

additional papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wed 17 Dec
2008
7.00 pm

Council Chamber
Town Hall
Redditch



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Access to Information - Your Rights

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 widened the rights of press and public to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. Recently the Freedom of Information Act 2000, has further broadened these rights, and limited exemptions under the 1985 Act.

Your main rights are set out below:-

- Automatic right to attend all Council and Committee meetings unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Automatic right to inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect minutes of the Council and its Committees (or summaries of business undertaken in private) for up to six years following a meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect lists of background papers used in the preparation of public reports.
- Access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting.
- Access to a public register stating the names and addresses and electoral areas of all Councillors with details of the membership of all Committees etc.
- A reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports relating to items to be considered in public must be made available to the public attending meetings of the Council and its Committees etc.
- Access to a list specifying those powers which the Council has delegated to its Officers indicating also the titles of the Officers concerned.
- Access to a summary of the rights of the public to attend meetings of the Council and its Committees etc. and to inspect and copy documents.
- In addition, the public now has a right to be present when the Council determines “Key Decisions” unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Unless otherwise stated, all items of business before the Executive Committee are Key Decisions.
- (Copies of Agenda Lists are published in advance of the meetings on the Council’s Website:
www.redditchbc.gov.uk

**If you have any queries on this Agenda or any of the decisions taken or wish to exercise any of the above rights of access to information, please contact
Jess Bayley and Helen Saunders
Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH
Tel: 01527 64252 (Ext. 3268 / 3267) Fax: (01527) 65216
e.mail: jess.bayley@redditchbc.gov.uk / helen.saunders@redditchbc.gov.uk
Minicom: 595528**

آپ انگریزی میں مدد چاہتے ہیں – نسلیاتی رسائی [Ethnic Access] سے رابطہ کریں ٹیلیفون: 01905 25121

ইংরেজি ভাষার বিষয়ে সাহায্য চান – এথনিক অ্যাকসেস [Ethnic Access] এর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন,
টেলিফোন: 01905 25121

‘Potrzebujesz pomocy z Angielskim – skontaktuj się z Ethnic Access Tel: 01905 25121’



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 17 December 2008
7.00 pm
Council Chamber Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	P Mould (Chair)	R King
	D Smith (Vice-Chair)	W Norton
	K Banks	D Taylor
	M Chalk	D Thomas
	W Hartnett	

9. Housing Mutual Exchange - Review
(Pages 31 - 90)

To launch the review of Housing Mutual Exchange.
(Report attached).
(No Specific Ward Relevance)

DRAFT REPORT

DIRECTORATE:

**HOUSING, LEISURE, AND
CUSTOMER SERVICES**

PROJECT:

MUTUAL EXCHANGES

AUDITOR:

D.R. PENDLE

DATE:

**5TH NOVEMBER 2008 (First Draft)
8TH DECEMBER 2008 (Revised Draft)**

Circulation:

L. Tompkin	:	Head of Housing
V. Jeynes	:	Tenancy Manager (Woodrow)
G. Davis	:	Senior Tenancy Officer (Woodrow)
R M Haycock	:	Internal Audit Manager

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A Mutual Exchange occurs when tenants occupying Council premises wish to swap their homes with other tenants. These maybe tenanted occupants from other Authorities or even Housing Associations not within the area.

To be considered for such Mutual Exchanges the tenants must initially obtain written approval from the Council's agreeing to such moves.

In order to be able to take full advantage of this scheme there are certain stringent conditions that need to be complied with and addressed.

The Mutual Exchange Scheme is an alternative mechanism to going on the Housing Register and may be one of the options considered by the Housing Options Team when providing housing advice to an existing Council Tenant.

Details supporting properties subject to Mutual Exchange can be seen on the Choice Base Lettings internet site, which allows for other tenants to make expressions of interest in the property(s) concerned.

2. EXTENT OF AUDIT

- 2.1 The system procedures were reviewed with the Tenancy Manager.
- 2.2 A sample of 5 case files were reviewed so as to ensure that the procedures had been complied with.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1.1 Application to go on C.B.L. system to seek a Mutual Exchange.

Tenants wishing to consider Mutual Exchange can either:-

- i) Access the internet and if they wish complete the application form, thus expressing an interest.
- ii) Alternatively the tenant can visit the OSS and complete the necessary documentation there. This information is then forwarded to J. Smith (Senior Administration Officer, Woodrow) for inputting onto the C.B.L. system where the application is advertised. However, if the a preliminary check of the application by the Tenancy Team shows the applicant is not suitable the request for the exchange is denied at this stage.

- iii) The Tenancy Team deal with all Mutual Exchanges and process the applications.

Prior to putting Mutual Exchange applications onto the Choice Base Lettings System on the internet each one is reviewed by the Tenancy Officer/s who delete the property number and any considered inappropriate comments. (Example shown in Appendix D).

Currently there appears to be a weakness in the application side of the process in that there is no link up between the advert information for Mutual Exchanges that are entered onto the C.B.L. system by the Tenancy Team and the actual Mutual Exchange applications completed by the applicant which are sent to the Tenancy Teams.

Once the Mutual Exchange has taken place the property details should be deleted from the internet. There is no mechanism for identifying Mutual Exchanges once transacted on the C.B.L. system. Details are however entered onto the house files.

The Lead Tenancy Officer on the Mutual Exchange is determined by "Alpha" identification - i.e. Downsell Road and Exhall Close. (The Lead Tenancy Officer would be the Downsell Road Officer)

3.1.2 Processing of Mutual Exchanges

- i) When the Mutual Exchange forms are received by the Tenancy Team a number of checks are undertaken prior to giving written permission to continue with the proposed Mutual Exchange these basically are:-
- Check the suitability of both properties i.e. ensuring the exchange will not result in over occupancy or under occupancy or is a specially designated adapted property.
 - Rent accounts / Council Tax accounts will be reviewed and should there be any arrears the tenant will be contacted and advised that prior to proceeding with the exchange the account/s would need to be up to date and clear of any arrears.
 - The next stage would be to arrange an inspection of the properties with the Voids Inspector. Out of Borough Mutual Exchanges would be dealt with through the Council's equivalent counterparts.
 - Should the property be an Housing Association property the Tenancy Officer will send a Landlords report to them and await one from them on their property.

- If the property passes the inspection an electrical test will be arranged. Should the property fail the inspection works must be completed prior to the electrical test being ordered. It is the responsibility of the tenants for carrying out the repair works.
- On completion of the basic checks and a satisfactory electrical test report then both parties are contacted to arrange a "sign up" interview. Appendix A details all associated paperwork for Mutual Exchanges. The extract from the Tenancy conditions regarding the details governing this process are shown in Appendix B.

3.1.3 Agreed pending Mutual Exchange details are no longer held on the Saffron System. They are recorded on a stand alone system and monitored weekly by the Senior Tenancy Officer.

A spreadsheet list is produced of pending Mutual Exchanges. Officers check the existing list weekly to ensure that applicants still require a Mutual Exchange and if so update any necessary information. Appendix C refers.

Once the Exchange has been completed the new Saffron rent accounts are set up but details held on the CBL are not updated for the completed Mutual Exchange. The Senior Tenancy Officer has advised that currently there is no link up between information input onto Saffron System and that held on the C.B.L. system.

3.2 Ten Mutual Exchange files were randomly selected and reviewed with the Senior Tenancy Officer these being:-

- i) 68, Astley Close and 62 Prospect Road
- ii) 49, Dolben Lane and 49 Greystone Close
- iii) 33, Hazel Road and 7, Elmley House
- iv) 156, Ibstock Close and a property in Aberdeen, Scotland.
- v) 30, Highland Way and 115, Foxlydiate Crescent
(See Working Paper 3.2)

Each of the 10 files reviewed had complied with the procedure guidelines and all relevant documentation could be evidenced on each file.

Details supporting the "out of area exchange" and liaison with Aberdeen Council (both notes covering the conversations that took place between the Authorities and official correspondence) were included within the file. All files had been well presented.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Each Mutual Exchange application reviewed had been processed in compliance with the laid down procedures and was found to be satisfactory.

The only concerns are that once the Mutual Exchange has been transacted there is no means of identifying the property/ies without referral to the Housing file but for this to occur there would be a need to know that the said property/ies that had been subject to a Mutual Exchange. Further there is a lack of a link up between the completed Mutual Exchange and the details retained on the CBL System. The Senior Tenancy Officer advised that the current structure is due for change in December 08 and it is felt that this could remedy this potential problem by issuing this task to the dedicated Allocations Team.

- 4.2 Statement of Internal Control

The documentation and monitoring controls currently in place have provided a full audit trail for each individual applicant which can easily be related to the procedures but the current failure within the system is the lack of a positive link between the advert detailed on the C.B.L. system and the actual application form.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Implementation
Time Table**

<p>5.1 Consideration should be given to maintaining a register of completed Mutual Exchanges with a brief note referring to the Housing file. (This would make Mutual Exchanged properties to be easily identified and provide a full audit trail).</p>	<p>Tenancy Manager and Senior Tenancy Officer to review.</p>
<p>5.2 Controls need to be implemented to link up the adverts on the C.B.L. system with the Mutual Exchange application so that on completion of the exchange the advert can be deleted from the C.B.L. system.</p>	<p>Tenancy Manager and Senior Tenancy Officer to review.</p>

Your Ref:
Our Ref: TT/MX
Contact: Tenancy Team
Extn: 3174

E-mail: Tenancy.management@redditchbc.gov.uk

Dear

**RE: APPLICATION FOR MUTUAL EXCHANGE WITH
OF**

I acknowledge receipt of your application for a Mutual Exchange.

The Council has 42 days (6 weeks) to undertake the necessary checks to enable this exchange to take place. I have now started this process and will be contacting you shortly to arrange an inspection of your property.

May I remind you that you must not make any arrangements to exchange properties before you have received written confirmation from the Council that this mutual exchange has been approved.

Yours sincerely

TENANCY OFFICER

Your Ref:
Our Ref: TT/MX
Contact: Tenancy Team
Extn: 3174

E-mail: Tenancy.management@redditchbc.gov.uk

Dear

Following the inspection of your property in connection with your request to carry out a mutual exchange with of

I am writing to inform you that you are responsible for carrying out the following work before the exchange can be agreed:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Please arrange to carry out the work in the next 7 days. Once the work has been completed please contact me to arrange a further inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tenancy Officer

Your Ref:
Our Ref: TT/MX
Contact: Tenancy Team
Extn: 3174

E-mail: Tenancy.management@redditchbc.gov.uk

Dear

RE: MUTUAL EXCHANGE WITH _____ OF

An appointment has been made for an inspection of your property to be held on.....atby your Tenancy Officer

It is also necessary for the other party to the exchange of to be present at this inspection and for you to attend at their address when the inspection of their property is carried out.

The inspection of will be carried out onat by their Tenancy Officer

If either of these appointments is inconvenient, please telephone to arrange an alternative time.

Yours sincerely

Tenancy Officer

Please Note:Should either party rent a garage which is not an integral part of the property they will not automatically be included in the exchange.

Your Ref:
Our Ref: TT/MX
Contact: Tenancy Team
Extn: 3174

E-mail: Tenancy.management@redditchbc.gov.uk

Dear

RE: MUTUAL EXCHANGE WITH

I am pleased to inform you that your application for a mutual exchange with
of _____ has been approved.

To complete the exchange, I should be grateful if you would attend the Woodrow One Stop
shop on _____ at _____

The rent payable for your new address will be _____ per week.

PLEASE MAKE NO ARRANGEMENTS TO MOVE PRIOR TO THIS DATE.

I would point out that internal decorations are the tenant's responsibility and no work of this
nature will be carried out by the Council either before or after the exchange takes place.

Beware of becoming involved in an exchange proposal that involves the handing over of
cash or any other payment. The Council has grounds for service of a Notice of Possession
Proceedings on tenants who charge or pay for the assignment of a tenancy.

If an exchange takes place without the Council's written consent, tenancies cease to be
secure tenancies and the Council may obtain possession by serving a Notice to Quit.

If you are in any doubt as to whether any proposal put to you by another tenant could, if
accepted, lead to the termination of your tenancy, you should contact your Tenancy Officer.

Yours sincerely

Tenancy Officer

Your Ref:
Our Ref: TT/MX
Contact: Tenancy Team
Extn: 3174

E-mail: Tenancy.management@redditchbc.gov.uk

Dear

RE: MUTUAL EXCHANGE

I have received a request to effect a mutual exchange of tenancies from the above named person(s) and give below details of my tenant(s) for your consideration:

TENANT: _____

FAMILY SIZE AND AGES: _____

TENANCY COMMENCED: _____ PROPERTY TYPE: _____

WEEKLY NET RENT: _____ HOUSING BENEFIT: _____
£ _____

RENT RECORD: _____

OTHER DETAILS CONCERNING TENANCY: _____

GENERAL REMARKS: _____

I shall be pleased to receive similar details concerning your tenant, in order that consideration may be given to this request.

Yours sincerely

Tenancy Officer

Your Ref:
Our Ref: TT/MX
Contact: Tenancy Team
Extn: 3174

E-mail: Tenancy.management@redditchbc.gov.uk

Dear

RE: MUTUAL EXCHANGE

I refer to the application for a Mutual Exchange between yourself and
Of

I am unable to agree to this exchange taking place for reasons which are not connected with your tenancy.

Should you wish to appeal against this decision, please contact to your Tenancy Officer.

Yours sincerely

Tenancy Officer

Your Ref:
Our Ref: TT/MX
Contact: Tenancy Team
Extn: 3174
E-mail: Tenancy.management@redditchbc.gov.uk

Dear

RE: MUTUAL EXCHANGE

I refer to the application for a Mutual Exchange between yourself and
of

I am unable to agree to this exchange taking place due to the rent arrears on
your rent account. Please see attached rent statement.

Should you wish to appeal against this decision, please contact your Tenancy
Officer.

Yours sincerely

Tenancy Officer

Task No. 7.13A

Seeking a Mutual Exchange

Frequency:

As required

Source:

Tenants – Mutual Exchange Forms

Personnel Responsible;

Tenancy Officer

System:

Manual/spreadsheet/Abritas

Action required:

1. A mutual exchange is where two or more Council or Housing Association tenants swap their homes. It does not involve any property becoming empty. As waiting lists become longer, a mutual exchange is often the quickest way of moving.
2. Everyone who completes a form for a mutual exchange or ticks the box on a transfer application to also be considered for a Mutual Exchange should be registered on CBL Abritas system.
3. Council Exchange Registers - These books are kept at the One Stop Shops. They provide details of tenants who currently live in Redditch and who wish to move elsewhere in Redditch.

Procedure:

5. Application form completed - check name matches that on Rent Screen and tenancy agreement: if not, refer to NSO for clarification. Please send letter acknowledging receipt of form (alloc.029).
6. Also place details in Mutual Exchange Books, complete card and place in appropriate book.
7. Update of Mutual Exchange Book

From Lettings and Termination lists - all tenants that have moved need to have cards removed from Mutual Exchange Books and Adverts removed from Abritas.

Task No. 7.13B

Mutual Exchange Procedure

<i>Frequency:</i>	As required
<i>Source:</i>	Tenants
<i>Personnel Responsible:</i>	Tenancy Officer
<i>System:</i>	Saffron/CBL Abritas

Action required:

1. The applications for exchanges, when between tenants in different patches, should be dealt with by the Officer which manages the address which comes first in the alphabet,

eg 24 Bushley Close, Woodrow

32 Cedar View, Batchley

In this case, the Officer responsible for Woodrow patch deal with this exchange.

2. Acknowledge receipt of the mutual exchange forms (alloc.029).
4. Check that the names of the parties to the exchange are the same as those on the Rent System and the Tenancy Agreement, if there is a discrepancy, then give to the Tenancy Officer for clarification.
5. Details then logged onto computer as per Task 7.13C, by Senior Administrator.
6. Check the rent account, if there are any arrears and a NOPP, referral to court for possession, or a suspended Possession Order has been obtained then the exchange can be refused on one of the grounds contained in Schedule 3, Housing Act 1985.
 - In this situation send letter alloc.032 to the tenant whose circumstances make the exchange inappropriate. Send letter alloc.033 to the other tenant. (Send letter alloc.032 if both sets of circumstances make the exchange inappropriate).

The Council can grant consent for a mutual exchange which is conditional. Send letter alloc.036. Therefore, where any tenant has an outstanding obligation to repair their property arising out of a failure to use the property in a tenant like manner, the Tenancy Officer would agree to the mutual exchange proceeding but on condition that any repair is rectified by the tenant before the properties change hands.. Write to the tenant clearly setting out the grounds on which the exchange has been refused. The property must be inspected again before the exchange can take place.

7. Check to ensure that property is suitable for the needs of the applicant, no overcrowding, etc, if underoccupied one bedroom more than requirements is allowed, eg a couple with no children would be allowed to exchange into a 2 bedroom property.
8. Contact must be made with the parties to the exchange within 5 days of being informed by the Tenancy Officer, to arrange an inspection (alloc.030). Both parties should attend both inspections.
9. If both parties are not at the inspection, then a further inspection date should be made.
10. Tenants agree to accept the properties in the decorative order they are in, the main purpose of the inspection is to ensure that no unauthorised alterations have been made or any rechargeable works need to be done. Tenants both sign the exchange form and one of the parties agrees to replace or pay the recharge or to accept any alterations.
11. If the other party to the exchange lives out of the area, then a letter giving brief details of our tenant, should be sent to them (alloc.034).
12. In the event of a tenant refusing to complete repairs to their property, the Tenancy Officer will in normal circumstances, continue to insist the repairs are carried out before the mutual exchange is permitted. In a situation where the repairs are of an urgent nature the Tenancy Officer will arrange for the repairs to be carried out and for the cost of the repairs to be recharged. The Tenancy Officer will arrange for a NOPP to be served on the tenant for the failure to maintain the property in a tenant like manner.
13. Once both inspection reports have been received and are satisfactory, then a letter agreeing exchange should be sent to both tenants (alloc.031).
14. Both parties to the exchange are requested to attend at the same time at the Woodrow One Stop Shop a new tenancy agreement or a Deed of Assignment.

Task 7.13C

Logging on Mutual Exchange Applications

Frequency:

As required

Source:

Tenants

Personnel Responsible:

Senior Administration Officer

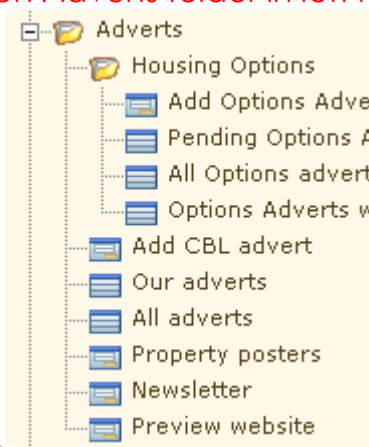
System:

Abritas

Action required:

1. When a paper application form is received, check name matches that on Rent Screen and Tenancy Agreement, if not refer to NSO for clarification.
2. If correct, log onto the system.

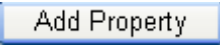
1. Open Adverts folder in left hand navigation



bar.

2. Open the 'Housing Options' subfolder
3. Click 'Add Options Advert'
4. Fill in fields of the advert form – All fields with asterix next to them are mandatory, all others are optional and can be left if the information isn't known.
 - Set the letting cycle to the next available cycle. Mutual Exchange adverts will stay on the system indefinitely until a match has been found.
 - Make sure the 'Allocation Scheme' and 'Advert type' options are both set to Mutual Exchange in the drop down menus.
 - Lastly, make sure that contact information for the tenant is included in the 'marketing information (web) box at the bottom

right hand side of the page. This information will then be shown on the Redditch Home Choice website.

5. When the form is completed, click the  button at the bottom of the screen. The advert will then be sent to 'Pending Options Adverts'
6. Click on 'Pending Options Adverts' and find the property. Click on the link to show the details page again.



7. If all details are correct, click the  button.
8. A page will come up stating that you are changing the status of the advert to 'Being Advertised'. If you still wish to add the advert to the system, click .
9. The property will now be advertised on the Redditch Home Choice website. To view the property, go to www.redditchhomechoice.org.uk and follow the instructions on the 'Property Search' menu.

How to find a home in Redditch

Housing Options



آپ انگریزی میں مدد چاہتے ہیں۔ نسلیاتی رسائی
[Ethnic Access] سے رابطہ کریں ٹیلیفون: 01905 25121

इंग्रेज़ि भाषार विषये साहाय्य चान – एथनिक् अ्याकसेस् [Ethnic Access]
एर सङ्गे योगायोग करुन, टेलिफोनः 01905 25121

'Potrzebujesz pomocy z Angielskim – skontaktuj się z
Ethnic Access Tel: 01905 25121'

DRAFT

SECTION	<u>CONTENTS</u>	PAGE
1. Introduction		3
a)	What is the Housing Register?	3
2. Who can join the Register - Criteria		3
a)	Special Circumstances	4
b)	What happens If I Disagree?	5
3. How to join the Register		5
4. How we assess your application		7
a)	Effective Date	8
5. Homes for you		8
a)	Property Adverts	8
b)	Type and Size of Property You May Be Able to Apply For?	10
c)	How Long Will I Have To Wait	11
d)	Map of Redditch	12
6. Applying for a home		13
a)	Applying on the Website	13
b)	Applying by Phone	14
c)	What Happens Next?	16
d)	Feedback	16
e)	When An Offer Can Be Withheld	17
f)	Local Lettings Plan	17
7. The Banding System		17

DRAFT

a)	The Housing Band Scheme	17
b)	Time Limits	19
c)	Points Applicable	20
8.	Homelessness	22
a)	Assessing Your Case	23
b)	Temporary Accommodation	24
9.	Older Persons Accommodation / Sheltered Schemes	25
a)	Sheltered Housing	25
b)	Very Sheltered Housing	25
c)	Special Needs Accommodation	26
10.	Alternative Housing Options	26
11.	Floating Support Services	30
12.	Useful Contact Numbers	31

DRAFT

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**HOW TO APPLY FOR A COUNCIL/REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORD HOME****1. INTRODUCTION**

This booklet is a guide to Redditch Borough Council's Housing Register and 'Redditch Home Choice'. It gives you the information you need to get on the Housing Register and apply for properties that you are interested in.

Redditch Borough Council operates a fair and consistent allocation scheme that reflects the values of the Council; ensuring homes are allocated on the basis of "Housing Need". Everyone is given an equal and fair service which opposes all forms of discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, disability, age, and sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs.

a) WHAT IS THE HOUSING REGISTER?

It is a list of people who have applied to the Council for help with finding a home. People who are already tenants of Redditch Borough Council are called Transfer applicants. Everyone else is a Housing Register applicant. You will also need to be registered on this list in order to access the majority of Housing Associations which provide family accommodation in Redditch, and for any 'Affordable Housing Schemes'.

Redditch Home Choice was introduced in September 2007 and puts you in charge of finding your new home; it offers a clear and transparent system. We will provide you with realistic housing options and information on all lettings. You can decide the route you wish your rehousing to take. Redditch Home Choice will also be advertising properties for Housing Associations, mutual exchanges and low cost housing.

2. WHO CAN JOIN THE REGISTER - CRITERIA

The Council operates an "open Housing Register". Anyone aged 16 or over, including existing housing association or Council tenants, can join the Housing Waiting List except for:-

- People who have been evicted in the last 5 years for anti-social behaviour, or harassment of any type, by a Housing Association or a Local Authority.
- People subject to immigration control and some people from abroad who are not allowed to join the List by law.

DRAFT

Further information relating to people who are excluded can be obtained from the Housing Options Team.

If you are accepted on to the Housing Register but owe money to any housing association or local authority, you may not be offered a property until you have cleared your arrears.

a) **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

i) Owner Occupiers

Owner Occupiers will be accepted onto the Housing Register and placed into the bronze band. Owner occupiers will only receive additional consideration if they require re-housing due to severe medical or social needs - please see the Banding breakdown in Section 7 of this booklet.

ii) Young Persons

The term “young person” refers to a person who is aged 16 and 17 years old.

If you are 16 or 17 years of age you can join the Housing Register. However, your application will be deferred until you are 18 years of age. Your application will attract ‘time waiting’. If your circumstances change and you become homeless, the Council has a duty towards **vulnerable** homeless 16 and 17 year olds. We will consider you for housing in line with the Council’s Homelessness Protocol for 16 and 17 year olds. This will be for Supportive Accommodation - please see Supportive Accommodation in Section 10.

If you are under 16 years, we will liaise with Worcestershire County Council Social Services, on your behalf, for help and assistance.

iii) Local Authority Tied or Service Tenants

“Tied or service tenant” refers to a local authority employee, for example: a local school employee who occupies their home as part of their job. The Applicant must be resident in their service tenancy in Redditch for at least 6 months. Upon receiving notification of retirement the Applicant will be given priority by being placed in the gold band. Applicants not retiring but required to leave their service will be placed onto the waiting list without priority and may approach the Council under homelessness legislation.

iv) Forces

Applications from serving members of Her Majesties Forces will be considered on an individual basis by the Head of Housing & Community Services and the Housing Options Manager. Priority may

DRAFT

be given to those considered to be in urgent housing need, or with severe medical conditions.

v) Staff / Elected Member applicants

If you a Staff member, Elected member or relatives of either, your application will need to be approved by the Tenancy Manager or the Head of Housing & Community Services, in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy. This will also apply to any offers which are made to you. Offers of accommodation to staff members will be signed off by the Director of Housing & Asset Management.

If you have not been accepted, you will receive a letter explaining why you have been denied access to the Housing Register.

b) **WHAT HAPPENS IF I DISAGREE?**

If the Council denies you access to the Housing Register and you disagree with the decision you can ask for a review.

To do this you must put your reasons in writing addressed to the Housing Options Manager, within 21 days of the letter telling you that you have not been accepted to join the Housing Register.

The Housing Options Manager will review your application and inform you of the decision within 21 days of the request being made.

3. HOW TO APPLY TO JOIN THE HOUSING REGISTER

Everyone who wishes to be considered to join the housing register must complete an application form. It is the same form for both new applicants and existing Council tenants (transfers). You can obtain an application form from One Stop Shop, by e-mailing comments@redditchbc.gov.uk or through completing an online application via our website www.redditchbc.gov.uk. Any application for housing will need to be validated by a visit to the One Stop Shop where you will be expected to provide relevant identification and proof of residency before we can activate the application and allow you to apply for properties. If you need help to complete the form please ask at any of these offices.

Please complete the application form carefully and ensure that the information given is correct and that the **appropriate documentation is provided**. Sometimes we may have to write to you to request further information. If you deliberately give false information, your application may be cancelled. If you are housed as a result of giving false information you could lose your home and be fined up to £5,000.

Your completed application form and documentation can be handed in at the One Stop Shop or by post to Housing Options at the Town Hall. When your application

DRAFT

and all appropriate documentation have been received, your application will be processed within **14 working days**.

If you or any member of your household has a health, disability or mobility need that would be significantly improved by different housing, you must complete an 'Application for Medical Priority Form' by visiting our One Stop Shop. You will not be given priority just because you have health, disability or mobility needs. You will only be given priority if your present housing is making your condition much worse than if you were living elsewhere. In some cases we may place you in a band temporarily whilst we carry out further medical assessments or obtain additional information.

At least **TWO** of the following documents are required for each adult on the application and **ONE** document must show the address you are applying from, dated within the 4 weeks prior to your application.

- ❖ Tenancy agreement (if you are living in accommodation other than Redditch Borough Council, i.e. private rented or Housing Association properties).
- ❖ A recent bank statement showing the address you are registering from.
- ❖ Confirmation of any state benefits.
- ❖ Certification of employment in HM forces or Navy.
- ❖ Driving Licence.
- ❖ National Insurance Card.
- ❖ Medical Card.
- ❖ Passport (needs to be a current and valid passport).
- ❖ Marriage Certificate.
- ❖ Identity Card issued by EC/EEA member states.
- ❖ Letter from Solicitor/Social Worker/Probation Officer/Inland Revenue.
- ❖ Life assurance/insurance policies.
- ❖ Mortgage Statements.
- ❖ UK Residency Permit.
- ❖ Divorce/Annulment papers.
- ❖ Change of name by Deed Poll papers.
- ❖ Utility bill in the person's name for the last quarter.

DRAFT

- ❖ Recent wage slips from current employer.
- ❖ Letters from Government officials confirming status of residence in the UK i.e. Home Office.
- ❖ Other documentation may be accepted at the discretion of the Council.

For each child included on the application we require a copy of the birth certificate or evidence of Child Benefit.

The Council will not accept responsibility for original documents. One Stop Shop will be able to photocopy your documents free of charge (please do not send original documents by post).

If you are an elected Member or an employee of the Council or you are related to an elected member or employee of the Council and you are applying to join the Housing Register you must declare this information on your application form. This is to ensure the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy is adhered to.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Under the rules of the Data Protection Act 1998 the Council will treat all information given on your application as strictly confidential.

4. HOW WE ASSESS YOUR APPLICATION

Each application is assessed individually using the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. If you can join the list your application will be assessed using the Council's approved banding scheme and you will be placed into a band and pointed according to your need for housing.

You will be sent a 'Registration letter' that you must keep in a safe place, as this is proof of your registration, and you will require the information on this letter when you are applying for a property. It will advise you, of which band you have been placed in, your point's total, give you a registration number and advise you of your 'effective date', which is discussed shortly. The Council's banding scheme is explained in detail further in this booklet (See Section 7).

You must inform the Council of any changes in your circumstances as soon as these take place. For example;- if your family size has changed or you have married/separated, or if you have changed your address. Depending on the change in your circumstances you may have to complete a new application form. If you do not tell us of any changes in your circumstances you could miss out on a home suitable for you.

DRAFT

a) EFFECTIVE DATE

The length of time you've been registered is important if more than one person applies for the same property.

Normally the effective date will be the day we receive your application. However, if you are accepted as homeless or given additional priority by being placed into the 'Gold' or 'Priority' band, then the date will be the day the Council made its decision to award you priority.

5. HOMES FOR YOU

Redditch Home Choice lets you apply for a home of your choice instead of having to wait for an offer which somebody else thinks is suitable. The size and type of home you can apply for depend on the needs and size of your household together with the letting criteria set for each property.

Properties are divided into three categories:-

1. General needs - housing which is available to everybody in the relevant banding.
2. Older person's accommodation - accommodation for applicants aged 50 or 60 years old plus, (depending on the scheme) who require supported or sheltered accommodation.
3. Adapted properties - accommodation which is only available to individuals / families needing specially adapted properties. Properties of this kind are likely to be reserved or prioritised for people with a disability and whose need match the property.

a) PROPERTY ADVERTS

The property adverts will give you all the essential information you need and will be set out as follows:-

Awaiting Photo

Property Ref:22

2 Bed, House

Northleach Close, Church Hill

Rent: £58.00
Service charge: £5.00, Other charges: TBA
Gas fire, Own garden, Garage with property

Bands allowed: Bronze, Gold, Silver
Preferred applicant types












The advert will show the property address, size, banding, property details, any specific criteria, rent amount, plus the property reference number.

You can only be considered for properties which are advertised as being available to your banding (as explained in Section 7) and you can only apply for 2 properties per week.

DRAFT

Please note:- some properties may have 'no pets' or other special rule which will be clearly highlighted in the advert.

The property adverts will give you all the essential information you need. The following symbols will be used in the adverts:-

TYPES OF PROPERTY	
	Choice based lettings property. Rented property via the Council or a Housing Association for eligible people on the housing register.
	Low Cost Home Ownership property. A property for people who may be able to afford to buy low cost housing. This could be 'Shared Ownership' or 'Discounted Sale' properties.
	Mutual Exchange property. Mutual exchange property for eligible current Council or housing association tenants.
PROPERTY DETAILS	
	Bedrooms. The number of bedrooms in this property.
	Disabled / Special Need Accommodation. This property is suitable for people with a mobility need or will have adaptations. Further details will be included in the property advert.
	Own garden. This property has its own garden.
	Maximum age. This property is only available to people of the age shown and below.
	Minimum age. At least one household member must be the age shown.
	Sheltered. This is a sheltered property.
	Off road parking.
	Supported. This is a supported housing scheme. Full details will be included in the property advert.

DRAFT

b) TYPE AND SIZE OF PROPERTY YOU MAY BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR

The following chart shows you which size of family may be considered for different types of properties. In exceptional circumstances the Council may use its discretion in the type of property you are eligible for.

Foster children will not generally be accepted on an application form as fostering is usually considered to be a short-term situation. However, where evidence shows that a family will be fostering a child on a long-term basis, consideration will be given to include them. Redditch Borough Council will liaise with Social Services directly.

Please use this chart to complete Section 12 on the Housing Register application form.

Family composition	Single person	Childless couple	Single (OAP)	Couple (OAP)	1 child family (homeless under age of 2)	1 child family (under age of 2)	1 child family (over age of 2)	2 child family	3 or more child family
Property Size									
Bedsit	4		4						
1 bed house	4	4			4	4			
1 bed flat	4	4	4	4	4	4			
1 bed bungalow			4	4	4				
2 bed house						4	4	4	
2 bed flat				4		4	4	4	
2 bed bungalow				4				4	
2 bed maisonette								4	
3 bed house								4	4
3 bed flat								4	4
3 bed bungalow								4	4
3 bed maisonette								4	4
4+ bed house									4

Please note:- Housing Associations may apply additional letting criteria for customers, as previously mentioned any special conditions / rules will be highlighted in the property advert.

DRAFT

c) **HOW LONG WILL I HAVE TO WAIT?**

There is now more information available to you than ever before to help you judge roughly the difference in waiting times for different types of properties in various areas.

- In each advertisement / newsletter, we will print details of how many people applied for previously advertised properties, the banding the property was awarded to, and the date that successful applicants registered to join the scheme.

This information will help you decide where you have the best chance of being rehoused and help you consider if you should look at other housing options, which are highlighted further in Section 10 of this document.

DRAFT

d) **MAP OF REDDITCH**



DRAFT

6. APPLYING FOR A HOME

Each week, properties will be advertised in the One Stop Shop / local Community Centres and all Council Leisure Centres etc. You can also find out what's available by visiting our website www.redditchhomechoice.org.uk. These properties will be available on a weekly cycle.

The Advertising Cycle will run from 00:01 Thursday a.m. to 23:59 Monday p.m. When you see a home you like which is available to your band and you meet all the specified requirements you can apply. You can apply for a property by calling the Home Choice Hotline (Tel: 0845 270 1308), via the internet or in person at our One Stop Shop.

As previously mentioned you can only apply for 2 properties per week.

a) APPLYING ON THE WEBSITE

The web site address to use when applying for a property is www.redditchhomechoice.org.uk.

In order to apply you will need:-

- Your housing register reference number.
- The date of birth of the primary applicant for your housing application.

Step 1	Type www.redditchhomechoice.org.uk in to the address bar of your internet browser.
Step 2	Click the 'My homepage' option then enter your housing register reference number and date of birth. At this stage your login will be confirmed and details of any current bids will be shown.
Step 3	Click the 'Property search' option. Select any search criteria that you require (for example you may wish to search for a particular size of property) and click search.
Step 4	A list of properties matching your search criteria will be displayed. If you are eligible for a property then an 'Apply Now' button will be displayed. Your current queue position should you bid for this property will also be shown but note that this can change as other people bid. If you are not eligible then the reason you are not eligible will be displayed.
Step 5	For a property that you are eligible for click the 'Apply now' button. You will be shown the property details and asked to confirm your bid. When you confirm your bid you will be told that your bid has been successfully placed.

DRAFT

b) APPLYING ON THE PHONE

The number to call when applying via phone is 0845-2701308. You will be charged the local rate for this call but note that this rate will vary depending on your telephone service provider.

In order to bid you will need:-




- Your housing register reference number.
- The date of birth of the primary applicant for your housing application.
- The property reference number(s) that you want to bid for.

Start by calling the bidding line on 0845 2701308	
What you will hear	What to do
<p>“Welcome to Redditch HomeChoice.”</p> <p>Please select your language from the following list. Press 1 for English, press 2 for etc....”</p>	<p>Press the number on the keypad to choose the language that you want (e.g. press <input type="text" value="1"/> for English).</p>
<p>“You have selected English. Press one to confirm, two to reselect your language.”</p>	<p>Press <input type="text" value="1"/> on the keypad to confirm.</p>
<p>“Please enter your housing register reference, followed by the hash key.”</p>	<p>Enter your housing register reference. For example if your reference was 1245 you would enter <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="#"/></p>
<p>“You have entered the following housing register reference”.</p> <p>(the reference you entered will be read back to you).</p> <p>“Press one to confirm your housing register reference, or press two to re enter”.</p>	<p>Press <input type="text" value="1"/> on the keypad to confirm.</p>
<p>“Your housing register reference has been accepted”.</p> <p>“Please enter the day of the month you were born, followed by the hash key.”</p>	<p>If you were born on 15th May 1952 you would enter <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="#"/> for the 15th.</p>
<p>“Please enter the number of the month you were born, followed by the hash key.”</p>	<p>If you were born on 15th May 1952 you would enter <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="#"/> for the month of May.</p>

DRAFT

<p>“Please enter the year of your birth using all four numbers, followed by the hash key. For example one nine six five to represent Nineteen sixty five.”</p>	<p>If you were born on 15th May 1952 you would enter <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>1</td><td>WXYZ 9</td><td>JKL 5</td><td>ABC 2</td><td>#</td></tr></table> for the year 1952.</p>	1	WXYZ 9	JKL 5	ABC 2	#
1	WXYZ 9	JKL 5	ABC 2	#		
<p>“Thank you; your details match our records.”</p> <p>“Press 1 to apply for a property, press 2 to review the properties you have applied for or press 3 to exit.”</p>	<p>To make a bid press <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>1</td></tr></table></p> <p>To review and / or cancel bids that you have already made press <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>ABC 2</td></tr></table></p> <p>To exit press <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>DEF 3</td></tr></table></p>	1	ABC 2	DEF 3		
1						
ABC 2						
DEF 3						
<p>Making a bid (option <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>1</td></tr></table>)</p>	1					
1						
<p>“Please enter the property reference number of the property you wish to make an application on, followed by the hash key.”</p>	<p>Enter the property that you want to bid for. For example if you wanted to bid for property 9591 you would enter <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>WXYZ 9</td><td>JKL 5</td><td>WXYZ 9</td><td>1</td><td>#</td></tr></table></p>	WXYZ 9	JKL 5	WXYZ 9	1	#
WXYZ 9	JKL 5	WXYZ 9	1	#		
<p>“You have entered the following property reference number”.</p> <p>(the property reference number that you entered will be read back to you. If you are not eligible you will be told why, if you are eligible you will be told your current queue position. Note that your queue position will change as other people bid).</p> <p>“Press 1 to confirm, 2 to change the property reference number”.</p>	<p>Press <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>1</td></tr></table> on the keypad to confirm.</p>	1				
1						
<p>“Your bid has been accepted”.</p>	<p>You can then make further bids, if allowed, review your bids or exit.</p>					
<p>Review / cancel your bids (option <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>ABC 2</td></tr></table>)</p>	ABC 2					
ABC 2						
<p>“You have bid on these properties”.</p> <p>(If you have already bid for properties you will be read a list of the properties with a number for example property 1 number 9491).</p> <p>“Press the number of the property that you wish to cancel the bid for followed by the hash key”.</p>	<p>If you want to cancel or review the bid for property number 1 then enter <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>1</td><td>#</td></tr></table></p>	1	#			
1	#					

DRAFT

<p>The property reference number and current queue position will be read out to you. You will be told:- “Subsequent bids may affect your queue position, and some properties may be offered to the most suitable candidate.”</p> <p>“Press 1 if you are sure you want to cancel your bid otherwise press 2 to exit”.</p>	<p>Press  on the keypad to cancel your bid.</p> <p>Press  on the keypad to exit.</p>
<p>Exit (option )</p>	
<p>“Thank you for using the system goodbye.”</p>	

c) WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

At the end of the advertising cycle the top ten Applicants details will be forwarded to the Tenancy Team who are responsible for allocating the Council houses. For Housing Association properties, the top ten Applicants details will be forwarded to the relevant Housing Association. The Tenancy Team and Housing Associations will then complete any further checks i.e. rent checks, etc and will allocate the properties as required. If the property is a Housing Association property, the Association may make further checks in accordance with their own procedures.

Allocations will be made to the Applicant who has expressed an interest in a property and who:-

- a) Has the highest points.
- b) Has the earliest effective date.
- c) Who satisfies the requirements of the Council’s eligibility for housing.

If your application is selected the Council will telephone you or hand deliver a letter to you. We would expect you to view the property within 5 working days. If you are unable to do this the property maybe offered to someone else.

d) FEEDBACK

In each weekly newsletter, we will also publish details of how many people applied for previously advertised properties, their banding and the date successful applicants registered to join the scheme. This information will help you decide where you have the best chance of being rehoused and help you consider if you should look at other housing options. It will help to advise if you are likely to be offered a property in the future.

DRAFT

e) WHEN CAN AN OFFER BE WITHHELD?

If you are applying for housing you must not owe any rent arrears or debt to the Council when you reach the point of being made an allocation. This will include any form of debt i.e. Former Tenancy Arrears / Council Tax arrears / Housing Benefit overpayments etc. You will be given the opportunity to clear the arrears so that the offer can proceed. In exceptional circumstances the Director of Housing and Asset Management may agree to the allocation being made without the arrears being cleared.

f) LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN

The Council believes that some areas and/or property types are more suited to particular applicants. Temporary local lettings plans are used to either resolve Housing Management issues or to allow for the allocation of difficult to let properties. Any properties subject to a local lettings plan will be clearly highlighted in the Redditch Home Choice advertising process.

7. THE BANDING SYSTEM

Each applicant on the Housing Register is banded and awarded points according to their housing needs. It is designed to give Applicants a choice where they live and ensure that those in greatest need are given the highest priority.

Redditch Home Choice uses a banding system - priority, gold, silver and bronze - to identify need, with those in the priority band being given the highest priority and those in bronze the lowest. Within the bands, there will be an element of points to establish housing need.

a) THE HOUSING BANDING SCHEME

The following table shows the banding and the relevant points:-

BAND	DETAIL	APPLICABLE POINTS	POINTS AWARDED	APP. TYPE
Priority	Cases which are agreed by the Head of Housing & Community Services, due to numerous needs, or cases which are particularly sensitive.	Priority will be given to the applicant with the highest number of points and the earliest effective date. <i>Points applicable in Banding: Residency points.</i>	30	Registration or Transfer.

DRAFT

Gold	Includes Applicants who have been accepted as statutory homeless or assessed as having a 'medical or social' priority. Will also include cases which are accepted via the 'Move on Scheme'.	Priority will be given to the applicant with the highest number of points and the earliest effective date. <i><u>Points applicable in Banding:</u></i> <i>Residency points.</i>	30	Registration or Transfer.
Silver	Includes all Applicants with a housing need.	Priority will be given to the applicant with the highest number of points and the earliest effective date. <i><u>Points applicable in Banding:</u></i> <i>Residency.</i> <i>Bedroom def. per room.</i> <i>Children in ground floor flat.</i> <i>Children in first floor flat.</i> <i>Children in second floor flat.</i> <i>Studio flats.</i> <i>Under occupying per room.</i> <i>Leaving special needs prop.</i>	30 50 5 10 15 5 50 250	Registration or Transfer.
Bronze	Includes all Applicants who are adequately housed.	Priority will be given to the applicant with the highest number of points, followed by the earliest application date. <i><u>Points applicable in Banding:</u></i> <i>Residency.</i> <i>Bedroom def. per room.</i> <i>Children in ground floor flat.</i>	30 50 5	Owner occupiers.

DRAFT

		<i>Children in first floor flat.</i>	<i>10</i>	
		<i>Children in second floor flat.</i>	<i>15</i>	
		<i>Studio flats.</i>	<i>5</i>	
		<i>Under occupying per room.</i>	<i>50</i>	
		<i>Leaving special needs prop.</i>	<i>250</i>	

Homeless Priority - to qualify for Gold band

All Applicants which the Council has accepted a duty to house under homeless legislation will be placed in the gold band.

Social Priority - to qualify for Gold band

This will be assessed by the Housing Options Manager and the Head of Housing & Community Services. Social priority will only be granted in exceptional circumstances where welfare/support needs are so great that a household is at significant risk in their current accommodation.

Medical Priority - to qualify for Gold band

Medical points may be given to people who have a special housing need due to a medical condition or disability. Current housing must be so severely affecting health that it could lead to rapid deterioration of health or become life threatening.

Medical priority will be assessed by the Housing Options Manager and the Head of Housing & Community Services in conjunction with the Council's medical advisors and Occupational Therapists. If we find that your need can be met by adapting your home and is reasonable to do so, medical priority may not be given.

b) TIME LIMITS

If your application is placed in the Priority or Gold Band there is a limit on the length of time you can remain in these bands. The length of time awarded will be dependant upon the number of Applicants in the banding and the number of properties available. The length of time you receive will be clearly stated in your confirmation letter. At the end of this time your application will be reviewed. In some cases where suitable properties have come up, which you have failed to bid for, a decision will be taken as to whether your priority should be reduced or the Council should begin to bid on your behalf.

If the Council has deemed it necessary to bid on your behalf and your case has been accepted as Statutory Homeless under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the following applies.

DRAFT

‘Once 2 properties have been offered to you, which you have declined to accept the Council may consider its ‘duty’ discharged under S.193 of the above Act.’

c) POINTS APPLICABLE

i) Residency

Applicants who have lived in Redditch for the past 12 months or who have parents currently living in Redditch. These are the only points that are applicable into the Priority or Gold band.

ii) Bedroom Deficiency

50 points will be awarded to each member of the household, requiring their own bedroom. These points will be awarded for children regardless of age or sex; however they do not reflect the size of the property to be offered - please see the table in Section 5.

iii) Children in Flats

These are awarded if there are any children under the age of 10, living in a flat. Points will vary depending on which floor the family reside in. The points are calculated per family, not per child.

Living in a ground floor flat.	5
Living in a first floor flat	10
Living in a second floor flat	15

iv) Leaving Special Needs Properties

250 Points will be awarded to Applicants living in properties with the following:-

- A vertical lift moving between floors.
- Properties where building adaptations have been made totalling over £1,000.

v) Studio Flats

Applicants who have lived in a studio flat / bedsit for at least twelve months will receive 5 points to help facilitate them moving.

vi) Under Occupancy Points

Points will be awarded to all Applicants regardless of tenure provided that it can be demonstrated that prioritising the Applicant for smaller housing would free up housing stock which is both suitable and accessible for other applicants solely on the Redditch Borough Council

DRAFT

Waiting List. 50 points will be awarded for each room that it under occupied.

The following examples may help you to understand how the banding and your points will be given:-

1. Miss Smith and Mr Brown have been living with his parents for 2 years in a 3-bedroom house in Redditch. They have their own bedroom and share all other facilities. They are both in full time employment and have been on the Housing Register for 1 year.

Banding	Silver
Points given:-	
Residency	30
Total	30

2. Mr Jones has been living with his brother for 3 months in a one bedroom flat in Redditch. He sleeps in the living room and shares the bathroom and kitchen. He previously lived with his mother in Wales. He has been on the Housing Register for 3 months and is currently unemployed.

Banding	Silver
Points given:-	
Bedroom deficiency	50
Total	50

3. Mr and Mrs Green have lived in a Redditch Borough Council 2 bedroom 1st floor flat for 4 years. They have 2 children, a boy aged 10 and a girl aged 3. Mr Green works part time and they claim Family Tax Credit. They have been on the Housing Register for 2 years.

Banding	Silver
Points given:-	
Bedroom deficiency	50
Child in 1 st floor flat	10
Residency	30
Total	90

DRAFT

4. Mr and Mrs White have been living in a 3-bedroom house in Redditch, which is privately rented for 2 years. They have 3 children, a boy aged 14 and twin girls aged 8. Mr White works full time and Mrs White is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. They have been on the Housing Register for 3 years.

Banding	Silver
Points given:-	
Residency	30
Bedroom deficiency	50
Total	80

5. Mr and Mrs Red have been living in a Council 4 bedroom house for 18 years. Their children have all left home including their youngest son who uses a wheelchair. Their home has adaptations such as a through the floor lift which is no longer needed. They both are in receipt of a State Pension. They have been on the Housing Register for 5 months.

Banding	Silver
Points given:-	
Under-occupation	150
Special needs property	250
Residency	30
Total	430

6. Miss Blue has lived with her parents in a two-bedroom house for 20 years. She is expecting to have her baby in 4 weeks time and has been asked to leave. She has been accepted as statutory Homeless. She has her own bedroom and shares all the other facilities. She is in receipt of Maternity Benefit and has been on the Housing Register for 3 years.

Banding	Gold
Points given: -	
Residency	30
Total	30

8. HOMELESSNESS

If you are homeless or you think you may become homeless contact the Housing Options Team (Tel: 534069) at the Town Hall or visit the One Stop Shop. You may be offered an appointment with a Housing Options Officer who will be able to advise and assist you appropriately depending on your circumstances.

DRAFT

If you become homeless outside of office opening hours you can ring the Council's Out of Hours service on **01527 67666**.

a) **ASSESSING YOUR CASE**

In order to assess your Homeless application, the Council needs to assess 5 main areas before it can decide what help you are entitled to. These are as follows:-

1) Eligibility

The Council must make checks whether you are eligible. This means that if you have any immigration restrictions, you may not be entitled to a Council or Housing Association home.

2) Homelessness

The Council needs to look at all the reasons why you are homeless or becoming homeless.

3) Priority Need

At this stage, the Council will try to establish whether you may have a priority need or not.

If it was established that you did not have a priority need - an Officer / Adviser would offer you advice and assistance, they may also arrange an appointment with a Housing Advice Officer to discuss your case further and to discuss alternative options.

If it was unclear whether you would have a priority need, your case would require further investigation. Therefore an appointment would be arranged or your case will be referred to the relevant department to investigate further.

If any of the list below describe you or a member of your household you may have a priority need:-

- Are responsible for dependent children/child under 16 years old and up to 18 years old if in full time education;
- Are pregnant;
- Are aged between 16 - 18 years old;
- Have severe medical problems or a disability;
- Are care leavers under the age of 21;
- Have served in the HM Forces;
- Have become institutionalised due to time spent in prison or in a residential unit.
- Fleeing violence or threats of violence;
- Are homeless because of fire, flood or some other disaster;

DRAFT

4) Intentionality

You could be found to be 'intentionally homeless' if you deliberately do something or fail to do something which leads to you losing your home, when it would have been reasonable for you to continue to live there.

5) Local Connection

To have a 'local connection' with Redditch Borough Council you must:-

- Have lived in the Borough for a least 6 months out of the last 12 months or 3 years out of the last 5 years; **or**
- Have a close relative (mother, father, son, daughter, sister, brother) who has resided in the Borough for at least 5 years; **or**
- Have permanent employment in the Borough; **or**
- Have some other special connection with Borough.

If you are a victim of violence or threats of violence this rule does not apply. If you do not fulfil the Local Connection criteria, you case maybe referred to the Local Authority where you would have a connection.

Once the Council has assessed these 5 areas, they will give you a written decision. The Council tries to keep within a target date of 33 days; however, sometimes this can take longer depending on the type of enquiries the Council has to make.

If your case is agreed the Council will have a duty to assist you with securing accommodation and your application will be placed into the Gold Band. As previously stated placement within the Gold Band is 'time limited', this will be explained in more detail in your decision letter. At the end of this time your application will be reviewed. Where suitable properties have come up, which you have failed to bid for, a decision will be taken as to whether your priority should be reduced or the Council should begin to bid on your behalf. If the Council has deemed it necessary to bid on your behalf, once 2 properties have been offered to you, which you have declined to accept the Council may consider its 'duty' discharged. If the Council does not agree your case, they will only have a duty to provide you with 'advice and assistance'.

If you are unhappy with the Council's decision you can apply for a review, but you must do this within 21 days of the decision letter. Further details will be provided on your Decision Letter.

b) TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

If you are eligible, homeless and appear to have a priority need the Council may offer you somewhere to stay temporary whilst your case is being processed. Temporary accommodation may be outside of Redditch and

DRAFT

consists of the Council's Temporary Accommodation, Bed & Breakfast, Refuges or Hostels.

If you have been provided with temporary accommodation and the decision is that you have become intentionally homeless the Council will give you 28 days to leave the temporary accommodation and assist you with finding alternative accommodation.

If you have a housing concern, please seek advice at an early stage as we may be able to prevent you becoming homeless by assisting you to maintain your existing accommodation; or by assisting you to secure alternative housing.

9. OLDER PERSON'S ACCOMMODATION / SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

There are two types of accommodation suitable for the more mature person.

a) SHELTERED HOUSING

The Council has a number of sheltered schemes throughout Redditch with Community Wardens visiting on a daily basis. The layouts of these schemes vary, but generally consist of independent flats or bedsits within a communal building with communal lounge facilities,

Sheltered schemes are generally for Applicants over the age of 60. However, certain schemes will accept people over the age of 50; however, priority will be given to Applicants over 60.

If you request this type of housing, arrangements can be made to visit one of the sheltered schemes. This gives the Community Warden an opportunity to explain the support provided and gives you an opportunity to experience the scheme before moving in.

When a ground floor flat becomes vacant, priority will be given to those tenants living in the scheme on the first floor or above who require ground floor accommodation.

b) VERY SHELTERED HOUSING

The Council owns an 'extra care' scheme called St. David's House, and has access to a very sheltered scheme at Terryspring Court.

You will need to satisfy the following conditions:-

- Be eligible for the Council's Housing Register.
- Be aged 60 or above.

DRAFT

- Need help with personal care such as washing, dressing or preparing meals and hot drinks, either now or in the foreseeable future.
- Have housing needs because your home is unsuitable. This may be because there is lack of basic amenities, or you may find it difficult to move around your home, or you wish to feel more secure, or your home makes your medical condition worse. There could be other reasons that your current home is unsuitable for you.

If you are interested in applying for this type of accommodation please visit the One Stop Shop for further information.

c) SPECIAL NEEDS ACCOMMODATION

There are a number of properties which have adaptations and are suitable for applicants with special needs. All accessible properties (i.e. housing which has been designed or adapted to meet the needs of disabled people) will be advertised through Redditch Home Choice. Priority will be given to those people who have appropriate levels of need and this will be clearly stated in the adverts. Consideration of the suitability of the property will be agreed by the Tenancy Manager and the Head of Housing & Community Services.

The property adverts will clearly state if the property is a Sheltered or Very Sheltered Scheme. Adverts will also highlight what, if any adaptations have been made to a property.

If you wish to remain independent in your own home but are finding it difficult, you may be offered equipment and adaptations to assist you, for example, lifts, showers, ramps, grab rails etc, or possibly a move to an adapted property. Assessments are carried out by the Occupational Therapist at the request of the Council's Special Needs Officer or the Care and Repair Agency - further details can be obtained at the One Stop Shop.

10. ALTERNATIVE HOUSING OPTIONS

As a result of the increased demand for Social Housing / Council Housing the Council is trying to encourage the use of alternative housing options. These are as follows:-

i) Private Rented Accommodation

Private rented accommodation can be found through the local newspapers, Lettings Agencies; and you can also find them in local shops.

With private rented accommodation you have more choice about where you wish to live and the property type. The agreement would be between yourself and the Landlord - a landlord can specify certain restrictions i.e. some may not accept people on Housing Benefit or pets.

DRAFT

If you are eligible for Housing Benefit you can apply for it to assist you with the rent for private rented accommodation. You are also eligible for the Council's Housing Waiting List whilst you are living in private rented accommodation.

ii) Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations)

Registered Social Landlords aim to provide affordable homes for rent, they are very similar to Council accommodation, some of these organisations hold their own waiting list. The Council has what is known as 'nomination rights' to some of these homes. Therefore their properties will be advertised and allocated through Redditch Home Choice. Most of the Registered Social Landlords who provide family accommodation will generally only accept nominations from the Council.

Some Associations will have their own criteria which Applicants will need to meet - this will clearly be stated in the property adverts.

iii) Co-operative Homes Scheme

Co-operative Homes is a form of housing which requires the involvement of the tenants in the management of their own homes.

If you are interested in this type of home you must be registered on the Council's Housing Register. These properties will be advertised and allocated through Redditch Home Choice.

You must also satisfy the Co-operative Homes requirement on suitability for living in a co-operative environment. Consideration will be given to anyone in housing need, on a low income and capable of living independently in their own home or with support if needed.

iv) Supportive Accommodation

Supportive accommodation is for people who wish to live independently, but require additional support with day to day activities. There are many schemes of supportive accommodation in Redditch for different areas of support. There are also several organisations in Redditch who provide Floating Support, in your own tenancy or property.

You may need support if you:-

- Have a learning disability;
- Have a mental health issue;
- Are an older person;
- Have a sensory impairment of physical disability;
- Are a young person in their first tenancy;

DRAFT

- Are a young single parent or a young couple who are parents;
- Have been homeless and are moving into a new tenancy;
- Are at risk of becoming homeless;
- Have drug or alcohol dependency issues.

The Council will be able to advise you of supportive accommodation schemes available for your needs or be able to refer you to external agencies that will be able to assist you further.

Some supportive accommodation may be advertised via Redditch Home Choice, however, the adverts will clearly state any requirements. Clients will need to satisfy any criteria that the Scheme / organisation request.

v) Low Cost Homeownership

There are several schemes; Shared Ownership, Discounted Sale and Homebuy; available to people wishing to live in Redditch. Properties available for Shared Ownership or Discounted Sale will be advertised via Redditch Home Choice.

Qualification for shared-ownership, 'Homebuy' and any other affordable housing scheme will be in accordance with the guidelines of the Housing Corporation. To qualify:-

- Applicants must be 'first-time' buyers. A first-time buyer is a person buying a home who does not already own one and is doing so for the sole purposes of living in it as their only / principal residence and not as an investment property.
- Must have a Social Housing need, i.e. would not be able to purchase a property without financial assistance.
- Be registered on the Council's Housing Register.
- Be eligible under the Allocations Policy of the RSL involved.

Further information can be obtained via the Local One Stop Shop or by appointment through the Housing Options Team. A One Stop Shop Advisor will make an appointment with a Housing Options Officer if they feel that you will benefit from further specialist advice.

vi) Mutual Exchanges

A Mutual Exchange is where two or more Council or Housing Association tenants swap their homes. It does not involve any property becoming empty. As the Housing Register becomes longer a Mutual Exchange is often the quickest way of moving.

DRAFT

Anybody who wishes to participate in a Mutual Exchange will be able to advertise their property via Redditch Home Choice. If you have internet access you can register your property direct via 'My Homepage', on the website (www.redditchhomechoice.org.uk). Alternatively you can approach the One Stop Shop who will be able to assist you.

There are certain conditions which need to be taken into consideration before the Council can agree to you exchanging with another tenant:-

- The property must be accepted in its present decorative conditions.
- The property must be suitable for the needs of the applicant.
- The rent record of both parties to the exchange must be satisfactory and the rent account clear prior to the exchange.
- The Council will not be liable for any costs arising from the exchange, e.g. rubbish, cutting back trees/hedges.
- No exchange may take place without the prior written agreement of the Council and the signing of the deed of assignment to exchange. The Council will need to complete the following checks before agreeing to the exchange.
 - An electrical test is carried out by the Council's contractor prior to the exchange.
 - An inspection of the property is conducted with both parties present.
 - There is not a breach of tenancy conditions.
- The Council may refuse an exchange if:-
 - There is a current Possession Order.
 - The accommodation has been built to satisfy a special housing need and the applicant does not have a need for such accommodation.
 - It will result in overcrowding.
 - It will result in a property being under-occupied, i.e. too large. You are allowed one additional bedroom.

vii) Moving to alternative Authorities

Move UK was a Government scheme which allowed social housing tenants (Council & Housing Associations) to move to alternative areas. This scheme

DRAFT

was recently suspended and the Government are currently considering launching a new scheme.

However, at present there are a couple of available options to assist a move:-

1. As most Councils are now opening their Waiting Lists, it maybe worth contacting the Council where you would like to live directly to enquire about applying for housing.
2. There is an independent website (www.homeswapper.co.uk) which you may wish to try.

If you require any further information on any of the above options please visit the One Stop Shop who will be able to assist you. Alternatively they may arrange an appointment for you with a Housing Advice Officer to discuss your case in more detail.

A list of Alternative Housing Options can be obtained from the One Stop Shop, this includes the following information:-

- Registered Social Landlords / Housing Associations with accommodation in Redditch.
- Private Landlords with accommodation in Redditch.
- Housing Options in surrounding areas.
- Other useful services who can offer support or further assistance.

11. FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICES

Floating Support is a Government initiative to provide support for vulnerable people across the country to prepare for successful independent living and to maintain their tenancies and independence whilst in their own accommodation.

There are several organisations within Redditch who offer Floating Support to enable tenancy sustainment by:-

- Maximising independence and daily living skills and equip tenants and householders with the necessary skills to live independently within the community.
- Empowering tenants to make their own choices and get involved in the services they receive.
- Increasing opportunities for education, employment and other skills.

DRAFT

It is a free service and may include:-

- Budgeting & money management.
- Advice on repairs.
- Assistance in obtaining grants.
- Benefit advice, including Housing Benefit.
- Contacting & arranging household services i.e. gas, electric.
- Accessing support of other agencies.

The following agencies offer Floating Support within Redditch:-

Nightstop offer support to single 16 - 25 year olds in their own tenancies and can be contacted on 01527 66036.

St. Basils offers support to singles, couples or families aged between 16 - 25 in their own tenancies. St Basils can be contacted on 01527 64623.

Stonham offer support to all age groups and household types and can be contacted on 0845 1550395. Stonham also offer specialist support to the victims of Domestic Violence and people with an Offending history.

Bromford & Carinthia Housing Association offer support to 16 - 25 years old, plus specialist support to people with Mental Health issues. They can be contacted on 01527 62250.

Fry Housing Trust offer support to people with an offending history, or Clients at risk of offending through their current lifestyle or actions. They assist people in their own tenancies. Fry Housing Trust can be contacted on 01527 578449.

You can contact the agencies directly or you can contact the Housing Options Team, One Stop Shop or your Tenancy Officer to assist you with a referral.

12. USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

One Stop Shop - Town Hall

Opening times as follows:-
Mon, Tues & Thurs - 9 a.m. till 5.30 p.m.
Wed - 10 a.m. till 5.30 p.m.
Fri - 9 a.m. till 5 p.m.
Sat - 9 a.m. till 12 p.m.

Appointments can be made to see a One Stop Shop Advisor at the Town Hall, via reception (Tel: 01527 64252 and request reception).

DRAFT

Town Hall	(01527) 64252 (switchboard).
Tenancy Team	(01527) 534075.
Housing Options Team	(01527) 534069 or via switchboard and extension 3511.
Nightstop	(01527) 66036.
YMCA	(01527) 61643.
Connexions	(01527) 66525.
Social Services	0845 607 2000.
Probation Services	(01527) 585152.
Community Drug Team	(01527) 61010.
C.A.B.	0844 415 0100.

E-Mail - comments@redditchbc.gov.uk.

Should this booklet need to be translated please contact the Housing Options Team for assistance.