
REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	THURSDAY 27 TH APRIL 2006	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	KAREN TALBOT HOUSING OPERATIONS MANAGER EXT 5797	DOC:
SUBJECT:	ALLOCATION POLICY	REF: HCS01
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 Members approve the update Allocations Policy which includes:

- amendments to homeless applicants,
- applicants with insecurity of tenure,
- clarity of local connection and medical need,
- provision to move from our general needs stock to sheltered accommodation,
- clarity on overcrowding and relationship breakdown provisions,
- deferments
- and allocations to gypsy site plots

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To advise Members of the proposed amendments to the Allocation Policy. The revised policy document as attached as Annexe One. The current policy is attached as Annexe Two.

3.0 Background

3.1 In April 2004 Members approved the current Allocations Policy which has now been in operation for two years.

3.2 Over the last two years it has become apparent that the document needed to be reformatted to become more accessible and transparent.

3.3 In addition, usage highlighted the need to amend and clarify eligibility and points awards for applicants who fall within certain categories.

4.0 Detail

4.1 The principals and objectives of the policy remain the same other than the addition of a commitment to work with our partner Registered Social Landlords to increase access to and options for social housing through nomination agreements. Formal

agreement has been reached with our partners and procedures have been in place to increase nominations from April 2006. (Annexe One, point 2.8)

- 4.2 Eligibility to the Housing Register has been clarified within section 3. The new policy also includes the provision that owner occupiers will only be considered through the homelessness route, i.e. fleeing violence, or because of a medical need for more suitable accommodation which they cannot afford to secure for themselves.
- 4.2 A section of the policy defines the points awards that will be given to application for social housing. (Annexe One, section 4) Many points awards remain the same as the current policy. However the following have been added or amended;

Homeless Applicants

Within the existing policy homeless points awards were considered in section q (Annexe Two, page 6) under the heading of priority needs and insecurity of tenure in section p.

The policy states that where applicants can demonstrate homeless with priority need or insecurity of tenure as defined by homeless legislation, that is threatened with homelessness within 28 days, 100 points will be awarded.

In reality this has meant that we see cases where a young woman with baby, living with parents, is served notice by mum and is awarded 100 points. Similarly a young woman and child can be actually homeless and receive the same points award. Under current policy we do not fulfil our duty to show reasonable preference to those who are homeless and we give the same priority to two different sets of circumstances.

The new policy states that where an applicant is actually homeless (and meets other criteria within Homelessness legislation) we will award 100 points. Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness (i.e. "Mum wants me out") they will receive 50 points to reflect the urgency of each situation but ensure that actual homeless are shown more preference. (Annexe One, section 4.1)

Insecurity of Tenure

Applicants who are temporarily re-housed in supported housing are there on licence rather than having security of tenure. Therefore where we had duty to re-house the duty has not yet been satisfied.

Section 4.2 of the new policy has been added to reflect the duty we still owe and to ensure that once in supported housing, applicants can be re-housed into secure accommodation when no longer in need of support.

This improved pathway will ensure that supported housing is no longer "bed blocked" by residents who needed support and now cannot move on, therefore freeing up supported spaces for those who need these services.

Connections to South Derbyshire

The 'Length of Residence' and 'Local Connection' sections of the current policy (Annexe Two, page 5) have been combined under one heading to provide a clearer method for points awards. (Annexe One, section 4.4)

Medical Need

The definition of medical need has been amended in the new policy to ensure that we consider the extent to which the existing housing circumstance adversely affects

an applicant's (or household member's) physical and mental health. (Annexe One, section 4.8)

General Needs to Sheltered Accommodation

Section 4.10 has been added to the new policy to ensure that our existing tenants in general needs stock are given reasonable preference for sheltered housing when they reach the time of life where they feel they need it.

This section not only affords protection to our ageing tenants but frees up our general needs stock to re-house other families.

Overcrowding

Currently household's with pregnant women apply to us because another child will make them overcrowded in their current circumstances. Under the existing policy overcrowding points cannot be given until the birth. (Annexe Two, pages 3 and 4) This means we often expect applicants to move house while caring for a very young baby.

Section 4.12.3 has been added to allow those points to be awarded in the third trimester of pregnancy in an attempt to increase the chance of re-housing earlier on.

Relationship Breakdown

This section has been reworded from the original (Annexe Two, page 7) to remove any misunderstanding of "joint tenants". This provision was originally added to ensure a service to existing joint tenants of South Derbyshire District Council.

Clarity has also been added to ensure that the points award is given to departing partners who leave their home so that their family may remain housed, not those who have been excluded by family courts for domestic abuse.

Deferment of Applications

This section seeks to clarify cases where the Council can legally defer applications. We cannot legally refuse any application to the housing register but in circumstances of outstanding debt or anti social behaviour we can overlook an applicant for re-housing until these matters have been addressed. Our process is explained in section 7. (Annexe One)

Other properties

Sections 10 and 11 have been added in the new policy document to reflect policy for allocating plots to the gypsy site on Woodyard Lane, Foston and our stock of garages and garage plots.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The Allocations Policy seeks to assist optimum rental recovery through appropriate use of the housing stock

6.0 Corporate Implications

6.1 The Allocations Policy seeks to fulfil our legislative obligations as housing providers.

7.0 Community Implications

7.1 The Allocations Policy establishes a fair, open and accessible process for matching housing need to available resources for the benefit of the community.

7.2 The policy also seeks to protect our communities from those who engage in anti social behaviour.

8.0 Comments from South Derbyshire Tenants Forum

8.1 South Derbyshire Tenants Forum sought and were given assurance that when re-housing applicants with previous convictions for sex offences, the District Council will take all reasonable measures to ensure that they will not be re-housed near children or schools.