

Housing Allocations Policy

Summary of consultation findings

Introduction

This report outlines the feedback and response from the internal and external consultation on the draft Housing Allocations Policy, which ran across September and October 2019 (including public consultation 3 September 2019 – 25 October 2019).

The first draft of the policy was developed based on the discussions of the Allocations Policy Steering Group, which met seven times between February and June 2019 and included membership from Housing Strategy, Wolverhampton Homes and the City's four Tenant Management Organisations.

The draft policy has been further refined based on internal, stakeholder and public consultation including:

Presenting the draft policy at Council Leadership meeting and a range of forums, providing the opportunity for face to face discussion and feedback including:

Housing, Adults, Children's, Public Health and Education Leadership Teams, Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel, Equalities Advisory Group, Wolverhampton Federation of Tenants Association, Children and Families Together Board, Bushbury Hill EMB Board, Dovecotes TMO Board, Better Homes Board, Wolverhampton Homes Lettings, Housing Options and Management team meetings, Rough Sleeper Operational Group, the Youth Council and Care Leavers Forum.

Emails and letters sent to internal and external stakeholders including all Councillors, Local MPs, Registered Providers, Voluntary Sector Organisations, The Armed Forces Covenant, Domestic Violence Forum and a sample of 1,000 applicants currently on the Housing Register offering the opportunity for them to feedback directly to the Housing Strategy team including face to face if preferred.

An online survey was made available to stakeholders and members of the public, and was promoted through various means, with hard copies available on request. 213 responses were received from the online consultation of which 88% identified themselves as residents.

The key messages resulting from the consultation are summarised in the below tables, having been incorporated into a revised Housing Allocations Policy.

Table 1: Public Consultation Feedback

| Theme | Feedback | Response |
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| Buy Back Programme | Consultation highlighted that there is a need on occasions to directly allocate properties purchased by the Council to the current occupants where the property has been purchased for the purposes of estate redevelopment and renewal. | Section 24 of the policy has been added which states: “The Council reserves the right to directly allocate properties which have been purchased in cases of for example estate regeneration, where this has been subject to separate Cabinet approval.” |
| Lesser Preference | There are currently circumstances where an applicant’s housing need is assessed but they are awarded ‘lesser preference’ and placed into the Band 4, the least priority for housing. Examples include having debt over £400, having failed a pre-leaving inspection and where they have been involved in unacceptable behaviour such as anti-social behaviour. Under the proposed policy, applicants with lesser preference would be demoted one priority band, meaning an applicant with significant lesser preference who showed no intentions of adhering to a repayment plan could still be allocated a property in certain situations. | The policy has been updated and applicants with lesser preference will now have their application suspended until the affected criteria has been resolved or a repayment plan has been adhered to for at least 3 months. This does not apply to applicants in the Emergency Plus or Emergency Bands. |
| Emergency + Band | While consultees were supportive of the creation of the Emergency Plus Band, which is a new band that would see a level of need above the current highest priority for applicants with a full homelessness duty who are also care leavers, members of the armed forces, require a substantially adapted property, severely overcrowded or anyone who requires immediate rehousing due to a significant threat to life, some responses felt that Rightsizing (overcrowding) should not be a qualifying criterion as this was adequately covered in other bands. | Category A Rightsizing has been removed from the Band and is covered elsewhere in the priority Bands. |

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| Band 1 | With the introduction of the Emergency Band + and removal of Band 4, concerns were raised that applicants in Band 1 would be significantly disadvantaged by the 10% preference of all lets that is given to Bands 2 and 3. | The 10% quota to lower priority bands has been redesigned, which now sees 5% of properties allocated to Band 1 and another 5% allocated to Band 2 and 3. |
| Medical Reviews | Concerns were raised that the policy requires applicants to provide medical evidence every 6 months. Medical professionals now charge patients for medical evidence; this element of the policy could therefore potentially place applicants into financial hardship. | The requirement for updated evidence every 6 months has been removed from the policy. |