

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

14 March 2014

Scrutiny of New Housing Allocation Policy

Purpose

- 1 To report on the response of the Executive to the recommendations made by the Committee's rapid scrutiny exercise on the development of the new Housing Allocation Policy.

Background

- 2 The rapid scrutiny exercise was undertaken at the end of October last year by Councillors Killane, While, Lay and Osborn. Its report was endorsed by the Management Committee on 5 November. Cabinet approved the new policy for implementation in April this year.
- 3 Cllr Richard Clewer, Portfolio-holder for Housing and Nicole Smith, Head of Strategic Housing were asked to provide an update to the recommendations made by Scrutiny.

Response

- 4 An initial discussion took place and the following has been provided:

Recommendations from Scrutiny	Actions
To support the benefit of seeking a common allocations policy among all social housing providers in Wiltshire	We continue at every meeting with our providers to seek some commonality with our policies. It has achieved some positive results with the development of a Wiltshire wide pre tenancy check and generic letters.
To change the description of the banding structure to a letter or number classification in order to signify that current arrangements have been extensively revised	The banding descriptions were changed in advance of the Cabinet paper from metals to Band 1 – 4.
To provide a graphical presentation of the changes in the form of a flowchart	This will be developed in preparation for the launch as it is recognised that this will help the public to better understand how allocations will work.
To allow local connection to also mean officially recognised neighbourhoods as defined within an adopted neighbourhood plan encompassing more than one parish.	This has been amended in our policy to include the designated neighbourhood area as defined in an adopted neighbourhood plan.

To rename the new “expression of interest” category to better reflect that it no longer forms part of the revised Policy	Following a discussion with the IT provider a common phrase used for this group is ‘Open Market Register’ we have therefore amended the name from ‘Expression of Interest’ to a more commonly used phrase.
To submit a further appendix to Cabinet and Council highlighting where the changes have been made within the banding structure.	This was included as part of the Cabinet paper
To utilise the Council’s hubs and new campus provision to improve access to housing services	This was recognised as being very important and as these are developed we will ensure that consideration is given to housing to help improve access to services. In the meantime we will continue to maximise all opportunities available to us.
To support an extensive housing newsletter for stakeholders and councillors	We are working with all the providers to ensure they include a section within their tenant magazines on the new allocation policy. We will also create a newsletter that can be circulated to members, parish councils, libraries etc

Next Steps

- 6 During the initial discussion on providing the update it was suggested that 6 months after the new policy is implemented a further meeting is held to go through how the process is working and provide some data analysis back to the Committee.
- 7 There is likely to be other areas in Housing as the service continues transforming that may benefit from engagement with OS. Ongoing positive dialogue with the Portfolioholder will generate future issues for consideration by the Committee.

Recommendation

- 7 To thank the Portfolioholder and the Head of Strategic Housing for the update and to support the idea of further report post implementation of the new Housing Allocation Policy.

Paul Kelly

Overview and Scrutiny Manager (and designated Scrutiny Officer)

Corporate Office