

Title of Report	REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY	
Presented by	Councillor Andrew Woodman Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Background Papers	<u>Review of Housing Allocations Policy Community Scrutiny Report 28th September 2023</u>	Public Report: Yes
	<u>Review of Housing Policies Cabinet Report 6th February 2018</u>	Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	There are no direct financial implications arising from the review of the policy.	
	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	There are no staffing or corporate implications.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To seek Cabinet agreement to amendments to the Council's Housing Allocations and Lettings Policy	
Reason for Decision	To agree amendments to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.	
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. APPROVES THE REVISED HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND LETTINGS POLICY 2. DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE HEAD OF HOUSING IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO MAKE MINOR CHANGES TO THE POLICY AS REQUIRED TO ADDRESS CHANGES IN NATIONAL POLICY AND DEMAND. 	

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 fulfils this requirement through the Housing Allocations and Lettings Policy. The Policy sets out amongst other things who is allowed to join the housing register as well as 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 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 29 August 2023
 - A workshop with allocations staff of partner registered providers held on 4 September 2023.
- 2.2 Feedback across all of these activities has fed into the revised Policy.
- 2.3 The Policy was considered by Community Scrutiny Group on 28 September 2023. The minutes of that meeting are attached as an appendix to this report. Community Scrutiny Group requested an opportunity to review the impacts of the changes to the policy six months after implementation.
- 2.4 Following on from Community Scrutiny, the draft policy was shared with key stakeholders for comment. It was not necessary to make any changes to the draft considered by Community Scrutiny as a result of comments received as they were all supportive of the proposed Policy rather than suggestions for changes.

3.0 KEY CHANGES FROM THE EXISTING POLICY

- 3.1 The revised policy is broadly similar to the existing Policy. 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. 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 IMPLEMENTATION AND POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

- 4.1 The Council is currently implementing a new ICT system to manage the housing register and the letting of affordable rented homes. Changes to the Policy will be implemented as part of the changeover to the new system in Spring 2024.
- 4.2 As identified above, a review of the changes will be carried out around six months after the new Policy takes effect to understand the implications of the changes. If necessary a further revised policy would be brought back to Cabinet at that time for further consideration. The Housing Strategy Team will then continue to monitor the effectiveness of the policy together with changes to demand for accommodation alongside legislative changes and national policy to identify when further revisions are necessary.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities & Housing - A Well Run Council
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.

<p>Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:</p>	<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 <p>Following on from Community Scrutiny the policy was shared with key stakeholders for comment.</p>
<p>Risks:</p>	<p>No risks identified.</p>
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