

# Community Housing and Environment Committee

18 July 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

## Housing Allocations Scheme Review and Update

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Community, Housing and Environment Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Tony Stewart, Homechoice and Strategy Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Non-exempt
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards

### This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee accept the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme

### This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

### Timetable

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Community, Housing and Environment Committee	18 July 2017

# Housing Allocations Scheme Review and Update

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is detailing proposed changes to the Council's Allocations Scheme.
  - 1.2 Amendments to the scheme are being proposed ahead of the Homelessness Reduction Act that is planned to be introduced next year.
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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Nominations made by the Council to housing association vacancies are governed by Part 6 Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The Act requires that nominations may only come from the Council's Housing Register and the Act provides the framework that sets who can join the Housing Register and how priority is determined between applicants. The Council's interpretation of the framework legislation must be set out in a document adopted by the Council and called an Allocation Scheme.
- 2.2 The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme is designed to ensure that access to subsidised housing supports the needs of residents, the corporate aims of the Council and reflects current legislation.
- 2.3 The current Allocation Scheme was introduced in 2013. The policy is designed to make best use of the limited stock available and awards additional priority to applicants in work or who assist the local community in other ways, such as serving in the Armed Forces or undertaking voluntary work.
- 2.4 Minor amendments to the Allocation Scheme can be made with the agreement of the Director of Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee. Several minor amendments have been made since the policy was introduced in 2013. However, due to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the enhanced homelessness prevention service within the Housing and Inclusion Team, more significant changes to the scheme are now required, which requires the Committee's approval.
- 2.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 amends the current legislation to increase the period of time in which a person is deemed to be threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days. Not only does this provide a longer period in which to work with someone threatened with homelessness but also better reflects the most commonly used ground for ending tenancies known as Section 21 Notices that require a two month notice-period.
- 2.6 The current Allocation Scheme reflects the statutory homelessness position that relies on using the 28 day notice period. It is anticipated that the Homelessness Act will be enacted after April 2018; however, the Council

has put resources in place to enable the prevention service to commence now. This will provide a period in which to better understand the implications brought about by this major change in homelessness legislation and to develop our services to have most impact. In order to assist with this process it is proposed to bring the Allocation Scheme into line with the statutory amendments that we know will take place early in 2018.

- 2.7 There are also some further changes being proposed to other parts of the Scheme to clarify and amend some points. These are intended to provide clarity for applicants and officers in applying the Scheme based on feedback received from stakeholders and service users.
  - 2.8 A table detailing the changes and the reasons for them is attached at **Appendix A**.
  - 2.9 A copy of the amended Housing Allocation Scheme version 1.8 is attached at **Appendix B**.
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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Accept the proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme. This will ensure that the published scheme remains relevant ahead of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and makes best use of the limited stock of social housing that is available in the borough.
  - 3.2 Do not accept the proposed changes to the scheme. This is not recommended as the allocations scheme will then not be up to date with the amendments required to ensure that it remains relevant and fair.
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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended to accept the proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme as detailed in **Appendix A**.
  - 4.2 It is important that the scheme continues to remain relevant and up to date with housing policy and the proposed changes will ensure this.
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### **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 The current Housing Allocation scheme was introduced in 2013. The scheme was devised after an extensive consultation process with both internal and external stakeholders. Minor amendments do not require the Council to consult with housing providers and as the more significant change is to comply with statutory change brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 it is not proposed to consult on this point either.
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## 6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Once the recommendations have been agreed, all relevant stakeholders will be issued with the updated scheme, including all our housing providers. The updated Housing Allocation scheme will also be published on the Councils website.

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## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The Housing Allocations scheme assists in the delivery of the council's corporate priorities.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Risk Management</b>	The scheme depends upon the effectiveness of partnership working between the Council and its housing providers.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Financial</b>	Any proposed amendments to the allocation scheme will be met within existing agreed budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	Appropriate staffing resources are required to be in place for the delivery of the scheme.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Legal</b>	The amendments to the scheme ensure that it is consistent with current Government Guidance and prospective legislative changes which will potentially reduce the likelihood of successful legal challenge.	Donna Price, Interim Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	The Housing Allocation Scheme potentially affects all population	Anna Collier, Policy & Information

	sections and groups.	Manager
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	N/A	
<b>Community Safety</b>	N/A	
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	N/A	
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A	
<b>Asset Management</b>	N/A	

## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Housing Allocation Scheme – Table of Amendments
- Appendix B: Housing Allocation Scheme Version 1.8

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017  
Housing Act 1996