

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 15 June 2021	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet Member for Council Homes and Homelessness
<b>Report title:</b>		Local Letting scheme – Four Squares	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		North Bermondsey	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member;

1. Approve the local lettings scheme area for the re lets of 13 homes located at Four Squares.
2. Agree a maximum of 50% of the properties at Four Squares allocated to existing tenants within the local area.
3. Note the further criteria applied to residents of the local lettings scheme
  - i. The local area is defined as tenants on the immediate area where the development is located:
    - New Place Estate
    - Four Squares Estate
  - ii. Rent arrears of less than four weeks or £50 if claiming housing benefit at point of application and point of offer.
  - iii. Households can only move upon successful completion of pre-tenancy inspection and interview as per section 5.26 of the councils published allocation scheme.
  - iv. Only households assessed in a housing need (bands 1-3) will be allocated a property through the local lettings scheme. Households will be prioritised in existing priority bands and priority stars in accordance with our published allocations scheme.
4. Note that any voids remaining following the local lettings scheme will be used as temporary accommodation for accepted homeless households where the

council have concluded are owed a full duty to provide permanent accommodation.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

5. In March 2009, the executive of the council established the void disposal strategy and criteria for selling certain council void properties to help raise capital funding for the housing investment programme.
6. The criteria for identifying naturally arising void properties in the bedsit, 1 and 2 bedroom category included inappropriate layouts, e.g. where the bathroom is off a bedroom.
7. In line with the void disposal strategy, the council identified 14 x one bedroom and 3 x bedsits properties located on the Four Squares estate to be listed for disposal.
8. On the 20 November 2020 the council amended the void disposal strategy and confirmed a new disposal criteria. This included the comparison of the cost of maintaining the void in our stock against the usage of capital receipts for new build homes. Following agreement of this report, it was deemed to be beneficial to the council to maintain the properties within Southwark's housing stock and therefore not sell the 17 properties located on Four Squares.
9. On the 6 April 2021 the cabinet member for housing confirmed the properties will be re let through a local lettings policy.
10. The 17 properties are located across 4 blocks and as at the 9 April 2021, minor voids works are required on 13 of the properties and it is expected the properties will be ready to let in June 2021.
11. 4 of the properties have already been let as general needs through the Homeseach bidding process, therefore this leaves 13 remaining properties for the local lettings scheme and usage of temporary accommodation.
12. The properties were refurbished to a high specification in order to achieve maximum resale. This included full decoration and the supply of carpets. In addition, fridge freezers have been provided and will be gifted to the moving households.
13. One of the aims of the housing allocations scheme is to enable local tenants

in housing need the ability to continue remain within their communities and not have to re locate outside of the area to find suitable accommodation.

14. Demand of social housing within the borough continues to outstrip supply where there are over 15,000 households registered on the housing register. Recent figures from 1 April 2020 – 1 April 2021 the council received and processed over 6,000 applications while only able to allocate 818 homes through either a nominations to housing associations or Southwark council properties.
15. Southwark's Housing Allocations Scheme sets out the criteria in which properties will be allocated. The scheme also permits Southwark the ability to implement local lettings scheme. Following directions from the lead cabinet member for housing, a policy decision is required to implement a local lettings scheme for the relets of the newly refurbished properties on Four Squares Estate in order to meet the housing needs of tenants within the area.
16. Due to the pandemic, during the financial year 2020/21, the council saw a 48% increase on homeless approaches to the service which further led to a 16% increase in the requirement for temporary accommodation.

### **Local lettings**

17. All lettings for the refurbished homes on four squares will comply with Southwark Council's Housing Allocations scheme.
18. It is proposed that a maximum of 50% of the re lettings of the refurbished homes will be allocated to Southwark Council tenants currently living on the Four Squares and New place Estate. These lettings will be delivered to maximise the housing solutions to the local community and to deliver the Fairer Future promises.
19. The local lettings area covers Four Squares and New Place estates, including the following properties:

#### Four Squares

- Layard Square
- Lockwood Square
- Marden Square
- New place Square

#### New Place Estate

- Jamaica Road 182A-210A

20. The refurbished homes will remain part of the Four Squares Estate consisting of the following properties:

<b>Property size</b>	<b>Number of units</b>
bedsit homes	3
1 bed homes	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

21. Therefore, it is anticipated a maximum of 6 properties will be allocated to existing tenants of Southwark Council living within the area identified within section 14 of this report.
22. As at the 9 April 2021, 55 households located within New Place and Four Squares Estate are registered on our Homeseach Bidding Scheme. Seven of those households have been assessed as having a housing need listed in a priority band and require a one bedroom home. The priority listed households are broken up below:

<b>Priority category</b>	<b>1 bed need</b>
Under occupiers	2
Medical needs	3
Sheltered housing	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>

23. It is anticipated these households will benefit from the newly refurbished homes within the local area.
24. There are no sub households listed on the housing register within the identified 7 households on the Estates. Therefore, it is expected they will free up properties that will be available to other households on the housing list.
25. It is noted the registered households on the housing register in the local area will not likely maximise the allotted 50% local lettings. However, it is anticipated there is sufficient demand to warrant priority given to tenants within the defined local area. An increase in the local lettings area for the new homes will generate unnecessary demand and likely to raise expectations above what can be delivered as part of this local lettings scheme.

26. Letters will also be sent to qualifying tenants on the register in advance to inform them of the upcoming re lettings of the available homes. This will include details of the available homes, qualification criteria listed under section 3 above and dates the properties will be available on the Homesearch bidding website.
27. The local Resident Officer will work with the Housing Applications Team to help identify additional households within the local lettings area whom are in a housing need but not registered on the Homesearch bidding scheme. Such cases will be expedited to permit the ability to bid on the new homes.
28. Upon agreement of the local letting scheme, the first 50% of homes will be advertised to the local tenants, while the remaining properties will be used for temporary accommodation.
29. The information listed on the website will promote the features of the newly refurbished homes and ensure the full benefits of the local lettings scheme is available for the households listed on the Homesearch bidding scheme.

### **Temporary accommodation**

30. The council has a target to reduce the number of households in nightly paid temporary accommodation to 400 by the 31 March 2022. Using the remaining properties following the local lettings process as temporary accommodation will assist in reaching this target.
31. The Housing Supply team has identified potentially 12 accepted homeless households residing outside of the borough and in shared nightly paid temporary accommodation. These households will be priorities for the bedsit properties located on the Four squares.
32. In addition to the above, there are 75 single parent households with one child under the age of 10 residing in self contained nightly paid temporary accommodation located outside of the borough. These households will be prioritised for a move into the remaining one-bedroom properties.
33. This will be allocated in date order unless there is a specific medical or welfare grounds which requires an urgent move into the borough.

### **Resource implications**

34. There are no additional staffing or financial implications.

### **Policy implications**

35. There are no policy implications. Section 7.10.1 of the existing Housing Allocations Scheme permits Southwark the ability to implement a local lettings scheme to aid in stabilising the needs within a specific area. As highlighted within section 7 which identifies the housing needs of the local residents and allocation of properties types, which will benefit from a local lettings approach.

### **Legal implications**

36. There are no legal implications in the implementation of the Local lettings scheme.

### **Finance implications**

37. There are no financial implications in the implementation of the lettings scheme.

### **Community impact statement**

38. The recommendations set out in this report will have a positive impact on the local community by giving existing secure tenants the opportunity to opt to move to a social rent home in their neighbourhood.

### **Resource implications**

39. The operational process will be conducted using the joint staffing resources within the Housing Solutions and Resident Service departments.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Director of Law and Governance**

40. Please refer to paragraph 36.

### **Strategic Director of Finance and Governance**

41. Please refer to paragraph 37.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
London Borough of Southwark Allocation Scheme 2013	Housing Solutions 25 Bournemouth Road	Ian Swift
<a href="https://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s41248/Appendix%20%20Housing%20Allocations%20scheme.pdf">https://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s41248/Appendix%20%20Housing%20Allocations%20scheme.pdf</a>		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Cheryl Russell, Director of Resident Services	
<b>Report Author</b>	Ricky Bellot – Interim Head of Housing Supply	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	14 June 2021	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		14 June 2021

