

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

28 NOVEMBER 2017

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL AND
PARTNERSHIP SERVICES**

SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY (SHAP) - AMENDMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval in respect of proposed changes to the Social Housing Allocation Policy (SHAP) attached as Appendix 1.**

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 The Policy will help to deliver the Corporate Improvement Priorities of 'Supporting a Successful Economy' and 'Helping people to be more self-reliant'.**
- 2.2 It will help to manage demand for social housing and deliver elements of the Local Housing Strategy 2016 -2018 approved by Council on 10 May 2016.**

3. Background

- 3.1 There is a statutory requirement for every housing authority to have a Housing Allocation Scheme for determining priorities and a procedure to be followed in allocating housing accommodation. The current Social Housing Allocation Policy (SHAP) was approved by Cabinet on 11th November 2014.**
- 3.2 The existing SHAP was based on local evidence of need and was aligned with wider local and national strategic objectives. The four Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have been actively involved in the continuing development of the SHAP and their compliance is vital to the success of this.**
- 3.3 The four RSLs in Bridgend who are party to the SHAP and the Common Housing Register (CHR) are:**
- Valleys to Coast (V2C)**
 - Linc Cymru**
 - Hafod**

- Wales and West Housing Association

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The Council and the RSLs have recently re-evaluated the effectiveness of the SHAP and have considered additional procedures to take account of, and formalise, requirements of the Housing Act 1996 and the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2015.
- 4.2 The Housing Act 1996 stipulates that Local Authorities are to have a written policy that determines the priorities and procedures that are to be followed in allocating accommodation.
- 4.3 Reasonable preference must be given to defined groups which have already been reflected in the bands contained in the SHAP. Preference will always be given to these applicants however; due to low demand for certain bedroom sizes in certain areas of the county borough, RSLs are sometimes unable to allocate these properties to applicants from one of the main housing need bands.
- 4.4 As there are occasionally applicants who are assessed as having no housing need who are willing to reside in an area of low demand, the introduction of additional criteria within the SHAP to facilitate this would be beneficial.
- 4.5 Section 167(2E) of the Act permits the Authority to allocate properties to persons of a particular description regardless of whether they fall into one of the reasonable preference categories. This ability is formalised via a Local Lettings Policy provided it does not govern the allocations scheme and in addition, that it meets the aim of community sustainability.
- 4.6 A Local Lettings Policy (LLP) will minimise the risk of tenancy failure and create balanced and sustainable communities. Such policies recognise the needs of new tenants and balance these with the interest of existing tenants to create sustainable neighbourhoods (This is included at points 3.0–3.4 in the attached Appendix). It will also be reflected in a new Band C within the SHAP to ensure efficient maximising of stock with the BCBC area.
- 4.7 An LLP can apply to an estate, a block or new development where there is justification for it. Examples of issues which may lead to the development of an LLP are:
 - New developments where there needs to be a new community established
 - Age restrictions to balance the population
 - Management of anti-social behaviour
 - Regeneration areas
- 4.8 There is current and future intention to develop new accommodation developments such as that currently being developed at the Rhiw site. Whilst a percentage of these may be subject to a Social Housing Grant and thus,

allocated in accordance with the current Social Housing Allocation Policy, some units will be let subject to an LLP to be agreed by the Housing Association and the Authority.

- 4.9 The regeneration of town centre areas in the Borough plays a major role in transforming the overall borough and increasing economic growth linking to the Authority's priority of 'Supporting a Successful Economy'.
- 4.10 Persons who are not deemed to be in housing need and thus ineligible for allocation of accommodation through the Common Housing Register may nevertheless wish to access the housing market and require support to do so due to a low household income. These persons will be economically active and contribute to the economic growth of the Borough.
- 4.11 The Authority seeks to support these households through allocation of accommodation subject to grant funding, specifically Homes In Town (HIT) grants.
- 4.12 A HIT grant is designed to encourage town centre living in the County Borough. The HIT Grant forms part of the Authority's overall approach to tackling vacant in the Town Centres of the Borough, to breathe life and vitality back into the Town Centre areas and to increase the supply of affordable accommodation in key hubs of the Borough.
- 4.13 The four RSL's in Bridgend have been consulted and have approved the proposed amendments to the SHAP.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules. .**

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the SHAP to assess its relevance to the Authority's public equality duties and potential impact on protected equality characteristics. This SHAP has been assessed as relevant to the Authority's general and specific duties to promote equality and eliminate discrimination with regard to gender, disability, race, religion and belief and age.
- 6.2 The policy has also been assessed as relevant to the Authority's duty to promote and protect human rights (specifically protection of property and right to respect for private and family life).

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 In seeking to make better use of the existing stock of social housing, the SHAP intends to help reduce the impact of other upward cost pressures associated with homelessness. The amended Social Housing Allocation Policy will continue to support this approach.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the amended Social Housing Allocation Policy (SHAP) attached as **Appendix 1**, in particular the creation of a new Band C for rehousing applicants assessed as having no housing need:

- who are willing to reside in an area of low demand: or
- who meet the requirements of a Local Lettings Policy

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16th November 2017

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Background Documents

None