



Delegated Decision for Cabinet Member for Housing

Date of Report - 6 March 2018

GATEWAY TO HOMECHOICE ALLOCATION POLICY AMENDMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council is required to review and amend the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy to ensure it will comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The Act comes into force on the 3rd April 2018. The legislation will come into force on the 3rd April 2018. The amendments to the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy will need to be agreed by all 8 participating local authorities by the end of March 2018
2. The key recommended changes are detailed in Section 3 of this report and will require the decision of the Member for Housing.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
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Cabinet Member:	Cllr Richard Kerry
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Supporting Officer:	Name Andy Jarvis Job Title Strategic Director Telephone ext 2323 Email address andrew.jarvis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 requires Local Housing Allocation Schemes to give reasonable preference to specific groups of households on the register which includes homeless households. The Council will now have a wider statutory duty to prevent and relieve homelessness in its area with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA). The Act will come into force on the 3rd April 2018
- 1.2 The associated 'Draft Statutory Code of Guidance' 2017 sets out the Housing Authority's requirement to review their housing allocation scheme in response to the 2017 Act, to ensure that they deliver the requirements of the legislation and are sufficiently geared towards preventing homelessness (Section 2.43 of the draft Code of Guidance).
- 1.3 At the Cabinet Meeting held on the 6th December 2017 the review of the allocations policy was referred to in the Cabinet report. The report specifically set out what measures would need to be in place to meet the requirements of the HRA.
- 1.4 The amendments to the policy will ensure that the policy complies with the legislation and statutory guidance
- 1.5 The Task and Finish Allocations Review Group is made up of representation from all 8 Local Authorities of the Gateway to Homechoice Partnership (Babergh DC, Braintree DC, Colchester BC, Ipswich BC, Maldon DC, Mid Suffolk DC, Suffolk Coastal DC and Waveney DC

2 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

- 2.1 The allocation policy is common to all partner authorities, reflecting the statutory requirements to ensure those in greatest need are given reasonable preference, with restrictions on those who are owed a duty to be accommodated, having to remain within the host District.

3 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY

- 3.1 The revised draft allocations policy is detailed in Appendix A
- 3.2 The changes to the revised allocations policy are detailed in Appendix B. There are 7 proposed amendments to the policy which are listed below
 - I. Amendment to the Schemes Objectives to reflect the requirements of the Act
 - II. Additional Priority Bandings for Prevention and Relief
 - III. Medical Awards-: Clarification of the level of medical award if under a prevention or relief duty
 - IV. Time restrictions : Expectation to bid on the first available property
 - V. Appropriate Bidding: Expectation that the applicants will use their bids appropriately
 - VI. Offers to prevention applicants: Clarification on the consequences of refusing a suitable offer
 - VII. Offers to Relief applicants: Clarification on the consequences of refusing a suitable offer

4. OTHER ISSUES

The decision to agree to the amendments is not considered to be a key decision of the Council as no financial implications are associated with the decision and it falls within criteria (b) of the Council's constitution:

"To approve minor changes to the provision of service where it has been demonstrated that current provision and delivery does not meet the needs of the communities which the Council serves"

Without approval to the policy the Council will not be able to fulfil it's duties to Homeless households in Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Allocation Policy cannot be agreed as one policy which will cover all 8 Local Authorities in the Gateway Partnership

5 REVIEW PROCESS

5.1 Gateway to Homechoice established a Task and Finish Group with a remit to:

- Establish the key areas of consideration for the review
- Produce review recommendations (Appendix B)
- Implement appropriate changes, including changes to the Gateway to Homechoice IT system.
- Revised Allocations Policy to be operational by April 2018

6 PUBLICITY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Policy changes will be placed on the Gateway to Homechoice website and leaflets amended to reflect changes in policy

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 No other options were considered appropriate for the decision.

8 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

8.1 The changes to the policy are necessary to meet the effect of legislative changes arising from the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.

8.2 To ensure that the policy remains up-to-date, relevant, and contributes to the Council's ambitions for social housing and preventing and tackling homelessness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the proposed amendments to the revised allocations policy as set out within Appendix A

APPENDICES (List the title of each separate Appendix below)

Appendix A	Revised Draft Allocations Policy
Appendix B	List of amendments to the Policy

BACKGROUND PAPERS (List below those documents for which the report author has materially relied upon to produce the report and which are available for the public to view – Do NOT include documents which contain ‘exempt’ information)

For CABINET, CABINET MEMBER, and CABINET SUB-COMMITTEES OR A JOINT COMMITTEE COMPRISED OF CABINET MEMBERS EXERCISING EXECUTIVE POWERS only – The following wording must be included. For any non-Cabinet reports, delete the wording (except where the report will progress onto the Cabinet).

Please note that copies of background papers have not been published on the Council’s website but copies of the background papers listed below are available for public inspection free of charge by contacting the relevant Council Department.

Date	Type	Available From
Appendix A	Revised Allocations Policy	Angela Haye