

### Consultation Report – New Allocations Scheme

#### Who was consulted?

A wide variety of stakeholders were consulted including Registered Providers, Statutory and Voluntary Agencies, elected members and all applicants to Cherwell's existing Housing Register. A list is found at the end of this report.

#### How were they consulted?

A variety of consultation methods were used including Cherwell's website, email, face to face and telephone depending on the audience.

All existing applicants to Cherwell's Housing Register received a personal letter advising them in outline of the changes which also invited them to 3 specific briefings held in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. Specific briefings were also provided for elected members, Registered Providers, Partner agencies and Cherwell staff.

#### What was the feedback?

Feed back was generally positive.

**Registered providers** welcomed the new Scheme in the light of the new welfare reforms. They were particularly pleased to see the priority given to those under occupying social housing tenancies in the light of the new 'bedroom tax'. They also raised some concerns regarding the new bedroom guidance on sharing, from central government, which was fully discussed with them. Sanctuary Housing particularly welcomed Cherwell's proposal to exit the Choice Based Lettings Sub-regional partnership.

**The Army** was very positive about the new Scheme and the priority that will be afforded to those being discharged from the Armed Services. They were pleased to see that urgent priority Band 1 will be given to those injured in active service who need to move to more suitable housing.

**Statutory Partners** - Oxfordshire County Council provided responses from both Adult Services and Children's and Families Services. They broadly supported the policy but were keen to be able to influence and participate in any reviews of cases they are involved with, in relation to them being successful in gaining social housing. They enquired whether compensation awards, clients sometimes receive, will be included in assessments for sufficient financial resources.

We have advised that we are keen to continue to work in partnership with them. We will endeavour to keep them fully informed of the changes, we will still take note of any letters of support and meetings they may be holding regarding their client's housing issues. We will also provide briefing and training for staff as appropriate. They also raised concerns that by prioritising a percentage of vacancies for those in education, employment and training, they felt their clients could be disadvantaged

MAPPA (multi agency public protection arrangements) provided feedback for the section in the Scheme that deals with serious offenders. Probation attended the single homeless forum briefing as did specific supported housing providers for high needs young people and mental health housing services.

**Existing Applicants to Cherwell's Housing Register** were generally concerned with how the new proposals may affect their personal applications. They understood and agreed with the need to impose a financial assessment and income, capital and assets threshold. They thought it fair to disqualify applicants that own their own home unless they have particular circumstances where they are not able to provide their own suitable housing. They also welcomed the new priority to assist residents of social housing to 'downsize' if they need to do so following the introduction of the bedroom tax. Three residents from Heyford Park enquired particularly regarding what effect this new Scheme would have for them in the light of the new development proposed at Heyford Park.

**Parish Councils** - several parishes responded fully. They are keen to see vacancies developed on rural exception sites remain prioritised to people with strong local connections. They are also keen for the Council to continue to promote rural sustainment.

**Elected members** attendance was high at the 3 workshops held at Bodicote House. They were fully briefed on the new Scheme and keen to understand the reasons for the new proposals. A number of questions were fully debated around qualification and disqualification from the Housing Register. The limit of £60K income capital and assets was discussed. It was considered high by several members but was generally accepted when the reasoning behind it was explained.

**Voluntary Sector Partners** - a specific briefing was held together with a briefing from Finance (Housing Benefit) on welfare reforms. They were keen to understand how they can continue to work with Cherwell to mitigate the impacts of welfare reforms and to continue to gain access to social housing for their clients. They also expressed some reservations regarding prioritising vacancies for those in education, employment and training.

**Cherwell staff** have been fully involved with the development of the new scheme. They have made many suggestions and comments which have helped form the new Scheme.

### **How was the Allocations Scheme changed?**

After listening to feedback

- Band 1 Safeguarding Children has been changed to include both adults and children subject to joint agreement between Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell Housing Department.
- Band 1 Abuse, Violence and Harassment is now included in Band 1 only rather than in both Bands 1 and 2.
- Priority for applicants to Cherwell's Housing Register who are participating in education, employment and training is limited to 30% of total vacancies per annum.
- The Policy will be subject to ongoing review with a further report to Cherwell's Executive to be submitted 12 months following the date of implementation.

## **Consultees' List**

### **Statutory and Voluntary Agencies including:**

805 (Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars) Signal Troop  
Action for the Blind  
Asylum Welcome & Detainees Society  
Banbury & District Housing Coalition  
Banbury Citizens Advice Bureau  
Banbury Community Church  
Banbury Polish Association  
Banbury Young Homelessness Project (BYHP)  
Beacon Centre  
Bicester Children's Centre  
Bicester Citizens Advice Bureau  
Bicester East Community Association  
Bicester Food Bank  
Britannia Road Children's Centre  
Chasewell Community Association  
Cherwell Community and Voluntary Service  
Cherwell Faith Forum  
Cherwell Single Homeless Forum  
Dogs for the Disabled  
Eve Women's Project  
Farm Crisis Network  
Focus Banbury Counselling Service  
Friends of Britannia Road Family Centre  
Friends of Frank Wise School  
Grimsbury Community Association  
Guide Dogs  
Habitat for Humanity GB  
Heyford Park Residents and Community Development Association  
Home-Start Banbury & Chipping Norton  
Kidlington & District Information Centre (KADIC)  
Kidlington Evergreen Club  
Langford Village Community Association  
Leonard Cheshire Home - Oxfordshire  
Ley Community Drug Services  
LSP Faith Groups Representative  
Member of Parliament  
Mind in Banbury  
Multiple Sclerosis Society (Banbury)  
North Banbury Children's Centre  
Oxford and Cherwell Valley College  
Oxford Sexual Abuse & Rape Crime  
Oxfordshire Equality and Human Rights Council  
Oxfordshire Adult Learning  
Oxfordshire African Community Association (OACA)  
Oxfordshire Association for the Blind  
Oxfordshire Association for Young People  
Oxfordshire Chinese Community & Advice Centre  
Oxfordshire Community Foundation  
Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Organisations (OCVA)  
Oxfordshire Family Conciliation Service  
Oxfordshire Family Mediation

Oxfordshire Mind  
RCV Oxfordshire  
Relate - Oxford  
Restore  
Royal British Legion (Bodicote Branch)  
RPC Association  
Ruscote Community Association  
Salvation Army  
Single Homeless Forum  
Southwold Community Association  
Special & Different Addiction Services  
SSAFA Forces Help  
SSAFA Forces Help Banbury & Bloxham  
St Mary's Church Centre  
Sunrise Multicultural Play Project  
Sunshine Centre  
Talking Newspaper Association - Banbury  
The Banbury Food Bank  
The Causeway Centre (MIND in Bicester)  
The East Street Children's Centre  
The Home Farm Trust Limited  
The Kingwood Trust  
The Orders of St John Care Trust  
The Shout Project  
West Bicester Community Association

**Local Authorities including:**

Oxfordshire City Council  
Oxfordshire County Council  
South Northamptonshire District Council  
South Oxfordshire District Council  
Vale of the White Horse District Council  
West Oxfordshire District Council

**Registered Providers including:**

Registered Providers Forum  
Registered Providers Development group  
A2 Dominion  
Anchor  
Bromford  
Catalyst Group  
GreenSquare Group  
Guinness Housing Trust  
Housing 21  
Paradigm Housing  
Sanctuary Housing  
Sovereign Group

**Equalities groups including:**

Age UK - Oxfordshire, City & County  
Banbury Asian Forum  
Cherwell Equality and Access to Services Panel  
Cherwell Strategic Housing Residents Panel  
Oxfordshire Learning Disability  
Shifa Trust

**Within CDC, stakeholders including:**

Council Members  
Customer Service  
Equalities Officer  
Fraud  
Housing Services Staff  
Legal  
Safer Communities

**Parish Councils including:**

Bloxham  
Bodicote  
South Newington