

Title of Report	REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY TO ACCEPT ANY PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY AS A RESULT OF A REVIEW AND CONSULTATION	
Presented by	Andy Barton Strategic Director of Communities	
Background Papers	none	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	There are no direct financial implications arising from the review of the Policy. However, the financial implications will need to be assessed on a regular basis and will need to be considered as part of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan each year.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	—The Council's Legal Team have reviewed the report and the policy	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None directly	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To introduce the proposed revised housing allocations policy to the Scrutiny Committee and seek its comments	
Recommendations	THAT COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PROVIDE COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY AHEAD OF ITS CONSIDERATION BY CABINET ON 12TH DECEMBER 2023.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 All local housing authorities are required to set up and maintain an allocations scheme under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996
- 1.2 The Council's allocations policy sets out amongst other things who is allowed to join the housing register as well the relative priority, applicants will receive for housing and how allocations will be made.

- 1.3 The policy applies to lettings made to Council Housing as well as Registered Provider properties over which the Council has nomination rights.
- 1.4 Currently there are around 900 households on the housing register and around 350 homes are let each year.

2.0 CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The revised policy has been developed in consultation with a range of key partners and stakeholders. Consultation and engagement has included:
- An online public survey promoted to current and recent service users of the housing choices service
 - A presentation to the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum
 - A member workshop held on 29th August 2023
 - A workshop with allocations staff of partner registered providers held on 4th September 2023
- 2.2 Feedback across all of these activities has fed into the revised policy.
- 2.3 Following on from consideration by Scrutiny Committee and subject to the feedback received, the policy will be shared with key stakeholders and delivery partners prior to consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 12th December.

3.0 KEY CHANGES

- 3.1 The revised policy is broadly similar to the current policy that is currently in place. The most significant change that impacts on the banding of applications is in relation to how it is proposed homeless households are treated who will be afforded a higher priority at an earlier stage in their homelessness application. It is expected this will reduce the number of homeless households needing to access emergency accommodation and increase the number of cases where homelessness is prevented (see section 7.26 onwards.) This change supports the emerging priorities of the updated homelessness strategy. The policy also introduces a formal procedure for making direct matches to certain homeless households who do not secure alternative accommodation through the bidding process. This approach reflects current advice from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) advisors and supports the policy objective of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation.
- 3.2 The revised policy also renames the housing needs bands replacing priority and high with critical and urgent. It is felt these better reflect the importance of resolving a housing situation in as short a period of time as possible and so reinforces the expectation that applicants in these bands bid on all properties suitable for them.
- 3.3 Qualification for the register has also been reviewed and this has led to updated income and savings thresholds and extended the qualifying period for a local connection as a result of residence in the district from six months to twelve. This reflects the feedback from the consultation and aligns the Council more closely with near neighbours. Income levels have reduced for single people and couples and increased slightly for families. The savings threshold for all groups has reduced.

4.0 POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that the changes in relation to homeless applicants are a significant change to the current approach. There will be ongoing monitoring of the implications of the changes once they have been adopted to ensure that all implications of the change are understood.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Local people live in high quality, affordable homes
Policy Considerations:	none
Safeguarding:	The policy does not directly impact on safeguarding but does allow for preference to be given to those who need to move for safeguarding reasons
Equalities/Diversity:	An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and no adverse impacts on protected groups have been identified
Customer Impact:	This policy has a direct impact on service users as it identifies how social housing will be allocated in the district. It has been framed to ensure those in greatest need are best placed to access social housing
Economic and Social Impact:	The policy is framed to assist people who need to move for economic reasons. Local connection considers those who work in the district
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	None directly although the policy can be used to transfer existing social tenants to allow upgrade work to take place more cost effectively on their current home.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	<p>The revised policy has been developed in consultation with a range of key partners and stakeholders. Consultation and engagement has included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An online public survey promoted to current and recent service users of the housing choices service • A presentation to the Tenants and Leasholders Consultation Forum • A member workshop • A workshop with allocations staff of partner registered providers
Risks:	no direct risks identified
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