



Housing Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy -Policy Options Consultation

Introduction

1. During the autumn of 2011 Sutton Council carried out a wide ranging consultation on proposed changes to its housing allocation policy and on the content of a tenancy strategy due to be put in place during 2012. Both have been prompted by the new powers and duties for local housing authorities contained within the Localism Act.
2. In the initial stage of consultation the Council chose not to put forward any specific proposals but instead sought to engage with as many stakeholders as possible on the various issues to be considered. These included matters such as who should be eligible or receive priority for social housing and whether we should introduce fixed term local authority tenancies for some or all housing applicants in future.
3. The initial consultation produced a huge and welcomed response, from a wide range of organisations and individuals, with many different (and sometimes opposing) views expressed. These have since been collated and summarised and can be found on the Council's consultation web site at <http://tinyurl.com/85f4zfb>
4. Following the initial consultation the Council has produced this document in which we have in two sections put forward various options for (i) amending the current housing allocations policy and (ii) alternative approaches we might take in relation to our tenancy strategy. We have highlighted (in bold blue type face) our preferred options based on the feedback received and which are believed to be practical and feasible. For each option a rationale is included while an overall rationale for the suite of preferred options is set out in the next section. For information, a summary of current allocations and tenancy policy is set out at Appendix 1.
5. In the case of the tenancy strategy section, this is confined to the local authority stock. We do not propose to make any changes to our policy approach to the letting of housing association homes, which was incorporated in the Council's revised interim policy on new affordable housing, issued in October 2011. In the case of new affordable homes, in principle, the Council supports the greater flexibility that fixed term tenancies allow.
6. Whilst we have attempted to be as specific as possible in describing the proposed options, in many cases some further work will be required to 'flesh out the detail' and ensure that options are viable and could be implemented from a practical point of view.
7. In December 2011 the Government issued for consultation a draft revised housing allocations code of guidance to reflect the new powers and flexibilities introduced by the Localism Act. In framing our policy options around housing allocations we have taken into account the revised guidance in anticipation of it being adopted broadly in

its current form. Specifically this has informed the following policy options for consideration:

- To give a degree of additional preference to working households and those seeking work and/or undertaking voluntary work in the community and who fall within one of the statutory reasonable preference categories
 - In addition to the requirement to give additional preference to former members of the regular armed forces who fall within a reasonable preference category and are in urgent housing need¹, to give a degree of additional priority to others who fall within a reasonable preference category and also to give some priority to other returning armed forces personnel who fall outside of the reasonable preference categories
8. We are now seeking views on the various policy options, and to that end are sending this document out to all stakeholders involved in the previous consultation phase, as well as making it widely available via the Council's consultation web site. In addition to receiving your comments on the proposals from an 'in principle' point of view, in light of the point made in paragraph 7 above, we would also be keen to have your thoughts as to whether they would be workable and or whether there are other considerations or positive or negative impacts that we have not identified.
9. We would be grateful to receive your views **by no later than Friday 30 March**, after which they will be taken into account as we draw up specific proposals for consideration by the Council's Executive in May. Comments may be sent to us via the post to:

Fran Massiah
London Borough of Sutton
3rd fl Civic Offices
St Nicholas Way
Sutton
SM1 1EA

Or via email to fran.massiah@sutton.gov.uk

10. If you would like to discuss any of the proposals with a member of staff, please contact Fran Massiah on 020 8770 5657 in the first instance.

1. Examples of urgent housing need set out in the draft revised Code of Guidance are: those who need to move for urgent medical reasons (e.g. because of a life threatening illness or sudden disability), families in severe overcrowding such that it poses a serious health hazard and those who are homeless and require urgent re-housing as a result of violence, fire or flood.

Rationale for Preferred Options

Sutton Council strongly supports the principle of the Localism Act which has given us the freedom to shape our housing allocations policy and tenancy strategy to meet the needs of our borough and local people.

We are aware that there is a shortage of social housing to meet local need, and we are already seeing additional pressure put on housing resources in the private rented sector that we expect to impact further on that need and our ability to meet demand.

However, we are also mindful that when it comes to social housing we cannot think just in terms of the management of stock, we are also dealing with people's homes, together with the hopes and aspirations that people invest in their homes.

Our overriding principle therefore, when seeking to take advantage of the new powers the Localism Act has given us, is to provide those most in need with the stability that comes with having secure accommodation. We want our tenants to take pride in their homes and their area. We want them to put down roots and feel part of a community.

We believe that providing this stability at a time when they are facing other difficulties in their lives, whether that is due to poverty, disability or potential homelessness, will be of most help to them in getting their lives back on track and removing one element of uncertainty in their lives. A commitment to an area and feeling part of a community can result in less anti-social behaviour, which will make for better neighbours. A supportive community can reduce the reliance on social services support and improve health and wellbeing.

We want to provide social housing in a way that is fair and transparent, where people's needs are met, but not to the disadvantage of others. We also want to avoid a two-tier system, where one group might be stigmatised through no fault of their own.

Jayne McCoy

Executive Member for Planning, Economic Development and Housing

(i) Housing Allocations Policy

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
Eligibility	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1 Exclude from the housing register households with no demonstrable housing need (i.e. those who are currently placed in Band 7) but with the exception of those requiring sheltered housing for whom Band 7 would be maintained</p>	<p>Promotes realistic expectations of re-housing prospects and allows for greater resources to be available to help those in housing need. Continued use of band 7 would require more staff resources with consequently fewer resources to deal with more urgent applications.</p>
<p>2 Exclude from the housing register households living outside of or having no connection with the borough</p> <p>Amend 'local connection' to mean, currently living in and having lived in the borough for at least two years or having a close relative (which will be defined) living in the borough who needs carer assistance and will avoid the need for a service from Adult Social Services.</p> <p>In relation to living in the borough, there is an alternative option to consider:</p> <p>2 (a) currently living in and having lived in the borough for at least 12 months</p>	<p>Maximises housing resources for Sutton borough residents (particularly as most other boroughs are likely to be closing their waiting lists) and would help to create realistic expectations. It would also prevent Sutton becoming a 'magnet' for out of borough applications as other boroughs close their lists.</p> <p>The Council may wish to consider allowing applications from households from other areas who have gained access to low paid employment in the borough and who are unable to access a private let. However, such a policy would be resource intensive to regulate, with a number of issues to be determined (e.g. What is 'low paid'? How many hours count as 'employed'? Is an applicant 'low paid' if they work part time?).</p>
Alternative or additional options suggested	
<p>3 Maintain a separate listing (outside of the register) of all households with no housing need</p>	<p>Although this would allow for the recording of all interest in social housing, it would maintain the current administrative burden for little benefit.</p>
<p>4 Exclude from the housing register households who are deemed to have the financial means to meet their housing need through the private sector (through an assessment of income/savings matched against the costs of accessing and renting suitable accommodation at the lower end of the market)</p> <p>4(a) As above but exclude households with a need for accessible housing from any financial assessment</p>	<p>More resources would be available to meet those in housing need and it would support the view that other tenures are viable options, thus maximising use of total housing available. It would, however, require additional resources to administer and could reinforce the perception that social housing is a tenure of last resort and not of choice</p> <p>If adopted we would need to properly assess accessibility including the ability to meet upfront costs and the willingness of landlords to accept certain types of household.</p>
<p>5 Exclude from the housing register households who have in the past accrued significant rent arrears, demonstrated serious anti-social or other unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour</p>	<p>-The Council would be seen as not rewarding bad behaviour. However, often these applicants are homeless and in priority need albeit that they may be found intentionally homeless. Legally we could not have a blanket policy towards such applicants as we would need to take individual circumstances into account.</p> <p>We would also need to locally define the extent of previous rent arrears or unacceptable behaviour that would trigger exclusion and also consider whether there should be a cut off point (e.g. five or 10 years) before which time any such behaviour is discounted.</p>

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
Priority	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1. Simplify the banding system by reducing the number of bands reflecting both the reasonable preference categories and local priorities. Each band would group a greater number of categories of need meaning a greater number of circumstances would be considered to have equal priority. For example:</p> <p><u>Band 1 – Council Interest and Hardship Grounds</u> Includes moves that support the wider interest of the Council, supports other services to meet their statutory duties or where a move is needed in an emergency, e.g. under-occupation, Medical 1, quota moves, ‘move on’, decants¹, management transfers. (Other than decants and under-occupiers, households in this band will not be given choice)</p> <p><u>Band 2 – Homeless Households</u> Includes households placed in temporary accommodation until a suitable private sector let is identified unless social housing has been agreed as the only suitable housing option</p> <p><u>Band 3 – Suitability of Accommodation</u> Includes factors that mean the current accommodation does not meet the household’s housing needs e.g. overcrowded households, medical needs, social and welfare factors</p> <p><u>Band 4 – Threatened with homelessness or living in insecure accommodation</u> Includes households living with parents, relatives or friends on a ‘bare license’ and households with a possession order being sought by the landlord</p> <p>¹Households who are re-housed to allow their property to be refurbished or redeveloped</p>	<p>Although there would be an administrative cost in making such a change it would make it much easier for applicants to understand how the system operates. It may, however, be more difficult to isolate those in greatest need if each band contains more categories of need.</p>
<p>2. Set aside a small number of lettings per year within the annual lettings plan for existing social tenants with no need to move (and possibly held on a separate ‘transfer list’), with the proviso that they leave their current home in a ‘lettable condition’ upon vacation; priority to be based on length of existing tenure</p>	<p>This would limit the number of lets to households already adequately housed and would allow some element of choice to long-standing social tenants who would not have accessed their current home via a choice-based lettings system. It would also reflect the views of tenants expressed in Stage 1 of the consultation.</p>

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
<p>3. Develop a ‘management transfer’ scheme to apply in cases where there was a clear risk of personal harm, severe harassment or other extenuating circumstances, or where there had been an inappropriate allocation and where the alternative accommodation offered resulted in ‘no betterment’</p>	<p>There is no current scheme and so existing social housing tenants must apply as homeless if circumstances arise where they are unable to remain in the current property. If adopted, the Council would be better able to respond to family crises. A scheme would also be a tool to promote and manage community cohesion and would avoid households having to apply as homeless.</p>
<p>4. Give additional priority to returning armed forces personnel who fall within a reasonable preference category and also give some priority to other returning regular armed forces personnel who fall outside of the reasonable preference categories whether or not they have a local connection</p>	<p>Such a policy would be in alignment with the support to be offered to the armed forces locally via the community covenant. Would also ensure that the Council is compliant with expected Government policy/direction.</p>
<p>Alternative or additional options suggested</p>	
<p>5. No longer consider for a transfer existing social tenants who are adequately housed (i.e. those that would be placed in Band 7 under the current policy), advising them instead to seek a move via a mutual exchange</p>	<p>Would save on the cost of ‘void’ administration. However, some existing social tenants were not given choice at point of allocation and many households on estates with high levels of anti-social behaviour would have no opportunity to transfer. Also, the quality of housing available when bidding varies; some households will have been fortunate with regard to the availability of properties but others not.</p>
<p>6. Give households in employment or doing voluntary work or actively seeking work additional priority for social housing, 6a. As above, but offering such households a five year fixed term tenancy (see Tenancy Strategy)</p>	<p>This could encourage people to work and to contribute to the community and would reward those that do so. It could also help to create a more balanced community within social housing estates.</p> <p>However, it may have the effect of those not in employment being perceived as less deserving and it could be difficult to administer fairly (e.g. How many hours qualify as ‘employment’? How long should someone be in employment? Would part time employment qualify? Would apprenticeships qualify as employment? Would it affect some groups disproportionately?). It might also penalise households in need who are not in employment or who are not able to volunteer due to no fault of their own.</p> <p>If adopted we would need to have mechanisms in place to determine whether households were actively seeking work, which could be difficult to administer. We would also need to determine the amount of additional priority to be given and how it is to be given.</p>
<p>7. Assist a limited number of households who have agreed to save for a deposit by providing them with a social tenancy, possibly of a ‘less desirable’ property, for a fixed term (e.g. 2-3 years)</p>	<p>Would assist households who are financially excluded to get onto the property ladder, but it may be difficult to monitor whether sufficient attempt has been made to save for a deposit. It could also be perceived to be a ‘back-door’ way in to social housing and would be making use of stock that would otherwise be available for permanent social lettings or temporary accommodation.</p> <p>If adopted, we would need to determine each year how many lettings were to be given as part of the annual lettings plan.</p>

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
8. For quota applicants consider the full range of provision (including renting privately) available to meet their housing needs, prioritising for social housing only those with a demonstrable need for long-term settled accommodation.	Would avoid unnecessary use of social lettings in some cases.
Medical Assessment	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1. Review Medical Priority 2 to restrict the award of medical priority to non-social tenant households that specifically require social housing to address their medical condition. Examples of such circumstances are where there is a medical need for ground floor accommodation, for an adapted property or the need for stability (where there is a mental health problem).</p>	Would ensure that social housing lettings are not used in cases where applicants could access appropriate private rented accommodation and would help distinguish those in greatest need. However, particular medical circumstances would no longer be awarded Medical Priority 2, e.g. diabetes, asthma, mobility problems but not a wheelchair user.
Bedroom Standard	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1 Change our bedroom standard to align with the statutory standard as set out in the allocations code of guidance where a separate room is allocated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married or co-habiting couple • Adult aged 21 years or more • Pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex • Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex 	Would offer a consistent approach to allocating property sizes and would remove the tension between housing benefit, housing association and council housing systems. It may, however, result in a shift in demand for more smaller family sized properties.
<p>2. Allow households to over-occupy (without their being statutorily overcrowded) if the letting improved their housing circumstances (e.g. allow a household currently living in a one bedroom home but needing a three bedroom unit to move into a two bedroom property)</p>	Could assist households to improve their circumstances sooner than might otherwise be the case.
Alternative or additional options suggested	
<p>3. Allow an additional bedroom for families with a child whose behavioural problems poses a serious risk to other children in the household</p>	<p>Maintains alignment with current thinking and development of understanding of behavioural problems on the family unit and in managing the disability and relates to equalities definitions. However, it would require providing social lettings of properties that would be larger than otherwise required.</p> <p>Needs to be given further consideration in terms of clarifying applicable circumstances and ensuring against abuses.</p>

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
Choice-based Lettings	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1. Allocate tenancies to statutorily homeless households (as opposed to allowing them to bid under the Choice Based Lettings system as at present)</p>	<p>Minimises the use of costly B&B and other temporary accommodation and creates a flow through in temporary accommodation and prevents the silting up of temporary accommodation which in turn prevents move on from B&B.</p> <p>When homeless applicants are given choice they exercise that choice and situations arise where no household in temporary accommodation has bid for a property. Although this has not been frequent it is becoming more so, and at a time when we need to move households through temporary accommodation such a policy would give us more flexibility to respond to demand.</p>
Alternative or additional options suggested	
<p>2. Where properties are directly allocated rather than let via the Choice Based Lettings system, allocate families with children to accommodation on any floor level within a flatted block (under Choice Based Lettings households may choose a property on any floor regardless of whether they have children)</p>	<p>Makes best use of the social housing resource to meet need.</p>
Pan-London Mobility Scheme (Londonmoves)	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1. Participate in the Mayor’s pan-London housing mobility scheme</p>	<p>Provides opportunities for social rented tenants to move from Sutton to other parts of London to reduce under-occupation within social housing, to help those who wish to move for reasons of employment or training as well as those who need to move to provide care. However, the scheme will result in 5% of the borough’s net social housing relets being let to applicants from other London boroughs rather than to applicants in need who have a connection with the borough of Sutton. (Close monitoring of the scheme will ensure that there is not an imbalance between the number of lettings given and the number received.)</p>
Mutual Exchanges	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1. Not allow mutual exchanges involving council tenancies where a household under-occupies a property as a result unless the household in question was previously under-occupying their home and the degree of under-occupation has not increased</p>	<p>Ensures that under-occupation of the social stock is not promoted or exacerbated. However, it will restricts the freedom in individual consenting households to swap their homes</p>
Alternative or additional options suggested	
<p>2. Not allow mutual exchanges of council tenancies where a household under occupies a property as a result.</p>	<p>As above</p>

(ii) Tenancy Strategy

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
Tenure	
Preferred option(s)	
<p>1. Maintain current policy of granting non-fixed term secure tenancies ('tenancies for life') but with the exception that where there are still behavioural issues (e.g. significant rent arrears, serious anti-social behaviour) at the end of an extended Introductory Tenancy but where they are not sufficiently serious to seek possession a two year fixed term tenancy will be granted.</p> <p>The policy would be reviewed again after a suitable period of time to take account of the emerging evidence base of the impact of fixed term tenancies.</p>	<p>Would avoid the need to review households' circumstances at the end of the fixed term and the administrative burden associated with this. It would also help to promote sustainable/stable communities and would minimize uncertainty for tenants. However, it would not make best use of the social stock to meet overall housing need.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances it would act as an incentive to improve behaviour and reduce the impact of the anti-social behaviour on others. It also reflects the strongly held views of many tenants (who would support such a policy) arising from the initial consultation stage. It would, however, prolong uncertainty for the tenant.</p>
Alternative or additional options suggested	
<p>2. Grant 'Renewable' tenancies where fixed term tenancies would be granted but with some form of accompanying guarantee that the household would be granted a new fixed term of the same unit, or, if appropriate and with the tenant's consent, re-housing to an alternative property suitable for the size and needs of the household.</p> <p>However, such a policy could include the proviso that tenancies may not be renewed in certain circumstances (e.g. in the case of continuing anti-social behaviour).</p>	<p>Makes better use of the existing stock by helping a greater number of households over time while avoiding the need to review households' circumstances at the end of the fixed term other than to find them alternative accommodation if appropriate and available. However, this may militate against the development of sustainable/stable communities and would present a degree of uncertainty for tenants.</p>
<p>3 Give a five year fixed term tenancy as standard for all general needs lettings, with tenancies for life for sheltered units for households over the age of retirement</p> <p>OR</p> <p>3 (a) As above but fixed terms of 10 years</p> <p>OR</p> <p>3 (b) As above but give variable fixed term tenancies for general needs properties depending on household circumstances (e.g. in relation to ages of children)</p>	<p>Makes best use of the existing stock by helping a greater number of households over time. However, there would be the cost of administering reviews and possibility of legal challenge. There could also be increased void works costs due to higher turnaround of stock. It may also encourage households to not better their circumstances in order to remain eligible for social housing. As with 'renewable' tenancies, it may also militate against the development of sustainable/stable communities and would present a degree of uncertainty for tenants.</p>
<p>4 Give shorter (e.g. two year) fixed term tenancies for a limited number of households under special schemes such as those who are assisted to save for a home-ownership deposit (also see under Housing Allocations Policy)</p>	<p>Would help to better meet housing need and may help to create more mixed communities within certain less desirable stock. However, it would be using stock that could otherwise be occupied by a household unable to ever access market housing. If adopted, we may need to consider a higher lettable standard if offering v. short tenancies (e.g. two year terms).</p>

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
<p>5 Give five year fixed term tenancies to non-social tenant households who are awarded additional preference in view of their being in work or actively seeking work (where they are able to) or, if not, are undertaking voluntary work (see Housing Allocations Policy section)</p>	<p>May be seen as a fairer approach to addressing the Government’s policy proposal that in-work/work seeking households and those contributing via voluntary work should be given additional priority for social housing. However, it may have the effect of those not in employment being perceived as less deserving and it could be difficult to administer fairly (see Housing Allocations Policy section).</p>
<p>6 Fixed term tenancies to not be renewed where the household at the time of review is:</p> <p>(i) deemed to be able to meet their housing needs through the market (ownership or renting)</p> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>(ii) has recently been in serious breach of their tenancy conditions</p>	<p>Ensures that social homes continue to be provided only to those in need and would act as deterrent to committing anti-social behaviour. However, it may act as a disincentive for some households to improve their circumstances and would prolong uncertainty for the tenant. Also, we would need to define ‘serious’ and ‘recently’, which may be problematic.</p>
<p>Succession</p>	
<p>Preferred option(s)</p>	
<p>1 Offer no further additional rights beyond those provided for in the Localism Act (in which case succession would be limited to a qualifying spouse or partner)</p>	<p>Is arguably fairer than the current policy in that children of council tenants would not have a ‘first call’ on a social home.</p>
<p>Alternative or additional options suggested</p>	
<p>2. Continue to allow a succession to a ‘member of the tenant’s family’ as currently but on a contractual basis (thus allowing inter-generational successions to still take place) subject to offering a suitable alternative property to the person in question if they would otherwise be under-occupying.</p>	<p>Would avoid possible ‘challenges’ from children of existing council tenants expecting to succeed. However, it would continue to allow children of council tenants to have a ‘first call’ on a social home when they may be able to meet their housing needs via the market. Also, a ‘contractual succession’, may in reality amount to the granting of a new tenancy, in which case a further statutory succession to a spouse or partner could take place upon the successor’s death.</p>
<p>3. Amend the ‘remaining relative’ policy to allow any remaining relative who is deemed to be vulnerable (taking into account their social care needs) to be granted a tenancy of the property; all other remaining relatives will be required to move, with action taken to re-possess the property should they refuse to do so. If a vulnerable remaining relative is under-occupying, however, they will be offered a move to suitable alternative accommodation, with action taken to recover the property if they refuse to move, unless it is considered on social care grounds that a move might adversely affect them in terms of their vulnerability.</p>	<p>Would ensure that social tenancies are not given to those who may be able to secure their own accommodation through the market. Would, however, require a fuller definition of ‘vulnerable’.</p> <p>Would be allowing under occupation of a property.</p>
<p>Adaptations</p>	
<p>Options suggested</p>	
<p>1 (a) Where a household is <u>under-occupying</u> an adapted property and where that household <u>no longer needs</u> an adapted property, depending on the circumstances of the case, including an assessment of the suitability of the accommodation for another household and the cost, the Council will offer it suitable alternative accommodation and if a reasonable offer of such</p>	<p>Makes better use of the existing stock and in particular of property adaptations previously carried out. There may, however, be the potential for legal challenge.</p>

Options for change	Rationale / commentary
<p>accommodation is refused it will seek to recover possession under Ground 10 of the Housing Act 1985.</p> <p>1 (b) Where a household is <u>under-occupying</u> an adapted property but the household <u>still needs</u> an adapted property, depending on the circumstances of the case including an assessment of the suitability of the accommodation for another household and the cost, the Council will offer it suitable alternative accommodation to which appropriate adaptation will be carried out. Where a reasonable offer of such accommodation is refused, it will seek to recover possession under Ground 10 of the Housing Act 1985</p> <p>1(c) Where a household is occupying an adapted property <u>of the right size</u> for the households but <u>no longer needs</u> an adapted property, depending on the circumstances of the case, including an assessment of the suitability of the accommodation for another household, the Council will offer it suitable alternative accommodation and if a reasonable offer of such accommodation is refused it will seek to recover possession under Ground 10 of the Housing Act 1985</p>	

Summary of the Current Housing Allocations Policy

Eligibility

- 1.1 To qualify to go onto the Council’s housing register and be considered for social housing applicants must be over 16 and not fall into one of the statutorily excluded categories (these include asylum seekers, those with no recourse to public funds and people who fail the habitual residency test). Applicants can include existing social tenants wishing to transfer.

Priority

- 1.2 Each application is assessed and, if the applicant qualifies, they are placed on the housing register in one of seven priority groups or bands (see overleaf). These reflect Government guidance ‘reasonable preference categories’ (see section 2). Each application is also given a ‘Priority Date’ (the date on which the application or referral is made, subject to adjustment) and this is used to determine priority within bands (the earlier the date, the higher the priority). Existing social tenants wishing to transfer are assessed on the same basis as new applicants.
- 1.3 An application can be given lower or no priority for housing in the following circumstances:
- Not been living in the borough for the last 12 months
 - Have the financial means to find own housing
 - Have rent arrears
 - Are guilty of nuisance or harassment
 - Have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances to gain higher priority for housing.

Band	Description
1	<p>Emergencies where temporary accommodation will not provide a solution or households considered to have an urgent need for re-housing, these including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -urgent medical priority (see below) -Social Services/Probation referrals (annual quotas) -households with a need for adapted property whose current home is unsuitable -council tenants whose homes are due to be demolished -statutorily overcrowded households -households living in a property subject to a demolition or closing order -social tenants under-occupying a home that could be used to meet an identified need -foster carers needing larger accommodation to allow them to increase their household -under-occupying successors where the property is larger than required by more than one bedroom -remaining (non-successor) relatives who had lived with a deceased council tenant for five years up until their death and who are under-occupying -service tenants whose employment has ended and who meet the conditions for re-housing -exceptional cases under delegated powers including ‘management transfers’

Band	Description
2	Households with a child or children or a pregnant woman living in insecure accommodation (i.e. with family or friends)
3	Households living in supported housing who are ready for 'move on' accommodation
4	Households accepted as statutorily homeless including those placed in temporary accommodation
5	Households living in unsatisfactory housing conditions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -lacking one or more bedrooms but not statutorily overcrowded -lacking access to an internal W.C. or sharing a W.C./bathroom with another household -lacking access to a living room -lacking other amenities (e.g. cooking facilities, cold/hot water supply, electricity) -those awarded medical category 2 priority (see below) -those needing to move to another location (in the borough) to avoid hardship to themselves or others
6	Homeless households eligible for assistance who are not in temporary accommodation where a duty has arisen under one of the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -are homeless, in priority need but homeless intentionally -are homeless, not in priority need and not homeless intentionally -are threatened with homelessness, but not intentionally, and in priority need
7	Applicants who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -have no housing need but live in the borough -are social tenants who do not fall into one of the other bands and wish to transfer to another part of the borough -have not resided in the borough in the last 12 months but need to move into the borough to avoid hardship to themselves or others -have been given reduced priority for being in rent arrears or responsible for causing nuisance or have the financial means to meet their own housing needs or have worsened their own circumstances to try and obtain social housing -do not have any factors that would qualify them to be placed in one of the other bands

- 1.4 Where an applicant falls into more than one reasonable preference group they will be placed in the band that gives the highest priority and for each additional factor or category they would fall into they receive six months' extra waiting time, with their Priority Date adjusted accordingly.
- 1.5 Where an applicant's circumstances change and they are moved up into a higher band the date of the change becomes the new Priority Date; where an applicant is moved into a lower band they retain their original Priority Date.
- 1.6 To be placed in Bands 1, 2, 3 or 5 applicants must have resided in the borough for at least 12 months and not have the financial means to resolve their own housing need (see section 3).
- 1.7 Households in bands 1 or 3 who refuse an offer of accommodation (see below) will have their priority reduced (usually by their being placed in Band 5).

Medical assessments

- 1.8 Medical Priority 1 is awarded to an application where there is an urgent medical need for re-housing or to allow a hospital discharge, with the applicant placed in Band 1. Medical Priority 2 is given to an application where there is a non-urgent medical need –

i.e. a disability or illness made worse by the applicant’s current accommodation. In such circumstances the applicant will be placed in Band 5, unless they are already in a higher band.

‘Bedroom standard’

1.9 Minimum bedroom size/number entitlement is calculated as follows:

Single person	-Bedsit or one bedroom
Childless couple	-One bedroom
Two non-partner adults	-Two single bedrooms
One child	-One single bedroom
Two children same sex	-One double bedroom or two single bedrooms
Two children opposite sexes	-Two single bedrooms

1.10 A full time live-in carer may also be entitled to a separate bedroom. No account is taken of an unborn child; instead the application is re-assessed at the time of birth.

Sheltered housing

1.11 To access sheltered housing the applicant must request such accommodation, be recommended by a social health care agency and either:

- (i) be over 60 or
- (ii) be under 60 but have a physical or sensory disability which could be assisted by sheltered accommodation and have a lifestyle that would be compatible with the general use of the scheme

1.12 For extra-care sheltered accommodation an assessment of the applicant is carried out to determine their suitability.

Choice based lettings

1.13 Sutton operates a choice based lettings (CBL) scheme. Once applicants have received their registration letter telling them what band they are in they can ‘bid’ for properties that are open to bidding from applicants in their band as they become available. The person who has bid with the highest priority (in terms of banding and Priority Date) is offered the property.

1.14 Applicants in Bands 1 or 3 are not required to bid; instead one suitable offer of accommodation is made by the Council. All vacancies that arise are first considered for allocating to Band 1 applicants before being made available to others. Not all empty properties are available to every applicant; some are restricted to certain bands. In the case of ground floor properties preference will be given to households needing such accommodation.

1.5 Band 4 applicants may bid for properties but will have a property selected for them if they do not successfully bid for a suitable property within a reasonable period of time. This will also apply to Band 2 applicants who become ‘potentially homeless’.

Nominations to housing association vacancies

1.6 In addition to vacancies arising within its own stock, the Council has agreements with various housing associations that allow it to nominate households to empty existing or new build units within the borough’s housing association stock. The Council’s

allocations policy applies to such lettings in the same way as it does to local authority lettings subject to any policy of the housing association itself.

Annual lettings plans

- 1.7 Each year an estimate is made of the likely number of social housing lettings that will become available (including from both the existing stock and new build units). The proportion of these lettings, including by bedroom size, to go to each of the bands and specific client groups within these is then determined (see Appendix 1).

Summary of the Current Tenancy Policy

Tenure

- 1 All permanent rented homes let to new applicants (i.e. those who are not existing social tenants) are let on introductory tenancies for a period of 12 months after which, providing the tenant is not in breach of their tenancy conditions, they convert automatically to (non fixed term) secure tenancies. An introductory tenancy may be extended for a further six months in the event that there is a minor breach of tenancy conditions at the end of the period.

Succession

- 2 Per the Housing Act 1985 provisions (as amended) a qualifying person made succeed to the tenancy, this including a spouse or civil partner or a member of the tenant's family.
- 3 Where a non-spouse successor is left under-occupying the home by more than one bedroom, priority will be given for that person to move to smaller accommodation. Should the successor not accept an offer of suitable alternative accommodation action will be taken to recover the property.
- 4 Where a non-successor remains living in the home following the tenant's death ('remaining relative') and they have lived in the home continuously for at least five years, they will be offered a tenancy of the family home. Where such person is under-occupying the home by more than one bedroom they will be given priority for a move to suitable alternative accommodation. If they refuse an offer of suitable accommodation action will be taken to recover the property.
- 5 Where a remaining non-successor relative is either over 50 and has lived in the property for at least 40 years or is over 60 and has lived there for more than five years, they will be allowed to remain in the family home regardless of its size.

Adaptations

- 6 Adaptations are carried out to council tenanted homes to meet a specific need, normally a disability. An adaptation may be carried out regardless of whether the household is under-occupying the dwelling. Once a property has been adapted the tenant is allowed to remain in the home whether or not the household continues to need the adaptation.

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