

BASSETLAW DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 FEBRUARY 2013

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

**UPDATE OF ACTION PLAN ARISING FROM SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CHOICE BASED
LETTINGS AND LOCAL LETTINGS POLICIES**

Portfolio: Policy and Community
Engagement
Contact: Gillian Blenkinsop
Ext: 3142

1. Public Interest Test

- 1.1 The author of this report has determined that the contents are not of a confidential nature.

2. Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a progress report on actions arising from the Scrutiny Review of Choice Based Lettings and Local Lettings Policies.

3. Background and Discussion

- 3.1 Bassetlaw District Council's Select Panel 1 was tasked to review their Choice Based Lettings and Local Lettings Policies by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of its Annual Programme of Work for 2011/12.
- 3.2 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a range of provisions aimed at reforming social housing including the way that councils can allocate their homes. The Government has introduced new statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England, giving local authorities greater flexibility in the way that housing allocations are managed which the Panel considered.
- 3.3 In June 2011 the Council and A1 Housing commenced a review of the current Choice Based Lettings Policy to align this to the requirements of both the Localism Act and emerging national allocations guidance. The review group consisted of members, A1 and Council Officers and representation from Council tenants. The outcomes of the review group was subsequently scrutinised by Select Panel 1.

- 3.4 The recommendations of the review included those that the Panel would wish to see in the Bassetlaw District Council CBL Policy and also other related housing issues. These were reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24th January 2012.
- 3.5 However, it should be noted that the revised Bassetlaw District Council CBL Policy and Local Lettings Policies was subject to an A1 Housing consultation process before a final decision was made by Cabinet on the changes to the policies.
- 3.6 The majority of the recommendations made by the Panel have been included in the revised Choice Based Lettings Policy. The key recommendations of the Panel that were included in the Policy are:
- To be accepted onto the Housing Register a person has to have a local connection to Bassetlaw for 24 months which is an increase on the current requirement of 12 months.
 - If someone owns or has a financial interest in a property they are only eligible to be allocated to a property in Band E (the lowest priority). Previously this only applied to applicants under the age of 60. Also the applicant must produce proof of sale to complete the allocation which was not a requirement previously.
 - In the case of separating family households, the applicant must provide proof of overnight access to the children for at least 3 nights per week.
 - East Midlands Landlord Accreditation scheme has been added to the list of organisations for debts and arrears owed in respect of a previous housing tenancy which are normally cleared before offering a tenancy.
 - Changes to the age ranges for offering properties to applicants on re-advertisement - previously the age ranges were 50+ and then 40-49, but are now over 60 and over 40 years of age.
 - Applicants are allocated to a Priority Band A-E with Priority A the highest and Band E the lowest, according to their housing need. Previously each band was allocated a proportion of the available properties to let. This target system has been replaced with allocating by priority band order i.e. all applicants in Band A would be considered first, then B and so on. Housing allocations are therefore based on housing need.
- 3.7 One of the key recommendations of the panel was that families with one child should only be eligible to be allocated to a 2 bedroom house and not a 2 or 3 bedroom house, but this has not been included in the revised policy. However, couples are now only eligible to apply for 2 bedroom houses and not 3 bedroom houses.
- 3.8 A significant change to the current policy was for the Council to allow any armed forces personnel to apply for housing on the register with or without a local connection. Previously this had only been permissible with a local connection. The Panel recommended Band D1 or C8.
- 3.9 The changes to the policy were reported to Cabinet on 4th December, 2012 and the attached table indicates the recommendations that were set out by Select Panel 1. Some of the recommendations were approved with an amendment that arose from the consultation process and this is noted. In addition Cabinet approved a recommendation to review the revised Choice Based Lettings Policy in 2013/14 to assess the outcomes of the policy.

3.10 Select Panel 1 also made recommendations to support the availability of good quality affordable housing in Bassetlaw including:

- carrying out a Housing Stock Condition Survey when resources are available
- encouraging the release of high demand properties
- producing a progress report on the Sub-Regional Allocation Scheme
- setting stretching performance targets
- supporting and informing tenants of the impact of the Welfare Reforms
- the Council encourage new build affordable housing

The Council has investigated or taken action on all these recommendations as reported in the attached tables.

4. Implications

a) For Service Users

None from this report.

b) Strategic and Policy

None from this report.

c) Financial – 13/380

None from this report.

d) Legal – 44/02/13

In carrying out scrutiny reviews the Council is exercising its scrutiny powers as laid out in s.21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation which added/amended these powers e.g. the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

e) Human Resources

None from this report.

f) Community Safety, Equal Opportunity, Environmental

None from this report.

g) Whether this is a key decision, and if so the reference number

No.

5. Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 None.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 That the report be considered to ensure the agreed actions have been implemented.
- 6.2 That a monitoring report on the Select Panel recommendations be carried out in 12 months' time.

Background Papers

Review of Choice Based Lettings and
Local Lettings Policies - archive papers
Cabinet Report December 4th 2012 –
Choice Based Lettings

Location

Policy & Scrutiny Unit Office