

Policy Review and Development Panel

Grand Jury Room, Town Hall
5 March 2012 at 6.00pm

The Policy Review Panel deals with reviewing policies and issues at the request of the Cabinet or Portfolio Holder, or pro-actively identifying issues that may require review; dealing with those issues either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, monitoring progress of these Groups and assessing their final reports.

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

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The Council values contributions from members of the public. Under the Council's Have Your Say! policy you can ask questions or express a view to meetings, with the exception of Standards Committee meetings. If you wish to speak at a meeting or wish to find out more, please refer to Attending Meetings and "Have Your Say" at www.colchester.gov.uk

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Terms of Reference

Policy Review and Development Panel

- To review strategies and policies at the request of the Cabinet either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, and to make recommendations back to Cabinet for decision.
- To review issues at the request of a Portfolio Holder either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups and to make recommendations back to the Portfolio Holder for decision.
- To monitor progress of Task and Finish Groups and assess their final reports prior to their submission to either the Cabinet or the Portfolio Holder.
- To proactively identify issues that may require review and improvement and to seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
5 March 2012 at 6:00pm

Members

Chairman : Councillor Nigel Offen.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Mark Cory.
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Julie Young, Margaret Fairley-Crowe, Marcus Harrington and Lesley Scott-Boutell.

Substitute Members : All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

Agenda - Part A

(open to the public including the media)

Members of the public may wish to note that Agenda items 1 to 6 are normally brief and the last Agenda Item is a standard one for which there may be no business to consider.

Pages

1. Welcome and Announcements

(a) The Chairman to welcome members of the public and Councillors and to remind all speakers of the requirement for microphones to be used at all times.

(b) At the Chairman's discretion, to announce information on:

- action in the event of an emergency;
- mobile phones switched off or to silent;
- location of toilets;
- introduction of members of the meeting.

2. Substitutions

Members may arrange for a substitute councillor to attend a meeting on their behalf, subject to prior notice being given. The attendance of substitute councillors must be recorded.

3. Urgent Items

To announce any items not on the agenda which the Chairman has agreed to consider because they are urgent and to give reasons for the urgency.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman to invite Councillors to declare individually any personal interests they may have in the items on the agenda.

If the personal interest arises because of a Councillor's membership of or position of control or management on:

- any body to which the Councillor has been appointed or nominated by the Council; or
- another public body

then the interest need only be declared if the Councillor intends to speak on that item.

If a Councillor declares a personal interest they must also consider whether they have a prejudicial interest. If they have a prejudicial interest they must leave the room for that item.

If a Councillor wishes to make representations on an item on which they have a prejudicial interest they may do so if members of the public are allowed to make representations. In such circumstances a Councillor must leave the room immediately once they have finished speaking.

An interest is considered to be prejudicial if a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard it as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.

Councillors should consult paragraph 7 of the Meetings General Procedure Rules for further guidance.

5. Have Your Say!

(a) The Chairman to invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition at this meeting – either on an item on the agenda or on a general matter not on this agenda. You should indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

(b) The Chairman to invite contributions from members of the public who wish to Have Your Say! on a general matter not on this agenda.

6. Minutes

1 - 7

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2011

7. Review of Housing Allocations Policy

8 - 114

See report by the Head of Life Opportunities

8. Work Programme 2011/12

115 - 118

See report by the Head of Corporate Management

9. Exclusion of the public

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

7 NOVEMBER 2011

Present :- Councillor Nigel Offen (Chairman)
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Mark Cory,
Margaret Fairley-Crowe (Former Mayor) , Marcus
Harrington, Lesley Scott-Boutell and Julie Young

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 8 August 2011 were confirmed as a correct record.

11. Equality and Diversity // Annual Update Report

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Corporate Management concerning the changes and progress made following the Equality Act 2010.

Lucie Breadman, Head of Corporate Management, attended the meeting to assist members in their discussions. She explained the Equality Act 2010 had replaced the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act and included a new Public Sector Equality Duty coming into force in April 2011. This replaced the separate public duties relating to race, disability and sex to also cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment more fully. Two consultation papers had been published by the Government in March 2011 signaling a change in approach and timescales, along with the removal of many of the previous draft regulations. As at October, the outcome of the review of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) was awaited, the specific duties regulations had come into force in September and the 'quick start' guide to these regulations had been published by the Government Equalities Office in October with the statutory guidance due to follow on from the Commission.

The Equality Act 2010 aimed to make the law simpler, to remove inconsistencies, and strengthen protection in some situations. It introduced 'protected characteristics', which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. Every person has one or more of these protected characteristics, so the Act protects everyone against unfair treatment on those grounds.

The General Duty's aim was to integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public bodies, and across all its functions. All councils, including their councillors and staff, must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and

those who do not.

Information had been published to demonstrate the Council's compliance with the General Duty including:

- Single Equality Scheme and action plan
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Website section dedicated to Equality and Diversity
- The Council's external accreditation as an 'achieving' organisation under the Equality Framework for local government
- Workforce statistics
- Work undertaken by the Council's Research and Engagement Team about service users, customers and the borough's population.

The Act also required local authorities to prepare and publish one or more specific, measurable equality objectives by 6 April 2012. The Council's current equality objectives were set out in the Single Equality Scheme 2010-13, and approved in 2010. The review of the Council's Strategic Plan for 2012-15 was currently underway which would provide an ideal opportunity to incorporate this more focused and streamlined requirement for "one or more specific, measurable equality objectives" into an updated Strategic Plan, and to demonstrate the importance of Equality and Diversity as a key priority for the Council.

Lucie explained that 2011 has been a year of transition and change in the field of equality policy and practice with a move away from proscribed, detailed requirements and each equality strand being viewed as a 'standalone' issue as well as moving towards a more inclusive approach to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who don't'.

She also confirmed that the Council's three internal equality groups – the Member Liaison Group, the Diversity Steering Group and the Equality and Diversity Reference Group – would continue to meet and the shared post of Equality and Diversity Officer between Colchester Borough Homes and Colchester Borough Council would be maintained.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:-

- Support for the Council's continued commitment to the Equality Impact Assessment regime and the internal equality groups which had greatly contributed to the embedding of Equality and Diversity implications within the organisation;
- That there are no upper limits to legal discrimination cases which had significant financial implications for the Council;
- Concern regarding the loss of 'best practice' networks due to changes to funding and priorities and the need for the Council's expertise and knowledge to be maintained;
- The continued importance of training for new staff and for councillors on a regular basis.

RESOLVED that the changes, progress and future plans made following the

introduction of the Equality Act 2010 be noted.

12. Magistrates' Courts Task and Finish Group // Final Report

The Panel considered a report by Executive Director, Ann Hedges (née Wain), concerning the work undertaken by the Magistrates Courts Task and Finish Group and presenting the recommendations of the Group to the Panel.

The Task and Finish Group had been established to investigate the future use of the space in the Town Hall building currently occupied by the Magistrates' Courts and it had been acknowledged in the Group's Terms of Reference that an overview of the use of the Town Hall would need to be taken as well as consideration as to the use of the Town Hall in terms of its role as a venue for Council meetings, Civic and Mayoral functions as well as the commercial marketing of the building.

Over a number of meetings the Group had identified and discounted a range of possible alternative uses and the broad principles of the following options had been considered at its final meeting:

- Do nothing;
- Look to dispose of parts of the building that are not currently used including the Magistrates' Courts;
- Consider looking at a larger area to dispose of, retaining the main meetings rooms and Mayoral suite only;
- Extend the Town Hall Business Plan in-house;
- Test expressions of interest to run the Town Hall on a commercial basis;
- Work with a Developer to look at options over a period of time;
- Sale of the whole building on a long lease;
- Sale of the building plus car park.

The Group had ruled out the first and last of these options during its work.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Turrell attended and, with the approval of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. She was of the view that the members of the Task and Finish Group had undertaken a thorough investigation of the issues presented to them. She explained that the Cabinet intended to refer the recommendations from the Policy Review and Development Panel on this matter to the Council meeting to be held on 8 December 2011 with a view to the outcome of the Council debate being determined by the Cabinet at its meeting on 25 January 2012. She confirmed that any further detailed work associated with the potential options would only be commenced following the decision taken by the Cabinet in January 2012.

Councillor Willetts attended and, with the approval of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. His strong view was that the Town Hall was the principal focal point in the town for important civic events such as Armistice Day and Freedom of the Borough Parades and, as such, this role should not be diminished. He was aware that that there would be a cost associated with the annual maintenance of the Magistrates' Courts and that this cost needed to be accounted for but he was alarmed that other parts of the Town Hall

had been included in the potential future options. He was of the view that the public accepted that there was a cost associated with any municipal building and that there was a need for such a building to provide rooms for use by Councillors generally as well as the Cabinet and the political groups. He acknowledged that it was difficult to assess the value of 'heritage' but there was an opportunity for the Town Hall building to be used to a far greater extent to display historical artefacts owned by the Council and he was of the view that the Task and Finish Group should have undertaken more work in this regard as well as the consideration of a detailed cost benefit analysis and / or business case as well as legal advice relating to the potential lease of the building to other organisations. He was concerned that the work required more time to complete, particularly in respect of a detailed consultation exercise and that this was to the advantage of potential developers rather than the people of Colchester.

Councillor Frame, Chairman of the Magistrates' Courts Task and Finish Group, attended and, with the approval of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. He outlined the work undertaken by the Group in relation to the Scoping Document, the running costs of the buildings and the Town Hall Business Plan. The Group had sought advice about potential more profitable uses as well as from English Heritage. Councillor Frame confirmed that the Group had visited the Courts and cells areas and had considered both unused and underused spaces in the building, including the former Caretaker's flat, spaces next to the Moot Hall and Councillors' and political group rooms.

Of the eight options which had emerged, the Group had quickly discounted those to do nothing and the sale of the building plus car park. The recommendations which had emerged took into account the need for further expert advice to be sought and also included an acknowledgement that conflicts of use existed between the commercial and council use of the building and this had led to the consideration of utilising other council owned space, such as Angel Court for meetings purposes. The Group had borne in mind the fact that public meetings had been undertaken in the past at alternative venues to the Town Hall although the need for robust audio facilities was of paramount importance for any meeting venue to be successful. The Group had been clear that the civic life of the Town Hall should be continued such that the Moot Hall would need to be reserved for certain civic functions along with the Mayor's Parlour. The Group had looked at what other local authorities were doing with their municipal buildings and had learnt that the Magistrates' Courts were not considered to be the best historic examples by English Heritage. He explained that potential educational use of the Magistrates' Courts area had been considered but would not be cost effective enough to pursue and it was unlikely that it would be possible to accommodate the Visitor Information Centre in the building due to the need to have a High Street presence and the accessibility constraints of the front of the building. Councillor Frame concluded by thanking the Panel for the opportunity to participate in the Task and Finish Group's work which he felt had been an interesting and challenging exercise.

Councillor Julie Young, in her capacity as a member of the Task and Finish Group, endorsed much of the information supplied by Councillor Frame. She agreed that the Group had been very thorough in its work and was of the view that the recommendations from the Group warranted support as they constituted the start of a process which the Council could ultimately choose to accept or reject. She was of the view that alternative venues for public meetings other than the Town Hall were workable

considerations so long as all accessibility issues could be adequately addressed.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:-

- The need for certain valued elements of the Magistrates' Courts buildings such as the Coat of Arms, to be retained or returned;
- The Town Hall building was the result of a number of benefactors' generosity and should not be disposed of lightly or hastily as it was important to retain the building for use by the people of Colchester;
- The potential for the building to be used for heritage purposes, such as the display of artefacts should be investigated further;
- The need for further investigation of the potential to increase commercial use of the building in-house;
- The need for the potential use of the building to house the Visitor Information Centre to be investigated further;
- The potential for facilities such as Firstsite to be used for public meetings and for this possibility to be investigated further;

A number of members of the Panel were of the view that the Town Hall was an iconic building and, as such, should be retained as the venue for the principal meetings of the Council. They were also concerned regarding that part of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations relating to the management of the Town Hall building by an external company and were of the view that the management of the building should remain within the control of the Council.

Following very thorough consideration the Panel were of the view that, in order to allow for a detailed debate at the next Council meeting, the conclusions of the Task and Finish Group should be referred to the Cabinet in full but in addition a further note of the Panel's view be also referred for consideration as follows:

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that –

- (A) To allow for a detailed debate at the next Council meeting, the conclusions of the Task and Finish Group be agreed in full as follows:
- (i) The external market is tested for expressions of interest to establish what could be possible within a range of conditions;
 - (ii) There are two distinct areas to be put out to the market:
 - (a) A range of spaces that are no longer used by the Council plus the space currently occupied by the Magistrates' Courts for possible long lease and redevelopment,
 - (b) The rest of the building for consideration to be managed by an external company to increase income;
 - (iii) The areas identified above at (ii)a and (ii)b could be bid for by separate companies or a single company and this would include bids from community groups;

(iv) Certain requirements, to address the following aspects, would be applicable in respect of (ii)b above:

(a) Reducing the Council's need for the building by moving internal day time meetings into space in Angel Court and looking at whether some public meetings could be moved out of the Town Hall, potentially using space in Angel Court to meet this requirement;

(b) Preserving the Council's right to use the Town Hall for a range of functions including, but not exclusively, Full Council meetings, Mayoral functions, Open Building Heritage Days, St George's Day, Oyster Feast, and Remembrance Sunday.

(B) Further investigation be undertaken regarding the potential use of the Town Hall building to house the Visitor Information Centre and the potential for facilities such as Firstsite to be used for public meetings of the Council in the future;

(C) (FOUR voted FOR, ONE voted AGAINST and TWO ABSTAINED) The Town Hall be retained as the venue for the principal meetings of the Council and the management of the building remain within the control of the Council.

13. Work Programme 2011-12

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Corporate Management giving details of the provisional scheduling in the Panel's work programme for the year, bearing in mind that this was likely to evolve as items of business were commenced and concluded.

The report provided an update on the current situation regarding the four Task and Finish Groups. In particular it was explained that the Older Persons Accommodation Group felt strongly that the future capital receipt as a consequence of the Cabinet's Sheltered Housing Accommodation Review should be ring-fenced to the improvement and conversion of sheltered housing and not to repay debt. The Task and Finish Group were seeking the Panel's support for this view to be communicated to Cabinet by means of a recommendation to this effect from this Panel. The work of the Older Persons Task and Finish Group was progressing well generally and it was likely that it would continue to meet into the New Year.

The Panel members were of the view that it was not necessary to seek to ring fence the capital receipt in the manner proposed by the Task and Finish Group and the submission of a recommendation to Cabinet was not required.

RESOLVED that:

(i) The contents and scheduling of the work programme and the current situation regarding the various Task and Finish Groups be noted;

(ii) The Older Persons Accommodation Task and Finish Group's request regarding the ring fencing of a Sheltered Housing Review capital receipt to improvement and conversion work rather than debt be not supported and the intention for the Group to

extend its timetable of meetings into the New Year be noted.



Policy Review and Development Panel

Item
7

5 March 2012

Report of	Head of Life Opportunities	Author	Diane Foley 506374 Matt Sterling
Title	Review of Housing Allocations Policy		
Wards affected	All Wards		

The Panel is invited to review proposed changes to the Sub-Regional Housing Allocations Policy

1. Action required

- 1.1 This report summarises proposed changes to the Allocations Policy which governs the way in which applicants are prioritised for housing within the Council's Housing Register. These changes are necessary for the Council and its partners to address provisions in the Localism Act and also to mitigate the impact of the reforms to the welfare benefit system.
- 1.2 The Panel is asked to note that a consultation event was held on 20th January 2012 to which stakeholders of our sub-regional scheme were invited to give their opinions on the proposed changes and the results of that consultation are attached as Appendix 2.

2. Reason for review

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and make comments on the elements of the Allocations Policy which are under review.
- 2.2 Following a period of consultation the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety will be asked to approve changes to the policy later in the year.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The Council has been operating a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system called "Gateway to Homechoice" since May 2009.
- 3.2 Choice Based Lettings is a transparent process which gives prospective tenants control over where they would like to live. Homes are advertised weekly on a website which allows applicants to see properties that are available. Applicants apply (or bid) for available properties which meet their requirements. Additional bidding support is available for the vulnerable or those without access to a computer. The bidding applicant with the highest need is then allocated the property.
- 3.3 The Allocations Policy has undergone only cosmetic changes since the scheme was implemented.
- 3.4 However, more substantive changes to government policy now need to be considered. The Localism Act will remove the requirement for councils to operate an open housing register, which means councils will be able to decide which categories of people to allow or exclude from its register. The Act also allows councils to allocate properties to its own

tenants outside the allocations scheme. Currently Council tenants are assessed on their needs alongside everyone else.

- 3.5 The welfare reform proposals will also have an impact on the allocations scheme. A key change from next year will see housing benefit reduced for working-age tenants in social housing who are living in homes larger than they need. This will bring the housing benefit for social tenants in line with the size entitlements in the private rented sector.

4 THE SUB-REGIONAL WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 Colchester is part of a larger sub-regional scheme which comprises seven other partner local authorities in Suffolk and Essex. It is a scheme which continues to receive praise for using identical policies, a common computer platform and an agreement which allows a percentage of tenants to move freely within the eight council areas.
- 4.2 The Choice Based Lettings Project Group has carried out a thorough review of the Allocation Policy. It has concluded that most of the current allocations framework remains fit for purpose. However, some changes are necessary to address the government policy agenda and they have been highlighted in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 Believing the current policy has served the sub-region well, the CBL Project Group decided to amend the existing policy rather than to attempt to agree an entirely new approach.
- 4.4 The current policy balances competing needs fairly and is consistent with the direction of government policy. Furthermore, there is sufficient flexibility within the policy to cater for the small number of cases where clients with especially complex needs present to the Housing Options service.
- 4.5 There is also strong evidence that clients across the five housing priority groups (known as bands) are actually quite successful in being allocated housing.
- 4.6 Panel members are being asked to comment on these proposals and to note that the CBL Project Group has held a stakeholder event on 20th January 2012 attended by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety, a Colchester Borough Homes Tenant Board member, the Head of Life Opportunities and representatives from local authorities, registered providers and tenants across the sub-region. Because of the size of the sub-region and the range of providers who are part of the scheme, councils and registered providers were allocated three spaces each. Results from this consultation are attached at Appendix 2.

4. Further sections

- 4.1 See Appendix 1 and 2

5. Strategic Plan references

- 5.1 Homes for All

6. Consultation

- 6.1 This report forms part of the consultation with councillors, customers, housing providers and voluntary and statutory agencies. A large consultation event with stakeholders was held on January 20th (Appendix 2), customers are being consulted through surveys on Gateway to Homechoice website and once a revised policy has been drafted there will be a 12 week consultation period for all stakeholders, members and housing providers. The draft policy will be available on the website for customers to comment.

7. Publicity considerations

- 7.1 Information about the new policy will be publicised to people registered on the Gateway to Homechoice scheme and to customers approaching the Council about joining this scheme.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Failure by the local authorities in the partnership to agree a new policy and continue to operate a common system would have financial implications. The cost of changes to the IT software to reflect any policy amendments can be shared amongst all partners to a common policy. The cost would be greater if each authority operates a different policy and bespoke systems are required.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 9.1 By providing a fair approach to allocating social housing, this policy enhances the protection of people's human rights.
- 9.2 An equality impact assessment will be carried out for the revised policy.

10. Community Safety implications

- 10.1 The policy contains provisions for dealing fairly with incidents where applicants are the victims or perpetrators of crime or anti-social behaviour.

10. Other Standard References

- 10.1 There are no particular health and safety or risk management implications.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Proposed changes to allocations policy

Appendix 2 – Results of Consultation Event January 2012

Allocations Policy 2011

<http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/NovaWeb/Infrastructure/ViewLibraryDocument.aspx?ObjectID=125>

Appendix 1

Proposed Policy Changes

Subject area	Current arrangements	Proposed changes
<p>Priority housing assessments – recognising community contributions</p>	<p>The present system does not recognise this as an area for priority but additional welfare awards can be given for special circumstances.</p>	<p>The Localism Act indicates councils should consider giving additional preference to the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working households • Volunteers • Tenants seeking training or educational opportunities • Registered foster carers • “Good” tenants <p>Further detail on each of these groups are detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Households <p>Rochdale and Southend Councils have adopted schemes which give additional priority to applicants who are employed. Both areas suffer high unemployment and deprivation therefore some working applicants can suffer disadvantage within the Housing Register.</p> <p>Whilst the Choice Based Lettings Project Group (CBLPG) believes this would be a popular move amongst a percentage of housing applicants, there is a risk of creating a two tier system. The data within the sub-region demonstrates that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% of clients on the Housing Registers are currently employed (and 30% of these clients are on incomes between £10 and 15K per annum • 19% of clients on the Register are unemployed. • 12% of clients on the Register are long term ill and unable to work.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The remaining 29% are pensioners, students or not seeking work. • Our present policy allows local authorities or RSLs to allocate a certain percentage of properties to those in work if they choose to do so. • For lettings Jan11-Dec11 29% of lettings went to those who were working • Volunteering <p>Barnet have agreed additional priority for those applicants who are actively volunteering. They require the applicants to provide documentary evidence when they apply.</p> <p>The CBLPG believes more clarity would be required about who is considered a volunteer (i.e. whether this would only apply to formal volunteering with charities or to informal arrangements, and whether there would be a minimum hours of volunteering threshold). The group also believes this approach would cause more administration work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training <p>Barnet again have included additional priority for those in education or training and who are therefore likely to enter job markets at a point in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex service personnel <p>The Government have issued new regulations in regards to members of the Armed Forces. These are likely to be enacted in Spring time. The first regulation requires Local Authorities not to disqualify members of the armed forces on residency grounds. The second regulation requires authorities to give applications from former members of the Armed Forces extra priority if they have a housing need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster Carers <p>Some councils award additional priority for registered foster carers. The CBLPG felt the process for becoming a registered foster carer is very long and complex and it would be necessary to establish the exact point in this process when priority should be awarded. There</p>
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		<p>remains the option to deal with these rare situations under the current overcrowding priority criteria. Any changes would also need to be mindful of welfare reform changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Good” tenants <p>The CBLPG intends to consult on whether a percentage of nominations could be given to Registered Providers to move on those tenants who have managed their tenancy well. This could be a useful and very positive incentive for tenants. The CBLPG is concerned that there need to be clear criteria for what is deemed to be “good”. The policy already allows ‘bad’ tenants to be given reduced preference.</p>
<p>Overcrowding- setting a new age range for sharing a bedroom.</p>	<p>The existing policy awards an extra bedroom for 2 children of the opposite sex where one child is 5 or more and same sex where there is more than 8 years between them.</p> <p>This compares with the qualifying age for Housing Benefit which is 10 years for the opposite sex and their room for any child when they reach 16 years</p>	<p>To adopt the housing benefit qualifying age of 10 years for the opposite sex but not to adopt the 16 years for any child as this would place too high a demand on larger properties.</p> <p>To retain the existing arrangements would mean that for housing benefit purposes there would be under-occupation and therefore the rent would not be met in full, leading to a possible increase in rent arrears.</p> <p>To adopt the benefit qualifying age could mean that initially there would be less movement from our smaller properties until the higher age limit was reached.</p> <p>The Consultation Guidance suggests that for overcrowded purposes a person should be entitled to their own bedroom when they reach 21 years of age.</p>
<p>Overcrowding- whether to deal with tenants in</p>	<p>The present system awards a Band B to tenants in social housing</p>	<p>The current system is considered unfair by some of our partners and support agencies who feel that the assessment for overcrowding in the private rented sector should mirror that in the social sector. They consider that this lower banding level disadvantages those on a lower</p>

<p>Social Housing and the Private Rented Sector in the same way.</p>	<p>who are overcrowded and a Band C to private tenants in the same situation.</p>	<p>income that need larger accommodation.</p> <p>The concerns over applying the same priority are that this will place greater demand on properties and create less transfer movement. If this happens some Registered Providers may chose to opt-out of the sub-regional system for transfers and instead operate their own closed systems. Concerns also that someone could deliberately overcrowd themselves in private accommodation to get increased priority on the register.</p>
<p>Bedroom eligibility</p>	<p>The present system allows transferring tenants to downsize to a property with one bedroom more than they require as an incentive to move.</p>	<p>The disadvantages of the current arrangements are that if a tenant who is reliant on Housing Benefit moves to a home larger than their need they could be subject to deductions to their entitlement.</p> <p>However, there are also concerns whether an offer of a property only suitable for the size of the household may act as a disincentive to downsize and therefore releasing fewer large properties and the view of the Project Board is that we should keep the policy as it is.</p>
<p>Eligibility to join the Register. – Transfer applicants only</p>	<p>Tenants under the existing policy can join the register immediately after moving into social housing providing they are not on an introductory tenancy.</p>	<p>It has been suggested that applicants housed through the register should be restricted from re-joining the register for a move for a period of 12 months</p> <p>The advantages would be that this restriction may prevent applicants from deliberately moving to unsuitable accommodation and also to reduce void costs</p>
<p>Eligibility – not accepting any customers onto the housing register who have no indicated housing need.</p>	<p>50% of the existing Housing Register is made up of applicants who have been assessed as having no housing need.</p>	<p>This restriction would reduce the size of the Register by 50%.</p> <p>The disadvantages are that this could result in an increased demand for housing options advice and the restriction could also make it difficult to let properties requiring a local connection and low demand sheltered accommodation.</p> <p>The new Affordable Rent Tenancies are also very likely to be let to those applicants in low housing need as it is likely those with a higher priority will wait for properties with the lower</p>

<p>This would include owner occupiers or those who have sufficient resources to secure housing in the private rented sector.</p>		<p>social rents.</p> <p>Evidence shows that all councils house those in the lowest housing bands for some properties. Removing these clients from the register may have a significant impact on the way in which some homes can be let, particularly those in rural areas.</p> <p>If implemented it could also lead to more work required in the back office where resources are limited. At the present time these applicants generate little work: – they apply on line themselves and no verification is done at the time of assessment. If we were to exclude these applicants we would need to ensure that full verification was done and this could lead to more appeals and more people seeking housing options advice</p>
<p>Eligibility – no longer accept applicants with a poor rent account/tenancy management history</p>	<p>The current system requires us to reduce the preference to a Band D but allows applicants to be rehoused in low demand properties provided they have a clear rent account at the point they are offered a new tenancy.</p>	<p>Consideration could be given to suspending the applicants for a period of 12 months and reviewing the situation after this period. It is felt by the Project Board that the existing policy of reducing preference deals with this situation and is less admin intensive</p>
<p>Eligibility – review local connection criteria</p>	<p>In order to have a local connection the present system requires applicants to live in the Gateway to Homechoice area or have close relatives living in the area. There is no time</p>	<p>Consideration could be given to making a minimum residency of 12 months a qualifying period for joining the register.</p> <p>This could result in more administration, verification, IT costs and amendments to publications.</p> <p>Disadvantages are that this could affect lets to sheltered/harder to let properties.</p>

	restriction. Applicants with no connection can apply but are placed in a lower band.	
Eligibility – not to accept applicants with no local connection to the sub region	The present system allows anyone to join the register but reduces preference to a Band D or E if there is no connection to the sub-region.	<p>This change would require a review of the definition of local connection.</p> <p>A Disadvantage is that this could affect lets to sheltered/harder to let properties.</p> <p>However, if more local authorities are adopting this restriction it could lead to an increase in applications to join our register.</p> <p>In reality we have only housed 3% of people with no LC to the sub-region over the past 2 years and these are likely to have been in sheltered accommodation or hard to let properties</p>
Statement on choice – penalty for applicants refusing suitable accommodation	At present there are no restrictions, with the exception of homeless applicants, on how many properties an applicant is permitted to refuse.	<p>Consideration could be given to penalising applicants who refuse suitable properties e.g. remove from register or give reduced preference.</p> <p>Registered Providers are keen to adopt this principle although evidence shows that actual refusals are only 10% of the total lets, 3% of which are refusals by the landlords. This process is already adopted for homeless households but it is felt that to do this for other applicants would increase the admin burden. The people most likely to be refusing properties are those who want to downsize who we want to move. There is already a provision in the policy to allow us to suspend applicants who are continually bidding and refusing</p>

Allocation Policy Review

Feedback from the Gateway to Homechoice consultation event on 20/01/12

1. Introduction

- This document provides an overview of the key issues raised at the recent consultation event and also provides the delegate feedback results (see Appendix 1).
- The consultation event was held with Local Authorities, Housing Providers, Members and Tenant Representatives.
- Gateway to Homechoice is currently reviewing the allocation policy in light of new legislation relating to welfare reforms and localism. Both pieces of legislation will directly impact on the allocation of Council and Housing Association accommodation. It is important we review our policy fully to ensure we continue to help those in the greatest need of housing, whilst also making best use of available accommodation.

1.1 Background to Gateway to Homechoice

- Gateway to Homechoice launched in May 2009 and operates a sub regional choice based lettings system across eight local authority areas (Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Ipswich, Maldon, Mid-Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney).

1.2 How does a choice based lettings system operate?

- Choice Based Lettings (CBL) is a method of allocating Local Authority and Housing Association properties.
- Rather than Local Authorities attempting to match an applicant to an empty property, choice-based lettings requires people seeking housing to bid for empty homes that are advertised by the landlord.
- The person with the highest priority who has bid for a given property will generally be made the offer.

1.3 How does a sub regional system work?

- The scheme has one allocations policy which governs which properties applicants are eligible for. The policy also includes details of how priority for housing is assessed.
- Customers are able to register an application and bid for properties using our bespoke website. Support and assistance is easily accessible for customers who may have difficulty using an online service.
- To facilitate mobility, customers are able to bid for eligible properties advertised in any of the eight local authority areas.

- In order to balance movement (particularly inward migration), we have developed a system of monitoring which will trigger a restriction on a property type when inward migration reaches 15%.

2. Policy review area: Restricted Groups

Current Policy

- The scheme operates an “open register” which means that it is possible for most people to join the register regardless of their housing need.
- Presently the only people excluded from joining the housing register are those subject to immigration control and those guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

We do currently apply a “reduced preference” to certain groups. These include:

- **Financial restrictions**

If an applicant’s income or savings exceed our set financial thresholds and they are able to meet their housing needs from the open market, the application will be assessed and will be placed into Band D (the designated “reduced preference” priority band).

- **Poor tenancy history**

If an applicant meets one of the following criteria, the application will be placed into Band D (the designated “reduced preference” priority band).

- Debt to a landlord
- Notice for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour
- Previous eviction
- Harassment/nuisance
- Failure to maintain a property
- Deliberate damage to a property
- Fraud

- **Local connection to the sub region/district/villages**

In the main, the scheme operates an open movement policy, allowing applicants to bid for properties in any of the 8 Local Authority areas. A local connection restriction will be applied in the following circumstances:

- Accepted homeless cases will be restricted to bidding for properties in the accepting Local Authority area
- Priority will be given to applicants with a local connection on all first lets of a new housing development.
- In accordance with legislation, priority to applicants with a local connection will be given for homes built on rural exception sites.

Logic behind the current policy

a) Financial restrictions

- Principle is that people who can meet their own needs in the open market should do so.

b) Poor tenancy history

- Principle that those with poor tenancy history should still be able to apply for housing, but must demonstrate a commitment to rectify previous problems and a commitment to any future tenancy.

c) Local connection to the sub region/district/village

- Local connection to sub region – principle is that applicants who live, work or have family connections within the operating area of Gateway to Homechoice should have priority for bidding opportunities in any of the 8 Local Authority districts.
- Local connection to district/village – restrictions applied in line with legal requirements (homelessness and rural exception sites).

What has changed?

- The Localism Act has removed the requirement for Local Authorities to hold an “open” housing register. This means Local Authorities now have the opportunity to shape their allocation policies to reflect “local” need. The new powers mean Local Authorities can decide which groups of people can be restricted from joining the housing register (for example, no longer register those who are deemed to be adequately housed).
- Local Authorities must still have regard to those who would have “reasonable preference” for housing. These groups include:
 - People who are homeless (accepted homeless, non priority cases and intentionally homeless)
 - People occupying insanitary or overcrowded conditions
 - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds
 - People who need to move to a particular locality where failure to do so would cause hardship to them or others.

Policy Area: Open Register	
Why retain the current policy?	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current approach enables anyone to apply for housing and receive a full assessment of their housing priority and be signposted to all housing options. Restricting the list could mean some vulnerable customers are overlooked. - Current system is easy to use and understand. By restricting certain groups (eg home owners) we could make the system confusing. A recent customer survey found that only 18.1% of people didn't understand the current system. - Current system relies on assessment and verification. Restricting groups from joining the register will increase Local Authority costs and demand on resources as there would be an increased need for administration and verification of all applications. - Enables Local Authorities to have a good understanding of housing need and demand across the sub region. Restricting the list could reduce the level of data available, effecting future development and assessment of housing requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In line with Government recommendations, which have suggested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o allocation schemes should be simplified o schemes which allow customers to register (even if they stand little chance of being housed) can unfairly raise customer expectations.

Key considerations

Should we continue to operate an open register and only exclude people who are not eligible or those with a record of serious previous misconduct?
Should we continue to operate a mainly open register but not register certain groups/people (eg home owners)?
Should we limit the register to people we consider to be "in need"?

Policy Area: Financial Restrictions	
Why retain the current policy?	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very few people with high levels of savings/income currently apply to the housing register - Current policy ensures that people with high levels of savings/income seek housing solutions through the open market. Local Authorities have existing mechanisms which provide advice and signpost to private rent and shared ownership options. - Current policy is fair to those on medium to low incomes. - Applicants with reduced preference can be considered for affordable rent/hard to let property, which in turn ensures housing providers are not exposed to rent losses. - If a system of restriction was introduced for those with high savings/incomes, it could increase Local Authority costs and demand on resources as there would be an increased need for administration and verification of all applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By not including applicants with high savings/income, the register will only contain those with a genuine housing need.

Key considerations

Should we continue to register applicants but reduce their preference if they have substantial savings/income?
Should we not register applicants with high income and/or savings?

Policy Area: Poor tenancy history	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current approach of reduced preference provides an incentive for applicants to rectify previous issues (such as rent arrears) and demonstrate to prospective landlords a commitment to any future tenancy. - Applicants with poor tenancy histories often have a range of support needs. By including these applicants, it ensures support needs are identified. The current approach ensures a balance is achieved - offering help and support, whilst protecting others. - Reduced preference acts as a safeguard mechanism, alerting Local Authorities and Landlords of potential issues. If the application were placed into any other priority band, there would be no system of safeguarding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By not including applicants with poor tenancy history, the register will contain applicants who are eligible and suitable for offers of accommodation.

Key consideration

Should we continue to register (but reduce the preference) of people with poor tenancy histories?

Policy Area: Local connection to the sub region	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current approach ensures applicants who live, work or have family connections within the operating area of Gateway to Homechoice have priority for accommodation in the any of the 8 Local Authority districts. This gives customers choice and mobility opportunities across a large geographic area. - Applicants with no local connection can be considered for affordable rent/hard to let property, which in turn ensures housing providers are not exposed to rent losses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local connection restrictions to the sub region will mean the register only contains applicants with a housing need in our area of operation. - Some neighbouring authorities (not included in our scheme) may make restrictions to people applying from our districts.

Key consideration

Should we continue to reduce the banding of people from outside our area of operation with no local connection?

Policy Area: Local connection to the district/village	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current policy ensures local people are prioritised for local accommodation eg the current policy of priority to local people for first lets on new build developments. - The current policy ensures applicants have mobility opportunities through the 8 Local Authority areas. Balance is achieved by a system of monitoring which triggers a restriction on a property type when levels of inward migration from other partner local authority areas reaches 15%. This mechanism ensures high demand properties are available to meet local need. - Despite the new powers under the Localism Act, the legal requirements and associated local restrictions in relation to homelessness and rural exception sites will remain. 	

Key consideration

Within our area of operation, we should continue to allow free movement (assuming we can get a reasonable balance between inward and outward migration)?

3. Policy review area: Overcrowding

Current Policy

- Each application is assessed and bedroom entitlement is awarded based on household structure and current accommodation tenure (eg Local Authority/Housing Association accommodation or private rented accommodation).
- Overcrowding priority is awarded when the standard bedroom entitlement is exceeded.
- The current policy for sharing a bedroom is as follows:
 - Children of the opposite sex share a bedroom until the eldest child reaches 5 years old.
 - Children of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom unless they have an 8 year gap between them.
- Current policy awards higher priority for applicants who are overcrowded in Local Authority/Housing Association accommodation. Applicants overcrowded in private rented accommodation are placed one band lower than those overcrowded in Local Authority/Housing Association accommodation.
- Household lacking two bedrooms are not automatically given a higher priority but are looked at individually to see if their circumstances justify a separate welfare award that would normally result in a higher banding award.

Logic behind the current policy

- The policy recognises families' medium-term needs, giving them a priority to move before the children reach an age where it is really problematic for them.
- In all districts, there is a waiting time for larger family homes. People are able to wait for a suitable home while their overcrowding is not acute and should move before the children reach secondary school age.
- The current policy gives a lower priority to private tenants. This is because in the social sector, people moving to larger homes free up a property to which we can make nominations. This is not the case in the private sector.

What has changed?

- Under the proposed welfare reforms, new housing benefit rules will not correlate with our policy. From 2013, tenants of Local Authority and Housing Association accommodation will be subject to the new housing benefit regulations.
- The current proposals will mean:
 - a girl and boy will be expected to share a bedroom until the eldest child reaches 10 yrs old

- children of the same sex will be expected to share a bedroom until the eldest child reaches 16 yrs old.
- Under the new housing benefit rules, people could be subject to benefit reductions as their accommodation may be deemed too large for their household requirements. We are concerned that this could place customers in financial difficulties.

The table below compares our current policy with the proposed changes to housing benefit and illustrates the potential changes to bedroom entitlement and priority awards.

Household structure	Current bedroom entitlement	Current assessment and banding award	Possible bedroom entitlement (if policy is in line with Housing Benefit rules)	Possible assessment and banding award (if policy is in line with Housing Benefit rules)
1 adult/couple + 2 children of the opposite sex (boy aged 4yrs and girl aged 3yrs)	2 bedroom property	- Adequately housed - Band E	2 bedroom property	- Adequately housed - Band E
1 adult/couple + 2 children of the same sex (girl aged 7 yrs and girl aged 14 yrs)	2 bedroom property	- Adequately housed - Band E	2 bedroom property	- Adequately housed - Band E
1 adult/couple + 2 children of the opposite sex (boy aged 5 yrs and girl aged 4 yrs)	3 bedroom property	- Overcrowded - Band B (if currently in LA/Housing Association accommodation) - Band C (if currently in private rent accommodation)	2 bedroom property	- Adequately housed - Band E
1 adult/couple + 2 children of the same sex (girl aged 7 yrs and girl aged 16 yrs)	3 bedroom property	- Overcrowded - Band B (if currently in LA/Housing Association accommodation) - Band C (if currently in private rent accommodation)	2 bedroom property	- Adequately housed - Band E

Policy Area: Children of the opposite sex	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proactive approach to managing overcrowding. On average, families can wait for 3-4 yrs for a 3 bedroom property. We award priority when the eldest child reaches 5 yrs old, to take account of average waiting times and availability of larger family accommodation. - Taking account of average waiting times, if we change the policy to correlate with housing benefit rules, families may have to wait for larger accommodation until the eldest child 13 years old. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government guidance sets out bedroom standards, which suggests that children of the opposite sex should share a bedroom until the eldest reaches 10 yrs old. - Affordability issues for applicants. Those dependant on housing benefit may have deductions imposed as the accommodation may be considered too large for their household requirements. - We need to ensure our system is fair to those customers in both private and social housing. If we retain our current system, homeless households placed into the private sector will have to take smaller accommodation (in line with the proposed housing benefit rules). - Current approach only awards one level of priority for overcrowding, not taking into account the number of bedrooms required by the household.

Key considerations

Should we increase the age limit for a girl and a boy sharing to when the eldest child reaches 10 yrs old (in line with housing benefit rules)?
Should we keep the age limit for a girl and a boy sharing to when the eldest child reaches 5 yrs old (current policy)?
Should we change the age limit for a girl and a boy sharing to another age?

Policy Area: Children of the same sex	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy takes a proactive approach to managing overcrowding. On average, families can wait for 3-4 yrs for a 3 bedroom property. - Taking account of average waiting times, if we change the policy to correlate with housing benefit rules, families will not be eligible for larger accommodation until the eldest child 16 years old. There is concern changing our policy to correlate with housing benefit may not be a good use of housing stock, particularly if the eldest child leaves home soon after the household moves into larger accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government guidance sets out bedroom standards, which suggests that children of the same sex should share a bedroom until the eldest reaches 21 yrs old. - Affordability issues for applicants. Those applicants/tenants dependant on housing benefit may have deductions imposed as the accommodation may be considered too large for their household requirements. - We need to ensure our system is fair to those customers in both private and social housing. If we retain our current system, homeless households placed into the private sector will have to take smaller accommodation (in line with housing benefit). - Current approach only awards one level of priority for overcrowding, not taking into account the number of bedrooms required by the household.

Key considerations

Should we keep our policy so that children of the same sex get an extra bedroom if there is an 8 yr gap between them?
Should children of the same sex share a bedroom, but when the eldest child reaches 21 yrs old be eligible for a separate bedroom?
Should children of the same sex share a bedroom, but in special circumstances, when the eldest reaches 16 yrs old be considered for an additional bedroom (for example welfare reasons)?

Policy Area: Priority for people who are more overcrowded	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Straight forward assessment process. - In cases of extreme overcrowding additional priority can be awarded on welfare grounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easier for customers to understand the priority awards based on bedroom requirements. - Customers not forced to make a separate welfare application in cases where they lack more than one bedroom.

Key considerations

Should we give more/higher priority to those who are overcrowded by 2 bedrooms?
Should we keep the current policy and give all overcrowded applicants the same priority (but use welfare awards in extreme cases)?

Policy Area: Priority for overcrowding in social and private sector	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current policy ensures that applicants overcrowded in existing Local Authority/Housing Association accommodation receive sufficient priority to transfer to larger accommodation, thereby also making best use of stock. - Changing the current policy will place greater demand on the supply of available housing, in particular family accommodation (2 and 3 bedroom properties). - Limiting the supply of family accommodation could affect households in temporary accommodation as they would wait longer to move on. In turn, this could prevent movement from temporary accommodation and mean new homeless households are placed into Bed and Breakfast accommodation (which is not recommended and incurs large expense to Local Authorities). - Current policy ensures that applicants in private rented accommodation explore all available housing options, including the option to source alternative accommodation in the private sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are concerns that the current approach is not fair to applicants in private rented accommodation.

Key considerations

Should we give the same priority to those in social housing and private rented accommodation?
Should we keep the current policy and give higher priority to social housing tenants?

4. Policy review area: Under occupation

Current Policy

- People downsizing from 3,4 or 5 bed homes are given Band A.
- People downsizing from 2 bed homes are given Band B.
- People are allowed to move to a property they under-occupy (with a spare bedroom).

Logic behind the current policy

- We need larger family homes to meet our housing needs. By giving Band A for larger homes, people will be able to be almost certain they get the property they want in the location they want.
- Because we allow under-occupation in the homes they move into, people are more willing to move. Most people moving are elderly and most moves are to bungalows (mainly 2 bed bungalows).

What has changed?

- Under new regulations, people of working age will have their Housing Benefit reduced if they under-occupy.
- Customers of working age may therefore face Housing Benefit reductions and ultimately, affordability issues.

Policy Area: Under occupation	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It helps provide a flow of larger family homes. We have to maintain such a flow to meet some of the most urgent needs we have. - People who have been living in larger homes may be tight for storage when they downsize – a spare room can help. - This policy mainly helps older people who retain the ability to have someone to stay (or room for a carer). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many people with low needs are helped to move through this policy – that may not be seen as fair to people in higher need who may miss out. - People of working age and claiming benefits may not be able to afford the spare room.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If someone is of working age and living in a 4 bed house (for example) and looking to downsize, their Housing Benefit is already restricted. Moving to a smaller property, even if they still under-occupy is better for them financially. 	
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Key considerations

Should we retain our current arrangements and allow households to bid on one bedroom more than they need?
Should we allow under occupiers to only bid on the bedrooms they are entitled to?

5. Policy review area: Access to children

Current Policy

- Currently children are only considered to be part of the household when they are living with a parent/guardian full time.
- The general principle is a child needs one home of adequate size and we do not accept responsibility for providing a second home for children.

Logic behind the current policy

- Due to the availability and demand, we do not have sufficient accommodation to provide a child with a second home.

What has changed?

- Following consultation with customers, we feel we need to revisit this policy area and decide if parents with access arrangements should be entitled to overcrowding priority (as appropriate) and bedroom entitlement for the child as part of the application.

Policy Area: Access to children	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current policy takes account of stock availability. - Changing the current policy will place greater demand on the supply of available housing, in particular family accommodation (2 and 3 bedroom properties). - Limiting the supply of family accommodation could affect households in temporary accommodation as they would wait longer to move on. In turn, this could 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer request.

<p>prevent movement from temporary accommodation and mean new homeless households placed into Bed and Breakfast accommodation (which is not recommended and incurs large expense to Local Authorities).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our policy is in line with current housing benefit rules. Allowing additional bedroom entitlement could result in a housing benefit deduction and households could face affordability issues. 	
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Key considerations

Should we keep our existing policy and only give bedroom entitlement to those who have children living with them permanently?
Should we allow those with access to children to get the bedroom entitlement they would have if the children lived with them permanently?
Should we allow those with access to children to get one bedroom less than if they lived with them permanently?
If we did allow bedroom entitlement for access to children, should we award overcrowding priority to parents with insufficient rooms to allow access?

6. Policy review area: Additional Priority

Current Policy

- Presently we only award additional preference on medical or welfare grounds.

Logic behind the current policy

- Our current policy ensures that we can actively consider the applicants circumstances and appropriately award additional priority as appropriate.

What has changed?

- The Localism Act gives Local Authorities powers to award additional preference to certain groups, if they are in urgent housing need and meet the reasonable preference criteria (households who are homeless, overcrowded, living in insanitary conditions, need to move on medical/welfare grounds or to give/receive support).

- The Government has recommended anyone in urgent housing need who makes an active contribution to the community should be considered for additional preference, for example applicants who are:
 - Working
 - In part/full time education
 - Foster Carers
 - Volunteering
 - Good tenants

Policy Area: Additional priority	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our evidence shows the current policy is achieving a good balance between the groups being registered and housed. See below for further information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working households - 39% of register and 29% of lets ➤ Unemployed seeking work - 19% of register and 16% of lets ➤ Long term sick – 12% of register and 16% of lets ➤ Pensioners – 12% of register and 15% of lets ➤ All other groups (including students) – 18% of register and 21% of lets - The introduction of additional priority to certain groups could increase Local Authority and housing provider costs/demand on resources, as there would be a requirement to verify all applications at the point of registration and offer. This is particularly relevant to working households as employment status could change given current economic climate. - New tenure options (affordable rents) have been introduced to assist working households. Additional priority to this group may cause problems in letting affordable rent properties and rent losses to housing providers. - If introduced, Local Authorities/Housing providers will need to have regard to equality legislation to avoid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government recommendation

<p>discrimination. Evidence from other schemes shows high levels of discretionary awards being made to groups who are unable to meet the set additional priority criteria eg disabled applicants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is concern that selecting and awarding additional priority to “good tenants” could be difficult and subjective, therefore open to challenge. It would be necessary to define what constitutes a “good tenant” and how many tenants would be eligible for such an award (e.g. all good tenants or just a set few per year?). 	
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Key considerations

<p>Should we give additional priority to any of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster carers - Good tenants - Those in work - Those in training/education - Volunteers - Other groups
<p>Should we only give priority to additional groups if they have a “reasonable preference”?</p>

7. Policy review area: Unlimited choice

Current Policy

- Customers are able to express interest in two eligible properties each week
- If a customer refuses an offer of accommodation, our policy is for the housing provider to move onto the next candidate on the shortlist.
- Persistent refusals are currently managed in the policy.

Logic behind the current policy

- Provide a system which is open, fair and customer focused.
- Facilitate customer involvement in selecting the homes they want to live in and ultimately create sustainable local communities.

What has changed?

- Housing providers have commented that a system of “unlimited” choice can cause day to day management problems and rent loss when properties are delayed in being let.
- It has been suggested that refusing two suitable offers of accommodation should result in suspension from bidding for a fixed period of time.
- It has been suggested customers housed into Local Authority/Housing Association accommodation should be prevented from re joining the register for 12 months.

Policy Area: Unlimited choice	
Why retain the current policy	Why change the current policy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unlimited customer choice and participation retains the objectives/principles of the scheme. - There is concern penalties could increase Local Authority and housing provider costs/demand on resources through increased administration – monitoring of bidding habits, appeals and complaints. - The policy does already have a mechanism to manage serial bidders/refusals of suitable accommodation. - Many refusals are from customers who wish to downsize to smaller accommodation as they require a specific property type/location. There is concern that penalties could be counterproductive, reducing the flow of properties, particularly larger family accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address the concerns of housing providers. - 12 month restriction to re joining the register for customers housed may stop customers from choosing to move into unsuitable accommodation.

Key considerations

Should we continue to give unlimited choice?
If a customer refuses two offers of suitable accommodation should their application be suspended?
Should a transfer applicant (someone housed into Local Authority/Housing Association accommodation) have to wait a year before they can re join the register?

8. Next Steps

- Gateway to Homechoice will be consulting with customers using an online survey on the Gateway to Homechoice website. The survey can be found at www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk.
- Over a period of 4 weeks, we will be asking customers the same questions raised at the consultation event.
- Recommendations will be formulated based on the feedback from the consultation event and online survey.
- Appendix 2 details our timetable for the review.
- If you would like to discuss the review process or subject areas, you can contact the Gateway to Homechoice Coordinator or one of the Local Authorities. Appendix 3 gives a list of contacts.

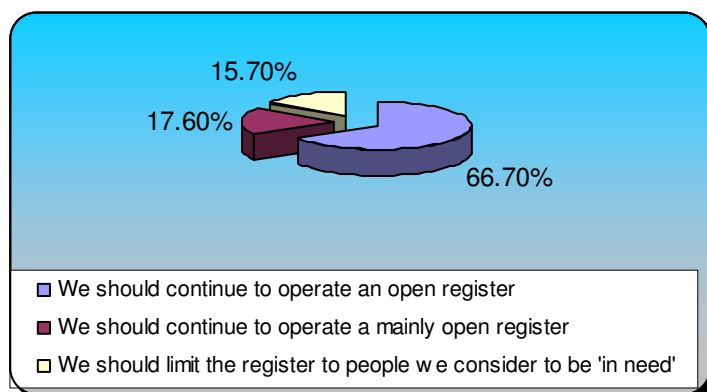
Appendix 1

Feedback results from the consultation event on 20/01/2012

1.) Operating an open register

Responses

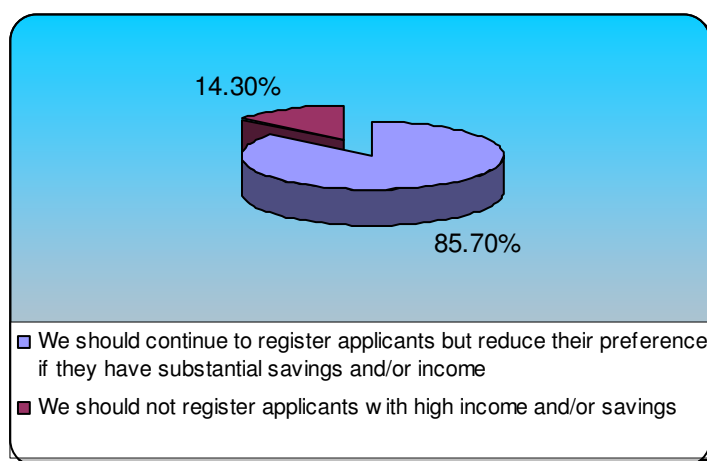
We should continue to operate an open register	66.67%
We should continue to operate a mainly open register	17.65%
We should limit the register to people we consider to be 'in need'	15.69%
Totals	100%



2.) Income and Savings

Responses

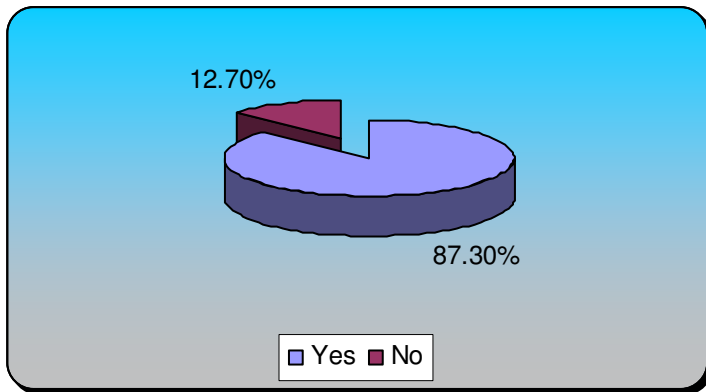
We should continue to register applicants but reduce their preference if they have substantial savings and/or income	85.71%
We should not register applicants with high income and/or savings	14.29%
Totals	100%



3.) Local connection to the sub-region: We should continue to reduce the banding of people from outside our area of operation with no local connection

Responses

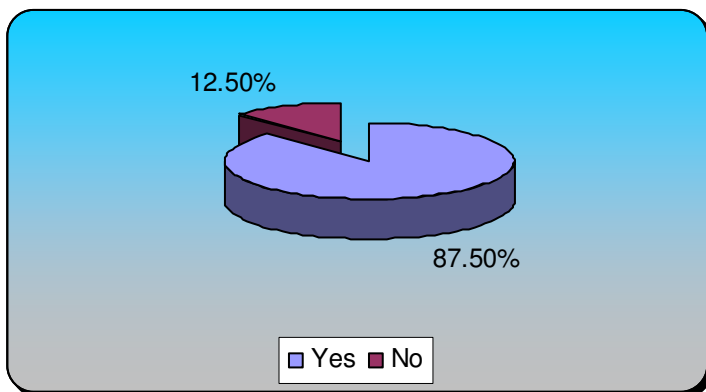
Yes	87.27%
No	12.73%
Totals	100%



4.) Local connection to the districts/boroughs: We currently consider people to have a local connection if they live, work or have family in the district/borough. Do you consider this to be strict enough?

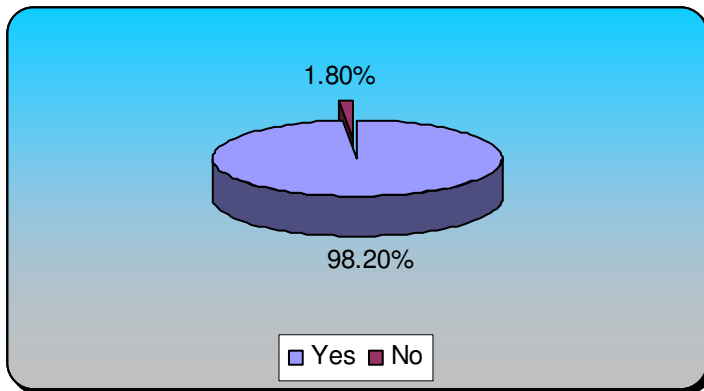
Responses

Yes	87.50%
No	12.50%
Totals	100%



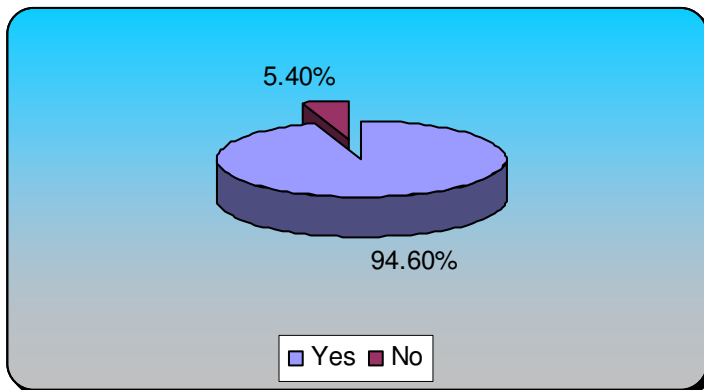
5.) Local connection to the district: Within our area of operation, we should continue to allow free movement (assuming we can get a reasonable balance between inward and outward moves).

	Responses
Yes	98.25%
No	1.75%
Totals	100%



6.) People with poor tenancy histories: We should continue to register (but reduce the preference) of people with poor tenancy histories

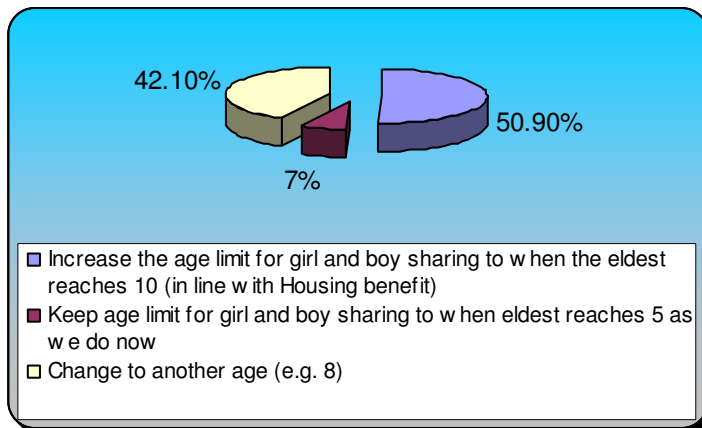
	Responses
Yes	94.64%
No	5.36%
Totals	100%



7.) Children of different sex - options

Responses

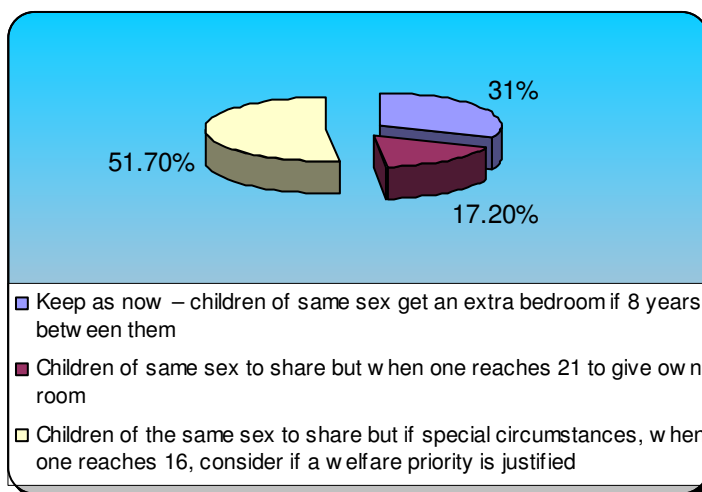
Increase the age limit for girl and boy sharing to when the eldest reaches 10 (in line with Housing benefit)	50.88%
Keep age limit for girl and boy sharing to when eldest reaches 5	7.02%
Change to another age (e.g. 8)	42.11%
Totals	100%



8.) Children of same sex

Responses

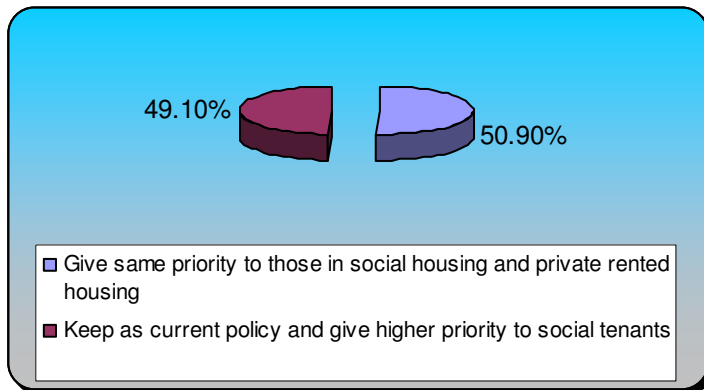
Keep as now – children of same sex get an extra bedroom if 8 years between them	31.03%
Children of same sex to share but when one reaches 21 to give own room	17.24%
Children of the same sex to share but if special circumstances, when one reaches 16, consider if a welfare priority is justified	51.72%
Totals	100%



9.) Overcrowding in the private sector

Responses

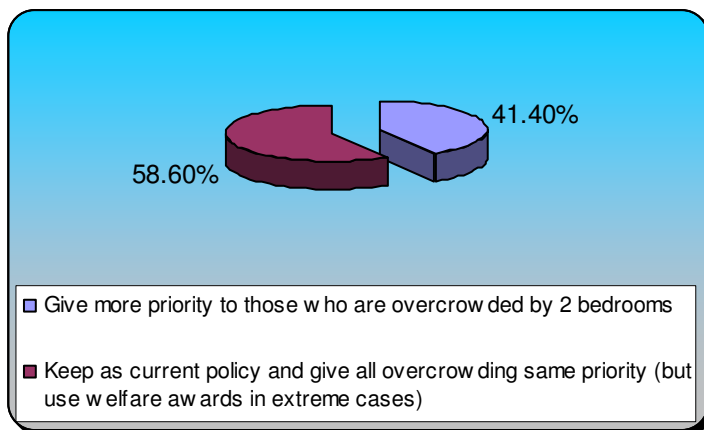
Give same priority to those in social housing and private rented	50.91%
Keep as current policy and give higher priority to social tenants	49.09%
Totals	100%



10.) Priority for people who are more overcrowded

Responses

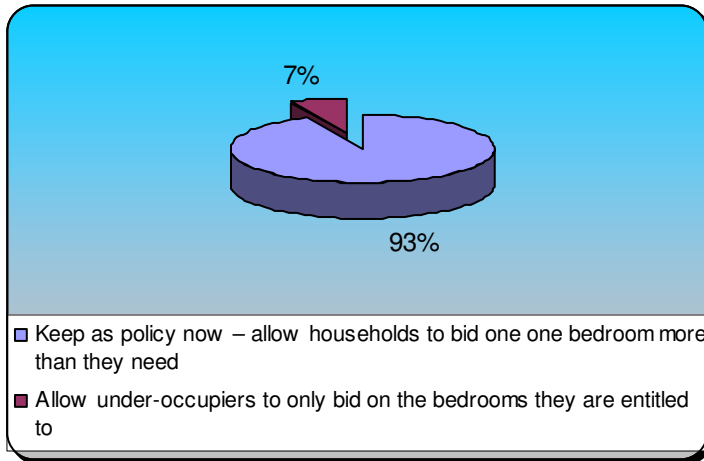
Give more priority to those who are overcrowded by 2 bedrooms	41.38%
Keep as current policy and give all overcrowding same priority (but use welfare awards in extreme cases)	58.62%
Totals	100%



11.) Under-occupation

Responses

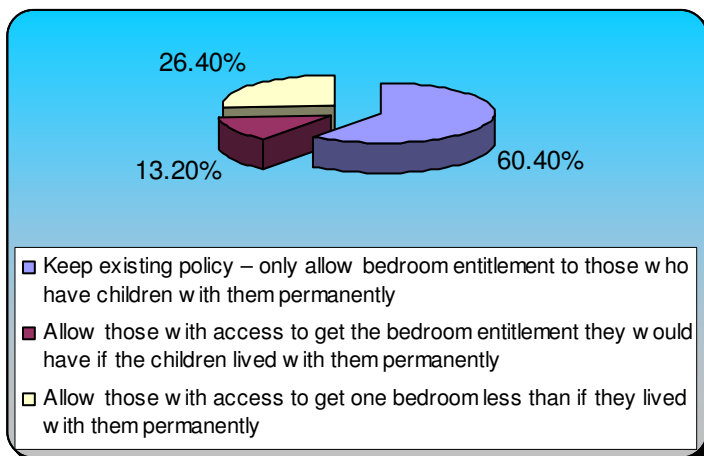
Keep as policy now – allow households to bid on one bedroom more than they need	92.98%
Allow under-occupiers to only bid on the bedrooms they are entitled to	7.02%
Totals	100%



12.) Access to children

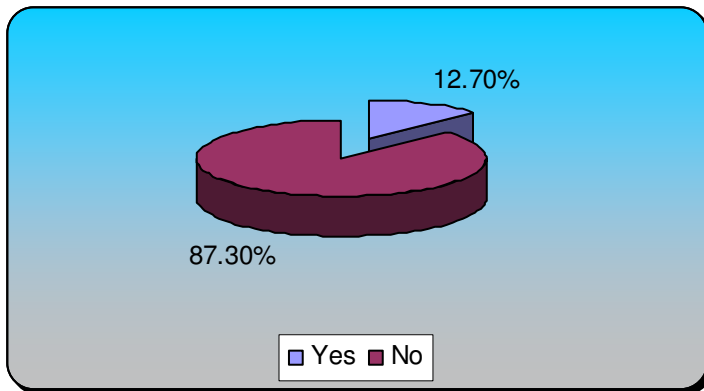
Responses

Keep existing policy – only allow bedroom entitlement to those who have children with them permanently	60.38%
Allow those with access to get the bedroom entitlement they would have if the children lived with them permanently	13.21%
Allow those with access to get one bedroom less than if they lived with them permanently	26.42%
Totals	100%



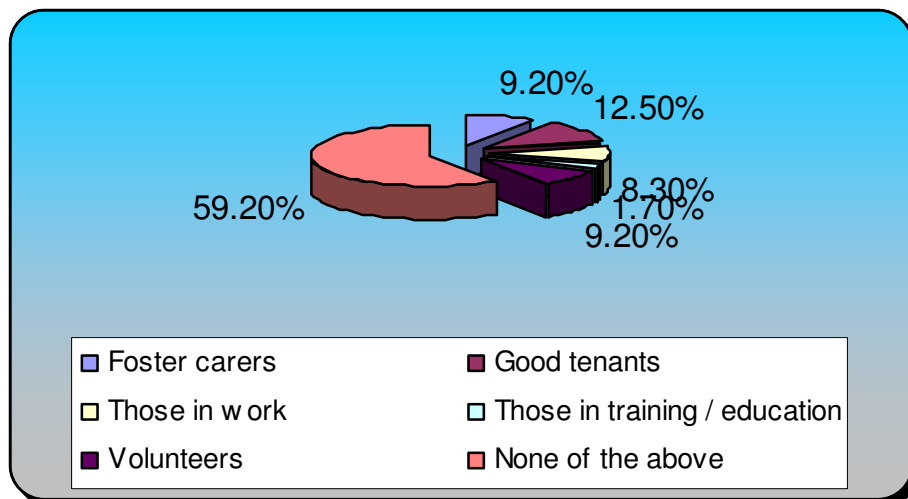
13.) Access to children If we did allow a bedroom entitlement for access to children, should we award overcrowding priority to parents with insufficient rooms to allow access?

	Responses
Yes	12.73%
No	87.27%
Totals	100%



14.) Should we give additional priority to any of the following groups?

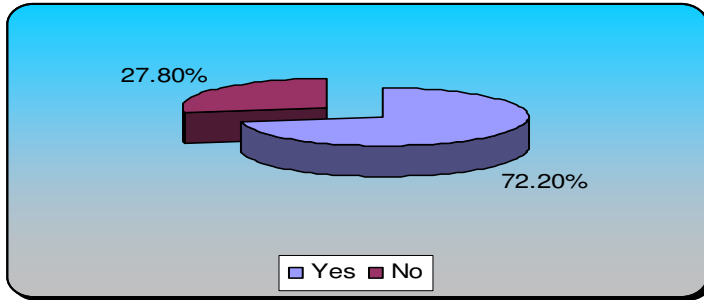
	Responses
Foster carers	9.17%
Good tenants	12.50%
Those in work	8.33%
Those in training / education	1.67%
Volunteers	9.17%
None of the above	59.17%
Totals	100%



15.) Additional priority groups Should we only give priority to additional groups if they have a 'reasonable preference'?

Responses

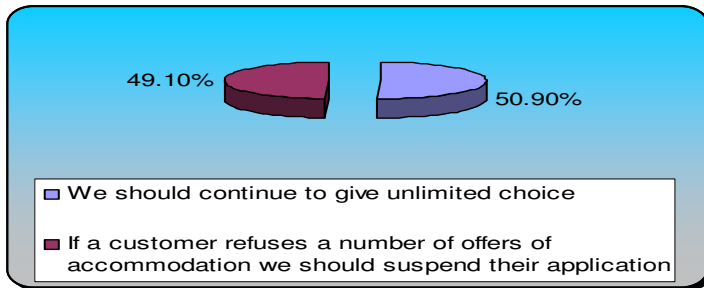
Yes	39	72.22%
No	15	27.78%
Totals	54	100%



16.) Choice

Responses

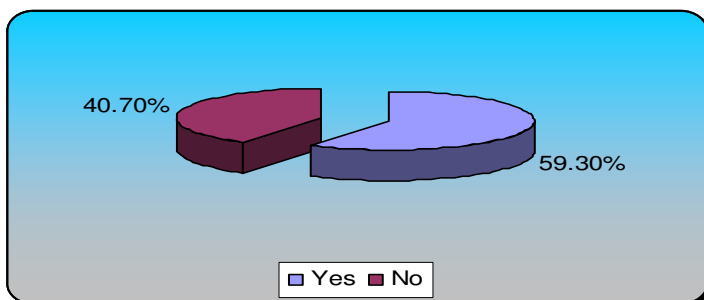
We should continue to give unlimited choice	50.91%
If a customer refuses a number of offers of accommodation we should suspend their application	49.09%
Totals	100%



17.) Transfers Should a transfer applicant have to wait a year before they can apply back to the register?

Responses

Yes	59.26%
No	40.74%
Totals	100%



Appendix 2
Timetable for the Allocation Policy Review

Actions	Sept	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Establish Steering Group and meet twice a month												
Desktop research												
Identify key issues and potential solutions												
Identify IT enhancements and obtain quotations												
1st stage consultation Internal consultation - Staff, RSL, Members - policy items and affordable rent/flexible tenancy module												
Draft new policy												
Legal advice on draft policy												
2nd stage consultation on draft policy												
Finalise policy and get formal agreement												
Changes to policy and implementation (including IT enhancements)												

**Appendix 3
Contacts**

Organisation	Name	Email
Gateway to Homechoice Coordinator	Ellie Vermeulen	ellie.vermeulen@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk
Babergh District Council	Sue Jackman	susan.jackman@babergh.gov.uk
Braintree District Council	Tim Lucas	tim.lucas@braintree.gov.uk
Colchester Borough Council	Diane Foley	Diane.Foley@colchester.gov.uk
Ipswich Borough Council	Sarah Yule	Sarah.Yule@ipswich.gov.uk
Maldon District Council	Lesley Lushington	Lesley.Lushington@maldon.gov.uk
Mid Suffolk District Council	Sue Lister	Sue.Lister@midsuffolk.gov.uk
Suffolk Coastal District Council	Julie Griffiths	Julie.Griffiths@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk
Waveney District Council	Angela Haye	Angela.Haye@waveney.gov.uk



Allocation Policy

May 2011

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Glossary of Terms

Applicants	People seeking access to social housing for rent or low cost home ownership options
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
LSVT	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer
ALMO	Arms Length Management Organisation
PO	Partner Organisation
RP	Registered Provider
TIS	Tenant Incentive Scheme

Statement of Choice

Fairness

Our aim is to:

- *ensure the widest possible access to housing by offering choice of accommodation, this includes options in the private sector.*
- *give you the opportunity to express preferences about your accommodation whenever possible, whilst allowing us to meet the local needs of each authority in the sub-region*
- *prevent discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex or marital status, sexual orientation or disability.*
- *write our publications in plain English and offer translations, large print or a reading service where needed to help you make an informed housing choice*

Excellence

Our aim is to:

- *be courteous and efficient*
- *respond to the needs of our customers and our partners and ensure the views of our customers are heard*
- *set out clear standards for services so that everyone knows what to expect.*
- *provide you with advice regarding access to social housing and other housing options, both over the phone and in person.*
- *direct you to the appropriate team or agency where specialist advice is required e.g. housing advice, welfare rights*
- *meet our legal and strategic requirements whilst considering the needs of the local community*
- *confirm in writing any decision made in relation to your application for housing*
- *ensure decisions reflect policy and are consistent and transparent*

Your Responsibilities:

- *provide full and accurate details on all forms or correspondence in relation to your application for housing.*
- *tell us immediately if your circumstances change in any way, for example, your address, family details, medical condition*
- *respond to requests from us for information*
- *make a decision on viewed properties within the specified time scale agreed with the landlord.*

Throughout this document we refer to people seeking access to social housing for rent or low cost home ownership options as “applicants”.

1 Housing Partnership

1.1 Housing Register

- 1.1.1 The Housing Register is intended to be a single register of housing need for the Greater Haven Gateway sub-region, which includes the local authority areas of Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Ipswich, Maldon, Mid-Suffolk and Suffolk Coastal. Waveney District Council, although not part of the Greater Haven Gateway sub-region, have joined the sub regional scheme. Tendring District Council, although part of the Greater Haven Gateway sub-region, has decided not to join the scheme. In this document, the housing register and Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme will be referred to as a sub regional scheme.
- 1.1.2 The Register is the way in which all applicants must apply for social housing in the sub-region.
- 1.1.3 The demand for housing exceeds supply and the register exists to enable the scheme to prioritise those households who are in greatest housing need and to maximise their opportunities for re housing.
- 1.1.4 The Register also provides information on needs which the sub region uses to develop new affordable housing.
- 1.1.5 The Allocations Policy sets out:
- The objectives of the Allocations Scheme
 - How the Housing Register operates
 - Who is eligible to be re housed
 - How applicants' housing needs are assessed
 - How social rented homes across the sub-region are let
 - How the sub-regional choice based lettings allocations (CBL) scheme operates.

1.2 Introduction

- 1.2.1 This section outlines the Greater Haven Gateway sub-regional CBL scheme, Gateway to Homechoice, which was introduced in April 2009.
- 1.2.2 The Greater Haven Gateway Sub-regional CBL scheme is a method of letting social housing across the sub-region and other areas where appropriate.
- 1.2.3 The Greater Haven Gateway Sub-regional CBL scheme is to be called Gateway to Homechoice.
- 1.2.4 The eight Local Authorities and their Large Scale Voluntary Transfers (LSVT) partners and Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), as detailed in Section 1.3, Partner Organisations (POs) have agreed to operate a common sub-regional CBL scheme.

- 1.2.5 The scheme will operate through a shared CBL IT system and one common allocations policy across the sub-region. However there may be local variations in order to make best use of social housing, in which case eligibility for properties will be clearly labelled in the advertisement.
- 1.2.6 This new approach will give applicants greater choice in selecting where and in what property type and tenure they wish to live.
- 1.2.7 The system is designed to be easy to use, and allows applicants to have an understanding of their housing situation, enabling them to make the best choice from the full range of housing options available to them.

1.3 Partner Organisations (POs)

- 1.3.1 The following local authorities are participating in the scheme:
- Babergh District Council
 - Braintree District Council who has transferred their homes to Greenfields Community Housing Association
 - Colchester Borough Council whose homes are managed by Colchester Borough Homes
 - Ipswich Borough Council
 - Maldon District Council who has transferred their homes to Moat Homes Ltd
 - Mid Suffolk District Council
 - Suffolk Coastal District Council who has transferred their homes to Flagship Housing (Suffolk Heritage)
 - Waveney District Council (joined January 2011)
- 1.3.2 Contact details for all POs are available in Appendix 1.
- 1.3.3 Within each authority there are other local housing associations, referred to as Registered Providers (RP), who may advertise their available homes through the scheme. Where nomination agreements exist with local authorities the RPs will advertise these vacancies through the scheme.

1.4 Governance

- 1.4.1 The scheme is subject to a sub-regional agreement which ensures that the scheme is kept up to date and meets national best practice guidelines. It is managed by a sub-regional board made up of the Housing Managers from the participating local authorities, RPs and other stakeholders.
- 1.4.2 All POs will contribute to monitoring, developing, funding and making policy decisions about the scheme.

1.5 Objectives of the Scheme

(a) To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act (1996) Part VI as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002)

The sub-region will ensure its allocation policy complies with all legislative requirements, related legislation, case law, local policies and strategies.

(b) Provide a single system of choice in housing across the whole sub-region

The POs will develop the allocation policy in accordance with the principles agreed sub-regionally. All assessments of need and allocations will be made according to the agreed sub-regional policy. The scheme will provide applicants with more choice and involvement in choosing the home and the area in which they wish to live.

The scheme aims to provide applicants with sufficient information to explain where homes are more likely to become available. This will allow them to make informed choices about their housing options.

(c) Produce a system applicants can understand and which is both open and fair

To ensure the scheme is consistent, fair and transparent it will include:

- Comprehensive feedback on homes let
- An allocation policy based on common principles
- Adoption of a common banding structure across the sub-region
- Sub-regional governance
- Clear labelling of properties
- Detailed procedures for needs assessment and allocations
- Performance management information
- A consistent review process.

(d) Increase the sustainability of local communities

Homes may be advertised with criteria aimed at improving the long-term stability of a community.

(e) Facilitate genuine opportunities for mobility across the Sub-region

In order to maximise choice and mobility for applicants within the sub-region and other areas, where appropriate, each PO will advertise their properties to applicants who have a local connection to any of the eight local authorities. Applicants who have no connection to the sub-region will still be able to take part but they will not have the same degree of priority and therefore will be banded one band lower than if they had a local connection to the sub-region.

Inward and outward migration (also called 'cross border moves') between authorities will be monitored quarterly. If inward migration exceeds outward migration significantly then properties will be restricted to bidding by applicants with a local connection to a particular local authority.

In some areas homes will be restricted to people with a close local connection to a village. This is because special planning laws have been used to develop these homes. In such cases properties will be clearly advertised to show a local connection rule applies.

(f) To assist in minimising homelessness and assist applicants in the highest assessed need

All applicants will have their housing needs assessed and be placed in a housing needs band according to their circumstances. This will take into account the reasonable preference criteria outlined in the Housing Act (1996) as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002).

Homes will generally be let to the applicant in the highest housing needs who has been waiting the longest, having expressed an interest in the home and meeting the criteria advertised.

(g) To ensure that vulnerable applicants are supported

Vulnerable people will be appropriately supported to access the scheme. A number of measures will be taken to ensure that vulnerable applicants are not disadvantaged such as:

- Providing appropriate advice and assistance
- Translating documents on request
- Providing information in other formats on request
- Partnership working with support agencies
- Producing and publishing a sub-regional vulnerable people strategy
- Undertaking monitoring and regular reviews of the allocations policy
- An assisted applicants list will be held which will help us identify applicants who, due to their vulnerability, require additional help.
- To ensure vulnerable groups are not disadvantaged by the scheme, participating Councils will put in place a full monitoring system to ensure they are successfully using the scheme.

(h) Aim to provide a complete housing options service to increase the opportunity for all

The scheme will be developed to enable the applicant to see all their housing options, including:

- Available homes from RPs and POs in the Sub-region
- Low cost home ownership and intermediate housing
- Mutual exchanges. Gateway to Homechoice have joined a national scheme, "House Exchange". Tenants are able to advertise their property and look for other properties through the website www.g2h.houseexchange.org.uk.
- Rented accommodation with private landlords

(i) Ensure that the scheme allows POs to make best use of homes and in particular adapted properties

Properties that have been adapted or developed for people with a disability will be advertised as such and preference will be given to households that need that adaptation because of the shortage of adapted properties.

Due to the significant shortage of housing across the Sub-region, POs will label available homes to indicate those groups who may express an interest in them.

1.6 How the Scheme will operate

- 1.6.1 Applicants can apply to join the scheme via any of the POs; the PO contacted will assess the application and make the initial assessment of need.
- 1.6.2 If an applicant has a local connection with another PO they may make further checks and enquiries.
- 1.6.3 Applicants who join the housing register are placed in one of five bands to reflect their housing need.
- 1.6.4 Most vacant homes are advertised for a set period of time on a regular basis called an advertising cycle.
- 1.6.5 Applicants can only express an interest in homes advertised which they are eligible for. For instance, they must meet the criteria for the number of bedrooms in the home.
- 1.6.6 Applicants may express an interest by mail, telephone, email, text message (currently under review), through the website or by calling in person to a local office.
- 1.6.7 Once the deadline of the advertising cycle is reached, a shortlist of the applicants who have expressed an interest is provided by the IT system.
- 1.6.8 The allocations policy is then used to determine who is prioritised for housing from the shortlist.
- 1.6.9 Feedback on lettings is made when a property has been let.
- 1.6.10 Feedback will include information about the priority and effective date of the selected applicant, but not any personal information relating to them.

2 Review of Scheme

- 2.1.1 A Partnership Board comprised of representatives from the POs will meet quarterly to monitor the CBL Scheme and manage any changes needed.

3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Framework

- 3.1.1 This policy has been drafted to comply with the requirements of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
- 3.1.2 Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 covers:
- allocations of local authority housing to new tenants
 - transfers requested by local authority tenants
 - allocations of local authority housing to current tenants of registered social landlords (RP) and
 - nominations that the Council makes to RP.
- 3.1.3 It sets out the circumstances of applicants to whom reasonable preference must be given when deciding who will be offered a property.
- 3.1.4 The policy has regard to the Allocation of Accommodation, Code of Guidance 2002 and the Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance 2007 and Fair and Flexible 2009 (Department for Communities & Local Government).

3.2 Allocations covered by the policy, where the rules under Part 6 do not apply

- 3.2.1 Where a PO needs to provide alternative accommodation for a PO tenant, in order to carry out repairs or improvements to their property.
- 3.2.2 Where the PO has a duty to re-house home owners following a compulsory purchase, provide suitable alternative accommodation under the Land Compensation Act 1973, s 39, or under the Rent Agricultural Act 1976. If it is not possible to provide a permanent tenancy immediately, the applicant will be registered within Band A of the scheme.
- 3.2.3 Where the PO grants a secure tenancy to a former owner-occupier or statutory tenant of a defective home under the Housing Act 1985, s554 or s555.
- 3.2.4 Where the PO provides temporary accommodation for Council employees under Para 5, Schedule 1 of the 1985 Housing Act (Temporary Accommodation for Persons Taking Up Employment).

3.3 The policy does not apply to the following situations, also not covered by the rules in Part 6:

- 3.3.1 Temporary accommodation provided for homeless people under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. However applicants in this situation can apply to join the housing register and take part in the CBL scheme.
- 3.3.2 Mutual exchanges between PO tenants or PO and RP tenants under the Housing Act 1985, s92.
- 3.3.3 Where a secure tenant dies, the tenancy is a periodic one, and there is a person qualified to succeed the tenant under the Housing Act 1985, s89, then that person will be offered the secure tenancy. If the home is bigger than they reasonably need, they may be offered a suitable alternative home better meeting their needs.
- 3.3.4 Where a secure tenant with a fixed term tenancy dies and the tenancy remains secure by virtue the Housing Act 1985, s90.
- 3.3.5 Where a secure tenancy is assigned to someone who would have qualified to succeed to the tenancy if the secure tenant died immediately before the assignment. That person becomes the secure tenant.
- 3.3.6 Where a court makes an order about who is to be the secure tenant under:
 - a) the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, s24 (property adjustment orders in connection with matrimonial proceedings);
 - b) the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, s17(1) (property adjustment orders after overseas divorce); or
 - c) the Children Act 1989, Schedule 1, paragraph 1 (orders for financial relief against parents).

3.4 Legal Context

- 3.4.1 All applicants will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band based on an assessment of their housing needs. This will ensure that the POs let homes to those in the highest assessed housing need and ensure that they meet their legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act (1996) as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002).
- 3.4.2 The law sets out five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered:
- Applicants who are homeless (within the meaning of Part V11 (7) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).
 - Applicants who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by such authority under section 192(3).
 - Applicants occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
 - Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability).
 - Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).
- 3.4.3 The Allocations Policy has been designed to ensure applicants who fall within the reasonable preference categories will be awarded the due reasonable preference.
- 3.4.4 Every application received by the POs will be considered according to its facts. Because every applicant's situation is different, applications will be considered on an individual basis and individual circumstances taken into account.

3.5 Equal opportunities and diversity

- 3.5.1 The POs will be responsive, accessible and sensitive to the needs of all applicants. The POs will not tolerate prejudice and discrimination and will actively promote equality.

3.6 Monitoring and reviewing the allocations policy

- 3.6.1 The Partnership Board will monitor the operation of the sub-regional allocations policy by regularly reviewing the policy to ensure that it meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.

The Housing Allocations Policy

4 The Housing Register

4.1 Who can go on the Register?

- 4.1.1 Anyone can apply to the POs to join the register. However, not everyone will be eligible for housing.
- 4.1.2 POs cannot register people who are not eligible to be housed.
- 4.1.3 Applicants are advised that due to a high demand for available housing in the sub-region, many people who are eligible to become applicants may not obtain an offer of a home.
- 4.1.4 Applicants must:
- be aged 16 or over (some landlords will only offer tenancies to 16 and 17 year olds if they have a guarantor)
 - not be subject to immigration control or be a person from abroad, unless they are a 'qualifying person'. They must pass the 'habitual residence' test (as defined in Section 161 of The Housing Act 1996 and the Allocation of Housing Regulations 1996 (SI 1996 number 2753) as amended by Homeless Act 2002).
- 4.1.5 Anyone who is eligible may complete an on-line registration form and will be placed on the housing register.
- 4.1.6 Applicants will be placed in the highest band that fits their housing need. Where applicants have 2 or more assessed Band B needs, they will move to Band A. (This does not apply to those accepted as homeless as additional preference is dealt with in Band A as 'accepted homeless in severe need'). (See Section 16 for how applicants are banded).
- 4.1.7 Where applicants have multiple needs, (by this we mean 4 or more assessed Band C needs), they will move to Band B.

4.2 Joint applications

- 4.2.1 An applicant may include anyone on their application form who may reasonably be expected to live with them. Where more than one eligible applicant wishes to have a shared application, they will be joint applicants.
- 4.2.2 For a joint application, both applicants have to qualify and meet the conditions on eligibility.

4.3 Who may not be eligible to join the register?

4.3.1 Some applicants **may** not be able to join the register because:

They, or a member of their household, have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour, serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant; for example, if they have broken their conditions of tenancy because of anti-social behaviour, and this was either:

a) proven by their conviction of an offence, for example being a perpetrator of sexual or racial harassment, use of premises for illegal purposes e.g. drug offences

or

b) backed up by evidence which would have been presented in a court action for possession, if they held a tenancy that had not ended before the action could be taken.

4.3.2 This decision will be based on the circumstances at the time of the application and the POs will consider these when reaching its decision, for example, the health of the applicant, any dependants or other factors. A decision that an applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant will be objective and will be taken with reference to relevant information such as Police or Environmental Services reports or by reviewing landlord's records.

4.3.3 An applicant who has been deemed ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour may make a fresh application if s/he considers their behaviour should no longer be a factor due to a change in circumstances. It will be the applicant's responsibility to show that his/her circumstances or behaviour have changed.

4.3.4 An applicant will be notified that he or she is ineligible and has the right to request a review of the decision.

4.4 Circumstances when eligible applicants will not be able to participate in CBL

4.4.1 Some applicants who qualify may not be allowed to participate in CBL for a temporary period. These will include applicants if they:

- are housed temporarily in a PO's private lettings scheme. These applicants may have an assured shorthold tenancy with a private landlord with a mandatory six month period. Therefore, to ensure they do not incur financial liability for two tenancies, they will be restricted from taking part until the fixed term of their assured shorthold tenancy ends.
- are not considered ready to sustain a tenancy because of their age or need for specialist support
- if they have accepted an offer of housing but the property is not yet ready.
- in exceptional circumstances applicants can be suspended from taking part if they repeatedly select and or view properties which they have no intention of accepting. The PO will monitor these cases very carefully and discuss whether it is appropriate to restrict participation with the applicant before action is taken.

4.4.2 The PO will decide on these cases explaining to the applicant:

- the reasons why they are temporarily not able to take part
 - any conditions which will need to be met before they will be entitled to take part
- and**
- the date they may request a review of the decision not to be able to take part

5 How the register works

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 To apply, fill in the on-line registration form 'Application to register for Housing in the Greater Haven Gateway Area', or telephone and we will complete the form with you.

5.2 Multiple applications

5.2.1 Multiple applications are not allowed. An applicant may have only one active application on the housing register.

5.3 Civil partnership

5.3.1 Civil partnership is a legal relationship, which can be registered by two people of the same sex. The Civil Partnership Act came into force on 5 December 2005.

5.3.2 Civil partners will be treated in the same way as married applicants:

- Parental responsibility for the other civil partner's child
- Succession and assignment of a tenancy agreement
- Protection from domestic violence
- Immigration and nationality purposes

5.3.3 Co-habiting couples will be treated in the same way as married applicants.

5.4 Applicants' consent and declaration

5.4.1 When an applicant applies for housing, they must complete a declaration. The submission and confirmation of the declaration section contained in the on line application form, will be taken as the applicants formal declaration and agreement, confirming that:

- The information provided by the applicant is complete, true and accurate.
- The applicant will inform the POs immediately of any change in circumstances.
- The applicant understand that information will be shared with all the POs and all participating RPs together with other relevant organisations in order to complete or verify information or to prevent fraud or protect public funds in other ways.
- The applicant consents to POs making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct, or, to add to the information given where this is necessary to complete an assessment of need or consider suitability for housing.

5.5 Data protection

- 5.5.1 The POs will make every effort to keep information provided by applicants safe and confidential. They will comply with policies on Data Protection, which can be viewed on their websites.

5.6 Cancelling an application

- 5.6.1 An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:
- At the applicants' request.
 - If the applicant becomes ineligible for housing.
 - When the applicant has been housed through the scheme.
 - When a tenant of social housing completes a mutual exchange.
 - Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the re-registration process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address.
 - If the applicant fails to respond to a request for further information within a reasonable time.
- 5.6.2 Should an applicant whose application has been cancelled wish to re-join the housing register they will receive a new effective date according to the rules in paragraph 6.5.
- 5.6.3 Where appropriate, a PO may agree to reinstate a removed application provided the applicant notifies them within 3 months of removal.

5.7 False Information

- 5.7.1 Any applicant who deliberately attempts to deceive or defraud the POs in order to secure a home to which they are not entitled, may lose any home provided for them, and may also be prosecuted. The law imposes severe penalties, including substantial fines or imprisonment, where an offence is proved.

5.8 Councillors and Involvement in decision making

- 5.8.1 Elected Council members cannot take part in the assessment and allocation process but this does not prevent them seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents or from being involved in future policy development.

6 Assessment of Housing Need

6.1 Legal background

- 6.1.1 All applicants will be placed in a housing needs band following an assessment of their household's needs. This is to ensure that the POs meet their legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act (1996), Part VI as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002).

6.2 Advice and information

- 6.2.1 All POs will ensure that housing advice and options information is available free to everyone. This will include information on how to apply for housing, and where to get help to make an application where the applicant cannot do so without assistance.

6.3 Housing Needs Bands

- 6.3.1 To apply for housing applicants must join the housing register by completing an on-line registration form which will be on the Gateway to Homechoice website and on all Local Authority websites. If you are unable to access this form you can telephone and we will complete the form with you. POs will assess each applicant's eligibility to join the housing register and may ask for further supporting evidence and documentation.

- 6.3.2 Applicants will be placed into one of the following five housing needs bands, based on the information provided:

Band A

Band B

Band C

Band D

Band E

- 6.3.3 Band A will contain those applicants in highest housing need. Band E will contain those applicants in lowest need. (See section 16 for more information on banding).

- 6.3.4 Some allocations will be dealt with outside the scheme; these are explained in Section 3.3. In such cases, applicants will be placed in Band F, which is where applicants are not able to bid for properties through Gateway to Homechoice.

- 6.3.5 Where any PO makes an assessment of need and places an applicant in one of the five housing needs bands, this band applies to the whole scheme. Different POs will not place applicants in different bands, even if they have a local connection to more than one authority.

6.4 Assessment of Applications

6.4.1 Once an application has been received it will be assessed and entered onto the Housing Register; the applicant will receive an acknowledgement letter. The letter will:

- Explain which band the applicant has been placed in on initial assessment. If they are subsequently assessed as having a medical or welfare need they will be advised separately after the assessment has been made.
- Confirm the size (and if applicable the type) of property the applicant is eligible for.
- Confirm the applicants' effective date.
- Include a reminder about informing the PO of any change in circumstances.
- Give details of appeal and review procedures.
- Give a registration number.
- If an applicant is temporarily restricted from bidding or has reduced preference it will explain the reasons why.
- Give details of the authorities where they have a local connection.

6.4.2 If an applicant moves home they must advise the PO either by telephone, email or by sending in a change of address form. so that their level of housing need can be re-assessed to reflect their new circumstances.

6.4.3 If an applicant's circumstances change (but their address remains the same), they must advise the PO either by telephone, email or sending in a change of circumstances form to enable their application to be reassessed. A change of circumstances could include the birth of a child, a change in medical condition or threat of homelessness.

6.5 Deciding the effective date

6.5.1 Priority within bands relates to an applicant's effective date. The effective date is usually the date the application is received, except;

- Where an applicant is moved from one band to a higher band. Their new effective date will be the date their circumstances changed.
- Where an applicant receives priority on medical or welfare grounds, their effective date will be the date they applied for this award.
- Where an applicant has been accepted as Homeless their effective date will be the date they applied as homeless; unless they already qualify for Band B with an earlier date.

6.6 Local Connection to the sub-region

6.6.1 The applicant will have a local connection to the sub region if:

- Their only or principle home is within the boundaries of the district covered by the sub-region.

or

- They were placed in specialised housing which is not available in the sub-region, but had a local connection previously through residence

or

- They (not a member of their household) are in permanent paid work in the sub region

or

- They have a son, daughter, brother, sister, mother or father, who is over 18 and lives in the sub-region, and has done so for at least five years before the date of application.

6.6.2 Applicants will lose their local connection if:

- Since applying to join the register they have moved outside the sub-region and no longer meet any other local connection conditions.
- They had a local connection through a close relative but the relative no longer resides in the area.
- They had a local connection through their employment but this no longer applies .

6.7 Connection to the local authority area

6.7.1 To ensure local housing needs are met some properties advertised through the CBL scheme may be advertised as available only to applicants with a local connection to an individual Borough or District.

6.7.2 The criteria for local connection to an individual borough or district will be the same as the criteria for local connection to the sub-region but will relate to that District or Borough only.

6.7.3 Applicants will be asked to identify their local connection to the sub-region and an individual PO in that sub-region. If they have a local connection to more than one PO they should mention this on their application form.

6.8 Applicants from outside the sub-region who have no local connection to the area

- 6.8.1 The sub-region is a high demand area where demand for social housing is in excess of supply.
- 6.8.2 For this reason applicants, who live outside the sub-region with no local connection to it, cannot expect the same priority for housing as those with a local connection.
- 6.8.3 Applicants living outside the sub-region will be assessed in the same way as others to establish their housing need. If the applicant has no local connection to the sub-region, the application will then be placed one band lower than the assessment, except, that, an application assessed as in Band E will stay in Band E but will be shortlisted below those people in Band E who do have a local connection.

6.9 Special Assessments of Need

- 6.9.1 Applicants placed in temporary accommodation by other Boroughs not in the sub-region are entitled to reasonable preference and will be placed in Band C.

6.10 Reduced Preference

- 6.10.1 Section 167 (2A) of the Housing Act (1996) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, allows allocation schemes to give reduced preference to the following groups of applicants:
- An applicant with significant financial resources “where the applicant was financially able to secure alternative accommodation at market rent for himself”
 - Where the “behaviour of the applicant (or member of his household) affects his suitability to be a tenant”.

- 6.10.2 Significant financial resources

An applicant will be given reduced preference where:

- An applicant with reasonable preference and sufficient resources to buy a property applies to the register, their housing need will be assessed as usual, however their priority may be restricted due to their financial resources.
- The applicant’s income, capital and/or interest held (and which could be redeemed) in a current home or other property would be taken into account along with their ability to get a mortgage and the size and type of property needed.
- Those who cannot afford to buy a property on the open market but who could afford to buy through a low-cost home ownership scheme will be placed in Band D under reduced preference if they have an assessed need.

6.10.3 Suitability to be a tenant

6.10.4 An applicant will be given reduced preference where:

- The applicant owes any PO, or another local authority or RP, money from a former tenancy either because of not paying rent or charges for use and occupation or through damaging the property. Debts with private landlords could also be taken into account. If it can be demonstrated that the applicant has entered into and maintained effective arrangements for repaying this debt it may not necessarily result in reduced preference criteria.
- An applicant has received a notice from their current landlord because of their own actions e.g. rent arrears or anti-social behaviour
- An applicant has been evicted from a home owned by a Council or RP.
- An applicant has assaulted or harassed an employee or agent of a Council or RP.
- An applicant (or members of their prospective household) committed acts causing or likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or where they have previously lived.
- An applicant has failed to maintain a rented property in a proper and reasonable condition.
- An applicant has deliberately damaged a property.
- An applicant (or member of their prospective household) has committed acts of anti-social behaviour.
- An applicant has obtained a previous tenancy fraudulently

6.10.5 In these circumstances, generally an applicant will be placed in Band D to reflect reduced preference if they hold another assessed housing need. If they have no assessed housing need they will be placed in Band E.

6.10.6 A PO will notify applicants given reduced preference. Applicants can ask for the decision to be reviewed. The PO will inform applicants in writing, if there is action they can take to improve their assessment. Decisions will be reviewed each year.

6.10.7 This is not a blanket policy. In exceptional circumstances, applicants will be given additional preference despite meeting one of the criteria outlined above. This may occur, for example, where an owner-occupier has a severe medical need and needs sheltered housing, or a person fleeing domestic violence has rent arrears; each case will be considered on its merits.

6.11 Applicants who have deliberately made their housing situation worse

- 6.11.1 The PO will consider whether an applicant has deliberately made their housing situation worse to increase their housing need, and consequently improve their chances of re housing through the register.
- 6.11.2 If it is decided that the applicant has made their housing situation worse, they will remain in the band that reflects their housing need in their previous accommodation.
- 6.11.3 If the applicant was not registered from their previous address, the assessment of housing need will be based on the accommodation occupied before their accommodation changed.
- 6.11.4 The assessment will be reviewed after 12 months, on request. If the restriction is removed, the application will be placed in the band that reflects current circumstances. Their effective date will be the date they moved to the new band.

6.12 Owner-occupiers

- 6.12.1 Owner-occupiers or applicants who own other residential property will be placed in Band E. Applicants who previously owned a property and have sold it will be asked to provide proof of the sale and evidence of any proceeds received.
- 6.12.2 Owner-occupiers generally will not be able to move to another band or be awarded medical or welfare priority (but see 6.12.4).
- 6.12.3 Owner-occupiers will be able to express an interest for a property if they wish to do so, however, because a Council or RP tenancy can only be held as a main home, homes are not usually offered to applicants who still own their home or are paying a residential mortgage. An exception may be considered where an elderly owner-occupier wants to express an interest in low demand sheltered accommodation.
- 6.12.4 Property owners may be able to be moved to a higher band and awarded medical or welfare priority if:
- they are over 60 **and** have been assessed as being unable to meet their housing need from their own resources
 - or
 - they have a disability and need an adapted property **and** have also been assessed as being unable to meet their housing needs from their own resources **and** the home they need is not available in the housing market.
- 6.12.5 The PO will assess whether an applicant can meet their housing needs from their own resources. To make this assessment they will need details of the applicant's income and savings.

6.12.6 Based on information received there may be one of three outcomes:

- That the applicant could buy suitable accommodation outright.
- That the applicant may be able to buy suitable accommodation with an affordable mortgage (with assistance from the welfare benefit system if appropriate).
- the applicant is unable to buy suitable accommodation.

6.12.7 If it is decided that the applicant is unable to buy suitable accommodation, it will be recommended they qualify to move to a higher band if they are awarded priority on medical or welfare grounds.

6.13 Applicants in 'tied' accommodation which is suitable for their needs

6.13.1 Applicants are considered to be in tied accommodation if the occupation of their home is essential for the performance of their duties as an employee. This includes applicants who are accommodated by HM Forces.

6.13.2 Applicants in 'tied' accommodation will be placed in Band E. They will be moved to Band C if:

- they are six months away from retirement
- or
- they have received a legally binding notice asking them to leave their accommodation.

6.13.3 Applicants who are qualifying agricultural workers may be covered by the Rent Agricultural Act 1976. Please see section 17.17.

7 Finding a Home under CBL Scheme

7.1 Advertising available homes

- 7.1.1 All social landlords within the scheme will advertise their homes as widely as possible.
- 7.1.2 In exceptional cases a home may be excluded from the advertising scheme. For example: it is needed urgently to deal with an emergency, facilitate a decant, meet the needs of those with specific housing needs, or it is specifically adapted and meets a particular need of an applicant, or it is needed to provide temporary accommodation to fulfil a statutory duty. This will include “extra care” and very sheltered accommodation.

Direct Lets may apply in the following circumstances:

- Extra care and very extra care properties.
- If a property is needed to house someone in Council property temporarily.
- In cases of where someone has to be moved immediately a direct let may be made.
- In the case of a specially adapted property built for a specific person.
- Decants
- Where a homeless applicant has either failed to bid or failed to bid on a a property on which they could be successful, or has refused a property and the PO needs to move them on from temporary accommodation.
- If there is no alternative for temporary accommodation and the Council would be breaching their duty.
- Where it has been deemed that the person is at risk or is at risk to others and unable to bid through CBL.

Note: Where a direct let is made, the property will not be advertised under CBL, but we will report that that property has been used as a direct let to ensure transparency. All applicants will be placed in Band F which is a non-bidding category.

- 7.1.3 Some partner RPs may decide not to advertise all their homes through the scheme. This will depend upon the level of nomination rights agreed with each PO.
- 7.1.4 To ensure applicants are aware of homes available, they will be advertised:
- On a website – www.Gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk
 - At local offices.
 - In a property newsletter sent to all RP, voluntary agencies and other agencies who request it.
 - Applicants in Bands A and B, or those who require sheltered accommodation, may be sent the property newsletter on request.
- 7.1.5 Advertisements will include a description of the home and any other relevant information, for example the rent, size and any special facilities or adaptations.
- 7.1.6 The home will be labelled to show who is able to express an interest in it, for example, should a local connection be required or if only applicants of a certain age may apply.

7.2 Labelling properties

- 7.2.1 POs will label advertised homes to provide as much information as possible about the property and who is eligible to express an interest.
- 7.2.2 Where an applicant does not meet the criteria outlined, they will not be considered for the home.
- 7.2.3 Labelling criteria will include:
- **Local connection:** If the home is only available to households with a local connection to a village or local authority, or with the sub-region.
 - **Transferring tenant:** Sometimes RP or POs may decide that a home will only be available for their own existing tenants.
 - **Property size:** Applicants must be eligible for the size/type of property. Applicants will be advised their eligibility when they join the scheme.
 - **Housing needs bands:** Some homes may only be offered to applicants in particular bands.
 - **Adapted homes:** Homes particularly suitable for people with disabilities will have special symbols to help applicants with those needs identify them. Adverts for adapted or accessible homes (for example those with wheelchair access) will specify that they are only available for people assessed as needing them.
 - **Supported Housing:** Homes which have been developed for vulnerable groups who require support, will be advertised to those applicants who are eligible for such support. This will include homes in sheltered housing schemes.

- **Age Restrictions:** Some homes may have a minimum age requirement.
- **Local Lettings Policy:** To promote sustainable and settled communities, POs may introduce specific lettings policies in some areas which will vary from this allocations policy. For example, where there is a need to balance the child to adult ratio or there are too many vulnerable residents in an area.
- **Pets:** The advert will identify whether pets are allowed.
- **Home type and facilities:** The advert will show the home type, floor level, heating, service charges and any other relevant details.

7.3 Expressing an interest in available homes

- 7.3.1 To be considered for an available home, applicants must apply for the home by the publicised deadline and meet the labelling criteria.
- 7.3.2 Applicants will generally be able to make expressions of interest each advertising cycle. The bidding cycle will be weekly.
- 7.3.3 Applicants will be able to express an interest in two eligible properties per cycle.
- 7.3.4 The number of homes in which an applicant may express an interest each bidding cycle and the length of the bidding cycle may be changed after monitoring of the scheme and applicant consultation.
- 7.3.5 Support will be offered to applicants who require assistance in using the scheme.
- 7.3.6 Applicants will be able to register an interest in a home by several methods:
- Interactive telephone - 24 hours (0845 2700724)
 - Website (www.Gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk)
 - Email (See Appendix 1 for individual Council email addresses)
 - In person at their local office
 - Text by mobile phone (currently under review - 07781 486643)
 - Using an advocate

7.4 Making an offer of accommodation

- 7.4.1 Once the advert deadline has passed a shortlist of applicants expressing an interest in the home will be produced from those who met the labelling criteria.
- 7.4.2 The successful applicant for each home will usually be the one who is eligible, meets any labelling criteria, in the highest band, and with the earliest effective date.
- 7.4.3 If an applicant's circumstances are found to be different to those stated, they are found to have made false claims, or problems have been identified which may make them unsuitable as a tenant it may be decided that a viewing should not be offered. In such cases the applicant will be told why they were not being put forward for viewing. If false information has been given deliberately, action will be taken by the POs and may have serious consequences for the applicant.

7.5 Feedback

- 7.5.1 After each advertising cycle, feedback will be publicised on:
- Home size and type
 - Location
 - Number of applicants who made a bid for each property
 - Band of successful applicant
 - Effective date of successful applicant
- 7.5.2 Feedback will also include any homes that were not advertised as part of the scheme, for example, properties used to decant tenants, to ensure transparency.
- 7.5.3 Feedback is important, as it will help applicants to see where their best chances of housing are.

7.6 Accompanied Viewing

- 7.6.1 Once the top applicants have been identified, arrangements will be made by the appropriate partner landlord for them to see the property as quickly as possible.
- 7.6.2 The landlord will decide whether or not they take multiple applicants to view at the same time or make individual appointments.
- 7.6.3 At the viewing or on the phone, the applicants will be given further information about the property, repairs to be carried out, the date when the property is expected to be available, and any special conditions of tenancy etc.
- 7.6.4 After the viewing, the applicant who is highest in the shortlist and interested after viewing the property, will be offered its tenancy.

- 7.6.5 The selected applicant will have up to 24 hours to make up their mind as to whether or not to accept the offer. In exceptional circumstances this period of time may be increased.

7.7 Refusals

- 7.7.1 When an applicant rejects a home after viewing, the applicant next on the shortlist will be considered.
- 7.7.2 Applicants may need to complete a viewing feedback form, if requested by the landlord, so any special issues with a property or area can be identified.
- 7.7.3 If an applicant refuses a property there will usually be no penalties except in certain circumstances (see 8.3).
- 7.7.4 If an applicant signs a tenancy agreement and then rejects the property, this does not count as a refusal. At this stage, they are legally a tenant. If they have given notice on a previous property it may not be possible to withdraw the notice.
- 7.7.5 Should an applicant accept a tenancy but then decide they do not wish to go ahead, it is likely that their landlord will insist on four weeks notice. However even if they are allowed to withdraw their notice they may still be suspended from the scheme and not allowed to participate for 12 months. The POs will decide if they need to complete a new application. Each situation will be considered on the individual circumstances.

7.8 Lower Demand homes

- 7.8.1 Where there are no expressions of interest from eligible applicants, a home will be re-advertised or the criteria for selection will be reviewed.

8 Offers of accommodation

8.1 Choice of area

- 8.1.1 All applicants can say where in the sub-region they would like to live. Applicants' areas of choice may be monitored for statistical information and to help inform new development, although applicants are not restricted to their stated areas when selecting properties through the scheme.
- 8.1.2 In order to maximise choice and mobility for applicants within the sub-region, each PO will advertise their properties to applicants who have a local connection to any of the eight local authorities. Inward and outward migration between authorities will be monitored quarterly. If inward migration exceeds outward migration significantly then properties may be restricted to bidding by applicants with a local connection to a particular local authority. In such cases properties will be clearly advertised to show a local connection rule applies. Cross border applications will be reviewed regularly by the sub-regional board.
- 8.1.3 Certain areas or homes may be restricted to people with a local connection to a village or local area. In such cases properties will be clearly advertised to show a local connection rule applies.
- 8.1.4 The homelessness law requires that an applicant must have a local connection to a particular area, and meet other statutory tests, before a full duty arises. A homeless applicant may also challenge the decision of a PO on the suitability of accommodation offered if it offers accommodation outside their boundaries. For these reasons all homeless applicants owed a main duty will be restricted to bidding for homes in that local authority area where they have been accepted as homeless. However in the case where an applicant has been accepted through homelessness because of violence their case will be assessed and the restriction on whether they can bid on all properties will be considered by the assessing authority. If the restriction is removed then they will be able to bid cross-boundary.
- 8.1.5 When applicants accepted as homeless, or those people who need to move urgently, do not bid for homes within a reasonable time or bid but then refuse homes, or do not bid for homes on which they could be successful, POs reserve the power to bid for them on any suitable property in an appropriate area. If they are the successful bidder and still refuse the offered home, the duty owed to them under homelessness legislation may be considered discharged. For other applicants, priority will be reassessed.

- 8.1.6 Applicants who have been placed in Band A because they have been assessed as needing to move on from supported housing accommodation will also be restricted to bidding in their own local authority area because ongoing support will usually be a condition of their tenancy. In certain cases cross boundary bidding will be allowed but only in agreement with the local authority and Supporting People teams.
- 8.1.7 Applicants that have been given a priority under welfare or medical grounds to move to a local authority area to give or receive support will be restricted to bidding for properties in that local authority area.

8.2 Offering properties to tenants who owe rent

- 8.2.1 Tenants on the register will not normally be offered a new tenancy if they are in arrears with their rent. An offer is possible if:
- The rent owed is no more than four times the weekly rent (less any Housing Benefit payable). Any rent owing must be paid **before** the tenant signs to accept the new tenancy.
 - Note: This may not always apply to RP tenants, as the rent account may need to be clear before making the offer. This is checked with the RP at the time.
 - A PO has accepted a duty to house the applicant under the Homelessness legislation. However the applicant will still be expected to agree to pay outstanding rent.
 - Note: If court action is being taken to gain possession or other legal action, no offers of housing will be made without the agreement of the PO.
 - The applicant is a Council or RP tenant who has a high priority because they:
 - have been temporarily moved from their property by the Council or RP to allow repairs or re-development work to take place.
 - are moving under the Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS). In this case the rent they owe cannot be more than any payment due from the scheme. An exception may be made if a move would benefit both housing needs in the area and the POs housing management work. The PO and the Landlord must agree this.
 - have a 'high' medical, welfare or hardship assessment. For clarification purposes this is for those who have been awarded Band A on medical or welfare grounds. No offers of housing will be made without the agreement of the PO.
 - tenants who are at significant risk due to violence or harassment. No offers of housing will be made without the agreement of the PO.

- 8.2.2 Sometimes a new tenancy will be approved if there is rent owing. These cases will be agreed by the PO and the landlord involved. Generally these cases will include a strong social or housing management need for the household to move.

8.3 Offers to Homeless Households & Reviews of Offers (duties under the Housing Act 1996 part VII section 193, as amended by the Homeless Act 2002)

- 8.3.1 All Homelessness applicants will be able to take part in the scheme. However those applicants accepted through homelessness legislation are restricted to bid in the local authority area where they were accepted as homeless.
- 8.3.2 If they do not express an interest for any suitable homes, or refuse any suitable homes they are subsequently offered, or if they do not bid for homes on which they may be successful, they will be interviewed and a bid may be made on their behalf or a direct offer made. If an expression of interest is made on their behalf and is successful, or a direct offer is made, this will be their only offer. If they refuse it the rules below will apply.
- 8.3.3 Accepted homeless applicants are entitled to one reasonable offer of housing. If they refuse or do not reply to the offer, the Council's duty under part VII of the legislation may be ended. If so, the Council will explain the applicants' right to appeal against the reasonableness of the offer of accommodation. They will also explain that the applicant may lose their right to temporary accommodation and that the duty towards them under part VII may end.
- 8.3.4 While an appeal is considered, the property may, at the landlord's discretion, be held until a decision is made as to whether the property is suitable. A homelessness officer will interview the applicant (where possible) to discuss the offer and explain how they can seek a review.
- 8.3.5 If the appeal is unsuccessful the applicant will be offered the property again, if it is still available. If this is refused, the applicant will be referred to the Homelessness Team Leader to confirm that the duty has ended.
- 8.3.6 Applicants to whom a homelessness duty has ended may stay on the register. If so, they must make a new application that will be reassessed and banded based on their current situation.

9 Type of property offered

9.1 Property size and household size

9.1.1 The POs will always aim to make the best use of their housing stock.

9.1.2 Sometimes the applicant with the highest priority may not be allocated a home if this would result in either overcrowding or under-occupation or if it would not make best use of ground floor or specially adapted accommodation.

9.1.3 In exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the landlord, an applicant will be allowed to move into a home that is smaller than their needs, if doing so improves their situation. For example, if an applicant has 4 children and is entitled to a four bedroom property, but is living in a 2 bedroom flat, their application for a 3 bedroom property may be considered.

9.1.4 The following table advises how many bedrooms an applicant should have.

Household Size	Lowest number of bedrooms needed
1 adult	Bed – sitting Room
2 adults living together as a couple	1 Bedroom
2 adults living together, but not as a couple	2 Bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with 1 child or expecting their first child	1 or 2 Bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as couple) with 2 children of the same sex, if less than 8 years between children	2 Bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with 2 children of the opposite sex, where both children are under 5 years of age	2 Bedrooms

<p>1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 children of the opposite sex where one child is aged 5 years or more • 2 children of the same sex, where there is an age gap of at least eight years between the children • 2 children, and the applicant or their partner is pregnant • 3 children • 4 children (all of one sex or 2 boys and 2 girls) 	3 Bedrooms
<p>1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 children (3 of one sex, and one of the other) • or up to 6 children 	4 Bedrooms
<p>1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with 6 or more children</p>	5 or more Bedrooms

9.2 Parents with ‘staying access’ to dependent children or shared residence orders

9.2.1 Applicants with a shared residence order or staying access for children are not automatically entitled to bedrooms for their children. The general principle is that a child needs one home of an adequate size, and that the POs will not accept responsibility for providing a second home for children. The POs will make an assessment based on the individual circumstances.

9.3 Applicants with a medical or social need for a larger property

9.3.1 Applicants can apply for an extra bedroom due to their medical or social needs. Their circumstances will be considered and evidence supporting the need for an extra room will be required.

9.4 Extra rooms for carers

9.4.1 If an applicant needs an extra room for a carer, the PO will investigate and offer advice on the need for an extra room. The PO will make the decision. The guidelines are as follows:

- Social Services should be able to give supporting evidence that a 'live in' carer is needed, and that if the support was not given voluntarily or paid for by the client, they would qualify for funding for a 'live in' carer.
- If one person has two carers working on a rota to cover 24 hours we would assume that they only needed one bedroom.
- In most cases only one extra bedroom for a carer will be considered. Extra rooms for a carer's dependents cannot usually be considered.

9.4.2 If the applicant does not need 24 hour care or intensive support an additional bedroom would not normally be considered, however an individual assessment will be made.

9.5 Bungalows – Age restricted

9.5.1 Many of the bungalows advertised are designed for older people, or people with disabilities. In areas where there is high demand and limited availability of bungalows, preference will be given to:

- Those aged 60 or over.
- Those under 60 with Bands A or B medical assessment for mobility, who require this type of accommodation.
- In areas where there is an abundance of bungalows, applicants under 60 with a Band C medical assessment for mobility, will be considered. Under these circumstances, applications will only be considered when it has been assessed that a bungalow is the most suitable type of accommodation to meet their housing need.
- Those who will release a property that is needed by the Council (as decided by the TIS) aged between 40 and 60.

Note: The advert will stipulate if there is an age restriction.

9.5.2 To make best use of stock, in exceptional circumstances, other applicants will be able to bid for special needs, bungalows in order to resolve a high welfare issue, which cannot be resolved by other types of accommodation.

9.6 Bungalows – without age restrictions

- 9.6.1 Due to differing demand in certain localities some of the POs have bungalows they let to applicants of any age. It will be clearly stated on the advertisement who is able to apply for the properties.
- 9.6.2 Bungalows adapted to meet the needs of wheelchair users or severe mobility problems will be offered to those who have been assessed as needing that type of property.

9.7 Properties empty for major repairs and alterations (decants)

- 9.7.1 A decant is where the landlord needs to do major repairs to their property or redevelop the area and the property needs to be vacant for this work to be carried out.
- 9.7.2 This will only apply to tenants of local authorities or tenants of RPs who allocate 100% of their properties through the CBL scheme. This is usually a temporary move.
- 9.7.3 All such cases will be dealt with outside the CBL scheme to enable the landlord to move applicants as quickly as possible. These moves will be featured in the scheme feedback to ensure full transparency.

10 Local Lettings Policies

10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1 In exceptional circumstances, the partnership may decide to let properties on a slightly different basis from normal, in the interests of building a strong and sustainable community or to deal with particular local issues. The set of criteria where this applies will be called a “local lettings scheme”.
- 10.1.2 The decision to apply a local lettings scheme will be jointly made by the landlord of the property and the PO.
- 10.1.3 For existing developments there will need to be clear evidence of the need for a variation in the normal policy, and a time limit for review of not more than 2 years. The implications for equal opportunities and for the ‘reasonable preference’ criteria of the law will be considered.
- 10.1.4 On new developments, the partnership may consider widening the eligible bands for home types on first lettings, again taking equal opportunities and legal issues into account.
- 10.1.5 Sometimes RPs may have agreed that they will allow a certain amount of their stock go to their own tenants. If so homes may be advertised accordingly.

10.2 Local lettings policy – properties

- 10.2.1 Local lettings policies may be used in an area or a block of flats with significant management problems, which put other tenants at significant risk and where other action has failed. In these circumstances action may be taken against the perpetrators and a decision made as to whether a local lettings procedure should apply.
- 10.2.2 Although applicants will only apply once to the sub-region some RP will still operate their own allocations policies, and in such circumstances the highest bidder may not always fit the criteria for the letting. Some RP may keep transfer registers for their tenants and use this to find tenants for some homes.

10.3 Local lettings policy – people

- 10.3.1 The local lettings policy will also be used if a PO knows that an applicant has committed serious offences, which restrict where they can live. This could include Registered Sex Offenders or those identified as posing a serious risk to a specific community. In such cases the PO will consult fully with the Police, Probation Service and other interested parties. In such cases (and after a risk assessment has been completed), applicants may have their bidding restricted to certain areas where it is deemed they provide less risk.

10.4 Local lettings policy – connection to an area (normally villages)

- 10.4.1 Some housing developments, particularly in villages, have been designated for people with a local connection to that area. This means that only applicants with a local connection to the area will be given preference for that property (see Section 6.7).

11 Allocating properties designed for people with physical disabilities or properties for older people

11.1 Allocating sheltered housing.

11.1.1 When allocating sheltered housing the same general principles as for other property types are followed, apart from the following:

- An assessment of the applicant's suitability and need for support must be completed before any tenancy is offered. If the applicant is considered unsuitable for sheltered accommodation, they will be advised and given advice on homes more suitable to their needs.
- When assessing the applicant's suitability for sheltered housing they will also be given advice about the scheme and how to bid. If they need help this will be noted and appropriate arrangements made. All applicants requesting sheltered housing will be monitored to ensure that they are participating in the scheme.

11.2 Allocation of extra-care sheltered housing or very sheltered housing

11.2.1 The CBL scheme will not be used for extra care or very sheltered housing schemes. This means that the properties will not be advertised.

11.2.2 These schemes have been commissioned with Social Services and RP and the eligibility rules means that applicants are assessed both on their housing and support needs. For more information on these schemes please contact your PO.

11.2.3 Applicants waiting for extra care will be placed in Band F (non-bidding band).

11.3 Properties designed or adapted for people with physical disabilities

11.3.1 All applicants who need a home suitable for wheelchair users will usually be assessed by an Occupational Therapist report before an offer can be considered.

11.3.2 Homes particularly designed for, or accessible to, people with disabilities will be advertised as such to help applicants with those needs identify them.

11.3.3 Properties which have been adapted to a very high standard may not be included in the scheme and will be directly allocated. The appropriate officer in the PO will make the decision whether the home is to be part of the scheme.

11.4 Age restrictions on homes

- 11.4.1 Except in special circumstances, sheltered housing and linked accommodation is let to people over the state retirement age (60 years for both men and women) or to those aged 55 and over in receipt of disability allowance and who need supported housing. Some landlords may offer sheltered accommodation to those aged 55 or over who are not in receipt of disability allowance. This will be stated in the individual advert. (See paragraphs 11.1 and 11.2 for information about how we allocate sheltered housing and extra-care, sheltered housing).
- 11.4.2 Bungalows are reserved for applicants as determined in section 9.5 and 9.6.

12 Types of Tenancies offered

12.1 Introduction

- 12.1.1 Applicants are normally offered permanent housing on either an introductory or secure tenancy if the property is a Council property. If the property is provided by an RP they will offer an assured or starter tenancy.
- 12.1.2 Introductory tenancies and starter tenancies give reduced security of tenure in their first year.
- 12.1.3 Tenants with an introductory or starter tenancy cannot mutually exchange their home or assign their tenancy but are eligible to transfer.

12.2 Letting permanent housing on a temporary licence

- 12.2.1 Homes are sometimes temporarily let to homeless applicants under a licence agreement or non-secure tenancies. This accommodation will not be let through the CBL scheme.

13 Checks to make sure housing is offered to those with the greatest need

13.1 Re-registering applications on the register

- 13.1.1 To keep the register up to date applicants may be contacted to see if they still want help with housing.
- 13.1.2 Applicants may be removed from the register if they do not respond to a request for information needed to assess their housing application.

13.2 Home visits before we make an offer of housing

- 13.2.1 POs and other landlords may visit applicants at the address given on their application form or conduct a telephone interview before actively considering them for an offer of tenancy.
- 13.2.2 The officer visiting will need to be satisfied that the details given by the applicant are correct. The failure of an applicant to disclose relevant information to the PO may result in the application being suspended or withdrawn. The PO may also seek to prosecute the applicant.
- 13.2.3 If application details are not accurate or circumstances have changed significantly the application will be re-assessed.
- 13.2.4 The PO may ask for a tenancy reference from their current landlord.

14 Making the best use of our housing stock

14.1 Tenants of Registered Providers (RP) where no nomination rights exist

- 14.1.1 There are some RP within the sub region that are not subject to nomination agreements and can therefore choose to let their homes according to their own rules. Applications from tenants with these landlords will be treated in the same way as an application from a tenant in the private sector.

14.2 Council and RP tenants from outside the sub-region

- 14.2.1 Should an RP tenant or Council tenant from outside the sub-region apply for housing, they will be treated the same way as an application from a private sector tenant.
- 14.2.2 This recognises that their current home will not become available to meet needs in the sub region.
- 14.2.3 These tenants will be placed in Band E if adequately housed. They are able to apply for medical or welfare priority, but any overcrowding priority would be assessed as if they were a private sector tenant.
- 14.2.4 Where there is no local connection to the sub-region applicants will be placed in Band E unless they have a medical or welfare need. After assessment they will be assigned one band lower than if they had a local connection to the sub-region.

15 Reviews

15.1 Rights to a review

15.1.1 Applicants have the right to ask for a review of decisions made about your application for housing or offer of accommodation. This includes:

- Decisions about refusing an application to join the register
- Removing an application from the register
- Assessment of bands
- Offers of housing

15.2 How to request a review of a Housing Register Decision

15.2.1 Applicants who disagree with a decision a PO has made may request a review of that decision. This may include the assessment of priority.

15.2.2 The appeal must be in writing within 21 days of the decision to the PO that made the decision. It must outline the reasons for the appeal. If an applicant is unable to appeal in writing an interview appeal may be offered.

15.2.3 The PO will reply in writing, giving the reasons for changing or upholding the original decision. Although the PO will aim to reply within 5 – 10 working days, they are legally obliged to reply within 56 days of receiving a request for a review.

15.2.4 If an applicant wants to appeal again against the decision they can request that another Council hears their review. The review process will be as follows:

Babergh – appeal to Braintree

Braintree – appeal to Colchester

Colchester – appeal to Ipswich

Ipswich – appeal to Maldon

Maldon – appeal to Mid Suffolk

Mid Suffolk – appeal to Suffolk Coastal

Suffolk Coastal – appeal to Waveney

Waveney – appeal to Babergh

15.3 Appealing against the reasonableness of an offer of housing

- 15.3.1 Under the CBL scheme there are generally no penalties for refusals of permanent accommodation. However, if applicants receive a direct offer and refuse the offer their priority may be reduced. (Separate rules apply to Accepted Homeless applicants. Please refer to section 8.3 for further information).
- 15.3.2 For information on how to appeal against the reduced priority please see 15.2 above.
- 15.3.3 If an applicant wishes to appeal against the offer of housing they must appeal in writing to the PO within two working days of the offer being refused. The PO will normally confirm the outcome of the appeal within ten working days.
- 15.3.4 The written reply will explain the right to take the appeal further if the applicant is not satisfied with the decision.
- 15.3.5 On refusing an offer of accommodation the PO may ask applicants to complete a form to record the reasons why the property has not been accepted. This will be used to monitor the CBL scheme and allow them to make improvements where possible.
- 15.3.6 Section 8.3 explains the right of appeal against an offer for homeless applicants accepted under the Housing Act 1996 part VII section 193, as amended by Homelessness Act 2002.

15.4 Complaints procedure

- 15.4.1 If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the management of their application, other than when a review can be made, they should contact the PO and ask for a complaints form.

15.5 The Local Government Ombudsman

15.5.1 The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and other bodies. They can be asked to investigate complaints about most Council matters including housing.

15.5.2 If a complainant is not satisfied with the action the particular scheme Council takes, he or she can send a written complaint to the Ombudsman. A complainant must give the organisation an opportunity to deal with a complaint first, using its complaints procedure.

15.5.3 The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman

10th Floor

Millbank Tower

Millbank

London, SW1P 4QP

Tel: 020 7217 4620

Email: www.lgo.org.uk

15.5.4 If an applicant wishes to make a complaint against a scheme landlord (RP) they should contact:

The Housing Ombudsman Service

81 Aldwych

London, WC2B 4HN

Tel: 020 7421 3800

Email: www.ihos.org.uk

16 Banding Scheme

Each application will be assessed and placed in a band based on the individual circumstances of each case. Further details of how each band has been assessed is provided below:

16.1 Direct Lets

Direct Lets may apply in the following circumstances:

- Extra care and very extra care properties
- If a property is needed to house someone in Council property temporarily
- In cases of where someone has to be moved immediately a direct let may be made
- In the case of a specially adapted property built for a specific person
- Decants
- Where a homeless applicant has either failed to bid or failed to bid on a property on which they could be successful, or has refused a property and/or the PO needs to move them on from temporary accommodation
- If there is no alternative for temporary accommodation and the Council would be breaching their duty.
- Where it has been deemed that the person is at risk or is at risk to others and unable to bid through CBL

Direct Lets will not be part of the CBL scheme and will not be able to bid on properties and will be placed in Band F

16.2 Band A

- Negotiated surrender of a tenancy within the sub region.
- Retiring Scheme Managers in Council or RP properties where accommodation was a condition of their employment within the sub region.
- Accepted Homeless in severe need.
- Critical medical/welfare award (includes emergency situations).
- Nominations (move on from specified agencies).
- Qualifying Agricultural Workers within the sub region.
- Relationship breakdowns (Council properties where they are under occupying but have been assessed as having housing need) within the sub region.
- Successions (Council properties where they are under occupying but have been assessed as having housing need) within the sub region.
- Releasing a property in need (Council or RP properties) or where it prevents the Council making expensive alterations to the property within the sub region.
- Tenant Incentive Scheme (TIS) currently in three or four bedroom accommodation, releasing one or two bedrooms within the sub region.
- Multiple needs. If someone has two or more needs in Band B, they will be moved into Band A. **Note: Accepted Homeless cases do not come under this category. If additional preference is needed for homeless cases, they will be assessed as Accepted Homeless in severe need.**

16.2.1 Retiring Scheme Managers, Accepted Homeless in severe need, relationship breakdowns and successions, would be expected to express an interest within six months.

16.2.2 High welfare and multiple needs in Band A would be expected to express an interest within 2 cycles of available properties, otherwise priority may be reduced.

16.3 Band B

- Serious medical/welfare award
- Tenant Incentive Scheme (TIS) currently in one or two bedroom accommodation, releasing one or two bedrooms within the sub region.
- Overcrowding in permanent social housing within the sub region.
- Accepted Homeless cases.
- Those applicants required to leave their homes as a result of an emergency prohibition order served in relation to the premises under the Housing Act 2004 within the sub region.
- A prohibition order or demolition order has been served, or is about to be served in relation to the applicants dwelling by the Private Sector Team of the particular scheme Council. This indicates that the property contains one or more Category 1 Hazards that probably cannot be remedied.
- An improvement notice has been, or is about to be served in relation to the applicants dwelling by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council and:
 - The remedies that are needed to reduce the hazard will require the property to be vacated for a significant period of time.
 - The cost of the remedies are beyond the means of the applicant (where applicable).
 - The remedies will make the property unsuitable for occupation by the applicant.
- Applicants assessed as meeting Band A criteria, but with no local connection to the sub region.
- Multiple needs. Applicants with four or more needs in Band C will be moved into Band B.
- Applicants threatened with homelessness, who are likely to lose their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress, who are assessed by the particular scheme Council as likely to be in priority need and who are receiving housing advice from the particular scheme Council to prevent homelessness.

Note: This will require a homelessness prevention referral from the particular scheme Council's advice and homelessness service. This is subject to a 3 month time limit.

16.4 Band C

- Moderate medical/welfare award
- Notice to quit
- Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, who are assessed by the particular scheme Council, as not in priority need.
- Applicants who following a homelessness application have been deemed by the particular scheme Council to be in priority need, but intentionally homeless.
- No fixed abode.
- Overcrowded in private rented accommodation or social housing outside the sub region.
- Fixed term licensees.
- Shared facilities.
- Lacking facilities.
- A hazard awareness notice has been served by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council, in relation to a Category 1 or 2 hazard at the applicants dwelling and:
 - The remedies that are needed to reduce the hazard will require the property to be vacated for a significant period of time; or
 - The cost of the remedies are beyond the means of the applicant (where applicable); or
 - The remedies will make the property unsuitable for occupation by the applicant.
- A suspended improvement notice or prohibition order exists but a foreseeable change in the applicants circumstances will cause it to become active and result in a high priority situation.
- Applicants assessed as meeting Band B criteria, but with no local connection to the sub region.

16.5 Band D

- Applicants assessed as meeting Band C criteria, but with no local connection to the sub region.
- Reduce preference.

16.6 Band E

- Caravan or mobile home, but no housing need.
- Tied accommodation, but no housing need.
- Applicants who live in a property that is adequate to meet their needs in terms of property type, size and facilities.
- In prison.
- A suspended prohibition order or improvement notice has been or will be served by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council, in relation to the applicants dwelling, but the criteria leading to it becoming active are not met by the applicant.
- A hazard awareness notice or improvement notice has been or will be served by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council, in relation to the applicants dwelling, but the specified remedies are low cost and straight forward to achieve.
- Owner Occupiers. **Note: Owner Occupiers will only be offered tenancies in sheltered accommodation or where there is no other demand.**

17 Housing Priority

17.1 Deciding who has priority on the register

- 17.1.1 Applicants will be placed in the relevant band defined by their specific circumstances. Reasonable preference, where appropriate, is awarded in accordance with legal responsibilities.

17.2 Overcrowding

- 17.2.1 Homeless applicants cannot fulfil the overcrowding criteria.
- 17.2.2 Applicants will be placed in Band B if they are overcrowded by one or more bedrooms and live in Council or RP properties where there is a reciprocal agreement with the RP in the sub-region. (See section 9.1 for how overcrowding is assessed). The overcrowding must arise within the household of the tenant, as named on the transfer application.
- 17.2.3 Applicants will be placed in Band C if they are overcrowded in private rented accommodation or living with relatives or friends.
- 17.2.4 Overcrowded applicants with a local connection to the sub-region, but living in Council or RP properties outside the sub-region will be in Band C.
- 17.2.5 Overcrowded applicants with no local connection to the sub-region living in either private rented or social housing will be placed in Band D.
- 17.2.6 Rooms which do not meet the standards for use as living accommodation for one person (the standards are given in the Housing Act 1985 Part X) will not be counted.
- 17.2.7 If applicants need an extra room for medical or welfare/hardship reasons they will not be considered overcrowded but will be assessed for medical or welfare priority.
- 17.2.8 Overcrowding priority will not be given if someone moved into the applicants' household making them overcrowded. This will be looked at on welfare grounds. As part of the assessment, consideration will be given as to whether applicants have deliberately made their housing situation worse. Please refer to 6.11 for further details.
- 17.2.9 Where an applicant is pregnant and they are entitled to a larger property they will not receive overcrowded priority until that baby is born.

17.3 Children sharing bedrooms

17.3.1 Children of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom unless:

- there is an age gap of at least 8 years between the two children

or

- there is a medical or social reason why the children cannot share a bedroom.

17.3.2 Applications will only be considered for overcrowding priority if the applicant is the main person who cares for the children named on the application. Welfare or medical grounds may be considered in other circumstances.

17.3.3 Applicants who have two children of opposite sex in a two bedroom Council or RP property who need a three bedroom property will be placed in Band B when one of their children is 5 or over.

17.4 Bedroom size

17.4.1 Bedrooms of less than 6.7 square metres are not considered for use by more than 1 child.

17.4.2 Rooms of less than 8 square metres are not seen as suitable for use by more than one 'non-dependent' adult (aged 16 or over), usually being the son or daughter.

17.4.3 Rooms between 6.7 – 8 m² are not considered suitable for more than 2 children and a second bedroom occupied by 4 or more children is considered unreasonable.

17.5 Applicants without children

- 17.5.1 Single applicants and couples without children who are living in overcrowded conditions will not be given priority for overcrowding unless they are in self-contained accommodation which is too small, for example a couple in a one person bed-sit. For example, young adults living with their parents, or people temporarily sharing with friends will not get overcrowding priority.

17.6 Disrepair, poor design and lack of facilities

- 17.6.1 Any complaint about poor repair within Council or RP properties must be reported to the applicant's landlord's Repairs service.
- 17.6.2 Applicants living in private sector accommodation in poor condition must be referred to the Council's Private Sector Housing team who will assess the situation and then make their recommendations according to the Banding Scheme (see Section 16).
- 17.6.3 If an applicant lacks facilities such as cooking facilities, washing facilities, toilet facilities or heating they will be placed in Band C.

17.7 Sharing with another household

- 17.7.1 Applicants will be placed in Band C if they share any of the following facilities with either people they are not related to or their family.
- living room
 - kitchen
 - bathroom or toilet.

17.8 People living in mobile homes or caravans

- 17.8.1 Applicants living in a caravan, mobile home or houseboat will be placed in Band E if there is no other housing need, reflecting parity with other private sector applicants.
- 17.8.2 It does not matter if the caravan is on a site or not or if they own or rent the property.
- 17.8.3 If their accommodation lacks facilities (see 17.6.3) they will be placed in Band C.

17.9 Homelessness and temporary or insecure accommodation

17.9.1 Accepted homeless households are applicants to whom:

- a PO has accepted a duty under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the duty towards households who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless)
- and**
- the PO accepts a duty to provide permanent Council or RP housing.

17.9.2 All accepted homeless applicants housed in temporary accommodation, including Bed & Breakfast accommodation, hostels, homeless at home provided by the Council will be placed in Band B.

17.9.3 Accepted Homeless applicants placed in self-contained temporary accommodation under a Council's private sector lettings schemes will be placed in Band B. However their application may be suspended from taking part in CBL for a period (they will be advised of this when they are placed in that accommodation).

17.9.4 Under the CBL scheme, all homeless applicants will be expected to make expressions of interest for any suitable property in the areas of their choice. Homeless applicants will not be able to express an interest while their application is suspended. Applicants will be monitored to make sure they are participating. Homeless applicants will be restricted to bidding within their own local authority area.

17.9.5 If a homeless applicant does not express an interest or does not make a successful bid within a reasonable length of time (for example within 3 months of their homeless acceptance date) they will be contacted and given appropriate advice and support. They will be given help to make expressions of interest if this is needed. If they still do not make any successful expressions of interest, the Council reserve the right to express an interest on behalf of them for any suitable property in their local authority area. If that expression of interest is successful, an offer will be made to the applicant and any refusal will be dealt with under Section 8.3. This is because POs have to make sure that homeless applicants do not remain in temporary accommodation longer than is necessary.

17.10 Accepted homeless households in severe need

17.10.1 These are applicants to whom:

- the PO has accepted a duty under the Homelessness legislation
and
- the PO accepts a duty to provide permanent Council or RP housing
and
- are elderly and vulnerable due to frailty*.
- have a terminal or severe long-term illness.
- have severe mental health problems, have been unable to cope in temporary accommodation, and have been 'sectioned' or are likely to be admitted under the Mental Health Act.
- are permanent wheelchair users.
- are Council or RP tenants who have an urgent need to transfer as they are suffering from violence or threats of violence and are considered to be at significant risk.
- if the Council is unable to provide/continue to provide suitable temporary accommodation.

Note: Where the above circumstances apply these applicants will be placed in Band A.

17.10.2 The PO will decide who will be placed in Band A. Recommendations will be made by the Homelessness Team because they have the most accurate and up-to-date information on the applicant, due to the investigations complete before an applicant is accepted as homeless.

17.10.3 *Elderly non-frail applicants may still be placed in Band A, however clear supporting evidence will be required to support their application.

17.11 Other Homeless households not owed a duty

17.11.1 Other homeless applicants who are not owed a duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the duty towards households who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless) are still entitled to reasonable preference and will be placed in Band C of the scheme.

17.12 Prevention of homelessness

- 17.12.1 Applicants threatened with homelessness who are likely to lose their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress, who are assessed by the particular scheme Council as likely to be in priority need and who are receiving housing advice from the particular scheme Council to prevent homelessness (this would require a homelessness prevention referral from the particular scheme Council's advice and homelessness service) will be placed in Band B.
- 17.12.2 Households placed in Band B to prevent homelessness will be subject to a 3 month time limit after which, their case will be reviewed and the enhanced banding may be withdrawn.
- 17.12.3 If they are subsequently accepted as homeless they will remain in Band B but their earlier effective date will remain, unless their enhanced banding had been withdrawn.

17.13 Assured shorthold tenants under notice

Assured shorthold tenants who have received a 'Notice Requiring Possession' from their landlord will be placed in Band C if there is less than three months before the notice expires.

- 17.13.1 If their notice has been received because of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour or because of their own actions then they will be given reduced preference and placed in Band D.
- 17.13.2 All applicants will be offered advice regarding their housing options.

17.14 Lodger under notice

- 17.14.1 This applies to applicants living in the same property as their landlord.
- 17.14.2 They must be renting a room that is for their own use only, and be paying a market rent.
- 17.14.3 Proof that notice has been served is required.
- 17.14.4 Applicants will be placed in Band C if there is less than three months before the notice expires.
- 17.14.5 The PO will then check to see whether the notice will be enforced.
- 17.14.6 If their notice has been received because of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour or because of their own actions then they will be given reduced preference and placed in Band D.

17.15 Tenants of tied accommodation under notice

- 17.15.1 Tenants in tied accommodation with no need to move will be placed in Band E.
- 17.15.2 If they have received a legal notice asking to leave that accommodation they will be placed in Band C.
- 17.15.3 If their notice has been received because of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour or because of their own actions then they will be given reduced preference and placed in Band D.

17.16 Protected tenants with a possession order

- 17.16.1 This applies to a tenant with a 'protected' tenancy (that is a tenancy with protection from eviction, but not an assured shorthold tenancy).
- 17.16.2 They must have been served with a court order for possession and then will be placed in Band C.

Important Note: Section 6.11 says that applicants will not get extra priority if *'we consider they have made their housing situation worse, and that their actions have been unreasonable in this respect'*. If a possession order has been granted because of a breach of tenancy, an applicant may be placed in Band D (reduced preference).

17.17 Qualifying Agricultural workers (protection under the Rent Agricultural Act 1976)

- 17.17.1 Certain categories of agricultural workers who are provided with accommodation as a condition of their employment, may be protected against eviction even if their employment comes to an end.
- 17.17.2 The worker can only be asked to leave their accommodation if an Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee (ADHAC) decides that the accommodation will be required by a successor or that the property is no longer in the interest of efficient agriculture.
- 17.17.3 If ADHAC decides that a worker must leave their accommodation, the local housing authority must use their best endeavours to offer housing to the worker.
- 17.17.4 An authority would not be properly carrying out its duty if it were to refuse to offer suitable accommodation to the worker because they did not have enough priority on the register.
- 17.17.5 In such cases this applicant will be placed in Band A.

17.18 Fixed-term licensee

- 17.18.1 This applies to applicants living in supported housing schemes.
- 17.18.2 Applicants in these schemes will be placed in Band C.
- 17.18.3 Applicants in supported housing schemes may apply for medical/welfare priority if they are ready to move onto permanent accommodation.
- 17.18.4 If they receive a welfare/medical priority they will be placed in the highest band that applies.

17.19 Applicants with no fixed address

- 17.19.1 This applies to applicants who have no fixed address.
- 17.19.2 They will be placed in Band C.
- 17.19.3 If they are in prison they will be placed in Band E.

17.20 Medical, welfare and hardship

- 17.20.1 **Important:** Priority can be awarded under **one** heading: medical, welfare, hardship or harassment.
- 17.20.2 Applicants can be assessed under all headings, **but get awarded priority under only one heading.**
- 17.20.3 Any medical or welfare priority can be reassessed if an applicant's circumstances change.
- 17.20.4 Applicants that have been given a priority under welfare or medical grounds to move to a local authority area to give or receive support will be restricted to bidding for properties in that local authority area.

17.21 Medical assessments

This applies if an applicant's present housing is detrimental to their health, or if a move to more suitable accommodation would have a positive effect on their health.

- 17.21.1 Applicants may also be awarded priority if the applicant is asking to be rehoused so they can receive care or specialist support
- 17.21.2 Extra information may be sought from private sector landlords, housing officers, GPs, health visitors and other parties.
- 17.21.3 The table below is used to act as a guide to priority:

Effect on housing	Medical problem			
	Very Serious 1	Serious 2	Moderate 3	Low 4
Very Serious 1	Band A	Band B	Band C	No award
Serious 2	Band B	Band B	Band C	No award
Moderate 3	Band C	Band C	Band C	No award
Low 4	No award	No award	No award	No award

- 17.21.4 Applicants accepted under Homelessness legislation will not be eligible for medical priority. If a homeless applicant's temporary accommodation is unsuitable on medical grounds the PO will first look to see if alternative temporary accommodation can be found.
- 17.21.5 Homeless households can be considered through a medical assessment if an extra room is required on medical grounds.
- 17.21.6 Applicants who have been awarded Band B prevention of homelessness cannot be assessed under medical or welfare grounds as these awards are based on their permanent accommodation and a Band B prevention award is because they are not in permanent accommodation.

17.22 Welfare/Hardship assessments

- 17.22.1 This applies if at least one person in the household is vulnerable and less able to find settled or suitable accommodation.
- 17.22.2 These people will have a need to move but may not get medical priority because their present housing may be suitable for their needs.
- 17.22.3 The table below is used to act as a guide to priority:

Need for settled suitable accommodation	Level of vulnerability		
	High 1	Medium 2	Low 3
High 1	Band A	Band B	Band C
Medium 2	Band B	Band B	Band C
Low 3	Band C	Band C	Band C

- 17.22.4 Homeless applicants will not be looked at under welfare issues. If a homeless applicant's temporary accommodation is unsuitable on welfare grounds the PO will first look to see if alternative temporary accommodation can be found.
- 17.22.5 If a homeless applicant or household is particularly vulnerable and they may be at significant risk in temporary accommodation the PO can consider the category of 'accepted homeless applicants in particular need' to increase them to Band A (see under section 17.10).

17.23 Tenants with a home that is bigger than they need

This applies to sub-regional secure tenants or tenants of RPs (where the sub-region has nomination rights), who are 'under-occupying' their homes and want to move to a smaller property. These applicants are given high priority because it enables a household with high need to move into the freed up larger home.

- 17.23.1 Applicants who are currently in 4 or 3 bedroom accommodation and will be releasing one or two bedrooms will be placed in Band A.
- 17.23.2 Applicants who are in 2 bedrooms or less and wish to move to smaller accommodation will be placed in Band B.
- 17.23.3 Some Local Authorities may also provide some financial incentives to move and can provide further information on request.
- 17.23.4 Applicants will be assessed under the criteria for occupation (see 9.1) but will be allowed to bid for properties one bedroom more than they qualify for e.g. a single tenant currently occupying a 4 bed property will be able to bid on bedsits/one beds or two bed accommodation.
- 17.23.5 A tenant wishing to move into smaller accommodation from within a sheltered housing scheme, or linked to another linked sheltered scheme will not be entitled to priority under the transfer incentive scheme. This is because sheltered accommodation is not in high demand.

17.24 Applicants offered housing because of the death of a secure tenant in the sub-region

- 17.24.1 This applies if the applicant qualifies to 'succeed' to a tenancy when the tenant dies.
- 17.24.2 To be a 'successor tenant' the applicant has to meet certain rules – usually must be related to the tenant, or be their partner, and have lived in the property a certain time.
- 17.24.3 The rules for this are in the tenancy conditions for the property. In such circumstances the applicant will be placed in Band A.
- 17.24.4 If the successor tenant does not need the property because of its size, or the adaptations or services in the property, they may be served a notice seeking possession under Schedule 2, Ground 16 of The Housing Act 1985.
- 17.24.5 If the applicant has no legal right to succeed but has lived in the property for the last 12 months the PO may decide to offer a move to more suitable accommodation. Each case will be individually assessed.
- 17.24.6 Under CBL applicants are able to express an interest for properties under the scheme but if they have not expressed an interest within six months of their application their case will be reviewed and the PO may reserve the right to express an interest for them on suitable properties.
- 17.24.7 If the offer of a new home is refused the applicant may lose their right to remain in their present property.

17.25 Applicants offered housing because of a Relationship breakdown of a secure tenant in the sub-region

17.25.1 This category applies to secure tenants only.

17.25.2 Applicants will be placed in Band A when there is a relationship breakdown and the joint tenant moves out and ends the tenancy and the other tenant either:

- qualifies to be offered the property
- or**
- qualifies to be offered a smaller property.

If a joint tenant ends the tenancy when moving out, the property is not automatically offered to the tenant remaining.

17.25.3 If an applicant qualifies to be offered the same property we will make them an offer of that property.

17.25.4 This property will not be part of the CBL scheme.

17.25.5 If an applicant qualifies to be offered a smaller property they will be placed in Band A.

17.25.6 They will be able to express an interest for properties under the scheme but if they have not expressed an interest within six months of their application their case will be reviewed. The POs reserve the right to express an interest for them on suitable properties.

17.25.7 If a property is then subsequently refused they may lose their right to remain in their current property.

17.26 Transfers which will release a property that is needed

17.26.1 Applicants will be placed in Band A of the scheme if they wish to move and:

- the property they would leave is needed to meet the urgent housing needs of another household on the register which otherwise would not be met within a reasonable time
- *or* where it prevents the Council making expensive alterations to the property and
- there is not a serious shortage of the types of home they want to move to.

17.27 Applicants where tenancy surrender has been negotiated

- 17.27.1 Applicants in this category would be placed in Band A if a tenancy surrender has been negotiated and meets these conditions:
- they were a Council or RP tenant when taken into custody **and** the offence did not mean that they had broken their tenancy or the tenant has to go into a mental health or other special facility for an extended period **and**
 - they have, or are likely, to be sent to prison or institution for more than 13 weeks (including the time spent on remand) **and**
 - they have conducted their tenancy in a reasonable way and have not broken their tenancy agreement **and**
 - their rent is up to date **and**
 - they have not been served with a 'notice seeking possession' **and**
 - they offer to end their tenancy.
- 17.27.2 Before agreeing to a tenancy surrender, the landlord will agree this with the PO. Tenancy surrenders will not go ahead until the PO gives their written confirmation.
- 17.27.3 Tenancy surrenders are only applicable in the sub-region.

17.28 Nomination agreements with supported housing providers (move on)

- 17.28.1 To help local authorities retain spaces within specialist or supported accommodation, POs have agreed to house a certain number of clients every year from this accommodation
- 17.28.2 Each PO in the sub-region will have their own individual nomination agreements or move on agreements and further details are available from each PO.
- 17.28.3 This arrangement does not apply to people who have been accepted under homelessness legislation.
- 17.28.4 These applicants would be placed in Band A of the scheme.
- 17.28.5 They would remain in this band for six months.
- 17.28.6 If no expression of interest had been received in that time their case would be reviewed and their priority could be removed.
- 17.28.7 These applicants are restricted to bidding in their own local authority as that is where their support is provided.
- 17.28.8 In certain cases cross boundary bidding will be allowed but agreement will be required from the local authority first.

Appendix 1

Contact details for each PO

Babergh District Council

Corks Lane
Hadleigh
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP7 6SJ
Telephone: 01473 825757
Website: www.babergh.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@babergh.gov.uk

Braintree District Council (LSVT)

Causeway House
Bocking End
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9HB
Telephone: 01376 552525
Website: www.braintree.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@braintree.gov.uk

Greenfields Community Housing

Greenfields House
Charter Way
Braintree
Essex
CM7 8FG

Colchester Borough Council (ALMO)

PO Box 887
Town Hall
Colchester
CO1 1ZG
Essex
Telephone: 01206 282569
Website: www.colchester.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@colchester.gov.uk

Colchester Borough Homes

P O Box 788
Colchester
Essex
CO3 3YB

Ipswich Borough Council

Grafton House
15-17 Russell Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP1 2DE
Telephone: 01473 433123
Website: www.ipswich.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@ipswich.gov.uk

Maldon District Council (LSVT)
Princes Road
Maldon
Essex
CM9 5DL
Telephone: 01621 854477
Website: www.maldon.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@maldon.gov.uk

Moat (Head Office)
Mariner House
Galleon Boulevard
Crossways
Dartford
Kent
DA2 6QE

Mid Suffolk District Council
131 High Street
Needham Market
Suffolk
IP6 8DL
Telephone: 01449 724760
Website: www.midsuffolk.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk Coastal District Council (LSVT)
Melton Hill
Woodbridge
Suffolk
IP12 1AU
Telephone: 01394 444822
Website: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Flagship (Suffolk Heritage)
Avocet House
Station Road
Framlingham
Suffolk
IP13 9EE

Waveney District Council
The Marina Customer Service Centre
Marina
Lowestoft
NR32 1HH
Telephone: 01502 523524
Website: www.waveney.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@waveney.gov.uk

5 March 2012

Report of	Head of Corporate Management	Author	Amanda Chidgey
Title	Work Programme 2011/12		☎ 282227
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report sets out the current Work Programme 2011/2012 for the Policy Review and Development Panel.

1. Decisions Required

- 1.1 The Policy Review and Development Panel is asked to note the current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for 2011/12.

2. Alternative options

- 2.1 This function forms part of the Panel's Terms of Reference and, as such, no alternative options are presented.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 At each meeting of the Panel, the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 The Work Programme has been updated since the meeting of the Panel held on 7 November 2011 to reflect the current circumstances as follows:

- **Joint Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments** This item had been scheduled for the meeting of the Panel on 16 January 2012. In the event this was not possible and work is still ongoing to develop a protocol with other authorities towards achieving a consistent approach. It is now anticipated that it will be possible to provide an update on the current situation for the panel at its meeting in June 2012.

- 4.2 In terms of progress in respect of the Task and Finish Groups:

- **20 mph speed limit:**

A letter was sent by the Chairman to Essex County Councillor Tracey Chapman inviting her to provide an update on this issue and to attend a meeting of a reconvened Task and Finish Group. A number of reminders have been forwarded to Essex County Council Cabinet Office, including one from the Leader of the Council. A response is still awaited;

- **Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal**

Two meetings of the Group were held on 16 August and 14 September 2011. National uncertainty regarding weekly collections and the commencement of the

trial for food waste in November prompted the Group to delay further work and the next meeting of the Group has been arranged for 23 February 2012.

- **Older Persons' Accommodation**

In the New Year the Group had another meeting on 17 January and is due to meet again in March 2012. In the interim the Group are conducting visits to Meadow Park in Braintree on 27 February and Elfreda and Walnut Tree Houses on 5 March 2012.

- **The Future of the Magistrates' Courts in the Town Hall**

Following work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group from July to November 2011, final recommendations were submitted to Cabinet and Council for consideration.

The following Motion was approved unanimously:

“(a) It is the wish of Council that the Town Hall be retained as the Civic Centre of the Borough. Within the Town Hall the Council Chamber, the Moot Hall, the Principal meeting rooms, the Mayor's Parlour and suitable accommodation for the day-to-day work of the Cabinet and Borough Councillors should remain within the control of the Council. But Council also encourages Cabinet to make the main civic rooms available for public use on a secondary basis, in so far as it is practicable.

(b) It is encouraged to test the market in regard to future uses of the Magistrates' Courts when they revert to the Borough Council, along with the Old Library and any other surplus space in the Town Hall, but should note that future uses should be sympathetic with the purpose and dignity of the Town Hall as the Borough's Civic Centre.”

Cabinet subsequently agreed that the Task and Finish Group be reconvened to oversee the implementation of the proposals and to take the final recommendation to Council.

The Group has had a meeting on 15 February 2012 and agreed a revised Scoping Document and programme of work with a view to reporting further recommendations to Council in July 2012. It is intended that these further recommendations will be submitted to Cabinet and Council without prior submission to this Panel.

5. Standard References

- 5.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; publicity or consultation considerations; or financial; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

Policy Review and Development Panel
WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

	<u>20 June 2011</u>		<u>8 August 2011</u>	<u>12 September 2011</u>
Policy Initiatives			Colchester Joint Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments	
Review of Corporate Policies	Events Policy for Parks and Open Spaces Debt Management Policy			
Task and Finish Groups			Update on the introduction of 20 mph speed limits in Colchester	

	<u>7 November 2011</u>		<u>16 January 2012</u>	<u>5 March 2012</u>
Policy Initiatives				
Review of Corporate Policies	Equality and Diversity - Annual Update report			Sub Regional Allocations Policy
Task and Finish Groups	Future of Magistrates' Courts in the Town Hall			

Task and Finish Groups	Membership 2011-12
20 mph speed limit	Councillors Cory, Ford, Hardy, and G. Oxford and Parish Councillor Gili-Ross
Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal	Councillors Cope, Cory, Ellis, B. Oxford, Willetts and J Young
Older Persons Accommodation	Councillors Kimberley, Lewis, Lilley, Mudie, B Oxford and L Sykes
Magistrates' Courts in the Town Hall	Councillors Davies, Frame, G Oxford, Spyvee, Sutton and J Young.

2012-13

June 2012: Economic Development Strategy 2010 – 2015
Gypsy and Traveller Encampment Protocol // Update

