

SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and/or Executive Director - Place
Rob Walker, Director of Place
Councillor Christine Lawton, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health

To: Policy Development Panel Tuesday, 1 May 2018

(Author: Martin Cregg Housing Landlord Services Manager)

Subject Housing Allocation Policy

Purpose: To provide an update on the current review of the Housing Allocations Policy

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That the contents of this report are noted.
- 2) That the review of the Housing Allocations Policy be completed by the end of September 2018

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 At a meeting of the Policy Development Panel on 20 February 2018, a number of concerns were raised by Members in respect to the review of the Housing Allocations Policy.

In summary the points raised were:

- That there are a comparatively lower number of households on the housing register in South Holland in comparison to other Lincolnshire Authorities,
- That that a review of the Policy had not taken place sooner rather than the reported conclusion of April 2019
- That the explanation provided at the Panel meeting was too broad in relation to the delay in delivery and that they wished the relevant officer to provide an update to the next Panel meeting.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the current position and the planned approach to a considered review of the Allocations Policy. Such a review is in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 (sub-section 145-147), amending the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI), by which local housing authorities have the power to make their own decisions on who should or should not qualify to be accepted onto their housing register and be prioritised for the allocation of social housing, subject to ongoing statutory guidance.

1.3 A Review was originally planned to take place in 2016, three years after the introduction of the current Policy. This has been rescheduled because a number of factors that are considered to have a direct impact and need consideration. These can be summarised as follows:

1.3.1. The impact of the Place Review that was initiated in the Summer of 2016 and implemented throughout 2017 with transition works into 2018. This process was management and resource intensive, changing the structure of the department and the way that the housing services are delivered in the District. This included bringing the functions

of allocations and lettings into a dedicated Available Homes team. There has been a need to establish ensure a period of relative stability to establish this team, it's work processes and systems prior to bringing in significant change to the Allocations Policy.

1.3.2. The awareness throughout 2017 of the impending introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 that came into effect in April 2018. The Act has significantly increased the duty upon local authorities and potentially the burden upon housing allocation towards homeless applicants. This will shape the allocation of housing, the problem is determining the extent of the change because the demand led nature of homelessness provision. We believe it will prudent to give the Council a six month period to understand the initial local impact of the legislative change in South Holland.

1.3.3 The impact upon staffing resources and the capacity to manage any changes to the Allocations Policy. There is also the appreciation of the need to introduce an IT based alternative because if, as a consequence of the review and subsequent change in policy, there is a significant increase in the number of eligible applicants joining the Housing Register this will impact upon capacity and resources. Currently the process is interview, paper application and staff input based, this will need to change to an online process in which people self-manage their applications.

1.3.4 A review of the Housing Allocations Policy will need to explore a potential contribution towards in the joint South Holland/Breckland "Open for Business" initiative and the scope to incorporate local lettings plans for future new developments.

1.4 Whilst all of these factors have affected the original timescale for the review of the policy, there is an appreciation of Members concerns and it is proposed to bring forward the date of the completion of the Review to the end of September 2018 predominantly to allow for the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act to be assessed over the six month period since it's introduction and to explore the IT options available prior to implementing any changes that the Review determines.

2.0 **OPTIONS**

2.1 To take on board Members concerns and bring forward the proposed date to complete the Review of the Housing Allocations Policy by the end of September 2018

2.2 Do nothing and retain the previously proposed Review completion date of April 2019

3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 The option of bringing forward the completion date will enable Members concerns to be addressed whilst enabling the impact of the first six months of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to be considered alongside the review of policy

4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 The considered review of policy that takes into account the wider impact of changes and ensures the operational delivery of the changes are fully appreciated and built in

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 **Constitutional & Legal**

5.1.1 Localism Act 2011 (ss 145-147), amending the Housing Act 1996 (Part V1)

5.2 **Staffing**

5.2.1 Consideration upon operational impacts and resources will be considered within the Review

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 All

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 None

Background papers:- None

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Key Decision: N

Exempt Decision: N

This report refers to a Mandatory Service