

ADDITIONAL AGENDA PAPERS

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

ITEM NO 7b

30 NOVEMBER 2016

7.00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES
CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/scrutiny

For more information about the meeting please contact Elizabeth Richardson on Tel: (01908) 252629 or e-mail: elizabeth.richardson@milton-keynes.gov.uk

CHOICE BASED LETTING

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Service Group: Place

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to give further information on Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and invite feedback and comments from the Housing and Community Committee

Cabinet previously discussed this issue on 14 March 2016, and reached the following decision:-

1. That the potential impact of the introduction of a new allocation 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.
2. That discussions with other Councillors, as appropriate, be continued and a further report be considered by Cabinet in due course.

2. Key Issues**2.1 What is Choice Based Lettings (CBL)?**

CBL allows applicants on a housing register to 'bid' for a property of their choice. Generally, the applicant with the highest priority from those who meet the criteria to bid is allocated the property. Advertising of available properties can be done in a variety of media, most usually the web or newspapers/newsletters. Many organisations using CBL use specialist software which automatically identifies a successful bidder.

Milton Keynes Council is planning on moving to a CBL scheme during 2017 and would welcome the involvement of the Housing & Community Committee in the process.

2.2 Key issues for consideration

- 2.2.1 Allocations Policy – The Council's current Allocation Policy will need to be reviewed but it is likely that minor amendments can be made to ensure it fully complies with CBL requirements.
- 2.2.2 Property Pool - Properties on CBL schemes generally include stock from both the Local Authority and Registered Providers (RP). Some schemes also include properties for private rental but Milton Keynes Council does not propose to include these initially.
- 2.2.3 Sheltered/OAP property – it is proposed that properties for older people should be excluded from the CBL scheme to enable maximum flexibility for those meeting the need for this type of property.
- 2.2.4 Nominations – The Council has nomination rights to 100% of Registered Provider's new build properties and 75% of properties becoming available for re-

let. Nomination protocols are in place but further consultation will be required around the operation of an MKC CBL scheme.

- 2.2.5 Bidding – Controls will need to be put in place to limit the number of bids an applicant may make, and a requirement to make bids within an agreed period of time before removal from the scheme. The bidding process will be dependent upon the software used. Applicants would only able to bid on homes that meet their eligibility criteria.
- 2.2.6 Bidding - The mechanisms of bidding will need to fit with the criteria we use, and we will need to consider limiting the number of bids, and any requirements to make bids within an agreed period of time before removal from the scheme. The bidding process will be dependent upon the software used. Applicants would only able to bid on homes that meet their eligibility criteria.
- 2.2.7 Access – The Council has a number of tenants who are vulnerable and some who may find accessing a computer system complicated. There will be a need to ensure that access for those individuals is possible, and assistance provided.
- 2.2.8 Process – The Council’s current Housing Management software may have the capacity to administer a CBL scheme but appropriate communication and advertising via a web portal will need to be explored.

3. Progress to Date

- A cross party working group met on 26/10/16 to identify key issues and agree on a way forward.
- The current Housing Management software provider, Northgate, have a CBL module, which the Council does not currently use. A demonstration to consider the suitability of this module is booked for 7/12/16.

4. Lessons Learnt

- We will shortly be contacting Local Authorities who have stopped using CBL, to design out issues within the Council’s scheme.

5. Timetable of Activities

- A detailed plan identifying key milestones will be developed over the coming weeks so that progress can be measured. A report will be presented to Cabinet in early 2017 outlining the next steps and implementation plan.
- Initial thoughts and views should be sent to Linda Ellen, Acting Service Director Housing and Community or Cllr Nigel Long.

Background Papers/Useful Links

Choice Based Lettings – Next Steps Cabinet Report 12/10/2015	http://milton-keynes.cmis.uk.com/milton-keynes/Choice based lettings next steps
Choice Based Lettings Cabinet Report 14/03/2016	http://milton-keynes.cmis.uk.com/milton-keynes//choice based lettings