

Falkirk Council

Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL
Date: 5th December 2007
Subject: REFERRAL FROM HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE, HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

1. The Housing and Social Services Committee on 3rd December 2007 considered a report on Housing Allocations.
2. The report recommended that:
 - Members note the work of the Allocations Review Group, to date, and the management decision to temporarily increase by 38 properties, the Council's stock of temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.
 - Members note that work will now focus on a comprehensive review and the evaluation of alternative allocation framework options and will include:
 - o reviewing best practice and guidance in relation to housing allocations
 - o consulting with relevant stakeholders
 - o taking account of local housing needs and affordability issues

and once this work is concluded, specific proposals for a revised allocations framework will be presented to Members.

Members agree the following recommendations for interim changes to the allocations policy framework and refer these for approval to Falkirk Council.

- o that from 1 January 2008 for a period of six months or until a revised allocations framework is implemented, allocations be made only to applicants in "reasonable preference" groups as set out in Section 4.1
- o that the number of offers made to all applicants be reduced to 2 offers
- o that social points be awarded to large families to reflect appropriately the degree of overcrowding experienced.
- o that applicants be able to change their Top 5 areas at any time.

3. Councillor Goldie, seconded by Councillor McNeil, moved the recommendations contained within the report with the following additional recommendation:
- “to authorise the Convener of the Housing and Social Services Committee to write to the relevant Cabinet Secretary conveying the Council’s concern that the duties placed on Councils in relation to homelessness are not matched by sufficient funding or the ability to provide new build accommodation.**
4. By way of an amendment, Councillor Coleman, seconded by Councillor Meiklejohn moved that the recommendations to the Report be substituted with the following:

“Members note the work of the Allocations Review Group and the management decision to temporarily increase by 38 properties the Council’s stock of temporary accommodation to homeless applicants with some concern. Previous reports approved by Council and committee and practices undertaken by the department have always contained consultation with the Local Member as well as a commitment to evenly spread the burden across geographical areas. Committee noted with disappointment that not only were Local Members not consulted on this exercise but were not even informed of the outcome. Committee agrees that this is unacceptable and in breach of previous agreements and the principal of openness and accountability.

Members agree to the following steps:

- i. Call on officers to bring forward a report within 6 weeks outlining the impact on the housing of homeless applicants with an increase of points within the existing system.**
- ii. The number of offers made to existing applicants remains at its current level.**
- iii. The level of Social Point be awarded to large families to reflect the number of bedrooms deficient within an application to be the equivalent of the removal of the cap on the amount of Overcrowding Points Due.**
- iv. Applicants be able to change their top five areas at any time.**

Committee notes that the Allocations Review Group, unlike the previous Allocations Review Group does not contain any Elected Members. Committee recognises the important role that members play in their community and agrees that the Allocations Review Group contain cross party representation of groups represented within the Council membership.

The remit of the group will be to:

- Review the findings of the Communities Scotland Report when this becomes available.**

- **Review best practice and guidelines in relation to housing allocations**
- **Consult with the relevant stakeholders including Elected Members.**
- **Taking account of local housing needs and affordability issues.**

Once the extended review group has concluded specific proposals will be presented to a seminar organised for all Members before being placed on an agenda for the Housing and Social Work Committee.

5. Following an adjournment to consider the terms of the amendment 7 Members voted for the motion and 4 for the amendment.
6. Council is therefore asked to approve the following recommendations:
 - i. to authorise the Convener of the Housing and Social Services Committee to write to the relevant Cabinet Secretary conveying the Council's concern that the duties placed on Councils in relation to homelessness are not matched by sufficient funding or the ability to provide new build accommodation.
 - ii. From 1 Jan 2008 for a period of six months or until a revised allocations framework is implemented, allocations be made only to applicants in "reasonable preference" groups as set out in Section 4.1 of the report;
 - iii. The number of offers made to all applicants be reduced to 2 offers;
 - iv. Social Points be awarded to large families to reflect appropriately the degree of overcrowding experienced, and
 - v. Applicants be permitted to change their Top 5 areas at any time.

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 Janet Birks
Director of Housing and Social Work Services
 4th December 2007
 JB/RG/com reports FC