration is to follow national guidance to protect lives.

publichealth@havering.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

n/a

Key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Patrick Odling-Smee

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date: 30 March 2020

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Committee Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____