

MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS – SEPTEMBER 2015 (Updated June 2016)

To review recommendations from the Housing Allocations Scheme Task and Finish Group following Cabinet meetings in September 2015 and March 2016

Ref.	Issue/concern	Risk/implication	Agreed Action	Responsible officer	Target date	Progress
1	<p><u>Housing Allocation Scheme</u></p> <p>Investigate cessation of the current Housing Allocation Scheme and introduce a choice-based lettings scheme (recommendation 1)</p> <p>Review the best and most cost effective choice-based lettings scheme distilled from</p>	<p>If a choice-based lettings system is adopted there would need to be detailed guidance provided to applicants together with clear expectations on how the new system operates and for which properties they would be eligible</p>	<p>Further paper to be presented to Cabinet outlining proposals.</p> <p>This was considered in March 2016 and the following decisions were made:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the potential impact of the introduction of a new 	Head of Housing	September 2016	Cabinet agreed in March 2016 that further work should be carried out to determine what an appropriate Allocations Scheme for Milton Keynes might be. This

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	<p>those of neighbouring local authorities (recommendation 2)</p> <p>Analysis completed by the end of the year for proposed changes to commence in the new Council year (recommendation 7).</p> <p>Refrain from changing the current system until choice-based lettings has been reviewed as a possibility (recommendation 8)</p> <p>To manage the expectations of each applicant, if a choice-based letting scheme is adopted, they should receive a clear explanation beforehand on how the system operates and for which properties they would be eligible, and on the point of</p>	<p>to bid on.</p> <p>There is the potential for increased costs for administering such a scheme.</p> <p>In addition there may be an increase in the time properties are empty particularly those in less desirable areas which may not be selected. This could lead to longer waiting time for housing and increased costs of temporary accommodation</p> <p>Duty is statutory and tied to homelessness legislation.</p>	<p>allocations scheme, such as a Choice Based Lettings Scheme that is unique to Milton Keynes, be noted and consultations with other housing providers, stakeholders and other interested parties to explore this further be carried out.</p> <p>2. That discussions with other Councillors, as appropriate, be continued and a further report be considered by Cabinet in due course</p>			<p>could include making changes to any local eligibility criteria that is not determined by legislation</p> <p>Choice Based Lettings Schemes used by neighbouring boroughs have been reviewed</p> <p>Any allocations scheme to be developed for Milton Keynes will be impacted by findings in the homelessness review carried out by HQN and the evolving Homelessness Strategy.</p>

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	<p>bidding, whether or not they are eligible for that specific property. The explanation should be provided in written form and also included in the computer-based instructions as each person applies (recommendation 9)</p> <p>Due to increase of acceptance of duty to house applicants and as part of the Housing Allocation Scheme review, the Cabinet should review the qualifying criteria for acceptance i.e. how long applicants have to have lived in Milton Keynes (recommendation 18).</p> <p>The group recommends re-numbering, if re-categorisation of bands does take place,</p>					

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	<p>to avoid the confusing Band 1A (recommendation 25)</p> <p>The TFG hope that Cabinet would consult with the TFG when it makes its decision and would be happy to reconvene to consider any proposals (recommendation 26)</p>					
2	<p><u>Discretionary Housing Payment</u></p> <p>Improve links between officers dealing with Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and officers dealing with homelessness. Improve flexibility of these two services (recommendation 3)</p>	<p>If closer links are not established there is a risk of increased homelessness</p>	<p>Improved relationships to be established</p>	<p>Head of Housing</p>	<p>Dec 2015</p>	<p>Meetings have taken place with colleagues administering the DHP scheme. A process is now in place to ensure referrals can be made more easily and decisions are reached more quickly.</p>

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3	<p><u>De-designating specialist accommodation</u></p> <p>Consider feasibility of making more homes available by de-designating specialist use of certain accommodation. Greater flexibility is needed but homes should remain appropriate to other households in the proximity i.e. within a housing scheme (recommendation 4)</p>	<p>Loss of specialist accommodation and properties that meet the needs of customers</p>	<p>Review designated properties</p>	<p>Head of Housing</p>	<p>Dec 2015</p>	<p>Designation of properties is regularly reviewed and changes made where appropriate. This has been useful in a limited number of cases such as managing hospital discharges but can create risks around right to buy and the impact on the settled community e.g. a close of OAP bungalows. There is close liaison between the housing team and the older peoples housing service</p>

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						in Adult Social Care.
4	<p><u>Adapted properties</u></p> <p>Adapted homes should remain available for all to use whilst still allowing that those with disabilities be given priority to homes that are adapted and meet their needs (recommendation 5)</p>	Adapted properties not put to the best use	If no one with specific needs can be identified for an available adapted property then let the property to a 'non-specialist' applicant.	Head of Housing	Dec 2015	All allocations are made to make the best use of accommodation available. Where there is no demand for a particular adaptation the property will be allocated as 'general needs' housing and adaptations such as stair lifts removed.
5	<p><u>Increase supply of temporary accommodation</u></p> <p>Explore alternative new sources of temporary accommodation. This can be imaginative and innovative i.e.</p>	Unsustainable costs to MKC if new sources of temporary housing are not found.	A range of solutions to be explored to increase the number of units available.	Service Director / Head of Housing	Dec 2015	A number of initiatives have led to an additional 160 units of temporary accommodation

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	converting Council buildings that may not have been designed as homes originally. (recommendation 6)					<p>being procured between October 2015 and May 2016 with a further 87 units in the pipeline. New opportunities are regularly explored and taken forward where appropriate.</p> <p>MKC is working with its partner Your MK to explore innovative temporary and permanent housing solutions.</p>
6	<p><u>Increase supply of other accommodation types</u></p> <p>Revisit how to bring empty, privately-owned properties back into</p>	This is a complex area of work which has resource implications	Consider the use of legislation which is available to deal with long term	Head of Housing	Dec 2015	Each case is assessed on its merits –

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	<p>use. This should consider compulsory purchase (recommendation 17)</p> <p>The Council should be at the forefront of identifying land to build hostels and identify larger properties that could be adapted to become hostels (recommendation 23)</p>		<p>problematic empty homes</p>			<p>compulsory purchase is currently being explored as a solution to one long term problematic empty home.</p> <p>Milton Keynes does not have a significant problem with empty homes but recognises the need to respond quickly to reports of such properties. The Private Sector Housing team carry out visits and work in partnership with Capacity Grid to return properties to use.</p> <p>Housing and planning are</p>

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						working together to identify potential sites for hostels which may be suitable for development/re-development or conversion
7	<p><u>Communication</u></p> <p>All applicants and private landlords should be given a single point of contact. Substitution should be arranged when the case worker is not available (recommendation 10)</p> <p>Homeless applicants should be contacted at least once a week by the caseworker (recommendation 11).</p> <p>Detailed written sheets should be given to applicants with all information they need.</p>	<p>Consultation with Service users and private landlords identified a single point of contact would benefit their relationship with the Council.</p> <p>Significant increased resourcing would be required.</p>	<p>Suite of leaflets created and includes the contact details of a case worker. Case worker stays as the point of contact until a decision is reached. Then applicants are given a named case worker in the Moving Homes team.</p>	<p>Head of Housing</p>	<p>Dec 2015</p>	<p>Information sheets including their named caseworker is now provided to all applicants. Services are tailored to meet individual needs as required.</p> <p>Due to the volume of work and increasing caseload it is not realistic to make contact with every applicant on a weekly basis.</p>

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	Consideration to sensitivity with needs such as translation, low reading ability or large print (recommendation 12).					Customers can call and speak to an officer for an update on their case at any time during office hours.
8	<p><u>Homes in Partnership (HIP scheme)</u></p> <p>Cabinet should consider options to enhance the HIP scheme. Improvements could include: Golden handshake, Guarantee repairs, Gas certificates etc. The HIP scheme should also be improved by making support of the tenant an integral part of it (recommendation 13)</p> <p>The Council should</p>	Clarity on what support should be included.	Agreed the development of an Enhanced HIP scheme	Head of Housing	Dec 2015	<p>New EPSL scheme was launched on 1/1/16 and 13 properties are now in use with a further 7 in the pipeline.</p> <p>The structure of the Housing Options service is currently under review and resources need to be allocated to</p>
			Explore opportunities			

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	<p>consider becoming a social lettings agent for both its own properties and those managed by others. Advertising could focus on attracting smaller landlords offering an easier and simpler model to operate their business (recommendation 14)</p> <p>In the event that the Council became a letting agency, the regeneration companies used by the Council could be invited to tender for maintenance contracts, offering an economy of scale. (recommendation 15)</p>					<p>ensure the greatest possible improvement. However, the work being done with private landlords, particularly regarding EPSL, provides a strong foundation to take this forward.</p>
9	<p><u>Local Housing Allowance (LHA)</u></p> <p>The LHA disadvantages Milton</p>	Lack of evidence that Milton Keynes is	Letter to be developed	Head of Housing	Sept 2015	Letter sent to MP's as

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	Keynes as a growing conurbation. The Chief Executive should write to two Milton Keynes members of Parliament, requesting that Milton Keynes is a special case and requesting they pursue the need for Milton Keynes to be considered as such (recommendation 16)	disadvantaged.				requested
10	<p><u>Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP)</u></p> <p>MKDP should be permitted to allow affordable homes to be built on its land without the requirement to seek best value. This would result in a saving to the actual cost of house building and contribute towards relieving of pressure on the use of temporary</p>			MKDP		

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	<p>accommodation. The Cabinet should also use its relationships with MKDP as an opportunity to build affordable housing in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (recommendation 19)</p> <p>The Council should review the stipulated percentage of affordable housing to allow a minimum of 30% affordable housing on Council land. This would enable Milton Keynes Council to determine a higher percentage on the land it currently owns through MKDP (recommendation 20).</p>			<p>Planning</p>		<p>From a planning perspective MKDP acts as any other developer and is already entitled to propose schemes with greater than 30% affordable housing.</p> <p>Ownership is not generally material to planning.</p> <p>Local Plan Policy H9</p>

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						encourages a range of tenures.
11	<p><u>Policy</u></p> <p>The requirements of 30% affordable housing in developments to be reviewed (recommendation 21)</p> <p>In the short term, measures should be taken to ensure that the current requirements for 30% affordable housing in developments in adhered to (recommendation 22).</p> <p>The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) needs to reflect accurately the genuine needs to the area according to current Council policy. Accurate reflection of</p>			Planning		<p>Planning policy matters go through a Cabinet Advisory Group as part of the production of Plan MK. The membership of this group needs to be re-established following the elections but it is expected that a series of meeting will be set up through to year end to move plan production forwards.'</p> <p>Policy H5 states that the proportion of</p>

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	<p>the figures in the SHMA, taking into account changes in policy, may show a change in levels of expected tenures and sizes (recommendation 24)</p>					<p>affordable housing that the council will seek on individual sites will vary depending on site and market conditions. Whilst the strict enforcement of the 30% affordable housing target is supported, the government's approach is to apply significant weight to the viability of developments. Planning Practice Guidance specifically notes that "Where affordable housing contributions are being sought, planning</p>

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						<p>obligations should not prevent development from going forward". Conversely there is no policy mechanism whereby the Council can secure greater than 30% AH if viability is particularly strong. This can only be achieved if purposefully offered by a developer. The introduction of starter homes and the impact these will have on the provision of traditional affordable housing types will make it</p>

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						more difficult to achieve.