

A weekly round up of local government news in the East Midlands brought to you by
East Midlands Councils

Top items this week

19 MAY 2023



Community Ownership Fund



Third round of the
Community Ownership
Fund launched



Private Rented Sector
reforms for tenants



EM Dev Co:
Introducing the EM



Call for evidence: An
inspection of asylum

THIRD ROUND OF THE COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND LAUNCHED

Last week, DLUHC launched the third round of its £150 million Community Ownership Fund.

Applications to bid for round three of the funding will open on 31 May.

Changes to the fund will make it easier for voluntary and community groups to apply for funding to acquire important assets and run them for the benefit of the local community.

A summary of the key changes to the eligibility requirements for the relaunch of the fund include:

- Reducing the match funding requirement
- Increasing the amount of funding all projects can bid for from £250,000 to £1 million
- Allowing parish councils (and their equivalent town and community councils) to apply in the same way that community groups do currently

The government is providing funding over four years to support community groups to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost such as community centres, parks, pubs and post office buildings.

The deadline for applications for this funding round is 12 July. Further information, the application form and prospectus can be found online:

READ MORE 

BUS FARE CAP EXTENDED UNTIL END OF OCTOBER

On Wednesday, as part of the Help for Households support, the government announced that they are extending discounted bus travel.

To help people with cost-of-living pressures and save on everyday travel costs, the government will continue to cap single bus fares at £2 outside London until the end of October 2023 and then at £2.50 until 30 November 2024 – when the government will review their effectiveness and future bus fares.

The government has published a list of bus companies and bus routes included in the £2 bus fare cap scheme.

The government also announced £160 million will be provided to local transport authorities to improve fares, services and infrastructure while £140 million will go to operators to help protect essential services across England.

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PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR REFORMS FOR TENANTS AND LANDLORDS

Earlier this week, the Renters' (Reform) Bill was introduced to Parliament, abolishing section 21 'no fault' evictions, which enabled private landlords to repossess their properties from assured shorthold tenants without having to establish fault on the part of the tenant.

The new Bill also protects landlords, making it easier for them to recover properties when they need to, by reducing notice periods where tenants have been irresponsible – for example breaching their tenancy agreement or causing damage to the property.

The government also announced a new ombudsman to provide resolutions to disputes, and a new digital Property Portal to enable landlords to understand their obligations and help tenants make better decisions when signing a new tenancy agreement.

DLUHC has produced a selection of guides on how the Renters' (Reform) Bill helps support a better private rented sector for both tenants and landlords.

READ MORE >

DLUHC has also published the government response to the consultation on amendments to the homelessness legislation as a result of the reform of the private rented sector announced today.

The department consulted on changes to the 'threatened with homelessness' definition and how councils can end the prevention duty, the removal of the reapplication duty and several minor technical amendments where phrases are no longer relevant in these parts of the legislation.

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TASKFORCE TO TRANSFORM OLDER PEOPLE'S HOUSING LAUNCHED

This week, DLUHC, working with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), brought together a government-appointed taskforce to discuss how it can improve housing for older people.

The taskforce will focus on ensuring the government is offering a range of housing options for older people and gives them greater choice in where they choose to live.

The taskforce includes directors from charities such as Age UK, the chair of the Home Builders Federation, local government leaders, CEOs of housing associations and senior academics on health and long-term care. It will be made up of three subgroups focusing on older people's priorities, the housing and financial options available, and close working with local planning authorities.

The taskforce will run for up to 12 months, producing an independent report to DLUHC and DHSC.

INTRODUCING THE EM EYE PROSPECTUS

This week, the East Midlands Development Company (EM Dev Co) launched a prospectus, EM Eye, a framework for growth into the 2050s, summarising the position established over the last few years, and introducing new concepts in establishing a deliverable vision framework for the area encapsulating Toton & Chetwynd, Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station, and the East Midlands Airport Area.

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MIDLANDS RAIL HUB: BUSINESS SURVEY

Midlands Connect want to hear the views of businesses on Midlands Rail Hub.

Proposed improvements to the rail network would add more than 14 million more seats each year and provide faster, more frequent, or new rail links between over 30 locations including: Birmingham, Bromsgrove, Redditch, Nuneaton, Worcester, Hereford, Cardiff, Bristol, Cheltenham and Leicester.

Midlands Connect has submitted a business case to Department for Transport to fund the rail improvements.

Midlands Connect now want to hear from firms about how a better-connected rail network across the Midlands and further afield would impact you.

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UK NATIONALS ARRIVING FROM SUDAN TO HAVE ACCESS TO BENEFITS

Last week, the government announced that it was making legislative changes to provide support to those arriving from Sudan following the evacuation. Emergency regulations, which came into force this week, ensure UK nationals, Irish nationals and those with Home Office leave which provides recourse to public funds, will be able to access benefits and services faster on arrival in the UK. The changes will help people access the support they need to secure settled accommodation.

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CALL FOR EVIDENCE: AN INSPECTION OF ASYLUM CASEWORK 2023

Last week, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration launched a call for evidence about asylum casework. For this latest inspection, the Chief Inspector would be particularly interested to hear from those with first-hand experience of the asylum process regarding:

- the efficiency and timeliness of asylum decision making
- the Home Office's responsiveness to queries and challenges
- the quality of asylum screening interviews, substantive asylum interviews and initial asylum decisions, including for asylum seekers who have protected characteristics
- the impact of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 on the efficiency and effectiveness of asylum decision making

The Chief Inspector is inviting anyone with knowledge and experience of this area to provide evidence for the inspection. Councils are encouraged to share the call for evidence. The call for evidence will close on 26 May.

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EMC COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

To support our member councils, EMC is providing a comprehensive and value for money Councillor Development Programme, complementing the in-house learning provided by your own local authority.

Thursday
25
MAY

Chairing Skills for Members

Wednesday
7
JUNE

The Role of the Civic Head

Thursday
22
JUNE

Planning Reform - One Year On

Friday
14
JULY

**Hitting the Ground Running:
New Councillor Workshop**

Take a look at our Councillor Development Programme Brochure, and book your place here:

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Chair: Cllr Martin Hill OBE
Vice Chair: Cllr Sarah Russell
Labour Group: Cllr Rob Parker
Independent Group: Cllr Jason Zadrozny
Executive Director: Stuart Young



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