

<b>REPORT TO</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>
Cabinet	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2013

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<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>ITEM</b>
Choice based lettings – Select Move common allocations policy	Cllr Cliff Hughes	Jane Maguire	

## SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This reports links to the corporate priorities of a Strong South Ribble in the heart of a prosperous Central Lancashire, and strong and healthy communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council, in order to progress and implement the Select Move common allocations policy

- Note the contents of the draft Select Move common allocations policy
- Gives approval to enable the Select Move partnership to go to wider consultation with stakeholders and partners
- Delegates to the Director of Planning and Housing in consultation with Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Housing power to amend the draft policy in the light of any representations made and to then implement.

## DETAILS AND REASONING

### Background

South Ribble Borough Council has been part of the Select Move choice based lettings scheme since 2006. During this time there have been some minor changes to the allocations policy the last ones being in 2010.

The scheme over the years has grown and now includes 9 Housing Associations, and the three Central Lancashire authorities of South Ribble, Preston and Chorley. This ensures across Central Lancashire customers can access social rented accommodation through a shared policy, shared application form and can access services through all 12 partners.

Each local authority is required to publish an allocations policy under Part V1 of the Housing Act 1996 and the policy must provide priority for certain groups of people. This is achieved through the policy and the Select Move housing register

By continuing to be part of the sub regional group we are maximising the number of homes that are available for households with a connection or living in South Ribble and offering a wider range of choice of properties across the Central Lancashire area.

The Select Move scheme ensures that all partners advertise their homes for rent each week on the website and applicants who meet the allocations policy criteria can express an interest on the homes that are available. The property is then offered to the person who has been on the list the longest and is in the highest need - based on the priority they have been given. The scheme has 5 bands which reflect the different housing priority.

## **Current situation**

The Localism Act 2011 has introduced a number of changes in relation to access to social rented housing:

- Local authorities can decide who can qualify to join the housing register
- Armed forces and ex – armed forces personnel are to be given priority
- Those who are adopting or providing foster care are also to be given priority

In order to meet the requirements of the Localism Act the policy has been reviewed and a draft document produced by all partners which requires wider consultation with interested parties before formal implementation.

## **Main policy changes**

### **Those qualifying to join the register**

- To join the housing register applicants must demonstrate a local connection to the Central Lancashire area. In addition to this when property is allocated priority will be given in the first instance to those with a local connection in the individual local authority area where the home is located.
- Those who have served or are serving in the armed forces within 5 years of applying will not be required to have a local connection and will have their application backdated to equal their period of service in the armed forces to afford them a time priority in the band they have been placed in.

### **Those who will not qualify**

- Home owners unless the authority have identified that they have a statutory duty to assist or their housing needs can only be met by social housing (eg sheltered housing)
- Households who have a gross annual income of £60,000 or more or have savings or assets of more than £30,000
- Households who have engaged in anti- social behaviour such that action has been taken for example a possession order
- Those who have housing debts over £1000 that can be proven by the landlord, for those under this level they must have an agreement plan in place that they are maintaining.
- Households who pass the habitual residency test but cannot access public funds and has insufficient income or savings to sustain a tenancy

For non – qualifying households the council can take into account individual circumstances and mitigating circumstances if the household is owed a duty under homelessness legislation.

Those who do not qualify but meet the national eligibility requirements can join an open market register for hard to let property.

## **Changes to the bands**

There will continue to be five bands A – E with A being the highest priority and E being no need and not qualifying

Band B will now include those who foster and adopt, and any tenant whose landlord is in the scheme who under occupy their home by two or more rooms/ or are overcrowded and short by two bedrooms.

Band D will now include those tenants whose landlords are in the scheme who are under occupying by one room and would suffer financial hardship due to changes to benefits.

These changes have been introduced to facilitate moves to suitable sized homes based on household size.

### **Quotas of homes in each band**

Homes are advertised for households in each of the bands and a proportion of homes are given to each band on a quota basis. Property will continue to be advertised using the quota system. However Band E will no longer have a quota of property, and Band C will have the quota increased from 15% to 20%. This will increase the number of homes available for dealing with households where we are looking at homelessness prevention options.

### **Consultation**

It is anticipated that the Select Move partners can proceed with formal consultation from the 17<sup>th</sup> of June until 29<sup>th</sup> of July, when all internal discussions and approvals have been granted. The changes will be available on the website and all relevant partners, network groups, statutory and voluntary agencies will be consulted formally.

The consultation feedback will be collated by Community Gateway.

### **Conclusion**

On approval of the contents of the draft policy and consultation exercise the document will be amended and the new policy publicised and formally implemented

### **WIDER IMPLICATIONS**

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these.

<b><i>FINANCIAL</i></b>	There are financial impacts for the new policy as the ICT systems will require changes, and documents changing these can be contained within existing budgets
<b><i>LEGAL</i></b>	The changes will take account of the Localism Act. The changes will provide more housing opportunities for homeless prevention cases and ensures that priority for housing is given to households with a local connection to the area.  The document will be checked for legal compliance with an external legal organisation Simply Housing
<b><i>Equality impact assessment</i></b>	As part of the consultation any specific groups will be consulted and full impact assessment conducted by all partners before the final version is approved

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### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**