



**Author/Lead Officer of Report:** *David Wilkinson,  
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**Report of:** *Executive Director of Place*

**Report to:** *Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and  
Community Safety*

**Date of Decision:** *17<sup>th</sup> July 2020*

**Subject:** *Changes to the Allocations Policy*

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	
- Affects 2 or more Wards	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? <i>Neighbourhoods and Community Safety</i> Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? <i>Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee</i>		
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>(Insert reference number)</i>		
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-  <i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>		

**Purpose of Report:**

This report sets out proposed amendments to the Sheffield City Council Allocations Policy. The Allocations Policy was implemented in April 2016. When approving the policy Cabinet agreed that a review of its impact would be carried out.

The impact of the Allocations Policy has now been monitored and reviewed and the changes proposed are the result of that review. There are six broad changes being suggested which are:

1. Removing all references to the inactive register.
2. Renaming of the bands in order to eliminate confusion as to their purpose and the level of need of applicants within each band.
3. Ensuring that the Allocations Policy makes provision for new legal obligations following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act.
4. Updating of the provisions relating to succession.
5. Removing provision for a demolition and redevelopment scheme which is now complete.
6. Correcting spelling and other drafting errors within the Policy.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the following changes to the Sheffield City Council Allocations Policy are agreed:
  1. That all references to the inactive register are removed.
  2. That the descriptive element of the band names is removed in order to eliminate confusion as to their purpose and the level of need of applicants within each band.
  3. That the references to homelessness duties are updated to make provision for new legal obligations following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
  4. That the provisions relating to succession are updated.
  5. That obsolete provision for the demolition and redevelopment scheme at Scowerdons Weakland and Newstead is removed.
  6. That spelling and other drafting errors are corrected.
2. That the amendments to the wording of the Sheffield City Council Allocations Policy set out in Appendix 1 of this report are agreed.
3. That the implementation of these changes takes effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020

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**Background Papers:**

*(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)*

**Appendix 1 – Changes to the Sheffield City Council Allocations Policy****Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment**

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: <i>Karen Jones</i>
		Legal: <i>Andrea Simpson</i>
		Equalities: <i>Louise Nunn</i>
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	<b>EMT member who approved submission:</b>	<i>Laraine Manley</i>
3	<b>Cabinet Member consulted:</b>	<i>Yes</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> <i>David Wilkinson</i>	<b>Job Title:</b> <i>Acting Service Manager</i>
	<b>Date:</b> <i>01/05/2020</i>	

## **1. PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 Following a period of development and consultation, in March 2013 Cabinet approved the Allocations Policy and authorised its implementation when the necessary updating of the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) information technology system was completed. This replaced the previous Lettings Policy, which had been in place since 2004 and seen a number of revisions since then, and introduced a number of key changes including a requirement for applicants to provide identification and references when applying to join the Housing Register, a two year period of being unable to re-join the Housing Register after accessing social housing, and some applicants (including residential property owners) being prevented from participating in CBL.
- 1.2 Cabinet also agreed that a review of the impact of the new policy would commence six months after its implementation. The Allocations Policy was implemented in April 2016. The review has been carried out, taking feedback from both applicants and staff, and the recommendations of this report are the outcome of that review.
- 1.3 The proposed amendments to the Sheffield City Council Allocations Policy are set out in Appendix 1 to this report. These amendments are detailed below.
- 1.4 Remove all references to the inactive register
  - 1.4.1 Currently, the Allocations Policy allows for two distinct registers which collectively make up the Housing Register, the 'active' and 'inactive' register. The distinction is that an applicant on the 'inactive' register would have expressed an interest in being on the register but not currently wish to actively seek rehousing.
  - 1.4.2 Since the implementation of the Allocations Policy, this has presented a number of difficulties. First and foremost, the CBL ICT system does not allow for two separate and distinct registers and so a number of workarounds have had to be put in place to differentiate between active and inactive applications based on the definitions within policy.
  - 1.4.3 In addition, there is a need for the Council to have a clear understanding of the possible future demand for housing which necessitates that the Housing Register be accurate and that all applications, whether active or inactive, are kept up to date. This means that in practice the inactive register is updated along with the active register thereby negating the biggest distinction between the two registers.
  - 1.4.4 Based on these facts, it is considered to be reasonable to instead hold one register where all applications are required to be kept up to date

and accurate. It will however still be possible to differentiate between those applicants who are actively seeking rehousing and those who are not through reporting mechanisms within the Council's ICT system.

1.5 Renaming of the bands in order to eliminate confusion as to their purpose and the level of need of applicants within each band.

1.5.1 Currently the band names include a descriptive element as to attempt to define their purpose and the level of need of applicants within these bands: top priority, 2<sup>nd</sup> priority, 3<sup>rd</sup> priority, general needs and diminished.

1.5.2 However, these descriptions have often caused more confusion for applicants who believe their circumstances to fit these descriptions rather than the detailed explanation of each band within the policy. Many other local authorities use a similar banding structure but have a simpler naming system i.e. Band A, Band B etc. without any description.

1.5.3 It is therefore proposed that Sheffield adopt a simpler approach to the naming of the bands by removing the descriptions and moving to a system of 'Band A', 'Band B', 'Band C', 'Band D' and 'Band E'.

1.6 Updating of the provisions relating to homelessness

1.6.1 Since the approval and implementation of the Allocations Policy the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has been enacted and come into force imposing new and additional duties on local authorities. Provision must be made within the policy to encompass these additional duties and requirements.

1.7 Updating of the provisions relating to succession

1.7.1 Since the approval of the Allocations Policy the Council's conditions of tenancy have been reviewed and have incorporated changes to succession rights introduced by the Localism Act 2011. It is necessary that these changes are also reflected within the wording of the Allocations Policy.

1.8 Removing provision for a demolition and redevelopment scheme which is now complete.

1.8.1 Sections 7.16 to 7.19 of the Allocations Policy cover allocations to Scowerdons, Weakland, Newstead (SWaN) and peripheral sites. This reflected specific arrangements made to facilitate the SWaN demolition and redevelopment scheme. As this scheme is now complete the provisions are obsolete and there is no further need for them to be included within the Allocations Policy.

1.9 Correct any spelling, grammatical or other drafting errors

1.9.1 A small number of minor spelling, grammatical and other drafting errors have been identified during the review of the Allocations Policy. It is proposed that they be rectified.

1.10 It is proposed that these changes will take effect from 03/08/2020

**2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?**

**2.1 An In-Touch Organisation**

These proposed amendments allow the City Council to continue to respond to customer concerns about simplicity and transparency in our allocations process. They also allow us to meet individual needs by giving households greater choice and control about their housing options and, ultimately, where they live.

**Tackling Inequalities**

These proposals support a clear and transparent Allocations Policy to help applicants understand how they can access social rented housing, how people in housing need are assisted and how social housing is let fairly and so as to fulfil our legal obligations.

**3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

3.1 The Council is not required to consult on this proposal and as such, no consultation has been completed. The changes proposed are minor and do not alter the technical nature or intention of the provisions within the Policy.

**4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

**4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications**

4.1.1 Access to social housing continued to be a critical area for the Council. These proposals for change will ensure that the Council's policy for allocating such accommodation is clear, fair and equitable.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for the proposed changes to identify who will be affected and to outline any recommended mitigating actions in relation to these impacts. This is attached at Appendix 2.

**4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

4.2.1 There are no expected additional budgetary requirements or changes as a result of these changes. The necessary preparatory work and subsequent amendments to supporting documentation will be undertaken by Rehousing Services through existing resources.

There are no IT developments or system amendments required as a direct result of these changes and so there are no associated IT costs. Any such developments which arise following implementation will be completed through regular updates to the system which are to be undertaken through business as usual activity.

#### 4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 Part VI Housing Act 1996 requires a local housing authority to adopt an “allocations scheme” and, except in defined circumstances, to allocate property only in accordance with the scheme. When framing the scheme the authority must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State and to its own homelessness strategy (approved by Cabinet in December 2017) and tenancy strategy (approved by the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods in January 2012). The proposals in this report do not conflict with the statutory requirements and support the Council’s strategies.

### 5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Option 1 would be to not make changes to the Allocations Policy. This option would not take into account feedback which the Council has received since the implementation of the Allocation Policy. This option would also mean that the Allocations Policy does not reference the duties placed upon the Council by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Option 2 would be to complete a full review of the Allocations Policy. This option was rejected at this time as to do so would require large scale consultation and as such would need to form part of a wider project. This option would take a much longer period of time to complete and implement during which the negative consequences explained in Option 1 would also continue to exist.

### 6. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The recommendations within this report set out proposed amendments to the Sheffield City Council Allocations Policy which will take account of feedback from both staff and customers. This will ensure the policy is fit for purpose as well as being clear and consistent.

It will also ensure that the Allocations Policy accurately reflects the provisions introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and that provision is made within the policy to encompass the duties and requirements this places upon the Council.