

# **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **HOUSING COMMITTEE – 18 MAY 2005**

### **ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

#### **Report by the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1** To report to Committee the outcome of the consultation with tenants and other stakeholders on a range of issues within the Allocations Policy.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** At the meeting of the Housing Committee on 3 November 2004, it was agreed that consultation with tenants and other stakeholders should be undertaken on a range of issues within the Allocations Policy with a view to improving operational efficiency and maximising the use of the housing stock to meet legislative requirements and housing need within East Ayrshire.
- 2.2** The consultation comprised of a detailed presentation to the Tenant Participation Steering Group, from which a working group comprising of 5 members of the Steering Group was formed. The group scrutinised the issues identified in the report of 3 November 2004. This process was facilitated by TIS. The views of the group with respect to each of the issues presented are expressed below. For ease of reference, the core elements of the issues identified in the original report have been presented again in this report.

#### **3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

##### **3.1 Review of Groups**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 imposed a duty on Councils to provide temporary accommodation to everyone presenting as homeless, regardless of whether there is a priority need. As part of the Council's Homelessness Strategy, a housing option is made available to everyone presenting as homeless. The upshot of this is that there are now many more people in temporary accommodation awaiting offers of housing. If a homeless applicant is not in priority need, he or she is placed on the Non-Householder Group to await an offer in the normal manner. The temporary accommodation provision, despite having been increased significantly, cannot sustain this position. The group were of the view that, as the concept of priority need is to be phased out, there is little point in creating a new group to deal with the non-priority homeless and that, since the current system of placing non-priority homeless in the Non-Householder Group does not readily allow applicants to be selected for available accommodation within a short timescale, it is recommended that non-priority Homeless applicants should be

placed in the Homeless Group and selected for available accommodation in accordance with their date of presentation.

### **3.2 Review Quota/Rota**

The rota system within the Orchard Allocations Module selects applicants for houses by visiting the various groups on a regular basis. The quota for these groups has been set at:

- Non- Householders 40%
- Householders 30%
- Medical 15%
- Homeless 12%
- Miscellaneous 3%

Since these quotas were originally set, the number of homeless presentations has increased by 54.25%. As the system will continually adjust to meet the quota, the outcome figures will not change significantly unless there is some intervention. The group were of the view that, particularly if the non-priority Homeless are included in the Homeless Group, it would be necessary to increase the quota for this group. The recommendation of the group was that the quota for the Homeless Group should be increased to 20%. As some of those currently on the Non-Householder Group would move across to the Homeless Group, then the quota for Non-Householders could be decreased slightly; the recommended quota is 38%. The Householder Group is of a lower priority, since these applicants are already housed, but it was recognised that this group needs to have some movement to free up appropriate accommodation and to recognise aspirations; the recommendation for this group is 26%. The Medical Group should remain at 15% and the Miscellaneous Group can be reduced to 1% on the basis of letting trends to this group. It is further recommended that these quotas be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the aims of the Allocations and Homeless Policies are being properly addressed.

### **3.3 Under-occupation Points**

The main purpose of under-occupation points is to seek to ensure the effective re-distribution of housing stock and to assist the Council in its obligation to show reasonable preference to large families. At present, all qualifying applicants in the Householder Group are awarded under-occupation points irrespective of tenure and locality. The group were of the view that if the property being released as a result of awarding under-occupation points does not assist in the effective use of the social rented housing stock there is no justification for the award and accordingly these points should only be awarded to social rented tenants. The group were also of the opinion that these points should be awarded regardless of locality and the value should remain at 15 points per bedroom under occupied.

### **3.4 Waiting Period Points**

Waiting period points do not reflect housing need. They are, however, widely perceived as an equitable way to recognise housing aspiration. The alternative is to award only need points and then revert to date of application where there are numerous applicants with the same points values. The group concluded that aspiration was an important feature in public sector housing and were of the view that the retention of waiting period points was the most equitable method of recognising aspiration. Their recommendation was therefore that waiting period points be retained at present values with the same ceiling of 20 points.

### **3.5 Family Support Points**

There has been previous discussion on a proposal to award points where there was an established family connection within an area to promote the concept of family support, particularly for younger people. The group were of the view that this would not be conducive to attaining balanced communities and that the wide range of support systems currently in place was adequate for the support of younger people.

### **3.6 Extending Areas of Choice**

Applicants are currently restricted to three areas of choice. In theory, the existing IT system permits no limit to the number of areas an individual can choose. However, the current facility of providing list positions for applicants would have to be discontinued if there was a significant increase in the number of areas of choice, as this process would become unmanageable. It should be noted that none of the main RSLs operating in the area and none of the neighbouring authorities provide this facility. The group were of the view that the provision of list positions was a valuable facility and would prefer that this was retained. It was recommended that the areas of choice should be increased to 5 and that the provision of list positions should continue.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 All the recommendations, as outlined, are in accordance with the relevant legislation pertaining to the allocation of houses.

5.2 Any changes to the Allocations Policy would require to be published.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 The Allocations Policy should be responsive to changing demographics and indicators of need and demand, and strive to meet the housing needs of local

people. It will, therefore, be necessary to regularly review the Allocations Policy to ensure that these objectives are being met.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**7.1** It is recommended that members:

- (i) note the views expressed by the Working Group;
- (ii) recommend to Council approval of the recommendations of the Working Group in sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.6 of the report and if so approved to authorise the Head of Housing to make the appropriate arrangements to implement the changes to the Allocations Policy and to amend existing applications in accordance with these changes; and
- (iii) otherwise note the terms of this report.

William Stafford  
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

28 April 2005

CMCA/GD/LA

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1) Housing Allocations Policy and Procedures, Housing Committee 6 November 2002
- 2) Allocations Policy , Housing Committee 3 November 2004

Members wishing further information should contact Gerry Darroch, Operations Manager on 01563 554873.

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