

REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES	AGENDA ITEM: 11
DATE OF MEETING:	6th JUNE 2019	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (SERVICE DELIVERY)	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	PAUL WHITTINGHAM Paul.whittingham@douthderbyshire.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy are noted and approved as a draft for consultation.
- 1.2 That consultation with the public and stakeholders on these proposed changes is commenced on 7th of June date for a period of one month.
- 1.3 That the results of this consultation and a final Policy are reported to a future Housing and Community Services Committee for adoption.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 The report explains the changes that are proposed to the existing Housing Allocations Policy.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The current Housing Allocations Policy which applies to Council properties and other social and affordable rented properties provided by Registered Social Landlords has been in place since June 2014. A review of the Policy and of the changing picture of housing supply and demand in the District has been completed. This review has identified some changes that are necessary in order to provide a transparent allocations system that meets the needs of applicants, the Council and other Housing providers.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 A project team reviewed the Policy in order to produce a revised version that:

- discharges the Council's statutory duties to applicants and homeless households
- offers customers information and free advice to enable them to make informed choices about their housing options
- delivers an easy to understand, fair and transparent system
- helps to prevent homelessness
- makes the most effective use of the local housing stock
- supports the principles of social inclusion and community cohesion
- responds to the circumstances of vulnerable individuals
- encourages joint working with other agencies.

4.2 The scope of the review is limited to:

- The allocation of housing to housing register applicants and existing Council tenants (transfers)
- The allocation of temporary housing
- The allocation of social and affordable housing offered by other housing providers

4.3 Excluded from the scope of this review are: Mutual exchanges and other assignments of tenancy, Garages and other non- dwellings

4.4 The review considered changes in legislation and the overall supply and demand for different types and tenures of accommodation in South Derbyshire. The outcome of this was to highlight a number of key issues and propose changes in policy which will assist in mitigating the risks that these issues pose.

4.5 The proposed changes to the Policy are contained in the Consultation Document (appendix A) and are summarised below:

- Retain the Choice Based Lettings approach to provide an open and transparent method of advertising, allocating and letting properties.
- Retain the current eligibility criteria but allow applicants for sheltered flats without a local connection to join the Housing Register in the lowest priority only. These households will be offered accommodation only where there are no other eligible applicants with a local connection.
- Retain the current Banding system for applicants in order to differentiate between levels of housing need and ensure that reasonable preference is given to households with the highest need.
- Increase the income eligibility limit from £32,000 to a household income of £40,000 per annum which is slightly above the South Derbyshire average household income in order to ensure that working lower income households are given the opportunity to join the Housing Register.
- Remove the allocation banding quotas this from the Policy and carry out allocations based on housing need, to remove any potential for disadvantaging households with a higher housing need.

- Reflect the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 by providing housing advice and assistance appropriate to all applicants and incorporate personalised housing plans (PHP) for homeless applicants
- Place Homeless Applicants owed a 'prevention' or 'relief' duty into priority banding A to assist in resolving their housing need.
- Where the Council is not able to prevent homelessness, the applicants will move into the Emergency Band (E).
- Care leavers will be deemed to have a local connection in the area where they received care. Care Leavers that have been placed in the area by another Local Authority may be deemed as having a local connection. (this provision may be further amended after discussion with Derbyshire County Council)
- Retain and encourage the use of "Local Lettings Plans" in order to ensure the sustainability of both new and existing housing
- Reduce the threshold for the allocation of sheltered and adapted dwellings to allow households with a disability and in receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) generally to be allocated sheltered or specially adapted housing.
- Reflect the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant of which the Council is a signatory.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 A further report regarding the re-procurement of the software which delivers the Homefinder service to and the financial implications of this will follow later in the year. This software holds all of the housing registers data and applicants personal information. It also produces the property details and advertisements for applicants to view and then express their interest in being allocated the property.

6.0 Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 6.1 There are no employment implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

- 6.2 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

Corporate Plan Implications

- 6.3 This Policy directly addresses Corporate Plan Aim PE1. “Improve the quality and make best use of existing Council housing stock to meet current and future needs.”

Risk Impact

- 6.4 This report directly addresses an action to mitigate the risk SD7 in the Service Delivery Risk Register “Insufficient supply of affordable homes to meet Council needs relating to allocations and homelessness”

7.0 Community Impact

Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation with existing Housing Register/waiting list applicants will be carried out through the online Homefinder system. There will also be the opportunity for applicants to attend a focus group in order to give their input to the Policy. Consultation with key stakeholders in the statutory and voluntary sector will be carried out online and also through existing multi agency forums including; The Southern Derbyshire Place Alliance, the Health and Well Being Group. Consultation with other Housing Providers will be carried out online and through existing partnership forums including: The Choice Based Lettings Board and the Homeless Forum. Subject to Committee approval of the draft Policy the consultation will commence on 7th of June until 7th July. Following analysis of the results a final Policy will be brought to Committee for adoption

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 7.2 An assessment of the Equality and Diversity Impact of the final policy document will be completed after the consultation exercise

7.3 Social Value Impact

This Policy supports the Healthier Communities aims of The Council by assisting people to retain their independence and wellbeing.

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.4 The Policy and associated processes will continue to be operated primarily through an “online “system to minimize the use of printed materials.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 As the supply and demand for social and affordable housing shifts, so the Council’s Allocations Policy must adapt to meet these changes whilst still achieving its corporate and community aims.
- 8.2 The modest changes proposed allow for this flexibility without compromising any wider housing management issues.

9.0 Background Papers

Previous Policy and associated Committee report.