

LETTINGS POLICY – DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

(Report by the Head of Housing Services)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to correct an omission in the Council's Lettings Policy to give delegated authority, to the Head of Housing Services, to award priority to applicants with exceptional circumstances, where those circumstances are not adequately covered by policy.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's Lettings Policy was last reviewed and adopted in June 2007, in advance of the move to the Home-Link Choice Based Lettings scheme. The policy provides the framework for how the letting of housing association properties in the district are to be carried out.
- 2.2 The policy provides a means of assessing the individual circumstances of each person applying to the Council's Housing Register and for applying a priority to applications, however, the council should not 'fetter its discretion' by a blanket policy that does not allow the flexibility to consider exceptional circumstances as and when they arise.
- 2.3 The previous Lettings Policy included an exceptional circumstances delegation to the Head of Housing Services, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health. Not including this delegation in the new policy was an oversight.
- 2.4 The true test of policy is its application over time. The choice based letting scheme commenced in February 2008. A review of the new Lettings Policy has just commenced and is expected to report back by the end of February 2009. It is anticipated that a few refinements will need to be made to the policy and some unexpected consequences of the policy will need to be addressed. Any changes to policy will need to be approved by Cabinet.
- 2.5 In the interim to any policy changes to be approved by Cabinet there needs to be a fast track process to correct any unforeseen consequences of the change in policy that would disadvantage an individual's opportunity for being housed in comparison with other applicants and their priority. The appropriate route would be to delegate authority to the Head of Housing Services.

3. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Cabinet agree to insert a section into the Lettings Policy that states:

Delegated authority is given to the Head of Housing Services, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, to:

- award priority to applicants with exceptional circumstances, where those circumstances are not adequately covered by policy; and
- in the interim to Cabinet's considerations of proposed changes to policy, to correct any unforeseen detrimental consequences of policy that would disadvantage an individual's opportunity for being housed in comparison with the priority of other applicants.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HDC Lettings Policy

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