

Agenda Item No: 3 **Report No:** 59/13
Report Title: Review of Housing Allocation Policy
Report To: Housing Working Party **Date:** 25 March 2013
Lead Councillor: Councillor Ron Maskell
Ward(s) Affected: All
Report By: Andy Chequers Corporate Head of Housing
Contact Officer(s): Sue Horne, Head of Housing Management
Jo Jacks Housing Needs Manager

Purpose of Report:

To outline proposed changes to the current allocation policy in response to the Localism Act 2011

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To authorise officers to commence wide consultation with applicants, tenants and other stakeholders on the proposals and invite any other proposals for consideration
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Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 The Localism Act 2011 authorised Local authorities to adapt their Housing allocation policies to suit the particular needs of their area. It gave local authorities a new power to positively prescribe, by class, the only applicants entitled to be allocated social housing under their allocation schemes.
- 2 The Council's current allocation policy permits applicants with no local connection to the Lewes District to register for rehousing. Following Welfare reform changes it is anticipated that there may be an influx of applicants seeking cheaper accommodation, from other more expensive areas.
- 3 Welfare Reform provisions for numbers of bedrooms, to be implemented in April, are less generous than the Council's current rules, and there is a concern that under the present system applicants may be allocated a property they are unable to finance, if dependent on Housing Benefit.
- 4 The opportunity is also available to adjust the policy to allow for penalties for refusing an offer of accommodation, and various other practical amendments to make the system more workable and more transparent.
- 5 Consultation with stakeholders before finalising the policy is a statutory requirement. Discussions have already taken place with TOLD (Tenants of

Lewes District) who are in broad agreement with the proposals. An on-line consultation is in preparation.

Information

- 6 The current Allocation Policy was adopted in August 2011, as a response to the requirements of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Housing Act 2004 and Homelessness Act 2002. The Council adopted Choice Based Lettings in January 2009 and the majority of vacancies are advertised in on the Sussex Homemove website on a fortnightly cycle. Applicants are banded from A (Priority) to D (No assessed Housing Need) and generally the applicant with the highest banding with the earliest band date is allocated the property.
- 7 Authorities are still required to have regard for the reasonable preference categories: (Homelessness Act 2002);
 - people who are homeless;
 - people owed certain homelessness duties;
 - people living in unsatisfactory housing conditions (including insanitary or overcrowded housing);
 - people with a particular need to move on medical or welfare grounds;
 - and people with a particular need to move to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

Financial Appraisal

- 8 The proposals are not anticipated to have any financial implications although it is hoped a cost saving may result from the simplification of the Medical Priority system.

Environmental Implications

- 9 I have completed the Environmental Implications Questionnaire and there are no significant effects as a result of these recommendations.

Risk Management Implications

- 10 I have completed a risk assessment.

The changes/issues covered by this report are not significant in terms of risk. No new risks will arise whether or not the recommendations are implemented or rejected.

Background Papers

- 11 Homelessness Act 2002; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/notes>

Localism Act 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/notes>

Lewes District Council Allocation Policy August 2011

http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/housing_choice_based_lettings_allocation_policy.pdf

Appendices

12 Lewes District Council Allocation Policy – proposed changes