



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

**ADULTS, HEALTH AND HOUSING
COMMISSION**
Monday 14 March 2011

ITEM 9

Report of the Strategic Director of Adults,
Health and Housing

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following new guidance issued by Communities and Local Government – CLG – a review of Derby's current Housing Allocations Policy has been undertaken.
- 1.2 This paper makes recommendations for changes to the policy to comply with the new guidance and to take account of responses to consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the new proposed Housing Allocations Policy – attached at Appendix 3.
- 2.2 To agree to implement the new policy following upgrades to the IT and software system, expected by 1 June 2011.
- 2.3 To inform all partner providers, tenants and housing applicants on the Joint Housing Register of the new policy.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To make sure the Council is compliant with the statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England and to make best use of limited social housing.
- 3.2 Once agreed, we will instruct our IT provider to choose software to align with the new policy.
- 3.3 To comply with statutory guidance on informing partners and clients.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The current Housing Allocations Policy was approved by Cabinet on 1 August 2006.
- 4.2 In drafting the Housing Allocations Policy, the Council must have regard to guidance issued by CLG and, in December 2009, CLG issued new guidance, following a House of Lords ruling earlier in that year. This has required a review of Derby's current policy.
- 4.3 A fundamental review of the current policy has been undertaken by the Housing Options Centre and the review included consultation with stakeholders, customers, members and statutory and voluntary agencies. Consultation was undertaken through a series of nine Focus Groups, from March 2010 to July 2010, and with all Derby Homefinder landlords via a questionnaire. Appendix 2 details who was involved in the consultation and the key outcomes. The review also included best practice examples from other local authorities and CBL North, our benchmarking group.
- 4.4 The consultation led to a number of proposed changes to the policy, namely:
- reducing the length of time homeless households have before a "Final Offer" is made from three months to one month
 - advertising adapted properties to allow applicants with a disability choice over where they live
 - reducing the number of bids from six to three
 - introducing penalties for refusals of offers of accommodation
 - introducing penalties for anti-social behaviour and tenancy related debt
 - changes to the eligibility table to maximise use of the stock and create more estate sustainability.
- 4.5 The proposed new Housing Allocations Policy, which is attached as Appendix 3, has been assessed by the Council's Legal Services as compliant with the latest CLG guidance.
- 4.6 The practical implementation of the new Housing Allocations Policy will require changes to the Housing Options Centre IT software and, as such, it is likely that the effective date for implementing the policy will be 1 June 2011.
- 4.7 The Government's proposed Localism Bill includes for changes in the way social housing will be allocated in the future. Therefore, it will be necessary to review the policy again, in light of these changes, when and if they happen.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Retaining the existing policy leaves the Council open to challenge, as it no longer complies with all statutory guidance.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Mark Menzies – Director of Housing and Advice Services
---	--

For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Name 01332 XXXXXX e-mail xxx.xxx@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Consultation and Outcomes Appendix 3 – Proposed Housing Allocations Policy
---	--

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 There may be some costs associated with updating the IT system to reflect the changes outlined in the policy. These costs will be contained within existing budgets.
- 1.2 The proposed changes in relation to “Final Offer” will result in more effective management of Bed and Breakfast and other temporary accommodation.

Legal

- 2.1 There is a statutory requirement imposed on the Council under the Housing Act 1996, where there is an alteration to the scheme reflecting a major change of policy to:
 - send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every private registered provider of social housing and registered social landlord with which they have nomination arrangements, and
 - afford those persons a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.
- 2.2 There is also a requirement to, within a reasonable period of time, take such steps as the Council considers reasonable to bring the effect of the alteration to the attention of those likely to be affected by it – that is all actual and prospective applicants on the Joint Housing Register. This will be achieved through written notification to each applicant on the Joint Housing Register, together with an advert in the local press.
- 2.3 These changes ensure the Council meets the requirements under the Housing Act 1996 – as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 – and the new guidance “Fair and Flexible, issued by CLG.

Personnel

- 3.1 None directly arising.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The principles of the proposed Housing Allocations Policy are to operate in a fair and transparent manner, taking account of both the Council’s duty to take account of housing need and its wish to offer as much choice as possible.
- 4.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment – EIA – has been completed and approved by the Equalities Task Group. An EIA Action Plan has been drawn up, which will be implemented within 12 months of the introduction of the policy, including relevant training and IT improvements.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 None directly arising.

Carbon commitment

- 6.1 None directly arising.

Value for money

- 7.1 The review of the Housing Allocations Policy includes a reduction in the number of bids an applicant can make, which will lead to improved efficiency in short listing.
- 7.2 Better management of temporary accommodation should lead to a reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 8.1 The proposed policy contributes to the corporate objective of making us proud of our neighbourhoods, giving excellent services and value for money.