

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 7 NOVEMBER 2022

INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (IHED) – 15 NOVEMBER 2022

PART I - DELEGATED

7. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY UPDATE 2022 (EHoS)

1 Summary

1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

1.2 The full policy can be found in Appendix One.

2 Details

2.1 The Council's current Housing Allocations Policy requires updating following changes in the structure of Housing Services.

2.2 Housing Services would like to take this opportunity to make minor changes to other sections of the Policy following updates to relevant legislation, to provide additional clarity to customers and to improve officer efficiency. The following changes are recommended.

2.3 All references to job titles in the previous Housing structure will be removed and replaced with the relevant position in the new structure. The Housing Register is now managed by the Housing Operations Manager, therefore any review request, will now be conducted by the Housing Operations Manager.

2.4 The exemption to a local connection to the district, for purposes of joining the Housing Register, by having special circumstances that give rise to a local connection, as listed in 2.2.1 will be removed.

2.5 The Council will maintain the ability to grant a local connection in exceptional circumstances to a customer, through the Council's Housing Panel (3.11). Certain restrictions will be placed upon these circumstances, namely that the customer will not have the means to facilitate a mutual exchange of a social housing tenancy or the financial means to access the private rented sector in the district.

2.6 Powers will be granted to the Housing Panel to consider other exceptional cases where an exemption to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy may need to be made (3.11).

2.7 The Housing Panel will now consist of the Housing Operations Manager, the Senior Housing Options Officer and other relevant officers if required.

2.8 Any decision made by the Housing Panel in relation to whether a customer is eligible or qualifies to join the Housing Register or the facts that were taken into account when considering whether to allocate a customer accommodation will be reviewed by the Strategic Housing Manager (3.12).

- 2.9 'Significant' child care needs will be required for a customer seeking a local connection to the district via the family connection. Previously, no level was placed on any child care need (2.2.1).
- 2.10 The Council will now treat it as a refusal of an offer of accommodation by a customer, if they do not hear from the customer, following contact regarding a potential nomination, within two working days (3.10).
- 2.11 Customers for which the Council has accepted the main homelessness duty, currently have four weeks to bid on properties of their choice via the Housing Register. Due to significant pressures on availability of temporary accommodation, both Council owned and on a nightly let basis, in addition to the fact that it is highly unlikely a customer will receive any offer of accommodation within this timescale, these four weeks of choice will be removed (5.1).
- 2.12 For any customer that is owed any homelessness duty (Prevention, Relief or the Main Duty) the Council will bid on behalf of this customer for all suitable properties and any offer of suitable accommodation at any stage, will be considered a final offer of accommodation (5.1).
- 2.13 Following the introduction of the UK Government's Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the definition of Domestic Abuse in the Policy has been updated. A link to the full legal definition has been provided (5.2).
- 2.14 The Council currently ensure customers who are suffering from domestic abuse are given appropriate priority on the Housing Register and are not disadvantaged by any local connection criteria if they have fled the district to a refuge in another local area or fled from another local area to this district. This will continue, however before this is considered, the Council will require the customer to be engaging with our Housing Options team (5.2).
- 2.15 Customers who have experienced domestic abuse, may be awarded welfare priority but must be engaging with the Council's Housing Options team (5.2).

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree the proposed changes to the Policy to ensure the Policy remains relevant to the updated structure of Housing Services, to ensure the Council complies with updated legislation, provides additional clarity to customers and improves officer efficiency.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The proposed recommendations in this report are not within the Council's agreed policy and but are within the Council's agreed budgets. The relevant Policy is contained in the Council's Strategic Plan.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators.

HN01 - Maximum number of households living in temporary accommodation on the last day of the quarter (snapshot)

HN03 - Maximum number of households in temporary accommodation throughout the year

HN10- Number of households prevented from becoming homeless

5 Equal Opportunities, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications and Health & Safety Implications

5.1 None specific.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 None Specific.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 Committee approval of the Housing Allocations Policy will ensure Council compliance with relevant legislation.

8 Communications and Website Implications

8.1 The Policy on the website will be replaced with the updated Policy.

8.2 The Communications Team will be requested to issue a Press Release informing customers that the Policy has been updated.

9 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

9.1 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.

9.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Housing Services plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

10 Recommendation

10.1 That the Committee approve the changes to the Housing Allocations Policy and the report go forward to IHED for information and any comments.

Report prepared by: Jason Hagland, Strategic Housing Manager

Data Quality

Data sources: None

Data checked by: N/A

Data rating: N/A

1	Poor	N/A
2	Sufficient	N/A
3	High	N/A

Background Papers - none

APPENDIX One: Housing Allocations Policy Updated August 2022