



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Item No.

9

Name of Committee	CABINET
Directorate:	Customer and Service Delivery
Corporate Manager:	Fran Rodgers
Date:	5th March 2007

Report Title	Interim Policy Review: Allocations
---------------------	------------------------------------

Key Decision	Yes
---------------------	------------

1. Recommendations

- 1. Restrict offers of accommodation to two offers only per household (excluding homeless cases who receive one reasonable offer only). Refusal of the second offer will result in a penalty of suspension from the Housing register (i.e. no further offer for 12 months).**
- 2. Restrict choice of offers for homeless applicants to**
 - a) Choice of location for one month only**
 - b) Choice of property type for one month only**
- 3. Agree the allocation of introductory tenancy to homeless clients less than 18 years of age where no guarantor can be found, along with appropriate support package.**
- 4. Agree priority transfers for housing management transfer cases where homelessness will be prevented. Choice of property type and area will be in line with homeless client choices as at (2) above.**

2. Report Background

The Allocation Policy was reviewed in 2004. There are several areas where a change to the policy will strengthen service improvements.

It should be noted that a full service review is scheduled to commence April 2007 and will include policy changes to include a more transparent registration and assessment process as well as implementing Choice Based Lettings System by March 2008. This report proposes 4 amendments to the current policy ahead of the full service review as the changes will demonstrate an immediate effect on performance in the following areas: -

Void Turnover - BVPI 212

**Length of time in Temporary Accommodation BVPI202 and
Homeless prevention BVPI 213**

The proposed amendments are: -

1. Restrict offers of accommodation to two offers only per household (excluding homeless cases who receive one reasonable offer only). Refusal of the second offer will result in a penalty of suspension from the Housing register (i.e. no further offer for 12 months).

2. Restrict choice of offers for homeless applicants to

- a) Choice of location for one month only**
- b) Choice of property type for one month only**

5. Agree the allocation of introductory tenancy to homeless clients less than 18 years of age where no guarantor can be found, along with appropriate support package.

6. Agree priority transfers for housing management transfer cases where homelessness will be prevented. Choice of property type and area will be in line with homeless client choices as at (2) above.

There are no current restrictions to the amount of offers that a housing register applicant can receive. This means that many clients refuse numerous offers resulting in wasted resources and particularly rent loss on empty properties. The recommendation therefore is to impose a "2 offer only" approach to clients. Officers will ensure that the offers are reasonable and meet the client's needs.

In 2004, the council also introduced a policy, which afforded choice of location and property type for homeless clients for a period of 6 months. If the client's choices are not satisfied within that time, then one suitable offer is made to discharge the council's legal duty to re-house.

The slowing up of turnover of family accommodation has meant that this amount of choice has proved impractical. Very few clients' choices have been met and there is a potential that clients time living in temporary accommodation will be prolonged unnecessarily whilst waiting for property in

locations where there is no turnover.

The proposal to limit choice for one month allows the council flexibility in the use of its stock whilst meeting its legal obligations. This results in shorter periods of time in temporary accommodation for the clients and improves overall performance for the council. (BVPI 203). It also reduces the risk of having longer void periods in areas where demand is less and therefore improves on void turnover (BVPI212).

4. Options and Evaluation of Options

This report is presented ahead of a full review which will give several options on the models of allocations available and recommend the appropriate course of action to lead Northampton Borough Council into the Choice based Lettings agenda.

Options relating to number of offers of accommodation.

The current policy has no restrictions on the number of offers. It has however proved problematic for Northampton where there is currently a 30 per cent refusal rate. Benchmarking with other local authorities in the county demonstrates that 4 other districts do operate restrictions either 2 or 3 offers. Daventry and Kettering do not have a restrictive policy.

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

There are no significant resource implications

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

Opportunities to maximise rental income and improve void turn round times i.e. BVPI 212.

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	Housing Services;
External	Registered Social Landlords operating in Northampton.

8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Recovery Plan
BVPI212
BVPI202
BVPI213
Corporate Plan
Improvement of service delivery

B: Other Implications

Other Strategies
There are none.





Finance Comments

Legal Comments

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source
Allocations Scheme 2004	Rules for allocating council housing stock	Housing Services

[Report Author, title and extension]

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
Author			
Corporate Manager		5/3/07	
Director		2/3/07	
Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)		2/3/07	
Section 151 Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)		5/3/07	