



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Appendix F

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held: THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2011 at 5.30pm

P.R.E.S.E.N.T.

Councillor Bhavsar – Vice-Chair (in the Chair)

Councillor Aqbany
Councillor Joshi

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Newcombe

Also In Attendance

Councillor Westley

Cabinet Member for Housing

160. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clair, Grant and Scuplak.

161. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they had in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Councillor Aqbany declared a personal interest in Item 7 'Review of Housing Allocation Policy' and Item 8 'Customer Access to Leicester HomeChoice' as his mother was a Council lessee.

Councillor Joshi declared a personal interest in Item 7 'Review of Housing Allocation Policy' and Item 8 'Customer Access to Leicester HomeChoice' as his sister was a Council tenant and his partner worked within Adults and Housing.

Councillor Newcombe declared a personal interest in Item 7 'Review of Housing Allocation Policy' and Item 8 'Customer Access to Leicester HomeChoice' as his partner worked within Adults and Housing and he was currently on the housing waiting list.

166. REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

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The Director of Housing Strategy and Options submitted a report that recommended changes to the Housing Allocations Policy, in light of new statutory guidance issued by The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), to improve transparency and to simplify the Council's Policy.

The Head of Housing Options introduced the report to the Board. She explained that the report recommended the Council to adopt a banding scheme for allocating housing rather than the existing points-based system. Members heard that a banding scheme had been introduced by most housing authorities. It was reported that a twelve week consultation on the proposals took place with over 30 key organisations and stakeholders.

Members were informed that the proposed changes would give higher priority to single parent families, severely overcrowded families and those leaving residential care or likely to require residential care to support the Adult Social Care transformation programme.

It was further explained by officers that within a particular band, priority would be determined by the date the application was placed in that band, with the person who had been waiting the longest within that band having the highest priority.

Should the proposals receive Cabinet approval, it was reported that the revised Housing Allocations Policy would be implemented by August 2011, and the performance of the new system would be monitored after a period of six months.

Councillor Westley, Cabinet Lead Member for Housing was also in attendance and addressed the Board in relation to this report. He welcomed the revised scheme, and felt that it would respond more quickly to people's housing needs than the present points based system. He was of the view that the system was both simpler and fairer, and stated that it was designed to help particular groups of people including single parents and those who had returned from duties with the Armed Forces. He also stated that it would benefit those who had been waiting for a suitable property for significant periods of time. This in particular was welcomed by Board Members.

It was commented that tenants often produced medical certification in order to hasten their progress in applying for Council housing, and that the reasons were often vague. The Cabinet Lead Member agreed that certifications were used often used by tenants to assist with applications, but that clear evidence of a need was also required, often from a medical consultant.

Clarity was sought in connection with assistance provided to applicants placed in Band 5 with the equivalent of no housing points. The Head of Housing Options confirmed that 2,900 tenants would be placed in band

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five, and that these people would be offered a property if no offers had been received from applicants in higher bands.

A Member of the Youth Council questioned what level of support was provided to Children leaving the care of the Council's Children and Young People's Services. Councillor Westley confirmed that all elected members were corporate parents, and it was deemed necessary for young people leaving the care of the Council to be placed in the highest band to provide the best opportunity for such individuals to be appropriately housed, and that assistance in doing so was provided to them by officers.

In response to a query around the allocation of families that had split, the Cabinet Lead member acknowledged that a surge in such cases could lead to a depletion of housing stock, but stated that it was necessary to take into account parental arrangements when determining the appropriate housing tenure for those who had temporary access to their children.

The proposed revised Housing Allocation Policy was generally welcomed by the Board, and many felt that it would assist their role of responding to queries around housing allocations to constituents.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and the recommendations contained within it be endorsed.