



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8 December 2022

Report of: Councillor Robert Reid
Cabinet Member for Housing and
Property

Progress report on Choice-based lettings in line with the Housing Allocation Policy

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

This report seeks to update the Committee on progress in relation to the implementation of Choice-Based Lettings following the adoption of the Housing Allocation Policy.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the latest progress of the choice-based lettings process and that full procurement procedures have been followed.
2. The Committee recommends to Cabinet the procurement of the Choice-Based Lettings system to meet the requirements of our Housing Allocations Policy.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Housing that meets the needs of all residents

Which wards are impacted?

All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The costs associated with the implementation and annual licence costs for the additional module will be met from the Housing Revenue Account budgets.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 Choice Based Lettings is an established legally compliant method for the allocation of Social Housing.

Completed by: Alan Robinson, Monitoring Officer

Safeguarding

- 1.3 The adopted Allocations Policy ensures those residents most at need will have priority when it comes to the housing register. The Choice Based Lettings system shall enable visibility of all homes available to bid on, increasing choice and transparency.

Completed by: Craig Spence, Acting Director of Housing

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2020-2023 to provide “Housing that meets the needs of all residents”. As a stock-retained local authority, the Council has around 5,900 properties.
- 2.2 The Council currently has a register of around 1500 live applications. In 2021/22, 327 properties in the Council’s own housing stock were re-let, and a further 189 allocations were made in respect of other social housing providers within South Kesteven.
- 2.3 The Housing Allocations Policy approved by Cabinet in July 2022 placed an emphasis on a change in our approach to a Choice Based Lettings scheme (CBL). Enabling the main principles within the policy listed below to be delivered:
- be transparent and easily understood by customers, staff, Elected Members and partner organisations
 - help prevent homelessness and support the Council’s homelessness strategy
 - widen choice and be more accessible
 - reflect local needs and encompass rural sensitivities
 - make the most effective use of the housing stock
 - ensure equality of opportunity in accessing the Housing Register
 - be easy to administer
 - to ensure customers are treated fairly, individually and in accordance with the commitment to equality and diversity.
 - promote mobility
 - be open and accountable
 - help tackle low demand
 - promote sustainable tenancies by ensuring adequate support is available for vulnerable people
 - to provide feedback to Customers about homes let through the choice-based lettings scheme

System Procurement

- 2.4 To enable the Council to implement CBL we were required to procure a system to manage the CBL process. The procurement process was initiated in September 2022. Welland Procurement were engaged in the process from the beginning to ensure compliance. The procurement was undertaken via the G-Cloud, digital marketplace framework.

- 2.5 Following searches of the framework utilising our identified key criteria there was only one supplier option, which enables us to direct award the contract to that supplier. The key criteria agreed for use on the search by the Assistant Director of Housing, Head of Housing and Housing Options Team Manager can be found as Appendix 1 – CBL Framework Search Criteria.
- 2.6 Following identification of the supplier, they have delivered a system demonstration, which reassured us of the viability and capability of the system along with an implementation timeline. The implementation shall require dedicated resource which we have a plan to deliver against.
- 2.7 The contract award is due to be presented at Cabinet in December 2022, if this contract award is approved, we shall progress with the implementation with an indicative timeline shown in Appendix 2 – CBL Implementation Indicative Timeline.

Implementation

- 2.8 There are three key stages to the proposed implantation of CBL, these are, System Configuration, Applicant re-registration and Go-Live.
- 2.9 System Configuration, this is where we tailor the system to match the needs of our allocation policy, compiling the questions and subsequent evidence needed to enable the correct banding of every applicant on the register.
- 2.10 Applicant re-registration, this shall be a 10-week process whereby all existing applicants shall be contacted and advised of their need to re-register for CBL. The applications shall be input online by the applicant with an offer for those unable to complete online for an officer to aid with this process. During this period our Housing Register shall be closed for new applications apart from those most at need to enable the effective transition from one system to another. During this time we shall of course continue to re-let properties from the existing Housing Waiting List.
- 2.11 Go-Live, this is planned for Quarter 2, 2023. This is the point in time when all properties and subsequent allocations shall be undertaken via the CBL system. I suggest that at a future Committee meeting post the Go-Live we present the system and how it works to provide an overview and understanding for members.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 This report informs Committee of the progress made towards the implementation of the adopted Allocations Policy.
- 3.2 To enable Choice Based Lettings, the Council requires a system to manage this process, a fully compliant procurement process has been followed.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 The report provides committee with an update on the implementation of CBL in line with the recently adopted Allocations Policy.
- 4.2 A compliant procurement process has been followed resulting in a supplier being identified that can fulfil our requirements.

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – CBL Framework Search Criteria
Appendix 2 – CBL Implementation Indicative Timeline