

## **ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW**

Report of the Chief Executive

### **1. SUMMARY**

The Council has been considering a review of the Allocations Policy during 2010. This report sets out my response to 25 questions asked in a questionnaire sent out in August, and invites Board Members comments. You can access the questionnaire, Appendix 1, on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS).

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

To comment or amend these responses and agree to them being forwarded to the Council as the Board's response on the Allocations Policy questionnaire.

### **3. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 The Council decides the Allocations Policy for all Council housing and uses the computerised Derby Homefinder choice based lettings system to administer the allocations process.
- 3.2 The Council is required to review their policy periodically and have been considering this during this year. Consultation meetings have been held and several Board and Local Housing Board members and Derby Homes' staff have attended these meetings. The draft Allocations Policy is to be reviewed by legal advisers and is expected to go to Council Cabinet in November.
- 3.3 In August I was sent a questionnaire that asked 25 questions about Derby Homes' views on Allocations Policy issues.
- 3.4 Government thinking about Allocations Policy appears to be moving towards a greater level of local discretion, with greater priority being given to local people, and an increase weighting encouraged to those who are in work. This may be reflected in the Localism Bill that is expected to be published later this year. In view of this, I suspect that the allocations review will be an interim one and address mainly administrative policy issues, pending the publication and implementation of the Localism Bill. I have reproduced below the top 9 questions that I think the Board may be most interested in plus my response.

#### **1. Rents arrears, minor anti-social behaviour and recharges**

Clearer guidance in the Allocations Policy about applications with rent arrears, minor anti-social behaviour and recharges. We want to consider if it is feasible to award lower needs, or some kind of penalty – possibly defer

applications.

We are still looking into how we could operate this in terms of the Policy and procedures/practical measures. For example, who would do it and who would review decisions. When we did this previously, this created considerable workloads for Housing Options Centre staff.

If we were able to do this, it would prevent bypassing and inform applicants of outstanding debts, so that they could make payment arrangements prior to offers.

**My response: The simplest line would be to refuse to re house anyone who owes rent arrears or court costs or rechargeable repairs charges or has caused serious ASB resulting in legal action. The only exception would be cases of homelessness or where a transfer is needed because of a serious threat to life or health.**

**When these issues are raised with council tenants they support a very hard line on arrears, debts and action against perpetrators. Why doesn't the Council follow suit? Any application could then be subject to a check of records. You could delegate these checks to the housing providers who would share this information with all others. It would be worth our while to put this time into such checks.**

## **2. Quota advertised to Bands**

Review the quota of properties advertised to Bands. However, this is dependent on whether we increase or reduce the number of Bands within our current Policy.

We will consult with you again when we have drafted the revised Policy. However, as things stand at the moment, the percentage quota to the Emergency Band will reduce, to fall in line with the reduction in homeless acceptances.

Allocations to difficult to let properties may be considered to applicants in no housing need, or where applicants have sufficient resources to meet their own housing need.

<b>Band</b>	<b>Current Quota</b>	<b>Quota achieved for the last financial year</b>
Emergency	30%	14%
Band A	35%	41%
Band B	35%	42%
Band C	5%	3%

**My response: I would still wish to keep Band C as an option to help with estate sustainability and increase it to 10%. We should market this Band to low demand applicants who wouldn't normally expect to be re housed, such as young couples in work with lower priority.**

**There is a great danger that estates and blocks of flats become more and more concentrations of people who are vulnerable, out of work or with a serious history of offences. Derby Homes is placed in a more serious position than Housing Associations because of our obligations to re house people exclusively from the waiting list.**

**A 10 % Band C code would allow housing management to manage concentrations of vulnerability and joblessness in particular streets, and blocks of flats over a long term.**

### **3. Discretionary and strategic lettings**

We do operate discretionary and strategic lettings outside of Derby Homefinder. For example, very serious anti-social behaviour, MOST Scheme, Child Protection, Care Leavers, releasing high demand/under occupied properties and adapted properties.

We do not publish these and Derby Homefinder is a transparent scheme. We intend to give an explanation of this within the Policy so that the Policy is more transparent. We also want to weight the Policy so that these types of applicants would be kept to a minimum and housed through Derby Homefinder.

**My response: I fear this process will slow down the rehousing of such discretionary cases. We have to re house some very difficult people as successfully as we can. This process needs to be managed. I don't think this will work under a Derby Homefinder system.**

**I agree Derby Homefinder needs to be transparent; to achieve this, explain each discretionary system we operate and publish that we have allocated a particular property through a discretionary system and allow a right of appeal.**

**We also have a need to manage sustainability and crime and disorder.**

### **4. Number of bids**

We propose to reduce the number of bids to three, from six. This would be in line with other authorities. At one of the Focus Groups, it was suggested

that applicants should only be able to bid for one property, as we only make one offer at a time. If we reduce the number of bids, this should hopefully reduce refusals and make short listing easier, this is because not so many applicants would have to be bypassed because they are currently under offer. How many bids do you think applicants should have and why?

**My response: I support one bid, but will accept a reduction to three bids. Both these will focus applicant's minds on one property, stop the wastefulness of multiple and insurance bidding, and hopefully reduce the refusal rate on offers.**

## **5. Length of choice for statutorily homeless applicants**

We propose to reduce the choice to one month rather than three months for statutorily homeless applicants. Under the current Policy, statutorily homeless applicants can bid for and refuse properties for three months. It is only at the end of the third month that a final offer is made. Are you in agreement with this?

**My response: Agreed final offer would then be at end of one month.**

## **6. Refusals**

We propose to restrict the number of properties applicants can refuse before suspending or deferring their application. CBL North has confirmed that refusals on area are an issue for all partners, often refusals are a result of a perceived area.

When we review the Policy, we could market areas more proactively. If we introduced some kind of penalty for refusals, this would hopefully prevent reckless bidding and reduce refusal rates. There would have to be a review process in place. Are you in agreement with this and how many refusals should be allowed before this is applied? This would not apply to auto bids.

Leeds is looking at proposing to change the date of registration if applicants refuse a property. If an applicant refuses an offer, their registration date will be amended to the date they refused the property. What are your thoughts on this?

**My response: I recommend suspend application for 3 months if refuse 3 properties.**

## **7. Applicants who are not actively bidding for properties**

What do you think we should do with these applicants? Some applicants still perceive choice based lettings as a waiting list. The new code of guidance allows us to give more weighting to waiting time, so applicants

may still want to register for housing for future need. We write to applicants who have been on the list for a year, but who have not bid in the last three months. This is a time consuming and costly exercise. We have applicants on the Housing Register who have not bid for years, but want to remain on the Register.

What do you think the options are:

- Cancel applications where applicants do not bid – this may cause reckless bidding, as applicants may just bid to stay on the list. This was highlighted at one of the Focus Groups. If so, what timescales do you think we should implement?
- Register basic information and suspend applications until they contact us and tell us they are ready to move?

**My response: Suspend all applications where no bid for 6 months until they contact us. Only review them when they contact us.**

## **8. Excluding/Reviewing applicants**

By law, the Derby Homefinder landlords must have a robust policy for excluding and reviewing applicants from Derby Homefinder. This is a very time consuming process and previously has fallen to Housing Options Centre staff.

What alternative procedures do you suggest we adopt and how would you be involved in this?

**My response: Give all landlords access to all applicants and a period of time to check them against their records and to exclude them from Homefinder. Give applicants a right to appeal this.**

**I think all waiting list applicants should have a visit that is less than 6 months old where they have a home. They should be visited if they have moved. I think the Allocations Policy for Derby Homes should require everyone who is to be re housed to have had a home visit assessment. I think the current situation arose when we had less demand for housing. Now that we do have such a huge demand we face a huge potential for fraud. All transfers should be subject to approval from the landlord who can inspect and decide whether the property they are living in is fit and so avoid rechargeable repairs.**

## **9. Additional changes to the Allocation Policy**

What else do you think we should change in the Allocations Policy and why?

For example, do you think:

- we have enough Bands, or too many Bands?
- the needs criteria should all be weighted the same, or do you think some needs should be more heavily weighted than others?
- we have too many needs?
- cumulative needs should only apply to the reasonable preference Band?
- do you agree with the Band criteria, or would an alternative Band criteria be an option? For example, have Bands for eligible property types – general needs, supported/sheltered housing, adapted/mobility Bands and needs/priority weighted within the Band. However, I am not quite sure how we achieve this through the software.
- there should be a percentage of lettings to transfer applicants? If so, what percentage would be feasible?
- there should be a percentage of allocations based on waiting time only? Both Leeds and Bradford are proposing 25% of lettings to applicants based on waiting time only.

**My response: I would support the idea of a waiting time allocations process for council and other social tenants; this would support good tenants in lower need to get transferred. It is a reward and an incentive to good tenants and be an alternative to always housing on pure housing need. Could we therefore adopt a new set of criteria**

**Emergency 15%**

**A 30**

**B 30**

**C 10**

**Waiting cat 15**

**There would be a reduction in rehousing of people purely on greatest need but this would help build sustainable communities.**

**I also think the eligibility criteria should allow for 2 person elderly and disabled households to bid for and be allocated 2 bed ground floor flats and bungalows. There are many hundreds of such couples in 3 bed family council houses who would only consider a move to such a property.**

#### **4. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

The proposals in the review will help to minimise delays and waste in the allocation process, releasing staff time to manage the allocation process more successfully.

#### **5. POLICY REVIEW IMPLICATIONS**

This is a key policy of Derby Homes and is/will be included in the Key Policy Review Schedule. In accordance with minute 10/51 this policy will be reviewed no later than 3 years from the date of this meeting.

**The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report**

- Consultation
- Legal and Confidentiality
- Personnel
- Environmental
- Equalities Impact Assessment
- Health & Safety
- Risk
- Policy Review

**If Board members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact the author, or the Chief Executive, [phil.davies@derbyhomes.org](mailto:phil.davies@derbyhomes.org) - Tel 01332 711010**

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**Background Information:** None.

**Supporting Information:** None.



# HOUSING PARTNER QUESTIONNAIRE

## What are your thoughts on our proposed Allocations Policy changes?

### 1. Rents arrears, minor anti-social behaviour and recharges

Clearer guidance in the Allocations Policy about applications with rent arrears, minor anti-social behaviour and recharges. We want to consider if it is feasible to award lower needs, or some kind of penalty – possibly defer applications.

We are still looking into how we could operate this in terms of the Policy and procedures/practical measures. For example, who would do it and who would review decisions. When we did this previously, this created considerable workloads for Housing Options Centre staff.

If we were able to do this, it would prevent bypassing and inform applicants of outstanding debts, so that they could make payment arrangements prior to offers.

**Comments: The simplest line would be to refuse to register anyone who owes rent arrears or court costs or rechargeables or has caused ASB. When these issues are raised with tenants they support a very hard line on rent arrears and action against ASB perpetrators.**

**Why doesn't the Council follow suite? Any application could then be subject to a check of records and it would be up to each housing organisation to check for you. It would be worth our while to put this time into such checks.**

### 2. Right to Review

Introduce a stringent Right to Review on applicants bypassed for offers. There is already a Right to Review in the current Policy, but applicants are not always aware they have been bypassed for an offer.

In addition, review mechanisms can be very time consuming to implement. Exclusion from an allocation includes bypassing/skipping an applicant on a shortlist. Derby Homefinder must have a robust Policy that includes a review process when this happens.

It is proposed that if you, as a landlord, bypass an applicant, you, the landlord:

- advise the applicant in writing, explaining why you have bypassed them and notify them of their right to a review
- review the decision if the applicant appeals and advise the applicant of a further right of review to the Housing Options Centre
- notify the Housing Options Centre of your decision.



The Housing Options Centre will then respond to any further review requests. Do you think this should be a panel or an individual member of staff? If it is a panel, who do you think should sit on it and how often should it be held?

**Comments: This is totally unacceptable, as we bypass literally thousands of applicants because of the poor performance of the CBL process. If you publish the outcome of the decision on the web and say it went to someone who was in X position with X level of need it will be apparent that they have been by passed. They can then have a right of appeal if they wish.**

### **3. Eligibility for two and three bedroom properties**

Our figures show that there are approximately 3,500 two bedroom houses and 7,240 three bedroom properties in the City. Statistics from Derby Homefinder show that there are approximately 2,600 households with one or two children and 565 applicants with three or four children.

Quite clearly, the demand for two bedroom houses is far higher than that for three bedroom houses. To address this imbalance, we propose that we change eligibility for families with two children, regardless of age and gender, to two and small three bedroom properties.

This will assist with estate sustainability, reduce the number of applicants applying for housing due to cramped conditions, widen choice for applicants – as there will be more properties available – and reduce the pressure on families to opt for living in flats.

In addition, consideration will be given to under occupation of three bedroom houses on new build schemes to assist with estate sustainability, under Local Letting Plans where necessary.

**Comments: agreed if this helps rehouse smaller families quicker. However care must be taken to recognise that there are some families in flats with no garden or upstairs and there is a need to balance their needs.**

**OAPs or disabled applicants with only 2 people in household should have access to 2 bed ground floor / bungalows.**

### **4. Quota advertised to Bands**

Review the quota of properties advertised to Bands. However, this is dependent on whether we increase or reduce the number of Bands within our current Policy.

We will consult with you again when we have drafted the revised Policy. However, as things stand at the moment, the percentage quota to the Emergency Band will reduce, to fall in line with the reduction in homeless acceptances.

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**Comments: Would still wish to keep Band C as an option to help with estate sustainability and increase it to 10%. We should market this Band to people who wouldn't normally expect to be rehoused, such as young couples in work with lower priority.**

**There is a great danger that estates and blocks of flats become more and more concentrations of people who are vulnerable out of work or with a serious history of offences. Derby Homes is placed in a more serious position because of our obligations to rehouse people exclusively from the waiting list.**

**A 10 % Band C code would allow housing management to manage concentrations of vulnerability and joblessness in particular streets, and blocks of flats over a long term**

## 5. Cramped conditions

What are your thoughts on our current cramped conditions need? We currently award a need if the household is lacking one or two bed spaces and two needs if the applicant is lacking three or more bed spaces.

Needs for cramped conditions are computer generated, we do not ask the size of bedrooms on the application. Do you think this is sufficient, or do we need to introduce a more specific overcrowding criterion that takes account of bed spaces and sexes of household members?

How do you think we should calculate a need, should it be a need per person, or a more general need for the household?

**Comments: No need to make this any more complicated, leave as at present.**

## 6. Owner occupiers / applicants with enough resources to meet their own housing need

The current Policy – Section 13.5, see below – already explains about owner occupiers and applicants with enough resources to meet their own housing needs. Generally they should be placed in Derby Homefinder Band C. However, due to the current economic climate, we do not always apply this.

Section 13.5 states...

**Owner occupiers and applicants with enough resources to meet their own housing needs**

*If you own a property or you have enough financial resources to enable you to get your own accommodation, you can still apply to go on the Derby Homefinder Register.*

*However, due to the high demand for social housing in Derby, it is unlikely that we would make you an offer of housing. This may not apply if you are aged over 60 because there are generally a large number of properties for older people across the City. In any event, we would be able to tell you about other available housing options. See section 25 on Other Housing Options for further information.*

We feel that we should still apply this, but we would need to establish a consistent approach. We also need to give consideration to owner occupiers who require adapted properties, in light of the limited Disabled Facilities Grant budget and pending budget cuts. We do get review requests on this.

What are your thoughts?

**Comments: Leave as it is.**

**However do not mislead people into thinking we can allocate a property to someone and then incur huge adaptations costs (this is particularly if they live in a RSL property and the RSL refuses to adapt their home).**

**These are paid for from HRA which is itself limited and any adaptation demand is a drain on our ability to repair council housing. We can allocate them an already adapted property if possible or one that requires minor adaptations.**

## **7. Adapted properties**

We intend to advertise adapted properties and develop a protocol with Social Services and housing providers to allocate from shortlists. The Disability Focus Group was really well attended, which highlights that there are many concerns over the allocation of adapted properties.

Other authorities do advertise adapted/mobility properties. Adapted properties are currently allocated outside of Derby Homefinder and, as there is only a limited manual audit trail... Obviously, if we advertised adapted properties, we would still need to make best use of stock and adopt a joint protocol with Social Services.

**Comments: Willing to try this, but should be piloted first with small selection or area of city.**

**When we have such properties applicants are just as choosy as non disabled applicants. They are just as concerned about location and needs of other members of family. Again we need to be sensible about what adaptation costs we will reasonably incur. Also concerns about void loss that occurs with**

**current system, so needs to be a streamlined system and allocations by a committee doesn't sound streamlined to me.**

**Also need to be sensible about what level of adaptation qualifies a house as adapted...does a ramp? All this does is make the property accessible. All new properties are to accessible standard but we would not regard these as disabled properties.**

## **8. Discretionary and strategic lettings**

We do operate discretionary and strategic lettings outside of Derby Homefinder. For example, very serious anti-social behaviour, MOST Scheme, Child Protection, Care Leavers, releasing high demand/under occupied properties and adapted properties.

We do not publish these and Derby Homefinder is a transparent scheme. We intend to give an explanation of this within the Policy so that the Policy is more transparent. We also want to weight the Policy so that these types of applicants would be kept to a minimum and housed through Derby Homefinder.

### **Comments:**

**Do not understand the proposal to weight such cases and rely on home finder system more. The need is to rehouse some very difficult and potentially dangerous people as successfully as we can. This process needs to be discretely managed. I don't understand how will this work under a Derby Homefinder system.**

**I agree Derby Homefinder needs to be transparent, to achieve this explain each discretionary system we operate and publish that we have allocated a particular property through a discretionary system and allow a right of appeal.**

**We also have a need to manage sustainability and crime and disorder. Derby Homefinder is a system to an end not an end in itself.**

## **9. Extra bedroom for a carer**

Clarity within the Policy on when we will award an extra bedroom for a carer. We have had an Ombudsman enquiry on this point. In what circumstances do you think we should award an extra bedroom? For example, a sleeping carer. How many nights per week do you think the carer should stay overnight to be eligible for an extra bedroom? We would need to evidence this through Social Services, Benefits – DLA Carers Allowance – and medical opinion.

**Comments: I agree with a sleeping carer 4 or more nights a week requiring an extra bedroom.**

## 10. Access to children

What is your definition of access – two or three nights per week?

Do you agree that single people with access to a child/children should only be allocated a two bedroom flat?

Are you in agreement that families with access should be eligible for an extra bedroom?

We do take account of access to children in the current Policy. Applicants are eligible for an extra bedroom, regardless of how many children they have access to or the sex or age of the child/children. For example, a family with three children will only be eligible for one extra bedroom. A pregnant household with access to a child will be eligible for a three bedroom property. A single person with access to three children will be eligible for a two bedroom flat.

**Comments: Extra bedroom seems to me to be fair.**

## 11. Local connection and financial hardship

For information only, we intend to define local connection and financial hardship within the Policy, to enable us to process applications more speedily.

**Comments: Ok.**

## 12. Number of bids

We propose to reduce the number of bids to three, from six. This would be in line with other authorities. At one of the Focus Groups, it was suggested that applicants should only be able to bid for one property, as we only make one offer at a time. If we reduce the number of bids, this should hopefully reduce refusals and make short listing easier, this is because not so many applicants would have to be bypassed because they are currently under offer. How many bids do you think applicants should have and why?

**Comments: I support one bid, as this would focus their minds on one property and stop the wastefulness of multiple and insurance bidding.**

### 13. Length of choice for statutorily homeless applicants

We propose to reduce the choice to one month rather than three months for statutorily homeless applicants. Under the current Policy, statutorily homeless applicants can bid for and refuse properties for three months. It is only at the end of the third month that a final offer is made. Are you in agreement with this?

**Comments: Agreed final offer would then be at end of one month.**

### 14. Refusals

We propose to restrict the number of properties applicants can refuse before suspending or deferring their application. CBL North has confirmed that refusals on area are an issue for all partners, often refusals are a result of a perceived area.

When we review the Policy, we could market areas more proactively. If we introduced some kind of penalty for refusals, this would hopefully prevent reckless bidding and reduce refusal rates. There would have to be a review process in place. Are you in agreement with this and how many refusals should be allowed before this is applied? This would not apply to auto bids.

Leeds is looking at proposing to change the date of registration if applicants refuse a property. If an applicant refuses an offer, their registration date will be amended to the date they refused the property. What are your thoughts on this?

**Comments: I recommend suspend application for 3 months if refuse 3 properties.**

### 15. Applicants who are not actively bidding for properties

What do you think we should do with these applicants? Some applicants still perceive choice based lettings as a waiting list. The new code of guidance allows us to give more weighting to waiting time, so applicants may still want to register for housing for future need. We write to applicants who have been on the list for a year, but who have not bid in the last three months. This is a time consuming and costly exercise. We have applicants on the Housing Register who have not bid for years, but want to remain on the Register.

What do you think the options are:

- Cancel applications where applicants do not bid – this may cause reckless bidding, as applicants may just bid to stay on the list. This was highlighted at one of the Focus Groups. If so, what timescales do you think we should implement?
- Register basic information and suspend applications until they contact us and tell us they are ready to move?

**Comments: Suspend all applications where no bid for 6 months until they contact us. Only review them when they contact us.**

## 16. **E**Property eligibility table

The size and type of property we normally offer you will depend on the size of your household. This table only gives a general guide.

Similar properties can be different in the size of bedrooms and the ideal number of people

	Studio flat	1 bedroom flat	1 bedroom bungalow	1 bedroom house	2 bedroom flat	2 bedroom maisonette	2 bedroom bungalow	2 bedroom house	3 bedroom flat	3 bedroom maisonette	3 bedroom bungalow	3 bedroom house	4 bedroom house	5 bedroom house
Single person under 60 years	✓	✓		✓										
Single person over 60 years	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Single person or couple expecting a baby					✓	✓	✓	✓						
Single person under 60 with access to children					✓									
Couple with no children, under 60 years		✓		✓										
Couple with no children, over 60 years		✓	✓	✓										
Couple under 60 with access to children					✓									
Household with one child					✓	✓	✓	✓						
Household with two children of the same sex under ten					✓	✓	✓	✓						
Household with two children of the same sex, one or more over ten					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Household with two children of different sexes					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Household with three children									✓	✓	✓	✓		
Household with four or more children									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We propose to amend the eligibility table to give greater guidance to applicants about eligibility for property types and size and change the software so that applicants can only bid for eligible properties. Again, this will prevent by passing. The current Policy and guidance is shown below. What are your comments on the current eligibility table?

*living in the property. We will tell you which size of property we consider is most suitable for you when we accept your housing application.*

*A Derby Homefinder landlord could identify a property as being suitable to meet the needs of:*

- an applicant who is a disabled person or who has mobility needs*
- another member of the applicant's household who is a disabled person or who has mobility needs.*

*Where a property is identified as suitable in this way, only disabled people or people with mobility needs will be able to apply for these properties.*

*If you have a permanent carer or a medical condition, we will normally offer you a property with an extra bedroom – as long as you have given us proof that shows you need an extra bedroom.*

**Comments: 2 person elderly and disabled households should be eligible for 2 bed ground floor flats and bungalows ahead of families.**

## **17. Applications from the Armed forces**

Do you think applications from the Armed forces should be given additional priority over other applicants?

**Comments: Follow whatever is the statutory requirements. They are presumably potentially homeless once they have their discharge notice.**

## **18. Difficult to let properties**

At what stage do you think you should stop advertising?

What are your thoughts on advertising a property on a first come first served basis, if it has already been advertised twice, where the property has been offered and refused and shortlists exhausted?

Obviously we would need some specific criteria if we adopted this policy

**Comments: If a property has been refused 3 times then the individual landlord/ALMO should have discretion to allocate from category C, this could be advertised and promoted as a way of encouraging more sustainable communities. We would need to promote category C to people who may not expect to be rehoused by the Council.**

## **19. Advertising cycle**

Having a weekly advertising cycle does cause problems for partners and the Derby Homefinder Team. Tenants often give notice on a Monday and details have to be with the Derby Homefinder Team by Tuesday lunchtime to advertise the property on



the Wednesday. A weekly advertising cycle does make sense for the customer, but does not always meet the partner's needs.

We could explore the possibility of daily advertising which would alleviate a lot of problems for partners, but would cause major issues for customers. For example, it would prove near impossible to provide a weekly Property List and the Property List is the only way for some applicants to access housing.

Alternatively, we could change the day of the weekly cycle from a Wednesday to a Friday. This would give landlords more opportunity to inspect a property prior to advertisement and give four consecutive days for short listing, say Monday to Thursday. Any suggestions/thoughts?

**Comments: Daily advertising is recommended. We need to use the website to its full capacity.**

**We should improve the adverts, they are gobbledegook and poor and don't sell the properties at all. Need to have a good photo of all properties.**

## **20. Excluding/Reviewing applicants**

By law, the Derby Homefinder landlords must have a robust policy for excluding and reviewing applicants from Derby Homefinder. This is a very time consuming process and previously has fallen to Housing Options Centre staff.

What alternative procedures do you suggest we adopt and how would you be involved in this?

**Comments: Give all landlords access to all applicants and a period of time to check them against their records and to exclude them from Homefinder. Give applicants a right to appeal this.**

**I think all waiting list applicants should have a visit that is less than 6 months old where they have a home. They should be visited if they have moved. I think the Allocations Policy for Derby Homes should require everyone who is to be rehoused to have had a home visit assessment. I think the current situation arose when we had less demand for housing. Now that we do have such a huge demand we face a huge potential for fraud. All transfers should be subject to approval from the landlord who can inspect and decide whether the property they are living in is fit and so avoid rechargeable repairs.**

## **21. Additional changes to the Allocation Policy**

What else do you think we should change in the Allocations Policy and why?

For example, do you think:

- we have enough Bands, or too many Bands?

- the needs criteria should all be weighted the same, or do you think some needs should be more heavily weighted than others?
- we have too many needs?
- cumulative needs should only apply to the reasonable preference Band?
- do you agree with the Band criteria, or would an alternative Band criteria be an option? For example, have Bands for eligible property types – general needs, supported/sheltered housing, adapted/mobility Bands and needs/priority weighted within the Band. However, I am not quite sure how we achieve this through the software.
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- there should be a percentage of allocations based on waiting time only? Both Leeds and Bradford are proposing 25% of lettings to applicants based on waiting time only.

**Comments: I would support the idea of a waiting time allocations process, this would support good tenants to get transferred and be an alternative to pure housing need. Could we therefore adopt a new set of criteria**

**Emergency 15%**

**A                    30**

**B                    30**

**C                    10**

**Waiting cat   15**

## 22. Verification procedures

The Housing Options Centre Housing Register Team currently check/verify the following:

- immigration checks – these can be very time consuming and complex
- if an applicant is able to live independently
- any community safety issues – for example, RPO checks
- Derby Homes rent arrears.

Traditionally, we have verified more information on the application. However, this created huge backlogs of work. To reduce backlogs, we verified applicants who were likely to receive an offer of housing. Unfortunately, this still resulted in unmanageable workloads and delays in processing applications. Whilst we understand the need for some verification/checks, we do need to be realistic and

practical. If we had a more simplified Policy, it would be easier to identify who is likely to get housed and focus on verification of these applicants.

Please find enclosed a flow chart indicating a mid way point. This explains that if an applicant has 3 or more needs we did more intensive checks. We have verified on this basis previously, but even this created high workloads. These checks were time consuming and staff intensive but would you consider this as a starting point?

What verification/checks do you feel we should make? When should we make them and why? For example, do you think verification should apply to applicants over 60 years, or could we relax this?

**Comments: all above plus ASB records.**

### **23. Information about your organisation**

It is really important that we know what stock our partners have within the City. Customers ask us these questions and it is very difficult for us to be able to advise them about their chances of housing. For example, we don't know how many four bedroom properties we have in Allestree.

Can you please complete the attached stock detail sheets for the following areas:

- Allenton
- Allestree
- Alvaston
- Central Derby – including West End and the Stockbrook area
- Chaddesden
- Chellaston/Shelton Lock
- Darley Abbey
- Derwent – including Cowsley and Sussex Circus
- Littleover
- Mackworth
- Mickleover
- Normanton and Peartree
- Oakwood
- Osmaston
- Sinfen
- Spondon
- Sunnyhill

and add scheme details in the comments box, along with anything else you think would be useful.

### **24. Allocation of flats to applicants with children**

What is your policy about allocating flats to applicants with children? Can you give some general guidelines?

**Comments: Do offer flats where necessary, this is increasingly so in some popular parts of city.**

**25. Allocation of properties to large families**

Would you offer a property to a family that would create cramped conditions? For example, a four bedroom/six person house to a family of seven.

We often have families with large households who need urgent housing and cannot wait for a larger property to become available. Whilst we accept this is not ideal, the family are more likely to accept this rather than remain where they are living. In addition some families would prefer to live in cramped conditions in an area they really want rather than be adequately housed in an area they don't want.

**Comments: Yes if there is no other option.**