

**INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**16 MARCH 2021**

**PART I - DELEGATED**

**7. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY 2020  
(DCES)**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with the proposed Housing Allocations Policy 2020. This details the way the Council allocates affordable rented accommodation through the Housing Register (the waiting list). The full policy can be found in Appendix One.
- 1.2 The overview of the proposed changes between the current Housing Allocations Policy and the Housing Allocations Policy 2020 is in the format of a comparison document. The comparison document is shown in Appendix Two.

**2 Details**

- 2.1 On 11 August 2020 and 21 August 2020 the Committee reviewed the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy, agreement was given to proceed to the statutory four-week public consultation on the proposals.
- 2.2 Following comments from the Committee and the public, the Policy has been updated to reflect the views that were expressed. These can be seen in the italics in the comparison document.
- 2.3 The majority of responses received through the public consultation were in support of the proposed changes. The detail for each question can be found in Appendix Three.
- 2.4 However, question 11 did not received a favourable response with 50% saying they disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal. In addition, question 13 received a majority response for do not know/not applicable.
- 2.5 Question 11 relates to non-dependent children (18+) not being included on a customer's housing application. This point was also discussed at length by the Committee in August.
- 2.6 Taking account of the consultation and comments from the Committee, the final Policy states that non-dependent children (aged 21 or over and no longer in tertiary education or apprenticeship) will not be considered part of a household unless they are unable to live independently due to support or care needs. This change allows a non-dependent child to attend university and/or complete an apprenticeship. It is important to note that this change does not mean that the Council will be evicting families or older children from accommodation when the adults reach a certain age, but if the household would like to keep their older children at home they will need to recognise that this will come with a need for some flexibility from the family as they will be unable to bid for larger accommodation. This may mean sharing a room with a sibling or making use of a lounge as a bedroom. This is often a circumstance encountered by families in the private rental market who wish to keep older children at home for longer. Housing Services do not feel it is fair or a good use of very limited stock to allow a family to be allocated a larger property with non-dependent children over the age of 21 ahead of a family with young children, to then have the older children potentially move out of that property in a short space of time. Leaving one

family under-occupying and the other remaining in an overcrowded situation for an extended period of time.

- 2.7 Question 13 had 48% of responses respond with don't know/not applicable. It is believed that the reason for this was the layout of the question, in hindsight, this should have been split into several questions to make it easier to respond to. Nevertheless, the comments in response to this question have been considered and changes made as a result, detail of this can be seen in Appendix Two.
- 2.8 Although all other questions received a positive response with customers agreeing or strongly agreeing, comments have still been taken into consideration and changes made a result.
- 2.9 Question eight details the proposed change to include an unborn child four weeks prior to the due date as part of the application. Although 72% of responses were in favour of the change, when previously discussed by the Committee in August it was requested that an earlier date be considered.
- 2.10 As the Council transferred to a new software system in 2018 it is not always possible to run reports that relate to transferred data and new data. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the average wait time for properties. Although wait times can be extensive, the shortest time that a person was awarded a two-bedroom property was 71 days from receiving a Band B. Although this is rare, it does highlight that should we recognise an unborn baby much earlier than four weeks we could have a situation where a person is housed into a larger bedroom property than is unaffordable for them. If the Committee do wish to extend the proposed four-week timeframe it is suggested that this is not more than six-weeks. It should also be noted that Housing Associations may reject a customer if they are nominated for a property that is not the right size for their household.
- 2.11 Question nine relates to the income thresholds of a customer. The previous proposal was that should a customer have a total gross household income of £60,000 or over, regardless of household size, the Council would consider this household to have the financial means to resolve their own housing need. Although a majority of consultees accepted this proposed change, following comments provided we have taken these on board and decided to alter this figure to reflect different household sizes. The figures listed in Appendix Two have been achieved by taking a snapshot of the current average rent price in the district of each property size and multiplying that by 36. The vast majority of high street Estate Agents use this calculation to establish the minimum household income in order let a property in the private sector.
- 2.12 All other changes can be seen in the comparison document (italics).
- 2.13 On 31 December 2020 MHCLG produced an updated code of guidance for Local Authorities regarding the allocation of accommodation. Therefore, it has been necessary to further update the Housing Allocations Policy 2020 with the required changes. The main change relates to eligibility for housing following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. As this is a legal requirement this change does not require further public consultation.

### **3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree the revised Housing Allocations Policy to ensure Council compliance with relevant legislation.

#### **4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policy is entitled the Council's Strategic Plan.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators.
  - 4.2.1 HN01 - Maximum number of households living in temporary accommodation on the last day of the quarter (snapshot)
  - 4.2.2 HN02 - Maximum number of families in Bed & Breakfast for more than six weeks
  - 4.2.3 HN03 - Maximum number of households in temporary accommodation throughout the year
  - 4.2.4 HN10 - Number of households prevented from becoming homeless

#### **5 Financial, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

- 5.1 None specific.

#### **6 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree the Housing Allocations Policy to ensure Council compliance with relevant legislation.

#### **7 Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 7.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	Yes
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	No

- 7.2 The relevance test showed that a full impact assessment was not required as sufficient provision is made within the policy to address relevant points.

#### **8 Risk and Health & Safety Implications**

- 8.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 8.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Housing Services service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

#### **9 Recommendation**

9.1 That the Committee approve and adopt the new Housing Allocations Policy.

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**Data Quality**

Data sources: none

Data checked by: not applicable

Data rating: not applicable

<b>1</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>n/a</b>

**Background Papers**

**APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix One: Housing Allocations Policy 2020

Appendix Two: Housing Allocations Policy updated comparison document

Appendix Three: Public consultation responses