

19 January 2021		ITEM: 8
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Annual Allocations Report – 2019/20		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Report of: Ryan Farmer – Housing Strategy and Quality Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the allocation of properties through the Housing Allocation Scheme in the 2019/2020 financial year. It sets out the information in three main sections – an introduction and background which contains a snapshot of the Housing Register at the end of the 2019/2020 financial year, an overview of the supply and demand of social housing properties, and details of activity surrounding property adverts, bids and offers throughout the year.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the contents of this annual housing allocations report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1. Thurrock Council has a legal obligation to allocate properties in line with a housing allocations scheme formally adopted by the Council, and the scheme has to comply with current legislation, regulation and case law. The current scheme was implemented in 2013 after the enactment of the Localism Act 2011, which gave increased powers to determine local priorities when defining how properties should be allocated. Since 2013 the policy and procedure have been regularly reviewed, most recently with a revised policy which came into effect in April 2019.

2.2. In Thurrock, as with many boroughs, the demand for housing exceeds availability. There are increasing numbers of people in Thurrock who require a home and many existing tenants with a priority need to move. With a limited amount of properties available from the Council and increasing house prices

in the private rental and owner-occupied sectors, the reality is that many households face long waits for suitable and affordable settled accommodation that is fit for purpose. The shortage in the supply of affordable homes is becoming an acute problem across the region, and these pressures are expected to intensify over future years to come.

- 2.3.** The below snapshot shows the number of active applications on the Housing Register as of 31 March 2020. The Housing Register is comprised of two lists, known as the 'Housing Waiting List' (formed of Bands 1 to 5) and the 'Transfer List'.

Band/List	Number of Applicants	% of total Housing Register	% of Applicants in with at least one bid in 2019/20
Band 1	3	<0.1%	0%
Band 2	149	1.6%	23.5%
Band 3	504	5.4%	46.0%
Band 4	4433	47.3%	36.7%
Band 5	2654	28.2%	22.2%
Total Waiting List	7734	82.5%	32.1%
Transfer List	1635	17.5%	21.9%
Total Housing Register	9369	100%	30.3%

- 2.4.** Those placed in Band 1 are considered to have the highest priority to be rehoused. These include those who are experiencing violence or threats of violence, including domestic and sexual abuse, as well as the Council's tenants whose properties require demolition or significant refurbishment where the tenant would no longer be able to remain at the property.
- 2.5.** Applicants awarded a Band 2 priority include those with an urgent medical or care need to be rehoused, tenants who are under-occupying by more than one bedroom or succeeding to an under-occupied tenancy.
- 2.6.** Those awarded a Band 3 priority include homeless applicants who are owed a homeless duty, those who have a medical or care need to move, those moving on from care or supported housing, those who are overcrowded by two or more bedrooms and those who are under-occupying by one bedroom.
- 2.7.** The Band 4 priority is awarded to applicants who are not adequately housed but do not meet any of the other priority criteria. It is also awarded to

applicants who are adequately accommodated with a valid notice to quit and non-statutory homeless applicants.

- 2.8.** Lastly, applicants placed in Band 5 in the 'Housing Waiting List' are considered to be adequately housed and have no priority need to be accommodated. As a result of changes to the housing allocations policy which were approved by Cabinet in January 2019, since April 2019 there have been no new applications accepted into Band 5, except for those who are eligible for Sheltered Housing.
- 2.9.** Other changes to qualifying criteria within the housing allocations policy saw the length of time required to establish a local connection increase from 5 years to 6 years. Since April 2019, applications have not been accepted where the length of time for a local connection is less than six years. The family local connection was amended to only include parents, siblings, children and those who have previously acquired parental responsibility for the applicant; however, the Council reserves the right to use discretion to award a family local connection in exceptional circumstances outside the defined criteria. Finally, local connection is no longer awarded solely based on employment within the borough.
- 2.10.** The 'Transfer List' is specifically for current Council and Registered Provider tenants in the borough with no priority need but who wish to move to a different property.

3. Supply and Demand

- 3.1.** The table below provides a snapshot of the Council's housing stock by property type and size as of 31 March 2020. At this point, it can be seen that almost half of the properties in the Council's stock were houses, and over a third of the overall stock were three-bedroom houses specifically.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Bungalow	488	16	20	1	525 (5.4%)
Flat	2542	1363	204	0	4109 (42.0%)
House	22	824	3612	238	4696 (48.0%)
Maisonette	0	74	371	4	449 (4.6%)
HMO Rooms	8	0	0	0	8 (<0.1%)
Total	3060 (31.2%)	2277 (23.3%)	4207 (43.0%)	243 (2.5%)	9787 (100%)

- 3.2.** The next table gives an indication of demand based on the identified number of bedrooms required by applicants and subsequently breaks this down by

priority banding. It can be seen that 0/1 bedroom properties were in highest demand based on household need for the Housing Waiting List overall, however the table does provide a breakdown between applicants who would be eligible for Sheltered Housing and those who would be applying for only general needs properties. The percentage of Transfer Lists applicants seeking a property with three or more bedrooms were far higher than those on the Housing Waiting List, who instead needed properties with two or fewer bedrooms.

Band/List	0/1 bed (General Needs)	1 bed (Sheltered Housing)	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+
Band 1	1	1	0	1	0
Band 2	52	76	18	3	0
Band 3	135	121	158	61	29
Band 4	2169	184	1431	511	138
Band 5	811	479	821	449	85
Total Waiting List	3168 (41.0%)	861 (11.1%)	2428 (31.4%)	1025 (13.2%)	252 (3.3%)
	4092 (52.1%)				
Transfer List	281 (17.2%)	459 (28.1%)	470 (28.7%)	344 (21.0%)	81 (5.0%)
	740 (45.3%)				
Total Housing Register	3449 (36.8%)	1320 (14.1%)	2898 (30.9%)	1369 (14.6%)	333 (3.6%)
	4769 (50.9%)				

- 3.3.** Finally, taking the data from both of the above tables, it is possible to identify the demand from those with Housing Register applications in relation to the total levels of stock held by the Council. At the end of the 2019/20 financial year, it can be seen that for every one hundred 0/1 bed properties in the Council's stock there were 156 applicants on the Housing Register. Conversely, there were only 33 applicants for every one hundred three-bed properties due to the prevalence of this property type in the Council's stock.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Application Bedroom Need	4769	2898	1369	333	9369
Properties in Stock	3060	2277	4207	243	9787
Application to Stock Ratio	1.56:1	1.27:1	0.33:1	1.37:1	0.96:1

3.4. It should be noted that these ratios do not indicate the number of applicants per available or advertised property, and instead use the overall number of Council-owned properties.

4. Adverts, Bidding and Offers

4.1. General Needs Property Adverts

4.1.1 The Council's housing allocations policy sets out the aim that 25% of all available properties are to be allocated to applicants on the Transfer List. These properties are only advertised exclusively for Transfer list applicants for one bidding cycle. If no Transfer List applicants place any bids on a given property, that property will then be advertised to applicants on the Housing Waiting List in the next bidding cycle.

4.1.2 The below table provides an overview of the number of general needs properties which were advertised through the Council's choice based lettings system (excluding those for the accessible housing register) and identifies the percentage of properties which were made available for Transfer List applicants' bids. These figures also include adverts for properties owned or managed by other social housing providers in the borough.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Advertised to Housing Waiting List Only	99	85	76	15	275
Advertised to Transfer List only	9	17	23	1	50
Advertised to Transfer List, then Housing Waiting List	2	1	1	0	4
Total advertised	110	103	100	16	329

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Of which, advertised to Transfer List	11	18	24	1	54
% advertised to Transfer List	10%	17%	24%	6%	16%

- 4.2.** Across the year, it can be seen that a total of 54 general needs properties were advertised to applicants on the Transfer List, which equates to 16% of all advertised general needs properties. Of these, 4 properties were subsequently to Housing Waiting List applicants.
- 4.3.** The Housing Allocations team work to ensure that the properties allocated to transfer applicants represents a fair mix of property types and areas. In order to ensure that this can be achieved, a review of methodology and reporting will be undertaken to best meet the needs of those on the Transfer List.
- 4.4.** Through its allocations policy, the Council sets aside 20% of advertised properties for applicants with a working household member. The 20% includes properties advertised for the Waiting List and the Transfer List, and only those deemed eligible can bid for these properties. In 2019/20, 53 general needs properties were advertised to working households on the Housing Waiting List out of a total of 287, and 18 general needs properties were advertised to working households on the Transfer List out of 67.

Overall, 71 properties were advertised to working households out of a total of 354, which represents 20.1% of advertised properties.

4.5. Bidding

- 4.5.1** Approximately 55,000 bids were submitted across the 451 properties which were advertised through the choice based lettings system in the 2019/20 financial year, which means that each property attracted 122 bids on average. This average, however, does not allow for the differing levels of demand between general needs properties and sheltered housing properties.
- 4.5.2** The first table below shows the ten general needs properties with the highest number of bids in 2019/20. It can be seen that all ten of the general needs properties advertised for the Housing Waiting List with the highest bids received over 400 bids each. The most bids received for a general needs Transfer List property was 126.

	General Needs Housing Waiting List	General Needs Transfer List
1	460 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Grays advertised in July 2019	126 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Grays advertised in May 2019

	General Needs Housing Waiting List	General Needs Transfer List
2	460 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in December 2019	87 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in September 2019
3	455 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Tilbury advertised in August 2019	85 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Stanford Le Hope advertised in February 2020
4	444 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in August 2019	79 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Tilbury advertised in September 2019
5	434 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in January 2020	75 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Tilbury advertised in March 2020
6	433 bids - 2 bedroom council owned flat in South Ockendon advertised in June 2019	74 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Stifford Clays advertised in August 2019
7	428 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Orsett advertised in October 2019	71 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Chadwell St Mary advertised in September 2019
8	425 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Grays advertised in January 2020	66 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Chadwell St Mary advertised in August 2019
9	413 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in November 2019	65 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Corringham advertised in May 2019
10	412 bids - 2 bedroom housing association owned flat in Grays advertised in July 2019	62 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Chadwell St Mary advertised in January 2020

4.5.3 In contrast, out of the ten sheltered housing properties which received the highest number of bids which were advertised for the Housing Waiting List, only one attracted more than 40 bids, with the Transfer List properties receiving 12 bids or fewer.

	Sheltered Housing Housing Waiting List	Sheltered Housing Transfer List
1	45 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in June 2019	12 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in January 2020
2	36 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in October 2019	10 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in May 2019
3	35 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in April 2019	9 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in November 2019
4	34 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in May 2019	8 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in February 2020

	Sheltered Housing Housing Waiting List	Sheltered Housing Transfer List
5	34 bids - 1 bedroom council owned bungalow in Chadwell St Mary advertised in August 2019	7 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Aveley advertised in June 2019
6	34 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in October 2019	5 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in South Ockendon advertised in November 2019
7	31 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in September 2019	5 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Corringham advertised in December 2019
8	30 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in July 2019	4 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Corringham advertised in October 2019
9	30 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Corringham advertised in October 2019	3 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in March 2020
10	29 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in July 2019	3 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in March 2020

4.6. Offers

4.6.1 The below table provides the average length of time for successful applicants in 2019/20 between being awarded a priority banding and being made an offer of general needs accommodation as a result of bidding through the choice based lettings system.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Average
Band 1	0y 1m 11d	N/A	N/A	N/A	0y 1m 11d
Band 2	1y 5m 4d	0y 6m 18d	0y 4m 22d	0y 5m 21d	0y 11m 12d
Band 3	0y 7m 11d	0y 6m 19d	0y 3m 24d	0y 11m 10d	0y 6m 13d
Band 4	3y 9m 15d	5y 11m 22d	4y 1m 14d	N/A	4y 1m 19d
Band 5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Housing Waiting List	1y 6m 7d	0y 10m 14d	1y 3m 21d	0y 10m 14d	1y 2m 23d
Transfer List	4y 7m 7d	5y 0m 26d	4y 2m 14d	1y 8m 17d	4y 5m 13d
Housing Register	1y 8m 16d	1y 5m 4d	1y 11m 26d	0y 10m 29d	1y 8m 2d

4.6.2 It can be seen that, on average, applicants in Band 3 were successfully offered a property quicker than applicants in Band 2, despite Band 2

applicants having a higher priority, which can be explained in part due to the qualifications for a Band 2 priority. A Band 2 priority can be awarded to a tenant who is seeking to downsize by two or more bedrooms. As there is no time restriction for this priority to be removed from the housing register application, in this case, applicants will often wait for specific property types or locations to become available before bidding.

4.6.3 In addition to the above, a Band 2 priority can be awarded following a referral to the Housing Adaptation Panel. Applicants who are awarded this priority are only able to bid for properties which meet, or can be adapted to meet their needs, as assessed by the Housing Occupational Therapist, and all bids must be within the bedroom requirement for the size of the household. Due to these stipulations, it often takes applicants longer to secure a property which is suitable for their needs when compared to applicants in other, lower priority bands.

4.7. Within sheltered housing, the average length of time between being awarded a priority banding and subsequently being offered a property in 2019/20 remained fairly consistent across all bands. This information can be seen in the table below.

Band/List	1 bed
Band 2	1y 0m 29d
Band 3	1y 1m 3d
Band 4	1y 4m 20d
Band 5	2y 10m 8d
Housing Waiting List	1y 5m 3d
Transfer List	2y 0m 29d
Housing Register	1y 5m 24d

4.8. Finally, the below table indicates the average length of time between a priority banding being awarded to an actively bidding application and the end of the 2019/20 financial year. To be considered to be actively bidding for this report, the applicant would have had to have placed at least one bid during the 2019/20 financial year. As demonstrated in an earlier table, only 30.3% of the Housing Register could be considered to have been actively bidding.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Average
Band 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Band 2	1y 8m 6d	1y 9m 7d	0y 6m 5d	N/A	1y 7m 28d
Band 3	1y 2m 11d	0y 10m 4d	0y 7m 26d	0y 10m 14d	0y 11m 20d
Band 4	2y 9m 28d	3y 0m 19d	2y 7m 15d	2y 8m 21d	2y 10m 16d
Band 5	4y 0m 16d	3y 11m 7d	4y 3m 2d	4y 5m 24d	4y 0m 24d
Housing Waiting List	2y 10m 19d	3y 1m 6d	2y 11m 11d	2y 6m 14d	2y 11m 17d
Transfer List	2y 6m 22d	2y 10m 14d	2y 11m 10d	4y 9m 20d	2y 10m 15d
Housing Register	2y 10m 11d	3y 0m 25d	2y 11m 11d	2y 8m 4d	2y 11m 13d

4.9. Direct Offers

4.9.1 At times it is necessary to make a direct offer of a property outside of the choice based lettings scheme. For example, a property will be identified for a specific applicant and offered to them without being advertised through the bidding process. The number of such moves is a minority of the total available properties; however, this is dependent on the number of cases being identified and may vary from year to year.

4.9.2 Properties let through direct offers are not advertised, and results are not published due to the nature of the cases requiring such moves and the need for confidentiality in many instances.

4.9.3 Direct offers are used in, but are not limited to, the following circumstances:

- Priority cases with a risk of harm or delayed discharge from hospital
- Management moves and temporary decants
- Extra Care properties
- Court Orders
- Multi-agency public protection agreements (MAPPA)
- Some homeless households
- Applicants living in housing with severe hazards
- Properties identified as suitable for supported housing.

4.9.4 A review of records indicates that 33 applicants accepted a direct offer of accommodation in the 2019/20 financial year.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1. The Council's housing allocations policy sets out that regular reports will be provided to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to outline how properties have been advertised and who has been successful. These reports should also include details regarding who is on the waiting lists, the number of priorities awarded, average waiting times and other statistical information as deemed necessary.

6. **Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

6.1. There is no impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance or to wider communities as a result of this update paper.

7. **Implications**

7.1. **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director - Finance

As an update report on action taken, there are no finance implications directly arising from this report.

7.2. **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Given that this is an update report, there are no legal implications directly arising from it.

The allocation of housing by local housing authorities is regulated by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (HA 1996). A local housing authority (LHA) must comply with the provisions of Part VI when allocating housing accommodation (section 159(1), HA 1996). However, subject to this compliance, authorities may otherwise allocate housing in any manner they consider appropriate (section 159(7), HA 1996).

7.3. **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

This report presents the outcomes of the activity undertaken to allocate social housing in the 2019/20 financial year. The Council follows its housing allocations policy in advertising and offering properties, and this work is

carried out in line with the identified housing need of each individual household.

As such, there are no diversity and equality implications directly arising from this report.

7.4. Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

9. Appendices to the report

- N/A

Report Author:

Ryan Farmer

Housing Strategy and Quality Manager

Business Improvement - Housing