

## HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

- 1.1 Pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15(C) (1), the Chairman of the Review Committee has requested that the decision made by the Portfolio Holder for Community on 29 April 2015 be called in for scrutiny:-

‘The amendments to the Council’s Allocation Scheme for Social Housing are approved.

The revised Scheme to be applied to new applicants only.’

- 1.2 To assist Members, copies of the original report of the Director and the decision by the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise are appended.



Angela Law

Assistant Director Legal Services

---

### Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Paul Gowers (Overview & Scrutiny Officer) on:-

Phone: 01702 318178

Email: [paul.gowers@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:paul.gowers@rochford.gov.uk)

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

## EXECUTIVE DECISION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY

### SUBJECT: HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

#### 1 DECISION MADE

- 1.1 The amendments to the Council's Allocation Scheme for Social Housing are approved.
- 1.2 The revised Scheme to be applied to new applicants only.

#### 2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE No: 02/15

#### 3 REASON FOR DECISION

- 3.1 The current Allocation Scheme has operated successfully since it was introduced in August 2013. It has however been decided to review the qualifying criteria in relation to local connection, having regard to the criteria adopted by other Essex Authorities. The Scheme has also been updated to take account of the recent management restructure.

#### 4 NAME OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER

- 4.1 Cllr JE McPherson.

#### 5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 5.1 None.

#### 6 LEAD OFFICER

- 6.1 Jody Bridge, Assistant Director Community and Housing Services.

I confirm that the above decision does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

Portfolio Holder Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Decision: 29/04/2015

# **REPORT TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY**

## **REPORT FROM DIRECTOR**

### **SUBJECT: HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME**

#### **1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To agree the amendments proposed to the Council's Allocation Scheme for Social Housing, as set out in the Appendix to this report.
- 1.2 The revised Scheme will be applied to new applicants only.

#### **2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE No: 02/15**

#### **3 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The current Allocation Scheme has operated successfully since it was introduced in August 2013. It has, however, been decided to review the qualifying criteria in relation to local connection, having regard to the criteria adopted by other Essex Authorities. The Scheme has also been updated to take account of the recent management restructure.

#### **4 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The changes in the new Scheme are as follows:
  - The period of residence required to establish a local connection has been increased from at least the previous 2 years to at least the previous 3 years. The alternative qualification of having lived in the District for 3 years in the last 5 years has been removed.
  - Local connection through employment has been amended from simply having paid employment or an offer of such (other than casual employment) to having paid employment of not less than 16 hours a week for the past 12 months.
  - Establishing a local connection through carrying out community or voluntary based activity or service has been removed.
  - Homeless applicants owed a full housing duty who have no local connection with the District who are not, or cannot, be referred to another local authority will now be placed in Band C instead of Band B.
  - Decisions on cases where it will not be appropriate to apply the local connection criteria will be made by the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services and ratified by the Director.

- Reviews of decisions on applications will be carried out by the Assistant Director Community and Housing.

4.2 There is a balance to be struck between the length of qualification for being considered as 'resident' in the District and the impact on homelessness applications. Evidence from districts where the residency period has been increased to five years (or in one case to seven years) is that the number of homelessness applications increases significantly. This in turn has resulted in many more people being accommodated in temporary accommodation. However, without a commensurate increase in the number of units of temporary accommodation, the end result is much greater use of B&B accommodation. On balance it is considered that a residency period of three years strikes a sensible balance between the availability of accommodation and cost.

## **5 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 For certain homeless applicants the prospects of an offer of social housing will be reduced. This has to be balanced against the legislative provisions that allow a greater scope for discharging the homelessness duty in the private sector.

5.2 The longer the period is for establishing residency the more likely it is that the Council will need to house greater numbers in temporary and emergency accommodation.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no immediate resource implications arising from the proposed changes, though, as pointed out in the report, an increased period for establishing residency in the District beyond three years is likely to increase costs for emergency accommodation.

## **7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The law requires the Council to send a copy of the revised scheme to every Registered Provider with which it has nomination rights and allow a reasonable time to comment on the proposals.

## **8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 In managing the housing register the Allocation Scheme has procedures in place to take into account the range of needs that different applicants may have, such as medical, disability, homelessness etc. to ensure the Scheme is fully inclusive.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.



LT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 21.04.2015

**Background Papers:**

For further information please contact Jody Bridge, Assistant Director Community and Housing Services on:

Phone: 01702 318195

Email: [jody.bridge@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:jody.bridge@rochford.gov.uk)

## Housing Allocation Scheme - Review

### Background

The current Allocation Scheme was developed to take advantage of the freedoms in the Localism Act and having regard to Guidance issued in June 2012. These freedoms included the ability to decide who qualifies for an allocation e.g. through their local connection. Under the Scheme the Council decided to maximise the opportunity for existing social tenants to transfer. In addition there is an aim to nominate applicants in employment, who want to take up an employment opportunity or who are helping the community to at least 40% of vacancies.

Further guidance was issued in December 2013 which reinforced the Government's view that Authorities prioritise applicants who can demonstrate a close association with their local area. When considering residency the S of S believed that a reasonable period would be two years. The Guidance advises Authorities that other local connection criteria could be considered, e.g. family associations or employment which implies they did not have to be. In the circumstances additional restrictions beyond just the residence criteria could be introduced.

Issue	Current	Proposal	Comment
Local connection - residence	Resident in the area for the 2 years or for 3 years out of the last 5. Existing social tenants in the district are deemed to have a local connection regardless.	Resident for the last 3 years	Across Essex Authorities the requirement ranges from 6 months to 7 years.
Local connection – family associations	Having close family i.e. mother, father, brother sister or adult children who have lived in the district for the previous 5 years	No change	Consistent with many other Essex Authorities although at least one does not accept this as a reason for connection

APPENDIX

<p>Local Connection -Working</p>	<p>Having paid employment or a confirmed offer of such in the area other than casual employment</p>	<p>Having paid employment of not less than 16 hours a week for at least the past 12 months</p>	<p>Across Essex Authorities the requirement varies from not accepting this as a reason for connection to simply having paid employment, working in the area for at 2 years, or working a minimum of 24 hours a week.</p>
<p>Local Connection – special reason</p>	<p>Reasons outside the above criteria. Includes community/voluntary based activity or service in the area for a minimum of 10 hours a week for at least the previous 6 months</p>	<p>Delete</p>	<p>Qualification through Community or Voluntary based service not specifically referred to in most other Authorities. One however requires a minimum period of 12 months</p>
<p>Local connection – specific exclusion</p>	<p>Social tenants living in another area unless they have a housing need not related to the size, condition or suitability of their current accommodation and where they need to move to a particular locality and failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others</p>	<p>No change</p>	<p>Introduced to responsibility for resolving accommodation issues in social housing in other areas rests with the relevant landlord or local authority</p>

<p>Local Connection – exemptions to requirements</p>	<p>Homeless acceptances who have no connection where we cannot or decide not to refer to another LA are currently placed in band B</p> <p>Certain Armed Forces personnel as laid down in Regulations</p> <p>Request from the Police, National Witness Mobility Service or under MAPPA arrangements</p> <p>Where the Strategic Housing Manager or Head of Service agrees it would not be appropriate to apply the criteria.</p>	<p>Place in Band C</p> <p>No change</p> <p>No change</p> <p>Decision to be made by: Assistant Director ratified by Director.</p>	<p>Approach varies across authorities. Aim of lower priority is to reduce potential attraction of approach to this authority and to ensure fewer opportunities for those without connection being nominated.</p>
--	--	--	--



## Additional amendment

Assessment reviews	Reviews carried out by the Strategic Housing Manager	Reviews carried out by the Assistant Director	
--------------------	--	---	--