



CABINET: 12 June 2018

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 28 June
2018**

Report of: Director of Housing and Inclusion

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J. Forshaw

**Contact for further information: Mrs N. Bradley (Extn. 5296)
(E-mail: nicola.bradley@westlancs.gov.uk)**

**SUBJECT: HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND PET POLICIES –
CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider feedback received during public consultation on proposed amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy.
- 1.2 To consider feedback received during public consultation on the proposed introduction of a Pet Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 2.1 That the updated Draft Housing Allocations Policy attached at Appendix 1 be approved.
- 2.2 That the updated Draft Pet Policy attached at Appendix 2 be approved.
- 2.3 That the implementation of the Draft Pet Policy be restricted to sheltered housing.
- 2.4 That the Director of Housing and Inclusion, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make minor drafting updates and changes arising from new legislation as required to both policies.
- 2.5 That the call in procedure is not appropriate for this item as the report will be submitted to the meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th June 2018.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 3.1 That following consideration of the report any agreed comments be submitted to the relevant Portfolio Holder.
-

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Draft Housing Allocations Policy and Pet Policy were considered at Cabinet, Landlord Services Committee & Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2018.
- 4.2 A 7 week public consultation exercise was then undertaken from 1 February 2018.

5.0 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

- 5.1 Concerns were raised by Members that reducing the age limit on sheltered accommodation may lead to an increase in neighbour nuisance. The proposal is to reduce the age limit from 60 to 55 for sheltered housing bungalows and Category II sheltered schemes with communal facilities.
- 5.2 It has been common allocation practice to allocate bungalows to individuals in the 55-60 age bracket in bungalows, where there was a medical need for this type of accommodation, there is no indication that this has created management difficulties.
- 5.3 For Category I sheltered flats, the proposal is that applications will be considered from households where all members are over 50 years of age. This would primarily apply to the 30 sheltered flats in Lambourne, where the age profile is already very mixed, with 9 tenants in their 60s, 10 in their 70s, and 8 in their 80s.
- 5.4 At present the Council has designated areas where a Local Connection criteria operates, this awards preference for housing in these areas to those applicants who live or have family in the area. The system is complex to administer, difficult for customers to understand and seen as unfair.
- 5.5 Feedback regarding the proposal to remove the current 50% Local Connection areas from the Local Lettings Policy received six comments from members of the public which focused on the lack of affordable housing primarily in the Ormskirk area.
- 5.6 In the interests of ensuring the Councils Allocations Policy supports that we house those applicants in most need, and are providing all the boroughs residents with a choice of areas in which they would like to live, it is recommended that proposed changes to local connection are accepted.
- 5.7 A further comment was made suggesting that some local connection areas could be combined. Awarding the same preference to those applicants in neighbouring

villages may be seen to be unfair and is not consistent with the aim of keeping local communities together, whilst still helping those in most need.

5.8 A number of minor grammatical changes were highlighted and the draft policy will be updated accordingly

5.9 Some minor amendments to the policy have been made to comply with requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

6.0 **SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON HOUSING PET POLICY**

6.1 In addition to the Housing Allocations Policy we also consulted on proposals to implement a Housing Pet Policy.

6.2 Whilst no feedback on the policy was received from individual tenants or the public, the feedback from officers and members on this subject has been very mixed, with strong views on responsible pet ownership and in particular allowing pets in general need blocks of flats.

6.3 Whilst those who are 'for' allowing pets in flats have specified the benefits of pet ownership in addressing issues of loneliness which we believe is positive, those 'against' allowing pets in flats have expressed concerns regarding dogs barking, fouling and general nuisance. It was felt that enforcement of the policy would be difficult and that dog ownership in general needs block would impact on the cleanliness of communal areas.

6.4 There were a number of comments regarding the size of dogs, it is therefore proposed that references to size are removed from the policy.

6.5 Comments were also made regarding:

- Two cats should be allowed
- Insurance should be encourage but not mandatory
- Allowing pets in ground floor general needs only discriminates against those in upper floors.

These points were accepted and the draft policy changed accordingly.

6.6 In view of these concerns it would be prudent to introduce the policy in sheltered properties only. This would help address the issue of low demand for sheltered housing whilst providing an opportunity to review and address any problems associated with operating the Policy.

7.0 **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

8.0 **FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are some financial/ resource implications arising from this report in respect of updating the Choice Based Lettings software, however these will be met using existing resources.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 The actions referred to in this report offer an opportunity to make the best use of council housing stock, address issues of affordability and reduce the financial impact of hard to let sheltered housing, and the high proportion of allocations made to transferring council tenants.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment was attached as Appendix 3 of the original report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Draft Housing Allocations Policy

Appendix 2 - Draft Pet Policy

Appendix 3 - Scenarios

Appendix 4 - Local Connection Data

Appendix 5 – Minute of Cabinet 12 June 2018 (Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee only) – to follow