

Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 26 October 2026

Item number: 9

Title: Recommendations arising from the Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel on the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme

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Ward(s) affected: All

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 The Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel considered a report which provided an overview of the Neighbourhood Moves scheme (NMS), at its meeting on 9th March 2026. The report set out the background to the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme, the results of the scheme on the allocation and letting of homes, as well as a series of proposed changes to the existing scheme as part of a wider consultation on changes to the Allocations Policy.
- 1.2 The NMS is part of the Housing Allocations Policy and changes to the Policy were approved for consultation over Summer 2026. Following a change in administration in the local government elections in May 2026, this consultation is now due to take place later in 2026/27.
- 1.3 After consideration of the report and a number of questions put forward by members of the Panel, the Panel made a number of recommendations in relation to proposed changes to the scheme. Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to ratify these recommendations and to agree to send the recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration, as part of the wider consultation process for changes to the Allocations Policy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet should consider introducing a minimum period since a household's last move before they are eligible to move again under the NMS. It is recommended that the time period should exceed five years. The Panel, however, would support an exception to this minimum time period, in instances where a household was willing to downsize.

- 2.2 That Cabinet consider amending the priority band given to residents based on their proximity to a new scheme, for those living on the same estate or within 250 metres of the new homes, so that a portion of the properties available through the scheme reserved for households outside of the designated area who were experiencing severe overcrowding. Priority for these homes should be given to families living in severe overcrowding, based on the length of time they have been affected.
- 2.3 The Panel comments that the presence of a catchment area (250m), and limiting the scheme to developments of four or more homes, has a disproportionate impact on areas of the borough where fewer properties are built, and inadvertently deprioritises families who live in these areas. Cabinet should consider how it can amend the area in which a household is eligible for a NMS property, to provide more flexibility around who is eligible for a move under the scheme, and so all residents are able to benefit from the Housebuilding Programme.
- 2.4 That Cabinet introduce an additional priority band for families who have experienced a significant change in circumstances; such as having a child with SEND, having a disability, or the onset of significant health issues.

3. Background to the Report

Background to the existing Neighbourhood Moves Scheme.

- 3.1 The NMS policy aims to extend the benefits of new homes to those living near them. The NMS is also a means to address over-crowding by releasing larger family homes which are under-occupied and by allowing over-crowded households to move locally. The NMS seeks to achieve this aim by giving priority for newly delivered Council rented homes to existing Secure Tenants in the local area. The NMS is facilitated by the Lettings & Rehousing service, with a dedicated NMS Officer to support the process and residents.
- 3.2 The current NMS applies to developments where there are four or more newly built homes unless a Cabinet decision is made to exclude a particular development and/or there is an alternative Local Lettings Plan. Priority for newly built homes is divided into bands; with the first band being for those whose home is being demolished as part of a regeneration programme. The second priority band is for existing council tenants living on the same estate or within 250 metres of the new homes. Homes left after this second band are then released to the wider Housing Register. Priority within this local band is determined by a resident's current housing arrangements, with first priority going to those with spare bedrooms. The second priority is given to those who are overcrowded, with priority given to those with the largest shortfall in bedrooms. The third priority is given to those with any other housing needs, and finally, those with no housing needs.

In all cases, these offers are voluntary and tenants have the option to refuse these homes with no impact on their applications or current tenancy.

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- 3.3 The Panel considered the report on the 9th of March 2026 and were supportive of the scheme. The Panel would like to see some changes made to the scheme as part of a wider consultation process that is due to take place on changes to the Allocations Policy. These changes are set out in the recommendations of this report. In consideration of the report, the Panel noted that the percentage of eligible residents who applied for the scheme was around 18%. The Panel would like to see this percentage increase, particularly where the Council is able to incentivise under-occupiers to downsize to a smaller property. Similarly, the Panel is concerned about the levels of severe overcrowding in the borough and believes that the NMS should be used to mitigate serious overcrowding in a more specific way.
- 3.4 The Panel noted that the report indicated that around one-third of moves facilitated through the NMS resulted in no net gain to the housing register. The Panel considered that the scheme should place greater emphasis on securing net gains by incentivising under-occupying households to downsize, thereby releasing larger family-sized properties for residents in housing need. The Panel also suggested that further work be undertaken to engage with households whose children are approaching adulthood, as these families may be more likely to consider downsizing in the future, creating additional opportunities to make more effective use of the borough's housing stock.

Proposed Changes to the Scheme

- 3.5 The report identified a number of changes to the existing NMS that were proposed as part of the draft Housing Allocations Policy, with Cabinet having approved these changes for consultation, which were proposed to take place in Summer 2026. The proposed changes included including housing association tenants that provided nomination to released properties and increasing the threshold for schemes to ones where ten or more homes are being built. The recommendations in this report are put forward in this context.
- 3.5 The report of the (then) Interim Director of Housing Services, along with the minutes from the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 9th March are attached at Appendices A & B.

4. Use of Appendices

- 4.1 Appendix A – Report to Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel – Overview of the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme.

Appendix B – Minutes for the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel meeting on 9th March.