

## **SUBJECT: IMPACT OF REVISED ALLOCATION SCHEME**

**Report to: Scrutiny Committee**

**Report by:** Trevor Chaplin – Group Manager Housing Services

### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 A revised allocation scheme was adopted by GYBC earlier this year. The scheme came into effect from 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014 to allow for processes to be in place.

1.2 The key amendments to the scheme included;

- a) Applicants will not qualify for an application if they have demonstrated unacceptable behaviour. This will include
  - i. Owing significant housing related debt to a Council, Registered Landlord or Private Landlord. (*Significant housing debt is rent arrears/use and occupation charges, including housing benefit and court costs, equivalent to 8 weeks and above chargeable rent/monies for the property, rechargeable repairs and repayable rent deposits*)
  - ii. Conviction for illegal or immoral use of your home
  - iii. Proven social housing fraud
  - iv. Proven nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors sufficient to have warranted action by the police, Council or landlord
  - v. Subject to an Anti Social Behaviour Order, an Anti-Social Behaviour Contract, Demotion of tenancy or any similar penalty introduced under future anti-social behaviour legislation
  - vi. Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate beyond reasonable wear and tear
  - vii. Being a perpetrator of domestic abuse as this is a ground for possession
  - viii. A decision has been made by a LA that the applicant is intentionally homeless
  - ix. The applicant has placed themselves in housing need or a greater housing need through an act or failure to act e.g. moving to a smaller property to create an overcrowded situation.
- b) A person will not qualify for an allocation where they are able to meet their own need, after considering their individual circumstances.
- c) The allocation scheme will include a safe surrender scheme to permit applicants to terminate their tenancy to avoid arrears accruing without suffering a penalty should they reapply at a later date.

- d) The introduction of a 2 year residence criteria unless accepted as statutory homeless or moving to the Borough to receive specialist support.
- e) The allocation scheme should allow for the creation of local lettings plans e.g. to ensure that properties in low demand are able to be let within a reasonable timeline or other specific circumstances.
- f) Applicants under the age of 18 will only be admitted to the scheme in exceptional circumstances and will only be offered an allocation if a suitable trustee has been appointed.
- g) The existing method of awarding priority will continue in the revised scheme.
- h) Reduced priority for cases where the applicants behaviour is such that they should not be offered a property but have not reached the threshold for non qualification
- i) Additional preference will be awarded to applicants who are in work at least 24 hours per week by backdating their date of application by 12 months. Additional preference is only awarded if an initial housing need is established, working itself does not constitute a housing need.
- j) Applicants will be permitted to make a preference of the geographical area and type of property that they wish to be considered for, for a period of three months. If the applicant has not been allocated a property within the three month period, housing options will reserve the right to consider properties outside the applicants preferences.
- k) Applicants are allowed two offers of suitable accommodation. Refusal of two suitable offers will result in the applicant being removed from the allocation pool. Applicants will be able to re-apply after a period of 12 months. Statutory homeless applicants are allowed one suitable offer.

## 2.0 Impact of the revised scheme

2.1 Given that the scheme has been running for 2 months, there is limited information on the impact the scheme on applicants. In particular, the ability to offer properties outside the geographical area of the applicants preference or alternative type of property will not be effective until 3 months after the scheme commenced, i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

2.2 There have been 64 applications who failed the eligibility or qualification criteria. Of these, 20 were due to no housing need which would have applied under the previous scheme. In addition, 28 applicants failed the two year residence criteria and 12 failed due to previous behaviour. Two applicants were assessed as able to meet their own need and the final two were removed from the allocation pool after refusing two suitable offers. (Please see Appendix 1).

2.3 The revised scheme permitted additional preference in cases where the applicant is working for 24 hours per week or more. Since 4.8.14, nominations have been made of 30 applicants in work out of a total of 167. Of those 30, 7 applicants were nominated where the additional priority advanced their application. In the remaining 23 cases, the nomination would have been made whether the additional preference was awarded or not. As with all nominations, there may be some refusals and therefore this may not reflect the total allocations for people in work.

2.4 No requests have been made under the safe surrender scheme.

2.5 A local letting plan for low demand properties has been adopted. This permits a reserve list to be created of applicants who would not normally be eligible for the main allocation pool. Those applicants not eligible due to behaviour remain excluded. The residence criterion has been initially relaxed to 6 months which will be monitored. Applicants in the reserve pool will only be eligible for low demand properties i.e. properties where there is no suitable applicant in the main allocation pool. The local letting plan will be reviewed after 6 months.

2.6 There have been 3 reviews submitted by applicants who have disagreed with the decision made on their application. In one review case the decision was overturned following the submission of fresh evidence.

### 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee note this report and request a further report once the revised allocation scheme has been in operation for six months.

## Appendix 1

<b>HOUSING REGISTER - statistics as 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014</b>	
Number of active applications (assessed and scored – by bedroom size)	155 X 1 bed 92 X 2 bed 50 X 3 bed 27 X 4 bed 5 X 5 bed 2 X 6 bed
Total active applications	331
Of those above – applications needing ground floor	137 (41.4%)
Of those above application need sheltered housing	39 (11.8%)
Applications from 'workers' who have been nominated for a property since the introduction of the new policy	30 (7 were successful due to additional preference awarded as per new policy)
No of safe surrender applications made	0
<b>Number of applications who failed eligibility or qualification criteria since August 2014</b>	
Failed two year residency criteria	28
Housing Related Debt (equivalent to 8 weeks rent or more)	5
Refused two suitable offers	2
No Housing Need	20
Able to meet own housing need	2
Intentionally homeless	1
Perpetrator of domestic violence	1
Police Warrant for ASB	1
Poor condition of property	2
Worsened housing need	2
Total	64
<b>Number of Nominations &amp; Allocations since 4.8.14</b>	
GYCH	116 Nominations & 74 Allocations
Other registered providers	51 Nominations & 17 Allocations
Number of Reviews received against allocation decisions since 4.8.14	3