

69. **Allocations Policy**

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director – Housing Management:

- a. presented the proposed new Allocations Policy for comments prior to referral to Executive.
- b. advised that following an interim review of the Allocations Policy in 2017 in preparation for the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, a full review of the policy was carried out as part of the review of the Allocations and Homelessness Teams.
- c. explained that in addition, consideration had been given to advice and guidance provided by the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) Specialist Homelessness Advisor; the Codes of Guidance; Case Law and the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.
- d. advised that the proposed policy would ensure that the City would operate a policy that fully complied with legislative requirements whilst ensuring that the Council best used all of the social and affordable housing in the City. The Council would ensure that those in most need were secured accommodation swiftly whilst also recognising that people who lived and worked in the City should be prioritised for housing.
- e. gave the background to the report as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report.
- f. referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report and highlighted the proposed change to introduce a residency qualification to the waiting list and explained that this would prioritise residents with a connection to Lincoln and would reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the City.
- g. advised that North Kesteven District Council didn't want to introduce the same residency qualification, however, the City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council would continue to work in partnership as Lincs Homefinder.
- h. highlighted the proposed changes to the policy and changes to procedures as detailed at paragraph 4.4 and 4.5 of the report.
- i. advised that consultation on the policy would take place between 24th January 2020 and 24th February 2020.
- j. invited members questions and comments.

Question: Would this Policy be joint with West Lindsey District Council as well as North Kesteven District Council?

Response: No, West Lindsey District Council separated from the partnership in 2018.

Comment: The Tenancy Agreement needed to be explained to tenants to ensure that they understood their responsibilities.

Response: A simplified summary of the Tenancy Agreement had been introduced and tenants were asked to accept that they understood it when they signed up for a tenancy.

Question: Asked for clarification on how the Council worked with other agencies such as Women's Refuge to house vulnerable people?

Response: The Council worked very closely with Women's Refuge. The process was that applicants would be directly matched to a property rather than bidding for a property.

Question: Asked for clarification on the residency qualification?

Response: In law homelessness could override the residency qualification. The residency qualification would apply to everyone else that the Council did not have a statutory duty to house. Exceptional circumstances would be considered to go onto the waiting list.

Question: Were there still any groups of people that would not be able to go on the waiting list?

Response: It would be those people who wanted to live in the City but did not have a connection to the City. They could still move to Lincoln via a Mutual Exchange.

The committee discussed an individual case of a vulnerable person which was referred to Housing Appeals Panel and asked for the procedures of how cases were dealt with prior to consideration by Housing Appeals Panel.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management advised that the Housing Appeals Panel was the last resort following preventative measures being put in place prior to referral to Housing Appeals Panel. She explained the new eviction procedure which had been put in place to ensure that the Council had worked with the tenant and done everything possible to sustain their tenancy before eviction was considered.

She suggested that following this meeting she would look into this particular case to see where lessons could be learned for future.

Members requested that a report be brought to the next Policy Scrutiny Committee on the procedures that were in place prior to a tenancy being referred to Housing Appeals Panel.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and referred to Executive for approval.