

# HOUSING CABINET MEETING

## Agenda Item 112

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Allocations and Adaptations Policy Review</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> March 2009</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Director of Adult Social Care &amp; Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Sylvia Peckham</b>	<b>Tel: 293318</b>
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 The current Housing Register Allocations Policy was approved by committee on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005.. A major review of Allocations Policy has recently been undertaken resulting in changes to the way the Housing Register is to be operated. As a result, the Allocations Policy has been amended and attached as Appendix one for approval.

1.2 This report is to look at the changes made to the Housing Register Allocations Policy. The consultation with the City has been completed and we have developed a clear, transparent and easily understood Allocation Policy that also incorporates the Adaptations Policy. This is to ensure that we make best use of the limited housing resources we have available.

1.3 The policy is based on the principal that it is:

- easily understood by tenants;
- fair and equitable;
- effective;
- efficient and
- legal.

It will also set a clear strategic framework within which we can deliver a sensitive and practical response.

1.4 In parallel with this report is the proposed development of an Adaptations Policy. Housing Management Consultative Committee will need to consider the implications in terms of the prioritisation of adapted/accessible housing, Sheltered accommodation, Local Lettings Plans and Transfer Incentive Scheme

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Housing Cabinet consider and approve, the report to amend the Allocations and Adaptations Policy.

## **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

The following areas of focus were identified by the tenant-led focus groups

### **3.1 Best Use of Stock**

Households who are under-occupying family accommodation are being considered for how we can best enable them to move to smaller accommodation. In addition we will explore various ways to promote new housing opportunities in the city effectively, for example by advertising private rented properties in the Homemove magazine and advertising new- build properties early

### **3.2 Communication**

We have taken on board the feedback from our user group so that information given is clear, correct and timely.

Tenant representatives will be more actively involved to promote such initiatives as under occupancy and assist with developing positive adverts of properties in their area and to provide information on the neighbourhood for prospective and new tenants, to enable them to settle into the community . This will also contribute towards developing sustainable communities as people are more likely to feel a part of the community.

### **3.3 Sheltered accommodation**

People are successfully bidding for Sheltered Accommodation when either they have no need for it or their needs are too high to be managed there.

- 3.3.1 The proposed solution is to have an assessment process to ensure that only those people who are suitable for Sheltered Accommodation can bid and that any support package is in place from the start. This will mirror the process as for Adapted properties e.g. only those assessed as needing a mobility 1 property can bid on a mobility 1 property.

- 3.3.2 The age threshold is to be removed as some people need Sheltered Accommodation before they are 60. This would allow flexibility for those older vulnerable people to access the support when they needed it.

### **3.4 Local Lettings Plans (LLPs)**

The Local Letting Plans have not been reviewed for more than 10 years. Some of them may now no longer be relevant whilst there may be other areas which would benefit from Local Lettings Plans. There is a need therefore to review all the current Local Lettings Plans and to identify any other areas which would benefit from new Local Lettings Plans. The process needs to incorporate undertaking regular reviews of the LLP to ensure they remain relevant. This work would take place outside of the Allocations review and would sit within Housing Management.

#### 4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The tenant-led focus groups identified the following areas for improvement and we have now completed the process of consulting with wider stakeholders in the City over proposed changes. Stakeholders included our Communities of Interest, our partner agencies, Age Concern, people on the Housing Register, and support providers. The feedback from Consultation and the amendments recommended as a result have been agreed by the Tenant-led focus groups.

#### 5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Financial Implications. There will not be any financial implications as the amendments have been timed to coincide with a new print run of the Scheme User Guides where the new information will be located.

Finance officer Consulted: Neil Smith Date: 07<sup>th</sup> January 2009

- 5.2 Legal Implications Under section 167 Housing Act 1996, the council as a local housing authority is required to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities and as to the procedure to be followed, in allocating housing accommodation. Local housing authorities must not allocate housing accommodation otherwise than in accordance with their allocation scheme. The amended Housing Register Allocations Policy, which the Cabinet Member for Housing is asked to approve, is the Council's allocations scheme for the purpose of section 167. As there is no specific right to housing under the European Convention on Human Rights or Human Rights Act 1998, there are no significant human rights issues to be considered in relation to this report.

Lawyer consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 07<sup>th</sup> January 2009

- 5.3 Equalities Implications. Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the proposed changes to the Policy and it has been found that no new practices or operational changes need to occur.
- 5.4 Sustainability Implications: The proposals will ensure that better use is made of the housing stock and will contribute to sustainable housing solutions.
- 5.4 Crime & Disorder Implications: None
- 5.5 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications: Failure to adopt the changes prescribed in the attached new Allocations Policy could render the Local Authority vulnerable to legal challenge
- 5.6 Corporate / Citywide Implications: Limited social housing stock will be used in the best and most efficient way possible and that the city will benefit from clearer communication and updated Local Lettings Plans.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 The alternative to the amendments would be for the policy to remain as per the current policy. This however would not make best use of the housing stock and may leave the Local Authority open to legal challenge.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The recommendations have been made so that through the Allocations Policy we can ensure that best use is made of the council and RSL housing stock in the City. The policy will be clear, transparent and easily understood.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**APPENDIX ONE**

**Brighton and Hove City Council  
Choice Based Lettings Scheme**