

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 29 January 2024

**Report Title:** Housing allocations scheme consultation

**Report By:** Sophie Honeysett – Housing Options Team Manager , presented by Chris Hancock – Head of Housing

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Classification:** Open

---

## Purpose of Report

To summarise the feedback the council has received on the proposed changes to the affordable housing allocations scheme. To agree the proposed revised changes which have been informed directly by the consultation process.

## Recommendation(s):

To adopt the changes to the allocations scheme as proposed in the report.

## Reasons for Recommendations:

The council believe that the changes to the allocations scheme will enable better use of the limited affordable housing in the borough to help meet the most acute forms of housing need faced by residents and also help reduce the use of, and therefore the cost of, temporary accommodation to the council.

## Introduction

1. Hastings Borough Council is required to periodically review its Housing Allocation Scheme. The current Housing Allocation Scheme was introduced in 2018.
2. The council intends to amend its Housing Allocation Scheme, so that it continues to comply with legal requirements and good practice standards, as well as make best use of the limited social housing available. It is particularly important for the council to do this now whilst the council is seeing such an unprecedented need for affordable housing in the Borough.
3. The law requires that when a local authority proposes to make major changes to the way social rented housing is allocated, members of the public should be invited to make comments on the proposed changes.

## Context of consultation

---

4. Hastings Borough Council, like all local authorities, has a legal duty to operate a Housing Allocation Scheme. The council's Housing Allocation Scheme uses a choice-based lettings approach to allocating social rented housing. The council advertises available properties as part of their Housing Allocation Scheme and applicants on the scheme register their interest on homes they wish to be considered for. All registered 'bids' of interest are then considered in priority order, based on the applicant's banding and then within the bands, the length of time the applicant has been waiting in that band. The council operates a common IT system to deliver the scheme, with Rother District Council and Wealden District Council, with IT software being provided by a third-party private sector organisation that also hosts a website on which properties available to let are advertised.
5. The council undertook a voluntary transfer of its social housing properties in 1996. These homes are now owned by Southern Housing who manage most of the social homes in the Borough. Although there are 21 registered providers of social housing that collectively hold the 6,300 properties, of which 90% are managed by two registered providers (67% by Southern Housing and a further 23% by Orbit).
6. Social rented housing is 14.3% of all housing in Hastings. As of 30 June 2023, there were 1,536 households on the Hastings Borough Council waiting list.
7. The number of new social housing lettings in Hastings has been reducing year on year from 451 in 2019/20 to 155 from 2022/23. Information on social housing waiting times and the number of lets is on this link: [https://www.hastings.gov.uk/housing/social\\_housing/new/](https://www.hastings.gov.uk/housing/social_housing/new/)
8. The council is required to allocate social rented housing in accordance with statute, statutory guidance, and regulations and orders issued by the UK Parliament and the UK Government. The council has limited powers to determine how social rented housing is allocated in respect of the following matters:

**Qualification** – persons that should qualify or be disqualified from being allocated social rented housing.

**Choice** – extent of choice a person might be entitled to express about the social rented housing they wish to be allocated.

**Priority** – the order in which persons wishing to be allocated social rented housing should be selected for an allocation.

**Refusals** – the number of offers of accommodation a person can refuse.

## Content of consultation

9. The proposed changes to the current allocations policy are across these areas,
  - a) **Financial rules** - Tightening of the financial resources' rules governing eligibility to join the register from a general principle that anyone who could afford to solve their own housing need cannot join the register to setting specific thresholds.

- b) **Bedroom Eligibility** - The current scheme states that one bedroom can be allocated to two children of the same sex under the age of 16. The proposal in the new Scheme is to change the age to 18, so one bedroom will be allocated to two children of the same sex under the age of 18.
- c) **Band A changes for under-occupying households** - A transfer applicant or someone entitled to a statutory succession who would or is currently under-occupying their accommodation by one bedroom or more. The previous scheme only gave Band A priority to households under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms. This is proposed to try and maximise the number of existing social housing tenants downsizing and therefore freeing up larger homes, for which we have a greater need.
- d) **Band A changes for Applicants who are a new (priority need as per homelessness legislation) family unit living within an existing family, who have insecure living arrangements that are not sustainable in the longer term.** This is being brought in to provide an alternative to temporary accommodation for households potentially being made homeless from the family home and help bring down the spend on temporary accommodation. It will enable certain households to remain in the family home with the same priority for rehousing as if they were in temporary accommodation.
- e) **Applicants to whom the council owe a statutory duty to house.** This category is in the existing Scheme as a Band A but it was qualified with 'but where the council has been unable to provide private sector accommodation and the household is resident in bed and breakfast accommodation.' We are proposing to remove the reference to Bed & Breakfast so all forms of temporary accommodation would result in the applicant being in Band A. This is being brought into to try and increase move on from all forms of temporary accommodation and help bring down the spend on temporary accommodation. As the use of all forms for temporary accommodation has increased it would be restrictive to just have this apply to Bed and Breakfast.
- f) **Moving applicants who are typically in supported accommodation but no longer in need for that level of support, and have exceptionally accommodation needs, which cannot be met in the private rented sector from Band A to Band B.** This category will only be used at the discretion of the council in consultation with support agencies. To best target the limited affordable housing available, we are proposing to not automatically give the highest priority to applicants in this situation but to review each applicant's circumstances individually.
- g) **The current local connection criteria are that an applicant is eligible to join the housing register if they have lived in the borough for three of the last five years.** The proposed change to the new scheme would be for the applicant being required to have lived in the borough continuously for the last three years. This is to prioritise housing for applicants who are currently residing in Hastings.
- h) **Change to the right of refusal for properties offered.** This proposal was made to limit the number of refusals applicants can make when directly offered a home which is deemed suitable for their needs. It is deemed necessary given the severe limited supply of affordable housing to pragmatically reduce the amount of choice we can offer, whilst still considering the individual circumstances of the applicant.

## The consultation:

10. The consultation began on 16 October 2023 and ended on 24 November 2023. The council wrote to all the households who are currently on the housing register, and to all partner services, to inform them of the consultation and to invite their feedback. The consultation was widely publicised on the council website and in council newsletters.
11. The council received 155 responses to the consultation. 16 responses were from partner services, and these included responses from Southern Housing, Public Health, Hastings Voluntary Action, Brighton Housing Trust, and Seaview. 139 responses were received from members of the public.

**Summarised results of the consultation:** The table below sets out a summary of the proposed changes and any further amendments made following feedback from the consultation. The rest of the paper sets out in greater detail the level and nature of the consultation responses for each area proposed.

<b>Areas of consultation.</b>	<b>Proposed change (including changes made because of consultation feedback). Sections referenced in more detailed section below.</b>
1. Introduce a savings and earnings cap when assessing who is eligible to join the housing register	<p><b>Section 12-31:</b> Savings – Applicants will not be able to join the housing register who have savings totalling more than £16,000, (unless it is their only source of income).</p> <p>Earnings – Applicants will not be able to join the housing register who’s monthly rent or mortgage payments are less than 32% of the total household income will not be eligible to join the housing register. For example, if the earnings for a household are £2,000 per month, a rent or mortgage payment less than 32% of the household income would be less than £640 per month. This calculation is aligned with the housing charity Shelter’s guidance on what should be the maximum proportion of someone’s income should be spent on housing.</p> <p>The consultation feedback has been considered and the earning cap has been reduced from £60,000 per year to the calculation detailed above, because of the feedback.</p>
2. Change the criteria for local connection through residency	<p><b>Section 32-43:</b> The current local connection criteria are that an applicant is eligible to join the housing register if they have lived in the borough for three of the last five years. This will change in the new scheme to the applicant being required to have</p>

	<p>lived in the borough continuously for the last three years. This is to prioritise housing for applicants who are currently residing in Hastings.</p> <p>The consultation feedback has been considered and the local connection criteria will change to apply to just the applicant, rather than to every member of the household. This is to consider the needs of family members to temporarily move away because of education, employment, or caring commitments.</p>
<p>3. Bedroom eligibility</p>	<p><b>Section 44 – 54:</b> The current scheme states that one bedroom can be allocated to two children of the same gender under the age of 16. Under the new scheme the age will be raised to 18. This is to make better use of social housing stock for larger families.</p>
<p>4. Changes to the banding criteria</p>	<p>The banding criteria will change under the new scheme as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 60-63:</b> A transfer applicant currently under-occupying their accommodation by one bedroom will be changed from band B to band A This is to give existing social housing tenants a priority to move so that more family homes become available.</li> <li>• <b>Section 64-68:</b> A new band A category will be awarded for applicants who are a new (priority need) family unit living within an existing family, who have insecure living arrangements that are not sustainable in the longer term. This can be used as a prevention tool for the home visiting officers.</li> <li>• <b>Section 69-73:</b> Band A will be awarded to applicants to whom the council owe a statutory duty to house, without the applicant having to reside in nightly paid temporary accommodation. This is to encourage applicants to make their own temporary accommodation arrangements where possible if it is safe to do so.</li> <li>• <b>Section 74-81:</b> Band B will be awarded</li> </ul>

	<p>to applicants who have unusually high ongoing accommodation needs, which cannot be met in the private rented sector. This category will only be used at the discretion of the council in consultation with support agencies. Discretion for a direct let will be applied when applicants have been there for a set amount of time and assessed as ready to move on. This change has been proposed to improve the throughput in supported accommodation and widen access to placements for clients in need of accommodation with support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 82-93:</b> Applicants who refuse offers of accommodation can be removed from the housing register and will be suspended from reapplying for twelve months. The decision has been made to deprioritise applicants on the housing register rather than remove them altogether.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Changes to the number of refusals an applicant can make when offered a property</p>	<p><b>Section 94 – 107:</b></p> <p>The new scheme will introduce a tiered number of refusals depending on the banding of the applicant. Band A can make one refusal, Band B two refusals, band C three refusals. This change has been proposed to make best use of available accommodation to all banding groups, and to provide choice and opportunity to homeless households making their own short term accommodation arrangements.</p> <p>The consultation feedback has been considered and transfer applicants in band A will be permitted two refusals, as an incentive for these applicants to move.</p>
<p>6. Introduce a savings and earnings cap when assessing who is eligible to join the housing register</p>	<p><b>Section 12-31:</b></p> <p>Savings – Applicants will not be able to join the housing register who have savings totalling more than £16,000, (unless it is their only source of income).</p> <p>Earnings – Applicants will not be able to join the housing register who’s monthly rent or mortgage payments are less than 32% of the total household income will not be eligible to join the housing register. For example, if the earnings for a household are £2,000 per month,</p>

	<p>a rent or mortgage payment less than 32% of the household income would be less than £640 per month. This calculation is aligned with the housing charity Shelter's guidance on what should be the maximum proportion of someone's income should be spent on housing.</p> <p>The consultation feedback has been considered and the earning cap has been reduced from £60,000 per year to the calculation detailed above, because of the feedback.</p>
<p>7. Change the criteria for local connection through residency</p>	<p><b>Section 32-43:</b> The current local connection criteria are that an applicant is eligible to join the housing register if they have lived in the borough for three of the last five years. This will change in the new scheme to the applicant being required to have lived in the borough continuously for the last three years. This is to prioritise housing for applicants who are currently residing in Hastings.</p> <p>The consultation feedback has been considered and the local connection criteria will change to apply to just the applicant, rather than to every member of the household. This is to consider the needs of family members to temporarily move away because of education, employment, or caring commitments.</p>
<p>8. Bedroom eligibility</p>	<p><b>Section 44 – 54:</b> The current schemed states that one bedroom can be allocated to two children of the same gender under the age of 16. Under the new scheme the age will be raised to 18. This is to make better use of social housing stock for larger families.</p>
<p>9. Changes to the banding criteria</p>	<p>The banding criteria will change under the new scheme as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 60-63:</b> A transfer applicant currently under-occupying their accommodation by one bedroom will be changed from band B to band A This is to give existing social housing tenants a priority to move so that more family homes become available.</li> <li>• <b>Section 64-68:</b> A new band A category</li> </ul>

	<p>will be awarded for applicants who are a new (priority need) family unit living within an existing family, who have insecure living arrangements that are not sustainable in the longer term. This can be used as a prevention tool for the home visiting officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 69-73:</b> Band A will be awarded to applicants to whom the council owe a statutory duty to house, without the applicant having to reside in nightly paid temporary accommodation. This is to encourage applicants to make their own temporary accommodation arrangements where possible if it is safe to do so.</li> <li>• <b>Section 74-81:</b> Band B will be awarded to applicants who have unusually high ongoing accommodation needs, which cannot be met in the private rented sector. This category will only be used at the discretion of the council in consultation with support agencies. Discretion for a direct let will be applied when applicants have been there for a set amount of time and assessed as ready to move on. This change has been proposed to improve the throughput in supported accommodation and widen access to placements for clients in need of accommodation with support.</li> <li>• <b>Section 82-93:</b> Applicants who refuse offers of accommodation can be removed from the housing register and will be suspended from reapplying for twelve months. The decision has been made to deprioritise applicants on the housing register rather than remove them altogether.</li> </ul>
<p>10. Changes to the number of refusals an applicant can make when offered a property</p>	<p><b>Section 94 – 107:</b> The new scheme will introduce a tiered number of refusals depending on the banding of the applicant. Band A can make one refusal, Band B two refusals, band C three refusals. This change has been proposed to make best use of available accommodation to all banding groups, and to provide choice and opportunity to homeless households making their own short</p>



	term accommodation arrangements.
--	----------------------------------

	The consultation feedback has been considered and transfer applicants in band A will be permitted two refusals, as an incentive for these applicants to move.
--	---

## Details of consultation responses question by question and the council's proposed response.

### Question 1. Financial resources (existing scheme and proposed changes)

12. Question one of the consultation relates to an applicant's qualification to join the housing register on the basis of the applicant's savings and earnings.

#### The current scheme states:

13. Applicants who have sufficient financial resources are not eligible to join the housing register.

14. Sufficient financial resources are defined as the following:

15. The household income and/or savings would be sufficient to enable them to afford to purchase accommodation on the open market or secure private rented sector accommodation locally which is affordable and suitable for the household requirements.

16. Or the household owns a residential property (outright or with a mortgage) that would accommodate the household or could be sold to generate income to resolve their housing needs.

#### The proposed new scheme states:

17. That a savings and earnings cap is in place to ensure that allocations are made to applicants who are not able to resolve their own housing situation.

18. The new scheme stipulates that an applicant or a member of their household who has savings of £16,000 or more (exemptions apply to any applicant who is a survivor of domestic abuse and Armed Forces personnel and accepted homeless households) will be excluded from joining the housing register.

19. The new scheme stipulates that an applicant or a member of their household who is earning £60,000 or more in one tax year (exemptions apply to any applicant who is a survivor of domestic abuse and Armed Forces personnel and accepted homeless households) will be excluded from joining the housing register.

20. Discretion will be operated where an applicant exceeds the limits above but have significant costs related to their or their household's health or care needs.

21. These changes have been proposed to improve the availability of homes to applicants who do not have the financial means to access other accommodation.

**The consultation feedback was:**

22. 108 responded in agreement with the proposed change. 25 responded they were not in agreement with the proposed change, and 22 responded they were unsure.

23. In the comments section of the feedback most responses stated that the proposed income and savings thresholds were too high. This was a theme across the responses, including those who had responded 'yes' in agreement with the proposed change.

**Recommendation:**

24. The recommendation, informed by the consultation responses, is to change the thresholds for savings and earnings from what is set out in the current scheme, and to provide a set figure for the threshold. This provides clarity and transparency to the applicant. However, this figure should be lower than the amounts proposed in the draft new scheme of £16,000 for savings and £60,000 in earnings.

25. Consideration has been given to the savings and earnings thresholds set by neighboring council's and the recommendation is to change the criteria to the following:

26. Savings - Applicants who have savings totaling more than £16,000, (unless it is their only source of income), will not be eligible to join the housing register.

27. Earnings - Applicants who's monthly rent or mortgage payments are less than 32% of the total household income will not be eligible to join the housing register. For example, if the earnings for a household are £2,000 per month, a rent or mortgage payment less than 32% of the household income would be less than £640 per month. This calculation is aligned with the housing charity Shelter's guidance on what should be the maximum proportion of someone's income should be spent on housing.

28. Exemptions apply to any applicant who is a survivor of domestic abuse and Armed Forces personnel, accepted homeless households, and where an applicant exceeds the limits above but have significant costs related to their or their household's health or care needs.

**Question 2. Local connection through residency (existing scheme and proposed changes)**

29. Question two of the consultation relates to qualification to join the housing register based on the applicant's local connection to the borough on the basis of their residency.

**30. The current scheme states:**

31. A local residency connection will only be established where the applicant has resided in the Hastings Borough for at least 3 out of the last 5 years or for at least 5 out of the last 10 years.

**32. The proposed new scheme states:**

33. An applicant will be disqualified from joining the scheme if an applicant or a member of their household does not have a minimum of three years current continuous connection to the Local Authority area because of residence. Other consideration is given to employment and other special reasons.

34. This change has been proposed to improve the chances of access to housing for applicants currently living in the borough.

**35. The consultation feedback was:**

36. 105 responded in agreement with the proposed change. 32 responded they were not in agreement with the proposed change, and 18 responded they were unsure.

37. In the comments section of the feedback responses referenced the need to move for members of a household due to education, employment, caring responsibilities, and domestic abuse.

**Recommendation:**

38. The recommendation, informed by the consultation responses, is to adopt the local connection criteria to the Local Authority area of a minimum of three years continuous residence in the borough.

39. However, as identified in the consultation responses members of the applicant's household may need to move away for work, or to go to university for example. So, the criteria should be changed so that the residency criteria apply only to the applicant, and not to all members of the household as was proposed.

40. Consideration is already given in the allocations scheme to applicants in employment, or applicants who have experienced domestic abuse.

**Question 3. Bedroom eligibility (existing scheme and proposed changes)**

41. Question three of the consultation relates to the bedroom entitlement for applicants with two children of the same gender.

**42. The current scheme states:**

43. One bedroom can be allocated to two children of the same gender under the age of 16.

**44. The proposed new scheme states:**

45. One bedroom can be allocated to two children of the same gender under the age of 18.

46. This change has been proposed to improve the availability of family homes to larger families.

**47. The consultation feedback was:**

48. 100 responded in agreement with the proposed change. 34 responded they were not in agreement with the proposed change, and 21 responded they were unsure.

49. In the comments section of the feedback responses referenced that the consideration should be given to the mental and physical health needs of those sharing, the size of the room, transgender children, and a potential increase in youth homelessness if families were placed under additional strain.

#### **Recommendation:**

50. The recommendation, informed by the consultation responses, is to adopt the proposal to increase the age that two children of the same gender can share a bedroom to under the age of 18.

51. Consideration will be given to any medical evidence or other evidence pertaining to the household's wellbeing that supports the need for two children of the same gender under the age of 18 not to share a bedroom.

#### **Question 4. Changes to the banding criteria (existing scheme and proposed changes)**

52. Question four of the consultation relates to how the council prioritizes applicants for an allocation of social rented housing by using a banding system.

53. Bands are used in the order of A to D. Band A has the highest priority and Band D the lowest.

54. Where two or more applicants might have the same priority in the same band, priority is awarded by the date their application was first received by the Local Authority.

55. Several changes are proposed to the banding criteria as follows:

##### **The current scheme states:**

56. A transfer applicant currently under-occupying their accommodation by one bedroom is awarded a band B.

##### **The proposed new scheme states:**

57. A transfer applicant currently under-occupying their accommodation by one bedroom is awarded a band A.

58. The change to the banding of those under-occupying by one bedroom or more has been made to encourage under-occupying households to move, to improve access to larger family sized accommodation for other applicants on the housing register.

##### **The current scheme states:**

59. There is no band reason for homeless priority need households who can make temporary arrangements to stay with family, as an alternative to being placed by the council in expensive emergency temporary accommodation.

**The proposed new scheme states:**

60. Applicants will be given a band A who are a new (priority need) family unit living within an existing family, who have insecure living arrangements that are not sustainable in the longer term. E.g., Where someone is living in the family home who has had a child themselves and this has resulted in overcrowding and tensions in the family home. This is for verified cases following a home visit, consideration of all housing options, and allocated at the discretion of the Council. Applicants will also need confirmation from their family that they can reside in the family home for a minimum of one year from the date of application.

61. This change has been proposed to recognize the need to move for newly formed priority need households, whilst promoting the prevention of homelessness and removing the need for temporary accommodation.

**The current scheme states:**

62. Band A will be awarded to applicants to whom the council owe a statutory duty to house but where the council has been unable to provide private sector accommodation and the household is resident in bed and breakfast accommodation.

**The proposed new scheme states:**

63. Band A will be awarded to applicants to whom the council owe a statutory duty to house.

64. The requirement for an applicant to be resident in bed and breakfast accommodation has been removed to encourage applicants to consider alternative temporary accommodation arrangements if it is appropriate and safe to do so.

**The current scheme states:**

65. Band A will be awarded to applicants who have unusually high ongoing accommodation needs, which cannot be met in the private rented sector. This category will only be used at the discretion of the council in consultation with support agencies.

**The proposed new scheme states:**

66. Band B will be awarded to applicants who have unusually high ongoing accommodation needs, which cannot be met in the private rented sector. This category will only be used at the discretion of the council in consultation with support agencies. Discretion for a direct let will be applied when applicants have been there for a set amount of time and assessed as ready to move on.

67. This category was previously in Band A, but with no provision for a direct let.

68. The change has been proposed to encourage applicants who have been assessed as ready to move on from support accommodation to look for alternative accommodation options including private rented accommodation.
69. Where it has not been possible for an applicant to secure alternative accommodation, the applicant will be made a one-off offer of suitable social housing on a direct let basis. Best endeavors will be made to meet the needs of the applicant where housing availability allows.
70. This change has been proposed to improve the throughput in supported accommodation and widen access to placements for clients in need of accommodation with support.

**The current scheme states:**

71. Applicants who refuse offers of accommodation can be removed from the housing register and will be suspended from reapplying for twelve months.

**The proposed new scheme states:**

72. Band D will be awarded to applicants from Band A, B or C, who have exhausted their right to refuse an allocation of social rented housing.
73. The change has been proposed to deprioritize rather than exclude applicants from the register.

**The consultation feedback was:**

74. 99 people responded in agreement with the proposed changes. 21 responded they were not in agreement with the proposed change, and 35 responded they were unsure.
75. In the comments section of the feedback responses referenced that they were not sure of the impact that these changes would have which is reflected in the higher responses of 'unsure'.
76. Other comments included that prioritization of transfer occupants under occupying by one bedroom was a good idea, and asked whether additional incentives could be provided to encourage these applicants to move.
77. The proposed change to the banding of applicants in supported accommodation was also considered positive.
78. It was also queried whether a band reason could be created for applicants who had received either a section 21 or section 8 notice to leave their current accommodation.

**Recommendation:**

79. The recommendation, informed by the consultation responses is to adopt the proposed changes to the banding criteria, and to permit transfer applicants two refusals on properties as an incentive for these applicants to move.

## **Question 5. Changes to the number of property refusals when a property is offered (existing scheme and proposed changes)**

80. Question five of the consultation relates to what happens if applicants refuse and offer of accommodation.

### **The current scheme states:**

81. If applicants refuse three offers of suitable accommodation within a 12-month period, they will be removed from the register and they will be suspended from reapplying to the housing register for a further 12 months from the date of the third refusal.

### **The proposed new scheme states:**

82. Applicants will be permitted a different number of refusals according to their banding, as follows:

Band A – Applicants are entitled to one refusal of a reasonable offer of accommodation.

Band B – Applicants are entitled to two refusals of a reasonable offer of accommodation.

Band C – Applicants are entitled to three refusals of a reasonable offer of accommodation.

Band D – Applicants are entitled to one refusals of a reasonable offer of accommodation.

83. Applicants from Band A, B or C, who have exhausted their right to refuse an allocation of social rented housing will be placed into Band D.

84. An applicant who is homeless or owed a homelessness duty will have no entitlement to a refusal of a reasonable offer of accommodation, except for applicants who are homeless and have chosen not to be provided with accommodation directly by the council.

85. This change has been proposed to make best use of available accommodation to all banding groups, and to provide choice and opportunity to homeless households making their own short term accommodation arrangements.

### **The consultation feedback was:**

86. 92 responded in agreement with the proposed changes. 21 responded they were not in agreement with the proposed changes, and 42 responded they were unsure.

87. In the comments section of the feedback responses were predominantly in favour of giving just one offer of accommodation across all bands.

88. There were also comments that transfer tenants who are in band A as they are under occupying a social housing property should be given the opportunity to have more than one refusal, as an incentive for these applicants to downsize into a smaller home.

### **Recommendation:**

89.. The recommendation, informed by the consultation responses, is to adopt the proposed changes to the number of permitted property refusals to all banding groups, with additional refusals permitted for band A applicants who are transfer tenants who are under occupying a social housing property.

**Public Exemption: Not applicable.**

**Timetable of Next Steps**

1. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Review IT requirements	<p>1. Request a quote to Locata for the changes.</p> <p>Locata is the database that the council uses as the electronic application and client files system.</p> <p>2. Re-tender for the IT contract. The contract with Locata expires in June 2024, and a re-tender process will need to be conducted. A decision will need to be made whether to make changes to the existing system or wait until the re-tender is completed.</p>	<p>January 2024</p> <p>No fixed date agreed. Meetings will be held in January 2024 to finalise the tender document.</p>	<p>Tracy Caister</p> <p>Procurement hub, housing options team managers, Wealden and Rother councils (the Locata service is currently a partnership with these councils)</p>



Review draft allocations scheme document for readability	This will need to be completed before implementation	No fixed date	Sophie Honeysett and communications team
Review staff capacity to reassess current housing register applications	The proposed restructure of the housing options team will be consulted on in quarter four of 2023-2024	Quarter four 2023-2024	Chris Hancock
Review method and timescale of implementation with the communications team and the community contact centre	A decision will need to be made as to whether all existing cases will be reassessed against the new scheme, or whether all cases will be closed and everyone will be asked to reapply. Either decision will have an impact on customer contact	No fixed date. This will be determined by the timescale for the IT contract re-tender, and staff capacity	Chris Hancock Kevin Brookshaw Sophie Honeysett

---

## Wards Affected

All.

---

## Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 43

### Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness Y.

If applicants are removed from the housing register, there is potential for these applicants to complain or challenge the changes.

Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17) N

Risk Management Y.

Not all respondents agreed with the proposed changes, there may be an increase in complaints and enquiries to councillors if the proposed changes are implemented. The implementation of the changes will be reliant on an upgrade or change to existing case management IT systems.

Environmental Issues & Climate Change                      N

Economic/Financial Implications                              Y

The implementation of the changes will be reliant on an upgrade or change to existing case management IT systems. Additional staff resources will be needed to assess cases against the new scheme.

Human Rights Act    N

Organisational Consequences                                      Y

A decision will need to be made as to whether all existing cases will be reassessed against the new scheme, or whether all cases will be closed, and everyone will be asked to reapply. Either decision will have an impact on customer contact, and this will need to be managed in partnership with the communications team and the community contact centre.

Local People's Views    Y.

Not all respondents agreed with the proposed changes, there may be an increase in complaints and enquiries to councillors if the proposed changes are implemented.

Anti-Poverty    N

Legal    N

---

### **Additional Information**

None

---

### **Officer to Contact**

Officer; Chris Hancock  
Email; [chris.hancock@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:chris.hancock@hastings.gov.uk)