

Housing Allocations Overview & Scrutiny Panel – Cabinet, 10 January 2011

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * the closure of the housing register and replacement with a database of 'live' cases; * replacing the points system with a banding system; and * the creation of a local lettings policy which recognises a positive community contribution (volunteering, working, in training or previously served in the armed forces). 	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the recommendations of the majority report of the Housing Allocations Overview and Scrutiny Panel be approved. 2. That the recommendations in the minority report be not approved. 3. That Cabinet's thanks be extended to the Panel for their work on this review. <p><u>Update June 2011:</u> All of these have been implemented from April 2011</p> <p><u>Update January 2012:</u> As stated previously, these have all been implemented</p> <p><u>Update July 2012</u> No update required</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel recommends that residents on the current housing register should be informed that the register had been closed by:</p> <p>* Writing to all those on the register; and</p> <p>* Introducing an online self assessment tool to allow housing applicants to identify which band they would be placed in, to enable them to determine whether they are eligible for housing.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Update June 2011:</u> An online assessment tool has been added to the Council's website.</p> <p>Letters have not been sent to all those households that were on the Housing Register. Instead, a number of actions were taken to ensure that the closure of the register and the introduction of the new allocations scheme were widely publicised, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An article in the March 2011 edition of Barnet First; • Article in Barnet Homes' March 2011 edition of "At Home"; • Notices in the local press as part of Choice Based Lettings adverts throughout February, March and April 2011; • Direct contact by the Housing Service with existing cases identified as likely to have high priority under the new scheme; • Barnet Homes wrote to all council tenants registered for a transfer; and • Information placed on the Council's and Barnet Homes' websites and the Home Connections website <p><u>Update July 2012</u> No update required</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel recommends that Housing Officers should give due regard to children's existing school when offering properties to housing applicants under assisted choice.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Update June 2011</u> Officers do take account of the potential impact on school children who are at key stages in their education, along with the availability of properties, when considering the reasonableness of offers of accommodation.</p> <p><u>Update January 2012:</u> No further action required</p> <p><u>Update July 2012</u> No update required</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel recommends that an evaluation of the new housing allocation policy be undertaken at six months with a further review after two years with the findings reported to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Update June 2011:</u> The policy will be evaluated after it has been in operation for six months (i.e. from 1st April 2011) and reported to the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee and Cabinet. Preparations for carrying out the evaluation are in hand.</p> <p><u>Update January 2012:</u> An evaluation has been undertaken, but will not be reported to Cabinet until April 2012 so that national changes in the Localism Act can be taken into account.</p> <p><u>Update July 2012</u> Evaluation completed and reported to cabinet on 4 April 2012 and Business Management OSC on 18 April 2012.</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel recommends that all future housing applicants regardless of their eligibility should be offered housing advice.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Update June 2011:</u> This is an integral part of the Housing Allocations Scheme (paragraph 3.7 refers).</p> <p><u>Update January 2012:</u> No further action required</p> <p><u>Update July 2012</u> No update required</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel recommends that the volunteering element of the community contribution should be clearly defined to remove any subjectivity.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Update June 2011</u> The volunteering element of community contribution has been clearly defined with input from CommUNITY Barnet, who also provided training to Housing Officers. The operation of this element of the scheme will be reviewed as part of the six month evaluation.</p> <p><u>Update January 2012:</u> The review of this element of the scheme found that the definition in use was appropriate. CommUNITY Barnet provided training to housing officers and have offered to provide further support to officers in the future should this be required.</p> <p><u>Update July 2012</u> No update required</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel stress the importance of effective management of the housing stock to ensure that:</p> <p>* All properties are offered in a reasonable condition; and</p> <p>*Turn around times for re-housing applicants is reduced to be in line with best practice</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Update June 2011</u> Barnet Homes have a voids standard setting out the condition that the properties need to be in before they are offered to housing applicants. They will be holding focus groups with residents to review this during July 2011. Barnet Homes have been implementing a plan to improve voids performance and targets have been agreed for 2011/12 that will bring performance much closer to the best in London, and we will continue to work with the Arms Length Management Organisation to improve this further.</p> <p><u>Update January 2012:</u> Void turnaround times have reduced, and are reported regularly to Performance and Budget OSC. Further improvements are expected following an Option Appraisal of the future of the Housing Service which is to be reported to CRC in January 2012</p> <p><u>Update July 2012</u> Void turnaround times have improved significantly, with Barnet Homes reporting 16 days average in March 2012 and 15 days in April 2012. Performance on void turnaround times will continue to be a priority.</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>

Recommendation	Status	Information	Contact Officer
<p>The Panel recommends that the verification process should be streamlined, including visiting eligible applicants in their current circumstances.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><u>Cabinet response to recommendations:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Update June 2011</u> The verification process has been streamlined as part of the holistic assessment that is carried out for eligible applicants; this includes home visits in many cases.</p> <p><u>Update January 2012</u> No update required</p> <p><u>Update July 2012</u> No update required</p>	<p>Paul Shipway, Strategy & Performance Manager Planning, Housing and Regeneration</p>