

**REVIEW OF THE HOME-LINK SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL'S LETTINGS
POLICY**

(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 7th April 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) considered a report by the Head of Housing Services on the outcome of a review of Home-Link, the choice based lettings scheme and the Council's Lettings Policy. This report summarises the Panel's discussions.

2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS

- 2.1 The Panel has received details of work undertaken to review the Home-Link scheme, which comprised an examination of strategic and operational aspects of the scheme and consultation with housing association partners, statutory and voluntary agencies and customers of the scheme.
- 2.2 The Panel has been encouraged by the reported level of users' satisfaction with the scheme, but has acknowledged the review reveals that a significant proportion of users rate the scheme as "poor". Members have suggested that the data should be analysed further with a view to establishing whether there is any link between users' responses and the priority band they have been allocated. With regard to the difficulties some customers experience in understanding the mechanics of the scheme and the finding that some users require assistance to bid for properties, the Panel has been reassured that efforts will be made to inform potential users and to raise awareness generally of the support that is available to them, particularly for those on the Housing Register.
- 2.3 On the subject of the Council's Lettings Policy, the Panel has been advised that the review has concluded that the current policy is adequate to meet local need and that only a minor amendment is required. The Panel has discussed the implications of re-prioritising homeless persons who are sleeping rough by awarding them a Band B priority. In expressing support for this change, Members have taken into account the facts that often such applicants for housing assistance do not merit a higher priority and that there are no charities in Huntingdonshire helping those who sleep rough.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is requested to take into consideration the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) as set out above during their deliberations on this item.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes and Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 7th April 2009.

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