

		<b>AGENDA ITEM NO.</b>																						
<b>Report Cover Sheet</b>																								
<b>Name of Meeting:</b>		Executive																						
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>		25 <sup>th</sup> March 2008																						
<b>Report Title:</b>		Warwick District Council HomeChoice Review																						
<b>Summary of report:</b>		To agree the supplementary changes to the HomeChoice Allocation Scheme following the review carried out in August 2006 and the subsequent Allocation of Accommodation Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities issued in January 2007.																						
<b>For Further Information Please Contact (report author):</b>		Alison Simmons Head of Housing Strategy																						
<b>Business Unit:</b>		Housing Strategy																						
<b>Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Policy Framework:</b>		No																						
<b>Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budgetary framework:</b>		No																						
<b>Wards of the District directly affected by this decision:</b>		All																						
<b>Key Decision?</b>		Yes																						
<b>Included within the Forward Plan?</b>		Yes																						
<b>Is the report Private &amp; Confidential</b>		No																						
<b>Background Papers:</b>		Executive Report – 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2006 Review of HomeChoice Final Proposals (Appendix 2)																						
<b>Consultation Undertaken</b> Below is a table of the Council's regular consultees. However not all have to be consulted on every matter and if there was no obligation to consult with a specific consultee they will be marked as n/a.																								
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Consultees</th> <th>Yes/ No</th> <th>Who</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Other Committees</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Cultural and Social Policy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ward Councillors</td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Portfolio Holders</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Councillor Michael Doody</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Councillors</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Councillor Mrs. Moira-Ann Grainger</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Warwick District Council recognised Trades Unions</td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Warwick District</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Housing Services</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Consultees	Yes/ No	Who	Other Committees	Yes	Cultural and Social Policy	Ward Councillors	No		Portfolio Holders	Yes	Councillor Michael Doody	Other Councillors	Yes	Councillor Mrs. Moira-Ann Grainger	Warwick District Council recognised Trades Unions	No		Other Warwick District	Yes	Housing Services
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Council Service Areas		
Project partners	No	
Parish/Town Council	No	
Highways Authority	No	
Residents	No	
Citizens Panel	No	
Other consultees	None	
<b>Officer Approval</b> With regard to officer approval all reports must be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance Services and Legal Services.		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Relevant Director(s)		Mary Hawkins
Chief Executive		Chris Elliott
CMT		
Section 151 Officer		Mary Hawkins
Legal		Simon Best
Finance		Mike Snow
<b>Final Decision?</b>		
<b>Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)</b>		

## 1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1.1 That the attached Warwick District Council's HomeChoice Allocation Scheme (Appendix 1) is adopted by the Council and subject to ICT implementation will commence in May 2008.

## 2. REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The Council's Choice Based Letting Scheme HomeChoice became operational in November 2005, and it was agreed at the time of implementation to review the scheme after six months.

This report takes forward the work previously carried out to review the scheme in August 2006 following the consultation with housing applicants and a range of social agencies within the District (Appendix 2).

In addition to the Allocation of Accommodation Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities published in January 2007 supplementary changes were necessary.

- 2.2 The main changes to the Scheme are outlined below:-

- 2.2.1 The Scheme will operate with four bands:-

<b>Band 1</b>
Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 1:-
1. Homeless applicants where the Council has accepted a duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.
2. Medical Priority is granted in exceptional circumstances, when the applicant or a member of the applicant's household has an immediately life threatening or progressive condition which is seriously affected by their current housing.
3. People moving on from Supported Housing Projects.
4. Special Agency Referral such as Warwickshire County Council Adult Health and Community Services, Children, Young People and Families Services and Probation. Referrals will be made under agreement with the departments concerned.
5. Special Cases.
<p>All applicants in Band 1 will have this priority for 16 weeks, and if not housed, their case will be reviewed. In some instances priority cases may be extended or one reasonable offer of suitable accommodation will be made.</p> <p>An applicants 16 week period will commence from the date they are registered in Band 1. If an applicant no longer fulfils the criteria for Band 1 they will be moved to the appropriate Band and revert back to the original date of registration.</p>

<p><b>Band 2</b></p> <p>Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 2:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Medical and Welfare Priority may be awarded when an applicant or a member of the households current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on their medical condition and welfare but whose need to move is less urgent.</li> <li>2. Households in priority need and threatened with Homelessness through no fault of their own (Homelessness Prevention).</li> <li>3. Non-priority Homeless applicants.</li> <li>4. Households who are overcrowded (bedroom deficiency).</li> <li>5. Households subject to a Demolition/Closing Order.</li> <li>6. Existing Council and RSL tenants within the District who are under-occupying their current accommodation and would move to smaller accommodation that would be more suitable to meet their change in need.</li> <li>7. Armed Forces applicants with 3 years or more service and having lived in the District for 2 years, within 12 weeks of their discharge date.</li> <li>8. Succession Cases.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Band 3</b></p> <p>Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 3:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Households in priority need who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally.</li> <li>2. People who are neither an owner or tenant.</li> <li>3. Families with young children under 16 years living on the second floor or above (ground and first floor are acceptable)</li> <li>4. Applicants in housing need without a local connection.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Band 4</b></p> <p>Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 4:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All applicants without a housing need with or without a local connection including transfers.</li> <li>2. Owner Occupiers.</li> </ol>

2.2.2 This allows the Council to meet the Government Legislation and Allocation of Accommodation Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities to ensure that reasonable preference is given to those in most housing need.

2.2.3 The Scheme will include quotas for lettings to Bands 1, 2 and 3, this will enable a greater spread of available properties to each band, but ensuring there is sufficient properties for Band 1 for the Council to meet its statutory duties. 50% of the properties will be advertised for Band 1, 30% for Band 2 and 20% for Band 3.

- 2.2.4 Lettings will be monitored on a quarterly basis so that targets can be altered should there be any risk that the reasonable preference requirements will not be met.
- 2.2.5 The Scheme will require the need to establish an applicant's local connection in meeting one of the following:-
- Has resided in the district through choice as their only or principal home for at least 6 months out of the last 12 months, or at least 3 years out of the last 5 years
  - Is employed in the District on a permanent paid basis, other than of a casual nature
  - Has a family connection in the District by virtue of a close family association, that is, a son, daughter, brother, sister, mother or father who is over 18 and has lived in the Warwick District for at least 5 years, before the date of application, occupying accommodation as their only or principal home.
- 2.2.6 All applicants will be assessed according to their need whether they have or have not got a local connection and banded accordingly. A higher degree of preference will be given to applicants with a local connection to the District.
- 2.2.7 Although applicants are permitted to bid for properties one bedroom in excess of their need, when letting preference will be given to the applicant who has the greatest need for that size of property
- 2.2.8 The Policy will allow applicants to request a review of their allocated banding and it is proposed that the appeals are considered by the Housing Advice Liaison Officer and the Housing Advice Manager.
- 2.2.9 Local Letting Policies will be considered for both urban and rural areas to make the best use of new and existing stock and to create sustainable communities. Our Partner landlords may choose to operate a local lettings policy for particular schemes or types of housing, giving preference to specific groups of applicants. Where this is the case, advertising will clearly indicate which applicants will be given preference.
- 2.2.10 Further research and consultation with stakeholders will be undertaken to ensure that all employment groups who are essential to the economic well being of Warwick District Council are identified and prioritised within the Scheme as necessary.
- 2.2.11 The South Housing Market Area Partnership were successful in its bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government for funding to enable the Wychavon HomeChoice scheme to be rolled out across the sub-region. The Choice Based Lettings Scheme HomeChoice Plus will be launched this year. The Council needs to give consideration into the feasibility and benefits of joining Phase 2 of the Scheme.

### **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 The HomeChoice Scheme required updating in accordance with Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 and the Accommodation Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities issued in January 2007 and the need to have an open and transparent Choice Based Lettings Scheme in place by 2010.

### **4. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 A budget of £7,000 has been allocated to carry out any alterations to the IT system and for promoting the changes in the new HomeChoice Scheme.
- 4.2 Any additional resources from the allocated budget will be funded through contributions from the Joint Commissioning Partners.

### **5. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The Corporate Strategy - Top 21 Target – CS2 Priority 3: To use current stock as effectively as possible

The Corporate Strategy - Top 21 Target - CS6 Priority 2: To understand and support the differing needs of our communities focusing support where it is most needed.

The Housing Strategy – Implementation of a Choice Based Letting Scheme.