



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

[No.]

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

On 6 December 2010

Report Title: **Consultation on the New Housing Allocations Policy**

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Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Discussion**

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To inform the Overview & Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of a consultation exercise carried out in relation to Haringey's new Housing Allocations Policy.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member

- 2.1 We need to simplify the housing allocations arrangements (to assist people's understanding and ensure they are perceived as being fair to all applicants) and we need to reduce the complexity and cost of administering the housing register.
- 2.2 The new Housing Allocations Policy will enable us to do this and to meet our statutory obligations, including those resulting from new regulations and case law.
- 2.3 This wide-ranging consultation has provided positive feedback on the proposed Housing Allocations Policy, with many stakeholders telling us that it will provide a fair and easy to understand way of allocating social rented housing.
- 2.4 Individuals and organisations have provided specific feedback on a number of the key aspects of the proposed Housing Allocations Policy and, where possible, we have taken their feedback into account in the final version of the Policy.

3. State links with Council Plan Priorities and actions and/or other Strategies:

- 3.1 Haringey's Housing Strategy 2009-2019
- 3.2 Haringey's Homelessness Strategy 2008-11
- 3.1 Haringey's Move-on Strategy 2010-15

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 It is **recommended** that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee:
 - (a) Notes the results of the extensive 3 months consultation exercise, which supports the proposed changes to the way in which applications for housing are administered and prioritised, including the use of housing needs bands, instead of points, as the basis for determining applicants' relative priority;

5. Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 Haringey's existing Housing Allocations Policy is extremely complex, difficult to explain and administer, prevents households from making informed decisions about their future housing, and makes only a limited contribution to the achievement of the borough's key strategic objectives.
- 5.2 A detailed review of the housing allocations policy has been carried out, taking into account the new staffing structure of Strategic & Community Housing Services, good practice, government guidance and recent court decisions.
- 5.3 A revised Housing Allocations Policy was drafted and approved by Cabinet in June 2010 subject to a three months consultation.
- 5.4 Undertaken between 21 June and 1 October 2010, the consultation followed the Council's Consultation Framework and the Compact agreement. It showed that there is widespread support for the new Housing Allocations Policy, which is based on housing needs bands rather than points.

6. Consultation activity

- 6.1 The consultation provided housing applicants and other stakeholders with a wide variety of opportunities to influence Haringey's Housing Allocations Policy, to ask questions and to provide feedback during the consultation.
- 6.2 It included all Councillors, a wide range of partners (such as Registered Providers, Homes for Haringey, housing support providers, voluntary sector organisations, equality groups and community groups), applicants and residents.

- 6.3 The consultation involved a total of 49 events and enabled Officers to speak directly to approximately 1,500 staff about the new Housing Allocations Policy. A special edition of the 'Moving On' magazine (sent to everyone living in temporary accommodation) was produced to ensure that all homeless households are aware of how they will be affected by the new Policy.
- 6.4 We used a range of mediums appropriate to the audience and ensured that we covered as many stakeholders as possible. These included the following:
- Newspapers – Haringey People, Homezone (Homes for Haringey's tenants and leaseholders newsletter), staff newsletters; Forum for Older People newsletter, special edition of Moving On magazine sent to everyone living in temporary accommodation and local press
 - Haringey Council's website
 - Presentations at Boards, including the Integrated Housing Board, Supporting People Partnership Board and the Transforming Social Care Board
 - Discussion at Forums, including the Temporary Accommodation User Forum, the Area Assemblies and the Haringey Policy Network
 - Workshops with support providers and with Council staff
 - Consultation meetings with Elected Members
 - Half day event for Council staff, stakeholders and consultative groups
 - Stands at Customer Service Centres and Wood Green Shopping City
- 6.5 The table below summaries consultation activity

Activity	Number
Number of events held	49
People directly spoken to about policy	Approx 1500
Number of people in temporary accommodation who received Moving On magazine	3,500
Number of Homes for Haringey tenants and leaseholders who received Homezone newsletter	20,000
Emails/ Telephone calls	55

7. Feedback from the consultation

- 7.1 We received feedback in a variety of ways, including e-mails and telephone calls. Most was captured during discussion at events and meetings.
- 7.2 Although applicants were keen to find out how they would be affected by the new Policy, we explained that these queries would be dealt with separately.

- 7.3 All of the comments received have been collated and assessed by the Housing Allocations Project Team to determine whether or not the Draft Policy needed to be amended. A response was given to everyone who provided comment.
- 7.4 Overall, the feedback has been very positive. The banding system is recognised as being fair and transparent and considerably less complex than the previous 48 points categories. The fact that the new Policy addresses strategic priorities such as under occupation, overcrowding and move-on from short term accommodation has also been welcomed.
- 7.5 The consultation responses confirmed that the new Housing Allocations Policy will help manage the expectations of people on the housing register by giving clear information about the likelihood of them being offered social housing.
- 7.6 Most of the feedback related to the following:
- Local connection
 - Move-on through the non-priority rent deposit scheme
 - The need for a clear definition of 'vulnerable'
 - Auto-bidding
 - The need for clear procedures
- 7.7 Some consultees (particularly providers who work with vulnerable people) said it is essential that re-registration does not in any way disadvantage applicants. This has been taken on board and comprehensive arrangements have been developed in response to that feedback.
- 7.8 In response to the consultation, we are developing a communication and training plan to ensure that the move to the new system is as smooth as possible.
- 7.9 Specific feedback on technical issues was welcomed as this will ensure that the Housing Allocations Policy is robust and minimise challenges.

8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

- 8.1 The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality and diversity and foster good relations between all communities. Greater transparency of the way in which it prioritises and allocates the increasing demands for its housing will assist it to demonstrate fairness and equality of opportunity.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out to assess the impact the new policy will have on the diverse community in the borough. The EIA shows that the introduction of the new Housing Allocations Policy is unlikely to have any adverse impact on the allocation of social housing in the borough.

9. Service Financial Comments

- 9.1 All consultation undertaken came from within existing budgets

10. Use of Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Revised banding categories

Appendix 1 – Revised Banding categories

Following consultation, the revised banding categories are as follows;

HOUSING NEEDS BAND 'A'

1. Applicants who need to move urgently because of a critical medical or welfare need, including emergencies.
2. Applicants who, at the discretion of the Council, need to move urgently because there are serious safeguarding circumstances. Included as a separate point. Originally part of point 1 above.
3. Tenants of the Council or of partner housing associations who have been approved for an emergency management transfer because of harassment, domestic violence or hate crime, including cases agreed through reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities. Revised to include.
4. Haringey Council tenants and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who are under-occupying a family home (with three or more bedrooms) and are willing to transfer to a home that has at least two fewer bedrooms. Revised to include.
5. Haringey Council tenants and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who are under-occupying a two-bedroom family home and are willing to transfer to a bedsit or one-bedroom home. Revised to include.
6. Haringey Council tenants and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who are occupying a specially-adapted home and are willing to transfer to a home that is more appropriate to their needs. Revised to include.
7. Applicants who have a right of succession to a Council tenancy but are under-occupying their accommodation (or occupying a specially-adapted home) and are required to move to somewhere smaller and/or more appropriate to their needs.
8. Haringey Council tenants and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who require extensive disabled facilities that can be provided more appropriately in alternative accommodation. Revised to include.
9. Applicants who are in severe need and have been accepted for rehousing, by Haringey Council, under the homelessness legislation.
10. Haringey Council tenants and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who need to be permanently decanted in order to enable essential repairs or redevelopment to be carried out, or as part of a regeneration scheme in Haringey. Revised to include.
11. Applicants who are required to leave their homes as a result of a prohibition order served by the Council or the Fire Service in relation to the premises.

12. Applicants (including young care leavers and people leaving hospital, residential care and supported housing) who are nominated for move-on accommodation by named agencies in accordance with an agreed nominations agreement that includes specific quotas.
13. Retiring service tenants who are living in Council accommodation and for whom Haringey Council has a contractual obligation to provide accommodation.
14. Situations where it is in the overriding interests of the Council to prioritise an allocation of housing to a particular household and/or it is necessary to fulfil an urgent statutory or legal duty.
15. Applicants (except homeless households for whom the Council has accepted a rehousing duty) who have two or more needs in Band B.

Note: Applicants assessed as meeting Housing Needs Band A criteria but with no local connection with Haringey will be placed in Band C, except in those cases of emergency management transfer through reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities. Revised from Band A to C and additional information included.

HOUSING NEEDS BAND 'B'

1. Applicants who need to move because they have been assessed as having a serious medical or welfare need.
2. Haringey Council tenants and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who are severely overcrowded and have at least two rooms less than the number of rooms to which they would be entitled to under Haringey's Housing Allocations Policy. This includes reception rooms that could reasonably be used as bedrooms. Revised to include.
3. Adult (aged over 25) members of the households of Council and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who require single person accommodation, and are severely overcrowded and have at least two rooms less than the number of rooms to which they would be entitled under Haringey's Allocations Policy. This includes reception rooms that could reasonably be used as bedrooms. New point.
4. Applicants for whom Haringey Council has accepted a full rehousing duty under the homelessness legislation.
5. Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in the Borough, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.
6. Applicants living in accommodation for which an improvement notice has been served, or is about to be served, by Haringey Council in relation to the applicant's dwelling and the Council has determined that the dwelling must be vacated because the remedies that are needed to reduce the hazard will require the property to be vacated for a significant period of time or will make the property unsuitable for occupation by the applicant. New point.
7. Applicants with 4 or more needs in Housing Needs Band C.

Note: Applicants assessed as meeting Housing Needs Band B criteria but with no local connection with Haringey will be placed in Band D. They will have a lower relative priority than those applicants in Band D who do have a local connection, regardless of those applicants having later 'effective dates'. Revised from Band C to D and additional information included.

HOUSING NEEDS BAND 'C'

1. Applicants who need to move because they have been assessed as having a moderate medical or welfare need.
2. Haringey Council tenants and partner housing association tenants living in Haringey who are overcrowded because they have one bedroom less than the number of bedrooms to which they would normally be entitled under Haringey's Housing Allocations Policy. Revised to include.
3. Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness but have been assessed by the Council within the previous 12 months as having no right to rehousing under the homelessness legislation because they are not in priority need. Revised to include.
4. Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness but have been assessed within the previous twelve months by the Council as having no right to rehousing under the homelessness legislation because they are considered to have become homeless intentionally, and have not been resident in settled accommodation. Revised to include. Originally part of point 3 above.
5. Applicants who have no fixed abode.
6. Applicants who the Council has placed in specialist or supported accommodation, or applicants (including young care leavers and people leaving hospital, residential care and supported housing), and require move-on from that accommodation. Revised to include.
7. Protected tenants and tenants of tied accommodation who have been served with a valid notice to quit and the Council is satisfied that they have little or no prospect of successfully defending the possession proceedings.
8. Applicants who are severely overcrowded and living in private rented (including non-partner housing association) accommodation in Haringey. Revised to include.
9. Applicants living in accommodation for which a hazard awareness notice has been served, by Haringey Council in relation to a Category 1 or 2 hazard in the applicant's dwelling and the remedies needed to reduce the hazard will require the property to be vacated for a significant period of time or will make the property unsuitable for occupation by the applicant.
10. Council tenants and partner housing association tenants in Haringey who are under-occupying a family home (with three or more bedrooms) and are willing to transfer to a home that has at least one fewer bedroom. New point.

Note: Applicants assessed as meeting Housing Needs Band C criteria but with no local connection with Haringey will be placed in Band D. They will have a lower relative priority than those applicants in Band D who do have a local connection, regardless of those applicants having later 'effective dates'. Revised to include.

HOUSING NEEDS BAND 'D'

1. Applicants who have an identified housing need but are awarded 'reduced preference' under the law.
2. Applicants who are overcrowded and living in private rented accommodation in Haringey. New point.
3. Applicants who are tenants of a non-partner housing association (whose housing is not subject to a tenancy nominations agreement with Haringey Council), are overcrowded and have a local connection with Haringey. New point.
4. Applicants living in accommodation lacking permanent facilities or sharing facilities with others not included on their application. New point.

Note: Applicants assessed as meeting Housing Needs Band D criteria but with no local connection with Haringey will be placed in Band E. They will have a lower relative priority than those applicants in Band E who have been relegated from Band D because they do not have a local connection, regardless of those applicants having later 'effective dates'. Revised to include this footnote.

HOUSING NEEDS BAND 'E'

1. Applicants who are living in tied accommodation, a caravan or mobile home, but with no identified housing need.
2. Applicants who live in a property that is adequate to meet their needs in terms of property type, size and facilities.
3. Applicants who are in prison.
4. Applicants whose homes are (or will be) the subject of a hazard awareness notice or improvement notice, but the specified remedies are low-cost and straightforward to achieve.
5. Applicants who are owner-occupiers (but see Section 5.9).
6. Applicants who are overcrowded and living in private rented accommodation outside Haringey. New point.

Note: Applicants assessed as meeting Housing Needs Band E criteria but with no local connection with Haringey will be placed in Band E. They will have a lower relative priority than those applicants in Band E who have a local connection, regardless of those applicants having later 'effective dates'. Revised to include this footnote.