

Subject:	Operational Review of Allocations Plan		
Date of Meeting:	19 September 2018		
Report of:	Executive Director - Neighbourhoods Communities & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	James Crane	Tel: 293316
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 In December 2016 the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee (PR&G) adopted recommendations to approve a new Housing Allocations Policy for the city. This policy had been referred to PR&G by the Housing & New Homes Committee on the 16th November 2016.

1.2 The new policy contained a new provision of an allocations plan. The purpose of the allocation plan is to give priority when allocating properties to four queues in the allocations policy. Each queue was given a percentage of properties advertised as follows:

- Homeless 40%
- Transfers 30%
- Homeseekers 20%
- Council's Interest (Social Services) 10%

1.3 This report at appendix one looks at the performance of the allocations plan since it was adopted and introduced in January 2017. The report also gives an update on the implementation of the new allocations policy and recommendations for a new allocations plan for approval, as required under the allocations policy.

1.4 The Allocations Policy provides that a new Allocations Plan will be approved by the Housing & New Homes Committee on an annual basis. In addition, any deviation of more than 5% of each allocations queue is reported to committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Housing & New Homes Committee:

2.1 Notes the performance monitoring report at appendix one of the report

- 2.2 Agrees that the percentage of properties advertised under the Allocations Plan remains as follows:
- Homeless 40%
 - Transfers 30%
 - Homeseekers 20%
 - Council's Interest (Social Services) 10%
- 2.3 Agrees to the following minor amendments to the Allocations Policy as set out
- 2.3.1 Band C Sheltered no other housing need – update to restrict this band reason to bids only on sheltered accommodation and not general needs.
- 2.3.2 Point of clarification – award of extra bedroom as contained in appendix two paras 3.3 to 3.7
- 2.3.3 3 bedroom properties with a dining room – increase minimum number of occupants to maximise occupancy level to large properties
- 2.3.4 Decrease total household income in policy to
- One bed £22,000
 - Two bed £32,000
 - Three bed and above £36,000
- 2.3.5 Increase savings cap to four months average rent
- One bed £5,000
 - Two bed £7,000
 - Three bed and above £8,200
- 2.3.6 Increase savings cap for sheltered applicants only to £16,000
- 2.3.7 Waive savings cap on extra care applications. Waiver cases can only be offered accommodation if there are no other non-waiver case waiting for extra care
- 2.3.8 Remove sheltered Panel from the sheltered assessment process
- 2.3.9 Introduce new Band A – sheltered applicant with need to move under the allocations policy within the same scheme
- 2.3.10 Affordability of accommodation due to the welfare benefit cap – Ability to by-pass applicant who is not able to afford accommodation.
- 2.3.11 Removal of over 50s requirement in seven blocks of flats. (not over 55 for sheltered)

- 2.3.12 Change the reporting period of the allocations plan from one year to three years.
- 2.3.13 Amend Band D Applicants, required to be on the Housing Register of the purpose of obtaining shared ownership. These applicants may only be assessed for the above purpose and will not receive an allocation of social housing or be nominated to a Housing Association, to include the following. Different financial caps may be applied for applications for shared ownership than those used for social /housing applications. All applications for this band will remain suspended whilst in this Band.
- 2.3.14 Change the method of increasing the income and savings from the Consumer Prices Index to the increase in average rents in the city allowing applicants 50% of income for the purpose of rent.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Councils are legally obliged, under the Housing Act 1996 Part 6, to have a policy that must be followed when they allocate social housing both within its own stock or where they nominate to a housing association. When the policy was adopted there were several matters that members resolved as follows:
- A) That this policy be reviewed at the end of the first Housing Allocations Plan cycle, and that this review will consider
 - 1) any revisions to the Housing Allocations Plan
 - 2) The possibility of reintroducing the positive local contribution category
 - 3) Feedback from applicants involved in the system
- 3.2 In addition to the above members requested that a report on a number of possible amendments was given to members of the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee as laid out in the Minutes of the Housing & New Homes Committee item 42.25. A report on all of the items listed in the Minutes was presented at the meeting of the 16th December but no further amendments to the policy were adopted at the meeting of the 16th December.
- 3.3 This report contains recommendations not to revise the Allocations Plan at the present time. It also contains some feedback from applicants on their understanding of the allocations policy, the application process and the outcomes that they receive.
- 3.4 Officers have met with the lead members of the Housing & New Homes Committee and discussed the possibility of the reintroduction of a positive contribution system as a local lettings plan. The council considers that in order to reintroduce a local lettings scheme in this area that it must first continue to reassess the remaining cases on the register so that it can properly analyse who is on the register and what impact such a policy would have. The council is also introducing a new I.T. platform. This software will have additional capability to hold data on working households and others that are positively contributing in the city. This data will be key in looking to justify such a policy in the local area.

- 3.5 The Allocations Policy introduced an allocations plan. This plan introduced the concept of four queues. Each queue was given priority to a percentage of properties when advertised. As part of the allocations plan officers are required to provide a performance report on this area of work. The monitoring report is contained in appendix one to this report.
- 3.6 The period covered by this report is from the 3rd January 2017 to the 31st March 2018. Properties were advertised to one of the four queues in the policy. In order to assess the effectiveness of the new policy it has been necessary to make changes to the monitoring process. Prior to the changes, monitoring occurred at the end of each quarter by band and the percentage lets to homeless household only. Under the new allocations plan reporting now looks at the results of each bidding cycle (every two week) regardless of when the property is actually let. This enables the service to accurately monitor the percentage targets set by committee. It also allows the service to monitor how many properties may be withdrawn by landlords following them being advertised and also allows monitoring “mismatches” from the advertised queue to the actual result of the letting by each queue.
- 3.7 The performance report contains monitoring for the first full year of operation from January to December 2017. It also contains monitoring of the first full financial year from April 2017 to March 2018 and it also contains monitoring of the whole period from January 2017 to March 2018.
- 3.8 The allocations plan set the percentage allocation across all four groups at
- Homeless 40%
 - Transfers 30%
 - Homeseekers 20%
 - Council’s Interest (Social Services) 10%

The report shows that overall there was good performance across each of the queues. The total number of properties allocated to the different queues was within the permitted tolerance of 5% of the targets set by the Housing & New Homes Committee in December 2016 for Homeless, Transfers and the Council’s Interest Queue. The total number of lets to Homeseekers however was outside the permitted tolerance of 5% and officers have therefore had to explain within the report why this particular group exceeded the allocated quota.

- 3.9 This report also contains a number of other recommendations to make minor amendments to the main allocations policy. A report on minor amendments can be found at appendix two.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 We have considered what the impact would be of changing the percentage of properties advertised to any of the queues. However, our analysis supports retaining the current split as being the optimum to deliver a mix of priorities which reflect budget pressures. The council is committed to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation, as part of the trailblazer funding and which is also necessary due to changes in the financial support from central

government for this type of accommodation which will place a financial pressure on the council's general fund if the number of households are not reduced.

- 4.2 We could increase the percentage of advertised properties for transfers from 30% but this option would impact negatively on the percentage of properties available to other queues. Separately we are exploring how mutual exchanges could better assist some of those households who need to transfer.
- 4.3 Any reduction to the Council's interest queue would impact on children leaving care, extra care and social services nominations which comprise vulnerable households who will also have a budget impact if we were unable to resolve their housing situation.
- 4.4 The Homeseekers queue currently has priority for 20% of adverts. This group contains the most households and makes up the bulk of the housing register and as such they are normally the group that benefit if a property does not go prioritised queue. The homeseekers queue however does contain a high number of applicants that may be in difficult housing situations. Any changes to the percentage of properties advertised to this group would either be at the detriment of other groups, or if the percentage was reduced, it may mean that more households become homeless as they have less opportunity to resolve their accommodation issues.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 In preparing this report officers have worked with cross party group of members.
- 5.2 Members have been fully involved in identifying minor changes to the allocations policy that can be found in appendix two.
- 5.3 As part of this process the council carried out a survey of applicants on how they found the allocations policy and process. A survey was placed onto the Sussex Homemove bidding site inviting applicants to give their views on the following:
 - How aware they were of how the council allocated its stock;
 - How easy or difficult was it to apply to the Housing Register;
 - and How easy or difficult was it to understand our response to your application.

The responses are detailed in Appendix 3

- 5.4 A copy of the minor proposed changes was sent to all registered providers for their comments. No responses were received back from the registered providers.
- 5.5 The Council also consulted with its own housing department to seek the landlord view of the proposed minor amendments along with the views of Children, Families and Learning and Adults Social Services. Changes were made and incorporated into the final recommendations following a meeting with the cross party member group.
- 5.6 The council has submitted a briefing to all of the Area Housing Panels for their consideration. At the Area Panel West meeting on the 28th August panel

members asked two questions on changes to sheltered accommodation and then noted the report. At the Area Panel West meeting on the 3rd September concerns were raised regarding the removal of the over 50's on 7 council blocks in respect of two high rise blocks and the possible placement of children if the over 50's requirement was removed. At the Area Panel Central on the 5th September members were very interested in the new Band A for sheltered applicants with a need to move within their block, that replaces the old Local Lettings Plan. They generally were supportive of the other recommendations.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The conclusion of the report into the performance of the allocations plan is that it has performed well in line with the targets set by member when adopting the Allocations Policy in December 2016.
- 6.2 Due to the councils need to reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation over the next two years, reducing the allocated quota to less than 40% will limit the council's ability to make the reductions needed. It is also necessary to ensure that tenants are able to move from their current properties especially for those that need to down size to more appropriate accommodation. There is also a need to move tenants to create vacancies elsewhere in the system. Reducing the number of tenant transfers would decrease the total number of moves achieved in any given period. Likewise, any decrease in the number of moves within the council's interest queue would see pressures on Children's and Adult Social Care budgets.
- 6.3 In addition there are some operational issues that have become apparent that need tidying up and we have also reflected the concerns of members as identified in the previous report recommendations.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The report recommends that the percentages allocated to the four queues that form the allocation plan remain unchanged. The queue for temporary accommodation remains at 40%. As part of setting the budget for 2017/18, the on-going budget for temporary accommodation was reduced by £0.551m as a result of the allocation plan being approved in December 2016. Any reduction in this percentage will have a direct impact on the number of households in temporary accommodation and will add budget pressures to this service. Similarly, the percentage allocated to council's interest (Social Services), if reduced, will add service pressures on the social care budgets of the authority.
- 7.2 The report recommends a number of amendments to the allocation policy. Most do not have financial implications. Two of the amendments have positive financial implications. Paragraph 2.3.3 recommends that the minimum number of occupants is increased for houses with a dining room. This will allow larger families to be housed in these properties and reduce the need for extensions on properties, thereby potentially saving HRA resources. Paragraph 2.3.10 recommends that the allocation policy is amended so that an applicant can be

by-passed if they are not able to afford the accommodation on offer. Were the council to allocate unaffordable properties, there is a risk that the household would fall into arrears (at a cost to the HRA) and ultimately, the household could become homeless.

Finance Officer Consulted Monica Brooks Date: 7/9/18

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The Allocations Policy sits within a heavily regulated framework – the Housing Act 1996 as amended, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and regulations issued by the Secretary of State. The proposed amendments to the policy fall within the powers conferred on the council by that framework. As the committee with overall responsibility for the council’s housing functions, including homelessness, it is within its powers to approve the changes.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley Date 10/09/18

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 The allocation of social housing has an impact on all of the groups that are found within the Equality Act 2010 as having protected characteristics. Many of the provisions are designed to have a positive outcome for example for those with a long term medical condition of disability. The allocation has to however follow statutory guidance in giving either reasonable or additional preference to certain groups.

The allocations plan report gives an outline that see that 40% of available lettings are given to accepted homeless households. Within this and other groups there are a higher percentage of households that will have a disability or be headed by a female head of household.

In making minor changes to the allocations policy this will not make a significant change to those that are not able to apply for social housing. An equalities impact assessment of the whole removals process will be carried out to see if the equality impact report that was produced for the December 2016 changes were agreed are correct.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 None

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.6 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Operational Review of Allocations Plan
2. Housing Allocations Minor Amendments

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

149 Public sector equality duty

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

(2) A person who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions must, in the exercise of those functions, have due regard to the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

(3) Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

(a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;

(b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

(c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

(4) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

(5) Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

- (a) tackle prejudice, and
- (b) promote understanding.

(6) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

(7) The relevant protected characteristics are—

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

(8) A reference to conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act includes a reference to—

- (a) a breach of an equality clause or rule;
- (b) a breach of a non-discrimination rule.

(9) Schedule 18 (exceptions) has effect.

1.0 The Allocations Plan

The Allocations Plan as agreed by Member in December 2016 was

Homeless 40%

Transfers 30%

Homeseekers 20%

Council Interest Queue 10%

2.0 How it works

- 2.1 Properties are advertised on a two weekly cycle throughout the year. Before the properties are advertised they are each given a “priority” in accordance with the allocations plan. For example “Priority to transfer applicants”
- 2.2 The properties are open for bids from Thursday to the following Wednesday in each cycle. At the end of each bidding cycle the properties are shortlisted. The first priority is to the queue that the property was advertised to. The highest band and longest priority date in this queue is checked against the allocations policy and if they meet the qualifying criterion the application is placed onto the shortlist of up to three candidates. This is sent to the Landlord who in turn will set up a viewing and potentially offer the property. If the property is refused by the top candidate for any reason the property will be offered to the next person on the list. If all three applicants refuse the offer, then a further shortlist “top up shortlist” is requested by the landlord. A top up shortlist will then supply a further three candidates until the property is let.
- 2.3 If there are no successful applicants that have placed a bid or no applicants qualify within the advertised queue then the shortlist will look at the applicants in the other three queues using the highest band and longest priority date to make up the shortlist. The same process as above will occur until the property is let.
- 2.4 When properties are let the result is monitored against the Allocations Plan so that adjustments can be made to the advertised queues in order for the Allocations Plan as approved by Members is achieved.
- 2.5 Officers are required to report if any of the allocation queues deviate by more than 5% from the agreed Allocations Plan.

3.0 Monitoring the Allocations Plan

- 3.1 The Allocations Plan is monitored by recording the number of properties that are allocated to each queue. The results records what happened to the property. The outcome can be

- Let to advertised queue
- Let to alternative queue
- Property withdrawn /re-advertised

4.0 Property withdrawn / re-advertised

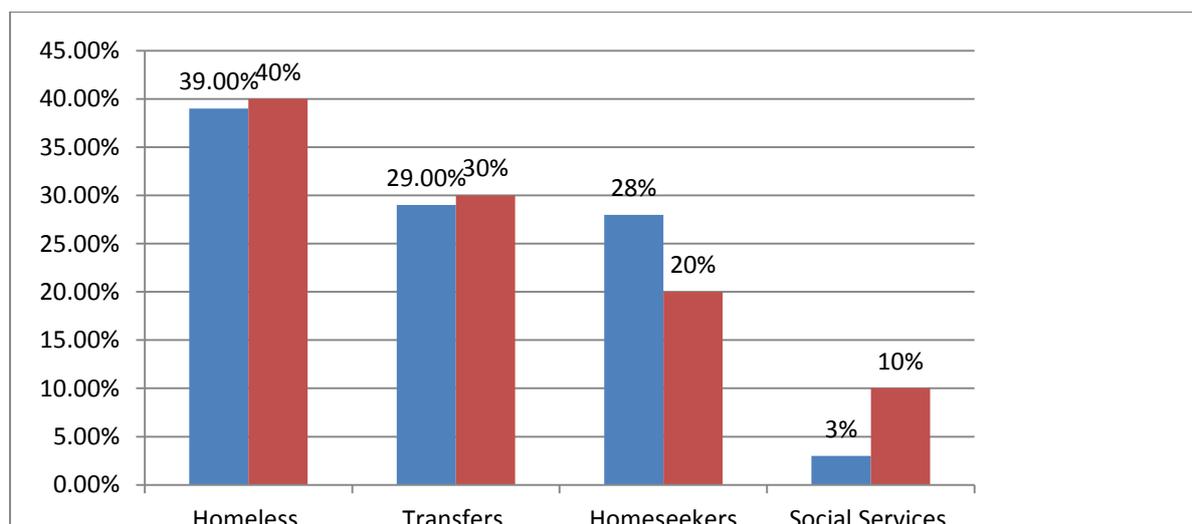
4.1 In order to keep void properties to a minimum, Landlords advertise properties as soon as they have notice that they are becoming vacant. This includes properties that are already vacant such as abandoned properties but will also be properties that are still occupied.

4.2 During the advertising cycle tenants may sometimes withdraw their notice and the property will no longer be available to re-let. Once properties are vacated they are then inspected, as part of the voids process, this will note any repairs or upgrades that are required such as rewiring. If the property requires a substantial amount of work, this will create a long delay until the property is of a lettable standard. When this happens the property will be withdrawn and re-advertised at a later date.

4.3 When the shortlist does not return anyone to let it to, the property will be re-advertised in the next available bidding cycle.

5.0 Performance January to March 2017

5.1 The allocations policy was agreed in December 2016. The allocations plan came into force in the first cycle on the 3rd January 2017. The results below are for the 4th quarter of 2016/17 financial year.

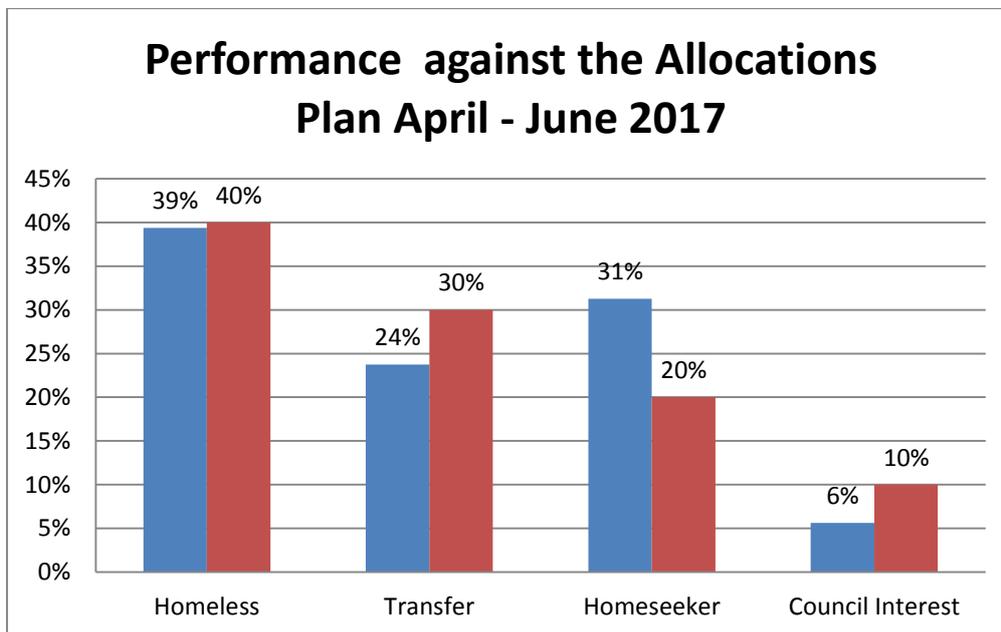


	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Social Service	Total
Lets in quarter	83	62	61	7	213
Performance	39%	29%	29%	3%	
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%	

5.2 It can be seen from the table above that the performance for homeless households was within one percent of the 40% target. The figures are rounded to the nearest 1%. The figure was equally good in terms of performance of transfers.

5.3 There was an over performance in the Homeseekers queue approaching 9% and an under performance of 7% in the Councils Interest Queue. The under performance reflects the need to develop a protocol with Adult Social Care in line with the policy as agreed in December 2016. This means that only nominations from Children’s Service and Care Leavers under the Care Leavers Protocol were captured in this quarter. It is expected that performance will be in line with the targets once the protocol is up and running.

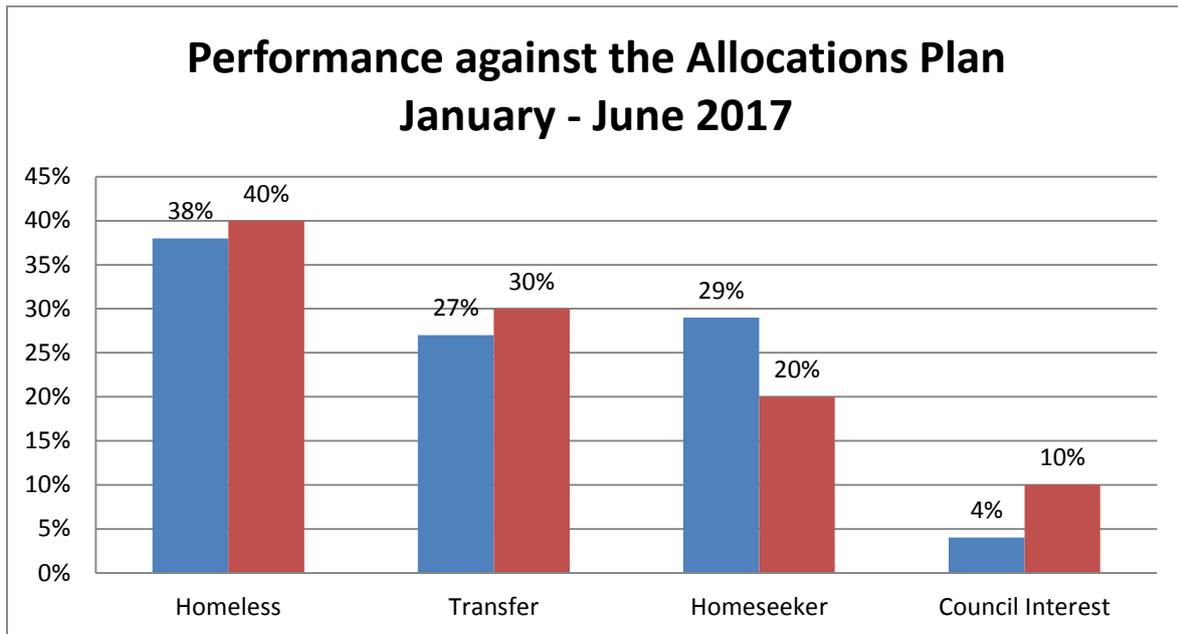
6.0 Performance April – June 2017



6.1 It can be seen from the table above that the performance for homeless household was one again within one percent against a target of 40%. Performance for transfer in the quarter however dropped by six percent against the target, with Homeseekers over performing by eleven percent in the same period. The Social Services queue performed better in the second quarter performance up to six percent.

	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest		Total
lets in Quarter	63	38	50	9		160
Performance	39%	24%	31%	6%		
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%		

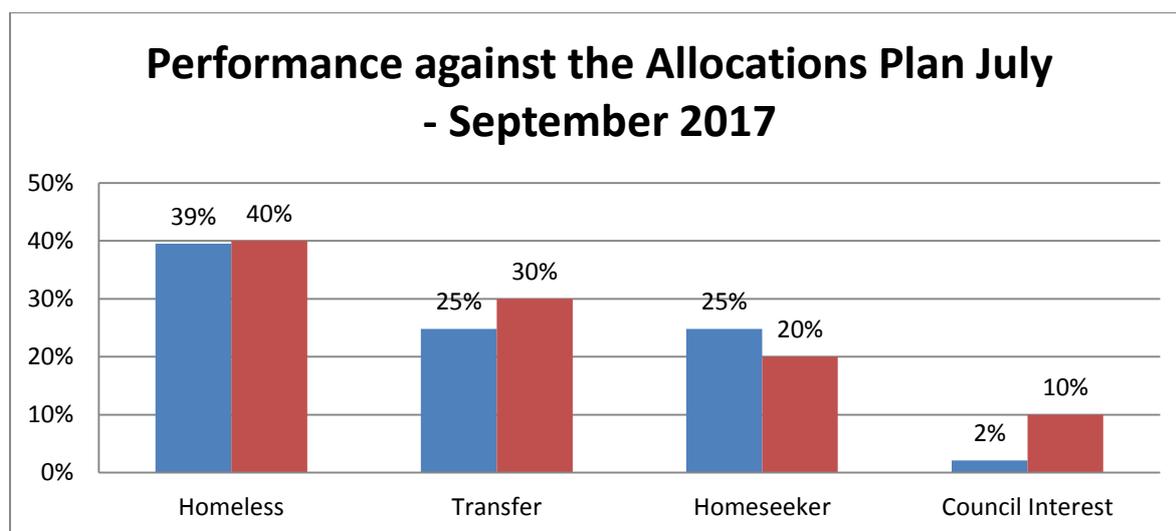
7.0 Performance January – June 2017



7.1 The table above show a combined performance for the period January to June 2017. The overall performance shows Homeless and Transfers coming two and three percent within target with Homeseekers over performing by nine percent and social services under performing by six percent over the period.

	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest	Totals
Lets Quarter two	63	38	50	9	160
Lets Quarter one	83	62	61	7	213
Total Jan to Jun	146	100	111	16	373
Performance	38%	27%	29%	4%	
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%	

8.0 Performance July – September 2017

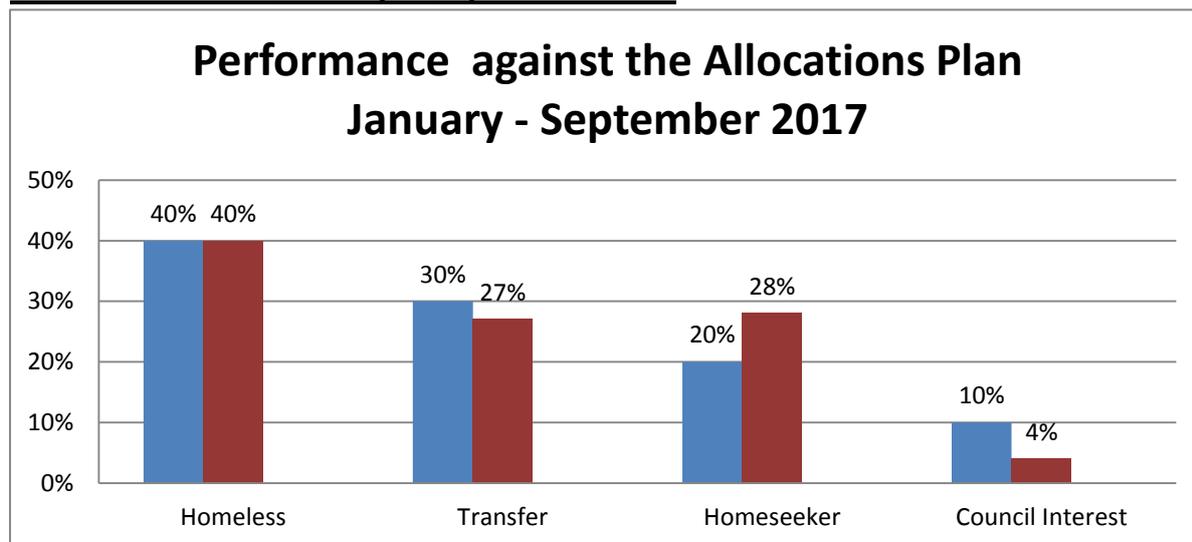


8.1 The third quarter performance table above shows the number of properties that have been let against the advertised groups to date. In this quarter the council advertised 57 properties at Kite Place. This is a new development that was due to be handed over to the council for letting in late September or early October. There have been some issues with the project running late and handover is not now expected until early February 2018. The council has been able to carry out some viewings to properties that do not have a mobility rating and therefore the results show those properties where the applicant has indicated that they will accept the property when completion happens. There are however 21 properties where viewings have not happened and we are therefore unable to indicate the final percentage lets in this period. If new data is available it will be updated as soon as possible.

8.2 The properties were all advertised in line with the allocations plan but there has been a particular issue with the very high number of mobility rated properties in this scheme all coming at the same time. A number of the properties have not been let as no one with the correct mobility code placed bids on them.

	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest		Total
lets in Quarter	95	63	63	5		226
Performance	42%	28%	28%	2%		
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%		

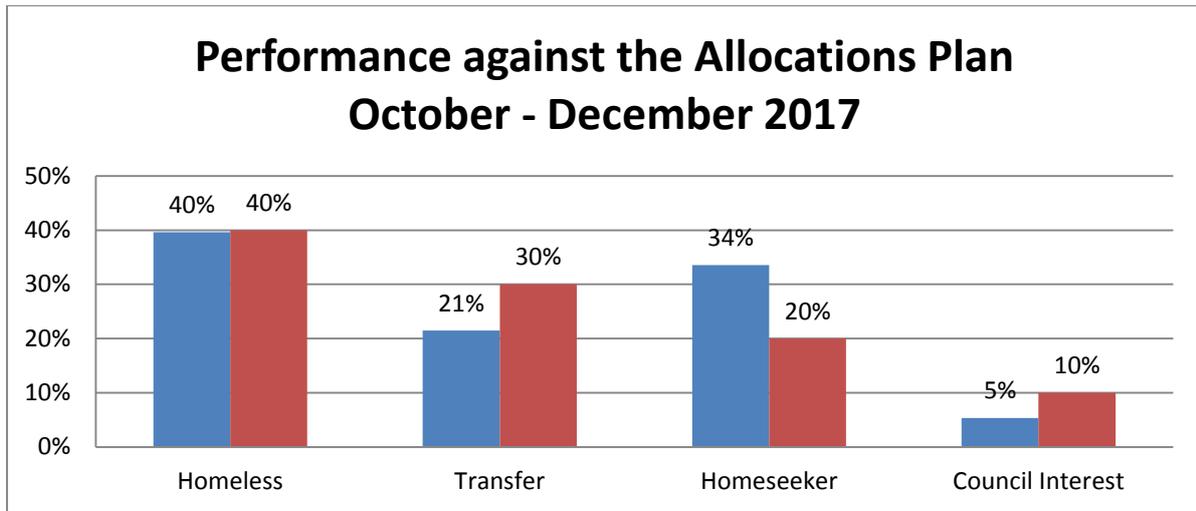
9.0 Performance January – September 2017



9.1 The table above show the performance against the Allocations Plan from January to September 2017. It shows the lets that have been agreed but does not show the remaining properties at Kite Place a further nine percent of properties are still to be reported. Much will depend on people accepting the remaining properties that have not yet been let. If they continue on the current trajectory then the performance will remain much as reported above.

	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest	Totals
lets in Quarter three	95	63	63	5	226
lets in quarter two	63	38	50	9	160
lets in Quarter one	83	62	61	7	213
total Jan to Sept	241	163	174	21	599
Performance	40%	27%	28%	4%	
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%	

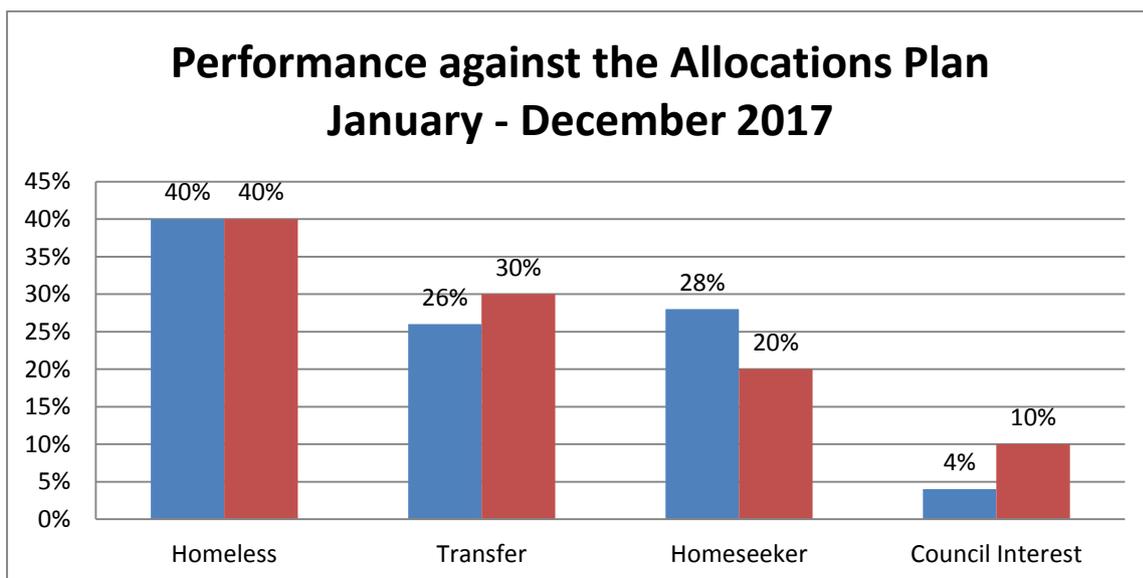
10.0 Performance October – December 2017



10.1 The table above show the performance against the Allocations Plan from October to December 2017. The table once again show lets to homeless applicants are on target at 40%. Transfers dropped in the quarter to 21% with Homeseekers increasing to 34% and council’s interest at 5%.

	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest		Total
Lets in Quarter	59	32	50	0		141
Performance	42%	23%	35%	0%		
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%		

11.0 Performance January – December 2017

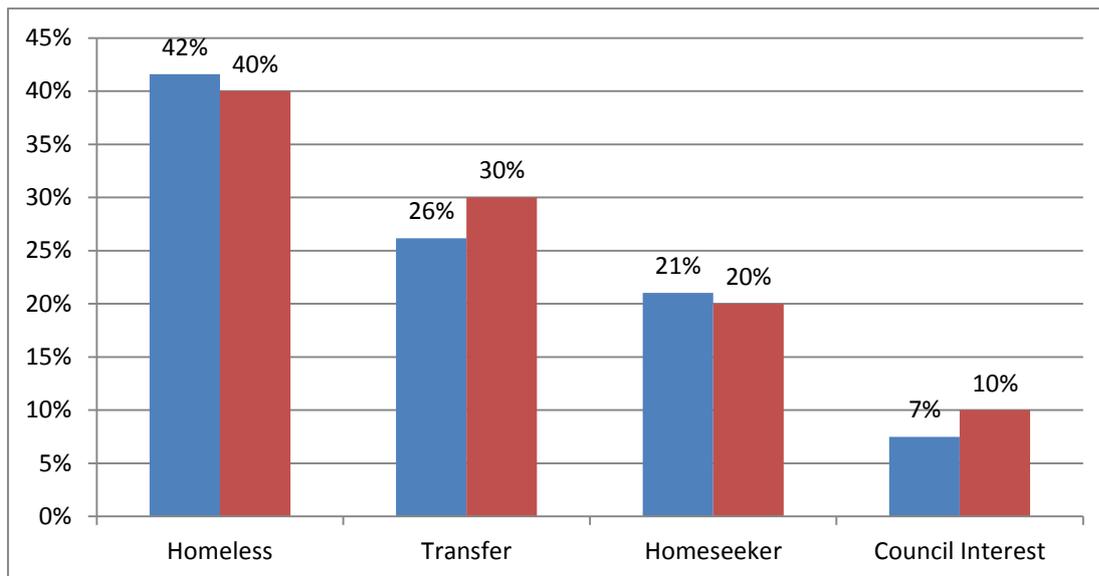


11.1 The table above shows the performance against the Allocations Plan from January to December 2017. This is the first table that show performance across

a four quarter period. This shows that lets to homeless households was on target at 40% over this period. Transfers underperformed by four percentage points and Homeseekers over performed by 9% points. Overall the council's interest queue under performed by 6 percentage points. .

	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest	Totals
lets in Quarter four	59	32	50	0	141
lets in Quarter three	95	63	63	5	226
lets in quarter two	63	38	50	9	160
lets in Quarter one	83	62	61	7	213
total Jan to Sept	300	195	224	21	740
Performance	40%	27%	29%	4%	
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%	

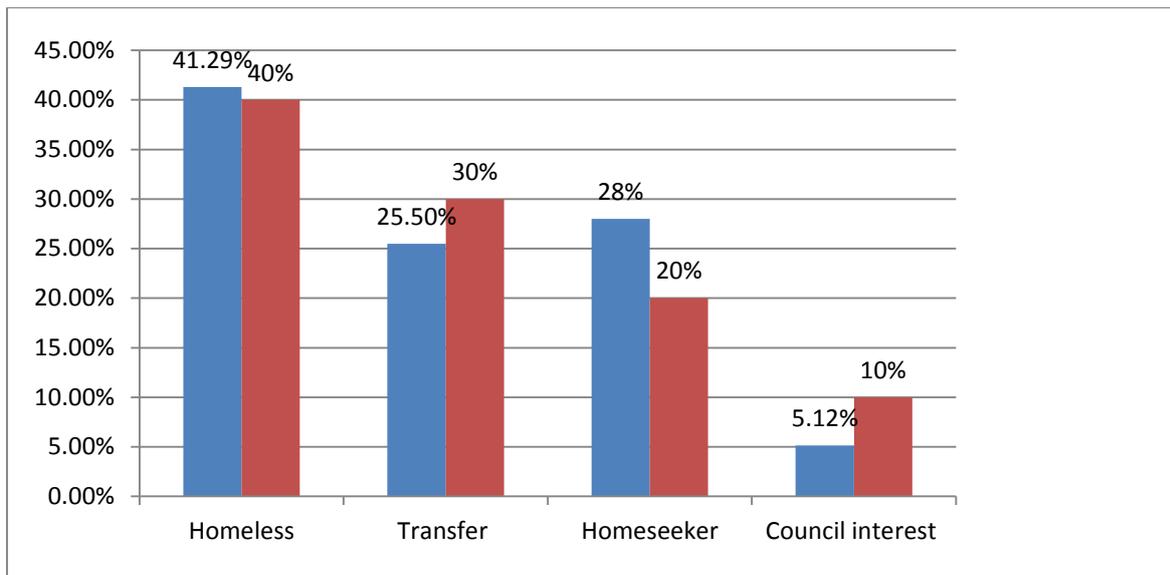
12.0 Performance January – March 2018



12.1 The table above shows the final reporting period of this report, Homelessness lets increased in this period to 42% with Transfers at 26%, Homeseekers at 21% and council's interest at 7%. In this time period performance was in line with the allocations plan, within the permitted 5% tolerance in the policy.

	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest	No Result	Total
lets In Quarter	89	57	46	16	6	214
Performance	42%	27%	21%	7%	3%	
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%		

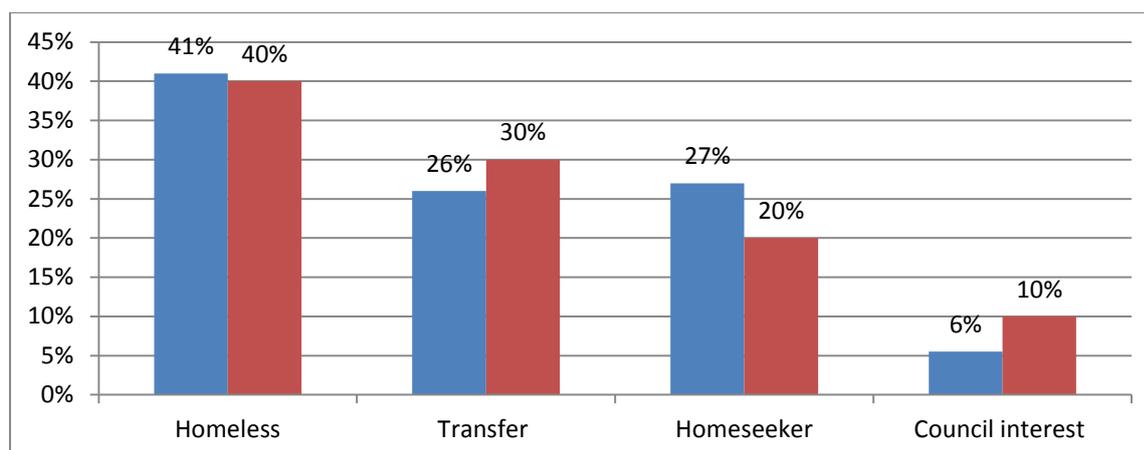
13.0 Performance April 17 – March 18



13.1 The table above shows the performance against the allocations plan for the financial year period of April 17 to March 18. The performance on Homelessness, transfers and council's interest queue were all within the permitted level of tolerance under the allocations plan. Homeseekers once again over performed against the permitted tolerance by 8% points.

Financial Year 2017/18	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest	Totals
Lets in Quarter five	89	57	46	16	208
lets in Quarter four	59	32	50	0	141
lets in Quarter three	95	63	63	5	226
lets in quarter two	63	38	50	9	160
	306	190	209	30	735
	41%	26%	28%	4%	
	40%	30%	20%	10%	

14.0 Total period performance January 2017 to March 2018



14.1 The table above shows performance for the whole of the reporting period from January 2017 when the allocations plan was introduced to the end of the financial year 2017/18 in March 2018. We can see from the data that the percentage figures do not vary when you put the calendar year 2017 with the fourth quarter of the financial year 2017/2018.

Total reporting period	Homeless	Transfer	Homeseeker	Council Interest	Totals
Lets in Quarter five	89	57	46	16	208
lets in Quarter four	59	32	50	0	141
lets in Quarter three	95	63	63	5	226
lets in quarter two	63	38	50	9	160
lets in Quarter one	83	62	61	7	213
total Jan to Sept	389	252	270	37	948
Performance	41%	27%	28%	4%	
Target	40%	30%	20%	10%	

15 Variance report 2017

15.1 Under the provisions of the Allocations Policy officers have been asked for an explanation when the percentage of lets vary by more than 5% from the agreed Allocations Plan.

15.2 The Allocations Plan has been in place since January 2017. This is the first report compiled to show the performance against the plan. This period has been a learning curve for officers to make sure that the performance is within the 5% permitted tolerance. Three of the queues performed within the permitted tolerance allowed within the allocations plan. Homeseekers over performed by 7% points.

15.3 Homeseekers

15.4 Homeseekers over performed by 7 to 8%. The main reason for this over performance was due to the under performance of the transfer and council's interest queue. To understand some of the reason why this happened we have to look at some factors that impact on the plan. Homeless applicants are allowed one offer of accommodation as a homeless applicant. This means that when a homeless household receives an offer they are far more likely to accept the offer of accommodation than other groups. Transferring tenants often have more specific things in mind when accepting an offer of accommodation. Longer standing tenants are often wanting to move from flats into houses or if they are downsizing under the tenants incentive scheme then they are often looking for something very specific such as remaining in the same area or wanting the property to be in good decorative condition for example. Homeseekers are often in circumstances that mean any offer of accommodation will be better than their current housing situation in terms of cost or condition and are once again more likely to accept an offer of accommodation than other groups.

15.5 We are not able to predict which applicants will place bids on available properties. Some applicants will only place bids on houses but not on flats or maisonettes. Some areas can tend to be more popular than others too. We have learnt that Homeseekers will normally benefit if there are no available candidates from the other three queues. This is primarily because there are more Homeseekers on the housing register than the other groups combined and therefore the law of averages mean that it will inevitably happen in this way. The Allocations Plan is monitored carefully and looks at the number of properties that do not go to the advertised priority. Some balance is restored when the property goes to a different group than advertised but overall Homeseekers will be the beneficiaries.

15.6 To address this we have reduced the number of adverts to Homeseekers by 5%. This has restored some balance.. However, we have to be cautious in our approach in reducing any one queue to ensure that we are not breaching the reasonable preference rules that are required in the Housing Act 1996.

16.0 Lettings analysis

16.1 This part of the report looks at the properties that have been let from 1 April to 30 September 2017 with summary data shown for the average number of bids, offers and refusals. There is also data on the recorded reasons for refusal where given. For ease of reference the lets have been broken down by bedsize.

Property bedsize	Number of lets	Average number of bids	Average number of offers	Average number of refusals
1 bed	271	84	1.8	0.8
2 bed	126	176	1.5	0.5
3 bed	49	183	1.3	0.3
4 bed	12	88	1.2	0.2
5 bed	2	87	1.0	0.0
Total	460	120	1.6	0.6

16.2. One bed

16.3 There were an average of 0.8 refusals per each property let, meaning properties were let after an average of 1.8 offers.

16.4 Of the 271 one bed lets only 10 were affordable rents or 3.7% of all one bed lets.

16.5 Some properties have a higher than average refusal rate than others. One of the main reasons for refusal in the one bedroom category is due to Band A applicants who are downsizing and other elderly applicants refusing properties as they are too far away from their support networks or they consider the property is too small.. Another reason can be that the applicant has changed their mind or is too ill to move.

16.6 The analysis does not find evidence that rent levels in this category are a major factor.

16.7 Two bed

16.8 The number of refusals on two bed properties, at a rate of 0.5 refusals per let, tends to be a little lower than for one bedroom properties (0.8 refusals per let). The vast majority (72%) of properties are let on the first person viewing (92 of 126). Reasons for refusals include not attending the viewing or needing to be nearer to someone for support. Also there is often a refusal if this is someone's first offer and they know that they have one further offer. It is also likely that there are higher numbers of homeless applicants in this category who only have one offer under homelessness before the statutory duty would end. There were 5 affordable rent properties let in the period out of 126. This is 4.0% of properties let. One affordable rent property had a higher than average level of refusals but none were related to the rent being changed.

16.9 Three bed

16.10 The number of refusals on two bed properties, at a rate of 0.3 refusals per let. This is lower than the refusal rate for one and two bed properties. There are however less three bedroom properties and less demand that for both one and two bed properties. The vast majority of properties (89%) are let on the first viewing (16 of 18) Three bedroom properties are often houses and therefore in high demand by applicant as many will have gardens, which again make them more popular.

16.11 Four bed

16.12 There were no properties let under affordable rent among the 12 in the four bed category. There was a lower level of refusals in this group too (an average of 0.2 per let) compared to properties with fewer bedrooms. This is likely to reflect the fact that people tend to wait longer for a four bed property and as there are fewer properties choice is also limited.

16.13 Five bed

16.14 There were no affordable rents among the two lettings in the five bed property category. There were also no refusals of offers either.

17.0 Analysis of refusals

Number of refusals	Occurrence	Percentage
0	315	68%
1	80	17%
2	25	5%
3	18	3.90%
4	7	1.50%
5	4	0.86%
6	1	0.21%
7	2	0.43%
8	1	0.21%
13	1	0.21%

17.1 Of the 460 lets in the period 68% were let to the first applicant on the shortlist. It is difficult to analyse this figure further as some shortlists are sent with one applicant if the offer is final under the allocations policy. If it is not a final offer three applicants are sent to the landlords. The vast majority (91%) of lets are either accepted on the first applicant or within two refusals.

Refusal Reason	Past 6 months	Year to date
Offer made in error	3	4
Prefer larger property	17	19
Failed to respond to Offer	11	11
Dislikes neighbourhood/estate	15	16
Prefer to be nearer shops/ transport	4	5
Prefer to be nearer to existing support (this category would include family, friends, church, school, job)	5	7
Considers self to be insecure or at risk there(incl. due to harassment or violence in the area)	2	2
Considers property to be in poor state of repair/ decoration/ cleanliness	5	5
Prefer different method of heating	0	0
Prefer different toilet/ bathroom arrangement	4	4
Considers rent too high	2	2
Prefer to have a garden	2	2
Prefer different floor level	4	4
Prefer different property type (e.g. house or bungalow to flat, or general needs to sheltered)	1	1
Considers there are too many stairs	12	12
Property cannot be adapted to meet their needs	0	1
Changed mind about wishing to move	7	7
Bid was made for this property by mistake	1	1
Have had another offer which they prefer	2	2
Prefer Council to RSL (e.g. because of Right to Buy)	0	0
Not allowed to keep pets there	2	2
No reason given	0	0
No Contact	9	9
Did not attend viewing	18	18
Member could not be verified	0	0
Shortlist withdrawn	8	8
Other (please note reason on system)	35	37
Total	169	179

18.0 Reason for refusal

18.1 The table looks at the reasons for refusal. This is from a standard report that is year to date and therefore covers a longer period than the lettings table on the first page of this report. This does however give a snapshot of refusal reasons.

18.2 The most common reason for refusing a property is not attending the viewing and people wanting a "larger property." Many applicants live in accommodation in other sectors and properties can be larger than those that are offered by the council. This does not mean that properties are too small for the number of occupants. There is no evidence that applicants are refusing properties due to rental values. A high

proportion of applicants in temporary accommodation or the private rented sector will be paying rents that are much higher than “affordable rents” and even higher still than social rents.

19.0 Removals from the Housing Register

19.1 The changes to the allocations policy were designed to reduce the overall number of applicants on the Council’s Housing Register. At the current time that are just over 15,000 applicants remaining on the register and so far from January 2017 to the time of this report just over 12,000 applications have been removed.

19.2 Removals by Band

19.3 Band A 99 removed of which the highest band reason was under occupiers. This was due to some work to clean up the register of those that were not bidding who had already found an alternative move or who had changed their household composition and were no longer under occupying.

19.4 Band B 253 of which there were a number who did not meet the local connection criterion or where there as no activity of bids on the account for over 5 years.

19.5 Band C 5303 of which the highest proportion had no local connection or were removed Band C reasons of low medical or sharing facilities.

19.6 Band D 6383 of which the applicant did not have any housing need or had to much income or savings, no local connection or no bids in over 5 years.

20.0 Review of Applications

20.1 Under the Housing Act 1996 there are statutory rights to a review of the council’s decision making process. These provisions are contained in the Allocations Policy. Generally a review can be requested if someone is considered as no eligible, due to their immigration status or is they do not qualify to join, or remain on the housing register.

20.2 In addition applicants can request a review of an application on Banding decisions, bedroom allocation, mobility group awards and sheltered housing decisions. The decision notification informs applicants that they have 21 days to request a review of the decision.

Row Labels	Band A - review	Band B - review	Band C - review	Band D - Review	Extra Bedroom	Priority Date	Removed from Register	Review of offer	Grand Total
Jan-17			11			1	16		28
Feb-17			1				49		50
Mar-17			4				56	1	61
Apr-17			1				39		40
May-17		1	5				34		40
Jun-17		1	5				25		31
Jul-17			2				34		36
Aug-17		1	7				31		40
Sep-17			3				17		20
Oct-17					1		35		36
Nov-17	1	2	2				17		23
Dec-17		3					23		26
Jan 18		1	2				20	1	24
Feb 18		1	4				24	1	30
Mar 18							28		28
Grand Total	1	10	47		1	1	376	3	513

20.3 From January 2017 to March 2018 the service received a total of 513 requests for a review. The vast majority of the requests were related to the activity of reassessment of cases under the new Allocations Policy agreed in December 2016.

20.4 Outside of the removals from the housing register there were 53 requests of a review of the council's decision. To date 31 of the 513 decision were upheld. Some review requests from the period are still to be completed and the number of review upheld is likely to go up proportionately as the review request are very much the same across the period.

20.5 The highest number of cases overturned were on those removed from the housing register. This is statistically likely due to the higher number of requests from this group. Outside of the removal from the register the most likely challenge came from those awarded Band C.

20.6 A challenge against a review, can only review the case against the provisions of the allocations policy. Applicants often wish the review to make an exception that is not within the allocations policy or where there is nothing exceptional to allow discretion to not follow the allocations policy. This is especially so for applicants who are applying and living outside of the area or those that have moved to the area in the past five years.

21.0 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

21.1 Member will be aware that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into effect on the 3rd April 2018. This new Act requires a new approach to preventing homelessness to all applicants that approach the council regardless of the person's housing needs. The Act does not make any changes to those that are already owed a statutory duty to provide accommodation. The new Homelessness Code of Guidance requires Local Authorities to consider the use of social housing and to ensure that the allocations policy reflects the competing needs of those that are owed a statutory duty to be offered accommodation and those that are not. The current allocations policy is designed to help those with a recognised housing need. The current Allocations Plan allocates 20% of offers of social housing to Homeseekers in need. The numbers of applicant actually accommodated from January 2017 to March 2018 was 314. (27%).

22.0 Numbers in Temporary Accommodation

22.1 Brighton & Hove has one of the highest numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation in England. The percentage of offers to Homeless Household has increased from 20% in 2016/17 to 40% in 2017. In numbers this has seen the numbers rehoused in 2016/17 (132 2016/17 to 280 in 2017).

22.2 The council accepts a statutory homelessness duty to around 500 homeless applications each year. If the numbers stayed at 20% of offers, then the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation would inevitably increase year on year, despite the numbers that we are able to assist to move to private rented accommodation.

23.3 Flexible Homeless Support Grant.

23.4 The Government has made changes to the way that councils are funded for Temporary Accommodation. Previously councils received an element for

management of accommodation of £60 per unit per week. This was paid in the Housing Benefit allowance to applicants. This management element has now been taken out of Housing benefit and will be replaced in the form of a grant to the local Authority. In 2019/ 20 the grant will reduce and the aim is for a grant based on the number of cases that the council accepts a full homeless duty towards per annum, not numbers in temporary accommodation. This will lead to a significant reduction of income in temporary accommodation in future years unless we can significantly reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation.

24.0 Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer

24.1 The Council was successful in being awarded funding through the Government's Trailblazer funding programme. As part of this two-year funding agreement the Council has a target of reducing the use of temporary accommodation by 50%.

25.0 Rough Sleepers and supported accommodation

25.1 The number of rough sleepers has significantly increased in the City. The increase is challenging for the city with high rents and property prices. High demand for properties means that landlords can favour prospective tenants who are professionals and this often means that those with a history of complex needs are not able to find accommodation in this sector. One of the impacts is that if residents are not able to move on and out of supported accommodation to private rented accommodation then supported housing becomes silted up, with fewer vacancies for others in need of this accommodation. There has to be a balance that residents that are ready to move on are able to manage an independent tenancy.

26.0 Recommendations for the Allocations Plan 2018/19

26.1 Given the factors that are outlined above it is recommended that the Allocations Queues for 2018/19 are as follows

- Homeless 40%
- Transfers 30%
- Homeseekers 20%
- Council's Interest 10%

1. Housing Allocations Minor Amendments

APPENDIX TWO

- 1.1 The council introduced a new Allocations Policy on the 16th December 2016. This was introduced following a full three-month consultation exercise with stakeholders and residents across the city. The changes that were implemented were designed to restrict access to the Council's Housing Register to those with a realistic chance of being offered social housing in the city as demand for social housing far exceeds supply.
- 1.2 The Allocations Policy changes have been introduced over the past 18 months and we have had a chance to review some aspects of the new policy and now looking to make some minor amendments to the policy.

2. Point of clarification – Band reason • Band C Sheltered no other housing need

- 2.1 Band C Sheltered no other housing need – update to restrict this band reason to bids only on sheltered accommodation and not general needs
- 2.2 The Allocations Policy has made provision for applicants over the age of 55 to apply to join the register for sheltered accommodation even if they have no other housing need under the rest of the policy. The Council and Registered Providers has a number of sheltered/seniors schemes in the city. This accommodation is designed for older residents and the majority of schemes have additional facilities such as communal areas, laundry facilities and have the addition of sheltered scheme managers to facilitate activities to assist with the wellbeing of residents.
- 2.3 Currently if a person is accepted on the housing register under Band C Sheltered no other housing need, then they can bid on any property and not just on sheltered accommodation. This reduces the number of properties that are then available in the general needs housing stock which is in very high demand.
- 2.4 This proposal is to make clear the purpose of Band C sheltered with no other housing need is given for applicants to only place bids and be offered sheltered accommodation. If applicants do not wish to be considered for sheltered accommodation, then they would have to be assessed under the general allocations policy provisions.

3. Point of clarification – award of extra bedroom

- 3.1 The Allocations policy makes provision for the number of bedrooms that an application can be awarded. In some circumstances there are a number of reasons why the bedroom allocation may have to be changed on the basis of disability, mental health, medical requirements or for a carer to live in the property.
- 3.2 We are seeking to clarify the Allocations Policy as follows:-

- 3.3 Live in Carer – An extra bedroom will be given to an applicant where there is an assessed need for a 24 hour live in carer. In terms of assessing the need for a live in carer this would have to be assessed as a need under the Care Act and therefore supported by Brighton & Hove Adult Social Care or Children’s Services.
- 3.4 The Council will not normally agree to award an additional bedroom where there is a need for occasional overnight care. Assessments take account of any medical or disability, together with the occasional overnight care provided along with the circumstances of the overnight carer. In the majority of cases where there is a living room then this would be able to be used for occasional overnight care.
- 3.5 Extra Bedroom unable to share due to disability or severe medical condition.
- 3.6 Extra Bedroom based on Medical needs. There are some cases where an additional bedroom is not needed on the basis on a live in carer but based on a person’s medical needs where a person is not able to share a room with another person as contained within the Allocations Policy. This is where a person would not be able to share with another person in the household based on a severe disability or medical condition. In the case of children with disabilities we will liaise with the Council’s Children’s disability services. If the applicant who is not able to share is an adult, then all of the facts of the case will be investigated and in either case this will be submitted to the medical advisor.

4. **Large properties with dining rooms.**

- 4.1 The council has some large properties that may have two separate living rooms. The properties are currently advertised by the number of bedrooms (i.e. three beds) with an additional “dining room”. This means that occupancy levels on these properties can be as low 3 people. The size of the property could be suitable for a much larger family, many of whom are in overcrowded situations. In order to achieve the best use of the housing stock in the city we will look to assess all incoming void properties and in some cases will advertise them as a four-bedroom property. Any other properties will be advertised as three bedroom properties but the minimum number of occupants can be raised to reflect the size of the property. Any application without the required number of people will be by passed in favour of an application with the required number of people in the household. If there are no applications with the minimum number of applicants, then the property may be let in accordance with the normal bed size in the allocations policy.

5. **Income and savings Caps**

- 5.1 The new policy introduced a household income and savings limit to ensure that social housing would be awarded to households on limited means that were not able to resolve their housing problems in any other way.

5.2 The current levels are Total Household Income

- Studio/One Bedroom £30,000
- Two Bedroom £55,000
- Three Bedroom or above £60,000

5.3 Officers were requested to take another look at this area of the policy with a view to reducing the household income but to increase the savings allowed under the policy. The income and savings caps were introduced in the policy for the first time in December 2016. Prior to this the only financial provision in the policy was to take account of someone's equity in a property they owned. The new provisions were designed to prevent applications where someone had sufficient resources to resolve their own housing situation. If the figures above are used to resolve a housing situation this would give the following allowance for rent, assuming no more than 50% of income is used for rent.

- Studio/one bed rented £15,000
- Two Bed £27,000
- Three bed or above £30,000

5.4 These sums are considered to be high in terms of the rental values in the city and the new income cap levels will be as follows:

- Studio/One bed £22,000
- Two bed £32,000
- Three bed and above £36,000

6. **Savings Cap**

6.1 Savings caps were also introduced into the allocations policy for the first time. Officers have been asked to also review these figures which have been seen as being to low. The current savings caps are:

- One Bed £3,000
- Two Bed £5,000
- Three Bed £7,500

6.2 In looking at the correct level to set the savings cap a formulation has been reached to allow up to four months average rent for each household size. The new savings cap will therefore be

- One bed £5,000
- Two bed £7,000
- Three bed and above £8,200

6.3 Exceptions to the savings cap

6.4 Sheltered Housing Applicants.

6.5 We know that people that are looking to move to sheltered accommodation may have savings that they are looking to use in their retirement. As someone's income decreases when they are no longer working it is felt that the savings cap for sheltered applicants should be higher. The savings cap for sheltered applicants will therefore be raised to £16,000 this will bring it into line with the savings cap on welfare benefits.

6.6 Annual Increase of income and savings caps

6.7 The current allocations policy allows for an annual increase in line with the Consumer Price Index each year without the need to report this increase to committee.

6.8 It is felt that the rate that rents are increasing in the city is higher than the Consumer Price Index and therefore this is not the best measure to use when setting the income or savings cap. It is therefore proposed that the same method is adopted for increasing the income and savings cap as has been used to set the caps in the policy. The Council will therefore use the average increase in rents to calculate the 50% of income levels in para 5.4. Any changes to the caps will be based on increased or decreased rents in September of each year.

7. Extra Care applicants

7.1 There are currently only three extra care schemes in the City. Two are managed by Hanover Housing and one by the city council. Extra Care is designed to enable older people in need of a package of care to live independently in the community for longer. There are very few comparable providers in the private sector. It is therefore a barrier to those that have savings above the cap to accessing extra care accommodation. It is therefore proposed to amend the allocations policy to waive the savings cap on applicants for extra care where there are no other applicants waiting for this type of accommodation. This will enable the council to make better use of the available extra care provision in the city.

8. Removal of the Sheltered Housing Panel

8.1 The sheltered housing panel was introduced into the allocations policy to allow assessments to be made based on a person's support needs under the supporting people regime. As sheltered accommodation providers no longer provide services in this way this means that the only assessment is on suitability of a person to live in sheltered accommodation taking account of previous behaviours or substance misuse issues that make this

accommodation unsuitable for some applicants. This is therefore proposed to remove the sheltered housing panel from the allocations policy. This will not mean that there is no input from sheltered schemes as there is a good working relationship that means individual applications can continue to be discussed in terms of those that are suitable for sheltered accommodation that those that are not.

9. Introduce new Band A – sheltered applicant need to move within the same scheme

9.1 Prior to the introduction of the new allocations scheme the council had a local lettings plan for sheltered applicants who had a need to move within the same scheme or to an alternative sheltered scheme. This local lettings plan was hard to administer due to the constraints of the IT platform being used. An analysis of all the sheltered applications on the register also found that there were very few applications of this nature to justify a local lettings plan. A local lettings plan has to be developed in line with the allocations policy and with two few applicants requiring this type of move no justification could be found. An alternative proposal is therefore to introduce a new Band A – need to move within existing sheltered Scheme. This will achieve the same policy objective as a local lettings plan but will make it easier to identify tenants requiring a move of this type. Introducing this new band will not guarantee a move within scheme as there may be other urgent cases such as discharge from hospital or care setting cases that are more urgent but it will significantly increase the chance of a move happening. A need to move will be based on mobility or medical factors that are making living in the current accommodation unsuitable and this can only be solved with a move to alternative accommodation.

10. Affordability of accommodation due to the welfare benefit cap.

10.1 The Allocations Policy includes giving a reasonable preference to those that the council has accepted a full housing duty to homeless households. In order to discharge this duty, the council can only do so in one of the ways laid out in the Housing Act 1996 as amended. One of these ways is to offer a suitable offer of accommodation. There are a number of things that the council has to take into account when offering accommodation. Amongst the items under consideration is that the accommodation should be affordable. In a small number of cases where the property on offer is under an affordable rent and the applicant is subject to a welfare benefit restriction the property would not be considered affordable. It is therefore recommended that if a property is considered to be unaffordable and therefore unsuitable that the applicant can be by passed for the offer or the offer can be withdrawn. The allocations policy also makes provision that offers are suitable to other groups and therefore this

provision will equally apply to any applicant where the offer is deemed unsuitable.

11. Age restrictions on over 50s blocks

11.1 There are currently 7 blocks of flats that have an age restriction that only allows them to be let to the over 50s. This restriction was introduced some years ago and has not been removed. The reasoning for an age limit is hard to justify today. These properties are not exempt from the right to buy and some have been sold and are occupied by under 50s. The properties are also subject to Mutual Exchanges and the under 50s cannot be prevented from moving under this scheme. Under the Equalities Act the council has to justify continuing only to allocate to applicants who are over 50 years old to these blocks. It is acknowledged that the residents of these blocks will need to be consulted separately but it is therefore proposed that following discussions that the over 50s requirement will be removed.

12.0 Band D Shared Ownership only.

12.1 The Council has made provisions within the allocations policy for applicants who are over the income and savings cap to still be included on the housing register and who can then be confirmed to partner agencies who are developing schemes with the council for shared ownership. When these schemes are being developed there will be a minimum financial commitment from prospective applicants that will have a certain level of savings or a deposit and be able to afford the mortgage and rental liabilities. Any minimum and maximum financial caps can be decided on a scheme by scheme basis.

13.0 Change to the Allocations Plan returning to committee

13.1 Under the terms of the allocations policy a report is required every year so that the performance of the plan can be monitored. It is felt that this time period is a very short time period and the work to produce the report is very resource intensive. It is therefore recommended that the allocations plan is brought back to committee every three years to allow a sufficient period of time to monitor lettings activity against the allocations plan and reduce the work load in producing reports.

Recom mendati ons	Summary of change	Comments
1	Band C Sheltered no other housing need – update to restrict this band reason to bids only on sheltered accommodation and not general needs	Point of clarification
2	Award for carer in conjunction with Social Care. Need for extra bedroom if unable to share a room under the allocations policy	Point of clarification
3	3 bedroom properties with a dining room – increase minimum number of occupants to maximise occupancy level to large properties	Increase minimum number of occupants will enable to bypass smaller households in very large properties
4	Decrease total household income in policy to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One bed £22,000 • Two bed £32,000 • Three bed+ £36,000 	Current level are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studio/one bed £15,000 • Two Bed £27,000 • Three bed+ £30,000
5	Increase savings cap to four months average rent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One bed £5,000 • Two bed £7,000 • Three bed+ £8,200 	Current level are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Bed £3,000 • Two Bed £5,000 • Three Bed + £7,500
6	Increase savings cap for sheltered applicants only to £16,000	Put this in line with Welfare Benefits limits
7	Change the method of calculation of income and savings caps to reflect an applicant's ability to use 50% of income in rent.	Current method is to increase the income and savings cap by the rate of CPI each year.
8	Waive savings cap on extra care applications. Waiver cases can only be offered accommodation if there are no other non-waiver case waiting for extra care	Allow applicants to be self-funding in extra care
9	Remove sheltered Panel from the sheltered assessment process	No longer required as supporting people funding is no longer in place and therefore no requirement to assess as low, medium or high needs. Case will still be assessed in line with general allocations policy.
10	Introduce new Band A – sheltered	Replaces the old Local Lettings

	applicant need to move within the same scheme	Plan in Sheltered – must have a need to move
11	Affordability of accommodation due to the welfare benefit cap – Ability to by-pass applicant who is not able to afford accommodation.	In small number of cases affordable rents are so high that they are not affordable to those in the benefit cap.
12	Removal of over 50s in seven blocks of flats in adverts. (not over 55 for sheltered)	Needs to be removed as no longer complies with the council equalities duties.
13	Change Band D Shared Ownership only to include a statement that can include applicants who are over the income and savings cap for social housing as directed by the financial needs for applicants to afford the shared ownership product.	Allows higher income levels for shared ownership which will be decided on a scheme by scheme basis.
14	Change the reporting period of the allocations plan from one year to three years	Allows for a longer period of analysis and reduces the work load to produce reports.

1.0 Feedback from applicants involved in the application process

- 1.0 Members adopted the new Allocations Policy in December 2016. A recommendation was made by the Housing & New Homes Committee that officers received feedback from applicants who used the application process.
- 1.1 A short on line survey was produced to obtain some initial feedback. The survey was advertised using the on-line bidding portal. This was used because this is where we receive the highest level of contact from our customers.
- 1.2 Despite there being an average of 4,500 active bidders, each two week cycle, who accessed the website the council only received 25 responses to the survey. Of those that responded 52% of respondents were either aware or very aware of how the council allocates housing under the allocations policy with 48% being not very aware (24%) or not at all aware (24%) of how it allocates housing.
- 1.3 When asked how easy it was to apply 60% of respondents found it very easy (28%) or fairly easy (32%) to apply with 24% stating that they found it neither easy nor difficult to apply. A total of 16% found it either fairly difficult (8%) or very difficult (8%)
- 1.4 When asked How easy or difficult was it to understand our response to your application 56% stated that it was very easy (16%) or fairly easy (40%) to understand the response to the application with 24% finding it neither easy nor difficult to understand the response to the application and 12% finding it either fairly difficult (8%) or very difficult (4%) to understand the response to their application.
- 1.5 This survey was the first stage of the councils proposed engagement with applicants who use the service. The Council is currently working with a new I.T. provider, as we have procured a new system to deal with Housing Register applications. The Council is currently on of six councils' in England who are working with the Local Government Association in its Homelessness and Housing Digital Programme. This programme is working to involve service users in the development of the new system and will involve customer user testing so that we may better understand what issues our service users have and how we can improve the new system for the customers.
- 1.6 The service user involvement will include use of video capture of applicants, who will have to agree to be filmed, using the on-line systems so that we can understand what they are having problems with. This will assist us in providing on-line help to our customers by using helper prompts or video clips on how to do things. A report will be prepared at the end of the project on what improvements we have made with the help of our service users.