

<b>Item No.</b> 3	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 10/11/04	<b>MEETING NAME</b> Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Outcome of Allocations Policy Review Consultation Programme and Final Lettings Policy Proposals	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Keith Broxup, Strategic Director of Housing	

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. To consider the results of the Allocations Policy Review Consultation Programme, as set out in Appendix 2 and the final proposals for the Lettings Policy (Appendix 3). This will be presented to the Executive for their final approval on 30 November 2004.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. The previous Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting on 30 March 2004 considered the Allocations Policy Review Board proposals for the new Lettings Policy which introduced choice and changed priorities to assist in increasing re-housings for tenants who are overcrowded and have medical needs. The sub-committee agreed an in-principle endorsement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> draft of the Lettings Policy.
3. The sub-committee further scrutinised the consultation arrangements on 11 May 2004 prior to consultation taking place. At this meeting the sub-committee resolved to consider the results and the final Lettings Policy proposals prior to their final consideration at Executive in November 2004.

### **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

#### **Results of Consultation**

4. A wide-ranging consultation programme was undertaken over the summer to seek the views of residents and a range of agencies. A consultation document was published summarising the proposals and inviting stakeholders to complete a questionnaire. The document also invited comments via direct telephone access, email or post.
5. Given the high priority attached to the consultation a range of methods was used to raise awareness of the move to Choice Based Lettings and allow all interested parties an opportunity to influence the policy. These were:
  - 13,000 'Your Housing Options' newsletters distributed - a copy sent to every applicant/tenant registered on the Housing List in June 2004
  - Southwark Housing News article 'More Choice For You – Your Say' – copy distributed to all Southwark tenants in July 2004
  - Housing Options Bulletin distributed in May 2004 to Neighbourhood Housing Office staff, Homelessness Service and other staff in the Housing Department

- Newspaper articles in South London Press (20/4/04), Dulwich & Streatham Guardian (5/8/04), Southwark News (5/8/04), South London Press (6/8/04)
  - Programme of presentations to neighbourhood forums in June through August 2004
  - Briefing sessions to staff in the Housing Department, including Homelessness Service, Temporary Accommodation, Special Needs and Housing Options
  - Questionnaires and consultation documents issued to Tenants and Residents Associations, Libraries, Faith Groups, Youth Groups, Community Groups, Police, Primary Care Trusts, Shelter, Tenant Management Organisations, Estate Management Boards, Joint Management Boards, Neighbourhood Offices, Partnerships and Forums, Social Services and other Council Offices in July/August 2004
  - 80 voluntary sector agencies offered opportunity to participate in the process
  - 6 Focus Groups for hard to reach groups including two homelessness groups, two Somali groups, African Group and Caribbean Group. A summary report is attached
  - 50 Housing Associations offered opportunity to comment
  - Two presentations to the Southwark Housing Association Group (SOUHAG)
  - New partnership established with the Voluntary Sector to develop a strategy to support vulnerable applicants
  - Information on Southwark Homesearch placed on Southwark Website.
6. Appendix 2 summarises the results of the focus groups, questionnaires and general consultation.

#### **Latest Draft of Lettings Policy**

7. The Allocation Policy Review Board has carefully considered the outcome of the consultation exercise and the suggestions that were received as a result. In addition officers brought to the attention of the Allocations Policy Review Board the suggestions made by the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 30 March 2004; these were considered also by the Board.
8. The latest draft of the Lettings Policy is attached at Appendix 3. Appendix 4 shows the amendments to the policy as a result of the last Housing Scrutiny meeting.

#### **Support for Vulnerable Groups**

9. Appendix 5 outlines the proposed support for vulnerable applicants to ensure that the scheme is as widely accessible as possible.
10. Additionally, the Council is currently working in partnership with specific agencies and Officers (including Southwark Carers, Southwark Mind, Cambridge House Advocacy Project, Supporting People, Centrepoint and Southwark's Equalities Officer) to devise a long term strategy aimed at vulnerable and disadvantaged clients. This includes developing clear working practices to support applicants and offering an ongoing training programme to staff and voluntary agencies to enable them to assist their clients to participate in the bidding process. It is anticipated that this Accessibility Group will continue to work together following the introduction of the new scheme to ensure continuous improvement and that robust support networks are established.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Current Allocations Policy Green Paper 'Quality and Choice – 'A Decent Home For All'	Housing Options Services, Chatelaine House, 186 Walworth Road, SE17 1JJ	Miny Jansen, Housing Options Manager 0207 525 4089

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Audit Trail
Appendix 2	Results of Allocations Policy Review Consultation Programme
Appendix 3	6th Draft Lettings Policy dated October 2004
Appendix 4	Amendments to draft policy
Appendix 5	Support for vulnerable groups

## APPENDIX 1

### Audit Trail

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Keith Broxup, Strategic Director of Housing	
<b>Report Author</b>	Carol Smith, Housing Options Initiatives Manager	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	20 October 2004	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	Yes	No
Chief Finance Officer	No	No
<b>Executive Member</b>	Yes	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services</b>	1/11/2004	