



## TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB- COMMITTEE, 26 FEBRUARY 2019

**Subject Heading:**

Operation of the Housing Waiting List

**SLT Lead:**

Gerri Scott, Interim Director of Housing

**Report Author and contact details:**

Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor  
Housing Demand Service Manager  
[Beatrice.Cingtho-taylor@havering.gov.uk](mailto:Beatrice.Cingtho-taylor@havering.gov.uk)  
01708 434606

**Policy context:**

Housing Allocation Policy 2016  
Government's Code of Guidance  
Localism Act 2011  
Equality Act 2010

**Financial summary:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, which is for information only

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Communities making Havering  
Places making Havering  
Opportunities making Havering  
Connections making Havering

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[X]  
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## SUMMARY

There is a statutory requirement for local authorities to publish an Allocations Scheme that sets out in detail how households are prioritised for social housing. The Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with considerable discretion in constructing the scheme.

The current Housing Allocation Scheme which was approved by Cabinet in June 2016 and implemented from July 2016 covers the eligibility and qualification for, and letting of, social housing in the borough. It is designed to focus resources where they are most effective, manage the demand for social housing, and allocate the limited supply of housing to those most in need.

The report provides information on how the policy is applied in the operation of the Council's housing waiting list, including the bidding and letting process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Sub-Committee notes the content of the report.

## REPORT DETAIL

### **1. Background**

- 1.1. The Council's Housing Allocations Scheme is used to determine which households are offered housing assistance. The Scheme recognises the contribution to the community from people who are in employment, former service personnel, volunteers, foster carers and carers.
- 1.2. The Council has a stock of approximately 9,000 affordable homes and with one of the most ambitious council home building programmes in London over the next 10 years, the Council will deliver additional homes to tackle the imbalance between supply and demand for affordable housing in the borough.
- 1.3. There is a shortage of social housing in the borough as demand for homes outstrips supply. There are approximately 2000 people on the housing register at any one time and approximately 400 vacancies become available to let every year.

## **2. Summary of how the scheme works**

2.1. The basis of the scheme is to have a priority system based on housing need.

2.2. The Scheme has a number of distinct parts:

- Firstly, applicants must meet the Eligibility Criteria for social housing; this relates to the right of residence in the U.K.
- Secondly, applicants must meet the Council's Qualification Criteria in order to join the housing register. This includes having lived in Havering for a continuous period of 6 years; gross household income of less than £36,000 and not being found guilty of unacceptable behaviour such as sub-letting, anti-social behaviour or obtaining a tenancy by deception.
- Thirdly, successful applicants are allocated to one of five Priority Bands, which reflect various categories of housing need.
- Fourthly, certain applicants will be entitled to an additional community contribution priority if they are working, a volunteer, an ex-service personnel or a carer.
- Fifthly, applicants will be able to 'bid' for available properties or receive a direct assisted offer.

## **3. Operation of the waiting list**

### **3.1. Assessment**

- 3.1.1. Residents can apply to join the waiting list by completing an online form which is available on the Council's website. They are taken through a pre-qualification questionnaire prior to completion of the application.
- 3.1.2. For residents who are unable to submit an application through the online form, staff can provide support in completing the form by telephone or in person at the Public Advice Service Centre (PASC). A paper version of the application form can also be provided if needed.
- 3.1.3. Medical information can be submitted to support the application. The information is assessed by the Council's Medical Officer who is a qualified G.P. to recommend if additional priority should be given. The assessment determines the impact of the current accommodation on the health of the resident and whether it has an adverse impact on their long term health.
- 3.1.4. All completed applications are assessed in line with the Housing Allocation Scheme and allocated into one of the following priority bands.

- **Emergency Band (ER)**  
People with an urgent need to move. This includes residents with life threatening health or medical needs, domestic abuse, critical safeguarding issues and where tenants need to be moved to enable a regeneration programme to be completed.
- **Community contribution Band 1 (CCR1)**  
People with an identified housing need, **plus** Community Contribution for being in employment, ex-service personnel, or a council tenant affected by benefit changes who wishes to downsize to a smaller property.
- **Community contribution Band 2 (CCR2)**  
People with an identified housing need, **plus** Community Contribution for fostering/adoption, volunteering, caring for a Havering resident, disabled residents who are unable to participate in work related activities and other council tenants wishing to downsize to a smaller property.
- **Home Seeker band (H)**  
People with an identified housing need but who do not meet the criteria set out under CCR1 and CCR2 above. A resident is considered to have a housing need in situations like overcrowding, under-occupation, care leaver, hardship and welfare grounds etc.
- **Reduced Priority Band (RP)**  
This priority is awarded to accepted homeless households who do not meet the 6 year residency period. This is to comply with the Housing Act legislation as homeless households are considered to have a housing need regardless of local residency criteria.

3.1.5. All applications received are processed within 28 days. A letter is sent to the resident confirming the outcome of their assessment, the priority band awarded, the housing need reason, the date the priority applies from, a bidding number and information on how to access the bidding website. If the application is declined, the same written notification process applies with reason for refusal of the application given. Information on how a resident can appeal against the decision is included in the letter. Information in table 1 shows the total number on the housing register.

**Table 1: Housing register numbers by priority band (As at end of Dec 2018)**

<b>Priority band</b>	<b>Number of households</b>	<b>%</b>
Emergency Band (ER)	310	14%
Community contribution Band 1 (CCR1)	329	15%
Community contribution Band 2 (CCR2)	245	11%
Home Seeker band (H)	1032	47%
Reduced Priority Band (RP)	264	12%
Total	2180	

### **3.2. Bidding process**

- 3.2.1. The bidding website is operated by the East London Letting company who provide bidding services for East London councils including Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.
- 3.2.2. Available Havering properties are advertised for bidding between Friday 00.01AM and Monday 11.59PM each week. This is known as a bidding cycle.
- 3.2.3. All advertised properties detail the property attributes, including number of bedrooms, proximity to local facilities such as schools, public transport and supermarkets. It will also include pictures of the property; details of the exact location of the property are not included in order to protect the tenant who might still be residing at the property.
- 3.2.4. The number and type of properties advertised depends on the number of voids that have become available the previous week.
- 3.2.5. Waiting times for securing a property is dependent on the number of voids that become available, applicant property preference, the number of bidders and most importantly banding. Information in Table 2 shows the current estimated waiting time.

**Table 2: Current estimated waiting time for each priority band**

<b>Priority band</b>	<b>Estimated waiting time</b>
Emergency Band (ER)	6 months – 1.5 years
Community contribution Band 1 (CCR1)	1 – 2.5 years
Community contribution Band 2 (CCR2)	1 – 4 years
Home Seeker band (H)	4 - 8 years
Reduced Priority Band (RP)	>7 years

- 3.2.6. Support is available to residents who are not able to use the bidding system as an auto bid system can be set up based on their areas of preference. Each time a property that matches the criteria becomes available, a system automated bid is placed on behalf of the resident.

### **3.3. Short listing Process**

- 3.3.1. Once the bidding cycle closes, all bids for properties are prioritised based on the priority band of the resident. For example a resident in the 'ER' band will be higher than a resident in the 'CCR1' band and therefore the resident with the higher priority would be offered the property.
- 3.3.2. Secondly, the priority effective date is considered if there are two residents with the same priority band who have bid for the property. This is to ensure that waiting time is taken into account and the resident who has waited the longest would be offered the property.

### 3.4 Lettings

Monitoring of access to social housing is important in order to ascertain compliance with the Housing Allocation Policy and to ensure that there is a reasonable balance between choice based lettings and direct offers to meet local priorities like regeneration estate decanting.

### Appendices

[Summary of Housing Allocation Policy](#)

[Full Housing Allocation Policy](#)

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### **Financial implications and risks:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, which is for information only.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

The general power of management of its housing is vested in the Council by section 21 of the Housing Act 1985.

The allocations policy fulfils the requirements of the Council's management functions.

Otherwise there are no direct legal implications in noting the contents of this report.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no direct human resource implications from this report.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

There are no direct equalities implications from this report, and Equalities Assessment has not been completed as this report is for information only.