

3 November 2011		URGENT ITEM
Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Housing Allocations Scheme		
Report of: Councillor Andy Smith Portfolio Holder Housing and Regeneration		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Yes	
Accountable Interim Head of Service: Linda Sinclair		
Accountable Director: Graham Farrant - Chief Executive		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: The current allocation policy is due to be updated and consulted on. The Council needs to be clear on what it wants the allocation scheme to achieve. Members of the committee could engage by setting up a Task and Finish Group to explore the outcomes the new scheme should deliver.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The allocations scheme links into the Homelessness Strategy. The authority has a duty to give Homeless applicants 'reasonable preference' in the allocation of their housing under the Homelessness Act 2002. The Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015 was presented to Cabinet on October 2010.

The Council has a legal duty to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities. There have been a number of policy changes in this area and it is a complex area. It is proposed that the Health & Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee members consider the council's response by setting up a Task and Finish Group.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 Health and Well-being Overview & Scrutiny Committee to set up a Task and Finish Group to recommend on the outcomes it wants to achieve from an allocation policy. The membership to be agreed by the committee.**
- 1.2 Health and Well-being Overview & Scrutiny Committee to note that officers will carry out a public consultation on the allocation scheme.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Background

- 2.1 The Localism Bill proposes to reverse measures in the 2002 Homelessness Act, and specifically to reintroduce closed housing waiting lists, which would give local authorities further discretion as to which households are eligible for an allocation of social housing. Changes to the definition of the homelessness duty may have a similar impact as well as the ability for local authorities to give greater priority to people who need to move due to work or who make a contribution to their community.
- 2.2 Members should be aware of the proposed changes to the welfare benefit system. While some changes have already been introduced further changes are still to be implemented once the Localism Bill has received Royal Assent. These changes have the possibility to increase the demand for affordable rented properties which could translate into increase demand on the housing options service and the housing waiting list.
- 2.3 There is already a high demand for social rented housing. The council and registered provider (RP) stock make up just over 18% of the total stock in Thurrock. So it is important that the Council is clear in what it wants to achieve from the new allocation scheme.

Table 1: Tenure Profile as at 31st March 2011 (HSSA):

Local Authority	RP	Private	Total
10,312 (16.1%)	1611 (2.5%)	52,237 (81.4%)	64,223 (100%)

- 2.4 There were 2,597 households on the housing waiting list as at 31st March 2010, a rise of 5% from 2009. There were also a further 2,348 applicants on the transfer list (current tenants waiting to transfer to alternative accommodation).
- 2.5 During 2009/10 897 households were re-housed through the Choice Based Lettings system. Of these 575 (64%) were new tenants of the Council and were a mix of homeless applicants, people previously renting in the private rented sector and the sons and daughters of existing tenants.
- 2.6 The council's review of the Allocation Policy in 2005 introduced the Choice Base Letting Scheme (CBL). Thurrock's CBL scheme called, Thurrock Choice Homes, (TCH), came into operation during 2006 in line with central government requirement at the time for all local authorities to be using CBL by 2010.
- 2.7 We would expect the new Allocations Scheme to reflect the current housing needs of the Borough whilst meeting the Council's statutory responsibilities. There have been a number of statutory guidance and policy changes since the last allocation policy which the new scheme must reflect.

2.8 The Allocation Scheme will be subject to a twelve week consultation with identified stakeholders and Registered Providers (RPs).

2.9 Members could engage with the Portfolio Holder and officers to develop outcomes for the new Allocation Scheme.

3. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

3.1 The allocations scheme will be written in conjunction with other Council policies including the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy. An equality impact assessment (EIA) will be carried out to determine the impact on the protected groups in line with current changes of the Equality Act that came in to place on 1st October 2010.

4. **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
 Telephone and email: **01375 652772**
mxjone@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no direct financial implications associated with the report. However, all council should maximise the use of its own stock and ensure it has full benefit, through the nominations into RSL stock.

4.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Jamie Hollis**
 Telephone and email: **01375 652925**
jhollis@thurrock.gov.uk

The Housing Act 1996 requires every local housing authority to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and the procedures to be followed when allocating accommodation. This allocation scheme should be current and reflect relevant guidance and good practice.

4.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
 Telephone and email: **01375 652472**
sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

The allocations scheme will be subjected to an equality impact assessment (EIA) to determine the impact on the protected groups in line with current changes of the Equality Act that came in to place on 1st October 2010. This process will run concurrently with the formal consultation process. In consulting on the allocations scheme, the Council should ensure the consultation is as accessible as possible for residents, particularly those who

may be considered vulnerable in terms of requiring social housing, such as disabled residents; residents experiencing domestic abuse; families with children; and older people.

4.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None applicable

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 There are a number of changes and allocation policy is a complex area. With high demand and scarce resources the Council needs to be clear what it wants to achieve from a new allocation scheme.

Report Author Contact Details:

Name: Janice White

Telephone: 01375 652178

E-mail: jawhite@thurrock.gov.uk