

Wiltshire council

Cabinet

20 April 2010

Subject: Homes 4 Wiltshire Service Review

**Cabinet member: Councillor John Brady
Economic Development, Planning and Housing**

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The Review of the Homes4Wiltshire service has been carried out in consultation with the Homes4Wiltshire Partnership, stakeholders and service users to address issues arising during the first 12 months of operation.

Recommendations from this review have informed proposed revisions to the Homes4Wiltshire Policy, together with further recommendations for how to progress the operation of the Homes4Wiltshire service in order to provide an efficient service to partners and service users. An action plan is attached, setting out the proposed process for implementation of the recommended changes.

Proposal

That Cabinet:

- a) approves the amended Homes 4 Wiltshire policy and agrees the implementation of the Action Plan
- b) gives delegated authority to the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood and Planning in consultation with the Cabinet member for Economic Development, Planning and Highways to make further amendments to Sections 6.7 and 6.8 of the Homes 4 Wiltshire policy if the Homes 4 Wiltshire Partnership decides that landlords should carry out the shortlisting function

Reason for Proposal

To enable amendments to the Homes4Wiltshire Policy, following an extensive consultation, which will enable Homes4Wiltshire to provide a better and more efficient service to customers and partners alike.

In order to retain credibility with our partners, stakeholder, service users and the general public, it is important that we act upon recommendations resulting from the public consultation that formed a part of the Review.

**Graham Hogg
Service Director, Housing**

Wiltshire council

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of the outcome of the Homes 4 Wiltshire Service Review and to seek endorsement of the resulting revisions to the Homes 4 Wiltshire Policy.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following the successful launch of the Homes 4 Wiltshire county wide allocations service in March 2009, it was felt that an early review of the service would assist in the way we give access to council and housing association homes.
- 2.2 An extensive consultation exercise was carried out earlier this year, in which service users, landlords, voluntary organisations and other stakeholders were asked for their views about how the service was working and any suggested improvements that could be made.
- 2.3 A publicly available consultation document was drawn up from this initial consultation, and responses were invited from Wiltshire residents.
- 2.4 Another driver for this early review was the publication in December 2009 of a new Code of Guidance, "Fair and Flexible", and we were eager to ensure that our service acts in accordance with this latest guidance.

3. Main Considerations for the Cabinet

- 3.1 Homes 4 Wiltshire works in partnership with social landlords across Wiltshire to allocate social housing fairly and transparently. The proposed policy changes and recommendations in the attached Action Plan have been drawn up following a review of the service, following consultation with partner landlords, stakeholders, service users and the general public.
- 3.2 The proposed policy changes take account of the new Code of Guidance for the allocation of social housing by local authorities, "Fair and Flexible".

3.3 Implementation of the changes recommended in the Action Plan will lead to an improved service for partners and customers alike.

4. Environmental Impact of the Proposal

4.1 Not considered applicable

5. Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

5.1 The attached policy aims to deliver quality services without prejudice and discrimination to meet the needs of all the community, regardless of age, cultural or ethnic background, disability, gender, marital status, religious or political persuasion or sexual orientation and will adhere to the equality and diversity policy developed by Wiltshire Council.

5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out during the Review of the Service (Appendix 3 attached), and recommendations from that Assessment have been incorporated into the policy amendments.

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 The potential risk of not approving the amendments to the Homes 4 Wiltshire Policy are that:

- Wiltshire Council would not have an allocations policy that complies with the latest Government Code of Guidance
- Homes 4 Wiltshire would lose credibility with partners, stakeholders, service users and the general public if it carried out a consultation exercise and failed to act on the recommendations resulting from that consultation

7. Financial Implications

7.1 None of the recommendations put forward by the Homes 4 Wiltshire Partnership are expected to increase costs in the revenue budgets of Wiltshire Council.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 All Housing Authorities must comply with the provisions of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and must have and publish an allocation scheme determining the priorities and the procedure to be followed in the allocation of Social Housing.

8.2 Under the act all Housing Authorities must also have regard to Guidance issued by the Secretary of State from time to time.

9. Options Considered

9.1 See Appendix 4 – Outcome of proposals considered as part of the Homes 4 Wiltshire Review.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 It is requested that Cabinet approve the amended Homes 4 Wiltshire policy and agrees the implementation of the Action Plan.
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Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
Part VI of the housing act relating to the allocation of accommodation

Code of Guidance for local housing authorities – Allocation of Accommodation

Code of Guidance for local housing authorities – Allocation of Accommodation:
Choice Based Lettings

Fair and flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities
in England

Homes 4 Wiltshire Policy 2009 (Version 8)

Appendices

1. Homes 4 Wiltshire Service Review Action Plan
2. Amended Homes 4 Wiltshire Policy
3. Equality Impact Assessment
4. Outcome of proposals considered as part of the Homes 4 Wiltshire Review
5. List of agencies involved in consultation

Graham Hogg
Service Director, Housing

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