

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2018

Title of report	REVIEW OF HOUSING POLICIES
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Purpose of report	To seek Cabinet approval for the revised policies attached as Appendix 1 and 2 to this report.
Council priorities	Value for Money, Homes and Communities.
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	The resource implications of housing policies can be accommodated from within existing approved budgets.
Link to relevant CAT	Keeping the services policy environment up to date ensures that housing business plan and team plan targets for performance can be achieved.
Risk Management	Having a robust policy environment within which to provide services ensured consistency in decision making and minimises the risk of successful challenge of decisions.
Equalities Impact Screening	Equalities Impact Screenings have been completed for both policies.
Human Rights	None
Transformational Government	Up to date policies that make use of the latest service delivery options and case law precedent ensure we can provide the most effective services possible in the most efficient way.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory

Comments of Deputy Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory
Consultees	Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Housing Service Management Team (SMT), Homelessness Working Group, Landlord Services Working Group, Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum (TLCF), Policy Development Group (PDG).
Background papers	Report to Policy Development Group 10 January 2018 – Review of Housing Policies.
Recommendations	THAT CABINET CONSIDERS THE VIEWS OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP AND APPROVES THE ATTACHED POLICIES.

1.0 REPORT

1.1 The Housing Service periodically reviews and updates the policies that provide Officers with a framework for delegated decision making when delivering services. Attached to this report are two revised policies which require Cabinet approval. These policies have been considered by Policy Development Group and their comments are attached as Appendix 3 in the form of the relevant draft minute from the meeting on 10 January 2018.

1.2 Allocations Policy – revised (Appendix 1)

Specific changes proposed to the Allocations Policy are detailed in the table attached as Appendix 1A.

The Allocation Policy review period was extended from that originally proposed, to allow the additional flexibility afforded by a change of ICT software system and the move away from a sub-regional scheme to be reflected in the new policy. Previously we have been part of a wider sub regional arrangement with a shared ICT platform, however this is no longer the case, and we have identified and procured our own independent system to hold our data and provide a Choice Based Letting service to applicants. By virtue of being independent from the previous wider scheme a number of amendments could be added to those originally proposed.

The first phase of consultation was carried out in June 2017 and comprised a stakeholder event held on 21 June 2017 where a wide range of internal and external stakeholders were invited together as well as an online survey that was promoted to both stakeholders and households on the housing register that ran from 23 June until the 9 July. There were 114 responses to the online consultation.

As well as the more formal consultation informal discussions were held with stakeholders based on “soft,” feedback where people identified that the current policy wasn’t working or

indeed the policy as written was not worded as people had thought and so adopted practice did not match what was written down.

This formal and informal consultation fed into a revised policy that was published as a consultation draft on 10 November 2017 with comments invited until 27 November. This was again promoted to members of the housing register, other stakeholders and involved tenants. There were 29 responses, 23 from members of the Housing Register and 6 other stakeholders.

There were no significant objections to the revised changes with most comment coming from members of the register who whilst notionally objecting to the approach to the low bands actually felt their individual circumstances were such that they should be a higher priority. In most cases they were alleging disrepair which will afford a higher priority under the existing and future policy anyway.

1.3 **Former Tenants Arrears Policy** – revised (Appendix 2)

A number of amendments have been made to the Former Tenants Arrears Policy and associated operational procedures, in the light of experience of operating the previous arrangements. The key policy changes are -

- Introduction within the reasons for write-off of 'Debt Relief Order' (Section 3.6 of Appendix 2). These last for twelve months, after which a review of circumstances will establish whether these may have changed sufficiently for the debt to be written back on against the individual. Debt Relief Orders were introduced after the approval of the previous version of the policy.
- Introduction of debt ranges of: less than £50.00; £50 to £300; and more than £300, which determine the subsequent actions taken to recover the debt by ensuring the cost of debt collection activity does not exceed the value of debt outstanding (Section 3.7 of Appendix 2).

1.4 There is a rolling programme of review of policies which will continue to be referred to Policy Development Group in advance of Cabinet consideration.