

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 25 March 2010

Portfolio: Housing – Councillor D. Stallan

Subject: Deferment of the Review of the Allocations Scheme

**Officer contact for further information:
R Wilson, Assistant Director of Housing (01992 56 4419)**

Committee Secretary: M Jenkins (01992 56 4607)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the reasons for the deferment of the Annual Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme until its July 2010 meeting.

Report:

1. At its meeting on 21 January 2010, when considering its Work Programme, the Director of Housing explained to the Panel that he recommended a delay in considering the Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme for 2010. The Scheme is normally considered by the Panel in December each year and approved by the Cabinet in January with the updated Scheme coming into force on 1 April.

2. The reason for the delay this year is due to the Government's new statutory guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England ("Fair and Flexible") not being received until late in January 2010.

3. Under the guidance, local authorities are now required to meet certain conditions, and have some additional flexibility when framing and implementing their schemes which include:

- Extending the external agencies they consult to include Social Care, Health, Probation, Children's Services and the Voluntary Sector.
- "Engaging fully" with the local community in developing allocation priorities, including applicants, the general public and the community and voluntary sector.
- Making appropriate information about allocations widely available in a way that is easy to access and understand including, how long applicants are likely to have to wait and the general profile of the housing stock.
- Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment to consider the impact of the changes on people with the protected characteristics of age, race, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, religion or belief or gender reassignment.
- Setting local priorities alongside the reasonable preference categories, such as promoting job-related moves and supporting those who are in work.

- Considering some preference to existing tenants who are willing to move to take up employment or training opportunities.
- Considering giving priority to attract essential workers into the District by giving them priority for a small number of properties.
- Considering if a small percentage of lets should be allocated to existing tenants who wish to transfer.

4. As can be seen, in order to comply with the requirements of the statutory guidance a number of actions need to be considered and/or undertaken, which will need some months to complete. Attached as an appendix to the agenda is an action plan listing the actions, the responsible officer and the timescale for completion. The Panel is therefore asked to note the reasons for the deferment of the review of the Allocations Scheme until its meeting on 29 July, with a new scheme being implemented with effect from 1 October 2010, and the subsequent review being undertaken by 1 April 2012.

5. Members are asked to note that although there is a legal requirement under the Housing Act 1996 to have an Allocations Scheme, the Council is not required to review the Scheme on an annual basis.

Reason for decision:

To review the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme in accordance with the Government's new Statutory Guidance.

Options considered and rejected:

To review the Housing Allocations Scheme prior to October 2010, not taking into account the Government's new statutory Guidance.

Consultation undertaken:

The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation will be informed of the matter at their meeting on 23 March 2010; any comments they have will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: N/A
 Personnel: N/A
 Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A
 Relevant statutory powers: Housing Act 1996

Background papers: Current Housing Allocations Scheme and the Governments Statutory Guidance.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A
 Key Decision reference: (if required) N/A

APPENDIX

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline (2010)
Draft the updated version of the Allocations Scheme	R Wilson	March
Consult with partner agencies now including Health, Probation, Social Care and the Voluntary Sector	R Wilson	31 May
Consultation through "Housing News" with all tenants and applicants	C Sobey	31 May
Consultation with the local community through "The Forester" magazine	C Sobey J Boreham	31 May
Set up a Tenant Talk-back Panel to consider the Allocations Scheme	R Jones	31 May
Consideration of the Allocations Scheme by the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation	R Jones	30 June
Complete an Equality Impact Assessment on the Allocations Scheme	R Wilson	30 June
Consideration of the Allocations Scheme by the Housing Scrutiny Panel	R Wilson	29 July
Consideration of the Allocations Scheme by the Cabinet	R Wilson	13 September

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline (2010)
Implementation of the revised Allocations Scheme	R Wilson	1 October
Make information available more widely in accordance with the Statutory Guidance	R Wilson C Sobey	31 December
Next review of the Allocations Scheme by the Housing Scrutiny Panel	R Wilson	December (2011)