

## **ITEM 7 – REFERRALS FROM CABINET**

**26 May 2015**

### **7.1 CA/039/15 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW**

#### **Decision**

1. That Cabinet recommend Council to approve the amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
2. That Cabinet approve the content of the proposed communications strategy regarding the Housing Allocations Policy.

#### **Reason for Decision**

To update Cabinet on the Housing Allocations Policy review and all proposed policy amendments.

To update Cabinet on the content of a proposed communications strategy relating to the policy.

#### **Implications**

##### Financial

No financial implications as the proposed policy changes do not require further software development

##### Value for Money

Carrying out a full review of this policy has clear value for money implications:

- If the policy does not comply with legislation then the Council could be vulnerable to legal challenge, which could be very costly.
- Lack of clarity in the policy will lead to an unnecessary increase in communication coming into the housing department from residents.
- If the policy can assist the Council to reduce letting times this will result in savings to the Council.
- By better matching suitable residents to properties with, or suitable for, adaptations, the Council will save money on very expensive installations.

#### **Risk Implications**

The main risks associated with policy amendments relate to communication of changes to residents and the Council's partners. Clarity in the policy will assist the Council if the policy is fully and properly understood by those who have to use it on a day-to-day basis either as applicants, or as the Council's partners who are supporting housing applicants.

In addition, procedural changes must be implemented effectively by Council officers to result in improved operations.

#### **Corporate Objectives**

## Affordable Housing

The Group Manager (Strategic Housing) introduced the report highlighting the following points:

- The current policy has been in situ since November 2013 and there had always been an undertaking to review it after one year due to the significant changes that had been introduced.
- The review has provided useful data analysis which confirms the Policy has been working as the Council had intended it to.
- It also provided recognition that there is a need to communicate more with applicants to advise that they can influence their chance of being housed by changing their bidding patterns which has brought about the Communications Plan.
- Clarification that 4.3 of the report relating to Local Connections the third bullet point should read: *Currently in permanent employment within the Borough boundary, consisting of 16 hours or more a week, and which has been continuous for the last 24 months*
- A new section has been added to the Policy – 14. New Right to Move.
- Guidance was issued by the Government in April that has meant we can propose the recommendations as part of these changes. We have recommended the absolute minimum the Council can do in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and that will also be reviewed within a year.
- Communication Strategy is to be implemented as soon as possible with staff and Members scheduled to be trained in Autumn

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Sustainability and Regulatory Services noted that this report had previously been to Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee where it had been welcomed with some changes recommended and noted that they had been implemented.

### **Consultation**

There was no consultation.

### **Voting**

None