

Resident Questions for Housing Area Panel

Department	Housing
Date question raised	23/06/2022
Date of Area Panel	16/08/2022
Area in city	East
Star rating applied by residents	3 star – city wide issue
Deadline for officer response	25/07/2022
Name of officer responding	Rachel Fitchie
Officer job title	Housing Options Manager
Title of Question:	Housing Allocations Policy
Issue:	The Council is not enforcing its own allocations policy.
Background:	<p>Reps in the East area are facing continuous issues with drug dealers being housed in Council-owned properties, and, as a result, are not convinced that the Council's housing allocations process is rigorous enough.</p> <p>Meanwhile, there have been reports of single-parent households being moved into areas they do not want to go, waiting a long time to be allocated suitable housing, their legitimate concerns not being taken on board, and generally not being listened to.</p> <p>Residents are concerned that the Council are failing to follow their own policy with regards to housing allocation (ref: Housing Allocations Scheme and Guidance, 2016), in particular with regards to tenants who are found to have omitted relevant information, or give the Council false or misleading information, regarding convictions that they are obliged to disclose.</p>
Action requested by residents:	<p>Residents are requesting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Justine Harris's presence at Area Panel, to discuss the issue. 2) Information about: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What checks and processes do Housing allocations have in place to ensure that applicants are not omitting relevant information, or giving false or misleading information? b. What checks and processes are in place to ensure that tenants who are found to have given such false or misleading information are removed from their allocated Council properties?
Officer Response:	Rachel Fitchie

Officer contact details:

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Response:

Persons who do not qualify on grounds of behaviour Applicants will not qualify for social housing in Brighton & Hove and be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues if any of the following circumstances apply:

(a) The council is satisfied that they have, within the preceding 10 years, obtained or attempted to obtain housing or other housing related services/welfare benefits /public funds, from any public body in the UK, by making a false or misleading statement or withholding information, or encouraging someone else to do so on their behalf;

(b) The council is satisfied that the applicant is unlikely to satisfactorily manage the tenancy and /or pay their rent because, for example:

(i) they have been evicted due to anti-social behaviour (including, but not limited to domestic violence and abuse, homophobic, transphobic abuse and/or noise nuisance) or rent arrears;

(ii) they have been served, within the last year, with a notice for breach of their tenancy conditions;

(iii) another person who shared a property occupied by them left because of the applicant's violence/abuse or threats of violence/abuse against them or a person associated with them;

(iv) they or a member of their household have a history of anti-social behaviour (including domestic violence/abuse and noise nuisance);

(v) they have a record of failure to pay rent 18;

(vi) they have outstanding debt liabilities to the council and are not making satisfactory arrangements to repay those debts 19.

(vii) they are a person who has been removed from a premises subject to a closure order under the Closure of Premises (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014)

(c) Where an applicant or member of the household has been found guilty of a criminal offence including theft, assault, criminal damage, robbery, possession or supply of drugs, burglary and fraud, sexual assault or other criminal behaviour a person may not be eligible, or may be removed, for a period no longer than the period that an offence becomes spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Each case will be considered on its merits 20.

If a criminal conviction is disclosed, we request further information, this can involve further contact with the applicant, contact via PPU, information held on other IT systems.

If someone knowingly provides false or misleading information and secures an offer of accommodation, we will make further enquiries with our Fraud Team. In most cases this information only becomes available from 3rd party reports. This may lead to criminal conviction and loss of tenancy.

I feel it important to let you know that we offer a choice based letting system, properties can only be advertised when they become available, Applicants are then invited to bid on the properties. Due to the demand far outweighing the accommodation we have available it may be necessary for applicants to open their area of choice that may lead to a successful bid. If they are on a final offer and the accommodation is considered suitable to meet their needs, then they are encouraged to accept. I appreciate that some offers may not be their first choice however the properties should meet their needs.

Specific Action:

Action: No further action

Timeline:

Start date: Ongoing

End date:

