

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY STATUTORY GUIDANCE DECEMBER 2013

Summary

This report updates Members on the provisions of “Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England” which was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 31 December 2013.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities the power to take a more flexible approach to managing social housing by deciding who will qualify in their area. We have recently reviewed our housing allocation scheme and introduced two qualifying criteria which mean that all applicants must have a verified housing need and a local connection in order to be included on the Council’s housing register.

1.1.2 The stated purpose of the supplementary guidance is “*to assist housing authorities to make full use of the flexibilities within the allocation legislation to better meet the needs of their local residents and their local communities*”. Local authorities are required to have regard to this guidance alongside the previous guidance issued in June 2012 when exercising their functions relating to the allocation of social housing.

1.2 Local connection

1.2.1 The supplementary guidance states that it is appropriate, proportionate and in the public interest to restrict access to social housing to applicants who can demonstrate a close association with their local area. The Secretary of State encourages local authorities to adopt a residency requirement as part of the qualification criteria, to include a minimum period of residency of at least two years.

1.2.2 Our housing allocation scheme provides several broad categories of local connection, including employment in the borough or close family members living

in the borough as well as residence and other special reasons. In respect of the residence qualification, applicants currently need to be living within the borough, or have previously lived here for either six out of the last twelve months or three out of the last five years.

1.3 Housing allocation scheme review

- 1.3.1 The housing allocation scheme is due to be reviewed in September 2014. As part of the review we will be seeking the views of our partner Registered Providers as to how the current scheme is operating for them and be analysing the impact that tightening the eligibility criteria has had on lettings. This detailed analysis will be very important to ensure that our allocations policy is refined to meet those in housing need and secure the best and most appropriate use and management of the housing stock. Members will be invited to consider the residency criteria alongside any other amendments to the scheme in a future report to this Board.

1.4 Right to Move

- 1.4.1 The supplementary guidance refers to the Government's intention to introduce a 'Right to Move' policy for social tenants seeking to move to take up employment or be closer to their work. DCLG will be consulting on options for implementing this policy in spring 2014 and Members will be informed of the progress of this in due course.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None arising from this report.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 None arising from this report.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

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Nil

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