

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 92

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Interim Amendment to Working Households Local Lettings Plan		
Date of Meeting:	1 December 2010		
Report of:	Strategic Director Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Helen Clarkmead	Tel: 293271
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Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Working Households Local Lettings Plan (WHLLP) was agreed on a pilot basis by the Cabinet Member for Housing in July 2009 and amended in November 2009. It is currently under review, as is the Allocations Policy.
- 1.2 The Evaluation of the Local Letting Plan Pilot has been completed and is due to be brought to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 13th December 2010. The findings have already been fed into the review of the Allocations Policy which is currently being consulted upon. It is proposed that the Local Lettings Plans will be integrated into the Allocations Policy. This report recommends that the pilot is extended pending ratification and implementation of the policy.
- 1.3 There is currently no household income cap in respect of eligibility for the Working households Local Lettings Plan. An income cap would better target the property to lower income households in greatest need of affordable housing. This report proposes an income cap. The level of this cap will be reviewed as part of the Allocations Policy Review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees to extend the pilot period of the Working Households Local Lettings Plan until the recommendations of the Allocations Policy Review are implemented.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees an interim cap of £35000 total household income in order to be eligible for the Working Households Local Lettings Plan.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Working Household Local Lettings Plan (WHLLP) was agreed on a pilot basis by the Cabinet Member for Housing in July 2009. The pilot was to advertise 25% of all properties which were 2 bedrooms and above within the 9 most deprived areas of the city to working households. It was agreed that a working household would include 1 member who was working for a minimum of 16 hours per week. Mobility standard flats and houses and sheltered accommodation were excluded from the pilot.
- 3.2 In November 2009 the WHLLP was amended to allow up to 50% of properties that meet the above criteria to be advertised for working households only. It was also agreed that the pilot would be reviewed after 12 months had elapsed so that the Cabinet Member for Housing could assess the impact of the pilot.
- 3.3 The intention of this pilot was to encourage people who can, to work and therefore to raise levels of aspiration and ambition. It was also intended to enhance balanced communities within the 9 most deprived areas. This policy has operated within existing priority bands, but working households have taken priority within those bands. For example, if 10 people from band A bid, five of whom work, then the property would go to the working bidder with earliest priority date, even if that is later than a priority date of someone who is not working
- 3.4 The WHLLP pilot has come to an end. The evaluation of the Local Lettings Plan Pilot has demonstrated that under the pilot scheme there is a broader spread of properties allocated within each band to working households. It is anticipated that this scheme will encourage households to seek employment and to hopefully influence households in the locality to also seek employment and thus reduce financial exclusion and inequality. A full review of WHLLP pilot will be brought to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 13th December for discussion.
- 3.5 It is intended the WHLLP will now be built into the Allocations Policy. The Allocations Policy is currently under review and a 12 week consultation period commenced on 17th November 2010.
- 3.6 There is currently no household income cap restricting eligibility for the Working Households Local Lettings Plan. An income cap would better target affordable housing for lower income working households.
- 3.7 An interim household income cap of £35,000 is proposed. This level represents the average household income in Brighton and Hove according to the findings of CACI Wealth of the Nations Report 2007, which provides a specialist Housing Market Analysis data source.
- 3.8 The household income cap will be reviewed as part of the ongoing Allocations Policy Review.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 This is an interim decision. Full consultation will take place as part of the broader Allocations Policy Review

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications to the Housing Revenue Account arising from the recommendations made in this report.'

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 16/11/2010

Legal Implications

- 5.2 "By virtue of section 169 Housing Act 1996, the Communities Secretary is entitled to issue guidance to local housing authorities in connection with the exercise of their powers under Part VI of the Housing Act 19976. - allocation of housing accommodation. Local Authorities are required to have regard to this guidance when exercising their allocation functions. In pursuance of this section, in December 2009 CLG issued a guide entitled, " Fair and flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England. The guidance endorses using local lettings policies to achieve a variety of policy objectives, including dealing with concentrations of deprivation , or creating mixed communities by setting aside a proportion of vacancies for applicants who are in employment. The proposal to extend the Working Households Local Letting Plan and to introduce an income cap for the duration of the pilot are compatible with the guidance. "

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 17/11/2010

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 This would help ensure affordable housing let under the Working Households Local Lettings Plan is prioritised for lower income working households less able to afford private sector housing. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be included in the review of the WHLLP pilot and brought to Housing management Consultative Committee on 13th December 2010.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no specific sustainability implications

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no specific crime and disorder implications

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 A household income cap would help ensure property let under the Working Households Local Lettings Plan is allocated to lower income households most in greatest need of affordable housing

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 There are no specific corporate or citywide implications.

6. EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 This will be considered as part of the broader Allocations Policy Review.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To ensure property let under the Working Households Local Lettings Plan is targeted at lower income households.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: None

Documents In Members' Rooms : None

**Background Documents: Cabinet Member for Housing Meeting reports;
17 July 2009 and 11 November 2009**