

Consultation event summary

Online surveys reports and related responses are background papers to the Report

Consultation event – 30 April 2012 - Registered providers and community stakeholders Notes from workshops

Housing Allocations scheme

Question1

	i) How do you think your tenants or service users will be affected by the Housing Allocations Scheme proposals? Comments received	ii) What would your tenants or service users want you to ask us to do? Comments received	Our response	Actionable?
1	Public perception of housing need & 2 years residency	Why not consider 18 months if in housing need?	We have discussed the different residency options and reasons with Members. We want to retain 2 years prior residency. Where there are exceptional circumstances and someone needs to move home as a matter of urgency, we would consider a period less than 2 years. These would be considered on a case by case basis.	No
2	Community contribution	What is the definition of disabled?	The definition under the DDA – defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical (including sensory) impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities. In terms of verification, we plan to use DLA. Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit you can get if you need help getting around and/or looking after yourself because you are ill, disabled or terminally ill. You can also claim Disability Living Allowance for an ill or disabled child. DLA has a care and mobility component.	No
3	Consultation / information		Results of the initial consultation with people on the housing register and other stakeholders informed revised proposals. A second round of consultation is carried out and comments will inform the final Scheme.	No
4	Concern regards current tenancies		It is important that existing tenants understand their tenancies will not change when they continue to live in a Havering council owned home	Inform Communications Strategy
5	Demoralize people to be community-minded		The Community Contribution Reward will encourage people to be more community-minded.	No
6	Lack of up keep regards short timestay		The Council wants to maintain stable communities. Key message –	Inform

			tenants will not normally have to move at the end of their fixed-term tenancy.	Communications Strategy
7	Less consistent communities		As above	Inform Communications Strategy
8	Negative impact on self progression/back to work		Disagree – applicants will receive Community Contribution Reward if they work, volunteer, foster or adopt, or have been armed services personnel.	No
9	Impact on adult children / under-occupancy may be less		Acknowledged – it is recognized that some adult children may continue to live with their parents.	No
10	May increase homelessness		Disagree	
11	Resource impact – communicating the changes		Noted. Havering Council wants to take a joined up approach to communicating the changes.	Inform Communications Strategy
12	Transition from area where links have been made – vulnerable adults		If a vulnerable person's housing, care and support needs are being met in another borough, they will be suitably housed. If a vulnerable adult is under-occupying, this will be considered under exceptional circumstances.	This item will be added to the Tenancy Strategy.
13	Process for judgement on specific cases – clear steps		A detailed Scheme is currently being produced.	No
14	Right to buy increase? – less social housing?		Acknowledged. The Government has introduced Right to Buy discounts to encourage social tenants to purchase their property.	No
15	Mutual exchange?		Noted.	The Service is seeking legal advice
16	Transfer list?		Noted – Existing Council housing tenants will retain their security of tenure when they move within the Council housing stock. If tenants with a secure lifetime tenancy decide to move to a home outside the Council's housing stock their security of tenure may be affected.	
17	Downsizing concerns – advertisement/criteria, financial incentives may not be sufficient		Outside of the Allocation Scheme.	No
18	Training of staff to implement new scheme e.g. other professional frontline staff		Noted. The Council is keen to work with other partners to communicate the Scheme.	Inform Communications Strategy
19	Verification of criterias i.e. voluntary work		Noted – applicants will need to provide evidence. Clarify volunteering.	Inform Application form, Detailed Scheme.
20	Positive impact: - realistic expectations - community contribution	Tenants would be happy	Noted.	No

21	Emergency banding definition should include multiple needs	-	There is no requirement to take account of multiple need in housing preference.	No
22	Housing association tenants treated the same as Council tenants	Important to get the message out that all tenants will be treated the same.	To be discussed further by the project team. 22/05/12 – The project team considered this item. It was agreed that HA tenants will be treated the same as council tenants.	Yes No
23	Reciprocal nominations with Housing associations under tenant transfer – how would this work? Only transfer if we get the nomination to the tenant.	-	To be discussed further by the project team 22/05/12 – The project team considered this item. It was agreed that HA tenants will be treated in the same way as council tenants on our Housing Register and the vacancy will be needed in return.	Yes No
24	Fostering – HB does not recognize fostering Think about cost implications and under-occupation	Concern about children's ability to move on given the economic situation.	Foster carers would need to make this decision. Under-occupation – to be discussed further by project team as each foster child has to have their own bedroom (this is outside the Council's policy). 22/05/12 the project team considered this item. It was noted that children who are not from the same blood line do not need to share the same bedroom at the moment. The scheme will align to Housing Benefit policy.	Yes No
25	Disability and community contribution – consider all the household contribution – to include children etc.	Use benefit definition – only need 1 disabled household member	This has been considered. Both applicants would need to have a disability, unless one partner is caring for a disabled child.	No
26	Clear definitions of disability	Consider long-term impacts.	Definition for disability – Disability Discrimination Act. Evidence of DLA or equivalent.	No
27	Volunteering – charities want good quality people, not just those looking for housing. Need strong definitions – there is a risk that pushing people.	Need to think of long-term involvement and too little criteria. What about tenancy involvement groups – they should be involved – you could look at involvement when renewing fixed term tenancies.	Community contribution reward encourages applicants to volunteer and achieves positive outcomes for themselves and others over at least a 12 month period.	No
28	Older people – may want to move within the existing scheme (e.g. from first to ground floor) and may need to compete with someone else in priority need wanting to access the scheme.	The tenant already living in the scheme should be given priority as they -have support and friends locally - have contributed to the immediate community - need support	To be discussed further by project team. 22/05/12 – the project team considered this item. The following was agreed - if the property is needed for an assisted bid (preference will be given to a person already living in the scheme) and this applicant will have priority. If it is not required for an assisted offer, then everyone can bid for the property.	Yes No
29	People in other social housing – understanding the different allocation schemes	Communication will be key to help people recognize balanced need. Do this in partnership with RPs through	Acknowledged	Inform Communications Strategy

		day-to-day correspondence, groups and committees		
30	Consider people living outside the borough who work in Havering e.g. firefighters	If these people cannot be included, communicate clearly with people	Noted.	Inform Communications Strategy
31	Consider people wanting to move into the borough -to care for someone/relative -to be cared for	If these households cannot be included, communicate clearly with people	Noted.	Inform Communications Strategy
32	Young people living at home and in the private rented sector	Communicate clearly that these groups must have a housing need to go on the housing register.	Noted.	Inform Communications Strategy
33	Disability Definitions of different levels of 'disability'	Who defines which 'band' they go in to?	Housing Officers will use criteria to decide which band applicants are placed in to.	No
		What are the criteria?	DLA Carer's Allowance Attendance allowance	No
		Appeals procedure	Noted – appeals procedure to be outlined in Allocations Scheme. 22/05/12 – considered by the project team. Appeals procedure is outlined in the Allocations Scheme. It was agreed that the appeals officer will have regard to related services when making a decision.	Yes No
34	Joint applicants	Do they both have to have a disability to qualify for Community Contribution? What if their child is disabled?	Noted - both applicants would have a disability unless one partner receives benefit to care for a disabled child.	No
35	Elderly people wishing to move another borough to live near to family		Noted. Options are available, including national transfer scheme, Pan-London <i>housingmoves</i> and the seaside and country scheme.	No
36	Fostering/Adoption criteria		Noted - we will consult Havering Social Services.	No
37	Those with drug / alcohol dependency		Noted – this group will be considered by project team and as part of the Equality Analysis. 22/05/12 – considered by the project team. It was noted that if people have a medical need due to drug/alcohol dependency and need to move, this will be taken into account following completion of a medical form etc.	Yes No

Draft Tenancy Strategy**Question 1 - Do you want us to take account of anything else in the Tenancy Strategy?**

	Comments received	Our response	Actionable?
1	Existing social tenants will not be eligible for Affordable Rent – local RP's HA policy.	Noted – the Council's choice based lettings scheme will include different RP policies for reference.	Inform Communications Strategy
2	Resources – additional training	Noted – the Council cannot deliver this Strategy alone. The Service is keen to work with partners to communicate the changes i) reassure existing tenants where applicable and ii) to give clear advice to new applicants and tenants.	Inform Communications Strategy
3	Due regard only to elements defined in the Localism Act – rent levels not in this.	Noted – the Tenancy Strategy provides guidance to RPs. It is not possible to include specific rent levels, this is set following valuation of each individual property.	No
4	Make sure that clear current tenants retain security.	Noted – the Tenancy Strategy states that existing tenants with secure lifetime tenants will not be affected by the changes when they live in Havering council property.	Inform Communications Strategy
5	Over 60s should be offered lifetime tenancies regardless of property type	Disagree. The strategy refers to the property type – sheltered housing and property designated for 60+. One reason - to allow younger people aged 55+ with a support need to access sheltered housing, otherwise this group would be disadvantaged. The Council wants to retain current proposals but will consider this scenario as part of the Equality Analysis.	Yes No
6	3 years when youngest is 18 – why? Move on options are reduced if they are not allowed on register and age of people moving out and Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) Local Housing Allowance (LHA) changes	Noted – under the Draft Strategy the Council proposes to give a fixed term 3-year tenancy when the youngest child has reached 15 years. The young person will be suitably housed and not require additional services.	No
7	Adapted properties can be hard to let – usually specific to person – consider adding level access / bungalow properties to this definition	Disagree – there is demand for adapted properties and a shortage of suitable homes locally. There are a number of ground floor flats and bungalows designated for people 60+.	No
8	Need appropriate safeguards for vulnerable households	Acknowledged. The impact of the Draft Strategy is being assessed. Safeguards have been put in place to minimize the impact on older and disabled people. In addition, research undertaken last year indicated that setting ARs at up to 80% market rents are below the HB cap. To form part of Equality Analysis. 22/05/12 – considered by the project team. Details will be added under exceptional circumstances in the Tenancy Strategy.	Yes Equality analysis – vulnerable groups No
9	Clear communication on impact for fixed-term for those with disabilities and under-occupation e.g. if they have part-time carer	Noted - Tenants who employ waking carer or part-time carers do not need an extra bedroom.	Inform Communications Strategy
10	Different focus groups	Unclear as to what this comment means.	No

11	Make use of under-occupation – support people into suitable accommodation (good management will be key). Be clear with tenants at the start of a tenancy – possible decisions that may be made a review stage. Provide information at the beginning of the tenancy, during (people are likely to forget what the terms of the policy are at the beginning of the tenancy) and at renewal.	Noted – to be actioned through Communications Strategy	Inform Communications Strategy
12	Under-occupation – the number of people receiving care at home has reduced the ability to deliver policy on under-occupation (liaise with Age Concern).	Noted.	No
13	Sheltered accommodation – make it clear to people what support services need to be paid for.	Noted – support services are highlighted and communicated to tenants as part of the rent and service charge review and setting process.	No
14	Change in circumstances – undertake a full assessment.	Noted – chapter 7 of the Tenancy Strategy states that circumstances will be reviewed at least 6 months before the tenancy comes to an end.	No
15	Stock mapping – include those moving within the same ward area – are the right types of properties available? (Particularly in relation to those wanting to downsize within the same area).	Acknowledged – this project is currently being taken forward. 22/05/12 – considered by the project team. Stock mapping is being progressed and will provide a useful tool in identifying the number of different size properties in any area. This information will be used to support people to downsize to another property in their local area where possible.	Yes No
16	Communicate the key messages.	Noted.	Inform Communications Strategy
17	Clarity over who is affected by the changes – deal with negative assumptions regarding eviction after review / established tenancies being converted.	Noted - need to reinforce that unless there has been a change in circumstances, tenants will not normally have to move at the end of their fixed term tenancy.	Inform Communications Strategy
18	As long as the appeals/reviews procedures are stringent, 5 years seems good and policy appears sound.	Noted.	No

Draft Tenancy Strategy - Question 2

	i) How do you think your tenants or service users will be affected by the Housing Allocations Scheme proposals?	ii) What would your tenants or service users want you to ask us to do?	Our response	Actionable?
1	More information required by applicants could lead to larger housing teams.	Link on website direct to RPs' policies – on fixed term tenancies.	Noted – project team will provide links to RPs' policies via ELLC Choice homes (choice based lettings scheme)	Inform Communications Strategy Consider how people without use of the internet will access different policies.
2	Different tenancies provided by individual RPs – difficult to manage		Noted – transparency and access to is important.	Inform Communications Strategy
3	More transparent / no jargon	(HiH) Use examples of cases (HiH) Outreach work – mobile events	Unclear which part of the Draft Strategy this comment relates to. Staff training will involve examples and used in explaining the Strategy to customers.	Inform Communication Strategy
4	A RP shared their experience – people were reasonably happy with the introduction of 5 year fixed-term tenancies.		Noted.	No
5	Older people – will need advocacy and support. It was suggested that emerging housing options are discussed with older people e.g. as extra-care and other housing options are developed in the borough.		Noted– the Council is investing in and working with RPs to deliver its Extra-care Housing strategy. It is important that customers are aware of other housing options.	Yes Inform Communications Strategy
6	Perception that 5 years fixed term tenancies will lead to an automatic move after 5 years	Needs to be managed.	Noted – will ensure that tenants understand that their tenancy will normally be renewed.	Inform Communication Strategy
7	3 years fixed term tenancies with regards to a child aged 15 or over – if the child is still living there after 3 years, what term will be the next tenancy be?		Noted – the tenancy will be renewed on a 3 year fixed-term.	No
8	Succession rights. What happens to the tenancy after a succession?		Tenants on a fixed-term tenancy – succession to spouse or civil partner. They will keep the same tenancy.	No

Draft Tenancy Strategy - Question 3

	i) What do you think are the main issues and challenges that may arise in Registered Providers' different tenancy policies?	ii) How do you think we can manage these issues and challenges?	Our response	Actionable?
1	Different expectations – different tenures		Noted – RPs' policies will be made available through the Council's website and ELLC Choice homes choice based lettings scheme website.	Inform Communications Strategy
2	Cross boundaries Registered Providers (RPs) – trying to work with as many councils and have a consistent company policy	Consistency in policies – regarding who gets renewed, who gets properties. Need a corporate approach – need a corporate approach but with council.	Noted – Havering Council acknowledges that RPs operate across different local authority areas. RPs do need to have regard to Havering Council's Tenancy Strategy. The Service is working with RPs to discuss the number of properties that will be let at Affordable Rents through new development and conversion at re-let stage.	Ongoing
3	Confusing for customers	Though there are currently differences between Council and RP.	Noted – details of different RPs' policies will be made available via website links.	As above
		Checklists for allocation officers to go through to explain their tenancy type.	Noted	To be taken forward by Lettings team.
		Have a feel to see if property let at Affordable or target. Not advertise 2 prices and determine on who bids i.e. tenant or new person. Controlled and helps you to meet targets.	This is not done - properties are advertised at either an Affordable Rent or Social Rent. A specific symbol is used by ELLC Choice Homes Scheme to highlight that a property will be rented at the higher Affordable Rent.	No
		Balance customers' needs as well as anticipated influx of tenants downsizing.	Acknowledged.	No
4	A Registered Provider confirmed that the Affordable Rents in LB Havering's Tenancy Strategy are similar to those in their tenancy policy.		Noted.	No
5	Some RPs will retain social rent for families.		Acknowledged.	No
6	The differences around rent costs between RPs and		Noted – correct advertising is key.	Inform Communications

	Council as well as tenancy terms.		The choice based letting scheme highlights properties that are let at an Affordable Rent.	Strategy
7	Real difficulties around communication and negotiations on changes to tenancy strategies.		Noted - the Service is keen to work with RPs to identify and proactively manage risks.	Yes
8	How do you align the different tenancy types between RSLs and the Council?		Noted – RPs need to have regard to Havering’s Tenancy Strategy.	Yes – regular meetings with RPs
9	Should raise age for secure tenancies to 70/65 to rise in line with regards to retirement age?	Carry out an assessment (of needs to make sure their move is their last?)	Noted – the policy relates to accessing the type of property as opposed to the age of the person.	No

Draft Tenancy Strategy - Question 4

What do you think are the best ways to communicate the changes to your tenants and service users, and other people who need to move in to social and affordable housing?

Comments and suggestions received	Comments / Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach / mobile / literature, use examples • Door knocking • 2013 tenancies • 55+supported housing • Current tenants • Benefits calculation / debt resistance • Resident conference – 2012 on housing changes • Communicate clearly that there will be a reduction in the number of applicants on the housing register. • Work with partners • Media releases • Residents groups • Engage existing tenants to ensure information is user-friendly. <p>Additional item – A risk of an imbalance in housing – the number of people on the housing register with the number of properties available to re-let. Property mapping needed.</p>	<p>The comments in the left hand column will inform the Communications Strategy.</p>

Public consultation sessions – 3 May 2012 (1.30pm and 5.30pm Hornchurch Library)

	Q1.What do you think of the reasons for changing the Allocations Scheme?	Our response	Actionable?
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pretty good - Something has to be done - Positive – rewarding community contribution encourages people - 2 years prior residency is good - Very good, now that it has been explained 	Noted.	No
2	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) some were unsure about the Community Contribution Reward –Volunteering - as there was a concern that older people cannot always volunteer. However, it was recognized that some older people do volunteer in charity shops etc. ii) Review the volunteering aspect of the Community Contribution Reward iii) Will older people be disadvantaged iii) Older people – very unfair on us 	<p>Noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Those who volunteer in charity shops in the borough would be eligible to apply for the Community Contribution Reward. ii) To be discussed further by the project team. iii) As most people with be in Homeseeker Band, older people are unlikely to be disadvantaged as opposed to other groups. iv) LB Havering does not have a problem letting sheltered housing or other homes designated for people 60+ and so older people are not likely to be disadvantaged. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>(ii) Review volunteering aspect (for older people). An amendment has been made to the Housing Allocations Scheme under Community Contribution Reward, as follows: The sole or one of the joint applicants is aged 70 years+ and is currently volunteering in Havering for a minimum of 5 hours a month for a not-for-profit organisation or group/organisation recognised by Havering Council and has been doing so for last 12 months.</p>
3	<p>Other comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) LB Havering needs to include photographs of all properties it advertises in the Choice Homes magazine and on the website. ii) Sometimes older people need a spare room so that a relative etc. can care for them at home. iii) Removal of wardens at sheltered housing schemes has been detrimental iv) Have heard that councils give housing to people from overseas v) Will the rules still apply to Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Noted – to be actioned ii) Noted. iii) Noted – an review of warden supported housing was undertaken. Following the review and consultation, the service was replaced with Mobile Support services. iv) Councils do not provide housing to new arrivals from overseas and allocate housing within legislative requirements. Housing for refugees is provided by the Government under a separate scheme. v) Allocations will be adhered to by 	<p>Yes</p> <p>i) to be actioned by Lettings Team</p>

		TMOs that work on behalf of the Council.	
	Q2 What are your views on the draft Tenancy Strategy?		
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Something has to be done - 5 years tenancy is a good idea – and renewed unless the situation has changed - Makes sense - It's fair 	Noted.	No
2	<p>Concerns:</p> <p>If tenants think they will only have a 5 years tenancy, they may feel more transient. Secure lifetime tenants invested in their properties – concern whether those with fixed-term tenancies do the same.</p>	Noted – tenants will not normally have to move at the end of their fixed term tenancy.	Inform Communication Strategy
3	<p>Other comments:</p> <p>i) Will people be given a fixed term tenancy straightaway?</p> <p>ii) Have Succession rights changed?</p>	<p>i) People will be given an Introductory Tenancy when they first move in. Once successfully completed, a fixed term tenancy will be provided.</p> <p>ii) Succession rights have tightened – Havering Council tenants with a fixed-term tenancy will have right to one succession, to either a spouse or civil partner.</p>	No

Notes from follow up meeting on 14 May 2012 - with Registered Providers and Stakeholder groups

	Questions and comments raised at the meeting	Our response	Actionable?
Housing Allocations Scheme proposals			
1	Residency criteria How will people with learning disabilities placed and living outside Havering borough be treated under the criteria.	Noted - Havering Council has an enduring duty to support these people and they will be treated as LB Havering Council tenants.	No
2	Residency criteria How will disabled owner occupiers be treated if they are being treated in hospital?	Noted - If their home has become unsuitable and cannot be adapted to meet their needs, they will have an urgent need to move under the scheme. This is part of the Housing Allocations Scheme.	No
3	Housing Allocations Scheme – residency criteria Owner occupiers may want to move into extra-care housing. It was recommended that the Council introduces a local lettings policy for extra-care housing schemes.	Noted – a local lettings policy will be developed and a separate list maintained for people wanting to move into extra-care homes.	Yes

4	People aged 55+ can apply for sheltered housing whether or not they have a support need at the moment. These people do not always realize that they need to pay for a mobile support service charge.	Noted – a breakdown of service charges is given at the start of the tenancy and every year thereafter. The Service will ensure that this is clarified with people at the start of their tenancy.	Yes – to be actioned by Housing Management team
5	Equality analysis Rough sleepers, migrants and Eastern European residents These people may not be able to provide documents to demonstrate that they have lived in the borough for the last 2 years. Rough sleepers may have had their identification documents stolen. GPs have been issued guidance on identification documentation.	Noted – a copy of the guidance will be forwarded to the council.	Yes
6	Asylum seekers There was concern that this group will not be supported.	Noted – asylum seekers are not eligible for secure tenancy.	No
7	Men/women fleeing domestic violence	Noted – people fleeing domestic violence access housing through services, e.g. Women's aid.	No
8	Romanian and Bulgarians The 7 year rule restrictions are due to be lifted – need to communicate details of the allocations scheme.	Noted	Inform Communications Strategy
9	Faith groups and community volunteering Will people who volunteer through local faith groups be eligible for the Community Contribution Reward.	Noted – People who volunteer for a group recognized by Havco, that includes faith and community groups, and LB Havering will be eligible to apply for CCR. Evidence will need to be provided as part of the application.	No
Draft Tenancy Strategy			
5	Fixed term tenancies There was concern that moving from secure lifetime tenancies to fixed term tenancies may mean that people will not look after their property.	Noted – this has been considered. A tenancy will not be renewed if there is substantial disrepair and damage to the property. Tenants will need to keep their property in good condition.	No
6	Fixed-term tenancies – introduction of 3-year tenancies when the youngest child reaches 15 years of age There was concern that this age was fairly young, as people are staying with their parents into adulthood.	Acknowledged – a 3 year tenancy means that circumstances can be reviewed more frequently. If the young person chooses to move out, the tenants could be under occupying and can downsize. The Council will try to keep people in the same area if they need to move to another property.	No
7	Scenario – what happens if 3 generations occupy a home? Those occupying would be parent(s), their child and their grandchild.	Noted – reviews will be based on the original family, i.e. the parent(s) and their child.	Yes – the definition of household will be included in the Tenancy Strategy.
8	Scenario – a tenant uses a spare room at their home when their grandchildren	Noted – the grandchildren are not part	No

stay over – they want a spare room for this reason.	of the household.	
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Comment received following consultation workshops in April - May

	Comments raised	Our response	Actionable?
	Individual response made on behalf of a residents association Housing Allocations Scheme The new Scheme should only apply to new applicants.	Noted – the highest priority applicants will have a protected period of time within which they can bid for housing under the new Scheme when it is implemented.	No

Consultation with Havering Association for People with Disabilities (HAD) - 7 June 2012

HAD members were briefed on the key headline proposals – Draft Tenancy Strategy and Housing Allocations Scheme

	Questions and comments raised at the meeting	Our response	Actionable?
1	Draft Tenancy Strategy Disabled people	The Council expects Registered Providers of social housing to continue to give secure lifetime tenancies to people with severe disabilities or learning difficulties with support needs living in specialist supported housing or living in general needs housing who receives long-term care and/or support services. We recognize that in some circumstances, offering a lifetime secure tenancy would not be appropriate e.g. for tenants living in move-on accommodation with floating support.	No
2	Housing Allocations Scheme Disabled people – how will housing be allocated?	If an applicant has lived in the borough for the last 2 years and has a housing need they will be eligible for the Homeseeker band. An example, if a single disabled applicant is unable to work or volunteer and is receiving DLA they can apply for Community contribution reward and this will give them priority over those in the Homeseeker band.	No
3	General Is the Council going to build any more homes?	Havering Council works with Registered Providers of social housing to develop new affordable housing in the borough. It does not have any current plans to develop new council owned stock.	No

Homes in Havering's Housing Services Operational Team Meeting – 20 June 2012

	Comments raised	Our response	Actionable?
1	The downsizing incentive payment was considered to be low	The levels of payment are not directly linked to the	No

		Allocations Scheme or Tenancy Strategy; they can be varied from time-to-time	
2	What access will the Council have to obtain residents' financial information?	A form will be sent to residents and the Government is currently looking at what financial information Local Authorities are permitted to access	No
3	What if a tenant refused to move at the end of a fixed term tenancy?	A Court Order would be required	No
4	The term 'exceptional circumstances' regarding what other factors will be taken into account when deciding whether or not to renew a fixed term at the existing property needs clarification	This will be considered	Add a reference to proximity of place of employment
5	Further discussion is needed around ASB issues	The wording in the Allocations Scheme will be reviewed	Wording clarified
6	Concern re: resourcing and IT issues around reviewing tenancies	Noted	Resourcing issues to be kept under review on an annual basis

HiH Customer care steering group – 10 July 2012

	Questions and comments raised at the meeting	Our response	Actionable?
1	Affordable rents A comment was made that the research did not give a true picture of earnings as it compared gross income and not net and that private rents in Havering have not been capped.	The research company used a standard approach to assess affordability based on median gross incomes earned in the borough.	No
2	Members of the group were concerned about how the proposed fixed-term tenancies will affect elderly people.	Existing Havering council tenants will not be affected when they transfer to another home in the council's housing stock. New tenants who move into housing designated for people aged over 60 years will receive a secure lifetime tenancy.	No
3	Concern was raised regarding what would happen if a fixed-term tenancy comes to an end and the tenants refuse to leave.	The Council's housing service will work closely with tenants throughout their fixed-term tenancy. In most cases, it is expected that tenancies will be renewed. In some cases when there has been a change in circumstances, the service may decide to not to renew the tenancy for a further period. In these cases, should a tenant not want to move out of the property, the council can take a number of options including seeking repossession of the property. The decision will be dependent on the change in tenant(s)' circumstances.	No
4	There was concern that it would be unfair to give a household with a youngest child of 15 years a 3 year fixed-term tenancy.	It is proposed that the 3 year fixed term tenancy will be normally renewed for another 3 years, unless there had been a change in circumstances	No
5	Downsizing – a member of the group enquired whether people who are downsize to another property when their tenancy comes to an end will have a choice in where they move to.	This will depend on the availability of housing in the stock.	No
6	University students – a query was raised about how students will be assessed.	Students deemed to be staying away from home in order	No

		to study in higher education during term-time will not affect the household's circumstances.	
7	The group asked whether foreign students will be given fixed-term tenancies.	Foreign students will not be given fixed-term tenancies.	No
8	Members of the group enquired how many asylum seekers are allocated housing in the borough.	It is unlawful to allocate council housing to asylum seekers. Havering Council has not allocated properties under the National Asylum Seekers Scheme (NASS).	No
9	Succession rights – what happens to the remaining occupant if the main tenant dies?	If a couple has a tenancy agreement and one partner dies, the surviving partner will be able to succeed a secure tenancy. Under current legislation there can only be one succession to a secure tenancy.	No
10	There was concern that the new policy will be more intrusive as personal details will be checked.	The council will need to work more closely with tenants under the new policy, particularly at the time a tenancy is reviewed.	No
11	Group members enquired what level of earnings a tenant would need to earn before having to move from council housing.	A tenant(s)' income and savings will be reviewed and a decision made based on the range of housing options available at the time of review.	No
12	A comment was made that there was nothing wrong with the policy proposals.	Noted.	No

Other comments received following consultation on Draft Tenancy Strategy – July 2012

	Questions and comments raised	Our response	Actionable?
1	6 June 2012 - Neighbourhood steering group Members of the group received details on the Draft Tenancy policy proposals. No comments were made.	Noted.	No
2	17 July – Umbrella Sheltered Housing Group (SHOUT) Members of the group received details on the Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Strategy proposals. Housing Allocations Scheme - SHOUT members were keen on the proposal to prioritise those in sheltered schemes with a need to move downstairs (after those with an emergency need). No other comments were made.	Noted.	Yes The Housing Allocations Scheme has been amended. If a void property in a sheltered housing scheme is not needed for someone with an Emergency need, it will be offered to someone who already lives at the scheme if they have a housing need to move.
3	Response from Mayor of London, Greater London Authority, 19 July The GLA is satisfied that the proposals in the draft tenancy strategy would give registered providers the flexibility they need in order to meet their contractual commitments. The borough could seek to give some additional priority to people who make an active and positive contribution to their community e.g. through employment or	Noted. Noted.	No Yes. An additional reference has been

	<p>volunteering and who may also face barriers to accessing suitable housing in other tenures. It might be appropriate to take this in account when determining where a tenancy is renewed or not, as well as the factors already set out in the draft strategy.</p> <p><i>Taking account of a household's income at fixed-term tenancy review</i> We anticipate that this will need to be kept under constant review so that the income threshold takes account of the relative affordability of the housing options in Havering, particularly the Mayor's FIRST STEPS programme. It would also have been useful to know what the income and savings thresholds are.</p> <p>Borough councils should ensure that those who clearly need longer term tenancies are not made to feel anxious about whether a tenancy will be renewed or not. Steps need to be taken to reassure households whose tenancies are likely to be renewed but who must still go through a tenancy renewal process every five years.</p> <p>The Council's commitment to reducing the levels of under occupation in the social rented sector This commitment is welcomed and shared by the Mayor.</p> <p>Enhancing mobility While the legislative and regulatory framework governing tenant mobility is fixed, the Mayor would be supportive of additional measures, set out in a tenancy strategy that seek to reduce as far as possible the potential barriers facing existing tenants who may need or want to move to a different home.</p>	<p>Noted. This point has been considered. Housing options will change over time and will be kept under review and income and savings thresholds set accordingly.</p> <p>Noted. The Council expects that fixed-term tenancies will normally be renewed.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The Council will work with and encourage RPs to honour existing secure lifetime tenancies.</p>	<p>included under exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes. The Strategy has been amended to reinforce that fixed-term tenancies will normally be renewed.</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes. An amendment has been made to section 7.2.1 of the strategy.</p>
4	<p>E-mail from local Solicitors office, 3 August (Summary of issues)</p> <p>There were grave concerns that removing the stability of long-term secure tenancies will not be conducive to creating settled communities: children's schooling may be disrupted; long-term employment may be prevented; families may be spilt up.</p> <p>Rights of current secure lifetime tenants What is the position regarding tenancies where there has been a mutual exchange, stock transfer, nomination, out of borough transfer or transfer to a registered provider?</p>	<p>Noted. The Council expects that fixed-term tenancies will normally be renewed, unless there has been a change in circumstances. Exceptional circumstances will also be taken into account as part of each review.</p> <p>Noted. This will be considered.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes. The council will work with RPs to protect lifetime tenants. Chapter 7 of the strategy has been amended.</p>

	<p>Succession / assignment rights. The provision for close relatives to succeed to, or be assigned a tenancy, has been removed.</p> <p>Clarification is needed as to whether a total tenancy following an extended Introductory Tenancy will 6.5 years (1.5 years introductory and 5 years secure fixed-term tenancy).</p> <p>Procedures in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reasons why the secure fixed-term tenancy would not be renewed for a 5 year period - Circumstances in which a tenancy will not be renewed 	<p>Noted. Localism Act 2011. There will be one succession to a spouse or civil partner of the tenant.</p> <p>This is correct.</p> <p>Noted. The strategy sets out the Council's strategic commitment in relation to fixed-term tenancies.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes. Procedures relating to fixed-term tenancies to be developed.</p>
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