



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 12th November 2012

Briefing Note – Housing Consultations Outcomes

1 Background

- 1.1 In July this year the Housing Directorate consulted on three major issues; the Sheltered Housing Review, and proposed changes to the Tenancy Strategy and the Housing Allocations Policy. This briefing paper describes the responses received and the impact these have had on the final recommendations for these services going forward.

2 Sheltered Housing Consultation

- 2.1 There have been 1,052 completed questionnaires from the 4,877 questionnaires sent to customers representing a 21.6% response rate which is above average for this type of consultation.

Outcomes of the consultation

- 2.2
- 94.3% of customers agree that future support provision should be personalised to meet each customer's needs.
 - 94.6% of customers agree that the future support provision should be flexible to increase or decrease to meet each customer's future needs.
 - 85.8% of customers agree that the customers with no support needs should be able to contact staff as and when they need to by telephone or at a regular drop in surgery instead of having Coordinator visits.
 - 92.6% of customers agree that instead of visiting customers who don't need support, staff time will be better spent providing enhanced support to customers who most need it.
 - 81.6% of customers agree that on some occasions when appropriate rather than visit, staff may contact customers by telephone.
 - 94.7% of customers agree that there is increasing number of older, disabled and vulnerable people who need support, and understand that it is currently only available to Sheltered

Housing tenants, Customers agree with providing support services to anyone who needs it, no matter what type of property the customer lives in.

- 81.1% of customers agree that community rooms should be used to support customers to arrange activities and that more services should be available in the community rooms.
- 79.7% of customers agree that the support service provided to customers should be called Independent Living.

What has changed as a result of consultation?

2.3

- Services will be reconfigured to meet the support needs of Sheltered Housing customers
- The Service will be flexible and focused on services which support customers to live independently
- The Service will be delivered within the budget available

3 Tenancy Strategy Consultation

- 3.1 The Tenancy Strategy consultation received 594 responses which represent a 5.94% response rate. The response received is statistically valid and provides sufficient confidence in the numbers received.

Outcomes of the consultation

- 3.2 The table below summarises the main questions asked as part of the consultation survey. As is illustrated, the majority of the Consultees are in favour of the proposed policy changes within the Tenancy Strategy.

Question Asked	Agreed		Disagreed	
	(%)	Number	(%)	Number
(Q2) – Should a Tenancy be renewed if no change in circumstances	80.4	426	11.3	60
(Q3) – Tenancy Length for Older People (Lifetime)	94.0	506	3.2	17
(Q3) – Tenancy Length for Disabled Households (Lifetime)	93.4	467	3.6	18
(Q3) – Tenancy Length for Family Households (5 Year FTT)	70.2	359	25.4	130
(Q3) – Tenancy Length for Single & Couple households without children (5 Year FTT)	65.9	331	29.1	146
(Q4) – Tenancy Length of less than 5 years (Exceptional Circumstances)	79.4	429	13.3	72
(Q5) – Circumstances for Non-Renewal of FTT	68.1	359	21.6	114
(Q6) – Financial Thresholds	78.5	414	15.1	80
(Q7) – Encouraging Social Housing Providers to provide Social Rents not Affordable Rents on larger homes	72.8	378	10.2	53
(Q8) – Discretionary Succession Rights	72.1	370	18.9	97

What has changed as a result of consultation?

3.3 As a result of the consultation the Tenancy Strategy and the Tenancy Policy will be introduced as proposed. The main elements of this will be as follows:

- All Households that are elderly or have a disability will receive a secure tenancy for life after an initial 12 month Introductory period;
- All other households will be offered a 5 year Fixed Term Tenancy after an initial 12 month introductory tenancy
- Circumstances for non-renewal of a fixed term tenancy are as proposed in the consultation
- Exceptional circumstances for offering a fixed term tenancy of less than 5 years remain as proposed
- The new Tenancy Policy will impact on all new customers being offered a tenancy after 1st March 2013 and will only impact on existing tenants who choose to transfer to a property that is charged at Affordable Rent levels

4 Allocations Policy Consultation

4.1 The Allocations Policy consultation received 311 responses which represents a 3.11% response rate. The response received is statistically valid and provides sufficient confidence in the numbers received.

Outcomes of the consultation

4.2 The main results of the consultation are as follows:

- 51% of customers agree that priority should be given to employed applicants over those not employed with the same housing needs.
- 64.1% of customers agree that the Council should develop Local Lettings Plans only for significant new areas of residential development.
- 76.5% of customers agree that the Council should limit the access to the Housing Register to customers who have lived in Northampton for a minimum of 6 months out of the last 12, or 3 out of the last 5 years.
- 87.7% of customers agree that the Council should suspend tenants from bidding for new properties if they fail to keep their existing property in good condition until it is improved.
- 65.7% of customers agree that the Council should suspend housing register applicants for 12 months for refusing 3 offers of accommodation.
- 82.5% of customers agree that the Council should suspend

housing register customers for 12 months for failing to attend three viewing appointments

- 44.2% of customers agree and 43.7% disagree that the Council should remove Band C and D customers from the Housing Register.
- 55% of customers agree that people in social housing on higher incomes should pay more towards their rent.
- 63.8% of customers agree that Council tenants moving in to the Private Rented Sector, due to overcrowding, via the Local Lettings Scheme should remain on the Housing Register.
- 85.3% of customers agree that the definition of a household will be the applicant, partner and their children, and the Council will make exceptions to this definition for those with valid reasons such as dependant relatives who cannot live independently
- 69.8% of customers agree that the Council should offer households transferred due to an emergency a property on a like for like basis
- 68.9% of customers agree that the Council should direct applicants with income over £16,000 for a single person and £32,000 for a couple to home-ownership options rather than allocate a property via the Housing Register
- 86.5% of customers agree that vulnerable people such as those with severe medical problems/disabilities/victims of domestic abuse should be given priority in the allocation of housing

What has changed as a result of consultation?

- 4.3 The potential changes to the new draft Housing Allocations scheme from the version that we originally consulted upon are as follows:
- Increasing the local connection period before a customer can join the housing register to 3 out of the last 5 years
 - Reducing the debt owed to Northampton Borough Council before a customer can join the Housing Register to below 6 weeks rent
 - The Armed Forces section now complies with central Government's recent announcements in this area of our work
- 4.4 The Housing Allocations scheme now complies with the new Code of Guidance on Housing Allocations issued by central Government on the 29th June 2012.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 There is broad agreement to the majority of proposals contained within these consultation exercises. The only issue that has divided opinion is the issue of removing Bands C and D from the Housing Register. A significant number of consultees did not support this proposal, but it is

the recommendation of this paper that Bands C and D are removed, as to retain them would give customers false expectations of their chances of being rehoused which are extremely unlikely to be met.

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1st November 2012