

## **PROPOSED HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY – OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Following the Council's approval in December 2018 of the proposed new draft Housing Allocation Policy ("the Policy") a statutory consultation exercise commenced. The Policy set out proposed changes to the way the Council allocates social housing within the District. The proposed Allocation Policy can be viewed using the link below:

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/allocationconsultation>

- 1.2 This report sets out the outcome of the consultation.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Under s.166A(13) of the Housing Act 1996 before adopting, or making any alterations to a housing allocation scheme that reflects a major change in policy, the Council is required to:
- (a) send a copy of the draft policy, or proposed alterations, to every private registered provider of social housing and registered social landlord with which they have nomination rights; and
  - (b) afford them with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.
- 2.2 Under s.168 of the Act, the Council is required to take reasonable steps to bring the effects of the alteration to the attention of those who are likely to be affected by them. It is accepted good practice to give those who will be so affected an opportunity to comment on the proposed alterations before they are adopted.

### **3. CONSULTATION**

#### **3.1 Process**

3.1.1 On the 15 January 2019 the Council opened its consultation on the Policy. A consultation document containing a summary of the proposed changes, a link to the Policy and a questionnaire was made available on the Housing Section of the Council's website. A copy of the consultation document is attached at Appendix 1. The consultation ended at 5pm on the 20 February 2019.

3.1.2 The following groups were also specifically invited to consult on the Policy:

- (a) All private registered providers of social housing with which the Council has nomination rights;
- (b) All current Homeseach applicants; and
- (c) Statutory, non-statutory agencies and organisations delivering services to vulnerable people in the District.

3.1.3 The Service Manager for Housing Options also visited the Job Centre Plus in Ringwood, a Care Leavers' Team Meeting and a Community Mental Health Team Meeting to promote the consultation. A presentation on the Policy was

also given to the Tenant Involvement Group and Homelessness Multi-Agency Forum.

### **3.2 Outcome**

3.2.1 There were 250 responses to the Council's consultation; 88.8% of responses were from current Homeseach applicants. Responses were also received from the following organisations:

- (a) Radian (private registered provider of social housing);
- (b) Ringwood Town Council;
- (c) New Milton Town Council
- (d) Together
- (e) Tenant's Involvement Group;
- (f) The Handy Trust Charity (Youth Service);
- (g) The You Trust; and
- (h) Two Saints

3.2.2 A summary of the responses received, including some of the comments made on the Policy and the Council's responses to them is attached at Appendix 2.

3.2.3 The consultation outcome showed the majority to be in support of the Policy; with 63.1% of respondents confirming that they believed it was correct for the Council to allocate scarce social housing with reference to an applicant's housing need and not only the time spent waiting for an allocation of housing.

## **4. FOLLOWING ADOPTION**

4.1 After adopting a new housing allocation policy the Council has to notify all current housing register applicants of the change and the likely effect of it on their application. Applicants will be invited to re-apply to join the housing register. Once an application is received, it will be re-assessed in accordance with the provisions of the new allocation scheme. The re-assessment period will likely take 3-4 months, during this period work will also be undertaken to procure and implement a new IT system to ensure the efficient re-registration of all applicants. All new applications received after adoption will be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the new allocation policy.

4.2 During the period of re-assessment, the allocation of social housing to existing housing register applicants will continue. Any applicants who apply to join the housing register after adoption but before the Policy goes live will not be able to bid for properties. Any such applicant who is assessed as having an urgent need to move will be assisted separately.

4.3 When the system goes live, all applicants will be notified of their new band under the Policy. All applicants will have a statutory right to seek a review of the decision made on their application.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

5.1 The majority of respondents to the consultation have expressed support for the proposed changes to the way social housing is allocated in the District as contained in the Policy. Some comments were made about the impact of the Policy on those who are adequately housed in the private sector. The Policy needs to be read in conjunction with the Council's recently adopted Housing Strategy. In particular, the Council will be developing its own shared ownership scheme which will provide

opportunities for residents who are renting in the private sector to get onto the property ladder.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 In order to better manage the allocation of social housing, the Council has procured a new case management system to replace the paper based system. This will result in more efficient working. The costs are likely to be in the region of £35,000 for year 1 and £8,000 ongoing annually thereafter and will be met from existing budgets.

## **7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are none.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are none.

## **9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken at the drafting stage of the Policy. An updated Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 3.

## **10. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are none.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the response to the statutory consultation and make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

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### **Background Papers**

Published documents