

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness

Date of meeting: 22nd February 2024

Subject: Proposal to consult on Portsmouth City Council's policy for allocating social housing

Cabinet Member: Cllr Darren Sanders

Report by: James Hill - Director for Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Author: Jo Bennett - Assistant Director - Housing Need and Supply
Shane Galvin – Head of Housing Needs Advice & Support

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek permission to consult on Portsmouth's policy for allocating social housing, which sets out the arrangements for allocating housing accommodation within the meaning of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, including:
- 1.1.1 The selection of applicants to be offered tenancies by Portsmouth City Council,
 - 1.1.2 Nominations to tenancies offered by private registered providers of social housing.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Cabinet member for housing and tackling homelessness agrees that a formal consultation will be undertaken on the requirements of an effective allocations policy. Consultation would seek the views of:
- 2.1.1. Private registered providers of social housing and local authority housing service,
 - 2.1.2. Local residents likely to be affected by any changes to policy, including those currently on the housing register,

2.1.3. Members of the Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group,

2.1.4. Partner organisations likely to be affected by the policy including council directorates.

2.2. The Cabinet member for housing and tackling homelessness notes that the consultation would run from around 14th May 2024 to around 24th June 2024, with officers reviewing the current policy ahead of the consultation.

2.3. The Cabinet member for housing and tackling homelessness notes that the outcome of the review and consultation would be presented to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness along with any proposed changes to the policy.

3. Background

3.1 Local housing authorities are required by s.166A of the Housing Act 1996 to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and procedure to be followed when allocating housing accommodation.

3.2 The council's allocation scheme was last reviewed in 2019, primarily accommodating the changes in homelessness legislation introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

3.3 Portsmouth has since seen increasing numbers of homelessness applications in the face of a challenging housing market. A greater proportion of households offered accommodation via the housing register are now related to homelessness.

3.4 Homeless households still only make up a relatively small proportion of the housing register, but are allocated the majority of the social housing available in the city.

3.5 The high band of the housing register is increasingly oversubscribed, with properties only rarely being offered to anyone with a low or medium level of priority.

3.6 Portsmouth's Homelessness Strategy (2024-2029) determined the following action as required:

3.6.1 Undertake a review of how social housing is allocated: i) a review of the allocations policy for social housing, including its relationship with homelessness and ii) a review of how internal transfers and exchanges are utilised to make the best use of available stock.

3.7 A full review will be carried out by officers ahead of the proposed consultation, in conjunction with colleagues, including with colleagues Adult Social Care, Children Services and homelessness services.

4 Consultation

4.1 Section 168 and 166A of the Housing Act 1996 require local authorities to bring any major changes to allocations policy to the attention of those likely to be affected by it, and to the attention of registered providers so as they have the opportunity to comment.

4.2 The allocations policy is a significant policy which has an impact on a large number of residents and partner organisations. There is therefore a need to significantly consult with them.

4.3 The proposed contributors to consultation would include:

4.3.1 Private registered providers of social housing and local authority housing service,

4.3.2 Local residents likely to be affected by any changes to policy, including those currently on the housing register,

4.3.3 Members of the Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group,

4.3.4 Partner organisations likely to be affected by the policy including council directorates.

4.4 The proposed areas of focus for the review and consultation will include:

4.4.1 The relationship between homelessness and the housing register, including the level of priority that should be awarded to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness,

4.4.2 The number of properties that return to the housing register for allocation from transfer applicants, including specific attention to the largest properties,

4.4.3 The need to make best use of the finite amount of housing available,

4.4.4 The names of the priority bands, particularly the perception of 'low' and 'medium',

4.4.5 Residency criteria and priority for the register, and how that relates to the council giving full effect to the Armed Forces Covenant,

4.4.6 The direct nomination quotas afforded to partners working with vulnerable people, and the effectiveness of the current agreements.

5 Following steps

5.1 On completion of the review and consultation, the findings would be returned for presentation to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness, along with any proposed changes to the policy.

6. Reasons for recommendations

6.1. To complete the action approved by the Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029.

6.2. To ensure that the council's allocations policy is up to date and gives priority to local residents with the greatest housing need whilst achieving the maximum benefit of the available housing for our residents.

6.3. To ensure the council continues to meet the statutory duties under Housing Act 1996.

7. Integrated impact assessment

7.1. An integrated impact assessment will be completed throughout the review and consultation process and would inform any proposed changes.

8. Legal implications

8.1 Full consideration to be given during and on completion of the review and consultation.

9. Director of Finance's comments

9.1 Comments to be sought following completion of the review and consultation.

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Signed by: James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services



Appendices:

None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Portsmouth City Council Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029	Homelessness strategy 2024-29
Housing Act 1996	Housing Act 1996 (legislation.gov.uk)
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (legislation.gov.uk)
Portsmouth Allocation Scheme	Appendix 1 - Allocations Scheme 20190129 Portsmouth Allocation Scheme.pdf

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: