

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 21 JULY 2025 FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 8 JULY 2025

EC19: CABINET REPORT - CHANGES TO SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Senior Housing Manager gave a presentation on the report.

The Chair, Councillor Collop thanked the Senior Housing Manager for the presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel as summarised below.

In response to questions and comments from Councillor Kemp, the Senior Housing Manager commented that he agreed families with children on the first floor or above needed priority. He explained that just under 700 people were on a low band and that they anticipated half of those people were adequately housed but advised they would drop down, therefore, those people who were on the first floor or above would still have some priority and would not be competing against those people who were adequately housed. He added that it had been a difficult recommendation to make. In terms of children in care placed outside of Norfolk not necessarily having priority, the Senior Housing Officer advised he would check this with the Housing Needs Manager and come back to Councillor Kemp with a response. The Senior Housing Manager explained that the law was due to change for people that experienced domestic abuse and confirmed they would ensure the policy was revised to reflect the change in law. He added people that experienced domestic abuse would not need to demonstrate local connection order to access social housing.

In response to a further question from Councillor Kemp, the Senior Housing Manager explained that if somebody approached the council fleeing domestic abuse who had full duty owed to them, they would be placed in a high band.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust commented that the Policy stated the council still provided accommodation to people leaving care and moving out of the area before the age of 16.

Councillor Ratcliffe referred to family carers and sought clarification whether the Policy considered households where there was a grown child caring for an elderly parent as the policy stated couples and the wording around this was not clear. The Senior Housing Manager confirmed he was happy to amend the wording to reflect that and explained each household was treated dependant on its circumstances.

Councillor Ratcliffe asked if there had been any consideration given to an age rule in the Policy which she raised at the last informal meeting of the Homelessness and Housing Delivery Task Group. The Senior Housing Manager confirmed it had been considered and explained the Policy did not exclude people over the age of 60 in bidding for properties but confirmed he was happy to amend the wording in the Policy to reflect that.

Councillor Heneghan commented that the Policy seemed fair and was in support of it. Councillor Heneghan asked what the timescales were for successfully bidding on accommodation, in relation to the different priority bands. The Senior Housing

Manager explained it all depended on how people bid and there was no set timescale for each band.

Councillor Bullen sought clarification on the structure of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group. The Senior Housing Manager explained the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group was a Steering Group for implementing the Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy and was made up of senior staff including the Chief Executives from Shelter Norfolk, Norfolk Citizens Advice, Purfleet Trust, the Director of the Night Shelter and members of staff from the council and other statutory services.

Councillor Bullen asked whether individual cases could be discussed within the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group. The Senior Housing Manager confirmed individual cases could not be discussed at the Steering Group level and that these discussions were best held by a “by-name” group, relating to individuals who were the furthest from having their housing needs met. The Senior Housing Manager added that enquiries relating to individual cases came through the Member Enquiries channel.

Councillor Parish addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34 and referred to the third bullet point under the options considered on page 16 of the report and commented that people in work did need a place to live and urged the Panel to leave that option in place. Councillor Parish commented that it would be a useful and fair way of encouraging people to work and enabling those in work to have a house slightly more easily.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust commented that elected Members had worked with the operational team to ensure that questions had been asked about employment and that the Equalities Group were best placed to determine how that would impact on fairness and the legality of putting one group above another. Councillor Rust explained there was a government policy which was further going to help people get into work and added that Cabinet Members were determined to look at the number of empty properties which could potentially be brought back in to use.

Councillor Kemp proposed a further recommendation to the Policy to prioritise younger families higher with a view to keeping them at least in a medium band.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust commented that overcrowding had to take priority over adequate accommodations.

The Panel voted on the further recommendation proposed by Councillor Kemp which was lost (2 For and 4 Against).

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supported the following recommendation to Cabinet:

Cabinet resolves:

To recommend that the revised HomeChoice Allocations Policy (with changes as set out in paragraph 1.3) is adopted by Full Council.

Recommendations to Full Council:

To adopt the HomeChoice Allocations Policy.