### Housing Allocations Policy consultation

### From Monday 24 February 2025 to Friday 18 April 2025, we are inviting feedback on to changes to our housing allocations policy.

### Background

### Local housing authorities are required to have an 'allocations policy' which sets out:

### how the council assesses the eligibility of applicants for the housing register, and

### how it allocates council properties.

### At Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils we are reviewing our allocations policy. We want to have a policy that provides a better experience for people applying to our housing register, and one that is fair, efficient, and makes the best use of the limited number of properties available.

### We would like your feedback to help us shape our new policy.

### The current approach

### The current Choice Based Lettings system involves people bidding for a property when it becomes available. The bidding process takes two weeks from start to finish before applicants can be shortlisted.

### However, for many years demand has far exceeded supply, with as many as four times the number of applicants on the register as there are annual lettings of properties. Many applicants spend years on the waiting list with little or no realistic prospect of an offer.

### The Choice Based Lettings model also causes significant delays and administrative burdens for staff, with minimal evidence that it encourages applicants to broaden their areas of choice or improve their chances of being re-housed in council accommodation.

### In response, an independent review has recommended that the council develop a new policy.

### The proposed new approach

### We are proposing a 'Property Match' model, which is designed to speed up the process by removing the bidding process and instead, empty properties are immediately offered to the best suited families and individuals on the housing register.

### The council would allocate a property directly to the most suitable person on the list, based on:

### Priority Band

### Earliest registration date

### Area of preference

### Number of bedrooms needed

### Mobility issues

### The main difference is that it would no longer be necessary for people to place 'bids' online and wait to the end of a bidding cycle to see if they have been successful, meaning the whole process is sped up, which also reduces the amount of time it takes for a property to be re-let.

### We have provided a summary of the key changes incluced in the new proposed policy.

### To download the full draft policy and read an overview of the proposed changes, visit

### lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/HousingAllocationsPolicyConsultation

### Have your say

### We would like to know what you think about the changes we are proposing to make to our allocations policy.

### Please complete the following survey and return it to either of the addresses at the end of the survey.

### Alternatively, you can complete the survey online by visiting the web page given above.

### To request the consultation information in a different language or format, please email CustomerFirst@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

### The consultation will close at 5pm on Friday 18 April 2025.

### Survey questions

### About you

### 1. Are you responding as:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | An existing council tenant |
|      | A resident who is not currently a council tenant |
|      | An organisation (please give its name below) |
|      | Other (please specify):

|  |
| --- |
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If responding as an organisation, please tell us its name:

|  |
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### 2. Which authority are you responding in regard to:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Lewes District Council |
|      | Eastbourne Borough Council |
|      | Both authorities (select only this option if you are an organisation working across both authority areas) |

**OUR ALLOCATIONS MODEL**

**Current policy**The current policy uses a ‘Choice Based Lettings’ model to allocate properties. Vacant properties are advertised on an online portal, which applicants use to place ‘bids’ on properties they like. Bidding for some properties is restricted to certain groups of applicants, such as homes with disabled adaptations.

At the end of the two-week bidding cycle, a shortlist is created for each vacant property, prioritised by highest banding, and registration date. The property is offered to the person who comes top of that list.

**Proposed policy**We are proposing to change to a ‘Property Match’ model. When we know a property is going to become vacant, staff can immediately create a shortlist of the most suitable applicants based on:

* Priority Band
* Earliest registration date
* Area of preference
* Number of bedrooms needed
* Mobility issues

The property is offered to the person at the top of that list.

This would mean the council matches vacant properties to the most suitable applicant based on priority banding, registration date, the number of bedrooms needed, area of preference and mobility issues. There would be no need for applicants to ‘bid’ for properties and no need to wait for the end of a two-week bidding cycle before the council matches the property with the applicant. We think that this system will be easier for everyone to understand how and why properties are allocated.

### 3How much do you agree or disagree that the ‘Property Match’ model would be an improvement on the current model?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |
|      | Don't know |

Comment:

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| **THE PRIORITY BANDING SYSTEM****Current policy**A system of four bands which are used to prioritise applicants:A\* - Urgent and exceptional needA – Very high priorityB – High priorityC – Medium priority**Proposed policy**A more streamlined system to prioritise applicants:A – Very high priorityB – High priorityC – Medium priorityUnder this proposal, the four bands would be simplified into three bands. Band A would be the highest banding and will include emergency medical cases, priority transfer tenants, armed forces personnel injured as a result of their service, decants, and those who no longer require an adapted property. |

### 4. How much do you agree or disagree that having three priority bands A, B and C will be an improvement on the current policy?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |
|      | Don't know |

Comment:

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**MOVING-ON FROM SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION**

Those moving on from supported accommodation would continue to be placed in the second highest band. This will now be named ‘Band B’. Their registration date will be the day they entered supported accommodation.

**Current policy**Supported accommodation is accommodation where tenants receive support and advice from dedicated workers, to learn how to manage their own tenancy and progress towards living independently.

Applicants who are currently tenants in supported accommodation in the district/borough are given priority Band A move-on, and bidding is suspended until they are ready to move-on to independent accommodation. Their registration date is the date their application is assessed.

When this notification is received from their housing provider, the applicant’s bidding is re-activated and they bid for properties along with the rest of those on the register.

Offering greater priority to people who are moving-on from supported accommodation, helps to ensure those placements are available for other vulnerable people who need them.

**Proposed policy**Those moving on from supported accommodation providers in the district/borough would continue to be placed in the second highest band. This will now be named ‘Band B’. Their registration date is backdated to the day they started in that tenancy.
Their registration date will be the day they entered supported accommodation.

The application is suspended until they are ready to move on to independent accommodation. When this notification is received from their housing provider, the applicant’s application is re-activated and they will be eligible to be shortlisted for properties, alongside other applicants on the register.

Their backdated registration date will give them some advantage over other applicants, which will help to support a steady flow of cases moving-on from supported accommodation, freeing those spaces up for other vulnerable people who need them.

### 5. How much do you agree or disagree that awarding people moving-on from supported housing a priority Band B and backdating their registration date, would be an improvement of the current policy?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |
|      | Don't know |

Comment:

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**MEDICAL NEEDS**

Low medical needs are unlikely to affect housing needs. Banding priority based on medical grounds is determined by assessing how an applicant's medical condition is influenced by the type of property they live in.

**Current policy**Applicants who demonstrate they have ‘low-level medical needs’ are awarded a priority Band C on the housing register, even though their medical needs are not impacted by the property they live in.

**Proposed policy**Applicants are not awarded priority for ‘low-level medical needs’. These needs are not affected by the type of property a person lives in, and have little to no impact on their housing situation. People whose medical needs are impacted by housing are likely to be considered to have 'medium to high-level medical needs' and would be banded accordingly.

These applicants could still receive a priority banding for other reasons, where applicable.

### 6. How much do you agree or disagree that the proposals for people with low-level medical need would be an improvement on the current policy?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |
|      | Don't know |

Comment:

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**REFUSING AN OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION**

Applicants can currently refuse one reasonable offer of accommodation. We are proposing to increase this to two reasonable offers of accommodation to maximise personal choice in the process.

**Current policy**Applicants can turn down **one** reasonable offer of accommodation without it affecting their place on the housing register. Their ability to apply would be suspended for 12 months if they turn down a second reasonable offer of accommodation.

**Proposed policy**Applicants can turn down **two** reasonable offers of accommodation without it affecting their place on the housing register. Their application would be affected if they turn down a third reasonable offer of accommodation.

### 7. How much do you agree or disagree that the proposal to increase the number of reasonable offers would be an improvement on the current policy?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |
|      | Don't know |

Comment:

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### 8. What would be the most appropriate action to take for an applicant who refused three suitable properties?

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| --- | --- |
|      | Removal from the register: the applicant's registration is cancelled  |
|      | Suspension for 12 months only: no offers would be made in this time. The application is reactivated on the same banding and priority as before. |
|      | Lower banding priority only: the applicant's priority banding is reduced to the next band below their current band (or removed from the register if Band C) |
|      | Deferred registration date only: the applicant's registration date is amended to reflect the date they refused the third offer |
|      | Other (please specify):

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**LOCAL CONNECTION**

Under this proposal, we would removal a local connection qualifying criteria. Applicants would need to live in the district/borough to apply.

In our previous policies, applicants who didn’t live in the area could join the housing register if they had relatives living in the district/borough, or if they worked here.

### 9. How much do you agree or disagree with proposals to remove local connection criteria for anything other than residency? This means only applicants who have lived in the district/borough for two or more years can apply. It would does not apply to homeless applicants.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |
|      | Don't know |

Comment:

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**INCOME THRESHOLDS**

Introduce a threshold; those with incomes over the maximum limit will not qualify to join the housing register.

**Current policy**

The current policy does not have a maximum income threshold. Household income is not considered when assessing applications to join the register.

**Proposed policy**

The proposed policy would include a maximum income threshold. Applicants whose household income is above the threshold would not qualify to join the register.

### 10. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a maximum income threshold?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |

Comment:

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### 11. What would you consider to be a suitable maximum income threshold for single person households (including single parents)?

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| --- | --- |
|      | £40,000 per year |
|      | £50,000 per year |
|      | £60,000 per year |
|      | £70,000 per year |
|      | £80,000 per year |
|      | Other (please specify):

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**HOUSING RELATED DEBT**

Introduce a maximum threshold of housing-related debt, above which applicants may not qualify for an offer of social housing. Housing related debt includes rent arrears, service charge arrears or council tax arrears owed to the council or any other previous landlord.

**Current policy**

The current policy does not have a maximum housing related debt threshold. The Council will not normally make an offer of accommodation to an existing council tenant who wishes to transfer to a new property. where the applicant has been served a Notice Seeking Possession for rent arrears or any other reason, (except for Lewes District Council tenants who are eligible for a Tenants Incentive Scheme and the amount payable would clear the outstanding arrears.)

Applicants who have housing related debt can bid for properties.

The bids from these applicants will be given less priority than bids from other applicants until the housing related debt or arrears have been cleared in full.

**Proposed policy**

The proposed policy would include a maximum income threshold. Applicants whose household income is above the threshold would be able to join the register, but would not be shortlisted for an offer until they could demonstrate that the debt has been cleared, or that they are sticking to an agreed repayment plan to reduce the debt to below the threshold

### 12. Do you agree with the proposals to introduce a maximum housing-related debt threshold?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Strongly agree |
|      | Agree |
|      | Neither agree or disagree |
|      | Disagree |
|      | Strongly disagree |
|      | Don't know |

Comment:

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### 14. What would consider to be a suitable maximum housing-related debt threshold?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | £1,000 owed |
|      | £1,500 owed |
|      | £2,000 owed |
|      | £2,500 owed |
|      | £3,000 owed |
|      | Other (please specify):

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### 15. Do you have any other comments on the proposed policy?

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### 16. If you would like to be updated on the outcome of this consultation, please enter your email below.

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| **Data Protection Statement**Lewes-Eastbourne Councils collect equality data to monitor fairness - to ensure our services are accessible to all, and that we are meeting the needs of different groups. The responses we receive to equality monitoring questions are separated from other information a person has provided to avoid any risk of bias. The Councils store equality data securely and confidentially. The information is kept no longer than is necessary for monitoring purposes, before being securely disposed of/ deleted from our systems. Equality data is not shared with any other organisations (except authorised external agencies - to ensure diversity and equality needs are met) and will only be used for statistical analysis and reporting. |

### 17. The following questions are about you. Would you like to answer these questions or skip them?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Answer |
|      | Skip |

### 18. What is your age?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Under 18 |
|      | 18 - 24 |
|      | 25 - 34 |
|      | 35 - 44 |
|      | 45 - 54 |
|      | 55 – 64 |
|      | 65 – 74 |
|      | 75 + |
|      | Prefer not to say |

### 19. What is your ethnic group?

|  |
| --- |
| **White** |
|      | English |
|      | Other British |
|      | Irish |
|      | Any Other White background |
| **Mixed** |
|      | White and Black Caribbean |
|      | White and Black African |
|      | White and Asian |
|      | Any Other Mixed background |
| **Asian or Asian British** |
|      | Indian |
|      | Pakistani |
|      | Bangladeshi |
|      | Chinese |
|      | Any Other Asian background |
| **Black or British Black** |
|      | Caribbean |
|      | African |
|      | Any Other Black background |
| **Other ethnic group** |
|      | Arab |
|      | Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller |
|      | Any Other |

### 20. Religion or belief - Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Christian |
|      | Buddhist |
|      | Hindu |
|      | Jewish |
|      | Muslim |
|      | Sikh |
|      | Atheist |
|      | No religion or belief |
|      | Prefer not to say |
|      | Other (please specify):

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### 22. Disability - A person is disabled if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Do you have a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial long-term effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Yes |
|      | No |
|      | Prefer not to say |

### 23. Carer - A carer provides unpaid support to family or friends who are ill, frail, disabled or have mental health or substance misuse problems. Would you consider yourself to be a carer?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Yes |
|      | No |
|      | Prefer not to say |

### 24. Marital status

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Civil Partnership |
|      | Co-habiting |
|      | Divorced |
|      | Married |
|      | Single |
|      | Widowed |
|      | Prefer not to say |

### 25. What is your sexual orientation?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Bisexual |
|      | Gay man |
|      | Gay woman or lesbian |
|      | Heterosexual or straight |
|      | Prefer not to say |
|      | Other (please specify):

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### 26. Gender: What a person considers their gender to be

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Female |
|      | Male |
|      | Prefer not to say |
|      | Other (please state):

|  |
| --- |
|   |

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### 27. Sex: Whether a person identifies with the sex they were registered with at birth

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      | Yes  |
|      | No |
|      | Prefer not to say |

Pleaser return your completed survey by Monday 7 April 2025 to:

Lewes District Council

6 High Street
Lewes
BN7 2AD

Or

Eastbourne Borough Council

C/O Housing Allocations Policy Consultation

Town Hall

Grove Road

Eastbourne

BN21 4UG