

Executive – 13th July 2015

0193. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS – 2015 REVIEW

Executive considered a report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT which proposed a number of changes to the Council's Choice Based Lettings (CBL) System.

The CBL system was introduced in 2012. It offered applicants more choice over where they lived by bidding for properties. This differed from the previous system that allocated properties to people. Since then over 1,400 properties had been let through the system and there were currently 1,900 applicants on the register.

The report proposed a number of changes to the current system, some of which had been proposed by a scrutiny review. The changes concerned the Allocations Policy and in particular the sub regional scheme, quotas, medical points, eligibility, applicants with Housing Related Debt, exclusions, connections with the District, under occupation, the housing application form, multiple applications, forces personnel, vetting of tenants as well as bidding for properties.

Moved by Councillor J Ritchie and seconded by Councillor B R Murray-Carr.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The Council withdraw from the sub-regional choice based letting system. The time-frame for this to be determined by the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.
- (2) A number of minor changes to the Allocations Scheme be made to have the following impacts:
 - a. The quota system for properties be replaced by a simplified set of rules.
 - b. High level medical points be only offered to residents of the District.
 - c. Applicants who have been re-housed by the Council not be considered for alternative accommodation for a period of at least three years.
 - d. An applicant who has given up a tenancy be excluded from the waiting list for a period of at least three years.
 - e. Households may be suspended from the waiting list if any member of the household has a housing related debt.
 - f. People may be excluded from the waiting list if the Council consider their behaviour makes them unsuitable to hold a tenancy.
 - g. People from outside the District be treated as if they reside in the District if they have a job within the district that has lasted for more than 12 months and was for more than 12 hours per week.

- h. New financial check will be introduced for applicants who may be unable to afford their accommodation.
 - i. People only to be able to appear as part of one application.
- (3) The Housing Application form be simplified. Additional questions be used including questions about a connection to the armed forces.
 - (4) Members note that the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing has used delegated powers to stop using some types of bidding as they did not offer value for money.
 - (5) The Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing be given delegated authority, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to introduce an alternative CBL system if this provided better value than the existing system.
 - (6) Members ask the Housing Working Group to consider the following questions, and report back to a future meeting of Executive.
 - a. Should applicants be asked about their level of income?, and
 - b. What level of income should exclude people from the waiting list?
 - c. Should applicants be asked about their level of savings and equity in their current home? And
 - d. What level of savings or equity should exclude people from the waiting list?
 - e. Should applicants be asked if they own any other property (in any part of the world), and
 - f. Should this exclude people from the waiting list

REASON FOR DECISION: To introduce a number of changes to the system.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: To do nothing which was rejected as a series of minor changes should improve the system for all users and satisfy the issues previously identified by Scrutiny.

(Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing)