

14 September 2015

Scrutiny Review of Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

Summary

Members are requested to consider information from Thirteen Group on the refreshed Compass website and Tenant consultation results, as well as the remaining proposals for change. The Committee is requested to consider the proposals, and agree the arrangements for agreeing the final report. The Committee's final report is due to be considered by Cabinet on 8 October.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1. consider the information provided at the meeting from Thirteen Group;
2. consider the proposals for change, make other suggestions as appropriate, agree that final report be circulated following the meeting for comment, and that final approval be delegated to Chair and Vice-Chair.

Detail

1. On 13 July, the Committee was provided with an overview of the current Compass Choice Based Lettings scheme, and briefed on how the scheme was previously marketed /the operation of the bidding system.
2. The Compass scheme is currently subject to a Tees-wide Review. The Common Allocations Policy (and so how applicants are prioritised) will not be affected. The review is concentrating on how properties are marketed and bids are submitted by applicants.
3. Improvements to the marketing of the scheme have been taken forward and changes to the website will be demonstrated at the meeting.
4. There are proposals for changes to the bidding system and advertising of properties, and these will need approval across the scheme's individual partners.
5. The specific proposals relating to the bidding system are outlined at **Appendix 1**.
6. At the meeting Members will be provided with information from Thirteen Group, including the results of tenant consultation on these changes to the bidding system (included at **Appendix 2**)
7. Members will then have the opportunity to discuss the proposals and make comment together with any other suggestions for improvements to the CBL scheme.

8. In order to contribute the Committee's findings to the Tees Valley-wide review the review will report to Cabinet in October. Therefore Members are requested to delegate final approval of the report to the chair and vice-chair, following circulation of a draft copy to the Committee for comment.

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Appendix 1

Proposals Relating to the Bidding Cycle

The proposed amendments to the scheme are as follows:

1. Enable a property to be added to the Compass scheme any day of the week. This will reduce delays in waiting to advertise a property that becomes available and should lead to quicker re-let times, therefore reducing rent loss.
2. To advertise properties for one week or longer (if no one has bid) until a bid has been received.
3. After a week's advertising cycle the landlord has the facility to end and allocate the property if there is a customer interested for an immediate offer of accommodation, meeting the policy and property criteria.
4. Allow customers to make unlimited bids for available properties to maximise their chance of qualifying for a property. This will remove the current 3 bid restriction.
5. Take details of customers' areas of choice to enable an auto bid function for any properties not being advertised for a full week to ensure no one waiting on this area or property type will miss out on an offer. The current areas that applicants can choose from will be reviewed where necessary and larger areas will be divided up to allow applicants more choice. In addition applicants will be able to choose more than three areas of choice when making their housing application, although they will still be able to specify their 1st, 2nd and 3rd preferred areas. Applicants will also still be able to bid on properties that they are not directly matched to.
6. In specific circumstances, some immediately available properties may be advertised on the system allowing for an immediate allocation by triggering an auto bid facility. This means that everyone registered on the system requesting this area and property type will be put forward for the property within a priority order without having to make a bid themselves. The text on the property advert will clearly state any properties that may be advertised for less than a week's bidding cycle.

To note:

- a) any decision about an unreasonable refusal will only apply to manual bidders and not for automated bid matching.
- b) Efficiencies will derive from the new way of working and improved information and advice will be offered to applicants. Advice and assistance will be available at the front end of the process to avoid confusion with applicants.
- c) Applicants will, however, need to be advised to check the Compass website more often to see when new properties are added during the week. However, the majority of properties will be continue to be advertised on the traditional bidding cycle (currently Thursday to Tuesday).