

## **Changes to Strategic and Community Housing Service's Lettings Policy under Delegated Authority powers**

### **1. Introduction**

The Lettings Policy is being fully revised with a view to implementation, following consultation with partners and residents, in December 2008. However in order to deliver the immediate priorities of the council there are three changes that have been discussed with the Cabinet Member and Director of Urban Environment, with a view to using their delegated powers, to introduce immediate change (Delegated authority was approved under Cabinet Minute TEX70, September 12<sup>th</sup> 2006.)

### **2. Background**

A report to Cabinet (the then Executive Committee) on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006 recommended that Cabinet agree the Lettings Policy as well as the following two recommendations:

- 1. That agreement of the final points scheme be delegated to the Director of Social Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing.*
- 2. That the pointing scheme be reviewed, and amended, as appropriate, by the Director of Social Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing as required to meet the Council's objectives.*

**N.B** Strategic and Community Housing Services (SCHS) was then situated in the Adults Social Services Directorate and delegated authority fell to the Director of Social Services. The SCHS business unit now sits within the Urban Environment Directorate and delegated authority passes to the Director of Urban Environment.

This report sets out the changes to the Lettings Policy. Appended to this report is the Delegated Authority form to be signed by the Director of Urban Environment and Cabinet Member for Housing Services which will formalise these changes.

### **3.Changes to the Lettings Policy**

The changes are detailed below and include their location in the original Lettings Policy as well as the amended one.

#### **3.1 Include a statement to assist in conversions from non-secure S193 tenancies to secure tenancies.**

It is recommended that the following statement is added to the policy to cover S193 conversions. It should be added to the list of Exceptional circumstances

where choice may not be offered, which is contained in chapter 7 (page 21 of the existing policy, page 21 of the amended policy)

***Conversion of council owned stock used as temporary accommodation***

*A homeless person who has been placed in council owned temporary accommodation may at the council's discretion later be made a direct offer of a secure tenancy of this accommodation.*

**3.2 Increase the priority of Decant cases and Management transfer cases, where a move is essential, to avoid the use of temporary accommodation and provide a permanent move within 8 weeks of approval**

It is recommended that the following statement is added to the Policy. This is an amendment to the list of Exceptional circumstances where choice may not be offered, which is contained in chapter 7 (page 21 of the existing policy, page 21 of the amended policy)

***Emergency moves***

*The Home Connections Scheme takes time to operate and sometimes the situation is urgent. Direct offers may be made, for example, where there are child or public protection issues, where significant repair or structural work is required, where there is serious harassment or violence or where the police ask for assistance under the National Witness Mobility Scheme.*

In addition a 800 points award will be introduced for management transfer cases and those requiring essential decant will be increased from 300 to 800. These points will be awarded on the recommendation of the management transfer panel. This is contained in Chapter 5 (page 17 and 18 of the existing Policy, page 18 of the amended policy).

**3.3 Increase points to Under-Occupation cases to deliver more moves and release larger properties sooner**

It is recommended that the points awards made to under occupying households are increased as follows:

Category 1 (giving up 1 bedroom) from 300 to 800 points

Category 2 (giving up 2 bedroom) from 400 to 850 points

Category 3 (giving up 3 bedroom) from 500 to 900 points

This is contained in Chapter 3 (page 14 of the existing policy, page 15 of the amended policy).

#### 4. Financial Comments

4.1 If there is a need to consult with tenants, any costs incurred will be met from the currently approved HRA budget. Otherwise there are no significant additional financial implications arising from the implementations of the recommendations in this report.

#### 5. Legal Comments

5.1 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

5.2 None of the proposed changes to the Lettings policy are major changes of policy which require further consultation with stakeholders.

5.3 There is a risk that the policy of converting non-secure tenancies to secure tenancies could be considered unlawful because it is a blanket policy which involves the Council fettering its discretion and removing choice from the applicant. However, provided that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that every case is considered on its merits and that reasonable criteria are being applied, the risk should be significantly reduced.

5.4 There is no statutory duty to publish the changes to the policy as they do not constitute a major policy change.

#### Approved by Director

Signed:



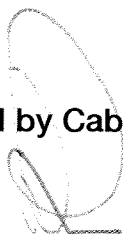
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#### Approved by Cabinet Member

Signed:



Name: Cllr John Bevan

Date:

03/10/08