

# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

## AGENDA HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

**Date:** Thursday, 11 April 2024

**Time:** 6.00 pm

**Venue:** Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

**Members:**

Councillor Mrs K Mandry (Chairman)

Councillor S Ingram (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors R Bird

F Birkett

H P Davis

Mrs C L A Hockley

Mrs K K Trott

**Deputies:** M R Daniells



**1. Apologies for Absence**

**2. Minutes (Pages 5 - 8)**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 08 February 2024.

**3. Chairman's Announcements**

**4. Declarations of Interest and Disclosures of Advice or Directions**

To receive any declarations of interest from members in accordance with Standing Orders and the Council's Code of Conduct and disclosures of advice or directions received from Group Leaders or Political Groups, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

**5. Deputations**

To receive any deputations of which notice has been lodged.

**6. Executive Business (Pages 9 - 10)**

To consider any item of business dealt with by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel that falls under the remit of the Housing Portfolio. This will include any decisions taken by the Executive Member during the same time period.

**(1) Fareham Housing Responsive Repairs Framework Contract Extension (Pages 11 - 12)**

**(2) Affordable Housing at Welborne Garden Village (Pages 13 - 14)**

**(3) Multi-dwelling unit acquisition for affordable housing (Pages 15 - 16)**

**7. Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Customer Questionnaire Outcomes (Pages 17 - 22)**

To receive a report by the Director of Housing which updates members on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures customer questionnaire outcomes.

**8. Housing Delivery Update (Pages 23 - 24)**

To receive an update by the Affordable Housing Delivery Manager on progress with the Fareham Housing sites and other relevant strategic matters.

**9. Allocations Policy : Update following consultation on the draft policy (Pages 25 - 32)**

To receive a report by the Director of Housing which updates members on the public consultation in respect of the Draft Allocations policy.

**10. Update on Hampshire County Council consultation on future services: potential impacts to Fareham Housing (Pages 33 - 34)**

To receive a presentation by the Head of Housing (Pathways and Neighbourhoods) which outlines the potential impacts to Fareham Housing in respect of the Hampshire County Council consultation on future services.

**11. Welborne Update** (Pages 35 - 36)

To receive a presentation by the Director of Housing and the Affordable Housing Delivery Manager which provides an update on Welborne.

**12. Housing Scrutiny Panel Priorities**

To provide an opportunity for Members to consider the scrutiny priorities for the Housing Panel.



A WANNELL  
Chief Executive Officer

Civic Offices  
[www.fareham.gov.uk](http://www.fareham.gov.uk)  
03 April 2024

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# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

**Date:** Thursday, 8 February 2024

**Venue:** Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

**PRESENT:**

**Councillor** (Chairman)

**Councillor** S Ingram (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:** R Bird, H P Davis, Mrs C L A Hockley and Mrs K K Trott

**Also  
Present:**



**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F Birkett and Mrs K Mandry.

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on 30 November 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

**5. DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

**6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS**

**(1) Housing Allocations Policy**

There were no comments or questions for clarification in respect of this item.

**(2) Emergency and Temporary Accommodation Pressure**

There were no comments or questions for clarification in respect of this item.

**7. STAFFING UPDATE**

The Panel received a presentation by the Director of Housing which provided Members with an update on the new staffing structure of the Housing Team and outlined job roles and responsibilities within it. A copy of the presentation slides is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

Members congratulated the Director of Housing on the new structure and thanked her for an excellent presentation.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the presentation.

**8. UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH MAKING COUNCIL-OWNED HOMES MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY**

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing which provided Members with an update on the greener measures undertaken on Council owned housing.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the report.

## **9. AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY UPDATE**

The Panel received a presentation by the Affordable Housing Delivery Manager which informed Members of the progress with the Fareham Housing sites and other relevant strategic housing matters. A copy of the presentation slides is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

In discussing the regeneration of some of the properties in the Council's housing stock, Members commented on the need to achieve best value for money when considering capital expenditure on some of the older and more challenging properties in the portfolio.

Members were interested to hear that, wherever possible, the opportunity is taken to redevelop existing buildings that are identified as having spare rooms or communal areas that are no longer in use to create additional accommodation. Members put forward some suggested sites across the Borough that, if in the Council's ownership, could be considered for redevelopment.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the presentation.

## **10. NEW CONSUMER STANDARDS FROM THE REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING**

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing which provided Members with details of the new Consumer standards from the Regulator of Social Housing.

Members acknowledged the huge amount of work that will be required in the implementation and delivery of the new standards. It was hoped by Members that a similar standard will be brought forward for private landlords.

In discussing Housing disrepair claims, the Panel was advised that numbers are still very low and that no new claims have been received. Members were advised that one claim has been brought under the Environmental Protection Act and that a settlement is progressing.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes:

- (a) the content of the report and the current anticipated performance against the draft emerging Consumer Standards;
- (b) the intention to produce an action plan relating to compliance with the Standards, to be reported at a later meeting of the Panel;
- (c) the section of the report relating to governance; and

(d) that a further report will be produced for the Council's Executive in 2024. This will relate to the Standards and any proposed changes of the governance structure.

**11. HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL PRIORITIES**

Members considered and discussed the Scrutiny Priorities for the Panel.

An update was requested and agreed in respect of Affordable Housing at Welborne due to the potential impact that the unexpected funding gap in delivering the required improvements to Junction 10 of the M27 motorway may have on the provision of affordable housing.

RESOLVED that the scrutiny priorities for the Housing Scrutiny Panel were discussed.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm  
and ended at 6.50 pm).

..... Chairman

..... Date



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Housing Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 11 April 2024

**Subject:** EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

#### SUMMARY

One of the key functions of this Scrutiny Panel is to hold the Executive Portfolio Holder and Senior Officers to account in the delivery of the service and the Improvement Actions identified in the Council's Corporate Priorities and Corporate Vision.

Members are therefore invited to consider the items of business which fall under the remit of the Housing portfolio and have been dealt with by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel. This also includes any decisions taken by individual Executive Members.

The relevant notices for decisions taken are attached for consideration.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Members consider the items of Business discharged by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

2023/24  
Decision No.  
2511

**Record of Decision by Executive**  
**Monday, 5 February 2024**

<b>Portfolio</b>	Housing
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fareham Housing Responsive Repairs Framework Contract Extension</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Provides Housing Choices

**Purpose:**  
To seek Executive approval for an extension of up to 12-months to the existing Responsive Repairs Framework Contract with the respective suppliers.

The Responsive Repairs Framework provides a framework of contractors who were awarded contracts to undertake repairs or specialist works, in Council homes, which cannot be undertaken by the Council’s in-house Building Services Direct Service Organisation (DSO). It forms part of the delivery of the repair service for Fareham Housing. The original contracts were entered into on 20 January 2020 and they will expire on 19 January 2024.

During 2023 there have been many changes to the social housing landscape. This includes the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (sometimes referred to as Awaab’s Law) and increasing focus by the Regulator of Social Housing relating to matters of repair. This has coincided with a significant increase in the cost of repairs (materials/labour) in recent years.

Key contracts for the Housing Property service will expire in 2024. One is the Fareham Housing Voids Property Repairs and Refurbishment Works (new contract due to be awarded in October 2024), along with the series of contracts awarded under the Responsive Repairs Framework (subject of this report). It is considered appropriate to take the opportunity to recognise the synergies between the works undertaken across both contracts, and opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

An extension of the existing Responsive Repairs Contracts will allow for a continuation of service delivery, ahead of many of the repair works being incorporated into the, soon to advertised, Void and Property Improvement Works contract (anticipated to be in place for Oct/Nov 2024). This amalgamation of some of the contract elements will assist in contract management, monitoring quality, service delivery and timeliness of repairs, and improved clarity on costs.

In November 2023 an internal review commenced to look at the existing framework contract performance. The review is aimed at ensuring an appropriate standard of repair works takes place alongside good quality customer service, whilst also improving efficiency and identifying opportunities to reduce the financial impacts of the repair process.

**Options Considered:**

As recommendation.

**Decision:**

RESOLVED that authority be delegated to the Director of Housing, following consultation with the Executive Member for Housing to enter into an extension of the existing Responsive Repairs Contracts with the respective suppliers, for a period of up to 12 months.

**Reason:**

To ensure repair works to occupied Council homes continue whilst a new tender pack and procurement exercise is concurrently prepared which will incorporate many of the responsive repairs works with the voids and property improvement contract.

**Confirmed as a true record:**

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 5 February 2024

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

2023/24  
Decision No.  
2527

### Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 18 March 2024

<b>Portfolio</b>	Housing
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Affordable Housing at Welborne Garden Village</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Provides Housing Choices

**Purpose:**

To provide the Executive with an overview of the potential opportunity for the Council to be involved as the Registered Provider of affordable housing at Welborne Garden Village, how that involvement might work, and broad financial and operational considerations associated with the potential opportunity.

Welborne Garden Village will deliver 6,000 new homes. In accordance with the S106 for the outline planning approval, a minimum of 600 homes will be affordable (a mix of Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership), with the potential for a total of 1,800 affordable homes (subject to viability).

On 09 October 2023 the Executive agreed the principle of further investigation and due diligence around the potential for Fareham Borough Council to be involved in the ownership and management of the affordable homes at Welborne, and for funding to be made available to seek appropriate advice on the matter.

Consultancy advice has now been obtained which highlights the positives and risks of potential models. This advice highlights that the initially proposed Joint Venture approach is unlikely to be attractive for the Council, and although other models for Council involvement could be more favourable, they would need to be considered in the wider context of risk, appetite and benefit.

The report explains why it is not considered appropriate for the Council to enter into the proposed Joint Venture approach for the ownership and management of the affordable homes at Welborne, but that alternative models might (subject to further legal and financial considerations) still offer some potential.

**Options Considered:**

As recommendation.

**Decision:**

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) notes the content of the report;
- (b) agrees that the proposed Joint Venture model is not pursued by the Council;  
and
- (c) agrees that should Welborne Land Limited wish to consider discussion on the Council's potential involvement as owner/manager of the affordable homes, further discussion takes place on the potential for a Development Agreement approach through the Council's Housing Revenue Account, and thereafter and as necessary, further work be undertaken to consider the legal and financial implications to the Council. Noting that if this were to progress positively then a further report will be brought back to the Executive before any agreements are entered into.

**Reason:**

To support the Corporate Priority of providing Housing Choices.

**Confirmed as a true record:**

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 18 March 2024

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

2023/24  
Decision No.  
2528

### Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 18 March 2024

<b>Portfolio</b>	Housing
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Multi-dwelling unit acquisition for affordable housing purposes</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Provides Housing Choices

**Purpose:**

To enable the acquisition of a multi-dwelling unit (block of flats) close to Fareham Town Centre for the purpose of providing additional affordable homes by Fareham Housing.

An unusual opportunity has arisen for the Council (in its role as housing provider) to acquire the freehold of a Multi-Dwelling Unit (MDU) block, with vacant possession.

The site is well located, close to the town centre, shops, facilities and public transport. The properties within the MDU are ready for occupation and finished to a good standard.

The acquisition can be funded through HRA borrowing, together with either Homes England Grant or 1-4-1 receipts, and it will provide a positive return to the Housing Revenue Account over the medium/long term. In the immediate/short term the acquisition would boost the provision of affordable homes for the benefit of Fareham Housing customers.

**Options Considered:**

As recommendation.

**Decision:**

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) agrees the principle of the acquisition for the value set out in the Confidential Appendix to the report, subject to the completion of due diligence by Officers; and
- (b) delegates authority to the Director of Housing, following consultation with the Executive Member for Housing, to agree the final terms of the purchase and to complete the acquisition.

**Reason:**

To enable the Council to proceed with the acquisition of a Multi-Dwelling Unit which will positively contribute to the affordable housing provision in the Borough.

**Confirmed as a true record:**

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 18 March 2024



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

**Date**                    **11 April 2024**

**Report of:**            **Head of Housing (Pathways & Neighbourhoods)**

**Subject:**              **Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Customer Questionnaire Outcomes**

#### **SUMMARY**

This report provides members with information on the outcomes of the first full Tenant Satisfaction Survey that was undertaken in December 2023.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes:

- (a) the content of the report; and
- (b) the intention to produce benchmark information later in 2024 and to report on improvements made based on feedback received.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Government has appointed the Regulator of Social Housing to create a system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.
2. After a period of consultation, regulations are now effective from 1 April 2023, which state that social housing providers must now annually survey all of their residents and report on a set of tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs). There are 22 TSM's, some of these measures include key statistics such as fire and gas safety checks and will be measured by landlord's internal reporting measures and the remaining 12 measures are collected via an annual tenant perception survey which must include the standard multiple-choice questions set by the Regulator of Social Housing.
3. The twelve perception measures are categorised as:
  - a) TP01 Overall satisfaction.
  - b) TP02 Satisfaction with repairs.
  - c) TP03 Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair.
  - d) TP04 Satisfaction that the home is well maintained.
  - e) TP05 Satisfaction that the home is safe.
  - f) TP06 Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenants views and acts upon them.
  - g) TP07 Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them.
  - h) TP08 Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect.
  - i) TP09 Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints.
  - j) TP10 Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained.
  - k) TP11 Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods.
  - l) TP12 Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour.
4. This survey must have been undertaken during the financial year of 2023/24, the results of which will be reported to the Regulator in Summer 2024 and the results for all social housing providers are expected to be published during Autumn 2024.

## **PILOT SURVEY**

5. As Fareham Housing had not previously conducted a customer satisfaction survey, a pilot survey was initially conducted on a percentage of our customer base during the Summer of 2023, based on the standard set of questions set by the Regulator.
6. The aim of this pilot survey was to find out what our customers think of the Housing service and how we perform against the perception TSMs, to highlight areas for improvement within our service, and to gain insight into how Fareham Housing customers prefer to communicate with us and how we communicate with them.

## FULL SURVEY

7. The full Tenant Satisfaction Survey was conducted during the period December 2023 through to January 2024. All of Fareham Housing's customer base (approx. 3000), comprising of secure tenants, temporary accommodation tenants and leaseholders, were sent the survey through a variety of methods. For those customers where an email address is held, surveys were sent with a direct link to the survey which could be completed and submitted through PC, tablet or smart phone. All other customers were sent a paper survey form.
8. In accordance with the Regulator's technical guidance, it is important that a minimum percentage of our customer base return their views on the survey, so we included the opportunity for customers to enter a prize draw either on submission of their survey or alongside the return of their paper survey. The prize offered was a £50 gift card for a supermarket of the winner's choosing.
9. To ensure we achieved the minimum required responses, telephone surveys were also carried out and Housing Officers actively encouraged the completion of the survey whilst out in the community visiting residents.

## AGE DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

10. 485 responses were received, and analysis of the respondents showed:

<b>Who responded</b>
70% of respondents lived in general purpose housing, 30% lived in sheltered housing
53% of respondents were of retirement age
20% of respondents were in either part-time or full-time employment
17% of respondents declared to have a disability or illness and were not working
47% of respondents declared to have a disability
68% of respondents were female
54% of respondents were above the age of 65, 16% 55-64, 30% 25-54 and 1% from 18-24 year olds

## SUMMARY OF TENANT PERCEPTION SURVEY RESULTS

11. Below is a summary of all the satisfactions measures resulting from this survey and the percentage of Fareham Housing customers that reported they were either very or fairly satisfied with each one. The table also provides a comparison of the full survey to the pilot survey that took place earlier in 2023:

	Satisfied (%) Full survey	Satisfied (%) Pilot survey
Overall satisfaction of the Fareham Housing service	84	76
Repairs (overall satisfaction)	87	79
Repairs (time taken to complete)	83	82
Provided with a well-maintained home	80	79
Communal areas clean and well maintained	75	64
Safe home	85	80
Landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood	67	56
Approach to handling anti-social behaviour	55	41
Complaints handling	46	30
Listens and acts on tenants' views	67	59
Keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	71	60
Treats tenants fairly and with respect	81	76

12. Fareham Housing's approach to complaint handling received the lowest rate of satisfaction. From April 2024 complaints will be handled within the timescales imposed by the Housing Ombudsman and there will be a much stricter and rigorous approach to dealing with complaints. It will be interesting to note, when all social housing providers results are published and as a comparison with next year's survey, whether this level of satisfaction is reflected across the board and is as a direct result of poor handling of complaints or whether this satisfaction rate is low due to customers not receiving their desired outcome.

### OPEN QUESTION ANALYSIS

13. Throughout the survey, respondents were given opportunities to leave comments and provide further detail on the satisfaction scores they provided. 117 responses were received regarding overall satisfaction and have been themed in the table below:

Theme	Number of comments
General positive feedback	56
Slow repairs/maintenance	11
Positive repairs	7
Positive Housing officer experience	7
Specific complaint	4
Rehousing issue	2
Other negative comments (relate to grounds maintenance, fly tipping/bins areas, overall dissatisfaction)	30

14. Following the questions specifically asking for views on repairs, positive neighbourhood, safe home etc, respondents were again given the opportunity to leave comments and provide further detail regarding their dissatisfaction in these areas. 77 responses were received and have been themed in the below table:

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of comments</b>
General dissatisfaction	15
Anti-social behaviour	10
Cleaning of communal areas	4
Maintenance of/issues with communal areas (external)	19
Maintenance of communal areas (internal)	1
Lack of communication from teams	2
Slow/delayed repairs	12
Other repair issues (not time related)	8
Re-housing queries	4
Specific complaint	2

15. Whilst overall respondents were satisfied with the services Fareham Housing provides, the comments received have provided some insight of where improvements can be made. These improvements will be driven through various means, including work driven by the Consumer Standards which is also overseen through the Regulator of Social Housing and through the recent appointment of the Principal Tenant Engagement Officer, who commenced their position on 02 April 2024.

16. Although surveys were conducted anonymously, of those paper surveys received and information provided for the prize draw, any specific comments were identified against the householder and specific concerns or issues were addressed. For example, concerns raised that a repair had been reported some time ago and were still awaiting contact from a contractor, these were escalated with the appropriate team and addressed.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

17. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

## **CONCLUSION**

18. The annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey results for all social housing providers are due to be published in Autumn 2024.

19. These results will be benchmarked against providers of a similar nature and of similar stock holding to Fareham Housing, which will be reported to members later in the year, alongside progress against the Consumer standards and a summary of improvements Fareham Housing have implemented or in the process of implementing.

**Appendices: None**

**Background Papers: None**

**Reference Papers: None**

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Andrea Kingston (01329 824618)

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Presentation to The Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date:** 11 April 2024

**Subject:** Housing Delivery Update

#### **SUMMARY**

To receive a presentation by the Affordable Housing Delivery Manager on the progress with Fareham Housing Sites and other relevant strategic housing matters.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel makes any comments or ask any questions for clarification and notes the contents of the presentation.





# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 11 April 2024

**Report of:** Director of Housing

**Subject:** Allocations Policy: Update following consultation on the draft policy

#### SUMMARY

This report provides Members with an update following full consultation on the draft Allocations Policy and also incorporates how this is aligned and impacted by the current Government consultation on reforms to social housing allocations.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel comments or raises any points for further clarification and notes the contents of this report.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Ahead of full consultation, the Housing Scrutiny Panel were previously provided with a draft Housing Allocations Policy on 30 November 2023, with an accompanying report outlining the changes proposed to the existing housing allocations policy (Optimising Social Housing: Applications and Allocations Policy) which was adopted in 2020.
2. The purpose of this report is two-fold, namely, to update Panel on the consultation feedback, and to outline how this is aligned with the current Government consultation on reforms to Social Housing Allocations.

## **CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

3. The consultation entailed a questionnaire seeking views on the key changes proposed within the new policy, and to what extent respondents agreed. 149 respondents completed consultation feedback. The summary feedback is provided as follows:
  - i. The updated policy stipulates that some home-owners under the age of 55 could be eligible to join the housing register where, for example, they are in significant and unsustainable negative equity or for whom it is not safe to remain in their homes. Responses are mixed, with only 53% of respondents in agreement with this proposal. Where applications of this nature are made, careful consideration would take place to ensure supporting financial information and fraud checks are undertaken, and that all other eligibility criteria are satisfied.
  - ii. 77% of respondents are in support for allowing people to apply to the register online (in addition to in person or over the phone). This supports development work in the team currently being undertaken to help make the process more efficient and offer self-service for customers who don't require in person support to make an application.
  - iii. 91% of respondents agree not to allow applicants with property overseas and/or income from overseas to join the Housing Register.
  - iv. 95% of respondents agree that all applications to the Housing Register should be reviewed annually. Applicants who do not engage with this review can be removed from the Housing Register. Paragraph 31 of the draft policy provides detail on the number and type of contacts made and the process involved. This was included in an earlier allocation policy published in 2013 and reintroducing this check is considered vital to help ensure allocations go to those households most in housing need.
  - v. The priority banding has been reviewed to provide a higher priority to some categories of applicants, such as homeless people for whom we have accepted a main housing duty. This will help to move them on faster from B&B and temporary accommodation into more settled accommodation and reduce the high cost of emergency accommodation to the Council. 59% of respondents agree with this approach, with 9% stating they neither agree or disagree or don't know.
  - vi. 84% of respondents agree that families in temporary or emergency accommodation should receive priority banding. 59% of respondents agree that any homeless household without children and owed a main housing duty who has been in B&B for longer than 4 months will receive an increased priority. The council review every emergency placement in B&B, and in the case of single applications, where a main housing duty is owed due to the shortage of 1-bedroom temporary accommodation and affordable housing, placements can be lengthy. Increased priority will help

address this.

- vii. The council's approach to tackling under occupation is supported, with 81% of respondents agreeing that the highest priority banding will be given to any tenant wanting to downsize by 2 or more bedrooms.
- viii. The council's approach to using flexible tenancies for all tenancies with 4 or more bedrooms or with structural adaptations has also been supported, with 89% of respondents agreeing that tenancies are reviewed so that tenants who no longer need this type of property can be offered a more suitable one at the point their fixed term period comes to an end.

## **GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REFORMS TO SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS**

- 4. Alongside the current Allocations Policy review, on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 the Government commenced consultation on reforms to social housing allocations. This consultation is due to close on 26<sup>th</sup> March. The consultation seeks views on proposals to:
  - i. Introduce a United Kingdom (UK) connection test, to ensure that it is those with the closest connection to the UK who are eligible for a social home;
  - ii. Mandate the following tests: local connection test, income test, false statement test, and tests for anti-social behaviour and terrorism offences;
  - iii. Introduce a new ground for eviction for those who are convicted of terrorism offences, and implementation of a 'three strikes and you're out' policy for anti-social behaviour.
- 5. The current social housing allocations provisions are contained within Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. The consultation us to inform secondary legislation that is proposed to be made under this part of the Act.
- 6. A comparison table illustrating the draft allocations policy and the government proposals has been attached as Appendix A to this report.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 7. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 8. Given the current government reform proposed in social housing allocations and the impact these identify in line with the draft allocations policy, it is therefore recommended that work in ratifying and implementing the policy is paused.

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Table of comparison between draft allocations policy and Government consultation on reforms to social housing allocations.

**Background Papers:** None

**Reference Papers:** Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel, 30 November 2023, Draft Housing Allocations Policy

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Abi Travers, Head of Housing (Pathways and Neighbourhoods), 01329 236100

**Appendix A – Table of comparison between draft allocations policy and Government consultation on reforms to social housing allocations.**

<u>Government Consultation proposals to social housing allocation</u>	<u>Fareham BC Draft Allocations policy</u>
<p><b>UK Connection Test</b> - where a person must demonstrate their connection to the UK before they can be allocated social housing. This can be achieved by (a) being a British citizen, Irish citizen, Commonwealth citizen with a right of abode, or EEA or Swiss citizen with equal treatment right or (b) by being a lawful resident in the UK for 10 years</p> <p>The government is proposing that those who arrive as part of a safe and legal resettlement or relocation scheme will be exempt from the UK connection test. This includes the UK Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, and the Ukraine temporary visa schemes (the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine), Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme).</p> <p>New applicants and those on a waiting list would need to satisfy the new test, or be part of an exempted group, before they are allocated social housing</p>	<p>This is broadly in line with the draft allocations policy, however the specification of a minimum age limit would be beneficial. There are concerns around the potential for British citizens who have chosen to live abroad for a number of years returning to the UK and potentially being eligible for social housing with no ‘habitual residency’ test applied.</p> <p>The requirement to live in the UK for 10 years isn’t compatible with the draft allocations policy, which is aligned to a 5 year period, which ties in with the existing and draft allocations policy around family connections to the area.</p> <p>FBC already requests evidence as proof of eligibility to join the housing register and implementation of a new UK connection test is estimated to take between 1 and 3 months. However, there are very low numbers of applicants who would likely be impacted – for example, from data taken in 2021 95.6% of people in Fareham consider themselves to be white British, with 4.4% being from another ethnic group.</p>
<p><b>Local connection test</b> – where a person must demonstrate a connection to a local area for at least 2 years before they can be allocated social housing. This will ensure greater consistency across the country and ensure more local people can access social housing in the area they call home, supporting people to put down roots and maintain links to family and community</p>	<p>The council already has a local connection test (current and new draft policy). The test used at FBC is more comprehensive than that proposed by the Government. If the Government proposal is implemented in isolation, it would potentially allow many more people onto Fareham’s local housing register. If implemented through Government reform this will potentially increase the number of people who qualify</p>

<p>The government intends to use a broader definition for local connection than residence, in order to capture employment and family associations as well.</p>	<p>to join, and place additional burden onto the demand for affordable housing in the Borough.</p>
<p><b><u>Income test</u></b> – setting thresholds for applicants and those on a waiting list to qualify for social housing. This will have no impact on existing tenants, but rather will ensure new tenancies are reserved for those who, at the point of signing for a new social home, would most struggle to afford private accommodation</p> <p>As part of this consultation, the Government are seeking views on where the income threshold should be set and whether this should vary at a regional level.</p>	<p>FBC does not include an income threshold with the new draft policy. Income alone does not give a full understanding of a customer’s ability to afford social housing. Applicants are assessed on affordability, so their outgoings and ongoing financial commitments are taken into account. Anyone with savings over £16,000 is excluded as this is the threshold at which benefits are generally withdrawn.</p> <p>Setting a national threshold doesn’t take into account regional variance in earnings and cost of living. Should a new income test be introduced a period of implementation would need to take place as it would impact applicants already on the list who would need to be reassessed.</p>
<p><b><u>Anti-social behaviour test</u></b> – people who have unspent convictions for certain criminal anti-social behaviour, as well as certain civil sanctions, will be disqualified from social housing for a defined period.</p> <p>This would require local housing authorities to check whether there is evidence of an applicant having been subject to specified anti-social behaviour sanctions.</p>	<p>This disqualification criteria doesn’t feature in the draft policy.</p> <p>Applicants may be excluded from joining the housing register if it is established that they, or a member of their household are assessed as being unsuitable to sustain a tenancy due to serious anti-social behaviour , nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or Illegal or immoral use of the property.</p> <p>The government proposal is therefore more robust.</p>
<p><b><u>Terrorism test</u></b> – terrorist offenders with unspent convictions will not qualify for social housing unless excluding them would increase the risk to public safety</p>	<p>The new draft policy makes no provision around terrorism.</p> <p>Clarification around how FBC can source this data.</p>

<p><b><u>Grounds for eviction (anti-social behaviour and terrorist offences)</u></b> – implementing a ‘three strikes and you’re out’ policy for repeat offenders of anti-social behaviour, and creating a new ground for eviction for terrorist . It would mean 3 proven instances of anti-social behaviour followed by three warnings from your landlord. After three proven instances of anti-social behaviour (and three warnings from the landlord), the government thinks it is right that perpetrators face eviction.</p>	<p>As outlined above under the Anti-social behaviour test, this is a new proposal which doesn’t feature in the Allocations Policy. If implemented, it may result in some applicants being ineligible to join the housing register, although a homelessness duty may still be owed.</p>
<p><b><u>Fraudulent declaration test</u></b> - mandating a period of disqualification for those who knowingly or recklessly make false statements when applying for social housing</p>	<p>This is broadly in line with the draft policy, whereby applicants found to have mad false declarations may be excluded from the housing register.</p>
<p><b><u>Applicants on a waiting list</u></b> – applying the new eligibility and qualification tests not only to new applicants but also to those currently on a social housing waiting list.</p> <p>Guidance will be issued to local housing authorities setting out the evidence considered suitable to meet each test, noting the need to minimise costs and administrative burden. In relation to the anti-social behaviour and terrorism tests, we will recommend that local housing authorities should rely on an applicant’s self-declaration at the application stage. Any formal criminal records check should only be undertaken at the point of allocating a social home.</p>	<p>The draft provision means that an annual review of all housing applicants on the housing register will be undertaken, which would then be used to ensure any new eligibility and qualification tests set out by the government can be taken into consideration for all existing applicants.</p>





# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Presentation to The Housing Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 11 April 2024

**Subject:** Update on HCC Consultation on Future Services: Potential Impacts to Fareham Housing

### SUMMARY

The Panel will receive a presentation which will provide details of the Hampshire County Council consultation on the provision of future services and the potential impacts to Fareham Housing.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the presentation.



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Presentation to The Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date:** 11 April 2024

**Subject:** Welborne Update

#### **SUMMARY**

Members will receive a presentation which provides an update on Welborne.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the contents of the presentation.

