

Appendix 1 – Information/Background

The project board have agreed that in order to save costs on procurement and IT systems, the sub regional choice based lettings scheme would follow Harborough Home Search as closely as possible through both its allocation policy and IT provider.

Market Harborough is already operating a Choice Based Lettings system and has been recognised as one of the best in the country and have identified that the system creates:

- Greater customer satisfaction
- Extends and develops housing options
- Improved Lettings
- Clear identification of need and demand
- Informs housing strategy

Their allocation policy and IT system have recently been updated to take into account latest government guidance for CBL schemes which includes enhanced housing options and care for vulnerable applicants. Harborough's current allocation policy also has regard to the Fair and Flexible – statutory Guidance on social housing allocation for local authorities in England which was issued on 4 December 2009. The new guidance reaffirms the Government's commitment to giving priority to those in greatest need through the following mandatory "reasonable preference" categories:

- People who are homeless (this includes people who are intentionally homeless, and those who do not have a priority need for accommodation).
- People who are owed a duty by any local authority under relevant homelessness legislation
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)

As mentioned above, it is proposed that we have a housing allocation policy in line with Market Harborough and move away from a point based system to a band system as follows:

Potential Housing Need Category
Preference Housing Need Category
Preference Plus Housing Need Category
Priority Housing Need Category

A full break down of the proposed banding system proposed for Melton Borough Council's Allocation Policy is attached at Appendix 2. This policy is very similar to Melton Borough Council's current allocation policy with priority being given to those in most housing need.

The proposed Leicestershire model will allow each authority to retain its own branding and identity.

Each authority will retain its own allocation policy and will be able to advertise properties in line with local lettings policy e.g. properties covered by a Section 106 agreement and priority given to applicants who live in the identified parish.

Properties in the adverts can be labelled to allow only applicants who have a local connection with Melton borough to bid for the property thereby giving to people living in the area priority for local housing.

All Melton Borough Council properties will be advertised through the choice based lettings scheme. To allow us to operate as a sub regional choice based lettings scheme and to receive funding from the government a percentage of our properties will have to open to bids from applicants outside our area. It has been agreed that 10% of each authority's properties should be offered sub regionally and these properties should be our hard to let sheltered properties such as bedsits and hard to let general needs properties such as 1 bedroom flats.

It is hoped that this type of cross boundary lettings will allow those elderly applicants requiring supported housing or a move to be close to family/ care agencies to be suitably housed and help all authorities provide accommodation to an increasing elderly population

A flow chart showing the process of Choice Based Lettings and an example of some adverts are at Appendices at 3 and 4

Funding was received from Communities and Local Government for a total of £177,000 to help fund the development of this scheme and includes a contribution towards the Year 1 and 2 capital and revenue costs for each Local Authority.

Melton Borough Council will have to fund aspects of this project. This will result in a restructure of the housing options team and some of their current responsibilities being transferred to other sections within the council.

A full outline of the costings is at Appendix 5