

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27th June 2023

Overview of the Housing Register

Report of Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing

This report is public

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with an overview of the Cherwell District Council Housing Register and allocations process

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note how the Council administers applications it receives to the Housing Register and enacts its Housing Allocations Scheme.
- 1.2 To note the basis for a review of the Council's allocations and banding scheme to ensure that the scheme is working correctly in prioritising and meeting local housing needs now and in the foreseeable future. Progress on which will be reported back to the Committee.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 As part of its statutory duties, the Council manages and maintains a housing register, or waiting list. This allows applicants for social housing to access social housing when available and in accordance with their needs. The majority of the eligibility criteria for housing applicants and their priority is outlined in legislation, specifically the Housing Act 1996, but the Council does have flexibility at a local level to make changes it feels would benefit the needs of local people.
- 2.2 The Housing Allocations Scheme is the agreed Policy framework for discharging this Council function. This is agreed by the Executive and reviewed periodically to respond to pressures, case law and other change. This Policy document provides the framework for who is provided higher priority depending on housing circumstances.

- 2.3 The Council does not retain a large stock holding of property following stock transfer. Therefore, the Council nominates suitable applicants to Registered Providers operating in Cherwell, to ensure those in the highest housing need (in accordance with Policy) are allocated properties more quickly.
- 2.4 Choice Based Lettings has been the preferred way of allocating properties within social housing since the early 2010's, and Cherwell uses this allocation method. It has a computer system that enables applicants to apply and access their application but also for the Council to administer their application as well as advertise and allocate properties. The Council offers support in accessing the system where required.
- 2.5 The Council has around 2000 applications on its housing register at any one time. Of these around 30% are in our highest need Bands (1 and 2). The Council enables around 600 lettings per year of properties that are available for nomination through Registered Providers. The numbers are very dependent on the levels of new build properties being completed and made available through affordable housing completions.
- 2.6 Applicants that are homeless or threatened with homelessness are also managed through the housing register and prioritised accordingly.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 Appendix 1 to the report provides an overview of how the housing register works and the journey that an applicant takes when applying for housing and the work of the Housing Team in administering applications and enabling access to the service.
- 3.2 The purpose of the housing register is to allow those in the highest need to be housed as quickly as possible. It prioritises applications through "Banding". The Housing Allocations Scheme outlines the Banding system. If an applicant has a certain household circumstance, they are reflected in the Banding system and are therefore given the appropriate band to match. Band 1 is the highest priority band and Band 4 reflects very low or no housing needs. The banding criteria is outlined within the Housing Allocations Scheme, which is Appendix 2 of the report.
- 3.3 For the scheme to operate in the most desirable manner, there should be the fewest people in Band 1, reflecting their urgency and need to be housed, and the most people in Band 4. The Council currently has an over inflated Band 2, shown in the table below.

Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4
58	636	323	860

(These figures present a snapshot at time of writing)

- 3.4 The criteria should therefore be considered for review to address this balance and ensure that applicants are being prioritised accordingly.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The Council is committed to providing an accessible, transparent and fair housing register that responds to the needs of those seeking rehousing within the District.
- 4.2 In order to do this, the Council regularly needs to review its policy frameworks and processes to ensure that the housing register is meeting those needs.

5.0 Consultation

Not applicable

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

Not applicable

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 The housing allocation, register and homelessness services are established and are provided through existing budgets and staffing resources. This report indicates no new pressures.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 No legal implications

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Risk Implications

- 7.3 This is an established service being provided by the Council currently and this report does not raise any specific implications. Any new or existing risks will be managed through the relevant service risk register and escalated as and when necessary.

Comments checked by:

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Equalities and Inclusion Implications

7.4 This is a current Council function that has an agreed policy in place and thus has Equalities risks managed as part of its approval process. In line with our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion framework, any significant changes in the Policy will require a new ECIA to be completed.

Comments checked by:

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision N/A

Financial Threshold Met: N/A

Community Impact Threshold Met: N/A

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Cherwell District Council Housing Allocations Scheme

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 – Housing Application Process
- Appendix 2 – Cherwell District Council Housing Allocations Scheme

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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