

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

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meeting date: THURSDAY, 6 JUNE 2024  
title: ADOPTION OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY  
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING  
principal author: RACHAEL STOTT, HOUSING STRATEGY OFFICER

### 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To approve adoption of the amended Affordable Housing Allocation Policy following the consultation and review.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To meet the affordable housing needs of all households in the borough.
- Corporate Priorities – To match the supply of affordable homes with the identified needs.
- Other Considerations – None.

### 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Health and Housing Committee, at the meeting on 18 January 2024, considered a Report on proposed changes to the Allocation Policy. Following the meeting a consultation period was open from February 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of April 2024. All households on the housing register were also contacted by letter or email and notified of the suggested amendments.

### 3. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

3.1 During the consultation, many calls were received from applicants with live applications, enquiring about the implications for their own applications. In response to the consultation only four written representations were received raising the following summarised points:

- Local connection should be retained where households have left the borough through lack of affordable housing accommodation.
- Local connection being secured after 12 months of living in the borough was seen as being too short.
- Issues raised around renewal letters for applicants and them being sent to the correct address.

3.2 Two meetings have been held between the housing team at Onward and Ribble Valley Borough Council housing staff where all the consultation feedback was discussed. Staff have also had time to consider the application of the new points system and to assess the impact for applicants.

3.3 The following are the key outcomes from these discussions:

- a. To ensure households with full homeless statutory duty are given sufficient priority then the points should be increased to 50 as opposed to the 30 previously proposed.
- b. With regard to means testing applicants, after much discussion and examples of cases, the following exemption was proposed:
  - a. *If you have the financial capacity and your housing needs can be met on the open housing market, then you are not entitled to register. If, however, you are over 70, eligible for medical points and require sheltered housing then there will be no financial assessment.*
- c. The disrepair points awarded by Environmental Health have been further clarified. Awarding the full disrepair points of 15 points will only apply where action is being taken against the landlord to ensure the improvements are being made to address the disrepair issues.
- d. The requirements to evidence housing need was proposed to avoid a person in no immediate need being higher on the list due to time accrued points. This point has been considered and discussed at length. If all the time accrued points are removed from current applications, then this will eliminate the concern around this issue. Applications will be assessed on the basis of need. Households with no immediate housing needs will therefore not be allocated property in areas of demand.
- e. Local connection for households that have left the borough through lack of affordable housing has been addressed within the changes.
- f. Changing the length of time to secure local connection beyond 12 months is something not previously considered. Changing the definition of local connection for Ribble Valley will wider implications as it affects a number of areas of work in addition to the waiting list.
- g. The issue of renewal and the correct address being used, and also collecting an email address was agreed.

3.4 The policy with all final tracked changes highlighted is attached at Appendix 1.

#### 4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 If approved by Committee then the proposed time schedule for application of the new allocation policy would be as follows;
  - Publish the new policy on the website - June 2024.
  - Amend the points calculation for every application on the waiting list and rerun all applications following the new points system - July 2024.
  - Meet with Onward and review a sample of applications to test the points application - August 2024.
  - Write out to all households on the register informing them that the new allocations Policy has been approved which includes a new points calculation or confirming the outcome of the new points calculation - Sept 2024.

#### 5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – Considerable staff time will be required in application of the new policy and points application. Essential that sufficient reviews/test runs are carried out to ensure the new points are applied correctly.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The IT technical input will be from the Onward IT services as they provide the administrative support and manage the waiting list on RVBC's behalf.
- Political – The Allocation Policy and Housing Register is the responsibility of RVBC. Important that the policy is kept up to date and relevant to address the housing needs of the borough.
- Reputation – Once the review is completed any changes need to be published and made available on the website.
- Equality & Diversity – The Allocation Policy should remain a fair and transparent document and is available for anyone to access.

6. **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 6.1 Approve the proposed changes to the Affordable Housing Allocation Policy and the schedule for implementation.
- 6.2 Note that a follow-up report providing an update following the implementation of the new policy is brought to a later Committee.
- 6.3 Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to make editorial changes to the policy document which improve the clarity and readability of the document.

For further information please ask for Rachael Stott, extension 3235.