



Housing Services Cabinet Committee

Thursday, 4 February 2021

Dear Councillor

You are advised that the attached documents form part of the main agenda papers for this meeting.

Please ensure you bring them with you to the meeting.

Yours faithfully



S Walsh
Service Manager (Communities)

List of documents attached

6. Revised Housing Allocation Scheme

(Pages 3 - 8)

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Revised Housing Allocation Scheme

Lee Georgiou – 4th February 2021

Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of

Allocations scheme

Background:

- Every Local Authority is required to publish a Housing Allocation Scheme.
- Current scheme was introduced in 2014 following legislative change – Localism Act 2011 and Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- Legislative and market changes.
 - Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
 - Case law relating to Social Housing Allocations.
 - Reduced mobility as a result of the Housing Crisis.
 - Increase cost of housing.
 - Homeless household being placed outside LA's district.
 - UK left the EU on 1 January 2021.
 - New statutory guidance published in December 2020.

Background

In February 2020, Housing Services Committee were presented with some proposed amendments that would need to be formally consulted on. This included:

- Extended local connection period from 2 to 3 years.
- Refusal sanction – 12 months suspension for people refusing offers.
- An increased priority for homelessness applicants – not all.
- Increased priority for armed forces personnel injured in service or for their families if they die in service.
- Removing people with no housing need.
- Increased priority for all households under-occupying - Band A.
- The introduction of a Housing Allocations Panel.

Consultation

In total 20 weeks consultation, with limited number of responses.

- General agreement with the overarching principles.
- Concerns:
 - Suspending people for 12 months if they refuse a property where an auto bid is made
 - Suspending people if they refuse an suitable offer.
- Easily mitigated by the system – people can choose to auto-bid on specific types of properties, within specified locations.
- The policy set outs clearly what will be considered when deciding suitability, this includes: the property size, any medical/welfare needs, any risk of domestic abuse or other forms of violence within a specific location.

Current position

- Draft scheme was presented to Housing Services Cabinet Meeting on 16 November 2020 for further feedback and comment. Since then:
 - Reviewed by senior managers and officers within the Council.
 - Reviewed by the Legal Team.
 - A Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) drafted.
- Further amendments to note include:
 - Updated eligibility section to include the Withdrawal Agreement after the UK left the EU.
 - Change in terminology when applicants refuse an offer of accommodation, from suspend to remove. The effect will be the same and applicants can reapply after 12 months.
 - Added an exception to the Local Connection rules for travellers as a result of the transient lifestyle.
 - Extended membership of Housing Allocation Panel to include Senior Officer from outside the Housing Department to ensure objectivity.

Recommendation and next steps

- Recommend that Members support the revised Housing Allocation Scheme to be signed off by the Lead Member.
- Communication will be sent out to all stakeholders and partners, including a short briefing note for Members.
- Service will work with Kent Homechoice to update the system to reflect the impact on applicants' bands.
- New scheme will come in on 5th April 2021.

• Questions?