



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

**to
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
22 MAY 2018**

REVIEW OF ALLOCATIONS POLICY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for a formal review of the effectiveness of the Council's policy for the allocation of affordable housing.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to agree to a formal review and analysis of the current policy and procedure for the allocation of social housing with a report presenting the findings to be presented to this Committee for consideration and possible further action if required.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 All local housing authorities are required by the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI) to have in place policies and procedures for the allocation of social housing. In 1995 this was contracted out to Moat Homes Ltd (formally Plume Housing Association) who continued to operate the housing register, commonly referred to as 'the waiting list'. Following formal review of the Council's Strategic Housing Service and suggestions from the Audit Commission and others, this function was brought back into the Council in 2008/09.
- 3.2 At that time there was strong encouragement to move to what is known as a choice-based lettings system whereby all available homes are advertised and applicants apply, mainly now through the internet, to be considered. Those with the highest level of need and the longest waiting time are then prioritised for nomination by the Council for the homes which are provided by local housing associations.
- 3.3 The Council procured its current system with seven other local authorities, providing a considerable saving as costs are pooled between all of the councils working as a consortium. They also all share a common policy for the assessment of need of all applicants and the allocation of homes, including an ability to apply and be considered for homes outside of their own district. This helped to meet the government's aim of giving more choice and also greater mobility to those in need of affordable housing, whether as younger people wanting to move to be closer to work or education, or older people seeking moves closer to family or to areas more suited to their needs and wishes.

- 3.4 Overall the levels of inward and outward migration between the Maldon District and the other districts in the consortium has balanced out and the Council has also benefited from mutual arrangements for handling complaints and requests to review decisions by sharing these with other members of the group who can provide impartial decisions but with changing demands on housing across such a wide area Members may wish to see a more detailed analysis of the allocation of housing and the workload placed upon officers. This analysis can be benchmarked against alternate options which would also include costs, allowing Members to see and make a judgement as to whether any benefits of working differently may be outweighed by additional costs.
- 3.5 A report of this analysis would be presented to this committee as soon as it is completed with an outline of options, giving Members information on the analysis and choice as to what they would like to do.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Understanding the effectiveness of the policy for the allocation of social housing, in particular the extent to which it supports the Council in meeting its statutory duties, is a vital aspect of the Council's role as a strategic local housing authority. This is especially pertinent with a pipeline of new affordable housing that is expected to be delivered over the next few years alongside the government's proposals to give greater flexibility over allocation policies and diversifying the type of affordable housing.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 Creating opportunities for economic growth and prosperity; by ensuring homes are allocated to those who live and work locally, supporting the local economy and helping local businesses especially smaller employers recruit and retain local employees.
- 5.2 Delivering good quality, cost effective and valued services; by ensuring current and future supply of affordable homes meets local need and the Council's statutory duties.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – the policy and operation of the housing register is vital in matching local housing need with supply.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Many of those in housing need are also protected under the Equalities Act.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Failure to meet local housing need can result in the Council being less able to meet its statutory duties.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None for this stage.

(v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.

(vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None.

Background papers:

Allocating Social Housing – Briefing Paper, House of Commons Library No. 06397 June 2017

Enquiries to: Paul Gayler, Strategic Housing Manager, (Tel: 01621 875872).