



## COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

**Date:** Wednesday, 7 February 2018  
**Time:** 6.00 pm  
**Location:** Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete  
**Contact:** Fungai Nyamukapa on 01438 242707

Members: Councillors: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), J Brown, E Connolly, L Harrington, J Mead, A Mitchell CC, C Saunders, G Snell and J Lloyd

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### AGENDA

#### **PART 1**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any apologies for absence or declarations of interest by Members.

**2. MINUTES**

To approve as a correct record the attached Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 8 January 2018. **(Pages 3 to 6)**

**3. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS REVIEW - FINAL REPORT**

To consider the attached final report and recommendations of the scrutiny review into the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. **(Pages 7 to 22)**

**4. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

**5. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

**6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Agenda Published 30 January 2018

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Date: Monday 8 January 2018**

**Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

**Present:** Councillors: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), J Brown, E Connolly, E Harrington, J Lloyd, J Mead, A Mitchell CC, C Saunders and G Snell

**In Attendance:** J Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing & Investment), M Levi-Smythe (Graduate – HR & Organisational Development), W Oglina (Empty Homes Manager)

**Start and End Time:** Start Time: 6:00 pm  
End Time: 8:00 pm

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

#### **2. MINUTES – 1 NOVEMBER 2017**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 1 November 2017, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

Item 3: Sustainable Transformation Plans - Page 4 Paragraph 4 to read:

“In reply to a further question, it was confirmed that dental services, along with GP surgeries, would be included within the scope of the STP’s activities which would also include all aspects of NHS operations including provision of medicines and back-room services.”

#### **3. HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF**

The Committee received a presentation by the Council’s Assistant Director for Housing & Investment, Jaine Cresser, on the “Housing All Under One Roof” programme and the reorganisation of its Housing and Investment Business Unit.

The presentation covered an update on the current status of the programme, and in particular, touched upon the business vision, knowing customers (Big Knock), service and personal development and digital housing. The Members were informed that the Council had purchased four additional modules of the Northgate housing management system. The modules would improve case management, capture more housing-related information and enable a consistent approach to handling customer

queries. The Assistant Director informed the Members that Health Checks were being carried out to ensure that the database was utilised to full capacity and that there would be no disconnect between Housing & Investment and Customer Services.

The Committee was informed that the Housing & Investment team was encouraging customers to use the self-service facility. This was aimed at re-assigning the extra resources to focus on assisting customers who were unable to access online services.

The Members were informed that the main issues raised by residents during the Big Knock were repairs, investment in new homes and the need for regular and up-to-date communication between the Council and residents. The Assistant Director reported that the team was now collating and analysing information gathered during the Big Knock. The Committee was informed that the Housing Operations Manager posts for Providing Homes, Managing Homes and Investing in homes and properties had now been filled.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the job descriptions of the Housing Operations Manager posts, the current organisational structure of the Housing & Investment team and whether officers had provided feedback on their view of the transformation plans.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- the presentation be noted
- the Housing All Under One Roof programme be revisited in a year to see what progress had been made with the transformation plans
- the Assistant Director provide the Committee with job descriptions for the new Housing Operations Manager posts and the new structure of the Housing & Investment team

#### **4. DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS REVIEW REPORT**

The Committee considered a draft report by the Council's Scrutiny Officer, which detailed the recommendations of its scrutiny review into the Council's Housing Allocations Policy, as part of the Committee's Work Programme for 2017/2018.

The Committee considered the draft report and recommendations of the scrutiny review into the Housing Allocation Policy. The Committee was informed that the draft recommendations had been presented to the Customer Scrutiny Panel for comments.

Officers responded to questions raised by Members in relation to:

- policy regarding under-occupiers and key workers
- incentives to down-size
- the aim of the exercise of converting some current hard to let studio apartment blocks to one bed flats

- details communicated to unsuccessful bidders

Members highlighted the fact that staff did not always follow guidance regarding advice to tenants moving properties. It was also acknowledged that tenants with literacy needs, language problems or limited access to online services required more support from staff.

With regard to recommendation 2, the Empty Homes Manager indicated that statistics concerning under 35s could be collated from other teams such as Income and Tenancy.

In response to a question, the Empty Homes Manager confirmed that incentives to downsize were offered in some cases and that it was not Council policy not to approve downsizing applications for those with rent arrears. The Committee was also informed that there was no priority for under-occupiers in the current Allocations Policy.

The Empty Homes Manager informed the Committee that his team used its discretion in some local connection appeal cases. Members were informed that it would be ideal not to communicate bid results to unsuccessful bidders.

It was indicated that it was hard to let sheltered accommodation because of the kitchen sizes and the preference of two-bedroom properties by some elderly couples. It was noted that officers had already started converting some hard to let studio apartments in line with the recommendation. The aim of this exercise was to make the properties lettable and ultimately reduce the voids.

The Chair raised concerns that there were cases of new tenants moving into properties before gas checks had been carried out. This practice could create health and safety issues.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- Recommendation 1 be amended to reflect that staff training needed to be adhered to and more support should be provided to tenants with literacy needs or language problems
- Recommendation 2 to consider the provision of shared accommodation for the under 35s, who would be impacted by the Housing Benefit Cap be included in the report
- The Empty Homes Manager submit to the Committee the statistics about under 35s likely to be affected by the Housing Benefit Cap
- Recommendation 3 be amended to include a review of the Bands to identify customers wishing to downsize and that when a move is possible, a realistic timeframe be established
- the reference to Great Ashby in the Recommendation 4 be deleted
- the Empty Homes Manager check the status of key workers regarding local connection rights and circulate a response to Members
- Recommendation 5 be retained to help monitor progress and for

- future review of the recommendations
- Officers liaise with Members and revisit the terminology used in all forms of communication with bidders
- Officers should arrange a campaign to improve communication with bidders and manage expectations in a transparent manner
- officers stop automatically informing housing bidders where their bid was within the top 50 bids
- in all cases of a new tenancy, an up-to-date gas check be completed on the property before the new tenant is offered the property
- comments be noted and incorporated into the final recommendations.

**5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None

**6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required

**7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

**Meeting:** **COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE**

Portfolio Area: Housing, Health and Older People

**Date:** **7 FEBRUARY 2018**

## **REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

Author – Martha Levi Smythe                      Ext No.2650/Stephen Weaver Ext No.2332  
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Contact Officer – Stephen Weaver                      Ext No.2332

Contributors: Councillor Sarah Mead, Chair of Community Select Committee; Lead Officer – Walter Oglina, Empty Homes Managers

### **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To consider the draft report and recommendations of the Community Select Committee's scrutiny review into the Housing Allocations Policy.

### **2 BACKGROUND AND SCRUTINY ISSUE IDENTIFIED**

- 2.1 The issue of scrutinising the Housing Allocations Policy was agreed by the Select Committee as a scrutiny review item when it met on 1 March 2017 to agree the Committee's work programme for 2017/18.

#### **2.2 Scope and Focus of the review**

- 2.2.1 The Committee met on 13 July 2017 and agreed a scope for the review of the Housing Allocations Policy, which it agreed should focus on Sheltered Criteria and Under-Occupiers, in particular:

- How are allocations into sheltered housing schemes and the flexi care schemes working in practise?
- Introduce priority categories for under-occupiers, with an options paper outlining the relevant choices for tenants

- 2.2.2 The overall aim of the review is that the committee is satisfied that the allocations policy is being implemented effectively and serving the people on the waiting list according to the expectations of the Council. To achieve this overarching aim, it will:

- Establish whether the allocations policy is effective in housing residents according to the premise that members of each band and group are being given the opportunity of housing.
- Establish whether the letting process is dealing accordingly with housing needs – evidence should be presented to the Committee to show where the process is effective and where it is not.
- Establish whether all housing is priority need - in 2014/15, the Council promised the residents, if they remained on the list, that every section of the list should expect to be housed and anyone who wasn't going to be housed was taken off of the list. Has this happened?
- Establish whether the housing offered is fit for habitation and meets the needs of the resident (including sheltered housing – i.e. is sheltered housing being used appropriately).
- Establish whether owners have moved into council housing through the scheme which allows people to do so.
- Identify any additional problems with allocations in order to inform changes needed to the policy.

## 2.3 **Process of the Review**

2.3.1 The Committee met formally on three occasions in 2017 to undertake the review. The Committee met on 13 July to agree the scope and receive an officer presentation on the service; on 26 September to interview a tenant on the process of moving from sheltered housing to a general needs bungalow and a lettings advisor, to get evidence about the situation; and on 1 November to consider the emerging recommendations together with officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People.

2.3.2 As well as through the formal meetings of the Committee, officers supporting the review have met in a series of parallel private meetings with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People to consider all potential amendments and additions to the current Allocations Policy, which officers are currently consulting on and these meetings have helped to feed into the Scrutiny review process.

2.3.3 The Committee received written and oral evidence from the following people:

- Walter Oglina, Empty Homes Manager
- Jaine Cresser, AD for Housing
- Theo Addae, Interim Housing and Homeless Manager
- Peta Caine, Housing Operations Manager
- Jeannette Thomas, Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People
- Mrs Pam Lambourne (a tenant who had recently moved from sheltered accommodation to a general needs bungalow)
- Elayne Crisp, Lettings Advisor

### **3 REVIEW FINDINGS**

#### **3.1 Conclusions of the Community Select Committee**

3.1.1 Based on the input provided to Members conducting the review by Officers supporting the review, the Committee has made the following conclusions in the following areas:

#### **3.2 Case Study - failure to provide a direct debit form - are processes being consistently followed?**

3.2.1 The Committee heard evidence from a tenant who had moved from sheltered accommodation to general needs housing. The way her case was dealt with opened up a number of areas for potential improvement. One process issue that occurred was the non-provision of direct debit forms to support her in setting-up payments for her new home.

3.2.2 However, post discussion with officers it became clear that this had been due to an oversight in this case, rather than a systematic issue. It was concluded that, in this case, there was clearly a lack of consistency in the application of the process and a difference between the expected standard and tenants' experiences.

3.2.3 Members discussed the need for a checklist for staff to ensure that everyone knows what is expected of them, and the service that tenants can expect is clear and consistent across the board. Officers later confirmed that there is a checklist that fulfils this purpose though it clearly had not been utilised effectively in this case.

3.2.4 Recommendation 1 therefore evolved (see below) to reflect the need to improve the way in which existing tools are used by staff to ensure consistent application of systems and processes to improve tenants' experiences.

#### **3.3 Robust communication with tenants is required at all stages of the process**

3.3.1 The evidence of the tenant demonstrated that communication through the process had at times been lacking, causing concern to the tenant, including examples of several phone messages having been left for officers, with no response.

3.3.2 Through discussions, it became clear that it's important to consider the balance between clear and responsive behaviours, and the limitations of officers in terms of capacity when it comes to communication.

3.3.3 There was a discussion around current perceived miscommunication around 'where people are on this list.' Some Members believed that people were being told they were 'close to the top of the list.' Officers clarified that people do not have a position on the list as such, but if they bid for a property, they can be informed of how close they were to securing that particular property.

Anyone who comes in the top 50 for a particular bid will be informed of this automatically by the Locata system software.

3.3.4 Given the potential confusion in this area, options were considered for ways of clarifying this process and reducing the potential for misunderstandings. Officers made it clear that communications with all unsuccessful applicants would not be feasible, but proactive 'myth busting' communications could be developed to make the process clearer and ensure people understand that they do not have a number on the list, just a rank for a particular bid. Hopefully, this would reduce misunderstandings amongst bidders.

3.3.5 There was also a need for improved messaging around the 'Direct List' as there was a perception at large that this list allowed people to 'jump the queue.' Officers advised that the purpose of this list was to make best use of the stock by prioritising cases that met certain criteria. Members suggested that the name 'Direct List' should be changed to an alternative phrase with different connotations and this could be another area that could benefit from proactive communications campaigns to potentially prevent rumours and misinformation about alleged queue jumping.

3.4 18 year olds living at home are signing onto the housing register before they intend to leave home

3.4.1 It was highlighted that 18 year olds are often signing onto the housing register when they aren't seriously intending to move, to make it easier to get a home in the future. This means they often bid on properties that they have no chance of getting. They bid just regularly enough to remain on the register. However, Members are aware that residents of this age have a legitimate right to bid for properties albeit that they are less likely to be successful and that it was agreed that this form of bidding was legitimate and within the rules. The introduction of the Housing Benefit Cap for single under 35s will have a detrimental impact for this group on affordability, so the conversion of a number of properties to shared accommodation, which would be more affordable for the under 35s who will be affected by the cap, will be a helpful improvement for this group.

3.5 High band priority should be given to under occupiers wishing to downsize

3.5.1 It was suggested that there would be benefits associated with enabling under occupiers to bid. Under the present system, under occupiers have no priority and so stand no chance of securing a property under the Choice Based Lettings System. At present, the staff do perform some direct lets for under occupiers, but there isn't enough capacity to make this work as the sole means of increasing mobility in the stock.

3.5.2 Members agreed that it would be positive to increase mobility in the stock. Officers believe this could help to address some of the imbalance between over-occupying and under-occupying in the system. Members were of the view that when negotiating with older people in this scenario the provision of clear and realistic timescales for a move to the tenant would greatly help and

may stop tenants pulling out of moves because of stress and insecurity. See Recommendation 3 for further details.

3.6 The local connection criteria for persons moving into local adjacent areas outside of the Borough whilst on the housing waiting list should be reviewed

3.6.1 There was discussion about the unfairness of the present policy, which means that if you move out of the borough, even for a short period, and even to areas that are very closely adjacent to the Borough, you will cease to be eligible due to the 5 year local connection rule.

3.6.2 There was agreement that something should be done to address this matter. See Recommendation 4 for more detail.

3.6.3 Members questioned the ability of people who are new to the Town to access the housing register in a revised allocations policy with regard to the current qualifying period, which officers confirmed could be waived dependent on the circumstances of the individual concerned.

3.7 Tenant Leaseholder Customer Scrutiny Panel

3.7.1 The Scrutiny Officer met the Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Scrutiny Panel on 4 January 2018 to sense check the issues that the review had identified and provide an opportunity for this group to have input into the review. The Customer Scrutiny Panel subsequently confirmed that it supported the draft recommendations which was reported to the Committee at its meeting on 8 January 2018.

## **4 EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 That the Community Select Committee considers the findings of the review, contained within this report and the recommendations below be presented to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources and the Strategic Director, Matthew Partridge and that a response be provided from these and any other named officers and partners within two months of this report being published.

4.2 RECOMMENDATION 1 – Staff training be arranged and adhered to, to ensure consistency of service with regards to advice when moving between properties, with more support offered to tenants with literacy needs or language problems or limited access to online services.

4.2.1 Reason – During the interview with a tenant from a sheltered scheme who was moving to a general needs property, there did not appear to be a smooth transition between the ending of one tenancy and the start of a new one, which included the non-provision of a direct debit mandate for the new tenancy when officers met with the tenant. This issue was tested with officers to see whether it was a common feature, or a one-off case. With further investigation, this did appear to be an isolated case as evidenced by the Lettings Advisor and the check list which shows what is expected from staff. Given this, we are keen to ensure that all staff are made aware of the

correct procedures and receive the appropriate training to support them to provide a consistent and high quality service to customers.

4.3 RECOMMENDATION 2 – Consider the provision of shared accommodation for the under 35s who will be impacted by the Housing Benefit Cap

4.3.1 Reason – Members were concerned about the impact of the Housing Benefit Cap on under-35s. The introduction of the Housing Benefit Cap for single under 35s will have a detrimental impact for this group on affordability, so the conversion of a number of properties to shared accommodation which would be more affordable for the under 35s who will be affected by the cap will be a helpful improvement for this group.

4.4 RECOMMENDATION 3 – Priority should be given to under occupiers wishing to downsize their properties, with a review of the Bands to identify customers wishing to downsize and that when a move is possible, a realistic timeframe be established

4.4.1 Reason – At present under-occupiers are effectively unable to bid under the current scheme as they are classed as ‘no priority’. A potential policy change would recommend considering a priority banding for under occupiers to incentivise them to bid for smaller properties more suited to their needs. There are currently 155 Band F applicants seeking to downsize who could benefit from a change to the banding as well as a further 70 applicants in other bands who are also wishing to downsize. At the time of this report being written there were 270 SBC tenants in overcrowded conditions. By reviewing and potentially amending the bands with perhaps a ribbon through a band this could provide greater flexibility. It would further help in the cases of older people moving from a larger family size property to a smaller property if, when a possible move is being negotiated, a realistic timescale is established to help the resident by giving them greater security around the move.

4.4.2 Changing the policy regarding under occupiers opportunity to bid could be the most influential recommendation and have the biggest impact on freeing up stock and moving people on the list into much needed larger accommodation.

4.5 RECOMMENDATION 4 - A review of the local connection criteria for persons moving into areas close to the Borough whilst on the housing waiting list

4.5.1 Reason – It was felt that for persons who had been resident in Stevenage and then moved out into private rented property into very close neighbouring areas should not be penalised by losing their local connection points. Currently, the criteria state that applicants require a residency qualification of 5 years. There are situations where applicants take up a Private Rented Sector let just outside of the Borough as there is no suitable accommodation in the Borough but they are then penalised by being taken off the register even if they are outside of the area for just a few months. To alleviate this, it was felt that officers should consider introducing a change to the criteria to

allow people to be considered over a period of years which would allow a break in their local residency, for instance introducing a period of 5 out of 7 years.

4.6 RECOMMENDATION 5 – That officers make alternative and improved use of hard to let sheltered accommodation

4.6.1 Reasons – There is currently extra capacity in sheltered accommodation with bedsits that are unpopular with potential tenants who would otherwise be suitable for sheltered accommodation but who are not keen to take the available bedsits. It's important to make better use of this accommodation.

4.6.2 The use of these units would need to be sensitively handled – but consideration can be given to accommodating emergency housing for homeless households in certain circumstances. For example, it will be possible to use sheltered accommodation at Asquith and Walpole for this purpose for a limited period of approximately 2 months, following the decants and before the demolition and rebuild. This should be considered where redevelopment is occurring to reduce costs associated with accommodating emergency homeless households in the private sector.

4.6.3 There is also the option to convert current hard to let studio apartments stock across to one bed flats. This process is currently underway in seven flats, which will make them more popular and therefore lettable, as previous conversions have shown. Though not all studios are suitable for conversion, we should be looking to do this wherever possible and continue to assess each one as they become void, subject to funding availability.

*Members are aware that this recommendation has already been in part actioned by officers but wish to keep the recommendation as it was a key finding of the review and it will also help monitor progress in the future when the review recommendations are revisited.*

4.7 RECOMMENDATION 6 – (i) That officers arrange a communications campaign to help 'myth bust' and liaise with Members and revisit the terminology used in all forms of communication with bidders to be clear and help manage expectations (ii) that officers specifically look at amending the terminology regarding the 'Direct List' to be replaced with another term with different connotations to help with perceptions of 'queue jumping'.

4.7.1 Reason – to make the bidding process as clear as possible to people so that they are not under the impression that they have a place in 'a queue' or that certain groups are 'queue jumping'. Bidders can currently see where their bid was within the top 50 bids on the Locata software on the Council's website. Residents who have access to the internet should be further encouraged to access this information via the website. Alternatives to viewing this via the internet should be explored for residents who don't have easy access.

- 4.7.2 The review had found that there was a need for improved messaging around the 'Direct List' as there was a perception at large that this list allowed people to 'jump the queue.' The purpose of the list was to make best use of the stock by prioritising cases that met certain criteria. Therefore, amending the wording from 'Direct List' to an alternative phrase with different connotations may help address perceptions.
- 4.8 RECOMMENDATION 7 - That officers should stop the current practise of automatically informing housing bidders where their bid was within the top 50 bids.
- 4.8.1 Reason – Members were of the view that automatically informing tenants where they were in the bidding process was perhaps perpetuating the misconception that the tenant would be very close to securing a property or had little or no chance with their next bid, depending on where they were with their last bid. It was acknowledged that this could result in more calls to the officers but these callers could be directed to the Locata software on the web site and also officers could verbally explain the process to respective bidders.
- 4.9 RECOMMENDATION 8 - In all cases of a new tenancy, an up-to-date gas check be completed on the property before the new tenant moves in and the gas to be approved and fully working prior to the tenant moving in.
- 4.9.1 Reason – The Committee want to avoid the possibility of safety being compromised in this area. When a property is let, as the landlord the Council should have confidence that the gas service to the property is safe. It is therefore recommended that a gas safety check be carried out on all properties prior to a new tenant being offered the property. Tenants should not be put in a position that this test has not been carried out prior to them taking on the tenancy.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

- 5.1.1 A number of the review recommendations may have a financial implication in terms of further officer time and training to address the issues raised and a number of recommendations could have a capital and revenue implication, including recommendations 2, 5 and 7 but these are as yet undefined including remodelling properties and carrying out further gas checks. Depending on the Executive Member response to the recommendations, these implications would need to be fully costed by officers and brought back to the Executive Portfolio Holder before any spending was agreed.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications for the scrutiny review report and recommendations. Any changes to the current Housing Allocations Policy would be

subject to current housing legislation, but this would be covered in a separate report to the Executive.

### **5.3 Equalities Implications**

- 5.3.1 Although the review did not directly address the Protected Characteristics groups within 2010 Equalities and Diversity Act, there are definite impacts on people based on their socio economic background and their need to access social housing. The revised Allocations Policy will revisit the existing equalities impact assessment for the policy and provide a refresh to the new policy. Officers, in conjunction with the Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Housing, will also have Equalities and Diversity considerations in mind when preparing a response to the review recommendations and how they will be taken forward.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Minutes of the Committee meetings held on 13 July, 26 September, 1 November 2017 and 8 January 2018 are available for inspection.

**APPENDICES** – Appendix A - Copy of the Scoping Document

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## Appendix A

### Revised Template Scoping Document following Members comments 13 07 17 meeting

<b>Community Select Committee</b>	
<b>Scrutiny Review Title:</b>	<b>Application of the Housing Allocations Policy (linked to Lettings)</b>
<b>Background issues</b> to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue:	Members raised the issue of reviewing the application of the Council's Allocations Policy when the committee agreed items for the work programme in March 2017. Members were keen to link any work on allocations with allocations into sheltered housing schemes and the flexi care schemes to see how these schemes were working in practise. It was also commented that regarding Lettings, Members could comment on the work of the newly appointed Reconnection Key Worker at the end of the six month pilot.
Is this issue covered by the <b>Future Town Future Council Programme</b> ?	(i) Housing Development - Excellent Council Homes for Life - Increase the number of social & affordable homes in Stevenage & (ii) The provision of high quality, efficient and effective Housing services for our tenants and leaseholders (develop a better Housing Service to our older people)
Is this issue one that raises interest with the public via <b>complaints</b> or Members' surgeries or with Officers?:	This issue is of interest to local people who are on the Housing register. This issue is raised by residents in Members' Surgeries.
<b>Focus of the review:</b> (State what the review focus will be)	<p><i>Following the meeting on 13 July 2017 to consider and agree the content of the Scoping Document the following issues were agreed as the focus of the review by the Committee:</i></p> <p><u>Sheltered Criteria &amp; Under-Occupiers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are allocations into sheltered housing schemes and the flexi care schemes working in practise?</li> <li>• Introduce priority categories for under-occupiers, with an options paper outlining the relevant choices for tenants</li> </ul>

	<p>Aims:</p> <p>That the committee be satisfied that the allocations policy is being implemented effectively and serving the people on the waiting list according to the expectations of the council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish whether the allocations policy is effective in housing residents according to the premise that members of each band/group are being given the opportunity of housing</li> <li>• Whether the letting process is dealing accordingly with housing needs? – evidence should be presented to the committee to show where the process is effective and where it is not. Should data need protecting this should be done leaving the case study details for analysis. Is it all priority need? In 2014/15 the Council promised the residents, if they remained on the list, that every section of the list should expect to be housed and anyone who wasn't going to be housed was taken off of the list. Members want to test if this has happened?</li> <li>• Whether the housing offered is fit for habitation/meets the needs of the resident (including sheltered housing) Members want to look at the suitability of people who are being housed in sheltered housing – is it appropriate?</li> <li>• For owner occupiers Members have asked for any available data on where owners have moved into council housing through the scheme which allows people to do so.</li> <li>• Identify any problems with allocations in order to inform changes needed to the policy</li> <li>• Through looking at the evidence Members will be able to see what needs to be reviewed so that we can strive to be open and realistic in meeting housing needs</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Timing issues:</u></b> Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out?</p>	<p>Officers will advise at the meeting if there are any timing issues to consider. The review will have to fit in with the timing of the other Select Committee review work programme items.</p>
<p>The Committee will meet on (provide <b><u>dates</u></b> if known):</p>	<p>Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue From June 2017 – Discuss scoping with lead officers for Housing Allocations review 13 July 2017 – agree draft scope &amp; receive presentation from officers</p>

	<p>Interview witnesses - 26 September 2017 first date and further dates (likely to be quarter 2 and quarter 3, July 2017 – Dec 2017)</p> <p>Agree recommendations &amp; final report - Date to be agreed</p>
<p><b><u>SBC Leads</u></b> (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD's Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses):</p>	<p><i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Executive Portfolio Holder(s) for Housing, Health and Older People, Cllr Jeannette Thomas</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategic Director Community, Matt Partridge</i></li> <li>• <i>Assistant Director Housing &amp; Investment, Jaine Cresser</i></li> <li>• <i>(Draw from other officers as necessary – including Lettings Advisor, Elayne Crisp. Other Housing officers – Service Manager Supported Housing, Janet Hagger, Housing Operations Manager, Peta Caine, Empty Homes Consultant, Walter Oglina, Housing &amp; Homeless Manager, Theo Addae, and officers from Reconnections Key Worker, Sheltered Housing and Flexicare Scheme)</i></li> </ul>
<p>Any <b><u>other witnesses</u></b> (external persons/critical friend)?:</p>	<p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Critical Friend – Would it be appropriate for this review to invite an officer from another local authority or social housing provider to speak as a “critical friend”.</i></li> <li>• <i>Members of the public who are on the waiting list (officers to advise suitability) and if possible recently housed tenants</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Allocation of lead Members</u></b> on specific individual issues/questions:</p>	<p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting.</p> <p>Members will ask questions on the following areas (list the issues to address during the interviews):</p>

Any other Questions Members wish to cover:	<u>Equalities &amp; Diversity Issues</u> – Are there any E&D issues to consider in this review? – The effect of damp and mould on E&D characteristic groups compared with other community groups?
<b><u>Site visits and evidence gathering in the Community</u></b>	It is not considered that this review would lend itself to a site visit.
<b><u>Equalities and Diversity issues:</u></b> The review will consider what the relevant equalities and diversity issues are regarding the Scrutiny subject that is being scrutinised	<i>To be identified by the lead Member – Cllr ....</i>
<b><u>Constraints</u></b> (Issues that have been highlighted at the scoping stage but are too broad/detailed to be covered by the review):	<p><i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting 13 July 2017 (These issues can be captured and dealt with via other means – Briefings/email/officer action etc)</i></p> <p>Any other matters that are not directly linked to the review into allocations should be directed to officers.</p> <p>The following issue was identified by the Executive Portfolio Holder and officers as a potential issue that could be considered in a review and will be picked up by officers in their wider review of the allocations policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the local connection rules - People on the allocations list who currently lose 'local residency' points if they take a Private Rented Sector accommodation let outside of the Borough. Could look at introducing a change like a 'five in seven year rule', so residents who had lived for between 5 out of 7 years would still keep their points if they came back to the area in the allotted time period</li> </ul>
<b><u>Background Documents/data</u></b> that can be provided to the review	<p><i>As identified by the Committee at the draft scoping meeting 13 July 2017:</i></p> <p>Evidence requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of housing allocations for 2016 – 17 groups/bands/property/ waiting times – Evidence to show how the allocations policy has worked, e.g. the number from each stage of the people on the waiting list who have been housed? – Is it all priority need?</li> <li>• For owner occupiers Members have asked for any available data on where owners have</li> </ul>

	<p>moved into council housing through the scheme, which allows people to do so</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage 1 to 3 complaints relating to allocations &amp; lettings</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Agreed Milestones and review sign off</u></b> -To be agreed by Members and officers</p>	<p><i>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a review: <b>Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected</b> (dependent on the final report &amp; executive portfolio response template publishing date):<b>06 04 18</b></i></p> <p><b><i>Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): March 2019</i></b> (Close to this date the Select Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)</p>

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