

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	10 February 2020
Report of the	-	Executive Directors
Subject	-	Housing Allocations Policy

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27 January 2020, considered a report on the Housing Allocations Policy. The recommendation and minute arising is reproduced below.

Recommendation to COUNCIL: That the new Housing Allocations Policy be approved and adopted.

OSC19/49. **HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

Members considered the report of the Executive Director which outlined the results of the consultation on the Housing Allocations Policy.

The purpose of the policy review and consultation was to ensure that the draft Housing Allocations Policy continued to effectively support the Council to promote socially, economically and demographically balanced communities. A revised Allocations Policy also allowed the Council to ensure it was compliant with new legislation and guidance that had been introduced since the inception of the existing policy. Further, through the process of reassessment of existing households (against the proposed policy criteria) the Council would be able to ensure that its Housing Register was smaller and less resource intensive to administer over the longer-term.

The consultation started on 15 July 2019 and closed on 7 October 2019, focussing on the main two changes to the existing policy, which were reducing the assessment criteria from four bands to two bands and changing the order in which households were nominated for and allocated social housing.

145 responses had been received to the consultation, made up of 11 responses from local organisations and 134 responses from housing applicants and other residents. All the proposed changes were agreed by the majority of respondents. As a result, no substantial policy changes were made to the draft policy.

Independent legal advice had also been sought in order to ensure the policy was compliant with the Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and to mitigate the risk of legal challenges being made against future allocation decisions, if the policy was adopted.

In order to implement the new policy criteria outlined in the draft Allocations Policy, it would be necessary to reassess all existing households on the register before the new policy could be adopted for new applicants, which had resource implications. It was estimated that the reassessment process could take up to twelve months and the software used to manage the register would need to be updated to accommodate the new points system. The cost of this was estimated to be £2,700 and would be met from within existing budgets. This process would allow the removal of any applicants who no longer required a place on the register and reassess the needs of those remaining.

The benefits to the new policy also included more sensitive and responsive criteria and it incentivised clients to work with the Council to secure accommodation in the private rented sector as well as pursue social housing options.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- support would be provided to assist with new applications for the Housing Register, in partnership with East Sussex County Council;
- it was clarified that applicants with a council or housing debt over £1,000 would be disqualified from making an application to join the register if the debt was also not being repaid; and
- military personnel with a housing need would be given high priority.

(Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda Item 9).

Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director