



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 5 FEBRUARY 2019

SUBJECT: ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW 2019

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Communities Committee with the results of the Allocations Policy review consultation and presents a revised Allocations Policy for approval.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the allocation and letting of houses and homelessness.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) considers and notes the results of the public consultation on the Allocations Policy as set out in Section 4 and APPENDIX A;**
- (ii) approves the revised Allocations Policy as set out in APPENDIX B; and**
- (iii) agrees that the revised Allocations Policy will be implemented on 1 May 2019.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Communities Committee was provided with updates on 26 June and 20 November 2018 (paragraph 12 of the Minute and paragraph 7 of the draft Minute refer) on the commencement of the provisions of Part 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, herein referred to as the 2014 Act and of the requirement to review the Allocations Policy to reflect the legislative changes.
- 3.2 Access to social housing is governed by legislation and guidance. At its meeting on 26 June 2018, Communities Committee was advised that in addition to the mandatory legislative changes introduced by the 2014 Act, key

issues had been identified for consideration as part of the review of the Allocations Policy (paragraph 14 of the Minute refers).

- 3.3 An extensive consultation was undertaken between 3 September 2018 and 21 October 2018 focusing on eleven key issues. Feedback was requested from applicants on the housing list, Community Councils, Community Planning area forums, the Moray Tenants' Forum, the Moray Equalities Forum and other key stakeholders including, Health and Social Care, Social Work and representatives from the Armed Forces.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 20 November 2018, Communities Committee was provided with the results of the public consultation and it agreed a revised Allocations Policy prior to a further consultation (paragraph 7 of the draft Minute refers).
- 3.5 The consultation, which commenced on 23 November 2018 and ended on 11 January 2019, was publicised on the Council's website and by social media. The consultation involved:
- publishing the full revised Allocations Policy along with an easy read version;
 - developing an online questionnaire to collate feedback;
 - contacting applicants on the Housing List to inform them of the consultation and request feedback;
 - issuing the draft policy to the Moray Equalities Forum for feedback; and
 - seeking feedback from:
 - the Moray Tenants' Forum and community councils;
 - the register of interested tenants; and
 - relevant stakeholders, including representatives of the Armed Forces, health and social care and social work.
- 3.6 Given the pressure on the availability of social housing, the allocation of social housing can be an emotive issue and there can be misconceptions and misinformation about the framework which applies to the Allocations Policy, including who can access social housing. As with previous consultations, some of the feedback indicated that some consultees were not aware of the legislative framework and constraints which the Allocations Policy must adhere to.

4. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 4.1 Despite contacting all of the stakeholders detailed in section 3.5 of the report and requesting feedback, only 81 responses were received. This is a significantly lower response rate than in previous consultations on the Allocations Policy. In terms of the Housing List, this equates to a response rate of 2.48%. It may be that consultees had previously given feedback and did not want to respond to another consultation, or that their feedback had been taken into account and they had no further comments on the policy. Given the low numbers, the responses returned are unlikely to accurately reflect the views of stakeholders.
- 4.2 The consultation survey asked five key questions relating to the revised Allocations Policy. These were:

- i) Do you support the introduction of the Allocations Policy?
- ii) Did you find the Allocations Policy easy to read and understand?
- ii) Is there a section that you would like to see reworded?
- iii) Is there something that we've missed that you think should be included?
- iv) Is there anything you think should be removed?

Respondents were also invited to provide any general comments that they may have on the Allocations Policy.

4.3 An overview of the responses, details of the comments returned and a response to the comments are included at **APPENDIX A**. The comments returned have been amended to correct grammatical and typing errors. Any comments relating to personal circumstances or which were not relevant to the allocations policy review have been removed.

4.4 An overview of the feedback returned and a summary of the comments received is as follows:

- Do you support the introduction of the Allocations Policy?
35 respondents (43.22%) supported the Allocations Policy, 12 respondents (14.81%) did not and the remainder either did not know or did not want to answer the question.

There were no substantive reasons for the responses provided and it's possible that those who did not support the policy were unhappy with the legislative requirements over which the Council has no control. In considering only the definitive "yes" or "no" responses, the majority of the feedback is supportive of the Allocations Policy.

- Did you find the Allocations Policy easy to read and understand?
58 respondents (71.61%) stated that the policy was easy to understand, whilst 16 respondents (19.75%) did not.

The allocation of social housing is a complex issue and there is no one size fits all approach. The Allocations Policy contains complex and detailed information needed to explain the framework within which the policy operates. The Allocations Policy has been developed using plain language where possible and the Council has also developed a plain language easy read version of the policy.

- Is there a section of the Allocations Policy that you would like to see reworded?
40 respondents (49.38%) did not want the Allocations Policy reworded, 8 respondents requested that some wording should be changed and the remainder either did not know or did not want to answer the question.

Following consideration of the responses returned, where appropriate, minor changes have been made to the wording of the Allocations Policy and are highlighted as track changes in **APPENDIX B**.

- Is there something that we have missed in the Allocations Policy that you think should be included?

38 respondents (46.91%) did not think that anything had been missed from the Allocations Policy, 13 respondents (16.05%) thought that an item had been missed and the remainder either did not know or did not want to answer the question.

The comments received regarding an item that had been missed related to:

- legislative duties that the Council must comply with;
- a level of detail which is not routinely included in housing policies but which is included elsewhere. For example, supporting procedures or separate policies; or
- an issue which is already considered in the Allocations Policy.

Consideration was given to the feedback received, however given the above, no changes have been made to Allocations Policy.

- Is there anything that you think should be removed from the Allocations Policy?

43 respondents (53.09%) did not think that anything should be removed from the Allocations Policy, 2 respondents (2.46%) did want an area of the policy removed and the remainder either did not know or did not want to answer the question.

The comments received regarding an area of the policy that should be removed related to:

- legislative duties that the Council must comply with; and
- the criteria used to consider applications from out with Moray.

Following consideration of the comments returned no changes have been made to the Allocations Policy.

- Do you have any other comments on the Allocations Policy?

Thirty additional comments were received and these related to:

- legislative duties that the Council must comply with;
- the complexity of the Allocations Policy; and
- personal circumstances which cannot be considered as part of the review.

Following consideration of the comments returned during the consultation, minor changes have been made to the revised Allocations Policy and are highlighted as track changes in **APPENDIX B**. These include:

- Confirming that if there is more than one person in a household with a health issue or disability which may mean that their current home is not suitable, only one award of points will be given and this will be based on the applicant with the highest need (Section 16.4.5);
- Confirming that tied accommodation points will not be transferred to family members in instances of relationship breakdown (Section 16.10); and
- Adding details about the Housing Needs Review Group (Section 26.7 – 26.10).

4.5 The revised Allocations Policy is provided as **APPENDIX B** for this Committee's approval.

5. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 Subject to this Committee's approval of the revised Allocation Policy, an implementation plan will be developed to support a "go live" date from 1 May 2019. This plan will include aspects of system testing, staff training and developing revised procedures to support the operation of the Allocations Policy.
- 5.2 A review of all information resources will be required to ensure all information is updated to reflect the agreed changes. This will include updating the Council's website and developing guidance for applicants on the revised process.
- 5.3 As part of the implementation process, the revised Allocations Policy and the changes will be publicised on the Council's website, the Apply4Homes website, through social media and an article will also be included in the next edition of the Tenants' Voice.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Corporate Plan: Moray 2023 and the Moray 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) identify the need to address the shortage of high quality affordable housing. The Allocations Policy seeks to make the best use of the Council's housing stock and promote healthier citizens and adults living healthier, sustainable independent lives safeguarded from harm.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 received Royal Assent on 1 April 2014. It amends some aspects of the law on social housing allocations and management. The Council is required to review its Allocations Policy and housing management policies in order to comply with the legislative changes. In addition, the Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the outcomes expected in relation to access to housing.

(c) Financial implications

There are some financial costs associated with changes required to the ICT housing system (iWorld) in order to implement the revised Allocations Policy. These costs are not expected to exceed £3k. There is sufficient provision within the Housing Revenue Budget in 2018/2019 to cover this expenditure.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The Equality Act 2010 supersedes all previous equalities legislation. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, an equality impact assessment for the revised Allocations Policy has been completed and no issues were identified.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Head of Housing and Property, Housing Needs Manager, Housing Services Manager and Officers within the Housing Service, Housing Strategy and Development Manager, Deborah O'Shea (Principal Accountant), Legal Services Manager (Property and Contracts), the Equal Opportunities Officer and Caroline Howie (Committee Services Officer) and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 This report provides the Communities Committee with the results of the Allocations Policy review consultation and presents a revised Allocations Policy for approval for implementation on 1 May 2019.

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Background Papers: Allocations Policy Review 2018, Appendix I and Appendix II (20 November 2018)
The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, Part 2 and Appendix I (26 June 2018)
Allocations Policy Review (17 December 2013)

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