

**Delegated Decision for Cabinet Member for Housing**

**ALLOCATIONS POLICY: TO APPROVE PROPOSED MINOR CHANGES TO THE POLICY (REP1746)**

**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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 recommended changes are detailed in Section 3 of this report.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards in the District
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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Chris Punt Cabinet Member for Housing
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<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Andy Jarvis Strategic Director 01394 444323 <a href="mailto:andrew.jarvis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">andrew.jarvis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>
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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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 the review of the allocations policy was specifically referred to at the Cabinet meeting. This report specifically sets out what measures will 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 housing 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 CONSIDERATIONS**

4.1 The decision-making delegation on this matter for the Cabinet Member, is set out on page 33 of the WDC Constitution, states that;-

“The Council operates a scheme under Section 14 of the Local Government Act 2000 whereby powers and duties of the Cabinet are delegated to individual members of the Cabinet (Portfolio Holders). Each Portfolio Holder exercising such delegation will do so within his/her area of responsibility.”

4.2 Delegated Authority was permitted by the Leader of the Council on the 23 March 2018.

4.3 Without approval to amend the policy, the Council will not be able to fulfil it’s duties to Homeless households in Waveney 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 PUBLICITY CONSIDERATIONS**

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.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A**

Revised Allocations Policy

**Appendix B**

List of amendments to the Policy

**BACKGROUND PAPERS – None**