


REPORT TO SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

21 February 2019

Subject:	Review of the Housing Allocations Policy
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Kerrie Carmichael - Cabinet Member for Housing
Director:	Director - Housing and Communities - Alan Caddick
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Neville Rowe neville_rowe@sandwell.gov.uk 0121 569 5190

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board:

1. Consider and comment upon the information presented on housing allocations together with a series of recommendations;
2. Make recommendations on taking forward the revised policy options.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 At its meeting on 4 October, 2018 the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board considered a presentation given by officers concerning temporary accommodation for homeless persons together with options being considered as part of a review of the current housing allocations policy. The Scrutiny Board has requested to consider these options in greater detail at its meeting on 31 January.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 Housing allocations contribute to a number of ambitions within Vision 2030:-

Ambition 1 – Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.

Ambition 2 – Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.

Ambition 5 – Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.

Ambition 10 – Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The current Housing Allocations Policy came into force in April 2013. The key amendments made in 2013 to the current policy were the implementation of a five-year residency test to gain access to the housing register together with a series of amendments that enabled the best use of the existing housing stock. These latter amendments included giving greater priority to households living in a flat with children aged 16 or under and to households living in accommodation that is either overcrowded or under-occupied, together with restricting access to 3 and 4 bedroom houses to households with children under 16 years.
- 3.2 On the whole, the policy has performed well, with a good distribution of households accessing accommodation according to their respective priority bands. However, since the introduction of the current policy the housing register has changed in that applicants (as opposed to existing tenants) now make-up roughly half of the register such that around a third of relets are now attributed to existing tenants that by nature generate a further void.
- 3.3 In addition, for many years the flatted stock has been dominated by age restrictions and currently 70% of the applicant base is now below the age of 40, and by default half of the flatted stock is now excluded from the applicant base on account of applicant age. This has resulted in issues regarding access at a time of a rising affordability gap together with concerns around equality of access and the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Officers will present further information to the meeting on the current policy amendments being considered, however, the main elements of the policy review aim to focus on a series of amendments related to:

1. the increasing affordability gap for residents seeking rented accommodation
2. the current stock/customer base mismatch
3. the Homelessness Reduction Act
4. looked after children and other vulnerable persons

4.2 Members of the Scrutiny Board have also received information on lettings following the October meeting.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 Consultation has already commenced with local TMOs and the Tenant Review Panel as well as a programme of lead offer consultation. A further programme of consultation is planned.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS.

6.1 If the Scrutiny Board does not consider the information presented to it then potential recommendations and actions to improve services would be missed.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no specific strategic resources implications arising from this report.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The allocation of council housing stock is governed by Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This Act was amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 No equality impact assessment is required for this report.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 No data protection impact assessment is required for this report.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no crime and disorder impacts associated with this report and no risk assessment is required.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 There are no specific sustainability issues associated with this report.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 Housing is key to improving wellbeing and health outcomes for our residents.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 Allocation of council housing ensures effective and efficient use of the authority's housing stock.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The Board is invited to consider the information presented to it and determine if there are more specific areas of interest that it would like to review in further detail.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.

17 APPENDICES:

None.

Alan Caddick
Director – Housing and Communities