

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS**

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate  
Street, Rotherham.**

**Date: Monday, 16 February 2009**

**Time: 10.00 a.m.**

### **A G E N D A**

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
3. Minutes of meetings held on 10th and 24th November, 8th and 22nd December, 2008 and 5th January, 2009  
(see Orange Delegated Powers Book dated 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2008-16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 Pages 1-24C)
4. Addendum to the Allocation Policy (Pages 1 - 5)
5. Exclusion of the Press and Public  
The following item is likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council)).
6. Decent Homes 2009/10 Allocation of Works (Pages 6 - 15)

<b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>16th February 2009</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Addendum to the Allocation Policy</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Programme Area:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

### **5. Summary**

This report details proposal made as a result of learning from the first 3 months of the new Allocation Policy which was launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008.

### **6. Recommendations**

- **THAT CABINET MEMBER NOTES THE CONTENT OF THE REPORT AND AGREES THE ALLOCATION POLICY REVISIONS:**
  - Applicants can be considered by the Housing Assessment Panel for the Priority Plus Group where they have been referred by the Assessment team due to an urgent move being required because a member of the household has been diagnosed to be terminally ill.
  - Households awarded Priority Plus status are offered “Like for Like properties” If the property offered is a different type to their original transfer application, the applicant be allowed to retain their original application date in the General Group.
  - Time limits of 28 days is given to all applicants in the Priority Plus group. If the applicant has not made a request and suitable properties have been available, the Priority Plus status is cancelled.
  - Households living in temporary accommodation, (statutory homeless) who are not actively bidding (without any apparent good reason within a 28 days period, will be made an offer of suitable accommodation. This will be a final offer of accommodation within the meaning of section 193 Housing Act 1996 and will be made in discharge of the Council's duty to homeless persons under that section of the Act. For the purpose of this provision the phrase 'actively bidding' means submitting bids for suitable available properties with the genuine intent of securing that available property.
  - “Aged Persons” accommodation can be allocated to people under 60 assessed as needing bungalow provision on the grounds of evidenced medical conditions. This will apply only where there are no other persons over the age of 60 requiring the accommodation. The provision of Rothercare remains a condition of the tenancy.

## 7. Proposals and Detail

- 7.1 The New Housing Allocation Policy was launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008. It is now more focussed on assisting people in urgent housing need with the introduction of the Priority Plus group and the General Plus group. Since the implementation it has been evident that there are instances where customer's circumstances are not currently met by the policy.
- 7.2 The Housing Assessment Panel meet on a weekly basis to consider cases that have been referred by Housing Officers from 2010 Rotherham Ltd or Neighbourhoods and Adult Services. The panel members can only make decisions in line with the Allocation Policy rules.
- 7.3 The first panel meeting was held 13<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and has met on a regular weekly basis. There must be at least 4 Senior Officers present for the meeting to go ahead. The table below details the outcomes of the cases heard.

Date of Panel	Number of cases agreed for Priority Plus	Number of cases refused Priority Plus Status	Number of cases Deferred
13/01/09	6	0	2
20/01/09	1	1	3
27/01/09	3	0	2

- 7.4 The Allocation Policy has been closely monitored by the Housing Assessment Panel and as a result of learning from recent cases there are now recommendations for amendments to the Allocation Policy:

- **Applicants can be considered by the Housing Assessment Panel for the Priority Plus Group where they have been referred by the Assessment team due to an urgent move being required because a member of the household has been diagnosed to be terminally ill.**

**Background** – The length of time waiting in the Priority Group can sometimes be too long for someone who is terminally ill. Where their current accommodation isn't suitable these households could be considered for Priority Plus by the Housing assessment Panel.

- **Households awarded Priority Plus status are offered "Like for Like properties" If the property offered is a different type to their original transfer application, the applicant be allowed to retain their original application date in the General Group.**

**Background** – Where households are already on the Housing Register in the General Group, living in a flat but would like to move to a house. The waiting time for a house could be several years. The Priority Plus award is to safeguard the applicant; otherwise this route can be seen as queue jumping to family accommodation.

It would be unfair if the applicant was placed in the Priority Plus Group and subsequently moved to the same property type but lose their original waiting time in the General Group.

- **Time limits of 28 days is given to all applicants in the Priority Plus group. If the applicant has not made a request and suitable properties have been available, the Priority Plus status is cancelled.**

**Background** - To prevent applicants waiting in the Priority Plus group to hold out for their ideal property, therefore time limits of 28 days should be implemented.

- **Households living in temporary accommodation, (statutory homeless) who are not actively bidding (without any apparent good reason within a 28 days period, will be made an offer of suitable accommodation. This will be a final offer of accommodation within the meaning of section 193 Housing Act 1996 and will be made in discharge of the Council's duty to homeless persons under that section of the Act. For the purpose of this provision the phrase 'actively bidding' means submitting bids for suitable available properties with the genuine intent of securing that available property.**

**Background** – Temporary accommodation is meant to be a short term emergency living arrangement. There have been instances where households refuse to make requests for properties meaning temporary accommodation can not be made available for other households. This will also assist in meeting the NI156 target to reduce the usage of temporary accommodation to 31 units by 2010.

Legal Services have advised that the “final duty discharge offer” must state that it is such an offer and be made under the relevant subsection of section 193 (normally s193(7)). This should be done in the form of an offer letter which also explains the consequences of refusing to accept the offer, and of the rights to review and appeal. The duty to offer “advice and assistance” will remain.

- **“Aged Persons” accommodation can be allocated to people under 60 assessed as needing bungalow provision on the grounds of evidenced medical conditions. This will apply only where there are no other persons over the age of 60 requiring the accommodation. The provision of Rothercare remains a condition of the tenancy. The properties will remain exempt from the Right to Buy Scheme.**

**Background** – There have been occasions where there is no older person who has been assessed as requiring aged person accommodation

interested in a property. There is however demand for younger people with physical disabilities or medical condition who would benefit from bungalow accommodation. These under 60 year old applicants must also have an assessed need for the accommodation and require Rothercare, but will now be able to be offered the property if there are no suitable older people interested.

## **8. Finance**

- 8.1 By reducing time periods in the Priority and Priority Plus Group will reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation. This will enable a cost saving to the Council as it is likely to allow a reduction in the temporary units of accommodation currently needed for homelessness families.
- 8.2 By offering suitable accommodation earlier to urgent medical cases in the Priority Plus Group may reduce the cost of Care Provision and cost of adaptations.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

- 9.1 Any change to the Allocation Policy must ensure that the needs of vulnerable and hard to reach groups are addressed, and the Council's statutory obligations are met. The Allocation Policy must be delivered in a transparent way to ensure it is fair, and seen to be fair.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

- 10.1 The Allocation Policy is delivered at a local level and via the Key Choices Property Shop and Neighbourhood Offices, which supports the Council's commitment to providing greater accessibility to services, meeting social needs by helping to ensure a better quality of life, improving fair access and choice, protecting, keeping safe vulnerable people and specifically addresses the diversity agenda, by tailoring services to the needs of hard to reach groups.

Working to improve services for Rotherham people and to ensure more effective links to the Rotherham 'Proud' theme.

*Rotherham people, businesses and pride in the borough are at the heart of our vision. Rotherham will have a positive external image and its people will be renowned for their welcome, friendliness and commitment to the values of social justice. Active citizenship and democracy will underpin how Rotherham works. Achievements and diversity will be celebrated. Rotherham will be a caring place, where the most vulnerable are supported. It will be made up of strong, sustainable and cohesive communities, both of place and interest and*

*there will be many opportunities for people to be involved in civic life and local decision making. The means to do this will be clear, well known and accessible.*

The Allocation Policy, can demonstrate a contribution to five Key Lines of Assessment within the CSCI 'New Outcomes Framework for Performance Assessment of Adult Social Care'. In particular there is a significant contribution to improved quality of life [KLA 2] through the development of more information; more joined up work to ensure minimum delays; better service consistency between agencies. The changes will lead to shorter waiting times for services and better interventions leading to the increased awareness of housing options and the prevention of homelessness.

### **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

In monitoring the Allocation Policy we have used the Housing Assessment Panel as a mechanism to consider any changes, where possible, to seek views of others to ensure any improvements are effective and are at the heart of customer's needs and aspirations.

The changes for consideration within this report have also been influenced by customer feedback. Customers are encouraged to make suggestions thorough the Learning from Customers Focus group, and within the customer complaints procedure and customer satisfaction surveys.

- The Allocation Policy (1st December 2008)
- The Homelessness Act 2002.
- Housing Act 1996, Parts VI and VII
- The Code Of Guidance in Allocation [CLG 2007]
- The Homelessness Code of Guidance

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