



Policy, Finance and Development Committee	Tuesday, 28 March 2023	Matter for Information and Decision
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Report Title: **Approval of Garage Management, Housing Allocations and Repairs & Maintenance Policies (March 2023)**

Report Author(s): **Chris Eyre (Housing Manager)**

Purpose of Report:	To seek the Committee's approval to adopt and bring into effect an updated Housing Allocations Policy, Garage Management Policy and a new Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
Report Summary:	This report provides a summary of the three policies and, for the policies that are being updated, sets out the main changes, and the reasons for making the changes.
Recommendation(s):	That the Council adopts and brings into effect the following new/updated Housing Allocations Policy, Garage Management Policy and Repairs and Maintenance Policy
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	<p>Tracy Bingham (Director S151 Officer) (0116) 257 2845 tracy.bingham@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of Build Environment) (0116) 257 2645 adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Chris Eyre (Housing Manager) (0116) 257 2726 chris.eyre@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Sunny Basran (Strategy and Performance Officer) (0116) 257 2853 sunny.basran@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p>
Strategic Objectives:	Our Council (SO1)
Vision and Values:	Accountability (V1) Customer Focus (V5)
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Financial:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	No corporate risk(s) identified
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report. Initial EA Screening (See Appendices).
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.

Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Leadership Team • List of consultees located within section 2.1
Background Papers:	None.
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Allocations Policy (March 2023) 2. Garage Management Policy (March 2023) 3. Repairs and Maintenance Policy (March 2023) 4. Equalities Assessment Housing Allocations Policy 5. Equalities Assessment Garage Management Policy 6. Equalities Assessment Repairs and Maintenance Policy

1. Background

1.1 The Council is committed to providing a cost effective and efficient service whilst meeting it's legal and contractual obligations. In 2021, the Housing Department commenced a programme of work to review the Housing Allocations Policy and the Garage Management Policy to ensure that housing services are being delivered in line with guidance and legislation; are delivering effective landlord services; and, are responding to recommendations made by the Internal Audit Team.

1.2 The Repairs and Maintenance Policy is a new policy.

2. Housing Allocations Policy

2.1 The current Policy was approved in July 2018 and describes the mechanisms by which the Council assesses applications to join the Housing Register. This enables the Council to allocate vacant properties from a shortlist of potential applicants.

2.2 Since the introduction of the current Policy, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has come into effect. This was one of the main drivers for reviewing the Policy. The changes to the Policy will enable the Council to comply with legislation and reduce the risk of a legal challenge.

2.3 The review was also designed to strengthen the Housing Need Assessment so that those people experiencing financial difficulties are given a higher priority than was previously permitted through the Policy. In addition, it will improve working practices to ensure that the Housing Register prioritises those applicants in the greatest need and reflects significant socio-economic challenges.

2.4 The new Housing Allocations Policy is attached as **Appendix 1**.

2.5 **Table 1** provides a summary of the main changes to the Housing Allocations Policy with a brief description for the reason for the change.

Current Policy	Section/Paragraph Amended	Reason for Amendment
Not addressed	9.2.2 Under 18 (New insertion)	To identify the exceptional circumstances where an applicant under the age of 18 would be considered to join the Housing Register
Not addressed	9.2.5 Lack of Capacity (New insertion)	To enable the Council to treat applicants as non-qualifying if they are considered to lack the capacity to sustain a tenancy
Not addressed	9.2.7 Home Owners (New insertion)	To enable the Council to treat applicants as non-qualifying if they own a residential property in the UK
Not addressed	9.2.8 Fraud (New insertion)	To enable the Council to treat applicants as non-qualifying if they have committed fraud in respect of their housing application
Not addressed	9.2.9 Deliberately Worsening Housing Circumstances (New insertion)	To enable the Council to treat applicants as non-qualifying if they have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances
5.8 Sheltered and Supported Accommodation	17.6 Sheltered Housing	The age to be considered for sheltered accommodation has been raised from 50 to 60
Not addressed	16. Sensitive Lets (New insertion)	Enables the Council to operate outside of the banding framework where it may be inappropriate to let an applicant a vacant property
Not addressed	21. 3 Offer Rule (New insertion)	To enable the Council to suspend an application for 12 months where an applicant has refused 3 suitable offers
Not addressed	22. Local Lettings Policies (New insertion)	To inform that the Council may develop a local lettings policy to address neighbourhood concerns and/or ensure communities are mixed/sustainable
Not addressed	23. Reciprocals (New insertion)	Enables the Council to enter into a reciprocal arrangement with another authority or registered provider
Not addressed	24. Exceptional Circumstances (New insertion)	Enables the Council to depart from policy where it considers an individual's circumstances warrant this
Not addressed	20.7 Non-Bidders (New insertion)	Enables the Council to review applications where no bids have been made in 6 months
Not addressed	20.8 Direct Offers (New insertion)	Enables the Council to make direct offers of accommodation
Low Housing Need Band (page 18 - first bullet point)	18.2.4 Joint Tenants	To widen the criteria from housing association tenants to include all joint tenants irrespective of landlord type
4. Welfare need to move (page 19)	18.3.5 Welfare Need to Move Criteria added in respect of applicants suffering financial hardship	Enables those applicants experiencing financial hardship to be considered for the medium housing need band under the welfare need to move

3. Garage Management Policy

- 3.1 The Council owns 229 garages and parking spaces throughout the Borough. The current Garage Management Policy was approved in 2014. The main purpose of the review was to ensure that optimum use is made of the garage sites, and to improve the allocation and management processes associated with the Council's garages.
- 3.2 The new Garage Management Policy is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 3.3 **Table 2** provides a summary of the main changes to the Garage Management Policy with a brief description for the reason for the Change.

Current Policy	Section/Paragraph Amended	Reason for Amendment
Part 2: Aims (bullet point 3) To prioritise lettings to existing tenants	Part 2: Aims (bullet point 3) Apply a local lettings approach	To give priority to the applicants whose flat or house adjoins the available garage
New insertion	2. Purpose (bullet point 5) Ensure that garages are kept in a good state of repair, are well managed and fully occupied	The requirement to ensure that garages are kept in a good state of repair, are well managed and fully occupied has been enhanced to clarify awareness of responsibilities
Part 3: Roles and Responsibilities	Part 3: Roles and Responsibilities	Table of teams and officers removed
Part 4: Waiting List	5. Eligibility (5.2 - bullet point 4)	Clarification that an application may be refused for history of poor behaviour
Part 5: Management (paragraph 2)	6. Use of Garage	Amendments to improve awareness and clarity
New insertion	11. Repairs, Management and Maintenance	Amendments to inform responsibilities of licensee and the Council

4. Repairs and Maintenance Policy

- 4.1 The Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy is a new policy and is attached as **Appendix 3**. The policy serves to define the principles that guide the repair and maintenance activities and the service standard that will be implemented to ensure tenants homes are well maintained by an efficient and effective Repairs and Maintenance Service.
- 4.2 The Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy has been developed to meet the legislative and regulatory requirements, to respond to tenant's needs, and improve satisfaction with the homes they live in.
- 4.3 Additional and separate Policies in respect of Damp and Mould Management and Capital Works Programme are currently in development will be brought forward separately during 2023.