

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY, LEISURE SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 15 JULY 2014**

**REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Report prepared by Neil Coles**

**1. REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE ALLOCATION SCHEME  
2013/14**

**1.1 Issue for Consideration**

- 1.1.1 To note the impact of the implementation of the new Allocation Scheme for nominations to subsidised housing during the first year of operation during 2013/14.

**1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Housing and Community Services**

- 1.2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.

**1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

**Background**

- 1.3.1 In March 2013, the council implemented a new Allocation Scheme which changed the approach for managing the housing register and nominating applicants for subsidised housing.

**1.3.2 The key changes were:**

- § Replacing the points prioritisation to a banding scheme where applicants are prioritised in date order in each band
- § Creating four housing register bands:
  - § Band A – Community Contribution
  - § Band B – Assistance (Medical and Welfare)
  - § Band C – Reasonable Preference
  - § Band D – Homeless

- § Setting a quota system for advertising properties to each band
- § Providing a greater opportunity for successful bids for those housing register applicants providing a community contribution, e.g. those in employment
- § Removing the link between homelessness and priority
- § Aligning bedroom need with the requirements of the welfare reforms
- § Requiring all applicants to meet local connection and housing need criteria to be able to join (and remain on) the register.

### Housing Need

1.3.3 Following commencement of the new scheme, on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 there were 1,120 applicants on the housing register. This compares with 1,288 applicants on the register a year later on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. Under the previous Allocation Scheme there were in excess of 3,700 applicants.

1.3.4 Table 1 provides details of comparative housing need data.

Table 1: Housing Need comparison										
Bedroom Need	Housing Register band									
	Band A Community Contribution		Band B Assistance		Band C Reasonable Preference		Band D Homeless		Total	
	01/04/13	31/03/14	01/04/13	31/03/14	01/04/13	31/03/14	01/04/13	31/03/14	01/04/13	31/03/14
1 Bedroom	40	105	24	72	437	517	31	42	532 (48%)	736 (57%)
2 Bedroom	43	127	14	28	226	172	33	20	316 (28%)	347 (27%)
3 Bedroom	28	26	7	14	150	36	10	2	195 (17%)	78 (6%)
4 Bedroom	12	23	1	6	51	56	2	0	66 (6%)	85 (7%)
5+ Bedroom	1	5	0	0	9	35	1	2	11 (1%)	42 (3%)
Total	124 (11%)	286 (22%)	46 (4%)	120 (9%)	873 (78%)	816 (63%)	77 (7%)	66 (5%)	1,120	1,288

1.3.5 The percentage of applicants requiring smaller homes has increased with 84% of applicants requiring one and two bedroom accommodation compared with 76% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 (Table 1).

- 1.3.6 There has also been a significant increase in the number of applicants with a need for 5 or more bedrooms when comparing the position at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.
- 1.3.7 The Allocation Scheme appears to have been successful in promoting community contribution. The number of households who now fulfill a community contribution (and as a result are banded in Band A) has increased from 124 to 286. At 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 the proportion of applicants in Band A had doubled to 22% compared with 11% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 (Table 1).
- 1.3.8 The number of applicants qualifying for Band B (Assistance) has more than doubled, with 9% of applicants in Band B as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 (Table 1).
- 1.3.9 The number of applicants within Band D, i.e. those who are homeless and who do not qualify for Bands A or B has reduced from 7% as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 5% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 (Table 1). This suggests that the Allocation Scheme is starting to break the link between homelessness and the housing register, however a single year's data cannot be considered to be statistically robust, and several further years data will be required before the true impact of the Allocation Scheme can be measured.
- 1.3.10 The number of applicants on the housing register has increased by 15% during the 12 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 (Table 1).

#### The Housing Register quota

- 1.3.11 Void properties are advertised through the Kent Homechoice choice based letting web portal, and housing register applicants may bid on up to three properties in every fortnightly bidding cycle. Under the new Allocation Scheme a quota was introduced to limit the number of properties advertised to each band.
- 1.3.12 Table 2 details the operation of the advertising quota.

Table 2: Operation of the banding quota (01 April 2013 – 31 March 2014)			
Housing Register band	Target	Lettings	Actual
Band A – Community Contribution	25%	163	28.1%
Band B - Assistance	5%	61	10.5%
Band C – Reasonable preference	65%	284	49.0%
Band D - Homeless	5%	72	12.4%
Direct lettings	-	38	-

- 1.3.13 During 2013/14 a total of 618 households were provided with homes through the housing register. The quota has operated successfully to restrict the number of adverts placed for applicants in each band to place bids. In addition some properties were let direct (i.e. outside of Kent Homechoice) in agreement with the housing provider, for example where properties were considered to be hard to let.
- 1.3.14 As some adverts are required to be advertised to all bands, for example sheltered housing and rural exception sites, it is not always possible to ensure that the quota meets the target set.
- 1.3.15 Wherever possible any properties that have aids and adaptations, or provide level access and living, are advertised initially to Band B to ensure that applicants who have the need for the aids and adaptations have the ability to place a bid.
- 1.3.16 This helps to ensure that aids and adaptations are utilised and reduces the impact on the public purse resulting from the need to make bespoke adaptations to properties that are less suitable for these applicants. However this also has the effect of skewing the quota, if as was the case during 2013/14 that a high number of adapted properties were advertised as voids.
- 1.3.17 Processes governing adverts have been developed since the scheme became operational and as a result the ongoing monthly performance against the quota targets provides a more responsive approach to balancing the quota.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 Not applicable

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 The Allocation Scheme supports the council's priorities for Maidstone to be a decent place to live, and to have a growing economy.

#### 1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 It was expected that in order to encourage households into employment, training or other community contribution (Band A) limiting the number of property that is advertised to Band D might, in the short term, result in some homeless households waiting longer in temporary accommodation.

1.6.2 It is too early to say whether this has been the case and a review of the data will be carried out after the end of September 2014, this being the end of the second quarter when statistics are collected. However, it has been noted that those applicants appearing in Band A has increased significantly and there has been reduction in the number of applicants in Band D.

## 1.7 Other Implications

### 1.7.1 None

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management


## 1.8 Relevant Documents - none

### 1.8.1 Appendices

#### 1.8.2 Appendix 1 – The Allocation Scheme

### 1.8.3 Background Documents - none

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

**THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED**

Yes

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No

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If yes, this is a Key Decision because: .....

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Wards/Parishes affected: .....

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