



## Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	<b>Housing Allocations Policy</b> – Working Community Adjustment (WCA): Points adjustment for eligible working households transferring from the previous allocation scheme.
<b>Decision Maker:</b>	<b>Patrick Odling-Smee</b> - Director of Living Well
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Councillor Natasha Summers</b> - Lead Member for Housing Demand and Climate Change.
<b>ELT Lead:</b>	<b>Barbara Nicholls</b> - Strategic Director of People
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	<b>Philip Dewar</b> , Senior Housing Choice & Applications Officer - Tel: 01708 434343 Email: philip.dewar@havering.gov.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	This decision relates to the Council's points based- Housing Allocations Policy and its intended balance between statutory reasonable preference (including homelessness duties) and households previously give priority under the old scheme. Officers have identified an unintended inequity in how time waiting points interact with homelessness decisions, disadvantaging longstanding working households transferring from the previous- scheme.
<b>Financial summary:</b>	The proposal is intended to be delivered as a points attribute of 50 (a Working Community Adjustment), and Housing IT's initial view is this is likely deliverable without major MRI development, though cohort identification, testing and resourcing will be required. No specific new budget requirement is identified in the proposal materials.

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<b>Relevant Overview &amp; Scrutiny Sub Committee:</b>	People Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision

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

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well      X

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

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### Part A – Report seeking decision

#### **DETAIL OF THE DECISION AND RECOMMENDED ACTION**

To approve a minor amendment to the Housing Allocations Policy by introducing a Working Community Adjustment (WCA) for a targeted cohort of applicants transferring from the previous allocation scheme, to correct an identified inequity in how waiting time points are experienced in practice.

#### **Recommended action:**

1. Introduce a flat, one-off award of 50 points as the Working Community Adjustment (WCA)
2. Apply the WCA only to households who:
  - were previously assessed under Band 2A / Working Community (or equivalent) and;
  - had been continuously registered for more than 12 months under the previous allocation scheme and;
  - do not owe their current priority to an accepted homelessness duty.
3. Confirm the WCA applies where the household is currently in sustained paid employment.
4. Confirm that households already at 50 time waiting points still receive the WCA (i.e., it is in addition, not gap bridging).
5. Confirm the measure is transitional: it applies to applicants transferring to the new scheme from the old scheme, and the points remain on the application until housed (or the applicant does not reapply at annual review). New applicants (even if working, or even if they had a previous application) do not receive the WCA unless they had a live application and were working at the time of transfer.

Housing IT have confirmed no external IT company involvement (MRI). The change can be managed in house and requires minimal effort to create this attribute in the system

#### **AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

The Housing Allocations Policy allows for minor amendments to be introduced by the Director of Living Well, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing Demand and Climate Change. This is contained in the Allocations Policy which was approved at Cabinet on 15 May 2024.

Part 3.3 (Scheme of Delegations – Functions Delegated to Officers), Scheme 3.3.4 (Specific powers of the Strategic Director of People) – Living Well, paragraph 2.1 (delegated authority to exercise the Council's housing functions under relevant housing legislation including the Housing Act 1996, including housing allocation). Where exercised by the Director of Living Well, this is in accordance with Part 3.3.1 (Sub-delegations) which provides for delegation to another officer to be recorded in writing and lodged with the Monitoring Officer, as notified on 3 April 2024

#### **STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

Officers have identified an unintended consequence within the current allocation's points framework: some accepted homeless households can receive time waiting points linked to the date of the homelessness duty decision, which may be historic, alongside homelessness

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priority points. This has had the effect of them receiving more points than longstanding working households who were previously in the highest band under the former scheme, causing indirect disadvantage contrary to the original intent of applicants from the old scheme not being disadvantaged through the introduction of the new scheme. -standing working households who were previously in the highest band under the former scheme, causing indirect disadvantage contrary to the original intent of

The WCA is designed to:

- Maintain statutory homelessness priority (no dilution of reasonable preference), while correcting unintended disadvantage.
- Use objective, measurable criteria and remain transparent/defensible in reviews and appeals.
- Protect confidence in the fairness of the allocations system and reduce risk of dissatisfaction, complaints and appeals from affected households if no action is taken

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- **Do nothing** – rejected as it would leave the identified inequity unaddressed and risk ongoing dissatisfaction/complaints/appeals.
- **Variable “gap bridging” WCA up to 50** (recalculating/tapering as waiting time accrues) – considered in the briefing narrative but not adopted; the preferred approach is a flat, one-off 50 points for clarity and implementability
- **Permanent change vs transitional** – Members could adopt either; the clarified intent is a transitional transfer measure for those moving from the old scheme (points remain until housed/annual review non-renewal).
- **Re-verification of employment for all affected households** – rejected to avoid creating a disproportionate evidential/admin burden; instead, a presumption is applied for those previously qualifying under the old application.

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

- Briefing presented for consideration at Theme Board (16 February 2026).
- Internal discussions/clarifications with relevant officers (Philip Dewar, Kwabena Obiri, Darren Alexander) and follow-up clarification from Patrick Odling-Smee. -up clarification from Patrick Odling-Smee.
- Democratic Services engagement on decision route noted (ED/Forward Plan handling).
- Housing IT initial view on deliverability captured (points attribute; testing/resourcing required).

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

Name: Philip Dewar

Designation: Senior Housing Choice and Applications Officer

Signature: P.Dewar

Date:18 February 2026

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### Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

#### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The proposal is intended to be legally robust because it:

- does not remove reasonable preference from homeless households;
- uses objective, measurable criteria;
- aligns with the Housing Act 1996 framework to balance reasonable preference with local priorities;
- can be framed as a transitional and corrective measure.

**Risk:** Any allocations policy amendment may be challenged; mitigation is clear published criteria, consistent application, and transparent explanation within review/appeal decisions

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Housing IT's view is that this can be implemented as a simple configuration change

Based on the cohort identification, there are 161 applications that meet the eligibility requirements; 38 of these are currently suspended.

- For the 38 suspended applications, the WCA points can be applied as part of the normal assessment workflow when each case is picked up (BAU).
- For the remaining live applications, we will need to add the WCA manually. This is a straightforward action (open application → add the WCA attribute/points) and we expect it to be less than half a day of officer time to complete as a batch.

We are not anticipating any material project cost or backfill requirement, it's primarily a small amount of officer time plus a minor Housing IT configuration.

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

Officer time will be required to identify eligible households though a report should be feasible, apply/configure the award on each application, and manage any resulting enquiries/appeals. The proposal is designed to avoid requiring additional applications from households, reducing operational burden compared to alternatives.

#### EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The rationale is to address indirect disadvantage to long-standing, economically active households caused by an unintended effect of the current points framework, while fully retaining statutory priority for those in highest need and homeless households.

**Risk:** Perception of preferential treatment; mitigate by communicating that the WCA is targeted, transitional, based on objective criteria, and does not reduce statutory reasonable preference

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

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Not specifically identified in the proposal materials; no direct environmental impacts anticipated from a points-based policy adjustment-based policy

#### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

Havering Council is committed to protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of residents.

The quality and stability of housing have a significant impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing. The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme seeks to prioritise access to social housing to those households experiencing the most acutely detrimental housing circumstances, such as those accepted as homeless, those with significant health-related housing needs, and those living in unsafe accommodation, for whom these health and wellbeing impacts are likely to be particularly acute.

The proposed change will ensure that a household's level of need/priority is accurately reflected in the points assigned to their housing application, enabling properties to be allocated in a fair and transparent way that maintains statutory protections for those in highest need, in line with the Havering Housing Allocation Scheme objectives.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**None**

#### **APPENDICES**

**None**

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**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: 27/02/26

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_