

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

11th July 2017

COUNCIL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY 2017

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mark Shurmer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Liz Tompkin
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	No

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Council's Allocations Policy was last updated in 2012 and there have been legislative changes to the allocation of social housing that have been incorporated in to this new revision of the Allocations Policy.
- 1.2 The Council have been undertaking a trial of new ways of allocating properties following a transformational approach and this new method has been incorporated into the revised policy.
- 1.3 This report seeks the approval from members to implement a revised allocations policy which incorporates the legislative changes and new methods of working.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

subject to Members' comments and consultation responses, the revised Housing Allocations Policy 2017 be adopted.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct financial costs to the revised Allocations Policy.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Housing Act 1996 Part 6 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011) governs the allocation of local authority housing stock in England.
- 3.3 Housing Authorities may only allocate accommodation to people who are defined as 'qualifying persons' (s.160ZA (6)(a)) with the exception for members of the Armed and Reserve Forces. Whatever classes of persons who do not qualify for social housing, it is important to consider exceptional circumstances where it may be necessary not to apply these criteria in the case of individual applicants.

- 3.4 The Government introduced the Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England 2012) and The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for armed forces) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 which sets out how local authorities should respond to the housing needs of ex-servicemen and Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015) after the Allocations Policy was introduced.
- 3.5 This revision to the Housing Allocations Policy 2009, updated 2012 reflects and incorporates the changes provided by the Localism Act 2011 and other relevant legislation and regulation.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.6 Officers have undertaken the revision of the Allocations Policy 2009, updated 2012 (Appendix 2), to update it in line with the new procedures for allocating accommodation and incorporate legislative changes which the policy must have.
- 3.7 The Housing Service has carried out trials relating to the allocation of accommodation, putting the customer at the heart, through Transformation and Systems Thinking. The current policy requires all properties to be advertised and customers 'bid' on a property with the allocation going to the applicant with the highest banding. The transformation trials have identified a new method of allocating of accommodation
- 3.8 This Allocations Policy provides a sophisticated approach to those with higher housing needs. Applicants have an interview with a Housing Options or Locality Officer so that these needs are fully understood. Applicants in higher housing needs will be placed into the Gold Band with the approval by a Senior Officer and then directly matched with a home in a locality that provides a sustainable long term solution to meeting those needs.
- 3.9 The changes to the Allocations Policy 2009, updated 2012 are:
- Relevant legislation updated (p3)
 - Included Strategic Purposes (p4)
 - Introduced new Purpose of the Allocations Policy section (p5)
 - Introduced a new section Statement of Choice (p6), this explains how applicants will be prioritised for housing and when bidding will not be used.

- Refined the eligibility and reasonable preference section (p7) and included the requirement of the armed forces regulations for access to housing register.
 - Introduced in Applying to go on the Housing Register (p8) that all applicants to have an interview with a Housing Options Officer to discuss their housing needs and the available housing options, to come to a housing decision together before accessing the housing register.
 - The current 'Priority' and 'Gold' bands to be amalgamated into a single 'Gold' band (p13).
 - Introduced in the Allocations section (p16) that all applicants in the 'Gold' band to be directly matched to a suitable offer of accommodation, rather than going on to bid on properties.
 - Included regulations on Armed Forces applicants and additional preferences(p15)
 - The ability to identify properties for transfers only (p16).
 - Applicants for whom the council has accepted a duty under homelessness legislation to be made a single offer of suitable accommodation instead of the current two offers (p21).
 - In The Right to A review decision (p29) the option of a 2nd stage appeal has been removed as this is not provided for in legislation.
 - Deleted section 20 Tolerated Trespass as no longer relevant
 - Deleted section 28 Forces as no longer relevant and included in other sections.
 - Deleted section 35 Monitoring included in section 10 Redditch Home Choice Banding
- 3.10 The trial introduction of direct matching has seen a decrease of 80% in the number of 1st offers refused. This is due to collaborative working by Locality and Housing Options Teams leading to a clearer understanding of housing needs and preferences

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 A strong and proactive housing options approach will ensure that households are offered support to access the housing solution which best meets their needs (this might be private rented housing, low cost home ownership or help to stay put), in addition expectations about accessing social housing will be properly managed, and social housing will be focussed on those who need it most.
- 3.12 Better use of housing stock will result in more families being housed in appropriately sized accommodation and free up other access level accommodation for households who may otherwise becoming socially excluded.

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3.13 Consultation will take place with applicants, residents and relevant stakeholders and responses will be considered prior to the final policy being approved.

3.14 In framing the Allocations Policy the council has had regard to its duties under the equalities legislation.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 There are risks to not implementing the updated Allocations Policy 2017 which are in the table below:

Risk	Consequence	Mitigation
Not allocating social housing in accordance with the allocations policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judicial review• Housing ombudsman complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction of the revised Allocations Policy 2017 that incorporates new working methods.
Increase in the number of reviews of suitability of offers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in staff resources to deal with reviews• Delays in providing housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better understanding of applicants needs following system thinking principals.• Allocation of stock provided through locality with a better understanding of the property and the customer.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Housing Allocations Policy 2017

Appendix 2 – Housing Allocations Policy 2009, updated 2012

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing Allocations Policy 2009, updated 2012

Housing Act 1996

Localism Act 2011

Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England 2012

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