

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting – 22 January 2024**OSC23/45. NEW HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

(7)

Members received the report of the Head of Housing and Regeneration which presented the findings of the eight-week public consultation on the draft Housing Allocations Policy 2024 (HAP) and the proposed final version of the Policy. Officers had considered the responses received and made some proposed amendments to the Policy accordingly.

The overall aim of the HAP was to provide a framework for the equitable, effective and accountable allocation of social housing. Social housing was in very limited supply and accounted for only 10% of the total housing stock in Rother; this percentage was below the national average of 17%. Therefore, only those in the highest housing need, with a local connection to the area were likely to obtain social housing. The principal purpose of a HAP was to meet the Council's statutory obligations under Section 166A(1) of the Housing Act 1996.

The consultation ran from 7 July to 4 September 2023 and a total of 111 responses were received. A more detailed report on how the consultation was conducted, as well as the number and type of responses that were received, could be found at Appendix A to the report. The majority of the proposed changes were agreed by most respondents; however, based on a number of comments, there were a few areas of the policy that were amended slightly. These changes were outlined in the report in paragraphs 12 to 14.

In order to implement the new HAP, it would be necessary to reassess all existing households on the register before the new policy could be adopted for new applicants. In the meantime, the present policy would continue to operate as normal. It was proposed that the Council write to all applicants currently on the Housing Register and give them a two-month window to renew their application. A reminder would be sent at four weeks; however, if a household did not respond within the two-month period it would be assumed they no longer wish to be on the register and they would be removed. Within this period, all new applications would be assessed against both the present and proposed policy criteria, prioritised accordingly and allowed to bid as normal.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and the following points were noted during the discussions:

- Members noted that the local connection criteria change meant that those applicants whose only local connection was through relatives would be permitted to join the Housing Register but would only be able to be considered for properties where there was a local letting plan in place for which they met the criteria. Only those applicants with a genuine need would therefore be considered;
- it should be set in stone that a local lettings policy be put in place;
- it was important that older residents were able to stay in their own home; and

- sites should be of mixed-use social housing, i.e. social rent and home ownership, in order to provide a balance. Grants were available to developers to bring forward social housing.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the new Housing Allocations Policy 2024 be recommended to Cabinet and full Council for approval and adoption;
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing and Regeneration to formally adopt the Housing Allocations Policy 2024, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing, following the conclusion of the implementation period; and
- 3) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing and Regeneration to make any further minor amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy 2024, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing.

(When it first became apparent, Councillor Maynard declared an Other Registerable Interest in this matter as an Executive Member of East Sussex County Council and Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health, and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).