

(12) HOUSING ALLOCATIONS REVIEW PANEL (HARP)

Objective - To ensure that housing decisions are made fairly and transparently.

1. The HARP panel will be made up of three members:
 - The Housing Needs Manager
 - The Housing Enforcement Manager
 - A Housing Needs Officer or a Tenancy Management Officer (on a rota)
2. The Housing Needs Manager or the Housing Enforcement Manager must be in attendance.
3. The panel will seek information from others as needed. This will include the housing team for the area. However, neither the applicants nor their advocates will be able to attend the meeting.
4. The panel will meet monthly, or as needed to consider urgent cases. The panel will have several functions including:
 - (i) to consider applicants to be barred from the waiting list. To set timescales or conditions that would allow the person to be reconsidered.
 - (ii) to confirm the level of priority given to applicants to be considered for smaller accommodation.
 - (iii) to consider cases whose housing needs are not met through the normal guidance. For example families who need additional rooms to cope with medical conditions, or families who are suffering from harassment or serious Anti-Social Behaviour.
 - (iv) to ensure that the authority makes best use of its housing stock by making direct allocations to unusual properties (examples may be properties with extensive adaptations).
5. The Panel will be able to consider unusual and emergency applications. For example people with multiple and complex housing needs, those who have a need to be rehoused in a particular type of property, or to ensure that the council makes best use of particular properties or adaptations.
6. The panel will be able to make the following decisions:
 - (i) To award absolute priority to an applicant – to ensure they are awarded a particular property.

- (ii) To award additional points to reflect the needs of the applicant.
 - (iii) To waive the normal rules on property size and location.
 - (iv) To request additional information or clarification. This may include seeking independent advice or medical or other complex issues.
 - (v) To award no priority.
7. Minutes will be kept of each meeting and decisions noted. Over time it is hoped that this will ensure that decisions made are robustly checked against other decisions.
 8. Applicants will be informed of their case within 10 working days of each meeting.
 9. Information and trends from the panel will inform future revisions of the allocations policy. Anonymous summaries of decisions made will be circulated to the portfolio holder for housing.
 - ~~10. A list of cases to be considered by the HARP panel will be circulated to local members prior to the scheduled meeting of the Panel. If the panel is meeting to consider an urgent case officers will attempt to contact appropriate members by telephone or e-mail. If the case involves any councillor of the authority (either as an applicant or other personal involvement) members will not be asked for comments. (Such cases must always be authorised by the Head of Housing or an Officer member of the Senior Management Team)) Members will only be asked to comment on cases where;~~
 - ~~(i) Applicants may be barred from the register~~
 - ~~——(ii) Cases where housing needs are not met through normal guidance.~~
 101. All decision letters from the panel should inform the applicant of their right to appeal any decision, and of the role that elected members can play as advocates in this process. Any appeal should be considered initially by the Head of Housing. If he/she believes there may have been an error in the process of the panel, or receives 'significant' new information he/she can refer the case back to the Panel to reconsider.
 112. Any other appeal will be considered by an Appeal Board consisting of:
 - The Head of Housing
 - The Portfolio Holder for Housing
 - An Officer member of Senior Management Team

(Note: In cases that are within the Portfolio Holder's ward, the Portfolio Holder will be excluded from the Appeal Board with their place taken by another member of the Executive)

123. The Appeal Board will look at individual cases and determine if the panel has made a decision that :

- (i) Is consistent with other decisions made by the panel
- (ii) Has taken account of all the information made available.
- (iii) Taken into account information it shouldn't have taken into account

The Appeal Board can decide either to uphold the original panel decision or to ask the panel to reconsider the case. The Appeal Board cannot make any other decision.