



Report Reference Number: PR/19/2

To: Policy Review Committee
Date: 11 June 2019
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Lead Executive Member: Cllr Chris Pearson, (Lead Member for Housing, Health and Culture)
Lead Officer: June Rothwell, Head of Operational Services

Title: North Yorkshire HomeChoice – Choice Based Lettings

Summary:

In July 2018 the City of York Council (CYC) made the decision to leave North Yorkshire HomeChoice and adopt a City of York Allocation Policy. This report explains the background to North Yorkshire HomeChoice and considers what the impact of CYC leaving may have on the wider partnership area and on Selby District specifically.

Recommendations:

That Policy Review Committee note the contents of the report and provides any comments.

Reasons for recommendation:

To ensure that Policy Review Committee is up to date with the changes to North Yorkshire HomeChoice and can consider the expected impact of those changes.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 In 2011 Selby District Council joined a shared common allocations policy with partner authorities and housing providers in the sub-region. Government policy encouraged and financially supported Local Authorities to develop a Choice Based Lettings System. The North Yorkshire Choice Based Lettings Partnership operates in Craven, Richmond, Ryedale, Hambleton, Scarborough, Selby and York and the partner organisations are the Local Authorities, Broadacres Housing Association, Yorkshire Housing and Beyond Housing. Harrogate Borough Council has never joined the partnership and operates a separate scheme.

- 1.2** Demand for our council housing remains high. When properties are re-let they are advertised through North Yorkshire HomeChoice. Customers apply on-line and then their application is assessed and verified by Officers and the applicant is awarded a band to identify their priority for housing: Emergency, Gold, Silver or Bronze.

The Bronze category is considered the category for those without a 'Housing need'.

'Assessing housing need', part 3 of the Policy is included as 'Appendix (i)

- 1.3** All applicants must have a local connection to North Yorkshire and unless there is a specific Local Letting Initiative in place the Policy enables them to move freely across the partnership area. This means that applicants from Selby can choose to apply to live in any of the other partner areas and likewise applicants from across the partnership area can bid on properties in the Selby District.

- 1.4** Local letting Initiatives may be introduced by partners to respond to local housing need and demand within a specific build or area. They are used to ensure best management of housing stock and support rural areas with regards to demand. Where there is a specific planning agreement, advertised properties will refer to a S106 planning agreement which provides criteria that must be met to enable a bid to be successful.

We have introduced local lettings initiatives for a number of our new developments across the Selby District.

- 1.5** Each week available properties are advertised and active applicants are able to bid on suitable properties they are interested in. The bidder with the highest priority for social housing gets first refusal of a property that has been advertised providing all the relevant criteria are met.

- 1.6** Choice Based lettings are considered to give greater customer choice and be more transparent than a traditional direct lettings system.

- 1.7** Currently there are **635** active applications registered with Selby District Council.

The applicants fall into the following priority bands.

Table ii. Number of applicants by priority band

	Emergency	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Number of Applicants	1	53	310	272	635

Demand is highest for 1 bed general needs properties.

Table iii. Number of applicants divided by maximum bedroom need.

	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4 and 5-bed	Total
General needs (applicant is under 60)	210	204	64	12	490
Sheltered (applicant is over 60)	129	13	3	0	145
Total	339	217	67	12	635

- 1.8** North Yorkshire HomeChoice is overseen by a Board and an Operational group both made up of representatives from the partner organisations. Currently City of York Council hosts the scheme and employs the NYHC Co-ordinator (0.6FTE), a jointly funded post. This partnership funds a shared IT system (Abitas) and operates the same lettings and allocation policy (with minor exceptions for participating organisations that have charitable status).
- 1.9** In July 2018 City of York made the decision to leave North Yorkshire HomeChoice and adopt a City of York Allocation Policy. City of York Council has made the decision to leave the North Yorkshire HomeChoice Partnership as they felt that the policy was no longer able to meet their specific local needs. At the time the decision was made City of York confirmed that they would not leave the partnership until their new Housing IT system had been procured and implemented and this was likely to take 2 years.
- 1.10** On the 24th April, 2019, the City of York Council Board member advised at a meeting of the North Yorkshire HomeChoice Board, that it would be between 18-24 months before they leave the partnership.
- 1.11** City of York Council are required to give a formal 6 month notice period of their intention to leave the partnership.

2. The implications of City of York Council leaving North Yorkshire HomeChoice

2.1 Migration

When City of York Council leaves the partnership North Yorkshire HomeChoice applicants will not be able to apply to live in York, or bid on properties in the York area. Anyone registering with North Yorkshire HomeChoice will be required to have a local connection to the partnership

area and that area will no longer include York. This also means that applicants from York will be unable to bid on properties in the Selby area.

Table iv -Migration data (2018/19)

The table below provides details of the migration of applicants across the partnership area. The horizontal row is where the applicant was housed, and the vertical row shows where the applicant was from.

Applicants from ↓	Applicants Housed in →								
	Total 18/19	Craven	Hambleton	Richmondshire	Ryedale	Scarborough	Selby	York	Total LA to ↓
Craven	81	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	82
Hambleton	0	114	1	3	2	4	3	127	
Richmondshire	0	2	105	0	3	0	1	111	
Ryedale	0	0	0	89	2	8	8	107	
Scarborough	0	2	1	13	264	3	2	285	
Selby	0	0	0	7	1	190	4	202	
York	0	6	3	10	5	36	208	268	
Total Housed for each LA →	81	124	86	121	277	241	226	1182	

The data shows that in 18/19 241 applicants were housed in the Selby area and of those 241, 190 were Selby applicants (79%), 36 were York applicants (15%) and the remaining 15 (7%) were from the wider partnership area. In total 202 Selby applicants were housed – 190 in Selby (94%), 4 in York (2%) and 8 in the wider area (4%).

It is expected that Selby's net migration will reduce when City of York leave the partnership as York applicants will no longer be eligible to apply for North Yorkshire HomeChoice without a local connection to the remaining partnership area.

2.2 City of York Council host North Yorkshire HomeChoice

City of York Council act as the lead partner for North Yorkshire HomeChoice and act as the 'host' for the partnership. The post of CBL coordinator is employed by City of York Council but is jointly funded by the partnership and undertakes work on behalf of the North Yorkshire HomeChoice partnership. Should City of York no longer participate in the North Yorkshire HomeChoice scheme there will be employment implications in relation to this post.

It is recognised by Board members that the coordinator role provides significant value to the partnership and would continue to be required when City of York Council leave.

2.3 Financial

The current costs associated with North Yorkshire HomeChoice are split equally between the partner agencies. The financial implications of City of York leaving are as yet undetermined. Civica, the IT software provider, will be meeting with the Board to discuss the IT costs at a future meeting.

2.4 Legal

The key legislation regulating the allocation of social housing is contained in part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Part 6 was amended by the Localism Act 2011 and this act gave local authorities the flexibility to operate a more focused list to better reflect local circumstances.

City of York Council leaving the partnership will not change this and the current allocations policy continues to meet legal requirements.

2.5 Policy

There will be no specific policy related implications to City of York Council leaving the partnership.

The North Yorkshire HomeChoice Board and Operational Group are in the process of reviewing the current Allocations Policy in order to ensure we continue to provide increased choice in housing to residents in North Yorkshire and help to create sustainable, mixed communities where people choose to live.

3. Implications

3.1 Legal Implications

As this report is providing information only there are no specific legal implications

3.2 Financial Implications

As this report is providing information only there are no specific legal implications

3.3 Policy Implications

This report is providing information only and there are no direct Policy implications at this stage. This report has not reviewed the benefits of Selby remaining within North Yorkshire HomeChoice but has considered the implications of City of York leaving.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1** The choice based lettings system currently allows applicants to bid for houses in our area and across the partnership area. When City of York Council leaves the partnership they will no longer be eligible to apply for housing in the York area unless they have a specific connection to York, but applicants from York will not be able to apply for Housing in Selby without a connection to the remaining partnership area.

York are unlikely to leave the partnership until 2020/21 at the earliest therefore in the interim the North Yorkshire HomeChoice policy will continue as it is now.

5. Background Documents

The North Yorkshire HomeChoice Policy is available on the link below:

<http://www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk/content/information/formsandbooklets>

7. Appendices

Appendix (i) – Assessing housing need

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Section 3 – Assessing housing need

Assessing housing need

Applicants will be assessed and given a priority band in accordance with the following categories of housing need:

Emergency band

This band is intended to meet the needs of applicants in extreme circumstances only; it will only contain a small number of applicants at any one time and is subject to a time limit.

- Applicants unable to return to their home from hospital because their current home is permanently unsuitable.
- Applicants unable to access key facilities in their home without **major** adaptation works
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Gold band

- Care leavers at point of leaving care home or supported housing with an agreed support package relevant to offer, and are ready for independent living.
- Applicants who need to move on from an approved accommodation based supported housing programme and the agency supporting them has provided evidence that their programme of support is complete and that they are able to live independently, either with or without support (Resettlement category)
- Applicants presently under-occupying a home owned by a local authority or housing association that is situated within the partnership area. They are moving to a property with at least two fewer bedrooms.
- Applicants who are a statutory homeless household under part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act who is owed the full duty. Applicants will only be able to bid for a
- property in the Local Authority area which has accepted the duty to
- house
- Applicants who are overcrowded and require two more bedrooms to relieve the overcrowding
- Applicants who are at risk of homelessness and in priority need
- Applicants with a serious and enduring illness whose health and/or well-being is significantly compromised by their home or its environment, as assessed by the relevant trained Housing Officer. (Bids made on this basis must secure a direct health gain as a result of a move).
- Applicants who need to move to a specific locality so that proven hardship can be prevented. Applicants can only bid to a local authority area with close proximity/accessible to a family member or employment.

Silver band

- Applicants who have a health or well-being issue, which will be removed or improved by a move as assessed by the relevant, trained Housing Officer.
- (Bids made on this basis of priority must secure a health gain).
- Applicants who are homeless under part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act or are at risk of homelessness and meet potentially homeless criteria, but are not in priority need
- Applicants who are overcrowded and require one more bedroom to relieve the overcrowding.
- Applicants whose home permanently lacks basic amenities, not due to the failure of the applicant.
- Applicants who share bathroom and/or kitchen facilities with separate households of people who will not be moving with them.
- Applicants who are presently under-occupying a home owned by a local authority or housing association that is situated within the partnership area and who will move to a property with one less bedroom.
- Applicants who are intentionally homeless under Part 7 1996 Housing Act.
- Applicants placed in temporary accommodation under Housing Act 1996 and pending a decision.
- Applications from foster carers, those approved to adopt, or those persons being assessed for approval to foster or adopt, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child or a child who was previously looked after by a local authority child

Bronze band

- All other applicants.