

REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	3rd February 2011	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Mark Alflat – Director of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Ros White – Housing Operations Manager	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Allocations Policy	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members note the process used to review the Allocations policy.
- 1.2 Members approve the proposed new Allocations policy.
- 1.3 Members approve targets for allocations for the coming 12 months be Emergency Band 25%; Band A - 47%, Band B – 25%, Band C - 3%.
- 1.4 Members approve the discontinued use of the automated telephone bidding and information service.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To advise members of the process used to review the Allocations policy.
- 2.2 To gain approval for the proposed new Allocations policy.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Government believes that allocation policies for social housing should provide for applicants to be given more say and greater choice over the accommodation which they are allocated. This is the best way to ensure sustainable tenancies and to build settled, viable and inclusive communities.
- 3.2 South Derbyshire's policy was last reviewed in June 2008 in preparation for the introduction of Choice Based Lettings in December 2008. Since then the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has issued a Statutory Code of Guidance on how local authorities should allocate properties.
- 3.3 In April 2010 a report was presented to Members which detailed the outcomes of the first year of South Derbyshire Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Scheme and sought Members approval for proposed actions to ensure compliance with the new Code of Guidance.
- 3.4 The proposed new Allocations policy is based on two years operational experience and will ensure that the way in which the Council allocates properties continues to be fair, transparent and flexible.

- 3.5 The views and opinions of residents were equally important in shaping the new policy. Residents who had direct experience of the allocations system in the last 12 months were invited to two Challenge Days.
- 3.6 The Coalition government have stated their intention to make further changes to national guidance relating to both allocations and transfer policies. At the time of writing the detail of the proposals is not known but it may therefore be necessary to bring a further report back to Committee in the near future.
- 3.7 At the end of November 2010 the number of applicants registered was 1597. The breakdown across the 4 Bands was:
- 64 in Emergency Band.
 - 337 in Band A.
 - 774 in Band B.
 - 422 in Band C.
- 3.8 The breakdown of ages of the principal applicant was:
- 16 to 25: 33
 - 26 to 35: 110
 - 36 to 45: 147
 - 46 to 55: 185
 - 56 to 66: 214
 - 67 to 74: 215
 - 75 & Over: 693
- 3.9 Of these 1597 applicants 133 were existing South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC) tenants. The high number of applicants in the 75 and over age group is a reflection of the housing need of this age group in the wider community. It may be that with a bespoke Telecare package some of these applicants may choose to and be able to remain in their present accommodation. This is a separate piece of work being undertaken by the Sheltered Housing Manager.
- 3.10 During the 12 months January 2010 to December 2010, 272 properties were re-let to applicants from the joint waiting list. Of these:
- 57 (20.96%) went to Emergency band
 - 135 (49.63%) to Band A
 - 79 (29.04%) to Band B; and
 - 1 (0.37%) to Band C.
- 3.11 Analysis of these figures show we are managing to achieve most allocations to those in most need (Emergency and Band A) whilst homeless allocations (generally emergency band) are not overly dominating our allocations. There is also considerable movement in the category of applicant with other, but less urgent, needs to move (Band B).
- 3.12 It is proposed that targets for allocations for the coming 12 months be: Emergency Band 25%; Band A - 47%, Band B - 25%, Band C - 3%.

4.0 Reviewing the Allocations Policy

- 4.1 The existing policy is over 2 years old and needed updating to reflect the changes in the statutory Code of Guidance issued by CLG and the lessons learnt from operating the policy for 2 years.

- 4.2 It was vital that residents and applicants were involved in the process of reviewing the current Allocations policy and not simply given a finished document to comment on. The aims of the consultation were to give residents the opportunity to:
- Question the current policy.
 - Consider the policies of other organisations. and to
 - Discuss and agree collectively what should be in the new policy.
- 4.3 In order to meet these aims the policy was reviewed using Challenge Days. Tenants who had progressed through the allocations system in the previous 12 months were invited to attend two Challenge Days which were designed to meet the aims at 4.2.
- 4.4 Over 30 residents attended the first Challenge Day, which was held on 4th November 2010 at Bretby Conference Centre. Working in small groups, residents scrutinised how we deliver the allocations service and put ideas forward that would improve the service and make it, from their perspective, more transparent and flexible.
- 4.5 All the ideas and suggestions expressed on the day were gathered together and a further Challenge Day was held on 17th December 2010, at which residents were asked to consider a draft of the new Allocations policy. To ensure that the new policy does capture their comments a "You said, we did" summary sheet was provided.

5.0 The New Policy

- 5.1 The proposed new Allocations policy is a comprehensive policy document which aims to provide:
- A better awareness among local people of the facts around social housing, including a clearer understanding of the amount of housing available and how social housing is allocated; (section 20.8.1. of the Allocations policy);
 - A greater sense among local people that housing is allocated fairly; (section 20.8.1)
 - Stronger community cohesion; (sections 13.6 & 25 of the Allocations policy)
 - The standards SDDC aims to meet and what residents can do if they feel that the service has fallen short; (section 12 of the Allocations policy)
 - Allow for the provision of Local lettings policies which may better reflect local pressures and priorities; (section 20.9 of the Allocations policy)
- 5.2 The proposed changes to the Allocations policy are shown in italics throughout the document at Appendix 1 (and also in a summary sheet Appendix 2). The words not in italics at appendix 1 are the original policy as agreed by the Housing and Community Services Committee on 5th June 2008. The main concerns raised at the community consultation events are shown in the "You said we did" summary sheet at Appendix 3.
- 5.3 The cost having the telephone bidding service, where applicants can place a bid on an advertised property or hear their position on the register, is £5,800 per year. As only 49 applicants have used the telephone to place a bid for a property or to check their position on the register in the last 12 months, it is proposed that this service is removed as it does not represent value for money.

6.0 Corporate Implications

6.1 The Council's vision is being delivered through actions grouped into 4 themes within the Corporate Plan 2009-2014. This policy contributes to:

- Theme 1 Sustainable Growth and Opportunity
This Theme recognises the Council's strong and growing economy, with its vibrant communities; and
- Theme 4 Value for Money.
This theme covers ensuring we continue to meet community needs, improve performance and reduce cost through efficiencies.

6.2 This policy also contributes to Housing Services' mission statement that: "Through high quality services, delivered in partnership with customers, the provision of well maintained affordable homes that meet the requirements and aspirations of the people of South Derbyshire."

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with this policy.

8.0 Community Implications

8.1 This policy contributes to the Vibrant Communities theme of the Sustainable Communities Strategy, where we want to see communities that are vibrant and active where there is a strong sense of community. The projected outcomes of having a fair, transparent and flexible Allocations policy developed in conjunction with residents are:

- More participation in community and voluntary action; and
- An increase in the percentage of people who feel South Derbyshire is an attractive place to live.