

COMMITTEE	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE	26 June 2014
TITLE OF REPORT	Common Allocation Policy and the allocation of Social Housing
RECOMMENDATION	For information
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1.0 Introduction

Gwynedd Council, Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, Grŵp Cynefin and North Wales Housing have adopted a Common Housing Allocations Policy which is overseen by the Gwynedd Common Housing Register Partnership. The current policy was introduced in September 2012 when the Housing Options Team was established and replaced 5 different policies that existed previously. The purpose of establishing the policy was to facilitate arrangements for applicants by having a common allocation scheme and better arrangements for providing more effective and timely information and advice to applicants. It led to:

- a single point of contact and one application form for social housing in Gwynedd
- one common allocation scheme for each allocation in Gwynedd
- an opportunity for applicants to make informed choices about the housing options available

2.0 Gwynedd Common Housing Register Partnership

All housing associations involved in the partnership are industrial and provident societies with charitable aims that require them to provide accommodation for people who need housing as a result of hardship or because their needs are related to their age or infirmity.

3.0 Gwynedd Common Housing Allocation Policy

The policy satisfies Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)("the Act"), giving reasonable preference to applicants in greatest need. It is a scheme based on points, and gives priority to applicants in the reasonable preference categories and gives additional preference to applicants with a local connection with Gwynedd and its communities.

Housing associations are expected to allocate accommodation to the applicant with the highest points on their application based on the area in which the property is located, the type of property and the number of bedrooms (subject to the housing association's household composition criteria).

The policy also includes provision for:

- Rural Letting Scheme - in areas that are defined as rural and where two applicants have the same points score the property may be allocated to the applicant with the most connection with the community where the property is located,
- Section 106 Letting Scheme – limits allocating to applicants unless they have a local connection of a specific length with the community where the property is located and that such a condition was part of the planning permission

- Local Lettings Plan - allows landlords to allocate in a designated area for a certain period of time outside the policy to tackle housing management issues
- Sensitive Lettings Scheme - allows landlords to make some allocations outside the policy in order to protect the interests of existing tenants
- Accessible Housing Register - to match applicants whose families include one or more persons with a disability, with housing suitable for their needs

3.1 The Legal Framework

Part 6 of the Act sets out the legal framework for allocating accommodation. Gwynedd Council administers the Common Housing Register on behalf of the Partnership and will ensure that it is fully compliant with legislation and regulations. Part 6 of the Act requires that "reasonable preference" is shown to certain groups of applicants, namely:

- people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the Act); this includes people who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need
- people who are owed a homelessness duty by any housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Act (or under section 65(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3)
- people who are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds
- people who need to move to a specific location in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)

Part 6 of the Act also states accommodation shall be allocated only in accordance with the policy. The Council must also have regard to the Welsh Government's Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Social Housing and Homelessness ("the Code").

Each application for accommodation will be assessed and points awarded on the basis of housing need. Points are awarded under the following headings:

- Security of Tenure
- Housing Conditions
- Medical and Welfare Grounds
- Social Factors
- Housing Management Factors (current tenants of the Partnership members only)
- Local and Community Connection

3.2 Local Connection with Gwynedd

The policy's definition of a local connection with Gwynedd is a person who:

- lives in Gwynedd
- does not currently live in Gwynedd but has lived in the past in Gwynedd
- currently living outside Gwynedd but either provide support to, or receives support from, someone who lives in Gwynedd; or
- has been continuously employed in Gwynedd during the past 12 months

3 points are awarded for each full year of local connection to a maximum of **15 points**.

3.3 Community Connection

Priority is also given to applicants who either currently live, or have lived in the past, in the

community where the property is located. 2 points are awarded per year to a maximum of **10 points** after 5 years.

3.4 Language

The Code states that social housing should meet the needs of a diverse range of people. The Equality Act 2010 defines those characteristics which are protected by law against all forms of discrimination, including indirect discrimination. The characteristics are:

- Gender (Sex)
- Gender Identity
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion or Belief
- Age
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

Although language is not included in the list above, it is associated with ethnicity and therefore there cannot be discrimination on the basis of language.

3.5 Recent Allocations

The Housing Department has completed an analysis of recent allocations to recognise the pattern of allocations in Gwynedd. This analysis will be presented during a presentation at the meeting.

4.0 Recommendation

Note and accept the contents of the report for information.