

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7th July 2009

Report by Councillor Leonie Cooper, Labour Speaker on Housing, on the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.

SUMMARY

This report sets out a proposal for a minor alteration to the Council's current Housing Allocation Scheme, proposed in light of the decision made at the April 2009 Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee to not proceed with a Choice-Based Lettings Scheme.

1. **Recommendation.** This report is submitted to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee for decision, and the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendation in paragraph 3.
2. If the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or additional recommendations on this report, it is proposed that these be reported to the Executive for consideration.
3. The Executive are recommended to approve:-
 - (a) That all Housing Applicants registered on any of the Housing Waiting or Transfer Lists, be allocated an additional 10 Points for every year they wait.

INTRODUCTION

4. At the April 2009 meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, consideration was given to paper 09-377, entitled Options for adopting a Choice-Based Letting Scheme. The paper set out in some detail the problems attendant on such schemes, and particularly identified a number of problems that would flow from the adoption of such a scheme
5. After due consideration of the paper, the overwhelming view of the Committee was that the Council should not adopt a Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme. However, this does mean that one of the advantages of CBL schemes remains unavailable to applicants in Wandsworth, and this paper and the recommendation aim to provide that advantage, within the existing Housing Allocations System which is otherwise fully retained.

ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR WAITING

6. Whilst the Council makes strenuous efforts to make the likelihood of being made an offer in any area crystal clear to housing applicants (see the Housing Allocation Scheme, and Access to Social Housing, a Guide to the availability of rented properties in the borough) most applicants on the waiting and transfer lists believe that length of wait results in them moving up the queue.

7. Whilst it is not proposed that length of wait become the sole arbiter of an applicant's place on the queue, it is proposed that additional points be given for each year waited. This will assist those applicants who are overcrowded and suffering extreme strain on family life and mental health in moving toward the possibility of being made an offer.

8. It is proposed that 10 Additional Points be given for each year an applicant waits for a transfer or their first offer. This would assist in moving up the queue, but would not overwhelm other factors which attract higher levels of points.

9. Such a change to the Housing Allocation Scheme will be seen as transparent and fair by applicants, who are currently confused that after waiting for many years and being told (for example) that they are no.12 in the queue are then told that they are no.24 (for example). On top of the strain of living in substandard or overcrowded conditions, this can be extremely distressing for applicants. Additional points for waiting will not prevent this from happening, but will assist applicants in coming to terms with what can be very lengthy waiting periods.

Councillor Leonie Cooper
22nd June 2009

Background papers

Paper 09-377, Options for adopting choice based lettings.

The Housing Department's Housing Allocation Scheme.

Access to Social Rented Housing, A Guide to the Availability of rented properties in the Borough.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case it can be requested from the Committee Secretary.