

CABINET**Agenda Item 247**

19 April 2012

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Housing Allocation Policy Review – Extract from the Housing Management Consultative Committee meeting held on the 19 March 2012	
Date of Meeting:	19 April 2012	
Report of:	Strategic Director: Resources	
Cabinet Member Responsible:	Councillor Wakefield, Cabinet Member for Housing	
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Wards Affected:	All	

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**3.00pm 19 March 2012****COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL****DRAFT MINUTES**

Present: Councillors Randall (Chair); Duncan, Farrow, Mears, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Robins and Summers

Tenant Representatives: Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Trish Barnard (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), David Avery (West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel), Roy Crowhurst (West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel), John Melson (Hi Rise Action Group), Tony Worsfold (Leaseholder Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network).

Apologies: Councillor Wakefield (away on council business) and Jean Davis, Central Area Housing Management Panel.

PART ONE**91 HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW**

- 91.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place and the Strategic Director People which explained that the current Housing Register Allocations Policy was approved by the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting on 22 March 2011. Under the current policy young people leaving care (care leavers) were not automatically awarded Band A priority for social housing (Council & Registered Provider), but were assessed for housing depending on their housing need in the same way as other applicants. The current Allocation policy, however, did give the Lead Commissioner for Housing

discretion to award priority in exceptional circumstances. There was also a quota system in place for Children's Services to grant up to 15 cases Band A status per annum as decided by Children's Services. This was normally used for re-housing young people from local families.

- 91.2 Care leavers and their representatives had raised concerns with the Council regarding the current policy and had suggested that automatic Band A status should be reinstated for young people leaving care.
- 91.3 To ensure that the council were reflecting both the need to make best use of limited housing resources and fulfil the corporate parent role to young people leaving care, a review of the policy had been undertaken including public consultation over 12 weeks (7 November 2011 - 29 January 2012). A list of consultees was attached in Appendix 1.
- 91.4 Consequently, the report set out recommendations for revising the Allocations policy and its operation reflecting a stronger consideration of the Council's role as corporate parent to young people leaving care.
- 91.5 An amendment to the recommendation was submitted by the Labour & Co-operative and Green Groups. This was circulated to members.
- 91.6 The amendment recommended amending recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 listed in the report, so that:

- (i) Paragraph 3.22 was replaced by a new paragraph 3.22;
- (ii) Three new paragraphs at 3.23, 3.24 and 3.25 be inserted; and
- (iii) The existing paragraphs 3.23, 3.24 and 3.25 become paragraphs 3.26, 3.27 and 3.28 as detailed below and shown in bold italics:

The new recommendation would be that Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- 2.1 That the proposals set out in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28 and also Appendix 3 to the report be approved;**
- 2.2 The Strategic Director; Place be authorised to amend the Council's Housing Allocations Policy to reflect the above changes; and
- 2.3 The Strategic Director; Place and the Strategic Director; People be authorised to take all steps necessary or incidental to the implementation of the proposals in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28.**

Paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28 to read as follows:

- 3.22 That Band A priority should be available as one of a range of housing options offered to young people leaving care. Allocation of Band A priority should be based on individual need following a case conference involving the young person and all relevant parties.**
- 3.23 That a case conference panel or board is set up to facilitate the above at 3.22.**

- 3.24** *That robust support packages are created with the involvement of the young person in advance of their leaving care.*
- 3.25** *That the implementation of support packages and the sustainability and success of tenancies on the part of care leavers is monitored by the newly created Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.*
- 3.26** Where a care leaver seeks to appeal an assessment decision and/or agreement cannot be reached by professional assessors, the matter is to be referred to the Strategic Director; People to arbitrate as the delegated corporate parent for the Council.
- 3.27** In addition, the Strategic Director; People and the Strategic Director; Place, will provide an annual report to the Council through a proposed Corporate Parent (sub) Committee on the impact of housing allocations on the management of council housing stock and the well being of care leavers.
- 3.28** With regard to other issues raised as part of the consultation as set out in Appendix 3, officers recommend that these changes are also accepted by Cabinet and subsequently recommended by Cabinet to Full Council for approval ***on 26 April 2012 to the nearest full-Council for approval.***

- 91.7 It was agreed that 3.28 (last line) above should be amended to read “by Cabinet to the nearest full Council for approval.”
- 91.8 Councillor Farrow stressed that care leavers were among the most vulnerable residents of the city. He stated that he could not support the original recommendations in the report, which he felt did not give enough emphasise on a support package. He moved the above amendment.
- 91.9 Stewart Gover expressed concern that that every time a care leaver was placed in Band A, someone in poor accommodation was moved down the waiting list. He was concerned that there was no mention of people on the waiting list who were living in poor conditions.
- 91.10 Councillor Robins recounted his personal experience of coping as a young person without a family. He had been able live with friends and get work. He expressed concern for young people who did not have a job, friends or a community to help them. He stressed the need for robust support packages.
- 91.11 John Melson expressed concern about the way the Allocations Policy was being handled and stressed that there were people with desperate housing needs in the Band A category. He welcomed the amendment but felt that paragraph 3.22 was a bit vague. He considered that there was a need to look at packages available to care leavers and the provision made by the CYPT. Mr Melson noted that in Appendix 7, the only unitary authority that used Band A for Care leavers was Northumberland Council. Of the total number of authorities listed, only 5 allocated Band A automatically.
- 91.12 Councillor Mears expressed grave concerns about the proposals in the report. She noted that homeless people and people in hostels were placed in Band C. She

considered that the proposal to place care leavers in Band A was worrying. Councillor Mears stressed that the current Allocations Policy was lawful and any suggestion that it was not lawful was factually incorrect.

91.13 Councillor Mears emphasised that Children's Services already had 15 allocations per year for Care Leavers and did not fill up their quota. She queried the funding of the proposals and asked if it was a budget cut. Councillor Mears referred to the Sustainability Implications in paragraph 5.4 and stated that this paragraph did not agree with the financial implications. Councillor Mears thought the paper was badly thought out and unnecessary and she would not support the proposals.

91.14 Roy Crowhurst stated that he failed to see how the proposals would help. The Care Leavers in question were people who needed other kinds of support in addition to housing. Mr Crowhurst stressed that there were many young people in their late 20s still living with their parents due to the shortage of housing.

91.15 Councillor Duncan supported the amendment. He stressed that the council were trying to improve the housing stock in order to offer more Band A property.

91.16 The Chair formally seconded the amended proposals. He considered that the Band A priority was one of a range of options and the amendment gave greater clarity.

91.17 A proposal was put that the tenants' representative should take a vote on the amended proposals and that councillors should accept their decision. The Senior Lawyer stressed that councillors on the Committee were required to use their own judgement when casting a vote.

91.18 An indicative vote from tenants was taken. 2 voted for the amended proposals and 8 voted against.

91.19 A vote of councillors was taken. The amended proposal was carried by 5 votes to 0.

91.20 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the comments of the HMCC as set out above be noted.

(2) That Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- (i) That the proposals set out in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28 and also Appendix 3 to the report be approved;
- (ii) That the Strategic Director; Place be authorised to amend the Council's Housing Allocations Policy to reflect the above changes; and
- (iii) The Strategic Director; Place and the Strategic Director; People be authorised to take all steps necessary or incidental to the implementation of the proposals in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28.

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