

Swindon Borough Council Housing Tenancy Strategy

Cabinet

Date: 24th July 2013

Author:	Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery) and Head of Housing
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 For Cabinet to agree the principals on which social housing in Swindon should be allocated in future.
- 1.2 This Tenancy Strategy contributes towards three of the Council's strategic priorities: Right skills, right jobs, right places, making the best use of resources inside and outside of the council and working with people to help them fulfil their potential.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Propose the Swindon Housing Tenancy Strategy attached at Appendix One to Council for adoption and, if Council approves, authorise the Head of Housing to implement an Allocations Policy based on it. (Members should note that the existing Housing Allocations Policy will remain in place until such time as the new Policy is agreed).
- 2.2 To authorise the Head of Housing , in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery) to undertake a consultation to inform the Housing Allocations Policy to be presented to Cabinet and Council in October and November 2013.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Localism Act 2011 has given local authorities greater control over the way that tenancies are allocated in future. Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 states that 'A local housing authority in England must prepare and publish a strategy (a "tenancy strategy") setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing for its district are to have regard in formulating policies.'
- 3.2 The aim of the strategy is to implement the objectives of the Government's Housing Strategy for England, Laying the Foundations. This states that social housing should be focussed on those households who 'need and deserve it the most'. Actions that we can take are changes to the Allocations Policy aimed at

Swindon Borough Council Housing Tenancy Strategy

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reducing the size of the waiting list, and ensuring that we get the best use out of scarce social housing.

- 3.3 Cabinet approval of this Strategy enables officers to commence an extensive review of the Housing Allocations Policy. The review will include a consultation period with all stakeholders, existing and prospective tenants. The consultation will commence in August 2013 and it is hoped that the findings will be brought to the Cabinet meeting in September or at the latest October 2013. Members should note that both the Tenancy Strategy and the Housing Allocations Policy as significant Council decisions will need ratification from Full Council before they can come into effect.
- 3.4 The strategy contains a number of changes to the way that social housing is allocated
 - 3.4.1 Additional priority for households in work, training or volunteering.
 - 3.4.2 Long fixed term tenancies will be introduced for new tenants of working age.
 - 3.4.3 Those who are able to afford to purchase their own home will not be eligible for social housing.
- 3.5 This report only applies to future tenants of general needs housing, so existing tenants, and applicants for sheltered housing are not affected.
- 3.6 The Tenancy Strategy will act as a guide for social housing landlords operating in the Borough, who need to have regard to its contents.
- 3.7 The Housing Tenancy Strategy does not cover wider issues in the housing market, such as the supply of affordable housing, which will be dealt with in the Housing Strategy.
- 3.8 The Housing Allocations Policy will be brought to Cabinet in October 2013.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council is required by statute to have a Tenancy Strategy, the details of which can be changed.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Resources will be required to manage the review process, which will be allocated through the 2014/15 HRA budget process.

Swindon Borough Council Housing Tenancy Strategy

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Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Where tenancies are not renewed the reviewer will need to consider the proportionality of ending a tenancy, as it could interfere with tenants' rights.

All Other Implications

- 5.3 None specific have been identified.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Analysis has been carried out, and is available from the author of the report. Negative impacts from the Tenancy Strategy will be mitigated in the Allocations Policy.

Risk Management

- 5.5 No unmitigated risks identified.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Draft Swindon Housing Tenancy Strategy.

9. Key Decision/Decision in Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme / Forward Plan for July 2013.