



Lewes District Council
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Housing Working Party

Minutes of a meeting of the **Housing Working Party** held in the **Meeting Room, 20 Fort Road, Newhaven** on **Thursday 3 October 2013** at **1.00pm**

Present:

Councillors I A Nicholson (Chair), R Blackman, S B Davy and E C Merry

Officers Attending:

A Blanshard, Committee Officer
A Chequers, Corporate Head – Housing Services
S Horne, Head of Housing Management
J Jacks, Housing Needs Manager

Also Present:

D Forsdike, Tenants' Representative
L Steer, Tenants' Representative

Minutes

Action

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors M P Chartier and S Saunders.

3 Changes to Housing Allocation Policy

The Working Party considered Report No 164/13 which outlined the proposed amendments to the Council's Housing Allocation Policy following an on-line consultation. The Head of Housing Management explained that at its meeting on 25 March 2013 the Housing Working Party had requested to receive a report on the results of a public consultation on the proposed immediate changes to the Housing Allocation Policy. The results of this consultation were shown in Appendix 1 of the Report.

The Working Party reviewed the proposed final changes, shown in Appendix 1 to the Report, one by one. The Head of Housing Management explained each change in turn and then the Working Party discussed the proposals and made suggestions for any actions or amendments it felt

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appropriate.

The Working Party agreed with the proposal to restrict eligibility to those who had been resident in the District for two years out of the past four. The Head of Housing Management explained that following the consultation it was suggested that exceptions for those over the age of 60 and for Forces candidates with a local connection be included. She explained that this would be advantageous to the Council as it would enable it to offer sheltered accommodation to those in need outside of the area. The Working Party asked whether there was a need for the two years resident in the District to be consecutive. The Head of Housing Management informed them that the requirement would be any two out of four years.

The Working Party then considered the proposed amendments to the exclusions criteria. The Head of Housing Management explained that the proposed changes, particularly regarding applicants with a conviction for drug dealing, would send out a strong message to prospective and existing tenants. She also explained that the wording of the criteria regarding the savings or capital of prospective tenants had been amended to provide a clear figure.

The Head of Housing Management advised that there was an urgent need to amend the Allocation Policy criteria on the number of bedrooms. She explained that officers were keen for the change to be made to best ensure that tenants were not placed in a property that was too large under the changes to welfare reform. The Corporate Head of Housing Services informed the Working Party that this policy amendment had already been made by other authorities in the East Sussex area.

The Head of Housing Management explained to the Working Party that any proposed change to the Priority for Medical Reasons criteria of the Allocations Policy was always contentious. It was suggested that there be a limit imposed of one medical assessment form per household, whereas currently this might be submitted by every member of the household. There had been some concerns raised about this by respondents, particularly around the idea of medical conditions being assessed by non-medical staff.

The Head of Housing Management explained that proposed changes would reduce administration costs and increase fairness of allocation. Changes had been made to the post of the Special Needs Housing Officer, which was held by a medically qualified officer. This condition had been included in the job specification for the future, and it was proposed that medical assessments be undertaken by this officer.

The Working Party discussed concerns around the matter of the village connections section of the Allocation Policy. It was established that there would need to be time given for the proposed changes, if agreed, to be in and to take the subsequent changes to the waiting list into account when reviewing the village connection section of the Policy. The Housing Needs Manager explained that only once these effects had been assessed would discussion of any proposed changes to the village connection be

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<p>appropriate. The Working Party was assured that there would be another meeting arranged to discuss the village connection section of the Policy at a later date.</p> <p><u>Resolved:</u></p> <p>3.1 That the implementation of the proposed changes to the Lewes District Council Housing Allocation Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 to Report No 164/13, with effect from 1 December 2013 be agreed subject to the following textual amendment:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(a) That the exclusions section of the Housing Allocation Policy as set out on page 8 of Report No 164/13, be re-worded to read “Applicants or members of their household have a current conviction for drug dealing”; and</p> <p>3.2 That officers in the Housing department be authorised to consult on detailed changes to the village connection rules and consider ‘community contribution’ requirements with a view to implementation by December 2014, subject to further consultation with the Working Party.</p>	<p>CH-HS</p> <p>CH-HS</p>
<p>4 Date of Next Meeting</p> <p><u>Resolved:</u></p> <p>4.1 That it be noted that the next meeting of the Working Party will be called as necessary.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 2.20pm</p> <p>I A Nicholson Chair</p>	<p>All to note/CO</p>