

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

11 January 2024

**Executive Response to the Final Report of the
Housing Allocations Policy Task Group**

Purpose of the report

1. To present the response of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer to the Final Report of the Housing Allocations Policy Task Group.

Background

2. On 7 November 2023 the Environment Select Committee endorsed the Final Report of the Task Group.
3. The Committee resolved to refer the following Task Group's recommendations to the relevant Cabinet member for response at the Committee's next meeting on 11 January 2024.

Executive response to the Task Group's recommendations

That the Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer;

Recommendation 1	Retains the principle of local connection but limits a parish connection to one parish per applicant.		
Executive response	28 th December 2023	Accept	As part of the allocation policy review we will be required to carry out a full three month consultation and Local connection will be a significant part of that process. The recommendation from both the consultation and the E&S committee will need to be considered in the final report to cabinet and full council to enable them to make a final decision on how local connection should be considered in the new policy
Action		Success criteria	
As part of the allocation policy review we will note that the E&S committee have requested for the local parish connection to be limited to one area per applicant. We will ensure that the E&S committee recommendations are		If the new allocation policy is adopted with the limitation of one parish	

included within the cabinet and full council paper when considering adoption of the new allocation policy.	connection per applicant
Target date	Implementation date
New policy anticipated to be adopted in Nov 24	After Nov 24 and will be based on the agreed timescale for the IT changes to be implemented

Recommendation 2	Includes a definition of hours worked within the criteria for employment eligibility under local connection.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 23	Accept	We will ensure that as part of the consultation a definition of hours worked will be included in the criteria of employment for determining local connection as currently its just length of time (one year minimum fixed term)
Action		Success criteria	
In advance of the formal consultation in May 24 we will define minimum hours worked as part of the recommendation for employment eligibility under local connection		Minimum hours worked will be included in the employment eligibility criteria for local connection	
Target date		Implementation date	
New policy anticipated to be adopted in Nov 24		After Nov 24 if recommendation agreed as a minor change this can be implemented quicker as requires limited IT change	

Recommendation 3	Retains the current exclusions to local connection.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 23	Accept	Having the exclusion group maintained is hugely supported as it has certainly helped to reduce the use of B&B and keep a healthy move on from temporary accommodation. The recommendation from both the consultation and the E&S committee will need to be considered in the final report to cabinet and full council to enable them to make a final decision on the local connection exclusion group
Action		Success criteria	

As part of the allocation policy review we will note that the E&S committee have requested for the Local Connection exclusion group to remain the same. We will ensure that the E&S committee recommendations are included within the cabinet and full council paper when considering adoption of the new allocation policy.	Cabinet and Full Council accept this recommendation and the exclusion group in the new allocation policy remains the same
Target date	Implementation date
This is already contained within the current policy. New policy anticipated to be adopted in Nov 24	Already in place

Recommendation 4	Removes the shared facility criteria within banding.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 23	Accept	Due to the extremely high demands for social housing and limited supply it is essential to ensure we prioritise those with the highest need. It is agreed that those sharing facilities are such a low priority that this criteria should be removed from the policy. This will be included as part of the formal consultation for consideration to be removed
Action			Success criteria
As part of the allocation policy consultation we will include the removal of shared facilities as a banding criteria. We will ensure that the E&S committee recommendations are included within the cabinet and full council paper when considering adoption of the new allocation policy.			Cabinet and Full Council accept this recommendation and the criteria in Band 4 for sharing is removed
Target date			Implementation date
New policy anticipated to be adopted in Nov 24			This is a minor change which could be implemented in Nov 24 if approved

Recommendation 5	Undertakes a review of the upper and lower affordability thresholds in order to develop new thresholds reflecting changes in housing costs.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 23	Accept	Due to the recent cost of living increases it is agreed that we should review the affordability thresholds. We will ensure that as part of the consultation a definition of upper and lower affordability thresholds will be considered
Action			Success criteria

In advance of the formal consultation in May 24 we will define minimum hours worked as part of the recommendation for employment eligibility under local connection	A revised upper and lower affordability threshold will be sent in the new policy
Target date	Implementation date
Affordability thresholds to be prepared ready for the 3 month consultation to take place in May 24. New policy anticipated to be adopted in Nov 24	After Nov 24

Recommendation 6	Applies no time limits for bidding.		
Executive response	28 th December 2023	Accept	Currently the system doesn't impose time limits for applicants to place bids. It is agreed that we should not look to implement time limits and it is noted that very few other LAs have. It is known that it can be an administration burden and increase in appeals, so would be counterproductive.
Action			Success criteria
No further action required			N/A
Target date			Implementation date
N/A			N/A

Recommendation 7	Extends the option to use auto bids to people who are in temporary accommodation.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 2023	Accept	Auto bids are currently used for applicants who are not able to use computers and who have no suitable support to help them with bidding, at our discretion, automated bids will be placed for any applicant in Band 1 or in Band 2 in the relief duty category to help the customer to move in a timely way to suitable accommodation. Applicants in these needs categories are in acute housing need so, whilst this limits applicants' choice, it is reasonable to limit choice to achieve a move to suitable accommodation
Action	Already implemented for all clients in TA under Band 2 relief duty which was introduced in Jan 23		Success criteria
			Already in place
Target date			Implementation date

N/A	This was a minor change implemented in Jan 23
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Recommendation 8	Supports multi tenancies for unrelated adults, where this is appropriate.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 2023	Accept	Wiltshire Council are in total support of offering multi tenancies to unrelated adults with LD, however we know this is not the same with all other housing providers who have different policies around multi tenancies.
Action			Success criteria
We will continue to explore all options and encourage all social housing providers to update their policies and practises in the letting and management of their homes to accept multi tenancies for unrelated adults who wish to live together for mutual support, but we do not have any powers to insist this is implemented			This is already fully supported by Wiltshire Council
Target date		Implementation date	
Implemented and on going		Already implemented and we will continue to work with and explore options with all housing providers to encourage them to accept multi tenancies as an option	

Recommendation 9	Uses the revision of the policy to explore aligning with the relevant policies of the social housing providers to ensure consistency.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 2023	Accept	As part of every allocation policy review we will always consider what has been included in other housing provider lettings policies. However as their are over 23 different policies it is impossible to have a perfectly aligned Wiltshire Council allocation policy as all housing providers are individual organisations who cover many other LA areas so policies will not be 100% aligned
Action			Success criteria
To ensure we review all housing provider lettings policies and where possible align the councils new allocation policy as much as possible to create a consistent approach across Wiltshire			To have the allocation policy aligned to other housing providers

	as much as possible
Target date	Implementation date
New policy anticipated to be adopted in Nov 24	After Nov 24 as implementation date will depend on the changes needed

Recommendation 10	Review the processes that supports people to join the housing register and bid for suitable properties in order to ensure consistency and limit administrative delays.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 23	Accept	As part of the Allocation review we will review the application process and administration functions to try and make the process as simple as possible and limit the amount of admin required
Action			Success criteria
Review the adminsitartion process for both the application and bidding process			A reduced administration process
Target date		Implementation date	
New policy and any revised administrative process to be adopted in Nov 24		After Nov 24 as implementation date will depend on the changes needed	

Recommendation 11	Reviews the Housing Allocation Policy 6 months after its adoption to assess the impact of any policy changes.		
Executive response	28 th Dec 23	Accept	It would be essential to review the policy changes within the first 6 months to understand the impact of any changes
Action			Success criteria
To review the policy within 6 months of its adoption			Allocation Policy review completed within the first 6 months of adoption
Target date		Implementation date	
Within 6 months of adoption – anticipated to be around May /June 25		May / June 25	

Recommendation 12	Provides an annual update report to the Environment Select Committee on the application of the new housing allocations policy and its effect on the housing register.
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Executive response	28 th Dec 23	Accept	We would be more than happy to provide an annual report to the Environment Select Committee
Action			Success criteria
To ensure an Environment Select Committee report is written within 12 months of the new policy being adopted to provide an update on its effect			ESC report received 12 months after adoption of new policy
Target date		Implementation date	
Within 12 months of adaption of the new policy		N/A	

4. Outside of the scope of the Housing Allocations Policy, the task group recommended that the Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer:

Recommendation 13	Works with social housing providers to identify the number of social houses available in Wiltshire and to link increasing the supply of social housing with demand and need.		
Executive response	3 rd Jan 24	Partially	See action statement below
Action			Success criteria
The Local Housing Needs Assessment (undertaken as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review includes information in regards to the supply of social housing across Wiltshire. It doesn't provide exact numbers, but looks at the supply of housing and compares it with need in order to inform policy. The results of this assessment are taken forward into planning policy at a strategic level in setting the Affordable Housing requirement and advising of the required tenure split. On a site by site basis, the role of the Housing Enabling Team is to consider evidence of local need and negotiate an Affordable Housing Mix which meets demonstrable need, taking into account tenure, unit size and need for adaptable properties. If the number of social housing units in Wiltshire is required our current option is to view the Census data which includes a 'tenure' category so a number of social housing could be established			Information provided by Census data when available
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Proposal

5. To note the executive response to the Final Report of the **Housing Allocations Policy Task Group**.

Cllr Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer

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