

FOR PUBLICATION

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY – FEEDBACK ON THE CONSULTATION REGARDING THE PROPOSED CHANGES (H710)

MEETING:	1. CABINET 2. EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING
DATE:	1. 21 APRIL 2015 2. 10 APRIL 2015
REPORT BY:	HOUSING SERVICE MANAGER – CUSTOMER DIVISION
WARD:	ALL
COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY:	ALL
KEY DECISION REFERENCE (IF APPLICABLE):	504
FOR PUBLICATION	

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to feedback the results of the consultation carried out in respect of the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the following changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy are approved –

- a) The introduction of a residency requirement
- b) Discharge of statutory duty in the Priority Band and offers to others in the priority band
- c) Re- introduction of 'children in flats' points in the transfer band

- d) Removal of lodging points
- e) Delegated responsibility to the Executive Member for Housing
- f) Ending of the Sub-Regional scheme
- g) Introduction of a pre-allocation risk assessment

2.2 That Members approve the Policy attached at **Appendix 1** which incorporates the changes.

3.0 **BACKGROUND**

3.1 A report was considered by Cabinet on 13 January 2015 which recommended a number of changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

3.2 These changes are as follows –

- a) The introduction of a residency requirement
- b) Discharge of statutory Duty in the Priority band and offers to others in the priority band
- c) Re-introduction of 'children in flats' points in the transfer band
- d) Removal of lodging points
- d) Delegated responsibility to executive Member for Housing
- e) Ending of the Sub-regional scheme
- g) Introduction of a pre-allocation risk assessment

3.3 It was agreed that a six week consultation period would be undertaken and this ended on 13 March 2015.

4.0 **CONSULTATION**

4.1 During the six week consultation period the following consultation took place –

- Information on proposals sent to all key stakeholders plus all invited to meet with Executive Members and Senior Managers to discuss the proposals
- Information published on the Council's website

- Information published on the choice based lettings 'on the move' website
- Posters in 'on the move' office
- Article in 'Our Homes' tenant newsletter
- Briefing to Labour Group
- Briefing to Lib-Dem Group
- Briefing offered to UKIP and Independent Group (but not taken up)
- Letter sent to all the RSL's with whom the Council has a nomination agreement with a summary of the proposed changes
- Presentation of the proposals to the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

4.2 **Meeting with Stakeholders** –the following organisations were invited to meet with Officers and Members, a summary of the proposed changes was sent out along with the invitation:

- Department of Work and Pensions
- Action Housing and Support
- Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre
- North Derbyshire Women's Aid
- DCC – Children and Young Adult Services
- P3 – support service
- DCC – Adult Care services
- Derbyshire Probation Service
- Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Credit Union
- Chesterfield Law Centre
- DCC – Youth Service
- Chesterfield CAB
- South Yorkshire Housing association
- DCC – Health and Communities – Public Health
- Pathways
- Framework Housing Association

4.2.1 The National Probation Service, DCC Public Health, DCC Children's Services (Early help Services), P3 – Support provider and Chesterfield CAB attended the meeting. Discussion centred on turnover and tenancy breakdown, affordability and longer term impacts. There was also discussion around exceptional circumstances, and comments that the Borough managed exceptions well.

- 4.2.2 The consensus of the meeting was that the organisations would like to see the Council provide more tenancy support and to look at tenancy training/and education opportunities.
- 4.2.3 All agreed that the 12 month residency was reasonable and appropriate and agreed to direct matching, and welcomed the children in flat points
- 4.2.4 All present had no objections to any of the recommendations and stated that they felt the Council were proposing sensible solutions.
- 4.2.5 All were invited to put any further concerns and/or comments in writing following the meeting, but no further communications have been received.
- 4.3 **Other responses** - we have received 3 written responses regarding the proposals, which are - an email from Derbyshire County Council a copy of this is enclosed at **Appendix 2**, a letter from The Guinness Partnership stating that 'the changes would be acceptable to The Guinness Partnership' at **Appendix 3**, and an email from the Law Centre a copy of which is attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 4.4 **Response from Derbyshire County Council – this states - / have some feedback on the residency requirement proposal; this could impact on our HRS clients if the length of stay is reduced to 12 months or under in short term accommodation based services. This would affect the provider's ability to achieve a positive move on and cause blockage in the service / reduce numbers able to access the accommodation. This reduction proposal in terms of length of stay is currently being consulted on in a number of our short term services (mental health and young people).**
- 4.4.1 This will only affect people who have been placed in Chesterfield by the Support Providers and who do not fulfil the residency requirement, i.e. they do not normally live in Chesterfield. There is an agreed protocol in place which all Housing Providers in Derbyshire have signed up to which prioritises applicants in supported accommodation for move on accommodation and this will not change.
- 4.4.2 This concern was discussed with the Provider(s) who attended the consultation meeting with stakeholders, and it was made clear that if a person is placed in a supported placement from outside the

Borough then 'move on' accommodation should be sourced from the Council where the person normally resides, in accordance with the Move On Accommodation protocol.

4.5 **Response from the Law Centre** - We are particularly pleased that the Law Centre found that there is '*nothing controversial regarding those changes and that they were appropriate for Chesterfield Borough Council*'.

4.6 It is encouraging to note that the majority of the responses we have received in response to the consultation have been supportive, with the overriding view being the acceptance that something has got to be done to resolve the issues around tenancy breakdown and young people getting into debt.

4.7 It is disappointing that there have been so few responses but perhaps it is fair to say that had the proposals provoked major concerns that these would have been expressed forcibly by one or more of the organisations with whom we have consulted.

5.0 **IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES**

5.1 Should the changes be approved then it is proposed that they all, with the exception of the introduction of the pre-allocation risk assessment, are introduced with effect from 1st May 2015.

5.2 The pre-allocation risk assessment will be introduced once the additional staffing resources and procedural arrangements have been put in place, which is likely to be late summer.

5.3 All of the applicants registered on the waiting list who are affected by the changes will be informed in writing of the effect of the change on their application, and the date of the implementation.

5.4 Based on current figures, it is anticipated that around 300 'out of Borough' applicants will no longer be eligible for accommodation, approximately 250 single applicants with no housing needs will be affected by the removal of lodging points and around 50 applicants will benefit from the re-introduction of 'children in flat points'.

6.0 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1 Risk management was covered fully in the initial report which proposed the changes and no further risks have been highlighted.

7.0 **EQUALITIES**

7.1 An Equalities Impact assessment was completed and attached to the initial report which proposed the changes and no additional impacts have been identified during the consultation process.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 That the following changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy are approved –

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8.2 That Members approve the Policy attached at **Appendix 1** which incorporates the changes.

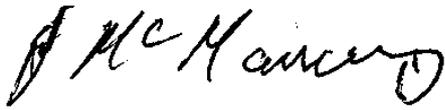
9.0 **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

9.1 The recommendations are made to ensure that the Council is compliant with the Government's Code of Guidance relating to the allocation of accommodation and to manage issues emerging from the implementation of welfare reforms.

JULIE MCGROGAN
HOUSING SERVICE MANAGER – CUSTOMER DIVISION

(Further information on this matter can be obtained from Julie McGrogan on extension 5135/5325).

Officer recommendation supported.



Signed Executive Member

Date 10/4/2015

Consultee Executive Member/Support Member comments (if applicable)