

CITY OF <b>WOLVERHAMPTON</b> COUNCIL	<h1>Individual Executive Decision Notice</h1>
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<b>Report title</b>	Bushbury Hill EMB Local Lettings Plan	
<b>Decision designation</b>	GREEN	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing	
<b>Wards affected</b>	Bushbury South and Low Hill; Fallings Park	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Ross Cook, Director of City Environment	
<b>Originating service</b>	City Housing	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Michelle Garbett,	Housing Policy Officer
	Mila Simpson	Service Lead – Housing Strategy
	Tel	01902 552954
	Email	michelle.garbett@wolverhampton.gov.uk, mila.simpson@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	City Environment Leadership Board 28 April 2020	

## Summary

Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board (EMB) are a tenant management organisation that manage over 900 homes on behalf of the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC). As part of the Bushbury Hill Estate Partnership Agreement that the CWC entered into with Bushbury EMB in August 2018, it was approved that they could agree with CWC a local lettings plan (LLP) to be applied to the homes they allocate as per the modular management agreement they have with the Council under the Right to Manage regulations.

Bushbury Hill EMB and CWC have worked to agree a local lettings plan which will afford them a local offer to help meet the housing needs of the local area, due to a lack of diversity of property types they manage. This will provide some opportunity to those that want to remain within the local community to do so.

The LLP sits within the wider framework of the Council's Allocations Policy with all homes being advertised and allocated on the Council's Homes in the City system. The LLP will be valid for a period of three years, will be reviewed annually and will be subject to monitoring of its application.

**Recommendation for decision:**

That the Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, in consultation with the Director of City Environment:

1. Approves a local lettings plan for Bushbury Hill EMB managed properties.

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Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date:

Date:

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board (EMB) is a tenant management organisation (TMO) which manages and maintains over 900 Council properties within the Bushbury South and Low Hill ward. Established as a TMO in 1998 they have managed the estate for over 20 years under the Right to Manage, with City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) remaining as landlord to those homes.
- 1.2 A well performing TMO, Bushbury Hill EMB entered into a Better Homes Partnership Agreement with CWC in August 2018, following approval at June 2018 Cabinet, which supported Bushbury Hill EMB entering into a new local lettings plan (LLP) in accordance with CWC Allocations Policy; its scheme for determining priorities, and the procedure to be followed, in allocating council and registered provider housing.
- 1.3 This report sets out the rationale, the type and proportion of properties affected and the letting criteria to be adopted by Bushbury Hill EMB in the application of an agreed LLP. The LLP will apply for a three-year period from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2023, with properties being advertised and allocated using the Council's chosen system; Homes in the City.

## **2.0 Objectives**

- 2.1 In the spirit of a TMO, with housing services being delivered by a board of local people to better meet local needs, Bushbury Hill EMB have worked with the CWC to develop a LLP to help meet the specific needs of the estate, helping to foster the community spirit amongst the residents of the estate and created a stable and cohesive community by:
  - Ensuring the stability and sustainability of established communities by giving some priority to transferring tenants who have demonstrated they are able to sustain a tenancy;
  - Offering some priority to those that have an established connection to the estate particularly for those properties that are in short supply whilst ensuring that homes that become available to let are utilised for those who are in housing need.
  - Ensuring those groups protected by an equality characteristic are not disadvantaged by this plan.

## **3.0 The Local Lettings Plan**

- 3.1 The LLP, as set out at Appendix 1, details the properties affected, how they will be prioritised for allocation, the process for letting as well as the monitoring and evaluation arrangements, with the key elements of the LLP summarised below.
- 3.2 To ease the pressure of residents having to move away from the estate due to stock shortages, particularly of two bedroom homes, Bushbury Hill EMB will apply a local connection criteria (set out in appendix 2) to a proportion of properties that become available to let as follows:

- 75% of all two-bedroom properties that become available to let will be advertised giving additional preference to those with a local connection to the property area.
  - For all other property types additional preference will be provided for 1 in 4 to applicants with a local connection to the property area.
- 3.3 For new build properties that are funded using the Housing Revenue Account to be allocated in accordance with the new build local lettings plan, which will enable up to 50% of properties on first let be prioritised to applicants with a local connection to the area (set out in appendix 2). This will help maintain a sustainable community, maintain support networks and provide opportunity to those living in the area with housing need.
- 3.4 For new build properties in receipt of funding from the Community Housing Fund programme, 100% of first lets and 50% of relets to be prioritised to existing CWC tenants within the Bushbury Hill EMB management area (set out in appendix 2), as Bushbury Hill EMB applied for this funding in order to develop properties that will diversify the types of homes in the area and meet local housing need. Other relets to be advertised in accordance with the agreed local lettings plan criteria.
- 3.5 All properties will be advertised and allocated via the Council's Homes in the City choice-based lettings scheme.
- 3.6 The LLP will be reviewed annually by Bushbury Hill EMB to assess its continuing impact and relevance and a copy of the review will be provided to the Council.
- 3.7 Allocations let under the LLP will be monitored in line with established processes for monitoring lettings to ensure it has been allocated in accordance with the LLP and Allocations Policy. In addition, following the letting of all new build properties under the LLP, City of Wolverhampton Council officers will complete an evaluation exercise to review how all properties were let, assessing factors of housing need, household composition, equalities and if the original objectives of the local lettings plan have been achieved.
- 3.8 The LLP will operate for a maximum of three years at which time, should a new LLP be needed this will need separate approval.

#### **4.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 4.1 Option one – Allocate the properties in accordance with Bushbury Hill EMB proposal for a LPP. The LLP applies to a proportion of properties becoming available to let, still with a focus on meeting housing need. A number will still be let in full accordance with the Allocations Policy. By approving the LLP this provides Bushbury Hill EMB with the opportunity to respond to local housing need. It will also fulfil the commitment CWC made to BHEMB in the signed Partnership Agreement
- 4.2 Option two – To let all properties in accordance with Allocations Policy, which is designed to create fairness across the allocation of housing stock coming available to let and

ensures that allocations are made to those in the greatest housing need. Whilst this is the most equitable way to allocate, it does not recognise the specific needs of smaller localities, that can be legitimately created through a TMO who have for many years focused on building a cohesive community of tenants with a genuine interest in the upkeep and needs of their estate. The Allocations Policy suggests such specific needs should be addressed through a LLP.

## **5.0 Reason for decision**

- 5.1 Option one is recommended; that a LLP for the Bushbury Hill EMB managed Council homes is adopted as it has due regard to the aims and principles of the New Build LLP and is in accordance with the provisions as set out in Section 166A (6) (b) of the 1996 Housing Act.
- 5.2 This LLP will help make best use of the homes in the local area, creating sustainable lettings and strengthening the local community. It will provide a transparent, fair and consistent way to achieve these aims within an established legal framework.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 Allocating new properties to existing council tenants will result in an increased number of void properties and the associated costs e.g. void assessment, gas checks, remedial works and advertising costs. Extra voids will also result in increased rent loss during the void turnaround period, although this can be mitigated to some extent through early identification of transferring tenants and subsequent early identification of works required to minimise void periods. However, by creating stable and sustainable communities this should lead to lower future turnover, minimising future costs.

[JM/07042020/D]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 Section 166A(6)(b) of the 1996 Housing Act enables local authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories, provided that overall the authority is able to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of s.166A(3). This is the statutory basis that allows local authorities to adopt local lettings policies for certain parts of the social rented stock within their area. The proposed local lettings plan is compliant with the legislation and statutory guidance in this area.

[RP/01052020/A]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 An equalities analysis has been completed which supports a small proportion of properties being let to those that are eligible and have the greatest need for them, whilst enabling them to stay within their local community where they can access established

support networks. Annual monitoring and review will also take into account the impact on protected groups.

## **9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

9.1 The objective of the LLP is to help establish a stable and sustainable community at the earliest opportunity within the new development. If achieved the benefits of this will be to create an environment where people have a sense of belonging and pride in the area and want to stay, which should have a positive impact on the quality of the local environment.

## **10.0 Human Resources Implications**

10.1 The allocation and letting of properties under the LLP will be undertaken by Bushbury Hill EMB under their management agreement with CWC.

## **11.0 Corporate Landlord Implications**

11.1 This report has no implications for Corporate Landlord as the properties are assets of the Housing Revenue Account.

## **12.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

12.1 The LLP aims to maintain a stable and sustainable community enabling a proportion of prioritisation for local people. This will provide some opportunity for those whose housing needs have changed, but would like to remain living on the estate because of the proximity to support networks and facilities such as the TMO, school, doctors and community hub to access housing that meets their changing needs.

## **13.0 Schedule of background papers**

13.1 14 November 2017, Proposed housing development at the former Dale House site, Cabinet (Resources) Panel

13.2 6 June 2018, Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board Update, Cabinet

13.3 10 July 2019, Local Lettings Plan- New Build Properties, Cabinet

## **14.0 Appendices**

14.1 Appendix 1: Local Lettings Plan: Bushbury Hill EMB.

14.2 Appendix 2: Local Connection Criteria.