

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
6th November 2019

Report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing

ITEM 4 HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY UPDATE

Purpose of Report

This report presents details of the Housing Allocation Policy implemented on the 1st April 2019.

Recommendation

The report is for information.

Background

The Housing Allocation Policy guides the principles of how homes will be allocated in a fair and transparent manner, taking account of both the Council's duty to meet housing need and its wish to offer as much choice as possible within available resources.

There is a statutory requirement for a Local Authority to produce a Housing Allocation Policy, Councils still have the primary responsibility to assess and meet the housing needs of their local population as housing delivery enablers. The Housing Allocation Policy is one of the elements setting out how this will be achieved.

The current Housing Allocation Policy covers the period 2018-2022.

The Council held consultation events between March and September 2017 to review the Housing Allocation Policy and proposed changes to the Policy:

- Strategic and Private Sector Housing Service Staff Meetings
- Lead Member for Strategic and Private Sector Housing
- Cabinet Members Briefing
- Policy Scrutiny
- Homelessness Strategy Steering Group
- Statutory and voluntary agencies
- Registered Providers Liaison Forum
- Housing Management Advisory Board
- Housing Register Applicants Workshop

In addition an online survey monkey questionnaire was made available for completion by partners and stakeholders and promoted at these events, on the Abris Choice Based Lettings website and the Council's website. A letter was sent to all Housing Register applicants to advise them of the survey and invite them to attend a consultation workshop.

Details of the Policy

The Council operates a Choice Based Lettings Scheme under which applicants are able to express preference for available properties by applying (or bidding) for advertised properties.

The Council seeks to give all applicants choice in relation to accommodation but may have to limit choice in certain circumstances, such as where there is limited availability or where the Council is discharging a statutory duty to a homeless household.

Letting of Council properties and nominations to Registered Provider properties within Charnwood are covered by this Housing Allocation Policy. This includes general needs accommodation for single persons, couples and families and sheltered accommodation for older persons.

Housing Register

The Council maintains a Housing Register of households who are applying for Council or Registered Provider properties within Charnwood. Applicants Guidance is attached as Appendix 1.

An individual can only be included on one active application at any one time, either as a main or joint applicant or as a member or another applicant's household.

All applicants must complete the Charnwood Choice Based Lettings Housing Application Form. The information included on the application form must be accurate. Applicants will be required to provide documentary evidence to support the information on their application and demonstrate that they have a housing need, for example proof of identity, address, income, savings and custody/access to children.

Applicants who have indicated that they have a medical, mobility, welfare or hardship need will be required to provide supporting evidence and may need to be referred to an appropriate agency for an assessment.

Housing Applications

The Council's Housing Allocations Team will assess completed applications and the supporting evidence provided and will decide whether the applicant qualifies for the register, which Banding is applicable to their circumstances and the type of properties they are eligible for. Incomplete applications will not be assessed and will be cancelled after 28 days.

Some people cannot join the Housing Register, for example:

- Applicants who are below the age of 16 years
- Applicants who are not eligible for social housing (for example most people from abroad are not eligible for social housing)
- Applicants who are homeowners or who have the financial means to purchase a property in Charnwood
- Applicants who do not have a local connection to Charnwood

- Applicants who have been responsible for serious unacceptable behaviour
- Applicants who do not have a confirmed housing need.

If an applicant is accepted onto the Housing Register, the applicant will be notified of the Band their application has been placed in, the properties they are eligible for and how to bid for properties. If an applicant is refused entry to the Housing Register, the applicant will be notified that their application has been refused and of the reasons for the refusal.

Applicants must notify the Council of any relevant change in their circumstances. Following notification of a change in circumstances, the application will be reassessed and may be moved from one Band to another or removed from the register. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of any reassessments.

Housing Need Bands

If you do not have a confirmed Housing Need, you will not be able to join the Housing Register. If you have a confirmed Housing Need your application will be placed in 1 of 3 Housing Need Bands:

- Band 3 – Housing Need
- Band 2 – High Housing Need
- Band 1 – Emergency Housing Need

The Policy includes specific criteria that gives additional priority to tenants of Council and Registered Providers Housing (Housing Allocation Policy – Management Need pages 22 -23).

Adverts

Vacant properties are advertised on the Council's Choice Based Lettings System. Adverts will contain information about the property and the applicable eligibility criteria.

The Choice Based Lettings System may include information about other affordable housing options within Charnwood, such as affordable Private Rental properties and affordable Home Ownership.

Applicants who have been accepted onto the Council's Housing Register can bid for up to 2 advertised properties per week.

Advertised Properties

Available properties are advertised every week. The adverts are available:

- On the Council's Choice Based Lettings website
- At the Council offices
- In local libraries across Charnwood.

Bidding for Properties

Applicants can express an interest in available properties by placing bids through the Choice Based Lettings System. Applicants can bid for up to 2 properties in every bidding cycle. Applicants may place and withdraw bids at any time during a bidding cycle. Applicants will **not** be able to place bids after a bidding cycle has closed.

Assistance can be provided to applicants who are unable complete an online application, search for properties or place bids themselves. Applicants can contact the Council if they need such assistance.

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