

## **Regeneration, Culture and Environment**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**14 August 2025**

### **Housing Allocations Policy Review 2025**

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#### **Summary**

This report introduces the draft Housing Allocations Policy 2025 which replaces current Housing Allocations Policy, last reviewed in 2019. The Housing Allocations Policy sets out how Medway Council allocates available social housing stock in the Medway area, as well as who is able to access the housing register. A summary of changes to the policy is set out in appendix 1.

#### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1. The Committee is invited to comment on the proposed Housing Allocations Policy 2025, and to note that the Cabinet will be asked to agree the Housing Allocations Policy on 23 September 2025, for adoption from 1 April 2026.

#### **2. Budget and policy framework**

- 2.1. The Draft Housing Allocations Policy has been developed in line with the Council Plan and sets out the Council's contribution to meeting the aims of the Council Plan with respect to Housing. The approval of the Allocations Policy is a matter for Cabinet.
- 2.2. In line with Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, it is a requirement for Local Authorities to follow statutory guidance when setting out a policy for how social housing will be allocated. This must have regard to the Local Authorities' own Homelessness Prevention and Tenancy Strategies.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1. Medway Council's current Allocations Policy was agreed in 2019. It was recognised that an updated Allocations Policy was required to reflect the changes in local demand for social housing and incoming national legislative changes. The Housing Allocations Policy details the Council's planned

response to how we let Social Housing to households on our Housing Register. The policy is designed to meet all legal requirements and support the objectives of Medway's Housing Strategy and to Provide a fair and transparent system that can be easily understood and trusted by people in the prioritisation of Social Housing.

- 3.2. To ensure that we captured a broad spectrum of views on the local picture, with its pressures and opportunities, in March 2025 we ran two pre-draft consultation workshops which included Stakeholders from a range of Registered Housing Providers, Supported Housing, and internal teams at Medway. This input has allowed us better understanding of the barriers of the current policy, and the fairest way to deal with social housing allocations. With agreement of RCE DMT, Medway Housing Services will be publicising the draft for consultation with Medway Residents, Stakeholders and Elected Members.
- 3.3. The public consultation will include an online survey, with a number of drop-in sessions held at the libraries to support people to complete the survey. We have also held a focus group session with the HRA's tenant panel to tackle some of the more complex aspects of this policy.
- 3.4. Responses to the consultation and focus group will then be analysed by officers within strategic housing services, supported by Business Intelligence colleagues and any potential changes to the draft identified and a log of responses to consultation and any answers to questions raised will be summarised in the report to Cabinet.

#### 4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The draft policy has been developed based upon a comprehensive review and consideration of:
  - 4.1.1. The national and local context;
  - 4.1.2. An analysis of the numbers of people currently on the housing register and their bandings;
  - 4.1.3. Consultation with stakeholders.
- 4.2. Although much of the banding criteria has not changed, there have been some other significant changes to how the bandings are set out and eligibility to access the register.
- 4.3. Some banding changes include removing the transfer banding and the inactive banding. The banding levels also more appropriately reflect the urgency of the housing need.
- 4.4. The eligibility criteria has seen an increase of the financial cap placed on households accessing the register from £50,000 to £63,000 to reflect inflation and cost of living burdens. The residency criteria has increased from 2 years

to 3 years (with exceptions to this identified). Provision for non-Medway care leavers has been introduced ahead of new regulations.

- 4.5. A more detailed summary of changes made can be found in Appendix 1.
- 4.6. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out and no adverse impacts were identified for any specific group of people with a protected characteristic. Advancement of equality was identified in the categories of Age, Disability, Sex and Low Income. The Diversity Impact Assessment is included as appendix 2.

## 5. Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>
That the proposed changes will negatively impact some people who may no longer be eligible for a banding	Some bandings are being removed, which will result in high numbers of households unable to access the housing register. In particular, those with a transfer banding.  Also those who currently have a band B for community contribution may find that their banding is lowered to a band C.	Medway Council will need to be clear about the reasons for change, given the current housing stock available.  Work can be completed with promoting the mutual exchange function which is currently under-used.	AIII
That the decision is made not to update the current Housing Allocations Policy.	The current policy does not expire, however the policy has been written with the consideration of changes to Medway and the demand on social housing since 2019.  We could be at risk of discriminating against those who should have reasonable preference according to legislation if our policy is not kept up to date.	The direction outlined in the policy is a shared vision across strategic housing and partner agencies. Should the strategy not be agreed, the work areas would continue under the aims of the previous strategy.	CIII
<b>Likelihood</b>		<b>Impact:</b>	
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare		I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor	

## 6. Consultation

- 6.1. A pre-Draft Consultation initially took place as three workshops between March and April and was delivered to a range of stakeholders including internal colleagues across housing and public health, registered providers, support providers, voluntary, community sector providers and members of Cabinet.
- 6.2. A public consultation is yet to be held and will likely be published mid to late May with a view to run for 10 weeks. During this period, housing staff will be holding drop-in sessions at libraries to support people in completing the consultation online. An additional focus group has been held with the HRA tenant's panel to tackle some of the more nuanced and complex issues that this policy raises.

## 7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. Given the remit of this policy, there is predicted to be no negative impacts on climate change factors. There is likely to be a positive impact in terms of to improving the throughput into better quality of accommodation for the most vulnerable groups is Medway, who would typically be housed in the lower end of the private sector and spending a higher proportion of household income on utility bills. In line with Housing Service's drive to improve the overall quality of housing in Medway, this will play its part in moving toward a higher percentage of Medway residents living in housing with better thermal efficiency, lower housing costs

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1. The draft Housing Allocations Policy does not include any budgetary commitments over and above those already planned for.

## 9. Legal implications

- 9.1. There is a legal requirement for Local Housing Authorities to have a Housing Allocations Policy. In delivering this policy we must have regard to the published guidance in exercising our functions under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

## Lead officer contact

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Change Summary Note  
Appendix 2 – Diversity Impact Assessment  
Appendix 3 – Full Policy Draft

## Background Papers

None