

Review: Choice Based Lettings
Committee/Task Group: Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee
Final report published: 3 February 2011
Cabinet/Executive or Officer response: Officer response (included in final report)
Chair: Councillor Steve Rackett

Recommendation	Cabinet/Executive/Officer response/decision	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
(1) Training courses for long term non-bidders especially relation to IT.	We already contact people in housing need who are not bidding to find out the reasons for this and they can be assisted by staff in the CSC or Housing officers, we also run regular training for support agencies e.g. hostel providers so that they can support their clients. <i>(Officer response)</i>	Housing department to be asked to provide evidence of effective training and follow up.	Practice of contacting non bidders in the higher bands will be incorporated into the new procedures of the Demand Team. This could usefully take place at the same time as a spot check of banding.	
(2) Explanations and education for bidders and potential bidders about the banding system.	See above, also a scheme guide is issued when people register. <i>(officer response)</i>	Housing department to be asked to provide evidence of effective training and follow up.	Provided on Herts Choice Homes website which our website has a link to.	

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(3) Provide information about, and ensure access to the appeals procedure.	Yes this is something we could improve. <i>(Officer response)</i>	Review in 12 months	This is included in the nomination policy. Will be considered as part of reviewing our web pages.	
(4) A spot check on a sample of applicants to ensure they are in the correct band and provide feedback on results to the scrutiny committee.	Yes this should be in place. <i>(Officer response)</i>	Review in 12 months	This will be incorporated into new procedures and will come under the remit of the Housing Casework Co-ordinator (new post) and also part of the audit plan being developed with internal audit.	
(5) Tailored letters should be initiated and also 'follow-ups' for unsuccessful bidders.	We need to take a view on how resource intensive this would be; our overall approach is to move away from letters due to the cost involved. Unsuccessful bidders can access feedback e.g. number of people bidding for the property they were interested in, which band the successful bidder was in etc. <i>(Officer response)</i>	Review in 12 months	Feedback is already available via Herts Choice Homes. Tailored letters will not be possible to resource.	

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(6) Investigate the schemes on Freeview and Wii pioneered by Kirklees Council.	Freeview is not compatible with the process, only packages that clients would need to pay for, e.g. Sky. <i>(Officer response)</i>	The Committee has information which suggests that users do not need to pay services such as Sky. Scrutiny Officer to follow up with Housing Officers. Review in 12 months	Not progressing at present, not a priority area for the service.	
(7) Council Tax cost to be displayed with house information on property listings.	Yes <i>(Officer response)</i>	Review in 12 months	This has been requested and is with housing providers to arrange. We are working with WCHT on this.	
(8) Obtain feedback from successful and unsuccessful bidders.	There is a user group which includes people who are still waiting to be re-housed. <i>(Officer response)</i>	Scrutiny Officers to follow up analysis of feedback. Review in 12 months	User group continues.	
(9) More work to be focused on the benefits of moving from under occupied properties (for example smaller utility bills).	For maximum impact, this work would need to be focused within our RSL partners although we could support any initiatives they bring forward. <i>(Officer response)</i>	The Committee Chair agreed to follow this up and report back to the Committee.	Underoccupation is a priority and we have revised our nomination policy to give additional priority to those underoccupying by one bedroom (on a par with those in larger properties). Intensive focus on casework in the light of welfare reform "bedroom tax"	

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(10) Staff to be alert to people who may have difficulty in filling in the forms.	This is already part of our daily working practice. <i>(Officer response)</i>		Previous comments apply.	