

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

25 July 2023

Housing Allocation Policy Task Group

Background

1. In January 2023, the council commenced a review of its allocation policy. The policy confirms the way in which social housing across Wiltshire are let, to ensure that people have homes that meet their needs, giving priority to those in greatest need and making best use of limited social housing stock. Following a formal three-month consultation in the autumn the council will implement the new policy during 2024, following full council approval.
2. The select committee agreed to set up a Housing Allocations Policy task group following the report presented to the committee at its meeting on 14 March 2023.

Membership

Cllr Ian McLennan
Cllr Iain Wallis
Cllr Bob Jones
Cllr Jerry Kunkler
Cllr Jonathon Seed (Chairman)
Cllr Mike Sankey

Terms of reference

- a) To review how well the current Housing Allocations policy is working.
- b) To support the development of a Housing Allocations policy which aims to house those in greatest need, create realistic expectations about being housed for those on the register and makes the best use of the councils limited housing stock.
- c) To consider the following areas and to make recommendations on whether:
 - To retain local connection as a priority for re housing and the impact of this policy.
 - To retain, increase or develop the four bands.
 - To increase the financial affordability threshold.
 - To introduce a time limit for those awarded the highest band.
 - Sharing facilities is a housing need.

- Individuals who are homeless have choice or should the council be placing bids for them when in temporary accommodation to facilitate a rapid move.
- d) To make recommendations to the Environment Select Committee by 7 November 2023.
3. Note that the task group has re-ordered the terms of reference following discussion on 19 June. The original clause (b) being moved to (a), and the timing of the final report moved to November (d), see above.

Recent activity

Scoping meeting (19 June 2023)

4. Nicole Smith (Head of Housing) gave a presentation to the task group. This covered a number of areas including:
- The purpose of the policy
 - What areas the policy does not cover
 - Why the policy is being reviewed, and
 - The objectives of the review
5. Overall numbers on the housing register are reducing but there are an increasing number of households with complex housing needs as well as increasing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping. All of this is stimulating demand for housing.
6. Some issues which potentially need to be addressed have been identified. These include applicants working the system to increase their chances of being housed. The way the policy can sometimes create unachievable expectations. And how local connection is given more weight than housing need or how long someone has been on the register.
7. The task group were given data regarding the housing register which will help with the task groups deliberations.

Meeting with housing providers (12 July 2023)

8. The task group had a meeting with a number of social housing providers in order to understand how the current Housing Allocations Policy is working in practice.
9. A number of issues were highlighted about the policy and its implementation. These included:
- inconsistencies with applying the policy.
 - delays between starting an application and beginning to bid.
 - the auto bid system creating its own challenges and delays.
 - bidders being given a local connection when they are not eligible.

10. Other issues discussed included, under occupancy, changes to tenancy periods, the local housing allowance (LHA) and affordability.

Climate Emergency Task Group

Background

11. The Climate Emergency Task Group (CETG) is a standing task group reporting to the Environment Select Committee. The task group's initial terms of reference were endorsed by the Select Committee on 3 September 2019 and were revised on 9 November 2021.
12. The task group has produced two reports with recommendations:
 - Energy and Transport & Air quality (29 September 2020)
 - Planning (13 January 2021)
13. At its meeting on 6 June 2023 the Select Committee approved the continuation of the task group 2023/24.
14. The task group's last update to the Select Committee was on [6 June 2023](#).

Membership

15. The membership of the task group is as follows:

Cllr Clare Cape
Cllr Sarah Gibson
Cllr Tony Jackson
Cllr Jacqui Lay
Cllr Brian Mathew
Cllr Nick Murry
Cllr David Vigar
Cllr Ian Wallis
Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman)

Terms of Reference:

16. The task group's revised terms of reference were endorsed by the Environment Select Committee on the 9 November 2021. These are:
 - a) To help shape and influence the development of Wiltshire Council's programme (in all relevant areas) for meeting its objective of making Wiltshire Council carbon neutral and seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030 (excluding the geographical area administered by Swindon Borough Council).
 - b) To scrutinise the delivery of this objective through the Climate Strategy (2022-2027) and its delivery plans, as well as key plans, policies, and programmes, such as the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Including the way in which the Council is

measuring progress and how it is performing and reporting against baselines.

- c) To provide recommendations on other aspects of decarbonising the county including partnership working and community-led approaches as well as acting as a national role model.

Recent Activity

Draft Local Plan – climate emergency implications (29 June 2023)

17. The task group received a briefing from Cllr Botterill (Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management, and Strategic Planning); Georgina Clampitt-dix (Head of Spatial Planning) and Geoff Winslow (Spatial Planning Manager) concerning the draft Local Plan and the policies that will address the climate emergency.
18. The recommendations of the task group have been looked at in a number of key areas of the Local Plan e.g.
- net zero development
 - sustainable (low carbon) construction
 - energy and heating
 - retrofitting
 - transport
 - standalone renewable energy development and grid decarbonisation
 - re-forestation and tree planting
19. The Plan has addressing climate change as one of its core policies (Policy 4). This policy has five key areas:
- minimising carbon emissions
 - maximising carbon storage and sequestration
 - mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change
 - responding to the economic and policy change
 - sustainable energy statements
20. The task group was briefed on a number of policies within the draft Plan i.e.
- Policy 71 Sustainable Transport.
 - Policy 72 Transport and new development.
 - Policy 75 Movement of goods.
 - Policy 87 Sustainable construction and low carbon energy.
 - Policy 88 Renewable energy.
 - Policy 89 Embodied carbon
 - Policy 91 Bio-diversity net gain
 - Policy 92 woodland, hedgerow, and trees
 - Policy 95 Green and Blue Infrastructure
 - Policy 97 Flood risk
 - Policy 98 Water resources
 - Policy 100 Ensuring high quality design and place shaping.

21. The task group raised questions about delivering carbon sequestration, promoting public transport, how to monitor bio-diversity net gain.
22. The task group welcomed the inclusion of a range of policies within the draft Local Plan which align with the Climate Strategy.

Forward work plan

1. The Climate Emergency Task Group forward plan is attached at Appendix 1.

Proposals

That the select committee:

1. **Notes the update on the Task Group activity provided above.**
2. **Notes the changes to the Housing Allocations Policy Task Group terms of reference and the timing of its final report.**
3. **Notes the Climate Emergency Task Group's draft forward work plan, see Appendix 1.**

Cllr Jonathon Seed, Chairman Housing Allocations Policy Task Group
Cllr Graham Wright, Chairman Climate Emergency Task Group

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APPENDIX 1

Climate Emergency Task Group – Forward Work Plan

Oct 2023	Update on council's response to climate emergency To receive the update report going to Cabinet (Oct 2023)
tbc	Climate Change Adaptation Plan To review the council's draft plan.
tbc	Zero-carbon housing To understand how local authorities have addressed this in local planning.
tbc	Local Plan To understand the key elements of the plan addressing the climate emergency agenda and the overall relationship to Neighbourhood Plans.
tbc	Local Transport Plan To understand the future strategy in particular active travel, electric vehicles charging.
tbc	Update British Army Sustainability To update task group following briefing on 6 May 2022.
tbc	Natural England Funded Pilot Meeting to consider the pilot projects looking at rolling out local nature recovery planning, bio-diversity net gain and the environmental toolkit.
tbc	Biogas To explore the potential for biogas as a replacement for natural gas and use in vehicles.