

# **Supplementary Report to Housing Standing Panel**

**Date of meeting: 25 October 2007**

**Subject: Review of Allocations Scheme (Addendum)**

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## **Recommendation:**

**The Panel to note this last minute addendum to the Allocations Report (item 12 on the main agenda).**

1. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has notified all Councils about the proposals to include, within the forthcoming Housing and Regeneration Bill, changes to the local connection provision in so far as it applies to the allocation of accommodation.
2. The CLG and the Ministry of Defence has reviewed the way in which current housing legislation impacts on those service personnel leaving the Armed Forces, and has decided to make the necessary changes to housing legislation, at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that service personnel are put on an equal footing with other people applying for social housing.
3. Under the Housing Act 1996 (the Act) authorities are required to give reasonable preference to people in certain categories of housing needs e.g. homeless people.
4. When determining priorities under their allocations schemes, authorities may take into account certain factors in determining priorities for those with reasonable preferences categories. One of these factors is whether the applicant has a local connection with the district. The Act provides that a person will not be considered to be employed or have chosen to be resident in the district if he is serving in the armed forces there.
5. Where, as with this Council, local connection is taken into account, the CLG believe this can disadvantage service personnel and those leaving the forces when compared to other housing applicants. Specifically, it is likely to disadvantage serving personnel who are approaching discharge.
6. The CLG propose to make the necessary changes to housing legislation under the forthcoming Housing and Regeneration Bill to ensure parity between Members of the Armed Forces and other applicants so that those serving in the armed forces are not excluded from establishing a local connection in the district where they are living or working.
7. Currently, Section 8.4 of the Allocations Scheme states that "Applicants who move out of the District for more than a year are treated as applicants who have not lived in the District for more than a year prior to application." Therefore, applicants without local connection, including members of the Armed Forces are placed in either Band 5 or Band 6 according to their circumstances. It is therefore suggested that the Housing Scrutiny Panel recommend to the Cabinet that when the changes are made to the housing legislation Section 8.4 of the Council's Allocations Scheme be amended at that time to reflect the changes.