

HOUSING POLICIES IN HIGH RISE BLOCKS

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an overview of the Council and its Partners Policies in relation to housing in High Rise Blocks.

Background

2. On formulating its work programme for 2017/18, the Committee requested they receive a briefing on how the Council allocates properties in high-rise blocks. With increasing pressures on the allocation of properties, Members wanted to ensure that the mix of residents in high-rise blocks were allocated fairly to ensure that all residents feel safe and not at risk in their homes.
3. Cardiff Council has 9 high rise blocks of flats:
 - Lydstep Flats, Gabalfa (3 blocks)
 - Beech House & Sycamore House, Holybush Estate Whitchurch
 - Loudoun and Nelson House, Butetown
 - Channel View, Grangetown
 - The Maelfa, Llanedeyrn

The highest block that the Council has is 16 storeys, with most being 11 storeys high.

4. In addition, there are a number of properties owned by Housing Associations that are classed as high-rise. These are:

Cardiff Community Housing Association:

- Aquila
- Galleon Way
- Hamadryad

All in Cardiff Bay

Wales & West HA

- Caerau Court in Ely
- West Lee, Canton

Issues

5. Attached as **Appendix A** is a copy of the **Allocations Policy** adopted by the Council and its partners. This provides Members with details of how social housing properties are allocated within the City. Members may be particularly interested in the following in relation to this issue:

Supporting Sustainable Communities/Local lettings Initiatives

6. **Section 8** of the Policy states that Local Lettings Initiatives are used to address sustainability and community issues in defined areas to ensure that a housing allocation scheme based on need helps to build sustainable communities, and does not de-stabilise local communities.
7. Its states that *“Local Letting Initiatives are tailored to fit local situations in well-defined communities (such as a particular block of flats, an individual street, or new housing development). Each Initiative is based on detailed analysis of relevant information gathered from Council records, partner Housing Associations, and local Councillors (such as tenant profiling, the incidence of anti-*

social behaviour, and stock turnover in the area).

“As an example, Local Letting Initiatives may prioritise applicants with consideration to their previous tenancy record or employment status. In the latter case, care will be taken not to exclude those who are unable to work. Longer-term initiatives are used to meet the specific housing needs and aspirations of certain groups such as older people.

“Local Letting Initiatives operate for a set time period after which they are reviewed. Depending on the outcome of the review they may be amended, extended or terminated. They are authorised by the Council’s Assistant Director of Housing & Communities (in consultation with the Elected Member with responsibility for housing) or by a Partner Housing Association Senior Officer with responsibility for Housing Management.”

8. **Appendix 3 of the Policy** gives more details on this issue, under ‘Housing Waiting List – Exceptional Letting Arrangements / Criteria and Suspension’

Matching Criteria

Appendix 1 of the Policy gives an indication of the profile of people allocated to particular properties.

- Houses with 2 bedrooms or more will generally only be offered to households including a child/ren.
- Bedsits will be offered to single people under the age of 35 before any other applicants.
- Children of any age may be accommodated in flats and maisonettes on the ground or first floor.
- Flats and maisonettes above the first floor will not be offered to households including a child/ren under the age of 8 (unless a Local Lettings Initiative is in place).

- ***All high-rise units in the city will be subject to local lettings initiatives, set to achieve sustainability.***
- Where a 3, 4 or 5 bedroom house has one very small bedroom (commonly known as the 'boxroom') the property will be allocated based on the fact that only one person would be accommodated in the 'boxroom'.
- Age-restricted accommodation is allocated in line with age and/or support criteria specific to the property / scheme.
- Council bungalows will initially be offered under the Downsizing Scheme. Council one bedroom ground floor flats will only be allocated to applicants who have an assessed medical need for ground floor accommodation.

Way Forward

9. At this meeting, the following witnesses will be in attendance:

- Councillor Lynda Thorne, (Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities)
- Sarah McGill (Director of Communities, Housing and Customer Services)
- Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Communities and Housing)
- Ellen Curtis (Operational Manager, Landlord Services)

Officers will make a presentation to Committee.

10. Members may decide any comments, observations or recommendations they wish to pass to the Cabinet for their consideration following the presentation at this meeting.

Legal Implications

11. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are

implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

12. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i. Consider the information provided in the presentation and the information set out in **Appendix 1**; and
- ii. Decide the way forward with regard to any further scrutiny of this issue.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance and Legal Services

29 November 2017