

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting19th June 2008

1. Title of Item/Report

Tees Valley Choice Based Lettings Scheme

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented the proposed Common Allocations Policy for the Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme across the Tees Valley.

Members of Cabinet were reminded that during 2006/07 the Housing and Community Safety Committee (HCSC) undertook a study of choice based lettings (CBL) and the benefits of adopting this approach to letting properties in Stockton.

It was explained that whilst Stockton was considering this, the Government were encouraging local authorities to consider sub-regional choice-based letting schemes and made funds available to explore this approach.

A bid from the Tees Valley region was successful to explore the opportunities for developing choice-based lettings scheme with a common allocations policy across Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland. The funding was used to appoint a Sub Regional CBL Co-ordinator's role for 2 years to drive forward the process.

It was noted that on 15th March 2007 Cabinet gave approval for Stockton to proceed with developing and partaking in a sub-regional choice-based lettings (CBL) scheme in the Tees Valley recognising the additional benefits likely to be achieved through membership of a Tees Valley sub-regional scheme in terms of customer choice and economies of scale.

Members were advised that over the last 12 months or so, the 'Tees Valley Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Partnership' (TVCBLP) - a steering group consisting of representatives from all 5 authorities - Stockton Borough Council, Tristar Homes, Middlesbrough Council, Erimus Housing, Hartlepool Council, Housing Hartlepool, Darlington

Council, Redcar and Cleveland Council and Coast and Country Housing, had worked closely together to develop a common choice-based lettings allocations policy.

It was explained that the framework for a Common Allocation Policy had to comply with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 and the statutory Code of Guidance: 'allocation of accommodation', issued to local authorities in November 2002. This meant that the framework had to include a method for determining which categories of applicants would be prioritised within the scheme in accordance with the reasonable preference groups as set out in s167(2) of the 1996 Act. This ensured a consistent and transparent approach to allocations across the sub region.

Members were advised that how authorities allocated their properties was mostly governed by statute with only a few areas for local influence and discretion. In adopting a common allocations policy across the Tees Valley all 9 partnering organisations had to agree to these discretionary areas. After lengthy discussion and debate a draft common allocations policy had been agreed and had been subject of extensive consultation spanning 3 months, so that a wide range of consultation groups had an opportunity to comment and influence the policy. It was noted that a comprehensive report outlining the consultation process and outcomes was available for Members to view in the Members library.

Members of Cabinet were presented with a copy of the final proposed policy document.

It was explained that all partners in the TVCBLP were now seeking approval from their decision-making bodies to implement sub regional choice based lettings across the Tees Valley with the proposed common allocations policy.

If approval was given to proceed it was envisaged that the new choice based lettings scheme for allocating properties would be introduced in late 2008/early 2009.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposed choice based lettings policy for Stockton-on-Tees be adopted.
2. The proposed choice based lettings policy be subject to review, 6 months after implementation, so that its impact can be measured.
3. Following the review a report be brought back to Cabinet for their consideration.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To obtain commitment for Stockton to continue with the implementation of sub regional choice based lettings in the Tees Valley with a common allocations policy amongst all partners.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in this item as he was a Board Member of Tristar.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than Midnight on Friday 27 June 2008

Proper Officer
23 June 2008