

FC38. REFERRAL FROM SPECIAL HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE – 24 JUNE 2008 - HOUSING ALLOCATIONS REVIEW UPDATE

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Housing and Social Services Committee held on 24 June 2008 (Paragraph HSS30 refers), there was submitted (a) Extract of Minute of the said meeting ; and (b) Report (circulated) dated 14 June 2008 by the Director of Corporate and Commercial Services considered at the said meeting.

Councillor Goldie seconded by Councillor McNeill moved the recommendations as agreed at the Special Meeting of the Housing and Social Services held on 24 June 2008.

By way of an amendment Councillor McNally, seconded by Councillor Meiklejohn moved that:-

“ Council believes that it is important to get the allocation system right and that the current process does not allow members adequate opportunity to scrutinise the proposals that have come forward from the officer only working group.

Council believes that there should have been a seminar in advance of the publication to discuss these proposals which, contrary to the claims by the convener of the Housing and Social Work Committee, have never been discussed with Members.

Council also believes that elected members are the democratic voice of the people and to refuse access to the working group for elected members is a breach of the principle of public representation.

However, as the Administration has decided upon the course of minimum scrutiny and minimum Member involvement the following changes should be made forthwith.

Council agrees to develop a choice based Housing Allocations System that is transparent and fair, the current proposed system fails both criteria.

The proposals as they are, fail to:-

- deal with the categorisation of multi priority applications thus being inherently unfair
- provide an easily understood system of allocation for elderly and infirm applicants in particular
- flexible enough to deal with applicants who fall between stools in the manner that Social Management Points category were established to deal with
- pass the test of scrutiny both in terms of the lack of opportunity for Member input into the policy determination phase and the ability to scrutinise the implementation of the policy if adopted
- reduce the number of successful homeless applicants to below the figures achieved in the months before the interim arrangements currently in place arose

Council therefore agrees to:-

1. Develop a “Choice Based” allocations system that has as its core, fairness. To achieve this Council agrees to allocate points for each priority classification within the individual Category Groups thus giving some transparency within the system. Applicants will be invited to apply for void properties with the property being allocated to the applicant with the highest number of priority points from within the

Category Group. Where there is more than one applicant with the same number of points the property will be allocated to the applicant who has waited the longest.

2. Develop a simplified method of advertising and registration that ensures all of our applicants have access to lists and therefore equal opportunity to view properties.
3. Remove the draconian penalties for refusal as there must be a reason for refusing an allocation an individual has applied for. Applicants should therefore be allowed a maximum of two refusals before they are suspended from the waiting list for a period of six months.
4. Officers to bring forward a financial incentive package to people with under occupancy points to encourage them to move into properties more suited to their family complement, thus freeing up larger family homes.
5. All medical applications must be dealt with by the Community Medicine Specialist to ensure consistency of award.”

Following a short adjournment to consider the terms of the motion and amendment, the matter under consideration was put to the vote when 16 Members voted for the Motion and 14 for the Amendment.

Accordingly, **AGREED:-**

- (i) the draft allocations policy for consultation as set out in Appendix 2 to the Report;
- (ii) to extend the interim arrangements as set out in Section 9 of the Report;
- (iii) to note that during the summer recess, further development work would be carried out as detailed in Section 8 of the Report; and
- (iv) to note the proposal to bring a report on the consultation outcome to a future meeting of the Housing and Social Services Committee.